

Sculpture and Space for Interdisciplinary Studies in Nigeria Higher Institutions

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Abstract

The impact of sculpture and its interactions with space, for interdisciplinary studies date back to the introduction of Arts in some Nigerian higher institutions. Sculpture has unimaginably played significant roles in teaching, learning, social life and the cultural aspect of the community lives of people within the institutions that offer sculpture programmes. The paper therefore takes a look at the various ways sculpture interacts with space in higher institutions. It explains the importance of sculpture garden and galleries in interdisciplinary studies. It discusses the impact of sculpture in the teaching and learning of other disciplines. The objective of the paper therefore discusses sculptures and spaces within higher institution in order to highlight the ways the works and space phenomenon aid in interdisciplinary studies. Qualitative methodology that relies mainly on narration, observation, digital, and secondary sources of information was used. The paper ends with a conclusion that sculpture and space aid in interdisciplinary studies and research. The paper made some recommendations. One of which includes, that higher institutions approve space and funds for the creation of sculptures within their environment in order that the sculpture objects made can serve aesthetics purposes and to give insights into knowledge in the study of other disciplines.

Keywords: sculpture practice, space, teaching, learning, interdisciplinary

1. Introduction

In higher institutions, sculpture's interaction with space for interdisciplinary studies can neither be overemphasized nor disputed. In some higher institutions' space, sculptures have been erected mainly for aesthetic purposes. When taken beyond aesthetic considerations, it is observed that some of the sculptures interject and intersect within spatial relations to give insight into knowledge. Okeke (2017) states that

psychology acknowledges art's value, because visual Language is one of the different ways to communicate and express one's perpetual abilities. He maintained that visual Language is a system of communication which uses visual elements. To this effect it implies that sculpture which is one of the visual arts represented in realism, abstract, installation and conceptual art effectively communicates meaning and knowledge that is not limited to any individual and disciplines.

In today's world of arts, science and technology which reflect almost all man's endeavor and the progress made in teaching and learning. Sculpture has gone beyond gazing at the object for pleasure to involve other roles that contribute to knowledge Arthur (2002) affirms that sculpture is visual art that blends technology of present day and past tradition. In a spatial relation some sculptures erected within a higher institution's space create meaning and insight into knowledge. The sculptures go beyond directing attention to form and space to inspire search for new visual learning which will open critical ways of thinking about a problem in other disciplines.

For sculpture to play significant role in interdisciplinary studies, space plays pivotal importance. The reason is because space, may project or mar the idea behind the work; meaning and message that the work possess. When adequate consideration is given to space visual knowledge will be gained especially when there is no hostile interaction between the sculpture erected within space and the environment. In fact, when there is no unity between sculpture and space, the idea, information and meaning embedded in the work may be distorted. Thus, when space is considered in spatial relation with sculpture, it enhances learning in interdisciplinary studies. Nwanna (2017) opines that spaces, public arts, and architecture play very important roles in society. He maintained that while parks serve as places for contemplation, relaxation and recreation, art works function beyond aesthetics to communicate to the audience since every picture tells a story and sculpture speaks.

Sculpture when executed in spatial relation is transformative. In its transformative form sculpture provides an open-ended way to understanding the idea behind the work. In fact, because of its transformative implications some sculptures have served as visual data in interdisciplinary studies. Researches have been successfully conducted and their findings reveal insights into knowledge about the cultural, social, political, religions and technological ways of a society's way of life. The reason sculpture effectively impacts on creating new knowledge is because it possesses energetic vascular quality that pulls one to it, either for appreciation or for gaining insight. Colman (2003) explains that sculpture has three basic components which include; content, form and subject matter. In

effect knowledge may be gained when consideration is given to the three basic sculpture components. In furthermore Colman holds that while content refers to the source, meaning, message, significance and feelings, form is the physical representation.

Sidhu (2003) states that sculpture gives intended form to all types of three — dimensional materials. To this effect it entails that apart from the mentioned basic components of sculpture, the materiality of thought explored in sculpture ignites the intellectual potentials of one to search for knowledge through spatial relation. In today's world materiality of thought in the arts is enriching learning activities in other fields and disciplines. Some sculptors explore other materials to create contemporary sculpture (Ulbright, 2009). Thus, sculpture contributes to knowledge in areas that are different from visual and creative arts. Some sculptors delve into science and technology in order to solve problems using ephemeral materials. In this way materiality of thought that is knowledge-based target audiences from all disciplines and fields.

In spatial relation some sculptors explore and emphasize aesthetics. But conceptual ones search for visual knowing, that is transformative. Be it as it may for higher institutions vision and mission statements to be achieved. Cultural context, space environment cannot be averse from their goals since culture is the bedrock of education. Education involves transfer of culture to the younger generation in order to prepare them to become acceptable members of society (Edusei, 2004). In furtherance, he maintained that visual art is introduced in the educational curriculum as the hand and eye. It implies that sculpture practices in higher institutions reflect cultural context of the location it situates.

To this effect most higher institutions offering sculpture programme have several students' work displayed in their outdoor spaces, galleries and sculpture gardens. These works may possess some significance which aid in teaching and learning in other disciplines.

Ikwuemesi (2019) holds that to the artist and society art has many significances and meanings in terms of why it is made and what it can do for the artist and society. In some higher institutions' discipline, sculpture is pivotal to their teaching and learning of some subjects. To this effect it becomes necessary to highlight the

significance of sculpture in interdisciplinary studies. Leavy (2009) explains that although anthropology and art education including other disciplines have been investigating art as a subject, it was only recently that art has been used for meaning-making and pedagogical capabilities.

It is based on these that this paper examines. Impact of sculpture in the study of other disciplines; sculpture practice and evaluation, and critical evaluation of some students work.

2. Impact of Sculpture in the Study of Other Disciplines

Sculpture objects have provided visual information which aid the teaching and learning of other subjects. In the study of history, social studies, religion and ethnographic researches, sculpture objects play significant roles, which are discussed thus:

2.1 History and Anthropology

Historians and Anthropologists discovered, studies, preserved and documented arts and artifacts which were made many years in some cultures. The reason is to gain insight into knowledge about the lives of societies through their arts and crafts. Anyachonkeya (2008) explains that when a person is ignorant of history the person will not know where he is coming from. He maintained that introspective investigation enables one to gain insight about the past, present and to look into the future. It entails that what we know today and study as history is portrayed in the sculptures and crafts of some cultures. The form, content, context and ideas that inspired the making of the works is a refraction of the social — cultural, political and religious life of the society where the works were obtained. Apart from contemporary arts of Nigeria. Artistic skill has scientific and technical component which enable artists in the ancient cultures of Benin, Ife, Igbo-Ukwu to cast bronzes that has remained the marvel of today (Aikhionbare, Osawuru & Okungbowa, 2013). Some of these mentioned arts of ancient and contemporary sculptures forms course content in history studies.

2.2 Religion

Apart from history programme, religion which study how society form their belief with the world beyond man's knowledge refers to iconographic sculpture objects to gain knowledge. In traditional religion sculpture

objects made in wood, metal, bone, ivory and terracotta which were regarded as gods that the people consulted, have become subject of discourse in religion studies. In effect religious iconographic objects, studied in religions' discipline has made sculpture objects to become an integral part of the programme in teaching and learning.

2.3 Social Studies

Social studies which study how society or a group of people sharing geographical or social territory interact, relies on sculpture as one of the means to gains insight. In fact, in social study programme several methods, strategies and triangulation of other means are used to examine some useful sculpture objects as quality evidence of how a society interacted. Some of the sculptures when ventured into as subject of study play important role in social studies, cultural and creative arts investigation. Many projects have been collaborative and inter-disciplinary, either by design or necessity which can be as a result of the complexity of Arts and Design research issues (Gray & Malins, 2004). In furtherance they maintained that it demonstrates a willingness to examine other fields and make sensible connections.

Thus, the reason is not far — fetched, since society, and art belong to culture. Sculpture therefore reflects the social-cultural aspect and expectations of a society. In fact, in social studies programmes, the analysis of sculpture iconographic objects reveal to future generations, the dressing code, belief, leadership, peace and conflict moments that existed within a society. In effect while society inspire sculpture making the objects made mirror the society, making their lives to be known and studied in higher institutions.

2.4 Medical

Medical sciences programme adopts sculpture objects made in relief and free — standing figure as dummies and models for teaching, learning and research. Anatomy, physiology, medicine, surgery and clinicals which dissect organs and study cells and molecular aspect of human and animal body, use sculpture dummies and skeleton made in polymer material to teach and learn. The sculpture dummies and models when used in learning enable a permanent effect on the learner. Aikhionbare, Osawuru and Okungbowa (2013) state that in universities, students of medicine, architecture, engineering

and other biological sciences have found art as a useful tool in tackling their problems. To this effect sculpture in no small measure aids the understanding of practical and theoretical knowledge in medical sciences. Psychologists use sculpture objects, paintings and music in the practice of art therapy in medicine. Okachi and Okachi (2013) opine that Art therapists use art as medium to help clients. They hold that arts encourage their clients to express their thoughts using paint, paper and clay materials. It implies that apart from the cadavers, sculpture is quite significance in medical science programmes.

3. Sculpture Practice and Evaluation

In some Nigerian higher institutions' sculpture programme ends with the award of a degree or diploma at the duration of the study. One common attribute in the teaching for a degree in sculpture or diploma certificate is that studio practice and theory are involved in creating the works. Nwanna (2017) states that sculpture was taught to be modelling of pliable materials or carving of hard objects, but that it has gone beyond the two methods to be assembled or installed.

In pursuance of assignment in order to acquire skills and knowledge, students create life size, and colossal sculptures in the round and relief. The works are inspired by themes such as; politics, social-cultural and natural phenomenon given by the course lecturers. Though a class may have a general theme for the students' assignment. The students' use different approaches and materials in achieving the subject matter, which depends on their interest. In creating their sculpture assignments, creativity plays a significant role in how sculpture students approach their work. Creative individuals think and design in puzzling ways. They formulate ideas, design things, and carry out activities in ways that are unique and unfamiliar to others (Nnachi, 2009).

Sculpture assignments have become strategic in assessing student performance. In fact, in trying to develop their own ideas, skill and techniques, many sculpture works have been produced. In effect evaluation takes place when students are able to successful carryout their assignments. Nkwocha (2009) opines that evaluation is a continuous process and not a single day activity which is done during interviews for employment and beauty pageant. She maintained that evaluation is a process that

takes place at a regular and predetermined intervals throughout a programme of study.

In conducting their assignments for evaluation, the students demonstrate in a gradual process their ability to learn and understand on regular basis. In conducting their sculpture assignments, while some of the sculptures are made in traditional materials. There are some which explore new materials, scientific and technological issues, tools and processes thereby going beyond traditional methods to explore other fields. Uzoagba (2000) explains that artists bring the knowledge and facts generated by scientists into reality in the form of assemblage, construction, casting, modelling and carving. To this effect students sculpture projects and assignments are not restricted to the art discipline. Rather their works transverse between disciplines in addition to space that strives to accommodate physical presence of the works.

3.1 Critical Evaluation of Some Selected Students' Sculptures

In Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri, some students sculpture assignments and projects call for attention in order to gain new insights on how they relate to other disciplines. The Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri is situated along the bank of the river Nworie. It is flanked on the west by Owerri -Onitsha Federal highway. The Department of Fine and Applied Arts of the institution offers sculpture and other arts course. Some of the sculptures that reflect interdisciplinary space and security include:

3.2 Conceptual Sculpture — by Uzundu Duru

In 2015–2018, Uzundu did a four years degree sculpture programme. His area of interest is on environmental issues and its abuse. He explored conceptual sculptures that give insight into knowledge about the challenges facing the environment and the defacing of the spaces in Imo State where he resides. Based on his concern about the challenges facing the environment and the health implications. Uzundu engaged in interdisciplinary studies to provide visual information about the area of his research interest. He used discarded plastics and bottle caps to create materiality of thought about the effects of dumping plastic containers in the environment. Most of his conceptual sculptures that depict his interest in health sciences and biology explores flowering plants Figure 1, 2,

and 3. One thing which is common to most works of art is the feeling that the artist is trying to pass onto those around him ideas which he considers worthwhile expressing (Anyaduba, 2018). Furthermore, Anyaduba maintained that the artist uses his art as a medium for drawing peoples' attention to some aspects of life experiences that he considers worthy of interest. Uzundu in his environment exploration therefore represents the environment by a creating flower with everyday discarded plastics. The flowers portray the beauty of nature and the environment as a phenomenon that has been facing insecurity because of the damage caused by dumping plastics a non-degradable materials.



Figure 1.



Figure 2.



Figure 3.

The flowers he created are presented as visual knowledge, which brings the misconceptions and peoples' intellectual in capabilities to realizing that their actions are catastrophic to the space within abused environment. Apart from environmental issues his other explorations evaluated solar and green energy — a major discourse in the science disciplines such as physics, chemistry, biology and geology. To explore alternative ways of sourcing energy from the environment he used coloured and glass like plastics to give insight into knowledge about light transmission of reflected rays. Thus, Environmental Art comprises artistic practices encompassing both historical approaches to nature in art and more ecologically motivated types of art (Wikipedia, 2024). To actualize his objective Uzundu created chandelier like sculptures Figure 4. Colored plastic bottles were juxtaposed and interjected to reflect light. In this way the student's simple effort was to comprehend energy and conservation of natural light in his environment for human development. Human is about creating environment wherein people can develop their full potential, and which lead to productive and creative lives in accord with needs and interests (Dakyes, 2012). Uzundu in these works tried to understand the environment beyond the way it is in its devastated structure.



Figure 4.

3.3 Vigilante – by Akor Emenike

At the Alvan Ikoku Federal University Fine and Applied Arts Department mounts a monumental (colossal) sculpture piece of a Vigilante with his dog Figure 5. The more than above life colossal sculpture was executed by Akor Emenike, a former degree student in the Department. The sculpture which was made in 2018 with cement concrete. It is a sculpture of a vigilante member firing a gun, with his dog charging forward to confront an unknown enemy. Akor executed this sculpture to draw attention to the insecurity, atrocious and heinous executions committed by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), the unknown gun men against the South eastern people of Igbo land. In this work Akor does not only draw attention of the collaboration which exists between the military, force personnels and the local vigilantes. He brings to limelight the issue of establishing community policing to solve the incessant insecurity in the state which involves killings and kidnappings. Insecurity over life and property is the most dominant challenge in Nigeria today (Ogu & Ndebilie, 2017).



Figure 5.

Apart from the “Vigilante”, Akor further explored a subject in civic education which teach peace and conflict resolution. To the young student life is becoming short in his nation, because of the mayhem, destructions and killings of innocent citizens which sums up as insecurity. Insecurity has gone beyond the confines of few states to almost all the states. To reject the spreading insecurity Akor attempted to advocate for peaceful resolution by carving three elaborate heads composition in wood Figure 6.



Figure 6.

In fact, in the wood carving work, Akor articulated the need for reconciliation within the major ethnic groups in Nigeria for peaceful coexistence. Reconciliation breeds peace and harmony between warring parties and it also brings to an end strife between two or more parties (Igboamazu, 2017). To portray peace and togetherness in the nation, he gives insight into knowledge about the gains of peaceful coexistence rather than insecurity. With his mastery of the traditional carving technique the student’s three heads entwined together. The heads are made to represent the three major groups in Nigeria. While the one on the right represents the Hausa of the North because of the cap, the one on the left represents the Yoruba in the west. Akor used the long Yoruba cap and facial scarification to portray the Yoruba ethnic group. Whereas the hidden frontal figure with long woolen Nigeria. The young student hid the Igbo ethnic representation because to him the Igbos are inconspicuous in the issue of the nation’s leadership. In fact, the unity and balance portrayed in the work is symbolic in turning the present insecurity situation into a symbolic form for future peaceful resolutions.

3.4 Internally Displaced Person — Unknown Artist

In the sculpture garden of the Department of Fine and Applied Arts Department, Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education is a free — standing sculpture of an internally displaced victim Figure 7. The work was made 1980 as students group project. Of a fact, hunger, insecurity and uncertainties of the time may have inspired the making of the work. According to Ogu and Ndebilie (2017) “kidnapping and sometimes resultant maiming of the victim has become the order of the day in South East and South — South parts of Nigeria”. To reflect insecurity as menacing challenge that faces society. The sculpture portrays in realistic form, a frail weak looking internally displaced person. It gives insight into knowledge about the plight of victims of insecurity. The sculpture had a mat on the left hand and a bowl on the right hand with the figure looking unkempt.



Figure 7.

The significance of the sculpture is explainable. Bowl is a container for holding food and water, in this sculpture it symbolizes severe hunger which the internally displaced persons experience because of incessant insecurity. While the mat which the male figure is carrying was creatively incorporated in the sculpture to make a resonating artistic statement about the constant movements embarked by internally displaced persons. Highlighted in this sculpture is the hopelessness and frustrations portrayed on the emaciated face of the male sculpture figure. In fact, the expressive forward looking face portrayed dejection, futility and expectations for peace to reign. It implies that apart from creating for aesthetic appreciation, the sculptures explored subjects that are

domiciled in other disciplines. In visual form issues were raised on varied areas in order disciplines and attempts were made to solve the problems using art practice methodologies.

4. Conclusion

Sculpture and space play important role as the basic concepts in interdisciplinary studies. In the multidisciplinary fields such as; social sciences, sciences, humanities, art and architecture sculpture and space relate to give insight into knowledge. The reason is because sculpture and space possess physical engagements.

While engaging space sculpture impacts on the study of some courses such as; history, religion, social studies and religion by creating three dimensional objects which enhance teaching and learning. In some Nigerian higher institutions are some sculptures which are made to engage space. Some of the sculptures intersect with space to inspire search for visual information which encourage visual knowing and research.

In effect most of the students’ sculptures analyzed reveal insight on visual realities in the area of environmental context and it’s challenges. While some of the sculptures give insight into social — cultural interactions about space, the works dialogued with insecurity, migration and conflict resolutions. The works discussed therefore blurred their aesthetic significance and revealed knowledge that is useful in the study of other disciplines.

In conclusion exploration of sculpture to transform space, provides critical thinking and solutions in solving research problems in order disciplines. It creates new knowledge which expands the boundaries of interdisciplinary studies.

5. Recommendations

- Considering the significance of sculpture in interdisciplinary studies, higher institutions offering sculpture programme can encourage the creation of sculpture by providing funds and space for the project.
- Regular sculpture exhibitions should be held within higher institutions’ spaces to give insight to knowledge about the sculpture works.

Students should be encouraged to borrow sculpture courses to enable them understand the immense knowledge embedded in sculpture works.

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