

Folklorization, Contemporaneity and Emotionality in the Sculptural Furniture of Tony Akudinobi

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Abstract

This research aims at the exposition of the sculptural-furniture forms overwhelmingly evident in Tony Akudinobi's art furniture works. This genre of art is rather obscure though with a high-end creative artistic production path which should be explored. Thus the objective is to examine this artistic sphere and its creative production ways, and to present a concise biography of Tony Chidi George Akudinobi, documenting his works and production methods. The project employs qualitative and biographical methods. The findings thus presented in this research highlights the urgent currency at which modern designers/artists hybridize designs and forms to actualize aesthetic utilitarianisms as it is particularly observed in Akudinobi's works. The anticipation thus, is that this project will tender an impactful source that X-rays unending possibilities in the sphere of creative utilitarianisms that budding artists and researchers could harness as an invaluable exposé.

Key words: Folklorization, Contemporaneity, Emotionality, Sculptural Furniture, Aesthetics

Introduction

Furniture is a word for movable objects intended to support various human activities such as seating and sleeping, for example chairs, stools, sofas and beds. Furniture is also used to hold objects at a convenient height for works (as horizontal surfaces above the ground, such as tables and desks, or to store things cupboards and shelves). Furniture can be a product of design and a form of decorative art. In addition to furniture's functional role, it can serve a symbolic or religious purpose. It can be made from many materials, including metal, plastic, and wood. Furniture can be made using a variety of wood working joints which often reflect the local culture as well as create the desired emotional impact.

Chidi Akudinobi is an avid investigator of Igbo culture and its extensive folklore. He adopts these cultural symbols and folklore as he explored the artist's vast atelier. He integrates them defiantly in sharp opposition to western views and beliefs. He is Igbo and believes in the supremacy of Igbo folklore pantheon. His works are stark and frontally which challenges most western furniture in their radical designs. However, he is true to the reality which modernity has overwhelmingly placed on the tracks of development as experienced in recent years. Thus, he agrees to use modern fabrics as aspects of soft finals and uses wood stains, and sometimes integrates metal and glass to achieve his creative quest and actualizations.

Akudinobi, thus has extensive clientele in Nigeria and overseas and has exhibited several times in Nigeria and abroad due to the uniqueness of his sculptural furniture that is grossly patented in his style of production.

This research is an inquiry on Tony Akudinobi and his global trend of art furniture productions. The objective of this study is to examine the sundry avenues of creative production involved in the

making of Akudinobi's excitingly provocative works in modern times. Furthermore, to provide the concise biography of Tony George Chidi Akudinobi and document his works and production techniques.

While it is evidently true that sculpture is an entrenched aspect of fine art, having multifaceted options, such as Assemblage art, Mobile sculpture, Environmental sculpture, Kinetic sculpture, Installation sculpture amongst others. This study is on the sculptural furniture of Akudinobi showing instances of Igbo folklore and cultural symbols on his furniture designs and productions.

Literature Review

Furniture as an age long practice dates back to pre-historic times. It started as soon as man began a non-nomadic living. Thus he saw the need to make utilitarian forms though crude as we may consider it today, yet it met the need of that time. As time progressed man continued to modify the objects that were relevant to him, at home and in his immediate environment. Pieces of furniture readily were part of the objects he tinkered continuously on, reforming its designs and forms to suit his need in various ways.

Furniture can be made using a variety of wood joinery techniques which often reflects the local culture, (wikipedia, 2014). Though in recent history designers and producers use steel, plastics, glass and sundry novel materials technology affords to produce wonderful pieces of furniture. We observed that in the nineteenth century till date furniture is usually defined by revival styles. The first three-quarters of twentieth century are often seen as the march towards modernism. One unique outgrowth of post-modern furniture design is return to natural shapes and textures.

Lorenz (2013) argues that African furniture is undergoing a transformation. Today's designs are contemporary, high-end and beginning to sport "made in Africa" branding. African Creations, (2005) states that besides its functional and home décor values, African furniture can also be dramatic with symbolic expressions of messages and guiding principles. These messages and principles act as a fabric for the peaceful co-existence of the tribes or the society as a whole. Each African furniture piece is designed to accentuate the traditional stature and purpose.

African sculptural furniture is alive and is sporadically practiced in different countries in Africa. In Nigeria it is evident in the works of Tony Akudinobi. Ugiomoh, (n.d) in "Made for Well-Grounded sensualism Period", stated thus; the furniture designs here by Tony Akudinobi are statements from a renascent spirit steeped in the traditions of African design re-presented in the contemporary.

It is important to survey Akudinobi's footprints in the sphere of art and design. In doing this we lent expression by Ugiomoh on Chinua Achebe's remark stated thus: "Art is man's attempt to create for himself a different order of reality from that which is given him, to offer himself a second handle on existence through his imagination".

Ugiomoh, observing the consummate creativity Akudinobi showcases in his indefatigableness, has this to say; "It is this reason I consider these designs as fulfilling diverse roles in the multiplicity of shapes and forms associated with them. I am intrigued by the geometry and mathematical precisions. I am intrigued in the way the forms evoke diverse art styles and forms that Africa has produced over the centuries. The sense of adequacy, which the objects throw up on mere appearance, remains their appeal. They are constructed answers to nature and its ordering powers.

Sieber (1980), avers that most African functional sculpture also have aesthetic qualities. He highlighted a typical traditional African stool, as an example, which has surface embellishment and can be regarded as a functional sculpture. In Igbo society, most carvings of traditional works reflect mask and masquerade in large numbers, and also they are well documented. Conversely, not much of furniture pieces are shown. However, we see carved thrones from places like Onitsha, Enugu-Ukwu, Nri and Awka.

Ogbu (2013) asserts that they carve with a combination of traditional tools and modern pneumatic tools which enable them carve very complex and intricate thrones..." "The Igbo modern

thrones are rich in symbolism and can be classified into (a) Human symbols, (b) Animal symbols, (c) Emblems, (d) Geometric and floral designs". ...groups of symbols serves as important activators of leadership, power and authority. This is why they have been in their diverse and sometimes profuse number to beautify and project leadership power in the context of modern Igbo leadership institution. Their diversity is a pointer to their different sources of borrowing in an urban melting point and in accordance with Ottenberg (1959) and Bravmann (1973).

Ogbu (2013), further comments that apart from the visually intimidating size and structure of many modern thrones, their symbolic power in projecting leadership authority can be seen from the variety of symbols used for their embellishment. These are carved symbols of swords, *Ozo* titled figures in their official regalia.

It is noteworthy to point out that furniture pieces for the royalty are salient in Igbo-land, thus we see genre like *Ozo* title stools, thrones belonging to Royalties like, the *Igwe of Achalla*, Awka North, L.G.A., His Royal Majesty Igwe-Alfred Nnaemeka Achebe (*Agbogidi*), the *Obi* of Onitsha, Igwe Peter Chikadibia *Ogbummuo of Nri*, His Royal Highness Igwe Osita Agwuna III, Igwe of Enugu-Ukwu and Eze Uzu II, the *Obi* of Awka Gibson Nwosu, just to mention but a few.

Concerning this aspect of Igbo furniture design and production, Ogbu (2013) further postulates that the energetic and dynamic Igbo are richly endowed with material culture which are incorporated into their artifacts and serve as the encapsulation of the people's ideology of Cosmology.

In terms of creativity, the Igbo are at the forefront of the crusade as epitomized in their skillful and expertise control of art media and material.... Thrones on their part show it as the embodiments of unrestrained authority and signal their commanding political status and influence. Its symbols embellish it with surface richness.

Thus we can see the trail of furniture from time immemorial, and how the Western world documents their advancement in all facets of living and endeavour, leaving a copious catalogue of how they have fared. As Ndi-Igbo (Igbo people), they are not left behind, particularly as they understand the richness of their culture woven into our art as evidenced in the sculptural furniture design/making of thrones in particular.

In conclusion the researcher opines that sculptural furniture such as the types created by Tony Akudinobi should be critically reviewed frequently and catalogued, to create an academic/research wealth base which will impact Africans and the rest of the world.

A Brief Biography of Tony Akudinobi

Anthony Chidi Akudinobi (b.1959) hails from Ihiala in Anambra State, Eastern Nigeria. Tony Akudinobi attended St. Mary's Primary School Port Harcourt in present day Rivers State, and Sacred Heart Primary School Odoakpu, Onitsha. He proceeded to Christ the King College, Onitsha between 1971 to 1975, and later attended Government College Umuahia from 1975 to 1976 to obtain Higher School Certificate. He moved back to Christ the King College, Onitsha to complete his higher school (1976-1977). Akudinobi gained admission to the prestigious Polytechnic, Institute of Management and Technology Enugu (IMT) 1977 to 1980 where he studied Marketing.

While in school in IMT, Enugu he made friends with notable contemporary artists such as Nsikak Essien (Painter), Boniface Okafor (Graphic communicator), Tony Umunna (Ceramist) and a host of other artists and students at that time. Little wonder, Tony Akudinobi though with a diploma in Marketing excelled in the field of Fine Arts. His sketches are fluid and well expressed. He told the researcher that he spent most of his time in the art studio with his contemporaries in IMT, Enugu. There his artistic flair emerged and blossomed.

Akudinobi, also a poet and an artiste was first published at 16, his book entitled "Crocodile Tears" was published in 1975 by Nwamaije Publishers, Enugu



Plate1: Tony Akudinobi in his studio
 Photograph: Courtesy of the writer

Tony Akudinobi has had myriads of invitations to exhibit in Nigeria and Abroad. He had joint exhibitions in the 29th India Trade Fair, New Delhi in 2009. Also in 2009 He exhibited in World Expo, Global Village Dubai, United Arab Emirate (UAE). In SAITEX 2012, South Africa he showcased slides. In the same year he had a solo exhibition in Nigeria titled Awakened Africa I. And in January 21 to February 7, 2015, he had another exhibition, Awakened Africa II. Akudinobi's works in private collections include Nsikak Essien Collection, Professor E.J. Alagoa, Zina Saro-Wiwa, and Shell Nigeria Collections respectively. Also his works are in Prof. Jude Akudinobi's Collection, California USA and in various private collections in Canada and Great Britain.

The Artist's Family Background

He had literate parents, his father Chief Silvanus Nwokorie Akudinobi was a retired principal of Boys High School Umunya, Anambra State. His mother Mrs. Anne Onyebuchi Akudinobi, a trained nurse, retired as a matron in Anambra State Ministry of Health. Tony is the third of the seven siblings in his family. Tony Akudinobi married to Ifeyinwa Christiana Akudinobi, a barrister, has four (4) children, three boys and a girl. In 1968 when the artist was nine (9) years old, his father took him and his siblings and returned to their home town in Umuloko, Ukpo, Nnewi South Local Government Area of Anambra State due to the Nigeria – Biafra civil war. This was a major event in his life as he had not been to his hometown until now. The civil war was a major even in his life. The artist's philosophy is encapsulated in brief as follows *"beauty an object shining in interactive light, escalating in exactitudes losing physicality to be beautiful"*.

Development Period and Early Life

In 1971 the artist visited a sculptor's studio in Onitsha. The sculptor whose name Akudinobi cannot remember hailed from Umuoji, Anambra State. The artist was in class one (1) in Christ the King College Onitsha at that period. The sculptor's works finished and unfinished were thrilling forms that resonated within the young Akudinobi and left permanent impressions.

Middle Period

Between 1988 and 1991 the artist started collecting artifacts from Idah, Benin and Anam, Aguleri, these three cultures are in Nigeria. In 2002 Akudinobi researched Igbo-Ukwu, visiting the National Museum, Igbo Ukwu. He researched motifs, symbols, and reliefs to understand their meanings and significance in Igbo culture. He was introduced to a notable man whom Akudinobi addressed as Principal Ike a native of Igbo-Ukwu whose abode was a repository of historical materials of art and culture of Igbo-Ukwu. Akudinobi had earlier considered antique floral furniture carvings very Elizabethan, and never had the marks of African culture. Thus Akudinobi was compelled to research Igbo culture and other cultures in Africa. In the course of meeting Principal Ike, the artist was overwhelmed to see "Igbo wedding ring" which spectacularly is different from the usual wedding ring of the western culture introduced to the world. Contrariwise, the Igbo wedding ring as Principal Ike showed to Akudinobi was a delicate *Uli* design drawn on a bride's body. This unique design elaborately drawn from between the bride's breast and spiraled down to the tip of the pubis. Principal Ike plucked a feather from an eagle he had in his residence and handed it over to Akudinobi and told him that he had just embarked on a long journey. Principal Ike requested that Akudinobi visit him again, but unfortunately he learnt on his next visit to meet with Principal Ike, that the principal had passed away.

The Present

In 2007, Akudinobi convened Africa Design Roundtable (ADR) in Port Harcourt, Rivers State Nigeria, chaired by Professor E. J. Alagoa. On Board were Professor Alabo Derefaka, a foremost archeologist, Dr. Chike Amene, and Professor Frank Ugiomoh. Together they produced the "advocacy document" which explains what the Africa Design Roundtable is all about. As written in the advocacy document, the Africa Design Roundtable (ADR) seeks to elucidate the essence of this re-awakening of Africa's art, culture and designed objects because these objects carry in them deeper sacred principles of our lives past which have been hitherto under-rated and under-appreciated due to a lack of knowledge and in some unfortunate cases misinformation. Through discourse and practical projects we intend to lend a vibrant voice to the clamour for defining our identity and hopefully provide well-defined and definite answers that will herald the achievement of creative genius.

Also as contained in the advocacy, Art is the greatest expression of man's desires. It is the highest testament that a civilization once blossomed anywhere. In an age of displacement and rancor, it will only be possible for the world to reach out to understand and support our heritage if it sees Africa not only in the eyes of today but also from the experience of those exposed to the uniqueness of different cultures and bring out this enlightenment not through speeches or rhetoric, but by conversations and physical experiences that stimulate and challenge the mind. The purpose of waking up such consciousness is to create a new mindset.

The future Akudinobi emphasized includes all the tenets contained in the advocacy document particularly as it is stated therein: Africa Design Roundtable is driven by the philosophy that humanity everywhere are endowed equally. But in order to actualize this values of this inherent potential, individuals within their cultures require a level of awareness. Enlightened individuals drive cultures, nations and the human race and ADR engages in group enlightenment discussions aimed at re-establishing tradition as a process of diffusion rather than protection. Simply put, looking to the past to shape the dynamics of the future.

Works and Techniques of Production of Tony Akudinobi

Tony Akudinobi's deep rooted convictions propel him in his creative path and quest. His creative astuteness engages the path and trajectory of uncanny techniques. His perspicacity in interlacing diverse materials, wood, fabric, leather and metal underlies his genius. In his own words, "in this art we find patterns, motifs and recorded principles of ways of life and living which may be man's salvation. That is why I raised Ethnika as a contemporary discourse of the past, refined in the present to be called African Urban Classics, just shouting out when the village goes to town" (Uzoatu, 2012).

Akudinobi further states, “The designing of furniture, for instance thus evinces character. By characterizing the design through structured aesthetic presence shines light onto self to define space or spaces in dialogue. Every design finds itself in dialogue with the owner and the maker, but asserting in its presence a light that dims, flickers or shines on its path to eventual physical destruction, but lives forever in the dialogue evoked”. Ugiomoh, (n.d), has high regards for Akudinobi’s designs, and writes thus:

“The works of art present here are coded in furniture of utilitarian types that are simply alluring”. Ugiomoh said further of Akudinobi, “They are in tandem with the African Spirit where works of arts are products of imaginative creative powers that are at once utilitarian as they are decorative and loud; desiring and demanding that we appropriate them, because we value them as products of our ingenuity”.

Throwing more light on the Hammerhead phenomenon, the notable film scholar and sibling of the Hammerhead founder, Dr. Jude Akudinobi, of the University of California, Santa Barbara, who has followed its germinal spark and assured mutations, over the years, has this to say: “In lots of ways, Hammerhead Furniture, draws from the dynamic transformation within contemporary Africa to project Kaleidoscopic expressions of African modernities, “Their sparkly conceptual spirit gives renewed life to indigenous art forms, inviting contemplation of the relationship between form and functionality, art and design, and crucially, cultural identities and living spaces. In essence, Hammerhead Furniture goes beyond the utilitarian, to give new shapes and meaning to the comforts of homes”.

As Chief Executive Officer of Hammerhead Integrated Ltd, which operates out of Aba and Port Harcourt, Nigeria, Tony Akudinobi sees designs as creative manipulations of life. Uzoatu, further states that, “The grist of Akudinobi’s art is all encompassing-intervolving Africa, life in general and the Holy Spirit”. In “History and Identity: Retranslating Tradition in Tony Akudinobi’s”, Ugiomoh, (2015) asserts that, “Mr. Akudinobi furniture may appear rustic, that look is deliberate. It locates us as it locates him within contemporary productions of culture. It does this within a natural human instinct to always seek essence in effort to link back to the roots. For example: what is the essence of seat? Lavishly ornamented, would such extra odd-on enhance the value of seating or call attention to the object”?

These are the thrusts Mr. Akudinobi’s works establishes in our consciousness. A commensurate initiative and venture, it squarely locates an African identity along-side other contemporary exploits in furniture design from other countries. Mr. Akudinobi’s exploits brings to the African in his/her living and interactive spaces, not only home-made furniture but home-like furniture. These home utility objects, the way they are presented, provide diverse options and exquisite finish from which the African identity comes alive, Ugiomoh asserts further.

In Hammerhead creative proclivities, we see wood sought out, wood used almost in its pristine form, yet so synthesized with other elements such as fabric to create a striking presentation. His unique approach in handling wood leaves bold and solid aesthetics, and conveys almost exquisite interactive diverse forms and concepts. Thus we have individualized pieces like *Ngiga*, *Akataka*, *Okpoka*, and many others (Plates 4, 7 & 9).

Classifications of Akudinobi’s Works

In classifying Akudinobi’s works, the researcher observed his extensive use of ideas from man-made objects, imitating shapes of living creatures (flora and fauna), and constant stylizations and abstractions dominantly characterize his works. Thus his works are classified as follows :(1). Ideas from man-made objects (2). Ideas from nature and (3). Philosophical / Abstract ideas.

Ideas From Man-made Objects

In man-made objects, we see Akudinobi tapping into Igbo folklore to create works like *Ite*. *Ite*, Igbo word for cooking pot is generously carved and shaped and arranged aesthetically to evoke Igbo culture in the most appreciable manner. This same creation also vividly points to the traditional Igbo water pot *Udu* (usually made of clay and fired to a hardened earthenware stage). In this piece which is artistically modified, it is designed a table and emphasizes the traditional relevance of the objects, though adapted for another purpose as we see in this art-piece titled *Ite* (plate 2).



Plate 2: Ite, wood, Chidi Akudinobi,

Onodu is another work the artist created drawing inspiration from traditional Igbo drum. The artist created it to form traditional seats. Its cylindrical shape is almost the exact shape of drums extensively used in Igbo land. This functional piece is upholstered with traditional *Akwete* textile material which in its self defines traditional Igbo textile designs uniquely woven and quite durable (plate 3). Another idea from man-made object is his work titled *Ngiga*. *Ngiga* also is just another stylized piece created with interlace of wood, metal, and animal skin to actualize a beautiful table piece (plate 4). Amongst the Igbos, *Ngiga* is a handcrafted object used for storage purposes.



Plate 3: Onodu, wood, Chidi Akudinobi,



PLATE 4: Ngiga, wood/metal/hide and skin, Tony Akudinobi

Ideas from Nature

The artist also draws inspiration from living creatures. We see this in his art piece titled *Nshiko* (Crab). Observing this work the researcher easily noticed the salient legs of a crab in motion. The piece is well fashioned in wood and aesthetically incised with the *ichi* marks (plate 4). Akudinobi also stylizes his themes, for example is his work titled *Ibeji* (twins)(plate 6). It is palpable that this same work is quite reminiscent of Ashanti Stool.



Plate 5: Nshiko, wood/fabric, Tony Akudinobi



Plate 6: Ibeji, wood, Tony Akudinobi

Philosophical/Abstract Ideas

The artist's philosophical/ abstract ideas features numerous works. Amongst them are *Ozue*, *Somadina*, *Akatata mmawu na abo*, *Oche Ike*, amongst many. The artist's versatility underlies his creative genius and reinforces his sundry presentations.

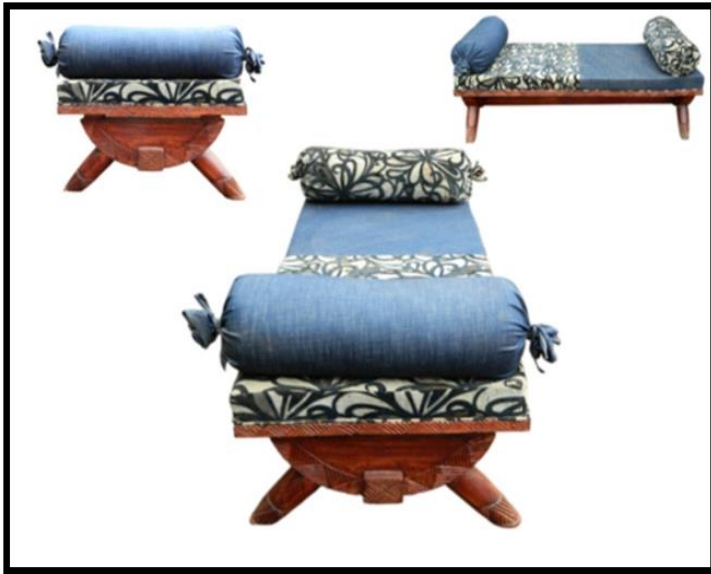


Plate 7: *Mgbidioma*
Wood/Fabric, Tony Akudinobi



Plate 8: *Nyelue* Wood/Fabric, Tony Akudinobi

Plate 9:
Somadina



Wood/Fabric/foam, Tony Akudinobi

Folklore in Akudinobi's Sculptural Furniture

It is very interesting to say that Akudinobi has consummate respect for his language thus he titles most of his creative pieces in Igbo language or expressions, and writes poetically on each work. Most works are incised with *Ichi* marks. *Ichi* or *igbu-ichi*, Akudinobi's adopted trademark is the ancient consummate traditional practice in Igbo land. "The nouveau-riche, the opulent personality in Igbo-land yielded himself to be scarified, a symbol of his distinguished prominence, wealth accumulation in his sphere" Akudinobi stated.

His works titled after Igbo folklore and culture are numerous, amongst them are *Ibeji, Nshiko, Mgbidi Oma, Ozue, Ite, Nyelue, Oche Ike, Ugwu afuru ego, Mpako, Njikoka, Akwu-Dike Dinta, Agada Ukwu, Akataka*. It is pertinent to look at the concepts of Akudinobi's proclivity in titling his works. In the artist's words, "the use of titles basically stand for multiple reasons. The contextual study of certain studies, reliefs and beliefs which are dying out in Igbo culture, so it's like re-awakening these things. For example the work titled, *Ojadili* is a story of a man crossing many thresholds of challenges in life..." (picture not included).



Plate 10: *Ugwu afuru ego*
Wood, Tony Akudinobi



Plate 11: *Isi ike*,
Wood, Tony Akudinobi



Plate 12: *Grand Stand*,
Wood/Metal/Fabric, Tony Akudinobi



Plate 13: Bush Boy,
Wood/ Fabric, Tony Akudinobi

Other contextual titles like *Abayi* (picture not included), stem from the emergence of kidnapers in Aba, Abia State, Nigeria. A dreadful and unsettling societal upheaval that led to many residents of the city of Aba relocating to other secured cities in the country. These contextual themes evoke dialogue within an African context.

Each title of his work elicits a story, a philosophy. Titles like *Somadina (In Igbo essence, they wish not to exist or live alone)* (plate 13), *Onodu agu na ibe ya, nwa aturu ejekwana ozi* (The sheep should not run errands on the avenue where lions are meeting) (plate 3).

Tony Akudinobi's Techniques of Production

With the aid of technology, Mr. Akudinobi orchestrates, defines and refines his creative pieces. However, the ancient wood carving tools, chisels, gouges, and adze remains his invaluable tools with which he forges his art pieces. In his vast production atelier, the researcher witnessed stacks, piles of various kinds of wood, they come in diverse forms and sizes (plate 14). There are sundry works in their various stages of completion. His assistants are seen in different sections of his cavernous studio busy and absorbed in actualizing the artist's intentions (plate 15 & 16).



Plate 14 : Stacks of wood for furniture design and production



Plate 15 : Work in progress

The logs which are carved and shaped are furthered to completion by joinery procedure. This is Akudinobi's consistent path of production. Sawn logs are moderately incised with '*lchi*' marks to embellish them in a uniquely African way bearing that indelible Igbo identity. This could be seen in one of his works titled The Bush boy (plate 13).



Plate 16 : Work in progress

As his works pass through stages of production, some are sometimes taken to various pneumatic tools/machines and electric powered tools in his studio to be further enhanced. There are Pneumatic saws, Scroll saws (used for delicate finishing or detailing), Barn saw, Big Planer, Spindle Molder, Table saw, Turning machine, Circular saws, Electric sanders, amongst others.

The pieces of wood that are completely forged and properly articulated are then sandpapered with electric sander in some areas or with hand sandpaper in other areas. As sanding is carried out, the assistants working feels the entire surface to make sure the smoothness achieved is user-friendly. All sandpapered works are primed with sanding sealer and re-sandpapered with very smooth sandpaper grade. Most works at this stage of production are then sprayed with neutral wood varnish to achieve a high gloss finish, after stain or dye is applied.

In the upholstery section of his atelier, the researcher saw vast stacks of fabrics. Mr. Akudinobi emphatically told the researcher that he employs the services of *Akwete and Opopo* weavers for most of his soft furnishings. Most works are finished with the works of these traditional textile makers. He also imports Kente fabrics made in Ghana to create a cross-cultural blend in his works. His upholsterers are well instructed to carry out their duties to conform to overall artistic inspiration and aspiration of the artist, who of course draws patterns for the upholstery work and selects the specific kind of fabrics for each production.

As the researcher was conducted round Akudinobi's studio, he saw specifics of finished works and how most of the finished works come in separate forms, the solid wooden forms and the soft and supple upholstered forms. The artist very often places the well finished soft upholstery on the solidly carved and articulated wooden aesthetics without permanently joining the two. Though in some concepts the artist instructs his assistants to fuse solid wooden aesthetics with supple parts permanently.

Taking a closer look at the stages of his production, and examining the artist's work titled Grandstand, the artist inspired by the intricacy involved in nests made by certain birds, assimilated this concept in welding pieces of metal together to form a unique prop. The wooden aspect of the work was done through the normal process of wood production design, cutting of patterns, joining, upholstering, and finishing (plate 23).

Stage One

The wooden aspect involved cutting the pattern from timber sawn into desired shapes and then fused by joinery technique. Some areas were mortised and socketed as it was supposed to. Proper sandpapering and sealer was applied and again sandpapered with extra smooth sandpaper grade. The next stage of wood staining is executed to create the desired stain effect finish. Finally four to six coatings of varnish was sprayed on the wooden work to achieve high gloss finish.

Stage Two

The upholstery work involved cutting wood to the desired sizes and shapes and joined by gluing and nailing. The base work which is to encase the foam formed before the upholstery fiber material and foam are integrated to create the soft finishing. The upholstery fiber material being encased with two inches high density foam is eventually covered with fabric.

Stage Three

Furthermore, the metal stand or prop which is forged after the semblance of a bird's nest is made by welding pieces of quarter inch rods and half inch rods together to achieve desired shape. The welded forms are sanded and coated with primer paint before final auto paint is machine sprayed upon the metal stand.

Stage four

These three aspects of this work, the wood, the upholstery, and the metal parts are then assembled together. First the wooden part is placed on the metal props and fastened with screw nails beneath and finally the upholstered parts are placed in the slots within the wooden pattern / frame.

Conclusion

Whitehead (2014) in Aesthetic Quotes posits that "Art is the imposing of a pattern on experience, and our aesthetic enjoyment is recognition of the pattern". The researcher agrees with Whitehead's assertion as it relates to Akudinobi's creative exploits. Akudinobi's works as veritable as they may be wields aesthetic influence on the beholder. They are forms in space. They complement spatiality and sundry patterns that subtly creep into space and dominate interestingly. Bernstein (2014), also in Aesthetic quotes postulates that "any great art work... revives and readapts time and space, and the measure of its success is the extent to which it makes one an inhabitant of that world – the extent to which it invites you in and lets you breathe its strange, special air".

Surely, Tony Akudinobi's art furniture delivers to the beholders that pleasant tangibility of utilitarian options which evokes instant appreciation that tickles the mind, emotion and the body and

delivers satisfaction of divergent proportions. It makes the people's world real and true, in tune with nature. His works in homes delivers mildly altered wooden forms, almost in their pristine stage evidently relocated from their original source in the forests, passing through the portal of human creativity where mutatis mutandis is evinced and moderate redefinitions made to achieve desirable aesthetics.

This research thus delivers to fore, the urgent demand to reposition people's concepts of sculptural furniture in Africa. To broadcast the originality of this art and its appreciation at home in Nigeria and abroad, letting its already existing impact, which flickers now to flare broadly unto useful applications in schools of art and aesthetic research.

Findings and Observations

In the course of working at this project, the researcher made the following observations: Sculptural furniture is relatively an unknown form of art in art schools and in the Nigerian society. Sculptural furniture as practiced by Tony Akudinobi is a highly creative aspect of art that should be researched and exposé made to encourage creative minds to plug into the same stream of creativity for exploits. Most artists are partly aware or completely unaware of the open doors to sculptural furniture which they can avail themselves of.

The pecuniary advantage it can afford artists and the overall revenue that can accrue to government if they encourage the development of this art and facilitate exhibition of these kinds of art globally. There is no government art gallery or Museum in Nigeria today that has exclusive reserves of sculptural furniture. If there is, the public will come to grips of the fact that creativity is unlimited, and those given to the promptings of creativity can move into this sphere of art and expand it.

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