

Sabastine Ugwuoke's Socio-Political and Environmental Intervention through Artistic Utilization of Waste Materials in Creative Venture

Livinus Kenechi Ngwu & Chikelue Chris Akabuike

Fine and Applied Arts Department, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

kcngwulivinus@hotmail.com

Abstract

The present day technological advancement and its resultant Industrialization have brought about plethora of generated waste, which litter every nook and cranny of the society, there by constituting environmental degradation. There have been ineffectual attempts by the Nigerian Government to checkmate the menace of waste, but its control has remained very daunting. Sequel to that scenario, whatever one does to help mitigate this ugly situation is apt and deserves a resounding praise. It is in that spirit that Sabastine Ugwuoke, a modern sculptor, explores the societal generated waste materials in creating works of art which not only is a way of sanitizing the environment, but the created oeuvre are also employed in highlighting the socio-political misconducts in the nation. This study will scrutinize Sabastine Ugwuoke's waste-to-art activities and expatiate on his utilized detritus, his mode of experimentation and the drive behind his formation of his conceptual framework. It is obvious and incontestable that Sabastine Ugwuoke's waste-to-art venture helps in combating environmental degradation and through its critical evaluation of the influence of governance on the masses, Nigerian political leaders would be more just in their taking of decision which will benefit the society.

Introduction

Sabastine Ibekwe Ugwuoke is endowed with amazing creative ability. His talent unfolded in his early years as a primary school pupil. Sabastine's knack for creativity is expected to have emanated from his maternal lineage, as his uncle Simon Ugwu, a brother to his mother, is greatly creative although not artistically educated. Sabastine Ibekwe Ugwuoke hails from Umachi Enugu-Ezike, Igbo Eze North Local Government Area of Enugu State, Nigeria. He was born in the family of Mr. Cyril Ugwuoke and Mrs. Cecilia Ugwuoke in the year 1975, precisely April 23rd.

Sabastine has profoundly established himself as an academic artist through the acquisition of O.N.D. from Benue State Polytechnic, Ugbokolo; H.N.D. from the Institute of Management and Technology (IMT) Enugu; Bachelor of Arts and Master of Fine Arts, both from University of Nigeria, Nsukka. All the aforementioned programmes were done in the field of art and he had always majored in sculpture. Currently he is undergoing his Ph.D. programme in the University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

Sabastine started exploring waste in his creative adventure in 2009. In an oral interview, he testified that the availability of waste in every nook and cranny makes it unavoidable for all to encounter its immanent presence and those endowed with creative minds are compelled to ruminate about the impact it holds on the environment. "The artist experimenter is a visionary that sees beyond the screen of the

conventional world. He probes his physical medium so relentlessly that something beneath mere appearance is revealed” (Obeagu, 2007: 23). Sabastine as a sculptor conceptually transforms waste he encounters in his immediate environment into works of art through intensive exploration and experimentation. He scrutinizes and makes his choice of media from the plethora of detritus dumped and abandoned by those who only see waste as useless and disturbing. Aina (2007: 26) testifies that there exists variety of media readily available to the twenty-first century artists, because of the level of technological development which has made it possible for assorted industrial goods to be manufactured. Almost all of the manufactured goods are encased in containers which as soon as the goods – being the contents – are exhausted become ostensibly useless and would be thrown away.

Ugwuoke, though an educated artist, was for quite a long time unemployed and had to seek for means of survival in the midst of untold hardship bedeviling Nigeria as an underdeveloped nation. He took solace in the utilization of waste materials in his adventurous creativity, being that conventional art materials and media are too expensive within the country. Waste abound and cost little or nothing in its acquisition and Ugwuoke having discovered it as veritable media for his creativity has been exploring and experimenting with it since 2009 in order to be economically self-reliant. Ugwuoke not only strives for entrepreneurial development but also employs his works in discussing, combating and amending socio-political ill-attitudes as they affect the country. As an entrepreneur, one needs to personally take a workable initiative and meticulously utilize any available resources in favourably productive ways (Ayers and Collinge, 2005: 33). Ugwuoke in 2009 decided to utilize disused objects – which are amply available – in the creation of works of art not just for sale’s purpose, but to educate the masses on the danger of environmental degradation. He also employs it as a way to correct the political leaders in their anti-developmental approaches to governance. The utilization of diverse media in one’s creative venture creates room for one to effectively attend to numerous audiences. It also makes it possible for the artist to satisfactorily achieving many goals, which invariably is a mark of a genius in the field of art (Ikwuemesi, 2010: 25).

No doubt, Sabastine Ugwuoke is awesomely endowed and he has been astute in his creative journey, employing what are ordinarily termed useless in creating art works in order to sustain himself economically, sanitize the environment and encourage good governance for societal development.

Waste as a Menace to the Environment

Any object or a material that has been discarded, thrown away, misplaced, abandoned, deserted, rejected, neglected or forgotten can basically be classified as waste, junk or detritus (Akwele, 2008: 9). Similarly, waste designate materials that have lost their value and are therefore regarded as useless and unwanted, which are due to be discarded or disposed (Asogwa et al, 2013: 1). Waste materials ordinarily are viewed as disturbing, obstructing and/or polluting the environment and consequently are discarded, thrown away, burnt or buried all in an attempt to sanitize the defiled environs.

Waste availability is in all the nooks and crannies of the environment and one effortlessly can locate them right in front of one’s residence (Akwele, 2008: 10). There are avalanche of detritus at homes, parks, market places, mechanic villages,

ceremonial halls, school premises and a host of other areas where human beings stay or dwell. The presence of waste in the various aforementioned locations is always very worrisome and their management often proves to be daunting and tiring. “Waste management has become a major issue in most countries of the world, particularly in the developing countries where waste disposal and management has become intractable” (Adewunmi, 2005: 1). There are very infinitesimal developed nations that have successfully mapped out workable strategies for waste management. Nigeria as a third world nation is ineptly combating the daily amply generated waste materials within the country to no avail.

Since government effort is yielding no remarkable result in the management of waste in Nigeria, the onus then lies on every good spirited individual and non-governmental organization to contribute their quota in subjugating this menace. Sequel to this scenario, Sabastine Ugwuoke’s exploration of waste for artistic creativity is apt and applaudable. In the world today, waste generation can only be managed and cannot be put to an end. Based on this, all hands should be on deck to create functional means of sanitizing the environment in order to prevent it from pitiable degenerating degradation. Industrialization and urbanization highly evident in the world over have greatly encouraged waste generation (Adewunmi, 2005: 1). Similarly, Asogwa et al (2013: 1) highlight that waste generation comes as a result of human interactions with his inhabiting environment, and its generation has frequently been on the increase as a result of global population growth, amazing technological advancement and its resultant urbanization as well as industrialization.

As the generation of waste increases, its management becomes more problematic and its availability continues to be a nagging threat to the environment. Ojabor (2008: 2) points out, as it concerns Nigerian situation, that “in most cities, the poor management of waste has constituted seismic health, social and financial challenges.” So, the move by artists to skillfully explore and convert these societal disturbing elements into beneficial works of art is a grand praiseworthy venture. It is this crusade that Sabastine Ugwuoke has joined in an attempt to mitigate the menace of waste in the environment. He also uses the same works in educating the citizenry to be conscious of their manner of handling waste which might deteriorate the condition of the environment and with the same artistic practice critique governmental attitude towards the society, for a better socio-political development. This kind of practice demands one’s ability to see beyond the ordinary and be enterprising in one’s creative undertaking. “The artist as a creative being is imbued with the ability to transform anything he chooses as his thematic medium. The only limitation to his ability is the inability to see beyond his everyday medium” (Obeagu, 2007: 25). Therefore, with the innate ability bestowed on the artist, he can choose, manipulate, transform and create breathtaking works of art with the seemingly belittled detritus. No doubt, waste-to-art practice is a means of fighting against the influx of waste in the environment. Dackey (2008: 51) commends that as the world becomes more populated and the generation of waste becomes more intense, recycling art is a welcome development as it can to a large extent help in subduing the negative effect of waste in the environment.

The availability of waste is of great benefit to the waste-to-art practitioners in the world today as its acquisition is cheap and it is a worldwide acceptable medium of expression in modern art circle. Ablefonlin (2008: 57) testifies that recycling art

offers the artists cheap materials useful in their artistic creativity and not only that; it is also a reliable solution to the issue of environmental pollution in this era of climatic change. It is the activities of man that adversely affect the environment which lead to climatic change, global warming or the greenhouse effect. Waste generation and application of wrong ways of managing it – through burning or other negative methods – have posed an untold threat to the peaceful continuous existence of the earth and its inhabitants. It has become very imperative for man to seek effective and harmless ways of managing the continuously amply generated waste, if the secure continuous existence of the globe is to be guaranteed. “In the world where the reality of global warming has become real ... protection of the natural environment through proper ways of disposing industrial waste has become very pressing” (Nzewi, 2008: 6). Sabastine Ugwuoke’s creation of works of art through exploring, experimenting, manipulating, recycling and transforming societal disturbing debris into ornamentally friendly objects is really a step in the right direction.

Though the objectives of Ugwuoke’s creative venture is multifaceted, the concept of educating both the literate and illiterate members of the Nigerian populace – through their encounter with his astute, meticulously created oeuvre – on the prejudicial nature of waste to the environment is of immeasurable benefit. Nzewi (2008: 6) laments that “it is troubling that despite the reality of climatic change, the rhetoric of global warming is yet to make an in-road into public consciousness in Nigeria”. The level of illiteracy, poverty and hunger is alarming and majority of the people battling with these monsters care much less about their personal health conditions not to talk about the condition of the environment. Sequel to this scenario, it is advisable that many more artists should be encouraged to join Sabastine Ugwuoke, and few others already in the field of waste-to-art practice, in this noble campaign of contributing positively towards sanitizing the environment and developing the societal socio-political structure.

Waste as a Medium of Artistic expression

Modern artists employ whatever they think appropriate in their attempt to conceptually delineate the reality of the modern world as it affects man’s existence. “The change of man and that of his environment for the better entails restructuring what obtains to suit man’s desire and promote survival by achieving economic independence” (Agbo, 2004: 50). It is that same drive, as eloquently enunciated by Agbo above, that gave Sabastine Ugwuoke the impetus to explore waste – ordinarily seen as useless – to the benefit of man and his environment. Modern art offers its practitioners limitless freedom of expression. It creates room for the artists to profoundly utilize plethora of media including junk, debris, detritus or waste materials, as they may be called. They employ the above mentioned media in the creation of groundbreaking art works in an attempt to express various ideological frameworks depending on one’s view of the universal cosmology. Araeen (2010: 277) opines that “the activities in life, which consist the obtainable history, are made up of both exotic and realistic happenings within a given vicinity and the onus lies on man to employ his imaginative ability in utilizing them to his advantage. No culture is static and changes witnessed in a particular culture may be as a result of borrowed ideology or it may be organically motivated.”

Waste materials' utilization in Nigeria as viable media for artistic creativity has element of foreign influence considering the global modern art practice and it is also organic based on what the change in the society has offered the artist. Just as the Zaria Art Society, that led the foundation of a truly modern Nigerian art, synthesized the cultural artistic ideology and that of the Western colonist to establish a peculiar art style that was culturally specific, Sabastine Ugwuoke is exploring the available waste materials within the local environment to create groundbreaking works of art while focusing on global modern artistic standard. This meticulous utilization of local media to create globally standard works makes it possible for Ugwuoke's oeuvre to be culturally peculiar without being parochial. Ugwuoke's waste-to-art products appear creatively original, culturally relevant and globally standard, just like the coat that Zaria Art Society's creation wore modern Nigerian art at its inception. "Zarianism is a philosophy of creative revolt, artistic pride, standard, originality, art intellectualization, experimentation and liberty" (Oloidi, 1998: 34 – 38). The creative venture of Sabastine Ugwuoke using detritus epitomizes the spirit behind the motivation of Zaria Art school creative campaign.

The modern world's realities can be very well described creatively using diverse available media brought about by modern technological advancement and its resultant varied productivity. Most of the industrial products are aesthetically packaged in graphically designed containers that become available for the artists' utilization as creative media as soon as the contained contents are exhausted. Such containers are always termed waste by the majority of people, which consequently makes it easy and cheap for the artists to obtain them. Nicodemus (2012: 6) highlights that "an artist normally employs whatever he thinks useful for his creative expression and such exploration is an aspect of his productive decisions." This is a hallmark of what Ugwuoke does in his choice of waste materials as he delves into his adventurous creativity. Waste objects of recent have attracted the attention of practising artists together with art historians and critics (Asogwa et al, 2013: 1). Similarly, Vogel (2010: 50), while describing how El Anatsui got fascinated by a certain waste material, states that "in the milk-tin lids, Anatsui acquired a metal element both sturdy and small enough to form an interestingly flexible sheet when joined. So, different artists make choice of discrete waste materials based on interest and intention.

Waste, found objects, junk or detritus have been preferably chosen by the modern artists instead of the conventional media because they aid creativity and grant freedom to the visual artist's creative process. Modern artists are very much conscious of the fact that orthodoxy and conservatism are arch enemies of creativity (Ikwemesi, 2010: 26). Again (Nzewi, 2005: 2) extensively expatiates that:

As a creative process, recycling or working with recyclable materials is an engaging exercise that challenges the creative depth of the artist as well as his intellect. It also exposes new modes or ways of engaging media or materials that are not exactly the typical conventional art media This attempt contributes additional verve, new opportunities and innovative dimensions to artistic enterprise all of which are the hallmarks of modern art, thus eliminating stiff-necked conventions that are cliché-ridden which trailed visual arts processes in the past.

Waste-to-art practice creates room for unlimited liberty that gives its practitioners the opportunity to express their views about life in practically clear and dynamic manner. A waste-to-art artist has to develop his imaginative ability to enable him articulate his view beyond the ordinary and eloquently express his creative thought so that others can visualize, understand and appreciate his created work of art (Ikenegbu, 2007: 7). In the same sense, Obeagu (2007: 23) testifies that the cognizance that virtually all the available objects can be turned to artistic creative media made him to be more creatively alert. Then he realized that creativity in art is not limited to orthodoxy and that there are ample opportunities to push back the creative frontiers exploring what commoners could have ordinarily christened waste and thrown away.

Besides, globally, diverse artists are really utilizing waste in their productive adventure and Nigeria is not left out. "It is no longer fashionable to bemoan the lack in new media and sophisticated image-making technologies, a deeper view will reveal that Nigerian artists are also drawing from the same pool of techniques, ideas and materials for art production as their counterparts worldwide" (Egonwa, 2015: ix). Nigerian artists are really working hard to be an integral part of the globalized world, creating awesome art works, with the use of trendy media like waste materials and found objects that global modern art utilizes. Some of the contemporary artists in Nigeria who are creatively employing waste in their artistic productivity include El Anatsui, Dilumprizulike (The Junk Man of Africa), Bright Eke, Nnenna Okore, not forgetting Sabnastine Ugwuoke who is used as a reference point in this paper. All the aforementioned artists are contributing remarkably in the development of modern Nigerian art. Ghariokwu (2015: 2) asserts that "Nigerian art has luxuriantly developed with many discrete artistic trends emerging which is an undoubted proof of the versatile and ingenious level of creative ability bestowed on the Nigerian artists."

In the exploration of modern artistic media and the current mode of expression which pay less attention to the creative formalism, modern Nigerian artists are creating in line with what are obtainable globally, even though the present level of societal appreciation of such conceptual works is yet not encouraging in Nigeria. This should not dishearten the waste-to-art practitioners; instead they should be resolute in their productivity since "in modern art, the concern of art could shift from the physical embodiment to the 'art ideas'. It is often assumed that the embodiment itself is no longer of great importance ... works of art are now seen essentially as the map of a thought process" (Odiboh, 2015: 27). Productivity in art should neither be static nor conservative. There should be modification in art to suit the changes being experienced in life, which is always constant. Waste-to-art practitioners should just ensure that issues prompting their conceptualization emanate within the society so that the finished products would harmonize with the societal happenings, which will facilitate appreciation and general acceptance. It is incontrovertible that "art has always been dynamic, addressing the complex yearnings of man. Art is an imponderable thing, a product of the decipherable and sometimes the indescribable. The problem of art is therefore, often hinged on the present and future aspirations of mankind" (Odibo, 2015: 33).

The Use of Works of Art as a Dialogue for Critiquing Socio-Political Agenda

Man differs greatly from other animals, because they live in an organized society. But for man to continuously dwell in a society that is organized, peaceful and

productive, there is an inevitable structure that should be put in place to oversee, moderate and govern man and his activities. That unavoidable structure is politics and to a very large extent, its stability or disorder determines how successful the economy and development of a society would look like. It is this all important societal structure that Sabastine Ugwuoke meticulously and in subtle manner employs his creative ingenuity in modifying and correcting the anomalies bedeviling the system.

Ugwuoke's utilization of his works of art in engaging political matters typifies the politically related intention of the Zaria Art society. Oloidi (1998: 37-38) testifies that the Zaria Art Society imbued in its members political consciousness employing their creative might to influence the socio-cultural realities as it affected the citizenry. The above fact is corroborated by Ademuleya (2003: 153), who proclaims that the fight for political freedom was an ideology so profoundly rooted in the Zaria Art Society's agenda—more than the vaunted cultural synthesis. When artists are committed in political struggle, employing their power of creativity in positively influencing the socio-political happenings, it certainly attracts development. “Development is a process for harnessing and adapting the technology of industrial civilizations to achieve a high standard of living for the masses, through the people's provisions of solutions to problems of poverty, ignorance, disease and food” (Oyebola, 2004: 49). The above clause; *through the people's provisions of solutions to problems of poverty, ignorance ...* captures succinctly what Sabastine Ugwuoke does with his waste-to-art production. He provides solution to unemployment, poverty and political injustice through his works of art created using ordinary waste materials that litter the environment.

Works of art when properly channelled are veritable instruments for combating social-ills, attracting development and ensuring a better society. While contemplating political, religious and economic issues among others in the society artists make use of detritus as creative media to proffer a platform for physical dialogue (Obeagu, 2007: 23). Undeniably, art is really a viable tool for fighting against social injustice, marginalization and ensuring that equity and egalitarianism are guaranteed. Orinolade (2015: 18 – 19) while commenting on Aghana Nwobu's works of art highlights that,

Nwobu is influenced by his view of being from a highly marginalized, exploited and stigmatized society where internal and external forces formed an unholy alliance against the people, leaving them impoverished. His works delve into and sometimes caricature-the social, political and economic situations within society as a means to promulgate a decolonization of orientation and an affront into the challenges of proactive participation in social development.

Political deficiency if not properly addressed could degenerate and breed untold consequences that would be prejudicial to the society. When the government of a given state is not dedicated to the welfare of its citizenry, there are bound to be unemployment, poverty, hunger and perverted attitude, which invariably would culminate to underdevelopment. Okwuolise laments that societal violence, thuggery,

rigging and impersonation are brought about in the society by joblessness among other things. Bad leadership is always the cause of such vice lead to chaos, political turmoil and unrest in the society. It is this ugly situation that well meaning visual artists, like Sabastine Ugwuoke, employ their creative prowess in intervening and subduing the circumstance.

The idea of reflecting the social realities in one's artistic productivity is always a proof of maturity in one's creative journey. It makes an artist's oeuvre to be relevant, congruent, meaningful and understandable in addition to facilitating profound appreciation of his creative works by the society. Ottenberg (2006: 224) comments that "Udechukwu's interests broadened as his art matured. ... He became concerned in his work with social, political and economic problems in all of Nigeria, and at times Africa." Artistic intervention in political matters integrates works of art into a given society, eschews exoticism, aids comprehension and encourages patronage. This situation is normally more beneficial to the artists rather than making the created works to be esoteric. It is pertinent to link artistic discourse with the societal realities that primarily galvanized the creation of the works of art (Araeen, 2010: 280). In support of Araeen's proposition, Kawaguchi (2005: 7) opines that "art is never unconnected to the vivid reality of the world political economy."

Notwithstanding the indifferent or negative reactions of the government towards the artists – which is most expected especially when their works of art is vividly critical against government approaches to governance – they would not be disillusioned, but should persistently continue to do the right things in their effort to positively modify the society. Ikwemesi (2005: 9) regrets that "the most painful aspect of bizarre approach towards art remains the hedonistic attitude which postcolonial African leaders ... have had towards art." The battle for the socio-political development of the Black should continue and aided from all angles and the visual artists should not be left out. Sabastine Ugwuoke is already contributing his own quotes, in his artistic exploration of waste, and many more visual artists are encouraged to join this all important campaign in order to bring about significant societal development.

Waste-to-Art Practice as a Way of Mitigating the Rate of Unemployment

Unemployment for years has remained unabated in Nigeria and it has caused serious setback in the expected development of the nation. Many educated individuals have nothing doing and white-collar job is not easy to come by. It is high time citizens stopped waiting for governmental employment and seek for feasible ways to help themselves and become self-employed. Contextualization of waste into works of art creates reliable opportunity to be self-reliant especially when the works are properly handled to attract patronage. In some East and West African countries, for instance, artists create soft toys, craft works and decorative designs and make them available to tourists who favourably patronize them (Odeh, 2007: 58). This type of individual effort towards creating jobs without governmental assistance is what is presently required in Nigeria these days. This is because "unemployment and dependence on government for sustenance are grave economic problems of Nigeria today" (Ezema, 2004: 3). The glaring unpatriotic hedonism that trails almost all the Nigerian government officials has really dealt a deadly blow to the national economy. Ogbe (1995: 3) laments that the societal situation is getting worse by the day owing to the

ugly economic condition in the country, which has remained unmitigated. It is fundamentally imperative for all the Nigerian citizens within the age of expected active labour force to positively engage in any activity that will help in improving the general condition of the national economy without waiting for the government, just like Sabastine Ugwuoke is doing through his creative conversion of waste into art works. Indeed “the stability of Nigerian economy can be supported and enhanced through many productive activities ranging from the making and production of art works, crafts and the buying and selling of them” (Yahaya, 2004: 250). When all the capable hands are on deck in a nation, productively utilizing the available resources and media in the creation of useful things, the nation would experience remarkable development in all ramifications. Undoubtedly, the committed individual efforts towards becoming self-reliant would invariably mitigate the rate of unemployment in the nation. Yahaya rightly points out that “when unemployment is reduced, the nation develops, which is a foundation for a strong, reliable and stable economy.”

It is pertinent to highlight that for the actualization of self-reliance to be feasible by the waste-to-art entrepreneurs; their products should be meticulously handled. When a work of art is properly finished, it attracts positive reactions from the viewers, who are the possible patrons. The expected qualities of the perfectly finished work are marketability, functionality and acceptability (Egwuibe, 2007: 70). The importance of entrepreneurial skill acquisition cannot be over-emphasized as far as the development of a nation is concerned. “Countries tap the creative potentials of entrepreneurs in order to improve the value they get from other resources” (Ayers and Collinge, 2005: 33). Waste-to-art practitioners should work very hard in line with the societal problems, needs and demands in order to ensure that their products are essentially useful. When waste-to-art production is effectively channeled and the accruing benefits become very remarkable, many more artists would be encouraged to join the venture and the society no doubt would be better for it. Ayers and Collinge assert that “labour force participation and job creation depends on each other” (2005: 146). In the conversion of debris into art works, care should be taken to ensure that the creation is not haphazardly done. The production should be skillfully manipulated in order to attain a desirable result. When inept skill is employed in an attempt to transform waste materials into works of art, the end result would invariably be a reshaped waste, which would sooner or later be thrown away. Such creation would neither be appreciated nor patronized and consequently would not provide any solution to unemployment. Agbo (2004: 50) avers that the attainment of economic independent is feasible when practical and applied skills are acquired, which make it possible for an artist to comfortably practice and survive economically in absence of employment from the government.

Unemployment is too frustrating especially when it has a strong grip on the economy of any given nation. It perpetuates under-development, cripples the labour force and breeds countless vice that destabilize peace in the nation. “One of the major characteristics of under-development is poverty caused by unemployment of citizens” (Agbo, 2004: 53). Okwuolise corroborate Agbo’s propositions stating that “unemployment and poverty are phenomena that can rock a people, generate political indifference, polity diffidence and socio-economic insecurity”. Whatever the government of a nation in addition to non-governmental organizations and individuals can do to curb the rate of unemployment is undeniably a step towards positive

development of the country and should be encouraged. The creation of waste-to-art works as practiced by Sabastine Ugwuoke, which is channeled towards economic enrichment, should be profoundly appreciated, encouraged and promoted in order to reduce the rate of unemployment in the nation.

Waste-to-Art Practice as a Means of Checkmating Environmental Degradation

The environment at its creation was pure, uncontaminated and whole. Unfortunately, it is man, for whom the environment was created, who damages and degrades it. So many activities of man, especially the unprecedented industrialization brought about by technological advancement have element of negative influence on the environment. Sequel to this scenario, it is imperative that man should devise effective and efficient ways of handling the environment in order to protect and preserve it from the menace of waste and other harmful activities.

Numerous artists globally have been artistically utilizing the generated waste in their vicinities to create art works and by so doing contribute in keeping the environment well sanitized. Not only that, through the visual knowledge and information disseminated as the created works of art are being observed by the viewers, they are made to have the cognizance of the danger waste materials pose to the environment and therefore be more conscious of how they handle them (Buhari, 2007: 4). When waste materials are disposed indiscriminately, they become prejudicial to the environment. But, when they are appropriately handled and harnessed for the benefit of man, they become useful resources to aid man and his well-being. It is in line with judicious utilization of waste materials that Sabastine Ugwuoke and other waste-to-art artists have creatively and skilfully employed the societal generated detritus in creation of works of art through transformation or recycling. "As many new resources and waste materials become available and in abundant, many new life realities unfold and become eminent and the artist continues to adjust in search of better ways of factoring these new realities into his expression and presentations" (Anidi, 2007: 20).

In the artists' quest to be realistic in their creation, they absorb new media evident in this current era and also employ unconventional mode of expression that suits the ever evolving nature of today's global realities. Artists have been intensively recycling and transforming waste materials, which are incontrovertibly positive ways of waste management. Recycling which entails the re-use of an earlier used and abandoned material, in order to recreate a related functional object is a lasting solution as far as the management of waste is concerned (Adewunmi, 2005: 1). In waste objects' transformation, artists utilize their chosen waste materials and completely change their nature in such a manner that their present appearance and function have no link with their initial characteristics. Whether recycling or transformation, both are genuine means of managing waste and by so doing save the environment from injurious degradation.

Nzewi (2008: 6) highlights that "the new Global Green Resolution is invested in safeguarding the environment by providing new ways of reducing industrial waste and pollution." Waste-to-art practice is harmonious with the above Global Green Resolution and its continuity should be encouraged and supported. Developed nations have taken more of all encompassing measures to checkmate the menace of waste. For instance, "in Japan measures take to control waste include the Receptacle

Packaging Recycle Law, which places the responsibility for recycling polyethylene, bottle, glasses, papers and plastic packaging on manufacturers” (Adewanmi, 2005: 1). For underdeveloped nations like Nigeria, where the government is not doing enough to effectively sanitize the environment, waste-to-art practice becomes a very applaudable development. It is a welcome development because it not only utilizes the generated waste materials as media of artistic creation but also educates and conscientizes the masses on how to manage waste and safeguard the environment. For successful education of the citizenry to be guaranteed on how to maintain the environment and protect it from the hazardous effect of waste, waste-to-art practitioners should be fastidious in their creativity, in order to ensure the attractiveness of their works. Udentia (2008: 30) admonishes that since the exploration of waste, through recycling or conversion for the creation of objects of beauty is the fundamental aim of waste-to-art practice, the artists involved should make sure that their created works are significantly meaningful and not just waste in disguised form. When the produced works are fascinating, the masses will be enticed and can easily absorb the message being passed across and vice versa. The environment is an unavoidable instrument of human dwelling and existence. It should be protected, safeguarded and rejuvenated for man’s safety and harmless living.

Societal Generated Waste Materials as Artistic Media



Plate 1: Empty Can Drinks. © Sabastine Ugwuoke



Plate 2: Used Printing Plates. © Sabastine Ugwuoke

The Artist at Work



Plate 3: Cutting and Perforation of the Waste Media. © Sabastine Ugwuoke



Plate 4: Joining of the Perforated Units. © Sabastine Ugwuoke

Some Created Works of Art by the Artist, Ugwuoke Sabastine



Plate 5, Title: Tolo-Tolo (2014), Media (wood, used printing plates, empty can drinks)
Size: 120 x 75 x 25cm (approx.) © Sabastine Ugwuoke



Plate 6. Title: No Rest, No Comfort, Confusion Everywhere; Media (toothpick, nails, foam, bamboo, used printing plates and planks) © Sabastine Ugwuoke



Plate 7. Title: Struggle for Survival (2014), Media (cylindrical strawboard, used print plates) Size: 135 x 46cm (approx.) © Sabastine Ugwuoke



Plate 8. Title: Broken Basket (2015), Media: (used printing plates), Size: 240x125(approx.)
© Sabastine Ugwuoke

The Relativity of Sabastine Ugwuoke's Waste-to-Art Creation to the Socio-Political and Environmental Factors in Nigeria and Africa in General

The elegant fascinating waste-to-art product by Sabastine Ugwuoke as shown in fig. V is created through the exploration of used printing plate, empty can drinks and woods. The three woods which barely serve as the skeleton supporting the structure of the work are firmly mounted on wooden bases. The central wood is taller than the two others at the right and left flanks creating a pyramidal elegant form and an undoubted symmetric balance befitting the piece. Cut and perforated units from the utilized waste media were neatly piled into rows which hang in an undulating format lending the work a look of royalty, elegance and elevated status. This work is metaphorically titled *Tolo Tolo*—which is the native name of turkey in Igbo—because of the unabated braggadocio inherent in the bird. Turkey's character is synonymous to the overwhelming personal aggrandizement that imbues Nigerian political leaders with arrogant pomposity, which derails their attention from rendering worthwhile services to the nation. Most African political leaders develop insatiable quest for wealth acquisition, luring them into the embezzlement of public funds. They employ the loot for their personal used, building mansions and riding exotic cars, while the masses are wallowing in abject poverty.

Sabastine uses his ingenious creativity to bring this ugly situation to the fore, and it is hoped that the leaders should be more patriotic in their discharge of duties, for the betterment of the nation.

Fig. VI entitled *No Rest, No Comfort, Confusion Everywhere* is produced with eclectic media; embracing toothpicks, nails, foam, bamboo, planks, sheets of plywood and used printing plates. These multitudinous materials were employed in the creation of a bed-like structure and walls surrounding the bed, which signify home. The planks and the plywood were used to construct the bed and the walls. On top of the bed lay foam and two pillows. The whole parts of the bed and the walls are decoratively covered with the multiple toothpicks and countless nails all in jagged form. This

ostensible ornamental decoration makes it practically impossible for any human to either lie on the bed or lean on the walls. So, this artistically created room is quite uninhabitable.

This scenario depicts the worrisome insecurity that most parts of Nigeria are bedeviled with. Nigeria—which should be a protective home for Nigerians—has been turned into a war zone owing to the activities of *Boko Haram Insurgency*, *Fulani Herds Men*, *Niger Delta Militants* and other obnoxious activities in the country. Hardly can anyone sleep with his two eyes closed because of the fear of the unknown. Numerous lives, property and other valuables have been lost and the nation has been thrown into serious crises. Indeed, peace and tranquility have eluded Nigeria despite the abundant human and natural resource bestowed to the country by the divine providence. There is no rest, no comfort and confusion is everywhere.

Nigerians should eschew violence, love one another and live together in peace and harmony. That is the essence of this artistic creativity by Sabastine Ugwuoke.

Moreover, the fig. VII titled *Struggle* is another politically induced artistic productivity. Ugwuoke utilized cylindrical strawboards and waste printing plates in this creation. In the work, there is a pole-like figure produced out of cylindrical strawboard covered with used printing plates, which measures up to 135cm high. There are other multiple short cylindrical structures, which none measures up to 15cm—showing a glaring remarkable disparity between the height of the towering standing pole-like figure and those of the other dwarf cylindrical structures sprawling on the floor. The towering figure represents the governing class, while the sprawling forms stand for the masses.

The governments in most African countries are usually inaccessible by the commoners, who daily struggle under the scorching sun perspiring to obtain their sustainable meals. The masses' pitiable state is normally not felt by the leaders, who with their fat constitutionally approved remuneration and the wealth cleverly stolen incessantly—ordinarily with the use of pen and paper—can always afford to live luxuriantly as much as they desire. This irritating socio-political condition in Africa has grossly hampered development and impeded progress in all ramifications.

For Africa to develop as a continent, their leaders must detest greed, embrace patriotism, examine the situations on ground and seek for positive means of carrying everybody along.

Broken basket as illustrated in fig. VIII typifies the unhealthy environmental condition of Nigeria. Its medium of creation is used printing plates. Ugwuoke meticulously cut the used printing plates into tiny units and skillfully combined them together into a unified whole. The daunting task of cutting the medium into tiny units, followed by the fastidious amalgamation of the plethora of units into a single work of art is an indication of Ugwuoke's stick-to-itiveness in his artistic adventure.

The created structure is haphazardly folded to give a seeming resemblance of a heap of rubbish. Heaps of detritus are common sites in Nigeria—a nation where the management of waste is an uphill task. Like a broken basket that litters whatever is put in it, Nigerians' attitude towards waste management, government and citizens alike, is too appalling to the extent that the entire environment is suffocating with waste materials littered in all the nooks and crannies.

Ugwuoke's aim of creating this art piece is to draw the attention of Nigerians to the importance of proper waste management and to highlight how prejudicial poor management of waste would be to the nation.

Conclusion

The artists as bona fide members of the society should always strive to contribute to the societal progress and development. This they can successfully achieve through their endowed creativity, just like Sabastine Ugwuoke is working assiduously exploring and experimenting with the societal disturbing generated waste and artistically converting them into aesthetically beneficial works of art for the betterment of the society. Ugwuoke does whatever it takes to transform his chosen waste materials into attractive objects of art, which then pave way for him to entice the masses and conscientize them on issues regarding waste management. Ikenegbu (2007: 9) expatiates on the doggedness of artists while engaging in their works' creation processes, stating that "the artist bends, lifts, carries, drags, and pushes material around, digs at it with tools, walks around it again and again to see it from different perspectives, trying to break its resistance to change."

As waste-to-art artists strive to conceptualize and create objects of beauty from common detritus, they should ensure that the societal realities are what drive their creativity. Sabastine's mode of creation which is basically targeted towards sanitizing the environment and significantly correcting political misconducts, typifies the exemplary mode of operation that is expected of other waste-to-art practitioners. Ogbu (2007: 17) avers that societal expectations, especially the views of those interested in patronizing artistic works, should be given significant consideration while producing works of art. Works of art have to be congruent with its place of production as it concerns the social, religious, economic, educational, political and/or environmental factors. That would facilitate appreciation from the viewers who would understand and critique the works.

Waste-to-art practice is a welcome development in the field of art as it brought about a paradigm shift, creating room for groundbreaking creativity. There is ample availability of waste materials and they can be found, collected and used by the artists without much financial involvement in the production processes. The artists have the opportunities of choosing from the plethora of detritus available in all locations in the society and through their creative ingenuity produce works of immeasurable values through meticulous transformation of the chosen waste materials. Aina (2007: 26) testifies that "there are wide ranges of materials/waste from which an artist can create."

Finally, more creative artists are required to join Sabastine Ugwuoke and few others who are already doing marvelously well in the conversion of waste into aesthetic works of art. Attention should be paid to the societal problems so that the produced works should serve as medium of enlightenment to both the leaders and the masses. This task is only attainable when the created works are worthwhile and have the capacity of attracting people's attention.

References

- Ablefonlin, F. (2008) "Waste-to-Art in Benin Republic." *Art-Is-Everywhere 7. International Waste-to-Art Catalogue*, edited by Ayo Adewunmi, Enugu" Timex Press.
- Ademuleya, B. (2003) "Synthesis: Between Onabolu, Enwonwu and the Zarianists." *The Triumph of a Vision*, edited by Chuu Krydz Ikwuemesi. Lagos: Pendulum Art Gallery.
- Adewunmi, A. (2005) "Building a Culture of Recycling." *Art-Is-Everywhere Workshop and Exhibition of Recycled Objects*, 1 April – May Catalogue. Enugu: Pearls and Gold.
- Agbo, C. (2004) "The Role of Vocational Technical Education in National Development" *Introduction to Vocational Education*, Enugu: OZYBEL Publishers.
- Aina, A. (2007) "The Strength of Mixed Media." *Creative Art and Design. Recycling, Mixed Media, Installation, Casting, Wood, Metal and Glass Designs. Lectures and Products of Art-Is-Everywhere, Waste-to-Art Recycling Workshops*, organized by Ayo Adewunmi, Enugu: Timex Press.
- Akwele, S. (2008) "From Found Objects to Beads." *Art-Is-Everywhere 7 International Waste- to-Art Workshop Catalogue*, edited by Ayo Adewunmi, Timex Press.
- Anidi, O. (2007) "Mixed Media in Art Today." *Creative Art and Design. Recycling, Mixed Media, Installation, Casting, Wood, Metal and Glass Designs. Lectures and Products of Art-Is-Everywhere, Waste-to-Art Recycling Workshops*, organized by Ayo Adewunmi, Enugu: Timex Press.
- Araeen, R. (2010) "Modernity, Modernism and Africa's Authentic Voice." *Third Text Critical Perspective on Contemporary Art and Culture. Beyond Negritude Senghor's Vision for Africa*, New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group.
- Asogwa, O.; Olajide, M.; Jide, A. and Fajuyigbe, M. (2013) "Beauty from Detritus: Aestheticizing Discards in the Visual Arts." *Art Design Studies*, New York: Color Works Service Limited, Vol. 12.
- Ayers, R. and Collinge, R. (2005) *Economics Explore and Apply*, enhanced edition, New York: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- Buhari, J. (2007) *Creative Art and Design. Recycling, Mixed Media, Installation, Casting, Wood, Metal and Glass Designs. Lectures and Products of Art-Is-Everywhere, Waste-to-Art Recycling Workshops*, organized by Ayo Adewunmi, Enugu: Timex Press.

- Dackey, E. (2008) "Recycling Art in Togo." *Art-Is-Everywhere 7. International Waste-to-Art Catalogue*, edited by Ayo Adewunmi, Enugu: Timex Press.
- Egonwa, O. (2015) *Issues in Contemporary Nigerian Art 2000 – 2010*, conceived and compiled by Juliet Ezenwa Maja-Pearce, Lagos: The New Gong,
- Egwuibe, E. (2007) "Finishing Well for the End User." *Creative Art and Design. Recycling, Mixed Media, Installation, Casting, Wood, Metal and Glass Designs. Lectures and Products of Art-Is-Everywhere, Waste-to-Art Recycling Workshops*, organized by Ayo Adewunmi, Enugu: Timex Press.
- Ezema, P. (2004) *Introduction to Vocational Education*, Enugu: OZYBEL Publishers.
- Ghariokwu, L. (2015) "Art as Visual Expression of the Undying Soul of a People." *Issues in Contemporary Nigerian Art 2000 – 2010*, conceived and compiled by Juliet Ezenwa Maja-Pearce, Lagos: The New Gong.
- Ikenegbu, O. (2007) "Where Is Art?" *Creative Art and Design. Recycling, Mixed Media, Installation, Casting, Wood, Metal and Glass Designs. Lectures and Products of Art-Is-Everywhere, Waste-to-Art Recycling Workshops*, organized by Ayo Adewunmi, Enugu: Timex Press.
- Ikwuemesi, K. (2010) *Re-Reading Uche Okeke Pioneer Works New Insights*, edited by Chuu Krydz Ikwuemesi, Enugu: Art Republic in association with the Peter Areh Fund for Cultural Enterprise.
- Ikwuemesi, K. (2005) "African Art in the New Millennium: From Playground of Fancy to the Promised Land." *Symposium Africa 2001, Representing African Art and Cultures*, edited by Yukiya Kawaguchi and Kenji Yoshida, Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology.
- Kawaguchi, Y. (2005) "After the Banquet: African Art since 1989." *Symposium Africa 2001, Representing African Art and Cultures*, Osaka: edited by Yukiya Kawaguchi and Kenji Yoshida, National Museum of Ethnology.
- Nicodemus, E. (2012) *The 2nd Peter Areh Lecture on Art and Cultural Enterprise*, Enugu: The Art Republic (Centre for Arts and Cultural Democracy) and the Peter Areh Fund for Culture and Development (PETAFund).
- Nzewi, U. (2008) "Art-Is-Everywhere 2008 and the Challenge of Continuity" *Art-Is-Everywhere 6*. Enugu: *Waste-to-Art Workshop Journal*, edited by Ayo Adewunmi. Timex Press.
- Nzewi, U. (2005) "Re-cyclable Art: Exploring a Creative Frontier." *Art-Is-Everywhere Workshop and Exhibition of Recycled Objects*, Enugu: 1 April – May Catalogue, Pearls and Gold.

- Obeagu, C. (2007) "From Waste to Taste: A World of Diverse Possibilities." *Creative Art and Design. Recycling, Mixed Media, Installation, Casting, Wood, Metal and Glass Designs. Lectures and Products of Art-Is-Everywhere, Waste-to-Art Recycling Workshops*, Enugu: organized by Ayo Adewunmi, Timex Press.
- Odeh, T. (2007) "Waste from Textiles as a Resource Material for Creative Arts." *Creative Art and Design. Recycling, Mixed Media, Installation, Casting, Wood, Metal and Glass Designs. Lectures and Products of Art-Is-Everywhere, Waste-to-Art Recycling Workshops*, Enugu: organized by Ayo Adewunmi, Timex Press.
- Odiboh, F. (2015) "International Trends and Modern Nigerian Art: Instructions for the 21st Century." *Issues in Contemporary Nigerian Art 2000 – 2010*, conceived and compiled by Juliet Ezenwa Maja-Pearce, The New Gong.
- Ogbe, G. (1995) *Fundamentals of Literature*, Enugu: John Best Publishers
- Ogbu, S. (2007) "Creating with Materials, Form, Nature and Environment." *Creative Art and Design. Recycling, Mixed Media, Installation, Casting, Wood, Metal and Glass Designs. Lectures and Products of Art-Is-Everywhere, Waste-to-Art Recycling Workshops*, organized by Ayo Adewunmi, Enugu: Timex Press.
- Ojabor, I. (2008) "The Innovation of Recycling." *Art-Is-Everywhere 6. Waste-to-Art Workshop Journal*, edited by Ayo Adewunmi. Enugu: Timex Press.
- Okwuolise, Godwin. *Art Education in Visual Art and Democratic Nigeria*. A paper presented at a conference organized by the Faculty of Education, Enugu State University of Science and Technology, February, 12th – 15th.
- Oloidi, O. (1998) "Zarianism: The Crusading Spirit of a Revolution in Nigeria." *The Zaria Art Society a New Consciousness*, edited by Chike Dike et al, Lagos: National Gallery of Art.
- Ottenberg, S. (2006) *Igbo Art and Culture and Other Essay*, edited by Toyin Falola, Trenton: Africa World Press.
- Oyebola, A. (1976) *Blackman*, Lagos: Board Publications Ltd,
- Udenta, F. (2008) "Packaging and Presentation of Artworks for Higher Value." *Art-Is-Everywhere 6. Waste-to-Art Workshop Journal*, edited by Ayo Adewunmi. Enugu: Timex Press,
- Vogel, S. (2010) *El Anatsui Art and Life*. London: PRESTEL.
- Yahaya, M. (2004) "The Prospects of Vocational Visual Art Education in Nigeria." *Introduction to Vocational Education*, Enugu: OZYBEL Publishers.