INTRODUCTION

The term ‘aesthetic’ is derived from the Greek word 'aesthesis', meaning sensory perception (Magrane, 2012). It is a branch of philosophy that deals with nature of art, beauty and taste encompassing the creation or appreciation of beauty. In its more technical epistemological perspective, it is defined as the study of sensory emotional value, or judgment of sentiment or taste (Magrane, 2012). In other words, aesthetics involves how artists imagine, create and perform works of art. It may further be explained as what happens in Artists’ minds, when they see and hear words; and the ways they interpret them to the society. It is also the study of artist's feelings about art, how art can affects mood, beliefs, and attitude towards life. Baumgarten (2007) observes aesthetics as emphasizing the sensory, rather than intellectual nature of judgments. Therefore, judgment of aesthetic values relies on the ability to discriminate at sensory level. Aesthetic value could be viewed from innate beauty of natural or manmade objects that has the capacity to elicit pleasure (positive value) or displeasure (negative value) when appreciated or experienced (Magrane, 2012). Here, emphasis on pleasure or displeasure has always appeared to pose a challenge to the objectivity of aesthetic values and aesthetic judgments. In this regard, one tends to weigh the dexterity of the artist on one side, and look at the shortcomings or inadequacies of a particular work of art on the other side. Plato and Meskin (2013) further argue that aesthetic value is a matter of personal preference or like; therefore, what is pleasurable to someone may be unpleasant to another. According to Plato and Meskin (2013), aesthetic value is the worth of an artwork or natural object that gives pleasurable appreciation and satisfied experience to the viewer. This overwhelming phenomenon is created in an encounter with work of art. The enjoyment derived, lingers on for as much time as one can find another work of art that is comparable to the former. In the same vein, aesthetic value can be termed as the worth of artwork, judging by the lasting satisfaction it gives to the end user. In this regard, an aesthetic appreciation is needed to trigger a positive environmental consciousness so that people can appreciate visual artworks mounted or displayed in the environment. Kant (2001) on the other hand, considers aesthetic judgment as 'subjective', he believes it is rooted in pleasure or displeasure; Kant argues that, judgment of beauty involves a claim to universality acceptance. He maintains that, when a natural or manmade object merits aesthetic quality, many people will reckon with the beauty it embarks. The benefit derived in it, there will not be two way judgments. In his view, the judgment that something is beautiful (aesthetically valuable) involves the claim, that other people should agree with the judgment. Summarily, to know aesthetically pleasing objects, one must be able to identify the presence of aesthetic features of an art object. These include: presence of symbolic reality, unity of fascination, and aesthetics appraisal (Markovic, 2012). It is when these features are present that one would be able to determine the aesthetic values in a visual work of art. It is against this backdrop, that, this study examines aesthetic characteristics of selected visual artworks in the environment. Using qualitative art historian method, the study employed field investigation for getting useful information for the study; while photograph of selected works were critically analysed, using symbolic reality, unity of fascination and aesthetic appraisal. The study justifies reasons for appraising the use of visual arts for the beautification of Lagos city; it identifies and presents values of visual arts, in the society.

Keywords: Visual Arts, Aesthetics appraisal, Murals and Environmental Sculptures.

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AESTHETICS INPUT OF MURALS AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCULPTURES IN THE BUILT CITY OF LAGOS

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ABSTRACT

There is a conscious effort to improve aesthetics, using visual arts to beautify the city of Lagos like other cities of the world. This study examines aesthetic characteristics of selected visual artworks in form of sculptures and murals erected at strategic places in the city of Lagos with a view to understand their aesthetic functions and socio-cultural relevance in the environment. Using qualitative art historian method, the study employed field investigation for getting useful information for the study; while photograph of selected works were critically analysed, using symbolic reality, unity of fascination and aesthetic appraisal. The study justifies reasons for appraising the use of visual arts for the beautification of Lagos city; it identifies and presents values of visual arts, in the society.

INTRODUCTION

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Methodology

Data for this study depended significantly on field investigation. Unstructured interviews were conducted with passers-by, using oral/interactive format. Field information and photographs of visual art works in different locations in Lagos city were taken, out of which ten (10) were selected for critical analysis. Secondary data were collected from textbooks, journal publications, and internet sources. Data collected were analysed using qualitative approach of art historical study.

Rationale for appraisal

To properly appreciate the aesthetic values of the visual arts in Lagos city, the works were categorised into two: murals and environmental sculptures. Under murals, there are four plates (plates 1 - 4), while plates 5 – 10 are sculptural works. The study found out that, all the environmental art pieces displayed within Lagos city were sponsored by the Lagos government; while Terra Kulture, one of the leading art, culture, lifestyle, and educational centre was contacted to recommend artists who handled the projects. The study also observed that, the mural and sculptural works were done by artists who acquired the knowledge through formal system of training. Mr. Lanre Ajayi, the General Manager of Terra Kulture, Victoria Island, Lagos provided information on the artists who were commissioned by Lagos State Government to erect environmental arts pieces displayed within Lagos to beautify the environment and valorise the city. Another look at Lagos environment gives a picture of the aesthetic values and functions of the visual art works in the city of Lagos.
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roundabouts, notable junctions, and public spheres and modern architectural designs which spice-up the aesthetic values in the city of Lagos. These aesthetic substances are part of the conscious efforts being made to recreate aesthetics order in the city of Lagos. Beyond beautification of the city scape, most of the art works were identified to be symbolic in nature, typifying socio-cultural figure in history or object of cultural relevance. While depicting these works, elements and principles of art were also put into consideration by the artists to complement their functions as environmental art.

Environmental arts in Lagos city

The display of art works in public spaces started as a concern to integrate socio-cultural and ecological approaches to develop the environment, and makes it aesthetically habitable for human being (Magrane, 2012). In this direction, visual art has been employed in the Lagos city as a measure to create aesthetically pleasing environment while addressing social and political issues relating to natural and physical environment. Elements of art such as line, texture, and colour have been put into consideration to recreate natural and manmade objects to fashion out beautiful landscapes in Lagos city. The making of murals and sculptural art in the public spaces show how citizens should think, get connected, and respond to the society socially, philosophically, economically, and spiritually (Baumgarten, 2007). It is expected that Lagos inhabitants understand messages conveyed by the environmental arts sited within the city. However, this response depends on the subject and theme of visual art in question as displayed by the artists. Artist produces works of art that have strong social and cultural values worthy to be displayed in the public space. The major purpose of executing artwork in the public spaces in Lagos is for beautification, and also to serve as a reservoir of people’s cultural history, and to equally address pertinent issues in the society. For instance, some of the environmental sculptures and mural paintings in Lagos address societal vices and youthful misconduct (Plates 3, 4 and 10). For instance, plates 3 and 4 portray messages against drug abuse and street hawking. The figurative illustrations convey symbolic images of reality, addressing a purpose. The colour scheme of the murals also suggests an arrangement of harmonious hues which are quite fascinating as well as attractive. Also the visual concept of mural could add aesthetics values to public places such as hospitals, bus-stops and other public places. The study observes, the essence is to mount an art work in a place where it will gain public viewing, and acceptability, giving credence to unity of fascination and aesthetic appreciation.

The paintings on wall of bridges are executed at the bus stop domain, where many pass on daily basis. This in a way has added beautiful appearances and warm reception to the public space under the bridge at the popular Ojuelegba bus stop. Such public spaces with environmental art include Obalende, Ikeja, Lekki Peninsula, Ojota, Ikorodu, Maryland, Tinubu Square, Ojodu Berger among others. The works in these spaces attract people, who pose to take photographs with the painted background in order to add beautiful background to their photographs. It was observed that, most passers-by cannot resist gazing at the beautiful and precautionary paintings for aesthetic pleasure. It is such an aesthetic experience that viewers wish, it last with them for as long as they would find another art presentation. It would match the figure of life, mood and emotion. The subject-matter is clearly depicted, reminding one of the benefits of education in the society. Generally speaking, this study observes a beautiful environment in Lagos State, where most spaces that were once known to be dirty and occupied by miscreants, artisans, petty traders of all sorts and transporters have been transformed to neat and quiet environment (Plates 2, 3, 4 and 8). Most of the stagnant public spaces in the past are now decorated with horticultural landscaping with beautiful walkways. These have turned these areas to be fascinating and aesthetically acceptable to passers-by. This effort and foresightedness of the Ministry of Environment and Works in the State is commendable, because it brings about aesthetic appraisal. The study observe among others, that, surfaces of columns and available plains under the bridges in Lagos city have now been embellished with different works of art, with thematic focus on various kinds of subject-matters ranging from historical matters, monumental sculpture, sporting wings of liberty probably recalls the freedom of the subject’s mind, overshadowing all other objects and the current one. Aesthetic expression is the representational part of the contents of visual artwork, and the attention it derived from people (Winston and Cupchick, 1992). By this position, it is not only the content that can be understood (or misunderstood) by the people, but its physical appearance must be appealing and attractive, to the extent that, it keeps the viewer’s ever gazing at it. The memory of expression of forms, lines, colours and draughtsmanship they would want to keep forever. The aesthetics display of visual art works, at the popular Tinubu Square, is an improved horticultural and visual art display in the Lagos Island. The first artistic work that catches one’s attention is the environmental sculpture: “Wings of Liberty” which covers the place in the square. It is a sculptural fountain produced with fibre glass, the wing of liberty probably recalls the freedom of Lagos and entire Nigeria from Colonial rule at independence in 1960. The subject is semi-realistic in nature; it is a representation of birds’ wings that can be discerned, while the real birds’ heads were not actually depicted. The sculptural piece is a symbol of freedom and liberty produced with the combination of unity, forms and attraction to satisfy aesthetics pleasure.

Tinubu Square has become a recreational place for relaxation, and enjoyment, since the garden was rebuilt in the 90’s. The integration of environmental art and landscape designs have made the location to become an attractive centre for commerce, commuters and passers-by. The reconstruction of Tinubu Square with the emphasis on manmade and natural elements, is fascinating to people on daily basis. The study observed, commuters sits comfortably and relax within the fenced square for as much as time permits individual, before they would proceed on their daily activities. Aesthetics content of the works of art at Tinubu Square makes the place a sight to behold you cannot pass-by without catching a glimpse of the beautiful sculptural pieces mounted in the square. The coolness of breeze, from the water fountain is also splendid at the square. The architectural landscaping of the square, obeys the aesthetic order and principles of design. The sculptural pieces are super realistic in nature that keeps one wondering, if they are actually human being or art pieces. One could hardly pass by the Tinubu Square, without being fascinated by the place. The square has become the focal point of attraction. You will always want to have a better glance of the sculptural pieces, mounted within the fenced square. The beauty of the creative art works, combined with the horticultural design of the flowers as well as the water fountain, will certainly arrest one’s focus. It is really an aesthetic experience, which enhances the atmosphere to become wonderful scene to behold. In view of this, Ognerenovic (1997) argues that aesthetic experience as a special kind of object relationship with man. In this case, a particular object strongly engages the subject’s mind, overshadowing all other objects and events. It is not a matter of I do, or do not like art, but of pronounced aesthetic values that is pleasurable to the environment. Also at Tinubu’s square, is a monumental effigy in memory of late madam Efunroye Tinubu (Plate 8), after whose the square was named. It is another sculptural piece that adds value to the aesthetics of the environment. Madam Tinubu was an irreplaceable opponent of the slave trade and British Colonial Government. She was an Icon, whose art and aesthetic foresight has rendered value wealth and nationalism earned her prestigious title of Iyalode of Egba land till her death in 1887. Other aesthetics input in the area, is the figurative sculptural expression of one time popular blind
Drummer called 'Kokoro' the blind drummer and a female dancer. Kokoro was a freelance ‘sakara’ drummer and singer. He earned his living by going from place to place to entertain people in Lagos Island in the 1970s. This study also considered the figurative sculpture at centre of Lagos city in Maryland as worthy of symbolic reality. It is a revelation of rich culture and diverse group of people in Nigeria. Here are podiums with figures dressed in traditional attires of Hausa, Ibo, Yoruba, Efik, Tiv etc., which portray different culture in Nigeria. The sculptural pieces are so naturalistic in rendition without missing any mark. It is really an aesthetic sight to behold, as it welcomes ‘Lagosians’ and foreigners, as they go in and out Lagos Mainland. The images were strategically placed at the cross junction of Maryland roundabout, going to Ikeja. The finest of the sculptural pieces encompasses painting of the figurative objects with gold colour; the podiums were painted white and black with rectangular marble base. Also depicted on the podium are indigenous symbols, and motifs, notable with different people of Nigeria. Here, the excellent artistic mastery of materials display by the artists, the work is the zenith of aesthetic values capable of attracting attention of passers-by. It is also an added beauty to Maryland junction and environs. As observed by passers-by, such objects of cultural heritage are ideal to remind one of national identity. Whenever the statues were unveiled, they have become a symbolic representation of Oba Rilwan Akiolu. There is also symbolic to high Chiefs in Lagos. These three figures dressed in traditional attires of Hausa, Ibo, figures are depicted in the classical art style but the sculptures are super depiction of human forms by Biodun Shodeinde (Sculptor). The hands, legs and other parts of the body are well-structured by professional artists. They wear facial expression that connotes joy and cheerfulness in the mood of celebration. The wrappers drape excellently suggesting easy movement of the legs and hands. There is no doubt that the statues exhibit classical art forms of beautification at the entrance to Lagos city. Community, (Plate 7), is a group of wooden sculpture erected at Ile-Zik roundabout, which is located between Ikeja and Mabogunje bus stop. The objects are arranged interestingly in circular form that gives a rhythmic visual flow that catches the attention of passers-by. Each wooden object represents a Local Government area in Lagos State. Also the cylindrically arranged abstract shapes formed a circular base for the work. The art work depicts togetherness of Lagosians living in unity, love, harmony. The work is a symbolic impact of dialogue, or putting heads together to resolve issues in time of crisis. The Artist, Abolore Sobayo depicts map of the twenty Local Government Areas in Lagos on the objects. He also inscribed symbols and motifs that are peculiar to Lagos State on these sculptural pieces. The art work was erected in 2017 as environmental monument to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Lagos State.
Plate: 2 Title: Fatai Rolling Dollar (Highlife Musician)
Enamel paint Medium:
Oil paint on Concrete Location: Ojuelegba, Lagos.
Artist: Peju Alatise

Plate: 3
Title: Say NO to Drug
Medium: Oil paint on Concrete
Location: Ojuelegba, Lagos.
Artist: Peju Alatise

Plate: 4
Title: Street Hawking
Medium: Oil paint on Concrete
Location: Ojuelegba, Lagos.
Artist: Peju Alatise

Plate: 5
Title: Agba Meta
Medium: Fiber Glass
Location: Ojodu Berger, Lagos.
Artist: Biodun Shodeinde
Plate 6:
Title: Eyo Masquerades
Medium: Metal Construction
Location: Lekki Peninsula, Lagos.
Artist: Francis Donedu

Plate 7:
Title: Community
Medium: Wood
Location: Ile Zik, Ikeja, Lagos.
Artist: Abolore Sobayo

Plate 8:
Title: Late Madam Efunroye Tinubu
Medium: Fibre glass
Location: Tinubu Square, Lagos Island, Lagos.
Artist: Unknown

Plate 9:
Title: Virtue of Life
Medium: Metal Junk
Location: Lekki Round-about, Lagos
Artist: Segun Aiyesan (Universal Studio)

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Conclusion
The display of art works in public spaces started as a concern to integrate socio-cultural and ecological approaches to develop the environment, and makes it aesthetically habitable for human being (Magrane, 2012). In this direction, visual art has been employed in Lagos city as a measure to create aesthetically pleasing environment while addressing social and political issues to recreate natural and manmade objects to fashion out beautiful landscapes in Lagos city. The study also highlighted different places in Lagos city that are decorated with monumental artworks in order to preserve the city's socio-cultural and artistic values. This endeavor by the Lagos Government can be said to have improved the level of visual literacy within Lagos city, because the study found out that, most of the art works were sponsored the Lagos State government. This in no some measure has made Lagos a beautiful city to behold.