ART, CRAFT, COMMODITY AND CREATIVE ECONOMY IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

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Abstract
This paper surveys art, craft, and co-modification in creative Economy based on aesthetic function, conceptual and commodity. It explains that art object is created to serve for aesthetic function, conceptual and as commodity. The paper is of the view that art object which its purpose is for pure aesthetic appreciation involves a disinterest in order to have emotion for pure forms. It explains that an aesthetic object is appreciated for the purpose of beauty without the attachment of any social function and desire for the object. Aesthetic object is appreciated and critiqued based on academic principle which glorifies form and technique. The paper considers craft as handmade object which involves skill, simple tools and mass production. Some objects defy the classification of being termed craft because they possess the quality of art. It further explains that in contemporary society art object goes beyond mere appreciation of beauty to involve thought. The object serves as conceptual and intervention art which gives insight on social issues and everyday life experiences that aesthetic discourages because it does not want art to engage in societal problem. The paper is of the view that some art practices bring art experiences close to the viewer by the processes of co-modification. It is of the view that the period the artist finishes his creative endeavour the art object becomes a commodity that is negotiated, contracts are entered and exchange takes place in order to own it. The paper concludes that creative economy sustains the artist and the co-modification of art objects.

Introduction

In reality art exists in everyday life experiences of human beings. The artist brings the reality of art to the sense perception of the viewer as a means of expression, processes of self discovery, personal exploration and a silent meditation. Like life which is a phenomenon and part of nature art lives on its own as force within an enclosure. It over powers all limitations and lives within human emotion which it raises to see beyond the ordinary experiences of materials, practical, and techniques used in the creation of art works. Art which is the oldest form of human expression exists as subjective in the mind of the artist that desires to create and the viewer who appreciates the work with a sincere sense of aware, joy, disinterest, aggression and criticism. Aikhionbare, Osuawaru, and Okungbowa (2013) are of the view that art is a part of culture which is dynamic phenomenon that reflects the past, present, and future of a people and their culture. They further maintain that

society inspires art while art documents society's life and endeavours.

Artist creates art which gives new knowledge to the viewer to understand his /her personal experiences, environment, culture and the complex issues in the society. The creation of art therefore serves for expression, fulfilment of desire and to generate inquiry which gives a better knowledge on some issues that concern a particular society. It is an important instrument that precedes human conditions which it reflects clearly in the different forms of arts. Aikhonbare, Osuawaru, and Okungbowa (2013) hold that, art is a formal expression of a conceived image which its completion comes as a result of inspiration from the artist's environment. The art portrays truth in spite of the economic, political crises and circumstances that inspired its creation. It inspires beauty where there is none, sheds light to restore hope and creates insights when one is needed.

In Nigeria, as elsewhere in the world, one finds traditional art, modern art, and contemporary arts that demonstrate the power of art to live either through restraint or creative economic abundance. A creative economy will encourage growth in art and craft activities. Bad economy is the opposite; it hinders growth in art and creativity. Art expressions created under any economic circumstances will definitely influence the art of that period. Isa (2013) holds that art thrives well in a good economy because some conditions within the periods favour growth in art and creativity. Economic circumstances in no small measure determine the art and creative activities of an individual artist and group of artists in a society. Art expressions created in whichever medium in a society carry same values with the economic circumstances of the period.

The human categorization places the purposeful human activities into what it considers as art which possess aesthetic qualities and craft which it attributes to simple skill. Aesthetic qualities of art are associated with all western art and all other arts that have aesthetics as its aim. Craft is associated to creative activities which are made with simple tools that its main purpose is for ornamentation and functional use. African art and other creative activities which their symbolism is divulged of western aesthetic are regarded by modernist as craft. The point to note is that art which is cumulative aesthetics or craft which uses minimal means to produce possesses prestige that draws the sense perception and conceptual visual knowing of the viewer to appreciate or think of art and the experiences that surrounds the art processes.

Art in all its form lived beyond human conventions to reflect economic experiences, desire and demand of the period that inspires its creation. Aesthetics is no longer the only issue of art, economic productions with its readymade goods creates new aesthetic which reflects society's consumerism. The art in order to portray the co-modification of the society's life creates new aesthetics with readymade products. It portrays economic exchange, display of commodity and trust formed in transacting economic business.

The paper therefore examines art, craft and creative economy based on art and aesthetic, conceptual art and new aesthetics, craft, art and co-modification in creative economy.

Art and Aesthetics

Some societies have artists that are creative. They explore experiences which provide explanation to what art stand for and the values that each society attach to the creative art objects that are produced. Overtime art processes, techniques, and works produced by some artist are appreciated and criticised based on western developed aesthetics that emphasizes a disinterest in the appreciation of art works. It is of the belief

that in order to enjoy pure form art appreciation should be viewed with a removed interest which is objective reality. Art should be inter subjective and removed from serving any societal function that it was subjected to, which made Plato to see art as mimesis. Somers (2014) says that Plato in his Republic voiced his denial of the validity of art over philosophy using the allegory of the carpenter and painter. In the allegory, Plato claimed that the idea comes first in the carpenter before he embarked to give shape to the chair. The painter Plato stated imitates reality because of it he had no regard for the art which copies nature, he maintained that art is removed from reality.

The resulting visual effect of Plato's regard on the role of art in the society created low value for art which have become popular among disciplines. Over the centuries some philosophers and art critics have relentlessly created positive views and philosophical thought on the validity of art. Some of the art philosophies have relieved art its secondary role in the society and give it a new value that is based on aesthetic which glorifies form for its sake. Somers (2014) further says that no artificial construct is required to make something art, the attitude now is that art is inspired by the motivation, idea, and intention regardless of the processes. Form, content and context therefore are inherent in art and aesthetics object. Plato's view on art has made philosophers and art writers to create other perspectives in philosophy known as aesthetics. These groups of people discussed issues, which appeal to the senses in art and the society. They create the idea that art could be appreciated for its own sake which resulted into aesthetics appreciation of art objects. Aesthetics is a modernist's appeal which enables one to have visual experience of an art. Modern art revolves around aesthetics and it considers its object importance. Aesthetics do not just overlap, they coincide (Greenberg in Sigmong 2009). It means that aesthetic develops man's sense of beauty and trains one to appreciate the importance of harmony and beauty in an art object and society.

In the creation of aesthetics object, the concern has been to achieve inherent beauty which radiates from the object. Beauty as a subjective quality or matter of taste is of importance when appreciating, discussing and critiquing an aesthetic object. Aesthetic is the main purpose for strictly creating art objects that are meant for appreciation and the enjoyment of pure form. The artist that engages in the creation of aesthetic object does not always have the economic implication of the art object as a focus. Some of the art objects when completed have attracted some economic financial values which come as a result of direct sales made by the artist or a resale engaged by the new owner of the art object. Aesthetic art objects which originally may have been created to serve for pure appreciations have often been involved in vital economic exchange and legal negotiations for ownership which artists, museum directors and art collectors participate in the business. Often times they don't project the transaction aspect of art they allow it to play the aesthetics role that society designates it to perform.

The creation of art for pure aesthetic appreciation demonstrates practical reason for the modernist society to elevate the validity of art to be seen as embodying reason and meaning. The aesthetic quality attached to modernist's appreciation of art objects created unforeseen problems which led to dissatisfaction in some artists. They started to see art as an organic entity or living thing that refuses to fit into one structure and experiences which made them to question modern aesthetic and its worship of objects. Dewey 1934 in Pring (2007) suggests that art objects have meaning because they play some roles in the organisation and anticipation of experience. He further maintained that

they were not something set aside from everyday experiences though the galleries and museums made them to appear so. Postmodernism, conceptualism, minimalism, earth art, etc questioned the aesthetics worship of form.

Conceptual Art and New Aesthetic

Art practiced after the modern period questioned the characteristics of art that is based on aesthetic. Conceptual art and other forms of art were adopted as the postmodernism mode of expression. Janson and Jason, 2006; explain that, Conceptual Art is a creative experience; the idea itself is a work of art which exists without visual object other than words. They hold that the object should be eliminated leaving only the idea or information as conceptual art. They further posit that conceptual art can also include art that is entirely visual which the conceptual aspect is emphasized more than the aesthetics the conceptualist regard the idea as supreme.

The ultimate reality implies that conceptual art tries to re-examine the physical apearance of form which it repositions and deconstructs in order to free it from depending on the visual aesthetic and verbal representation. Frank 2006, Richard and Fred 1996 are of the view that conceptual art begins as an idea in the artist's mind. They are of the opinion that great works of art start in the mind with an idea which the artist brings out as physical form or shape by manipulating materials. They agreed that the idea is a mental process which its form becomes the materiality or conceptual art. In view of their opinion the creative imagination of the artist in the making of art work is not to create objects for only aesthetics, idea, motivation, materials and processes are considered as the art.

It entails that the idea which the artist generates using material is seen as the art and not the objectified art form as is emphasized in modern art aesthetic experience. Conceptual art emphasizes the idea that portrays it by arranging forms which enables the viewer to have intellectual experience of the intentions of the artist. Langer in Innis (2009) explains that, art works are pregnant images which come out from the rich complex mental process to portray inner reason, life and mind. She further says that art objects depict the mental process which it makes to become an organized complex mental abstract engagement that comes out of the unnoticed inner activities of the individual. The affirmation seems to hold that conceptual art has become a postmodernist way of departure from aesthetic attitude and appreciation of art object for its sake to include mental search for the artist's idea, material and process.

Skleiner and Christin 2005, explain that, throughout the 1950s, and 1960s conceptual artists and writers attempted to merge art and life. They removed art object as an issue of aesthetic and replaced it with the artist, viewer, process, material and the idea generated in the work. The conceptualist re-examines and repositions form from its physical state of matter and portrayal of aesthetic to an idea that exists in the mind which is regarded as materiality.

Conceptual art therefore considers art to be general without relying on the practice of a specific aspect of art. Duve (1994) explain that Duchamp considered to be the forerunner of conceptual art movement of the 1960s made it possible for artist to be 'artist in general' It means that conceptual art does not explore specific art practice for only aesthetic experiences but experiments with insightful art inquiry that thought is considered important. Kosuth (1991) agrees that being an artist now means that one questions the nature of art. In essence Duchamp and Kosuth exposed the idea that art exists not purely as aesthetic object but it is art because we regard them to be one. They suggested in their art practice that the idea that art goes

beyond perception of art object is to engage thought. The idea of concept is the most important aspect of the work conceptual art is made to engage the mind of the viewer rather than the eye (Sol Lewitt in Sigmon 2009).

Today in Nigeria the creation of art object inspired from nature, culture, or personal experiences of some artist reflect exploration of multifaceted dimensions which the conceptual art and aesthetic are conjoined to create hybrid art that is in between pure aesthetic object, mixed media and conceptual art. Unlike Duchamp and Kosuth's opinions that aesthetics should not be the essence of art rather that art should be general. Some Nigerian artists create works that possess qualities that aim to achieve beauty and idea behind the work. They seem to be motivated by the opinion of Author C, Danto's opinion on the progressiveness of art. Danto (1994) holds that art should be progressive and that aesthetic based on art history of progressive precedence should not be the bases for considering contemporary art since aesthetic really does not belong to the essence of art or defining it characteristics.

Some Nigeria contemporary artist following trends in the global art creates for aesthetic and conceptual art that reflects issues of social intervention and the economy of the nation. They are inspired by both aesthetic and conceptual qualities of art and economy of their nation that give them the opportunity to create mesmerizing conceptual art which are executed with everyday economic industrial products. They create conceptual and installation art which does not only reflect global art but their own economic and environmental conditions using readymade economic industrial products.

Craft Practices.

Craft are simple art objects, decorative and house hold items made with simple tools. They are used daily for carrying domestic activities. In Nigeria some examples of craft objects are: pottery, leatherworks, baskets, mats, raffia bags, mats, mortar, pestle, brooms, walking stick, metal knives and hoes. Craft practice regards labour 'skill' rather than aesthetics which is inherent to art object. Press (1973) holds that the value of visual object is in the labour of the workers that created it for which it can be exchanged. He explains that the artist separation from work process is artistic alienation. The craftsman depends on craftsmanship, and skill using simple techniques, materials and exertion of direct energy which placed craft as mere exercise in labour that is devoid of thought. Plato in his 'Republic' as fore mentioned emphasized the importance of the idea before execution. The point is that unlike conceptual art craft is not involved in the creation of higher order idea that leads to greater cognitive importance. In a creative economy craft items thrive and add to the revenue base of the nation. It is exchanged for currencies at tourist's attraction venues in Nigeria. Today some craft objects are sold at airports, hotels, urban and domestic markets in Nigeria to tourists. Since the introduction of domestic tourism in Nigeria interest has been created in the economy to encourage its development. To this effect, craft owes its growth to tourism investment in Nigerian economy.

Art and Co-modification of Ready-made Economic Industrial Products

Economy to the layman means development and welfare; it is often associated to changes that shape the politics and development of a nation. Some see economy as developing interest in domestic and foreign trade or the acquisition of goods and rendering of services. The former ones involve exchange of commodities of produced factory and non factory goods. Often time discussions on the relationship between art and creative economy in Nigeria is restrictive as the artist, viewer and artist

writers uphold appreciation of the objectified art work which they don't want to associate with any social functions that remove it from aesthetic.

It should not be denied that creative economy of Nigeria offer opportunities to some of her artists to earn their living from producing aesthetic art objects that are exhibited for shows at galleries, museums and public places. In a developing economy some of the artists are commissioned to execute art projects as are now seen at some state capitals in Nigeria such as Owerri in Imo state and Abuja. Due to a developing creative economy, art and craft are encouraged to function as reflected in the nation's cultural policy of 1988, artists and craftsmen including other forms of art are reinforced to create experiences and objects that add to visual sensitivities and ideas that relate to Nigerian culture. Ecoma (2010-2011) holds that art in Nigerian society plays a very vital and sustainable role in all areas of human endeavour.

Apart from creating opportunities for the artist to survive, the economy provides discarded readymade industrial material from the environment for the artist's use in the creation of conceptual art as a means of intervention art to portray some of Nigerian's environmental problems. Some Nigerian artists due to curiosity create with readymade industrial waste which originally served as packaging for consumer goods. Some of the most used industrial wastes are readymade plastic bottles, plastic bottle tops, and plastic food and water containers, glass, fluorescent light bulbs, fabric, paper, and electronic wire which are thrown away industrial products. The discarded readymade industrial wastes are recycled back to the economy and society by the artist as art. The aesthetic and conceptual art which they create portray silent truth and shared experiences on the issues of environment and some Nigerian social problems. Baudrillard (2008) asserts that with Duchamp's advent of the readymade the banality of art has merged with the banality of the real world. He further says that any object, detail or fragment of the material world could exert the same insoluble questions as were reserved in the past for a few aristocratic forms known as works of art. In his view art is democratized to relate to the everyday life and not to only aesthetics experiences.

The Nigeria artists therefore seem to agree to Baudrillards view. They apply limitless materials from industrial waste to create conceptual art that make sense of the world. The artists explore some industrial waste that would never have been used by the artists to create pure aesthetic art object. The choice of materials is endless. Through art they raise recycled readymade economic industrial waste from their original functions of serving as packaging for commodities to a conceptual art that is thought provoking. They co-modify the materials and made them to be seen as art in general.

Conclusion

Art is life. It explores the context of the society which it portrays in the various forms of art. Oftentimes art is like an organism. It refuses to be contained within a human confinement and convention to operate as an entity that is endless. Human categorization removed it from any attachment to societal function and reserved it purely for the purpose of aesthetic appreciation. Art object is to be appreciated with disinterest in order to enjoy pure form. Art transforms as the society which it reflects from creating purely for the purpose of aesthetic to embody thought.

Craft unlike art is mere exercise that does not involve thought and the issue of aesthetic. It is created with simple tools to serve as household and functional objects. It emphasises skill to perception and cognitive. In spite of the nature of any

nation's economy it sustains the creation of art and craft. The art and craft that are produced reflects the economic state of any nation and reflects the state of the economy. In Nigeria the economy to some extent sustains the artist. It provides readymade materials that the artist creates some of the aesthetic and conceptual art that portray the experiences of the period.

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