

Exploration of Waste Material in Sculpture Using Crown Corks

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Abstract

Waste constitute major environmental problem in Nigeria today. Some of these wastes are locally generated while others, mainly e-waste, are deliberately imported by Nigerians out of ignorance. Our culture of consumerism is another factor that contributes to increase in waste found in our country. This situation calls for effective management from various experts. Visual artists were not left out in the attempt to deal with the hydra-headed problem. Their approach, known as “waste to wealth” philosophy do not only help to combat waste but has also made people to see beauty/ aesthetics in waste, in line with Martin Heidegger’s theory on perception and phenomenology, basically, any object exist as a perception of the mind. Given the dynamic nature of waste recycling/exploration, the researcher focused on the exploration of crown corks. The researcher undertook a lot of literary research, covering both published and unpublished works. He also embarked on several sculptural experimentation which in the end yielded new styles, media and techniques. Other information gathered from both primary (oral) and secondary sources contributed immensely to the success of the project. The work reveals that waste to wealth philosophy could also be extended beyond visual arts to areas such as architecture and engineering, this will open more fronts in the war against waste.

Introduction

The study of sculpture confronts us with the three dimensions: height, width and depth. Sculpture has one of the longest histories of any medium/movement and yet it is especially vital and exciting today. A major reason for this vitality in contemporary sculpture is its use of materials and techniques that were unheard of just a century ago. The experience of looking at a flat painting on a wall is quite unlike the experience of walking up to a freestanding sculpture, circling it, observing it from various viewpoints. There are four basic methods of sculpture; modelling, casting, carving and assembling. Sculpture can be created from almost any traditional materials such as stone, wood, clay, metal; other materials such as plastic and paper, found and recycled objects.

The material or medium an artist chooses to create a sculptural work can help communicate the meaning of the art work. Many artists have resorted to using waste material and recycling them artistically into beautiful works of art. This form of art essentially focuses on the conversion of waste materials into more friendly products that can be used either at home or in public places. Exploration of these waste materials brings out new ideas or information about the resources.

One of the biggest problems of developing countries especially Africa is how to manage all kinds of waste which has posed a threat/harm to the lives of people in the society. Waste constitutes all objects or substances which the owners no longer have need for and therefore discard them. Waste result from human activities within a given environment. Generation of waste has been on the increase following the global population growth and subsequent development in technology and its attendant urbanisation. Thus, various governments globally have invested a lot in its management. Its proper management generate employment and wealth. Waste has in recent times engaged the explorative and creative attention of the visual artist as well as that of the historians and critics.

Waste sculpture is symbolic of how art can be used to draw attention and raise awareness while engendering contemplation, collective discussion and action. The use of discarded materials in contemporary artistic creation began with Marcel Duchamp who exhibited a discarded wheel which he turned upside down and mounted on a stool, three decades later Pablo Picasso 'coupled' and exhibited the seat and hand bars of discarded old bicycle, which he called "Bull's head". Other artists have in various ways been exploring the adaptation of discards as art forms. This attracted interest of art public, historians and critics. Many sculptors have produced both abstract and representational works by means of assemblage, employing junk and found objects frequently; with these processes a total new environment has been created. Such artists as Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, George Segal, Marisof Escobar, Red Grooms, Claes Oldenburg and Lucas Samara.

Modern African Artist have also earned global acclaim creating impressive and creative work from waste material, made use of mostly discarded industrial materials. Today hundreds of modern Nigerian artists found in this category include masters of Junks such as El Anatsui who since he discovered the latent potency of beverage cans and bottle corks as creative medium abandoned wood which he made amenable his creative hands and tools others are, Dil Humphrey Umezulike (Dilompruzulike), Olu Amodu, Uche Onyishi and Sokari Douglas-camp. Their works are entirely made of discarded materials such as bottle corks, beverage cans, cloths, automobiles etc.

For art, here and now, there is an urgent need to create an atmosphere for a re-evaluation or self-reflection, concentration and contemplation aimed at bringing out a change in the society at large (Ngwu, 2005). Urban waste has become common and has provided the artist with invaluable material with which to create unique qualities and possibilities in art. Visual artists in the quest of forming these unique qualities and possibilities seek ways of exploring, converting and eradicating health hazard and also addressing social ills of the society. The potentials of waste materials provide the artist with viable alternatives that transform into magnificent, pleasant visual configuration. Specifically, the study seek to rediscover waste crown cork as a resource for artistic creation and expression; thereby drawing attention to environmental issues, introducing unique qualities and possibilities and creating aesthetic and utility art forms.

Crown cork waste has for a long time, been a medium of personal expression in arts, which can be treasured. They have been used by different artists, crown cork collectors in different capacities such as addressing social problems or events, interior decoration and utility. Yet most artists, in Nigeria and elsewhere, are yet to understand, explore and appreciate rich creative potentials of these waste crown corks. Exploring waste crown corks appeal to many, but only a handful attempt to delve into the exploration.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of the study is to explore waste material in sculpture using crown corks. Specifically, the study intend to:

- i. Explore the aesthetics and utility of waste crown corks in creating art forms.
- ii. To educate and inform the community/public of the need to adopt improved waste and sustainability practice by promoting the use of recorded waste resources as art medium.
- iii. Introduce unique qualities and possibilities of waste crown cork exploration in sculpture in order to stimulate people's interest in the medium.
- iv. To create works of art that will address social events/problems in our society.
- v. The ideas and research findings which will be embodied in this research will serve as a reference material.

Research Questions

In order to give direction to this project, the following research questions were raised to guide the study:

- i. Can unique qualities and possibilities be created or explored using crown corks?
- ii. Are the techniques, material and energy commensurable with the appreciation and feedback from the art community and society at large?
- iii. Can aesthetic and utility art forms be achieved using waste crown corks?

Methodology of the Study

In order to properly address the problems facing this project, both literary and studio based research were employed. Information used for the project was gathered through primary and secondary sources. The primary sources were mainly oral sources, such as interviews and observations while secondary sources include written materials, published and unpublished. It is vital that photographic data of works done with waste crown cork in different views were gathered for analysis. Sketches were also made in addition to other studio experiments. Art materials which will be used include: adhesive, wire, metals rods, wood, and sheets of metal for framework and waste crown corks to mention but few. In the actual working, the waste crown corks will be flattened individually by beating, bent and fixed together. The fixed crown corks are to be explored in various forms. The waste crown corks was sourced from restaurants, bars and waste bins.

The means and method of formation are sources of inspiration and an integral part of the process leading to the work. Stylistic, technical and aesthetic methods would be used in analysing the research. The project also involves some theoretical aspects. The information from the primary was used to write a report of the practiced project which was organised as stated below.

Literature Review

Asking “what is modern art” is a good (and very common) question. While it’s a bit complicated, the single most important thing one needs to know about modern art is that it is different from contemporary art. Essak (n. d) described modern art as art from the impressionists (say around 1880) up until the 1960s Or 70s while contemporary art is from the 1960s or 70s up to until this very minute. Modern art denotes the style and the philosophy of the art produced during the era. Wikipedia (n.d) referred to it as an art that experiment the new ways of seeing and with fresh ideas about the nature of material and function of art. Typically, modern artists rejected previous Renaissance-based traditions, in favour of new forms of artistic experimentation. They introduced new materials, new techniques of sculptures and other forms of art, and developed new theories about how art should reflect the perceived world, and what their functions as artists should be. This brought about entirely new types of art which sprang up during the period. According to Igboamazu (2014), modern arts do not adhere to the classical canons and one can also view them as works that set out to challenge the status quo and also reflects on the situation of the society. The social transformation brought by the Industrial Revolution had triggered the emergence of new ideas in all areas including fine art, and artists were eager for change. Modernism reflected this new mood and engendered new forms of artistic expression on the ground that they were more appropriate to modern life. These art forms often reflected a number of political agenda, frequently associated with utopian visions of human society, together with a strong occurrence at irregular intervals of beliefs in progress.

The processes of creating these artworks from items that are primarily non art materials; particularly trash, waste or junk has attracted different names overtime such as “readymade”, “funk art”, “junk art” or waste art”. These are sometimes classified as a sub- genre of found art. According to Halliday (2012), artists all over the globe, since the early 20th century have been exploring and experimenting with discarded items (waste) as a medium / media for artistic expression, by assemblage, installations from ever widening range of visual objects and materials through a process generally referred to as “conversion” and the end product have not only been adjudged significantly impressive but beautiful. These works primarily comprise components that have been discarded. Often they come quite literally from the trash.

The first junk artist was Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968). His specialty was *ready made* - a mass produced article, chosen at random, isolated from its usual context and presented as a work of art. Example of readymade by Duchamp (a series of found objects) include: *Bicycle wheel* (1913 ready – made, metal, painted wood, Pompidou center, Paris); *fountain* (1917, Replica, Tate Gallery, London); *In Advance of the Broken Arm* (1915, Yale University, Art Gallery). Other pioneer Junk artists were the Kurt Schwitters (1887-1948), Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) and Vladimir Tatlin (1885-1953).

Goueier (1960) as cited by Ngwu (2005), commented on Dak' Art 96, observed that, recycling an alternative media reveals everyday objects especially wastes or thrown away objects as is witnessed in most of the works of the artists working with junks. These discarded objects usually come from the kitchen, bars and restaurants, waste bin cars or construction site. Nagel (2013) is of the opinion that it could be as a result of so much waste in the world today and that could be why artists think about recycling. These materials are recycled to what we can appreciate either for its use or beauty. According to Nagel,

The basis of my sculpture comes from the fact that I let natural shape of single objects dictate my whole project. I then build around this with an array of other recycled items to marry them and create a piece of art.

Louise Nevelson had written half a century ago as cited by Jess Castellote (n.d), “ when you put together things that other people have thrown out, you are really bringing them to life- a spiritual life that surpasses the life of which they were originally created. Ademuleya (n.d) also noted that a material or use of material simply does not hold value, connotation of significance, instead holds a different value and charismatics depending on the context in which it is used. According to Halliday (2012) artists seeks to create dialogue about social, historical and political realities through the use of the discarded materials.

Understanding the symbolic significance of a material sometimes requires the philosophical understanding of the context and environment in which the artist is working. This is exemplified by one of the artist with passion for raw-material, El Anatsui (b. 1944), a Ghanaian sculptor. Anatsui frequently made use of liquor tops. The liquor tops are cut up, flattened and arranged in sequence, joined together with wire to create large cloth like sculpture making it flow rhythmically like the Ghanaian cloth which portrays symbols and representation. Cook (2007) sees some of El's sculptures as art works that are metaphors for African nations struggling under poverty and political corruption. They speak of societies where crime, disease, and war can sometimes make human life seem as disposable as tin cans. Halliday believed that the good reason for Anatsui's choice of used liquor tops is the malleability that allows the artist to puncture holes through them, a quality which is unobtainable with some number of bottle tops like crown corks and wine corks. Also in this genre, is Jan Elftman (2007) who used wine corks she saved for 13 years while working as a waitress at an Italian restaurant to cover her truck. Her reasons being that wine cork is naturally impermeable and also water resistant. She named it “cork truck”. In this context, Jan Elftman did not consider the symbolic aspect but the utility qualities of the medium.

Castellote (n.d) in his review: Joseph Eze: Assemblage Art made in Nigeria presents Nsukka Art School as the *Avante garde* of scrap/ junk art. According to him two major focal points can be identified in the recent assemblage art in Nigeria: the one in Nsukka under the leadership of El Anatsui and the one in Yaba under the influence of Olu Amoda. Though they share a concern for the materiality of the artworks, there is a substantial difference of approach to its realization. While El Anatsui works by repetition Amoda by aggregation. The heavy, clunky metal sculptures of Olu Amoda use a great variety of scrap and discarded metal pieces assembled in extraordinary ways. There are good number of Yaba College of Technology (YABATECH) students that continue producing metal sculptures using scrap materials.

Nwanna (2014) in his “Art and Interactive Environment” used the works of some outstanding Nigerian modern artist who utilize waste materials, namely El Anatsui (b.1944), Uche Onyishi (b. 1969) and Bright Eke (b 1976) to showcase the aesthetic and intellectual attributes of scraps and junk art.

Nwanna's work is focused on the fact that the concepts of environment will determine to a very large extent the scope and nature of artistic development coupled with interest in regulating and controlling various forms of environmental problems. This paper is very relevant to this study because in addition to projecting the use of waste to create art as a reflection of our environmental problem, he also presented these artists as patriots committed to aesthetics, preservation and natural beauty and resources.

Okwuosa (2013) in his "Environmental Challenges as Creative Muse: The Installation of Performance Art of Bright Eke" presents Bright Ugochukwu Eke as an innovative contemporary Nigerian artist. His exploration of water as a sculpture medium was sparked by an experience of acid rain he had in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria in 2005. It was sometime in 2005 while he was working on a site in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, that Bright Ugochukwu Eke, who was then an MFA student in the Department of Fine and Applied Arts, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, experienced acid rain which jolted his creative muse. Okwuosa, as cited in Weintrab (2012) recorded Bright Eke's motivation for his acid rain thus:

I was working outside the rain. In two days I discovered skin irritation from toxic chemicals that go into the atmosphere from the industries. The emissions from the industries come down when it rains. I was not surprised, as Port Harcourt has a lot of industries, especially in the manufacturing and the oil production. Then I came to think about not just myself but the people who live around the area. What about the aquatic life? What about the vegetation?

This creative epiphany was cultured and conditioned by the master sculptor, El Anatsui (b. 1944) who was Eke's teacher in his undergraduate days and his MFA research supervisor. Anatsui's creative sensitive and sensibility are foundational to his discovery and appropriation of chain saw as a sculpting tool and the use of aluminium bottle cover as sculpture materials.

Halliday (2012) in his article "One man's Junk is another man's Treasure" reflected on some African artist who use discarded media mainly for its artistic vision and not its necessity. One of the artist is Remouald Hazoume who takes slightly different approach in his use of discarded objects. He uses petrol can repetitively in his works which draws attention to the black market petrol trade and its deeper social significance. With cheaper petrol prices in Nigeria (at least until recently), the black market saw petrol flow easily, if illegally, across the border. The cans carried by black market transporters are worked to breaking point then discarded, something in which the artist sees similarities with enslavement. Remouald revealed that, "Many people live in the same kind of conditions, bound to work their whole lives for rich bosses who use them without regard for their humanity, and who then throw them away, like refuse".

Hazoumé's representation of slavery is most notable in the installation *La Bouche du Roi* in which he uses hundreds of petrol containers laid out, resembling the image of the Brookes slave ship print (which was used by campaigners against the transatlantic slave trade). According to Halliday (2012), the individual containers represent the people of Africa who were crammed together in the slave trade. The piece refers to the exportation of oil to the West with little in return, juxtaposing the historical image with that of the implement used to transport petrol. The used petrol cans act as a metaphor for slavery past and present.

In a bid to promote the use of trash in execution of art works, Offiong (2010) expressed how Alliance Francaise, Enugu exhibited works of nine artists from Nigeria, Togo and Ghana who centered their ideology of art creation on the use of art materials collected from dustbins and other waste sites as well as discarded wood, recycled paper, metals, saw dust and pips from food items. The artists include, Ayo Aina, Esther Gomina, Lebechi Okochaeze, Promise Airunmude, Okechukwu Eze, Ekene Ireagwu, Ghana's Akwelu Suma Glory and Togolese's Egyo Dackey. These artists made genuine effort to transform waste into attractive master piece with no visible link to its origin. Offiong expressed the ignorance of Nigerians in exploring the potentials the waste in their environment for useful purpose.

She noted that the highlight of the exhibition was to educate the public on the various ways they could use these environmental waste in various aesthetic and functional ways. The exhibition also aimed at refocusing and redirecting the minds and attention of the young artist to be environmental conscious and the artistic opportunities yawning for them to utilize. According to Offiong, the exhibition received a warm commendation and appreciation from viewers and art lovers.

African Artist Foundation (2012) in exposing the emerging trends of contemporary art in Nigeria revealed the paradigm shift in artistic practices of artists who adopted conceptual and embraced the unconventional materials in conveying their message. Their ideas were born out of political and sociological influences in Nigeria and of African continent. They interrogated the role of African artist in global environment, influence of technology, the digital revolution and its impact on collective world view. The artists whose works were exhibited include Joseph Eze, Ike Francis, Taiye Idahor, Demola Ogunajo, Obinna Makata, Chike Obeagu, Richardson Oubiebo, Alafuro Sikoki, Stephen Anueze Ubaka, Bob-Nosa Uwagboe and Uche Uzorka.

Kunde (2011) drew attention to the works of Anthony S. Ekpe, a young and vibrant contemporary Nigerian artist, who made aesthetically pleasing and also environmentally friendly sculpture from everyday waste materials like empty beverage containers from house hold or garbage heaps. According to Kunde, execution of these works starts with sketches of what the artist intend to create. The artist employed stylization and abstraction as basic styles in rendering various sculptural forms of artistic standard. This showed in his work titled *Trumpeter* (2009), where he used iron rods and constructed anatomical frame which red compressed cans were selectively welded to cover parts of the work to achieve the shape/form of a person blowing a trumpet. According to Kunde, the artist succeeded in creating environmental friendly work in a way of combating the environment waste and also used the unconventional material to portray and project cultural values of the environment the artist exist in.

The above mentioned artists with ingenuity, creativity, and contemplation made effort in pointing out three major subjects waste or discarded material can perform namely symbolic, social significance and utility role. These works give the audience time and stage to contemplate dialogue and object about social, historical and political realities. Appreciation sometimes lies on the philosophical reflection in the observer or the artist.

Summarily, this research intend to explore the use of unconventional material specifically crown corks in producing art form that are not only visually appealing but environmental friendly. It will focus on recycling such materials as means of addressing such social problem and also creating utility works. It will also redirect attention to the new ways of exploring discarded material such as crown corks in art production. This will also generate attention to other artists because it is readily accessible and available.

Production and Technique

This chapter will familiarize readers with the elements, techniques of manipulating and exploring of the crown corks. It will also look at the different stages of production, starting from the concept stage to drawings and to finishing of the work.

- **Stage 1: Conceptualization**

All planning and decisions were made in this stage. Concepts were generated and inspired by geometric shape, works of David Smith, personal experience and the environment. On this note, the researcher generated some ideas and compositions on paper

- **Preliminary Drawings:**

The Researcher made several drawings in which one was chosen to guide the production processes of the sculpture.

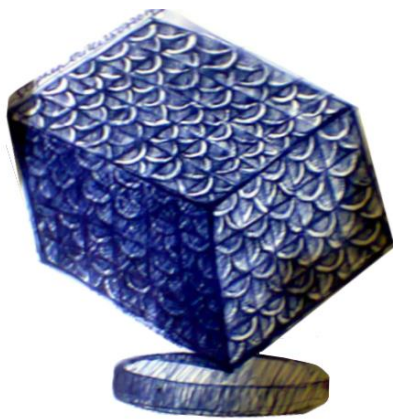


Plate 1: Drawings for sculpture 1,
Ink on paper, 2014,
Photo: by the researcher.



Plate 2: Drawings for sculpture 2,
Ink on paper, 2014,
Photo: by the researcher.

Stage 2: Selection of Materials

The materials for the project include: rods, metal sheets/pan, different colours of crown corks sourced from restaurants, bar and waste bins, adhesive (top bond).

The picture below shows the welding stage which involves the transferring of the two dimensional design into three dimensional form. The researcher is seen forming the skeletal frame of the work otherwise known armature. Metal rods were cut to different sizes, welded together to form different sizes of cube shapes.

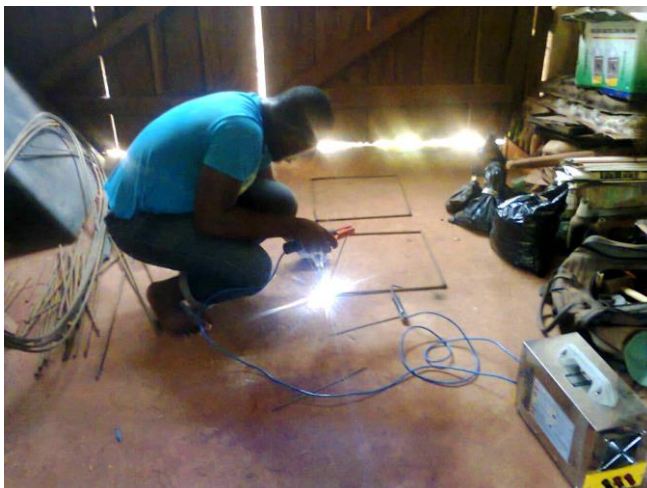


Plate 3: The researcher welding the rods together to form a cube, 2014, photo: Nwamini Peter.



Plate 4: A unit of the cube, 2014, photo: by the researcher.

Stage 4: in this stage, different sizes of the cubic shapes are placed and welded together in juxtaposed form and in an ascending order from biggest cube to smallest cube.



Plate 5: shows the different sizes of the cube placed on top of each other in a juxtaposed position and welded together, 2014, photo: the researcher.

Stage 6: Coating of the Metal Sheet with Anti Rust.

This involves coating the metal sheet with oil paint to prevent it from rusting.



Plate 6: Coating of the metal sheet 1, 2014, photo: by Nwamini Peter.

Stage 7: Forming a Designed Unit of the Crown Corks

This stage requires great precision, energy and creative mindedness. The processes involves flattening of the crown corks, bending and fixing the crown corks. Each unit consist of four pieces of crown corks.



Plate 7: shows step by step guide of creating a designed unit of the crown corks, 2014, photo: by the researcher.

Stage 8: Gumming the Units of the Fixed Crown Corks

This stage has to do with gumming the units of the fixed crown corks on the metal pan using adhesives to create interesting and captivating designs.



Plate 8: The researcher gumming the crown corks 3, 2014, photo: Nwamini Peter.

Stage 9: Finishing

The compositions were finished by spraying Lacquer in order to prevent it from corrosion since it's an outdoor sculpture. The picture below shows the finished work. The gigantic free standing metal work no doubt shows an agreeable interplay of shapes in a space. The researcher was able to achieve this with careful study of forms as it relates to the environment.



Plate 9: finished composition 2, 2015, photo: by the researcher.

Presentation and Analysis of Works

This chapter explored, described, analyzed and evaluated the various principle or element put together in sculptural processes. It also exposed the themes as it relates to some of the works analyzed. Works analyzed below are considered more directly suitable for this research. The works falls under two major categories: aesthetics and functional art. Aesthetic works are works of art that are pleasing in appearance. They relate to the philosophical principles of aesthetics. Functional art are works of art that have practical application, or serving a useful purpose.

Aesthetic Art works



Plate 10: *We stood when standing was difficult*, Ezike Stephen, crown corks/ metal rods/ metal sheets, 13 ft, 2015, Photo: by the Researcher.

1. Title of Work: *We stood when Standing was Difficult*.

The work titled “we stood when standing was difficult” is a three dimensional sculpture. The material used in executing this work include: rod, metal sheets, adhesive (Top bond) and lots of crown corks. The work consist of boxes in cubic shapes welded together, arranged in an ascending order in a juxtaposed forms. The stages in achieving this work include welding of rod in a box like shape, joining it together and covering it with metal sheets to bring out an interesting form. Afterward the fixed crown corks are gummed on the surface of the metal sheets to form a pattern. From a far distance the texture appears to be so smooth but on a closer view it appears tactile. The pattern of arrangement of the crown corks made the work appear colourful.

The researcher tried to communicate an aesthetic arrangement which represent very interesting symmetrical and asymmetrical designs. The arrangement defines energy, movement, unity, growth, strength with harmony in our environment. The researcher expresses his sense of beauty, unity and balance using different colours of crown corks. If the colour was not saturated and well placed, more focus will be on a particular side of the sculpture. The compositions of the artwork contribute to the up and down, back and forth motion of the viewer’s eyes. The work is abnormally large and placed in juxtaposed form which made it not to have concrete scale of measurement or proportion. This also created a sense of ambiguity making the viewer wonder the intention of the researcher.

The massive sculpture can be classified under cubism, a movement in modern art, especially invented by Spanish artist Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) and a French artist George Braque (1882- 1963) in 1907 and 1908. Although the look of cubism and ideas behind it evolved with time, the art form is characterized by geometric shapes and simplified forms. A spatial plane that are broken into fragments and forms overlap or penetrate one another. Art historians generally consider cubism to have been influential art movement of the first half of the 20th century. The researcher tried to assimilate his idea through this movement and also incorporate it with his medium of research which is crown corks.

Walking round the sculptural work gives a feeling of a building that wants to collapse but is still standing firm. The concept of the work is centered on the Nigerian society where we have different cultural background and ethnic religious group. The work depict the unstable economic situation and other challenges such as insurgents and corruption trying to pull down or divide the country but despite all these challenges, we are still standing as one nation.

The researcher made effort in using his medium of research and artistic expression to promote the unity of the country just as it is popularly said, divided we fall, united we stand. The different colours of crown corks represents the ethnic groups, the boxes arranged in ascending order represents the different stages of challenges we have passed through as a nation ranging from military dictatorship to civil war and to corruption trying to divide us into unit groups.

The sculptural work is meant to be an outdoor sculpture, so as to attract more audience and for more appreciation. The researcher enjoyed every bit of technical skill it took to create the work and motivated to engage in a bigger project in future. The finishing of the work enlightened his spirit to explore more on the medium.



Plate 11: *The bar/restaurant was empty except for the Lounge Lizard*, Ezike Stephen, crown corks and wood panels, 3ft by 5ft, 2014, Photo by the Researcher.

2. Title of Work: *The Bar/Restaurant was Empty Except for the Lounge Lizard*

The bar/restaurant was empty except for the Lounge Lizard is a relief sculpture of a stylized Lizard mounted on a wooden panel of about 3 by 5 feet. The work is composed of wood, metal sheets, crown corks of various colours, adhesive (Top bond). The researcher used assemblage of various colours of crown corks on the surface area of the lizard shaped metal sheet as a means of unifying his arrangement of disparate colours of crown corks into colourful display. A mono colour was used to guild the edges of the figure in order to bring out the form. The texture of the surface area of the lizard created the impression of the rough skin of lizards. The collision of the texture and the tactile effect on the lizard suggest visual impression of surrealism on the lizard. On the panels are spiral and angular lines that reflects the Uli designs which Nsukka Art school are known for.

The sculptural piece was executed using a 9 feet wood which was cut into 3 panels then joined together. A stylized lizard shape was cut out of a metal sheet. Narrow sheet of metal of about 3 inches was also cut out and welded round the edges of the lizard to give an embossed impression. After which the work is mounted on the panel and fixed with screw nails. Crown corks were generously and religiously gummed on the surface area and side of the sheets to embellish and give it colourful impression. Finally angle grinder was used to make spiral and angular line on the wood.

Lounge Lizard was first heard of after World War 1, when it was applied to musicians who perform in supper clubs and kept an eye out for susceptible women of means. As the century progressed, a man do not have to be a musician, any well-dressed predatory male or a person who frequents a bar earned the phrase. People also view it as men's low-life character. This erupted the concept behind the work and the title; "the bar/restaurant was empty except for the lounge lizard at the corner". The work gives an impression of a lizard basking under the sun which suggest an exposure to something. The researcher tried to paint a picture of his experience in the course of sourcing his primary material for his research work which is crown corks. He visits the bar/restaurant at odd times (when the bar was closed) most especially on Sundays to avoid being bombarded with questions. The researcher literary became a lounge lizard in other to get what he wanted.



Plate 12: *Dilemma*, Ezike Stephen, crown corks, cement and wood, 2ft by 3ft, 2015, Photo by the Researcher.

3. Title of Work: *Dilemma*

The researcher took a leap in fusing a relief of a modelled and casted figure with his research material (crown corks) in his work titled *Dilemma*. The size of the work is about 2 by 3 feet and the medium include cement, wood panels and crown corks. It's a stylized human figure folding his hands. The face is oval and the facial expression of the figure gives impression of one that is sober. One leg is longer than the other. The background of the work is embellished with crown corks of two major colours, red and blue. The red colour was arranged in a manner to blend with the blue colour in an ascending manner. The blue crown corks was used to subdue the intensity of the red crown which creates impression of someone that is troubled with something but cannot voice it out or someone under tension.

Dilemma is a situation where one finds himself or herself in a cross road of choosing between two or more options. The researcher tried to use his medium of artistic expression to portray his

experience where he was faced with the option of choosing between his research work and a profitable job. This was represented on the figure folding his hand in sober reflection.

Functional Art works



Plate 13: *We delight in the beauty of butterfly, but rarely admit the changes it has gone through* (light off) Ezike Stephen, crown corks, 6ft x 3ft, Photo by the Researcher.

1. Title of Work: *We Delight in the Beauty of Butterfly, but Rarely Admit the Changes it has gone Through*

The work titled "We delight in the beauty of butterfly, but rarely admit the changes it has gone through" is a mixed media sculpture of a colourful butterfly in relief form mounted on wood panels with 4 lights on it, two on each wing. The colourful pattern was represented by varieties of crown corks. It's about 3 x 5 feet. The medium involved in executing the work include wood panels, crown corks, decorative bulbs, and metal sheets. In executing this work, a long wood panel of about 9 feet was cut into three panels, each panel is 3 feet, then joined together to form a board-like form of 3 by 5 feet. The butterfly like shape was formed with metal sheets and welded to form a relief impression. Two holes were bored at each of the wings of the butterfly. One at the top and one below, followed by the researcher's gumming of the fixed crown corks on the metal sheets to create a colourful pattern on the wings of the butterfly. The fancy light was fixed on the bored hole after which it was mounted on the board. Engraving and cutting were also made on the wooden panels to create impression of antenna and curvilinear form that suggest the flower it pollinates which was also represented using crown corks.

The butterfly's attractiveness is derived not only from the colour and symmetry, deeper motive also contributes to it. People would not find them so beautiful if they did not fly or if they flew straight and briskly like bees, or if they sting or above all if they did not enact the perturbing mystery of metamorphosis. The later assumes in our eyes the value of a badly decoded message, a symbol or a sign. The work derived its title from an anonymous proverb. It throws light on the way people visualize or see people who have achieved something in life. They tend to look at their success and achievements without x-raying the challenges they have passed through.



Plate 14: *Side stool*, Ezike Stephen, crown corks, 1 ft, 2013, Photo: by the Researcher.



Plate 15: *Table* (different view 2), Ezike Stephen, crown corks, 1 ft, 2013, Photo: by the Researcher.

2. Title of Work: *Table and Stool*

The above shows picture of table and a side stool designed and produced by the researcher. Being one of the researcher's numerous ideas and earliest concepts. A research contribution of new concepts as it concerns the art of recycling. He explored materials such as metal sheets and bottle covers to achieve this sculptural piece. First, a metal frame otherwise known as armature was constructed, then covered with metal sheets. Gradually the crown cork was used to cover the entire body. The above work however shows careful assemblage of different colours of crown corks in such an asymmetrical order that shows strong harmony achieved in varieties. The work also defined strength in dynamism, endless unity and interplay of highly visual aesthetics. Both works (the table and side stool) will be useful and suitable when placed in a sitting room or lounge.

Conclusion

From the experience and works displayed one can boldly say that art has left an indelible foot print on the exploration of various waste materials into aesthetic and functional art. As art continue to transcend the age of aesthetics and functionality to more fascinating and philosophical works, we tend to channel the mind towards using the unconventional material and make effort to make it the medium of artistic expression. Beyond the incorporation of the major art principles, these materials possess other functional qualities that encourage the creative processes, which emphasize the exploration and experimentation of ideas. Crown cork was the hallmark of the experimentation and exploits. Thus the researcher set out to explore unique, elegant and beautiful ways in which crown corks could be

effectively used to create utility and aesthetic artworks, encourage the use of the medium and also address social problems.

Social environment defines the human habitation with agreeable and conducive features. These include both human and natural endowments that offer sense of aesthetic appreciation and judgment. Our social environment exhibits lots of natural features ranging from beautiful scenes such as seascapes, landscapes and glamorous weather conditions among others. Man as a rational being is highly endowed with good sense of appeal and potentials, found these features indispensable to his life which makes him sensitive to his environment. All these natural environment form the bases of the artist's works. He was able to address some changes, messages and experiences encountered in course of his research using his medium of artistic expression which is crown corks.

Before the inception of this research work, artists have been working on crown corks, wine corks, plastic corks, can corks among other new media. The researcher was able to create unique and creative art works that will inspire and propel upcoming artists to explore the medium or other waste materials creatively. The outcome of the exploration of these crown corks shows that endless ideas can be generated from this medium. Instead of deforestation in search of wood to carve in this era of global warming, excavating earth to get clay in this era of earthquake or mixing chemicals that are harmful to our health, artists should use the waste materials littered in their environment. Thus artists should summon courage to explore and exploit expressively these waste materials yawning for people to utilize them.

Recommendation Arising from the Study

In the light of findings of this study, the following recommendations have been made which if taken seriously, will enhance the effective exploration of crown corks

- i. To achieve a huge sculptural piece using these crown corks within short time, it requires a number of hands in beating and flattening the medium.
- ii. If the work is meant to be out door, it should be coated with lacquer to prevent it from rusting as a result of rain.
- iii. Art students should be encouraged to explore on waste materials since the materials are readily available in their environment.