

Setting up a Web-Based Art Gallery in The Department of Fine and Applied Arts Education, Enugu State College of Education (Technical), Enugu, Nigeria

Okolo, Anthony O.

Abstract

Art teaching, learning and marketing in Nigeria had hitherto followed the usual traditional approaches of classroom demonstration, studio practice, and exhibition of physical works in one art gallery or the other at a particular time. These approaches are fraught with limitations of time, space, and feedback mechanisms. Being an institution that is situated in a developing country, the Department of Fine and Applied Arts Education of Enugu State College of Education Technical, Enugu, the Government must find ways to transcend the limitations placed on it by the poor economy and bad leadership. Technological advancement has recently brought revolutionary changes in Art and the economy. Digital spaces such as the worldwide web now prove to be an avenue for the storage, display, and marketing of art. In line with this, this project was embarked upon to collate data from the Department of Fine and Applied Arts Education, ESCET, and deploy them to create a web-based art gallery. This work reported the procedures undertaken to design and hoist a befitting gallery for the department of Fine and Applied Arts Education, ESCET, Enugu. Through careful collation of data, interviews and documentation, adequate resources were made available for the actual project. The result would help to reposition the Department of Fine and Applied Arts Education, ESCET to the path of international recognition, economic art, and fame.

Keywords: Web-based Art Gallery, ICT, Tourism, Art, Web Art, Economic Art, ESCET, Enugu

Introduction

In the late 20th Century, following the advent of the internet came the birth of a new media known as Internet art, commonly referred to as net art, a type of new media art distributed online. The art may employ a variety of media and is frequently interactive or participatory. Through this approach, which departs from the conventional gallery and museum systems, even emerging artists can reach a vast audience with their work. This type of artist is often regarded as a "net artist". Apparently, this style is more modernist than the conventional dominance of the physical gallery, and museum system. A website which showcases works of art is regarded as an online art gallery. The internet gallery is typically operated as a business, with the goal of showcasing the artwork to attract new customers. Additional variants include an online secondary market for collecting art. The visitor is frequently persuaded to engage in some sort of interaction with the artwork. These categories of artists are frequently referred to as net artists.

Owel'okwe is the title name of Ichie Anene (Owelu Okwe of Enugu Agidi), the inspiring pioneer head of the Department of Art Education, the then Institute of Management and Technology (I.M.T.) Enugu. It was from I.M.T. that the Fine and Applied Arts department of Enugu State College of Education (Technical) (ESCET) was carved in 2006. The name *Owel'okwe* is an Igbo word which signifies one who is satisfied with one's shares, choices or decisions. However, it was Ichie Anene Obianyido's pioneering inspirations to the development of the department that counted much for the choice of the name, rather than the literal meaning of *Owel'okwe*.

Brief History of ESCET, Enugu, and the Birth of the Department of Fine and Applied Arts Education

The Enugu State College of Education (Technical) Enugu was established by the State House of Assembly Law No. 2 of 11th April 2006 to be an institution for teaching, research and study of education. The primary purpose of the college is to prepare its students for professional teaching and other positions of responsibility in education and industry (ESCET, 2020). The State Government, on the establishment of the College, directed the Institute of Management and Technology (IMT), Enugu to vacate its campus II, Abakaliki Road premises to accommodate the new college, it also directed the closure of the Science and Vocational Teachers Education (SSVTE) of the IMT and transfer of all its staff and student to form the foundation staff and student of the new College. The Government then renovated and refurbished some of the buildings and equipment inherited from the IMT to enable the college to take off (ESCET, 2020).

The National Commission for Colleges of Education granted the College permission to start operating as a college of education (technical) beginning with the 2006–2007 academic year. The College's emphasis is on teaching and research in the crucial fields of business, science, technical, and vocational education, resulting in the award of the Nigeria Certificate in Education, as its name implies (NCE). The College also offers a one-year Technical Teacher Certificate (TTC) Programme in Education, a post-graduate study for students looking to become teachers, in addition to the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE). However, the college Academic Board approved the switch from the Technical Teachers Certificate (TTC) to the Professional Diploma in Education (PDE), so the college now offers the PDE Program in place of the TTC Program, with due regard for the philosophy and policy thrust of the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN).

The NUC approved the college's affiliation agreement with Nnamdi Azikiwe University after the University Senate approved the affiliation of the school of Education (formerly of the INT) and after a subsequent preliminary resource inspection by a combined team of officials from the National University Commission (NUC) and Nnamdi Azikiwe University (NAU)

- Business Education major
- Education Vocational Major

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- Science Education for B.Ed.
- Technical Education with a B.Ed.
- Educational Foundation for B.Ed.

The College Degree Program officially began during the 2009–2010 academic year, which is why its maiden graduation ceremony was conducted on December 18, 2009.

The Department of Fine and Applied Arts Education of ESCET Enugu, like many other schools, have been experiencing the problem of decline, and the obvious issue of lack of relevance of curriculum offerings. It has also had the half-hearted commitment of teachers and students to the learning process on account of the outmoded old-school approaches. Younger persons are pressured by demands for survival and the pervading “get-rich-quick-syndrome”, that they are impatient with the traditional classroom approaches.

Problem of the Study

The internet holds a lot of opportunities for students and practising artists as there are opportunities of marketing their works and services. The artist-lecturers and students of the Department of Fine and Applied Arts Education of ESET have been producing world-class works, but they lack the avenue to showcase them. In recent times, the internet has proven to be an avenue of unlimited opportunities for artists. Most of the works with high value produced in the department have never been showcased or archived for the world to see. Therefore, the problem of this study arises as a result of the ardent need to adjust to the demands of the 21st Century.

Purpose of the Study

Given the identified research problems, this work focused on the following objectives:

- To develop a platform for the presentation, exhibiting, and marketing of the various high-impact products, models, and designs of the lecturers and students of the department.
- To harness Economic Art among the teachers and students of the Department of Fine and Applied Arts Education of Enugu State College of Education Technical, Enugu, Nigeria.
- To promote Culture and tourism in Nigeria through Information and Communication Technology

Literature Review

An overview of the Web Art

Web, internet, or net art is an elusive and sometimes anarchic art form which uses the Internet as its primary material. Net artworks often draw on data from other Internet materials and websites, which helps give them their distinctive dynamics and transience. Web Art, Internet Art, or Net Art, is an art that is accessible to anyone with an internet connection (and the right browser). Net art can roughly be described as a website that is

an artwork in itself. Like other digital, art net.art is transient – it exists only when the technology, software, and code are compatible. Net Art must also be constantly supported and unkept otherwise it will disappear, many examples of Net Art no longer exist because the domain name expired. So, this week I will be sharing my 5 favourite examples of Net Art, which will hopefully still be around as this is published.

The term “net.art” is less a coinage than an accident, the result of a software glitch that occurred in December 1995, when Slovenian artist Vuk Cosic opened an anonymous e-mail only to find it had been mangled in transmission. Amid a morass of alphanumeric gibberish, Cosic could make out just one legible term— “net.art”—which he began using to talk about online art and communications. Spreading like a virus among certain interconnected Internet communities, the term was quickly enlisted to describe a variety of everyday activities. Net.art stood for communications and graphics, e-mail, texts and images, referring to and merging into one another; it was artists, enthusiasts, and technoculture critics trading ideas, sustaining one another’s interest through ongoing dialogue. Net.art meant online détournements, discourse instead of singular texts or images, defined more by links, e-mails, and exchanges than by any “optical” aesthetic. Whatever images of net.art projects grace these pages, beware that, seen out of their native HTML, out of their networked, social habitats, they are the net.art equivalents of animals in zoos (Greene, 2016)

Eastern Europe and Russia were vital to the Internet's early years as an artistic medium, even if American businesses now dominate it (just as the military and the academy were critical to its early years as a communications tool). Media openness and pluralistic politics were hallmarks of the emergence and growth of "civil society" (read: "post-Communist and neo-liberal") in Eastern Europe in the early and middle 1990s. During this time, the Internet had an idealistic aura for Eastern European artists and new media professionals.

Between Art Culture, Tourism and ICT

Recently, tourism has developed into many subsets, including cultural tourism, ecotourism, adventure tourism, ancestry tourism, creative tourism, drug tourism, educational tourism, medical tourism, sexual tourism, mystical tourism, space tourism, cyber tourism, virtual tourism and a whole lot of other modes and incentives to travel. Most of these “tourists”, arguably, fit into the framework of ‘cultural tourism’ since culture is said to embrace the totality of the way of life of a people (Andrew-Essien and Andrew-Essien, 2013)

The cultural sector—the visual arts, museums, and theatres, among others, is increasingly seen as a potential driver of growth by governments and organisations charged with promoting economic development around the world (Kotler and Kotler, 2000; Throsby, 2008). Historically, the mission of a museum, including art museums, is cultural. They give “individuals the opportunity to withdraw from the busy world and to gaze on works of art at their own pace and choice” (Roberson, 2010, p. 77).

The pairing of arts and culture with tourism can lead to economic development by bringing visitors to the area, also contributing to community well-being by invigorating local areas through creative practice (Boland, 2016). The relationship between tourism and creativity has changed dramatically in recent times. Traditional cultural tourism has transformed, moving towards greater involvement with the everyday life of the destination—an authentic experience—which is one driver for the growing importance of creative tourism. The nexus between ICT, culture and Art is not farfetched. Creating digital interphase where works are displayed for the world to see, and appreciate is a cogent example of it.

Theoretical Studies

The following section describes the theoretical model that was employed as a guideline for building the website. Without a doubt, the new digital media are changing many aspects of the political, social, cultural, and economic lives of people around the globe. Digital technologies (from email, file sharing, mobile phones, online gaming, e-commerce, and GPS systems) are becoming commonplace and part of our social and personal lives (Brokerman and Jaimes, 2015). Elena and Razlogova (2016) buttress that the internet culture dated back to the evolution of the new media, as it encompasses earlier media forms, such as eighteenth-century magazines; nineteenth-century broadcasts, telegraph, telephone, and radio and television. As Internet culture evolved across platforms and categories, it became a tool to undermine institutions of ideology, advertising, government, and society as a whole. It wasn't just for entertainment or news. It became a universal language connecting people from all over the world (Allebach, 2019). In line with this, digital culture is a workplace shaped and influenced by digital tools and technologies such as websites. In companies with advanced digital cultures, most employees use digital tech to collaborate, innovate and offer customers access to products, services and support.

This culture is invariably known as digital culture, cyberculture, Internet culture, and information culture, among others. Culture is the shared norms, practices, values, and expectations of a set of human beings. Digital culture is an expression of norms, values and expected ways of doing things due to the ever-increasing computerization and digitalization of society (Dezue, 2006). Thus, the spread of smartphones brought about the chat culture which is a good example of dual games in digital culture. Computer games are one of the areas for exploring and being immersed in digital culture. Another successful application for everyday use is weblogs. Weblogs are considered to be similar to the way we behave.

A theory of digital culture was adopted for this study. Digital culture is a concept that describes how technology and the internet are shaping the way that we interact as humans. It is the way that we behave, think and communicate within society. Digital culture is the product of the endless persuasive technology around us and the result of disruptive technological innovation. It applies to multiple topics but it comes down to one

overarching theme; the relationship between humans and technology (gdsgroup.com, 2021).

This theory is in tandem with this study because its main focus is to report a design procedure for a digital space where works and events of the department of Fine and Applied Arts Education of ESCET, Enugu will be displayed.

Research Methodology

Field trip, Interviews and Collation of Data

With the aid of the staff and students of the department, photos of past works were shot with a camera. Interviews were conducted with the staff and students of the department. Also, relevant documents were collected from the departmental administration.



Plate 1: Entrance gate to Enugu State College of Education Technical, Enugu, situated at the Metropolitan Polo Park area. Photo Credit: Anthony Okolo, 2021



Plate 2: The frontal signage of the Department of Fine and Applied Arts Education, ESCET, Enugu. Photo credit: Anthony Okolo, 2021



Plate 3: A cross-section of some works from the department.
Photo credit: Anthony Okolo, 2021

Design of the Site Map

A sitemap is a blueprint for your website that assists search engines in finding, crawling, and indexing all of its content. Sitemaps also inform search engines about the most important pages on your website. It lists the most important pages on a website, ensuring that search engines can find and crawl them. Sitemaps also aid in understanding the structure of your website, making it easier to navigate. Below is the thematic view of the site map:

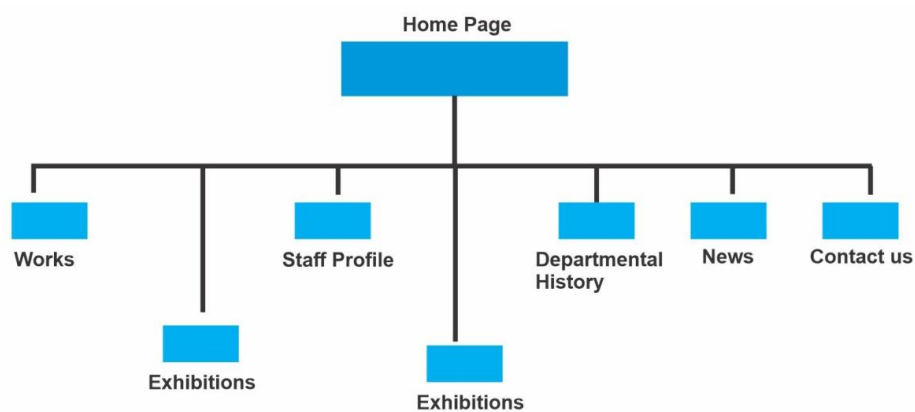


Fig 1: The site map. Anthony Okolo, 2020

Choose a domain name

The domain name is the identity of the site, an equivalent of a physical address. It is the domain name that will be typed into search engines for a direct link to the site. The domain name chosen was **www.owelokwevirtualart.com**

Registration of the domain name and choice of Web hosting service

In registering the domain name, it was necessary to check the availability of the domain name on top-level domain platforms such as .com, .org, and .net. The preferred platform chosen was .com because of its prevalence in servicing big names such as Amazon, Google, Cisco, Facebook, Webvan, and others.

Select Your Theme/Template using the WordPress

A website template is a predesigned resource that shows the structure for the comprehensive layout and display features of any website. It is provided by various suppliers to help make Web design a lot easier for designers. A website template is also known as a Web page template or page template. WordPress (WP or WordPress.org) is a free and open-source content administration framework (CMS) written in PHP [4] and matched with a MySQL or MariaDB data set with upheld HTTPS. Highlights incorporate a module engineering and a format framework alluded to inside WordPress as Subjects. WordPress was initially made as a blog-distributing framework yet has developed to help other web content sorts including more conventional mailing records and discussions, media exhibitions, participation locales, learning the kgh6ttyws executives frameworks (LMS) and online stores. One of the most famous substances is the executive's framework arrangements being used. WordPress is utilized by 42.8% of the main 10 million sites as of October 2021.

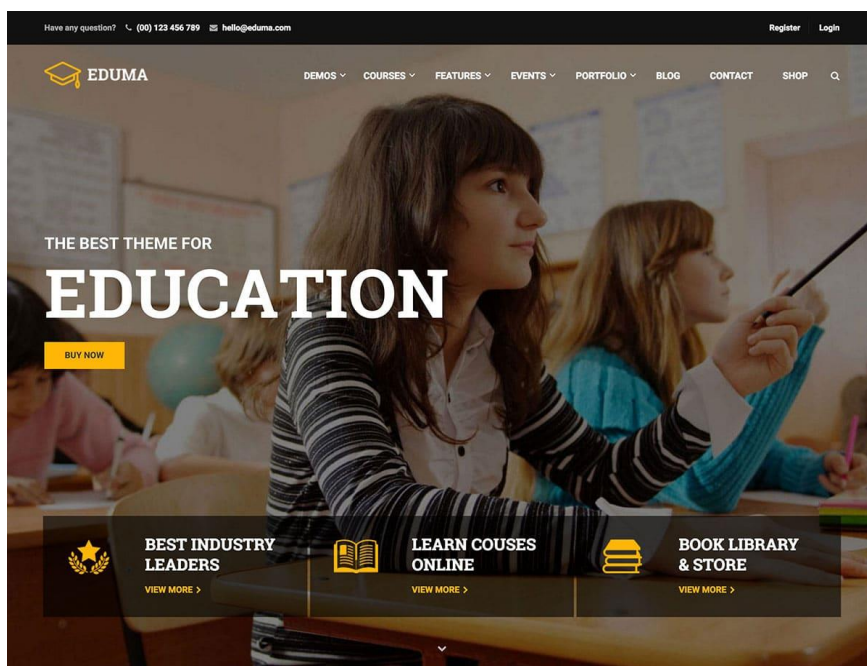


Plate 4: A web template from wordpress.com. google.com

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Many years ago, WordPress was primarily a tool to create a blog, rather than more traditional websites. That hasn't been the case in a long time. You can now create any type of website with WordPress thanks to changes to the core code and WordPress' massive ecosystem of plugins and themes.



Plate 5: The template is modified with reference to the site map. Source: Researcher, 2021

Page building, Writing the Site Copy, arranging the web contents

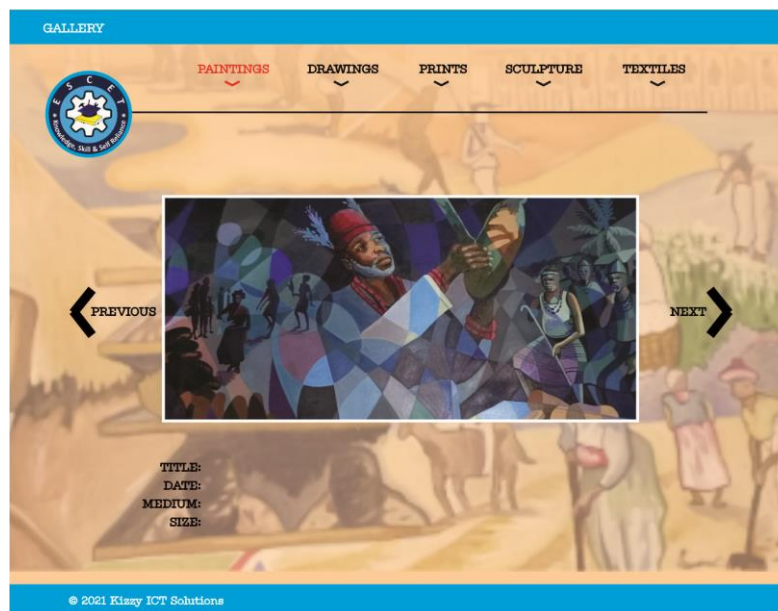


Plate 6: A web template from wordpress.com. Source: Researcher, 2021

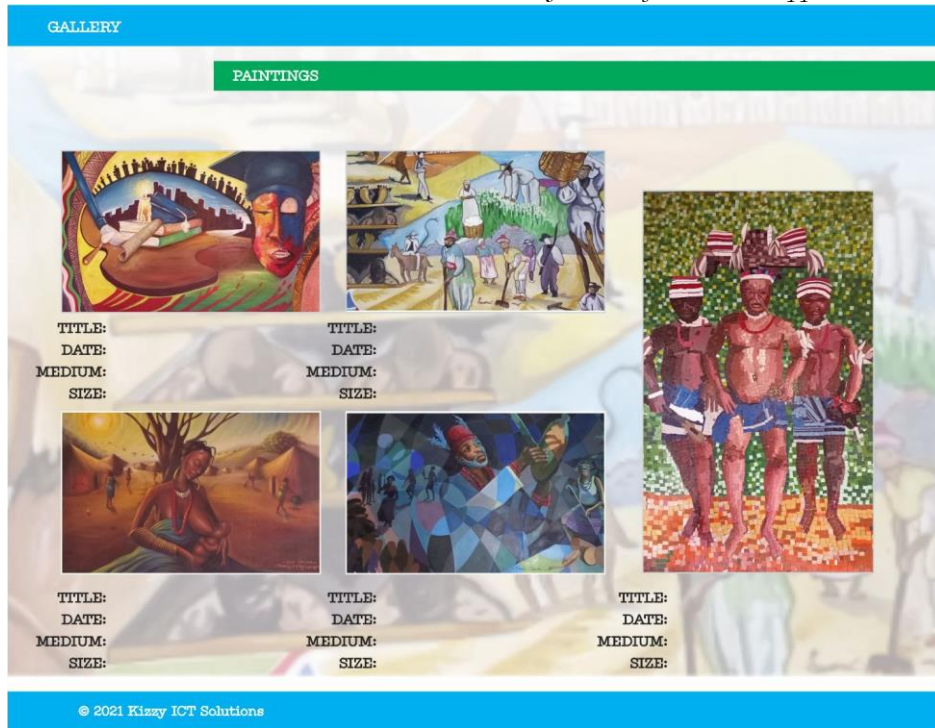


Plate 7: Progress. Source: Researcher, 2021

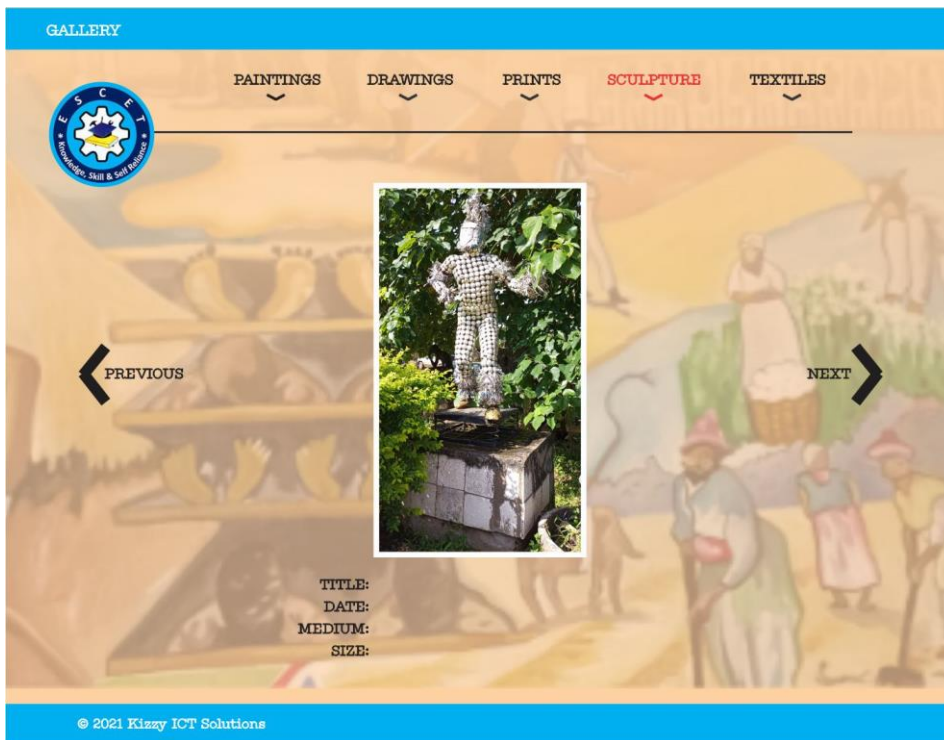


Plate 8: Work in progress. Source: Researcher, 2021

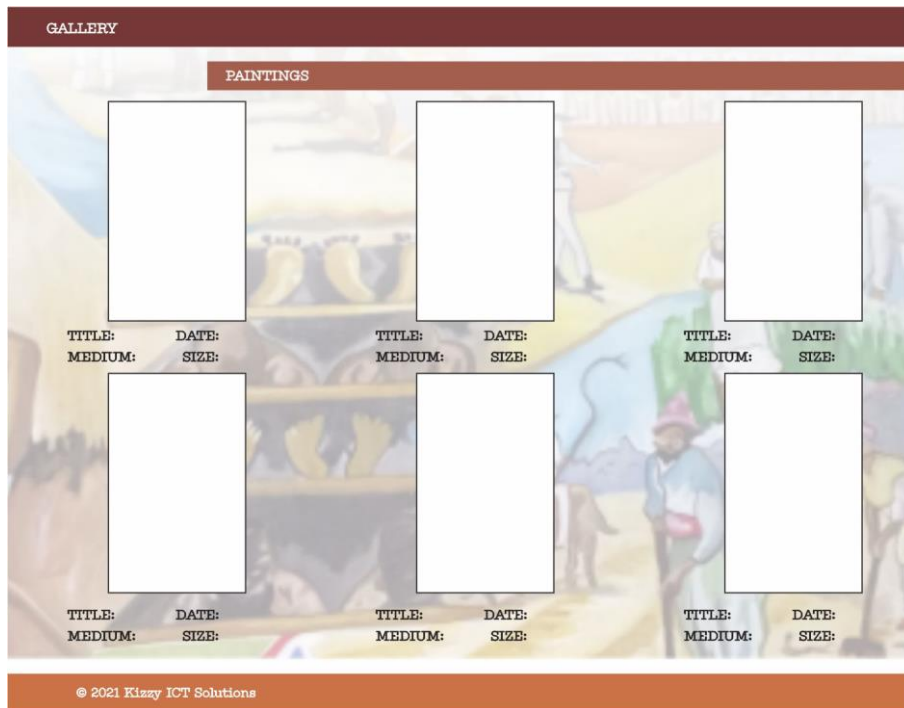


Plate 9: Work in progress. Source: Researcher, 2021

Web Programming

During the programming, the data toggle automatically turns the element into a collapsible element. Data-toggle is a bootstrap framework element. The following backend code displays the first accordion which has the first collapsible category with an id “collapse0” below:

```

1 | k?php
2 |
3 | defined('_JEXEC') or die;
4 | // Load template framework
5 | include_once JPATH_THEMES . '/' . $this->template . '/framework.php';
6 |
7 | $doc = JFactory::getDocument();
8 |
9 | $doc->addStyleSheet('templates/' . $this->template . '/css/foundation.css');
10 | $doc->addStyleSheet('templates/' . $this->template . '/style.css');
11 | $doc->addScript('templates/' . $this->template . '/js/vendor/modernizr.js', 'text/javascript');
12 | JHtml::_('jquery.framework');
13 |
14 | $option = JFactory::getApplication()->input->getVar('option');
15 | $view = JFactory::getApplication()->input->getVar('view');
16 | // Make sure it is a single article
17 | if ($option == 'com_content' && $view == 'article'):
18 |     $id = JFactory::getApplication()->input->getInt('id');
19 |     $article = JFactory::getInstance('content');
20 |     $article->load($id);
21 |     $author_id = $article->created_by;
22 |     $user = JFactory::getUser($author_id);
23 |
24 |     $article_title = $article->get('title');
25 |     $article_created = $article->created;
26 |
27 |     $article_alias = $article->get('alias');
28 |     $article_introtext = $article->get('introtext');

```

Fig 1: Backend code for the homepage

Testing the Site

In development testing, the site was tested on different platforms with the Chrome developer's tool. It was concluded that the application does not need to scale for a mobile platform but for tablets and computers screen would suffice. Therefore, the testing did not

involve the mobile aspect. The Department of Fine and Applied Arts Education, ESCET, also concurred with these developments since the prospective visitors of the web gallery can easily access computers from wherever they are.

Testing was necessary to execute with Internet Explorer and Chrome. The key people in the department such as the Head of Department, Staff adviser and unit heads have been given the passwords to the back-end office of the sites where they can upload or delete information as they have agreed. It is interesting to note that most visitors use Google Chrome; hence it was mostly used in development testing. The use of internet explorer is according to statistical evidence in great decline over the past couple of years. Therefore, was decided that the site would still have minimum working requirements for Internet Explorer, but it would be optimized mainly for Google Chrome browser.

Conclusion

Following the need to adjust to the demands of recent times, this project reported the procedures of designing and hosting a web-based art gallery for the Department of Fine and Applied Arts of Enugu State College of Education Technical, Enugu. Data was collated via field trips, and oral interviews, including photos of work, staff profiles, students' profiles, and the history of the Department. An eight-page web gallery with the domain name **www.owelokwevirtualart.com** was designed using a WordArt template. The home page shows the window to other pages such as units, exhibitions, staff and student profiles. The back end and frontends of the site were run with JavaScript programming language. A fundamental testing parameter was deployed on the user interphase, APIs, database testing, security, client, and server. Moreso, outgoing links, internal links, anchor Links, and MailTo Links, were tested. Again, in order to ensure that search engines can crawl the site easily, the HTML and CSS were tested. All have been proven to be active. A plan to renew the web hosting fee for up to three years has been put in place.

Declaration

The author declares that he has no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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