

Harnessing the Aesthetic Potentials of Textile Wastes for Interior Decoration

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Abstract

This research delves into the possible experimentation that could contribute to the massive use of textile waste materials and incorporating its value for visual art aesthetics (both aesthetically and utilitarian). It also highlights systemic efficiencies and inefficiencies in textile waste recovery and recycling efforts that could assist in environmental sustainability through waste-to-art process. The process in this study is hoped to increase both input and output benefits to the recycle system. This will no doubt reduce textile wastes in landfills. Although textile and apparel products serve important function in society, like many products designed for consumption and use, there is an end of life disposal process that is inevitable, hence, textile wastes are continually generated in great quantities. The possibility to explore avenues to harness the aesthetic potentials of textile waste for interior decoration is an imperative. Literature review and studio experimentation form part of the researcher's methodology for the study. Finally, the research proffers possible solutions necessary for the growth of waste market and the need to harness the inherent economic and environmental benefits.

Key words: Environment, wastes, recycling, reusing, aesthetics, exploration and adaptation.

Introduction

The generation of textile waste is fast growing in landfills which have posed great concern to many in the society. A writer Diaz, (2006), noted that wastes such as textile wastes are materials which are regarded as unwanted, unusable materials and are discarded after primary use. They are therefore regarded as worthless, defective and of no use. These textile wastes include piles of fabric scraps, off cuts from textile material which are generated from apparel industries after production. Ekostrom and Salomonson, (2014) suggested that "both reuse and recycle of clothing and textile are under-researched areas and that more information is needed on how reuse and recycling can be utilized by different stakeholders in the society." This study therefore highlights the system of recovering apparel and textile waste in efforts to recuperate their economic value and reduce the environmental impacts to landfill disposal of these materials. There is better understanding of how textile wastes are processed within the textile recycling system through exploration and adaptive processes. The exploration and adaptive processes of these textile wastes was used by the researcher for the purpose of harnessing their aesthetic and utility values of these textile wastes for interior decoration. This will make the society become more accountable for the

textile wastes it generates. It will also encourage the decreased dependency of foreign imports of second hand clothing and other degraded textile materials.

Clothing on the body is a tool that communicates identity, value, beliefs, social status and aspiration. Its value is used for protection, movement through different environments and group structures. However the apparel industry faces challenges that after consumption and use of these apparels, there is an end of life disposal process that is unavoidable. (Newell, 2015). Also McDonough and Braungart, (2013) suggested that 'clothing as one of the consumer products in fashion system at any given time has a limited life span and subsequently disposed of as waste or unserviceable textile waste.' Although the fashion system continuously introduces new models of desirable goods while it promotes obsolescence of old items, the environmental consequences of increasing waste streams has become an important and turbulent issue of this recent time. The findings of Warkins, (1995) have shown that textile waste provides an opportunity to observe the much wasteful behaviour of both apparel consumers and the fashion industry. However, through exploration and adaptive processes of the textile wastes, one must consider how the materials and the textile waste products came to be in the waste streams and their extent of degradation.

Hawley, (2000) noted that the landfill disposal of textile waste contribute to gas emission which is viewed by advocates of recycling as a missed opportunity for recovering valuable materials. This is because these economic resources can put back the use through re-use, and recycling processes. Re-use and recycling processes refer to the use of an item or material for purpose different from its original functional purpose(s). These were achieved through studio experimentation process which is aimed at devising new ideas, new media, new materials and creative approaches in confronting the ever challenging needs of waste management. In studio experimentation, Gushem, (2014) sees the process as breaking barriers in the transformation of ideas into visual forms. However, in the objective of this study, the researcher showcased creative approaches through various exploration processes, adapting various textile and non-textile wastes alike during studio experimentation. The production processes are seen in many stages and transformations, ranging from realism and abstraction, assemblages to installation for various end uses. The possibilities of the exploration and adaptive processes seemed endless as one can undergo inventively from one medium to another.

Recovery of textile wastes as a positive resource for environmental protection

In Enugu State, for an example, there is high population rate in Enugu urban than in rural areas. In urban areas, there is high consumption and disposal rate of textile waste materials. According to Enugu State Environment Protection Agency (ESWAMA), (2008) report which noted that rubber, leather and textile materials are often used in clothing, shoes and accessories make up to 8.7% of municipal solid wastes generated in Enugu Metropolis. Although re-use and recycling of used clothing and other textile materials represent part of the solution for textile wastes. Ultimately, there is underlying problem of over consumption which has an effect on

the environment and needs to be addressed through altering people's lifestyle and consumption pattern. (ESWAMA, 2008).

Textiles are used widely in the design of items to support basic human needs. They are clothing, accessories, shoes, linens, towels and other house hold items which are produced for aesthetic and utility functions and are eventually disposed of. Joung and Park-Poaps, (2013) found out that "these unserviceable textile materials contribute to the growing stream of post-consumer textile waste. In addition to post-consumer textile waste, pre-consumer textile waste is generated by industrial production and manufacturing outfits." Hence, the overall apparel industry contributes both pre-consumer and post-consumer textile wastes. Warkins, (1995) also suggested that "textile waste is entering municipal solid waste streams in growing numbers, posing new challenges for communities and municipalities in its handling and disposal." Although, clothing is not the only form of textiles entering landfill, no research has successfully analyzed this number into categories of textile waste and this statistic is frequently framed exclusively in context of post-consumer clothing disposal. Dumina and Koch, (2009) therefore concluded that "textile wastes make up a largely untapped consumer commodity with strong potential for reuse or recycling." In as much as there are various exploration and adaption processes and textile strong potentials for reuse and recycling, textile still enter into municipal solid waste streams. They also suggested that textile reuse and recycling should be controlled by a multitude of stakeholders by seeking to recover and avert textile waste from landfills and put it back to use. The issue of capturing economic value, utilizing materials at hand and reducing environmental impact of these textile wastes will be a welcomed development. (Domina and Koch 2009)

Observations

The researcher showcased possible experimentation of the massive use of the textile waste materials for the value in visual art. Textile waste recovery and recycling efforts can assist in improving diversion effect through waste-to-art or waste-to-wealth process. The process to re-use, along with recycling textile waste is quite beneficial because they lengthen products lifecycle and usage (Ekstrom and Salomonson, 2014). This was because "reuse" is a form of source reduction when resources can be recovered for an extending lifestyle while "recycling" is the process of changing waste material into a new material or product. Recycling actually refers to the manufacturing of recovered items into new materials. McDonough and Braugart, (2013) found out another approach that combines the idea of reuse and recycling as "the concept of up-cycling." The idea of up-cycling is to explore what can come next in a product's afterlife. It urges for creativity in design and reuse that has positive impact and provides continuous improvement for ecological, social and financial condition. Also, up-cycling is the idea of adding value to something that is considered waste, to again eliminate the idea of waste altogether.

Hawley, (2008) notes that "up-cycle is synonymous with the term "re-fashion", and has some gained momentum in the apparel industry." The researcher's art works entitled *Rhythm* and *Ullism* were achieved through reclaimed pre-consumer and post-consumer waste products, transforming them into creative textile art for

drape fabric and wall hanging respectively. Moreover, the goal of the artist / researcher as a contributory factor to textile waste management hierarchy are firstly to reduce waste generation and secondly, to explore on wastes in a manner that diverts as much as possible disposed textile wastes from landfills and dump sites. In a bid to avert this situation, the researcher explored on techniques such as appliqué, quilting, mixed media, tapestry, macramé, hand sewing embroidery, tie and dye, batik among many others. Various adaptations of textile wastes were employed successfully in various stages of development for the purpose of this research methodology to re-use, recycle and up-cycle the waste materials.

Harnessing the aesthetic potentials of textile wastes for textile art

The studio experimentation exposed the researcher to achieve interesting effects through the use of discarded textile wastes and found objects to create works of art. During the process, the researcher explored techniques such as appliqué, quilting, mixed media, macramé, tapestry, tufting and piling. Others include tie and dye, batik, rubber and PVC (poly vinyl chloride) printing, beading and hand stitching. Some of the artworks were achieved using combined techniques. The researcher was however convinced that according to Obeagu (2014), art is not restricted to any stereotyped expression, that there are numerous potentials and variant discoveries that can be achieved with what ordinarily may be overlooked or may have passed as waste. Also, Obeagu, (2014) continued in his findings that it is necessary that one should have at the back of his or her mind that there is often total dependence on the conventional option or waste materials available to the artist. Also to be considered is the condition of creative consciousness of the artist which calls for proper evaluation and strategic methodologies. This in effect will subvert the dwindling aspects of realities and existence of other material options available to the artist. In so doing, it will involve the artist's area of specialization. The researcher there upholds that the artworks so produced can be exhibited and sold as a well finished art piece. This will in effect boost the growth of our waste market and harness the inherent economic and waste management benefits.

Design and Adaptive process

This research is designed to showcase some exploration processes and create adaptive possibilities of textile wastes. This is by actively embarking on avenues to increase recovery rates of these wastes in our immediate environment. The researcher also seeks to utilize these wastes for new purposes over sending them to landfill for disposal. Basically the researcher discussed briefly the explorations of some of the following techniques used for the textile art production which included appliqué, quilting, mixed media, and macramé.

Exploration of appliqué, tufting and mixed media for wall hanging:

Title of artwork: - *Uliism*: (Plate 1). This concept involved the use of lines, shapes, forms texture and colour to create a representational drawing. The artwork featured *Uli* symbols and elements of art with abstract drawings. The materials used involved scraps from acrylic yarn, synthetic yarn, jute and fabrics. Other materials employed

include coloured marker, off cuts of metal and glue. Tools employed are scissors, needle hooks and nails. The techniques used are appliqué, tufting of cut piles and mixed media. Beautification was done with permanent coloured marker. This was mounted on a wooden framework, to be used as wall hanging for interior decoration.



Plate 1: *Ullism*, Francisca Chime, 4ft x 3ft, Scraps of fabric, jute fabric, yarns (acrylic synthetic) and wood, 2014. Photography: Francisca Chime

Exploration of appliqué and mixed media for a wall hanging

Title of artwork: Maiden Dancer – (Plate 2). The materials solely used were for adornment and body decoration. The waste from pear seed were slashed open with hammer and sharp knife. These were used as beads for waist bracelets, hand bangles and earrings, while some were sewn into the background. Various scraps of fabric were sourced and cut into oval shapes with the use of plain and zigzag scissors. These scraps of fabric were fastened systematically by one scrap overlapping the other to the pictorial drawing on the background woven fabric with the aid of glue. This created on which draped from the waist to the feet of the maiden to create more ego and pride as she danced along in the midst of a crowd. The calabash waste used exhibited her homely and domestic background depicting that she is of a good parental upbringing. The techniques explored by the researcher included appliqué, mixed media and hand sewing.



Plate 2: *Maiden Dancer*, Francisca Chime, 3ft x 2ft, Scraps of fabric, broken pear seed, yarns (synthetic twine) and calabash waste, 2017. Photography: Francisca Chime

Exploration of quilting, embroidery sewing and appliqué combined for wall panel

Title of artwork: - Currencies – (Plate 3). The materials solely employed are textile wastes generated from apparel and furniture industries which include scraps of locally woven fabric, foam, satin fabric of various colours, embroidery yarns, cowries shell and so on. The shapes of the design objects and motif were cut and padded with foam. These design motifs were sewn with embroidery machine to produce low relief forms of design while the fixing of the cowries shell were done by hand sewing process. The researcher explored on mixed media, appliqué, quilting, hand and machine sewing processes. The end use is for furnishing and interior decoration.



Plate 3: *Currencies*, Francisca Chime, 5ft x 2ft, Scraps of fabric, cowries shell, foam and wastes of satin fabrics of various colours, 2014. Photography: Francisca Chime

Summary

The ability to harness the aesthetic potentials of textile wastes for textile art resulted to the development of recovering, reusing and recycling of textile wastes and other solid waste materials and provided alternatives to landfill disposals. This will go a long way to reduce the environmental impacts of landfill disposal of these materials. The researcher's findings revealed that textile wastes and other solid waste materials from exhausted utility could be transformed into a valuable commodity as a mechanism for effective and efficient waste management. The result of this study will create a great impact to harness the inherent economic and environmental benefits.

Conclusion

Textile wastes, like other solid waste materials as earlier noted are unwanted, unusable materials which are discarded after primary use. They are often regarded as worthless, defective and of no use. In view of the above findings, the researcher noted that residual recycled or reused at the place of generation are not properly harnessed. According to Gambo, (2014), it is obvious that waste materials, if not properly harnessed can constitute serious environmental hazards. This effort therefore, needs to be properly coordinated along with other efforts, to ensure that waste is not only properly managed, but managed in such a way that it creates beauty and wealth in the society. In the

contributory measure of the researcher, explorations on various techniques using textile wastes and solid waste materials were made possible to create applied surface designs for furnishing and interior decoration.

Recommendations

- Artists should engage in various explorations adaptive measures to improve the intellectual and professional background adequate for waste management through waste transformation.
- Manufacturers should create a process of mass production of artworks by entrepreneurs to earn their living thereby encouraging self-employment.
- To promote land fill diversion of textile wastes effectively.
- The government needs to sensitize the manufacturers of products such as textile materials to create avenues to reuse and recycle textile wastes and other solid waste materials for new end-products.
- Manufacturers should create policies of achieving source reduction of these textile wastes and solid waste materials through waste elimination strategies, using the technique called zero-waste design.

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