
BEAD PAINTING AS A CATALYST OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT'S VEHICLE IN NIGERIA VISUAL ARTS SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

The development that meets the needs of a Society without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs can be said to be sustainable. In Visual Arts for example bead can no longer be limited for the use of jewelries and personal adornment purpose. The uniqueness of beads as a creative painting material can unfold its numerous tendencies. Bead painting as a means of sustainable development is a possibility. Though presently, few artists defy its traditional usage as craft materials and for body adornment. The need to therefore expose its possibilities in two and three dimensional works shall be adequately synergized for the much needed sustainable development in Nigeria Visual Arts sector.

Key Word: *Development, tendencies, adornment, synergy*

INTRODUCTION

The concept of sustainability connotes different things to different people. It could mean support, help, encouragement, to keep alive or maintain. The fact remain that many part of humanity around the world still live without adequate assistance and encouragement, even in basic areas like access to water, light (energy), food and shelter. The need to address areas like poverty, decent jobs, sustainable development and availability and affordable materials to produce the needs for human satisfaction are germane in Nigeria as a nation. Apparently, education is vital in facilitating the much needed sustainable development in any system or nation. According to Shah (2012) the "quality of life is a system, it is desirable to be physically healthy, but what if you are poor and do not have access to education?" To tap the optimum performance of education therefore, skills, manpower and material availability are key, should be identified and maximally utilized. Technical and Vocational Education present paradigm areas where these are exemplified.

Visual art is a typical example of areas or skill with materials problems or challenges. Visual Art according to Uzoagba (2002) is more than the ability to draw and paint pictures only. Aesthetic development and financial benefit among others are accruable privileges derivable from the profession. Visual Art also is a major ingredient and wheel of sustainable development in our nation. In other to maximally benefit from visual art advantages therefore, the need to bring to the fore some methods and underutilized materials that can provoke the needed sustainability in Nigeria cannot be downplayed. In this regard, the need to engage and encourage bead painting as a sustainable development fuel in Nigeria Visual Arts sector is vital. The reason is stem from the fact that the usefulness of beads has been unduly restricted to craftworks, personal adornment, jewelries and decoration of objects and

things before now. However, critical appraisal of bead as an important material reveals its significant usefulness in the two and three dimensional arts. Though few successful artists in Nigeria like Jimoh Buraimoh (B.1943), Kunle Adeyemi (B.1959) and pockets of few upcoming artists presently utilizes beads for two and three dimensional arts' synthesis. But the fact is that more artists should be encouraged, engaged, experiment and to utilize beads for aesthetic and or for visual decoration purposes. Through this, no doubt, the needed economic sustainable development shall be galvanized in the visual art sector in Nigeria. Resultantly also, this shall result in benefit and generation of employment opportunities. It shall also in turn reduce poverty which naturally will pave way for the needed sustainable growth in Nigeria as a nation. These shall assist to fulfill vision 20:2020 of the present administration.

Bead Usefulness

Beads are perhaps one of the most universal art forms. They are attractive and varied items of jewelries and an important component of personal adornment. They are usually round and perforated object which are customary strung to form necklaces or bracelets or attached to garments and articles of clothing for decorative effect. Vanguard media [2012] states that beads are made of a great varieties of materials namely; glass, copper, wood, silver, brass, aluminum, bone, horn, shell, coral, pearl , jet, amber, precious stones, ceramics, and plastics.

According to the write-up on beads which is available on permanent exhibition display in the National Museum, Onikan, Lagos – the use of beads in Nigeria dated as far back as the Nok culture – 900BC - 200 AD, where a good number of quartz stone bead have been recovered. Meanwhile, beads have always played a prominent role in the life of Nigerians. They are associated with royalty and symbol of wealth and rank especially among traditional religion member. Social and ritual ceremonies such as the coming of age of young man and woman, wedding ceremonies, the naming of children and funerals of elders were all occasion for the use of beads. Beads are used as ornament, jewelries as well as royal insignia among the Yorubas of the South Western part of Nigeria. According to Okunlola (2003) "Fulani nomads use bead as necklace. They are also worn as armlet and at times for magical purposes".

Beads are also status symbols in the ancient world and in the present day Africans, as religious artifacts with the Buddhist, Christian and Islamic faith and as a standard medium of barter throughout the world at a particular point in time. Each bead is therefore a capsule of cultural information containing a fascinating tale of the origins of its materials, its manufacturer, its multifold usage, perhaps, its travels and certainly its potent symbolism. Despite the above traditional usage of the beads, the usefulness of bead as visual artwork is vital and should not be down played. These actually inform this paper.

Bead Painting in Nigeria

Not much literature exists about bead painting in Nigeria. This may be because few artists engage this unique material to execute their two or three dimensional works. Some few artists are however dedicated bead painters. They includes: Jimoh Buraimoh (B. 1943) and Kunle Adeyemi (B. 1959). Jimoh Buraimoh is a prolific oil painter, etching as well as his signature – bead paintings and mosaic murals. Jimoh Buraimoh is among the influential artists to emerge from the 1960's experimental workshop known as the Oshogbo movement. His work intermingle Western media and Yoruba style and motifs. Buraimoh is among the artists permanently displayed at the Smithsonian Museum of African Art Washington DC. His colorful large scale mosaic murals adorn public areas in Nigeria, Europe and USA.

Contemporary (2008) reveals that in the history of modern art in Africa, Chief Buraimoh is the continent's first bead painter, having in 1964 created a contemporary art form inspired by the Yoruba tradition of incorporating beadwork design into ceremonial fabric and beaded crown. Jimoh Buraimoh represented Nigeria artists at the first all African Trade fair in Nairobi, Kenya in 1972. His works was presented at the second World Black Arts festival (FESTAC 77) in Lagos. In 1983, he became the 1st Nigeria to be awarded a membership in contemporary World Association of Mosaic Artists based in Ravenna Italy and contributed to global public art statement for world peace in Ravenna's Parco Della Pace.

Another artist that is also utilizing bead frequently in his artwork is Kunle Adeyemi (B. 1959) The Yaba College of Technology Lagos Fine Art Teacher has exhibited locally and outside Nigeria. He was a resource person at Art workshop in Lindesberg and Orebro Arts Schools Sweden. In his solo show in Sweden, titled "The beauty in Freedom, he created nostalgic feelings in the minds of people residing in Sweden during his visit. The show's theme leans toward freedom, Adeyemi (2011) reveals that he "brought the need to explore the visual language to portray the ills of my society, give succor to the hungry, the deprived, the tortured, the downtrodden and at the same time, be contemporaries with happening of the time" Evidently, new materials and technology were employed by kunle to complement his toast material-bead.

Sustainable Development Potentials in Bead Painting in Nigeria

Painting is the method of spreading colours or pigment on a prepared "ground". The "ground" could be canvas, board, paper and any surface that can absorb colours. Bead painting could be viewed as utilizing the same method with pigment painting-execution. This is because the placement utilizes techniques in pigment painting. The colour flow for example is considered in chiaroscuro style that is dark to light effect. This tends to bring out solidity. The colour scheme to represent images and sceneries are expected to flow from dark to light perspective to conform to the artist style. A finished bead painting is always attractive and aesthetically appealing. This is as a result of its unique and respect commanding attributes. Beads naturally play significant roles in the life of many Nigerians. For example, they are associated with royalty, symbol of wealth and rank especially among traditional religion members. Invariably when beads are engaged as a material for an artwork such piece

intrinsically control respect accorded bead as a material. Attraction is therefore recorded which lead to patronage of the works. The artist is therefore encouraged and constant when his works are purchased. The wheel of sustainable development shall therefore be supported when patronage are recorded in the vocation. Information release by Lagos museum indicates that the use of beads in Nigeria dated back to as far back as the NOK culture 900BC – 200AD. It is a known fact that people honour and respect ancient items. Beads, if properly utilize for painting therefore because of its history shall be patronized and it shall extract research attention. This reasoning is true because the material utilized will be regarded as a heritage of the people. It is expected therefore that such product shall attract higher prize in near future. The present demand will therefore be encouraging this. It will in turn sustain development in our nation.

Further, in Nigeria, religious and mythological materials are no doubt crowd puller. Though, religion and mythical things tend to be seen as unreal and controversial. But the respect it commands is unprecedented. Bead, therefore being ancient mythological and religious items attracts great attention. It is obvious therefore that using bead to execute paintings shall encourage higher patronage than normal painting executed on board or canvas. This also shall lead to sustainable enlargement. Eyitayo (2012) notes that Jimoh Buraimoh's beadworks addresses among others, the subject of priesthood with the expected characteristics of the holder of that office. Priests are respected beings, believed to be endowed with wisdom, knowledge, understanding and ability to consult with the spiritual power. The holder of such office and their admirers naturally tend to value any symbols, images and prestigious articles that exemplify them. Beads when utilized for painting therefore attract good sale from the artist. The artist therefore shall be persistent and this shall translate to development even in the nation.

Limitation of Bead as a Painting Material

Limitations are hindrances and impediments. If bead is engaged, like every other mixed materials engaged for art works, it has its short comings. This may account for the reason why few artists employ it for their piece.

First, because bead is associated with jewelries, ritual and body adornment materials, it is often seen as craft material. Craftworks are majorly seen as naïve, mechanical and assume not to require serious cognitive domain (reasoning faculties) in execution process. So, some artists have a feeling of being inferior if they carry out works with beads as its materials.

Second, bead painting tend to consume much more time than the normal painting- time of execution. This is because; ample moment is needed for beadworks production. This is evident in the time used to select colours, interplay it for solidity so that great designs will be brought out from the work.

Furtherstill, the durability of bead work is very important. If the glue or binder used is not effective enough, some of the beads could be detached from the main work that is the

'ground'. This shall thus render the beauty of the work useless. Moreover, realistic representation of beadwork may be naturally hindered. This is because the bead unlike normal pigment may not be able to flow in required direction as desired. Most beadworks therefore appear abstract or semi abstracted. This is evident in most Jimoh Buraimoh's works.

Recommendation for Bead Painting to Function as Sustainable Development Vehicle in Nigeria

For bead to be an appropriate material for painting work, the following recommendations are put forward:

First, for the binder to be effective in holding the bead to the 'ground' it is recommended that Epoxy (Araldite) gum should be used in fastening the bead to the board. This shall prevent immediate and future damages to the work

Second, appropriate colour should be chosen to enhance beadwork; otherwise the finish work may appear disorganized and less appealing.

Moreover, artist engaging in bead artworks may consciously adopt semi abstract style of painting so that the impression of output may be registered. Jimoh Buraimoh is one artist that utilizes this style regularly; it has even become his style.

Finally, for bead to be an acceptable material for painting exercise, the artists and the observers should see bead materials as serving beyond the purpose of body adornment, religious items and mythological relics. Yes, to bring sustainable development to the visual Art sector, bead painting techniques should be conspicuously embraced by the artists and should be well encourage by observers and collectors. The much needed sustainable development shall be witnessed by the Visual Art sector, and by extension Nigeria economy shall experience tremendous sustainable progress if bead painting is embraced by artists in Nigeria.

Summary:

Sustainability is seen in this paper as engaging bead material by more artists to produce painting works for better growth in the visual art sector. The paper observed that really bead is associated with body adornment, religious items and mythological relics. But the fact remains that few artists like Jimoh Buraimoh and Kunle Adeyemi that utilizes this materials are raking in a lot of money through the technique. Though some limitation as regard the original function of beads and the binding challenge to the ground in term of application among others was identified, but the paper challenged artists to think beyond the box, use appropriate materials and consciously embrace bead painting or design so that the much needed sustainable development in the visual art's sector in this twenty first century can be actualized by artists. This is expected to translate to improve financial opportunity not only to

art sector but to galvanize and kinetize the Nigerian economy tremendously, thereby reducing the extreme poverty and financial incapacitation from our nation-Nigeria.

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