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RESEARCH ARTICLE:

Contemporary Nigerian Artists' Response to Postmodernist Trends and Its Implications for Effective Artistic Growth

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Abstract

The arguably retrogressive development of infrastructures, socio-political systems and technology in most African states casts a shadow of doubt on Africa's claim to modernity and by extension, postmodernity. Within the context of the arts, the argument of this paper is premised on two questions: Why do some Nigerian artists claim to be post-modern? What is the viability of such a claim, in a country that, one is wondering whether it is even a modern society? To proffer answers to these questions, the paper enunciates a historical overview of contemporary African art and artists vis-à-vis the generalized concept of post-modernity, from the subjective view that its conceptualization and understanding, have a direct influence on contemporary artistic practice and expression. The paper then interrogates certain arts, within the context of their postmodern trend. The paper's conceptual framework is premised on Peroziosi's (2009) postulation that artworks are reflective of their original time, place, and production circumstances. The authors conclude that contemporary artists' responses to and their manifestation of postmodernist trends are such that can be categorised into three: Those who aspire faithfully to postmodernist principles; those who are inspired by postmodernism but want to progress their society by socio-political and economic reflections, criticism and advocacies as well as those who ordinarily would not have been artists perhaps, if not for the freedom provided by postmodernism.

Keywords: *postmodernism in Nigeria; Nigerian artists; postmodernism; modernism in Nigerian art*

Introduction

We organised a talk show called Dandalin Muhawara, focused on the state of the arts in Nigeria, which took place on February 2nd 2022. To ensure inclusivity and accommodate interested participants from anywhere, we sought to establish a virtual participation platform. This was because the conference room of the Department of Fine Arts, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria Nigeria could not take the anticipated crowd and therefore, there was a need to restrict the number, due to health and other considerations. However, as the time to start the programme drew near, there was a power outage, and with it went the internet connection, as it depends on electricity for its infrastructure to function. While frantic efforts were being made to activate the pre-arranged alternative power source, these authors reflected on the state of affairs in their country, Nigeria. That reflection birthed two questions: why do some Nigerian artists claim to be post-modern, and what is the viability of such a claim, in a country that is wondering whether it is even a modern society? These two questions can indeed, be asked of the majority of the African states. It is wished that the answers to these two questions are simple, considering the acknowledged globalised nature of today's world. Therefore, this paper will attempt to enunciate briefly, and in simple terms, a historical overview of contemporary African art and artists *vis-à-vis* the generalised concept of post-modernity, from the subjective view that its conceptualisation, and by implication, its understanding, has a direct influence on contemporary artistic practices and expression. The paper will then interrogate certain arts, within the context of their postmodern trend. The aim is to ask, rhetorical questions rather

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than providing answers, depending on the individual school(s) of thought. First, the paper shall account for its conceptual basis.

Several theorists and thinkers have offered explanations for the judgement of beauty and value in art. For instance, the formalist judgement of beauty places emphasis on the form of an artwork. In the Kantian account, decisions about beauty are made based on formal elements such as lines and colours (Herrington, 2016; Zangwill, 1999). In an intellectual disagreement with the Kantian explanation of beauty, which ultimately proposes the idea that beauty should be acknowledged and appreciated regardless of individual and cultural preferences or inclinations, Eaton (1999) favours the contextualist approach to the judgement of beauty. For Eaton, knowledge of the contextual factors surrounding something is important before deciding its beauty. To further illustrate, Eaton (1999: 13) asks: "Would one not be puzzled to hear a person insist that, although evil, the gas chambers used by Nazi Germans to commit genocide were nonetheless quite beautiful?". Eaton's standpoint here illustrates the notion that nothing exists in isolation. She argues that there is no such thing as the Eurocentric notion of beauty for beauty's sake. When beauty is rid of its cultural, social, historical, environmental, and creative contexts, Eaton (1999: 14) argues that "beauty stops mattering." While these views and counter-opinions to the logic of beauty are arguably valid in their distinctive contexts, this paper leans towards the contextualist approach to the recognition of beauty and the appreciation of art. To appreciate 'the part', 'the whole' requires consideration. For it is in relation to the overall purpose and existential nature of 'the whole' that the essence of 'the part' is deduced. To fully understand what an artwork portends, its temporal, spatial, and cultural dimensions would have to be properly accounted for. Likewise, the form, content, value, status, and identity of an artwork can only be properly interpreted and understood in relation to the artwork's cultural and historical contexts. "An appropriate interpretation of the work, therefore, demands some pertinent knowledge of this context" (Deines, 2011: 24).

In furtherance, the argument of this paper glides on the contextualist view of Preziosi (2009: 7) that "an artwork is reflective, emblematic or generally representative of its original time, place, and circumstances of production". Preziosi highlights the prevailing approach taken by most Art Historical inquiries, emphasising the underlying assumption that artworks inherently hold valuable evidence regarding their temporal, spatial, and contextual origins. The author posits that crucial aspects, such as the materials and the technology employed in creating the artwork, can provide significant insights into its production timeframe, geographical association, and the circumstances surrounding its creation. Additionally, the author asserts that the examination of time, place, and circumstances often yields distinctive and profound evidence concerning an artwork's period, national identity, and potentially even the identities of the individuals responsible for its creation. By implication, if a work does not reflect its original time and space of production and existence, it will likely bear signs of external influence in its entity. This insinuates that for a proper understanding of contemporary Nigerian artists' responses to postmodernist trends, they, and the works they produced, would have to be considered within, as products of the time, place, and circumstances of their existence. Similarly, it will not be in error to question their embrace of modernity and postmodernity as an identity marker, within the context of the spatiality and temporality of the system and circumstances surrounding their production and existence.

African Art, Modernism and Postmodernism

The mixed nature of contemporary African art is traceable to its 'modern' origin (in terms of the period) at the early stages of colonialism in Africa. The label 'African' in the colonial contemplation of the art of Africa begs a rethink. The colonial era is believed to have instituted a culture of subordinating, not just African art, but also its processes, thereby, introducing new concepts, materials, and processes, generally regarded as modern (in terms of ideas and materials). Consequently, African artists, depending on their individual encounters, experiences, and opportunities embraced different forms of modern art and pursued it. In similar thought, Ogbechie (2008: 8) remarks that "modern African artists… achieved mastery of European conventions of representation and its discourse."

In Ghana for instance, the contributions of individuals like Kofi Antubam in the progression of Ghanaian art into modernism are noteworthy. Kofi Antubam's multiple identities as an artist, an art historian, and an educator were leveraged in his quest for the development of art in colonial and postcolonial Ghana. Without mincing words, Kwami (2013: 218) declares that "the most influential modern artist of Ghana who came into conversations in my mother's circle was Kofi Antubam." Kwami argues that Antubam's works and designs were specifically illustrative of the

modernist philosophy of the "African personality", which was earlier sponsored by Kwame Nkrumah as a catalyst against colonialism and towards postcolonialism. Kwami argues further that Antubam's teaching and studio practice was deliberately and particularly characteristic of the African approach to modernism, which fuses European visual elements with tradition-based artistic cultures to create uniquely African hybridised expressions. The display of such creative intelligence and duality by these pioneering African modernists aligns with an assertion by Enwezor (2002, as cited in W/Giorgis, 2004: 139) that "the duality of the identities of modern African artists, writers and thinkers inhabited in the early years of decolonisation".

Concerning the emergence and development of modern art in Ethiopia, names like Aganahu Engeda (1904-1947), Afewerk Tekle (1932-2012), Ale Felege Selam (1924-2016), Gebre Kristos Desta (1932-1981), and Skunder Boghossian (1937-2003), come to mind. These individuals, through their notable contributions in staging historically iconic exhibitions, establishing formal art schools, and fostering intellectuality in the post-invasion art of Ethiopia (Bekele, 2004), laid the foundation for the training and thriving of other artists in the politically vibrant Ethiopia. Aganahu Engeda for instance, features prominently in Bekele's (2007) recount of Ethiopia's visual culture history and the country's history of art exhibitions. The first art exhibition in Ethiopia was held from 1 to 15 November 1931. Although dominated by foreign artists, Engeda was featured as the only indigenous artist and as the first-prize winner. His participation in this particularly significant exhibition in the history of Ethiopian modern art, as well as his embrace of the modern style of expression having trained in Paris, earned him the reputation as the first modern artist in Ethiopia (Bekele, 2007). Menhat Helmy (1925-2004), Mahmoud Mukhtar (1891-1934), Gazbia Sirry (1925-2021), Inji Efflatoun (1924-1986), and Ghada Amer (b.1963) are a few of the names one keeps encountering in different researchers' construction of Egyptian modern art history (LaDuke, 1989; Auricchio, 2001; Okeke-Agulu, 2006; Ogbechie, 2018; Seggerman, 2019; Kane, 2022). Even more significant in this case, is the pivotal role that women played in the development and sustenance of modern art in Egypt (Kane, 2022; Okeke-Agulu, 2006). For instance, Okeke-Agulu (2006) argues that Gazbia Sirry is a great example of women who, through their work, have immensely "contributed to the discourse of nationalism, cultural emancipation, gender politics, and individual freedoms within the sovereign, modern state." A major highlight of her contribution is the co-establishment of the Group of Modern Art (GMA) in 1948 with fellow young artists such as Ghada Amer, who were her contemporaries (Okeke-Agulu, 2006; Ogbechie, 2018; Kane, 2022).

In Nigeria, Ben Enwonwu's embrace of modernity, for instance, was not an absolute plunge. While he held the encountered strands of European modernity on one hand, being a bona fide product of the Igbo cultural heritage, he maintained a strong connection to his cultural source on the other. He constantly expressed the implications of this curious amalgam in his works as he unravelled his African modernist identity (Ogbechie, 2008). This reaffirms Vogel's (1991: 28) submission that "African artists select foreign ingredients carefully from the array of choices and insert them into a pre-existing matrix in meaningful ways … not as a sign of their domination by the West, or of the repudiation of their African heritage, but in terms of their own culture".

Plate i: David Koloane, Power I, 2010. Mono Print, 37.3 x 57.7cm. (DavidKrutProjects n.d.)

In addition to the contributions of proponents like Gerard Sekoto to South African modernism, individuals such as Cecil Skotnes of the Polly Street Centre and David Koloane of the Thupelo workshops, were also major protagonists in the propagation of modernism in an African state grappling with the legacies of apartheid. Koloane's work titled *Power I* (see plate i), is an example of his works that symbolically represents that power struggle. Skotnes inspired and steered budding artists at the Polly Centre, such as Sydney Kumalo, towards artistic modernism, as a result of his fervent belief in creative entrepreneurship and his keenness towards graphic forms of expressionism. For example, Kumalo's artwork titled *Three Figures* (see plate ii) demonstrates a distinct amalgamation of sculptural and painterly elements, aligning it with the abstract expressionist approach to art creation. This blending of influences creates a cohesive and unified composition. It is noteworthy that this shared affinity between *Three Figures* and the works of renowned artists like Pablo Picasso and Alexander Archipenko is not unexpected, given the modernist tutelage-cum-apprenticeship that likely influenced the artist's development.

Koloane on the other hand, embraced and expressed his modernist tendencies at the annual Thupelo workshop through his gestural mark of abstract expressionism. As South African artists participated in the annual workshop, they often returned to their base with a particularly stimulated creative appetite and an urge to create. Despite such impacts on the creative ecosystem of South Africa, the works of some Thupelo participants like Koloane were subjected to political criticism for their visual affinity with Western modernism. The trend at the time was for the works of black South African artists to carry political notions of rejection against the legacies of colonialism and apartheid (Rankin, 2011).

Plate ii: Sydney Kumalo, *Three Figures,* 1981. Mixed Media, 69 x 94.5cm (DymanGallery 2023).

Nonetheless, the pre-independent and immediate post-independent eras, in most African states including Nigeria, gave rise to what you will call, 'the emergence of the real modernist artists', that is, from its conceptual understanding. These artists were largely intellectual and therefore appropriated their various forms of expression for the benefit of the various independence agitations that were prevalent at that time (Ogbechie, 2009; Okeke-Agulu, 2015). Indeed, immediately after independence, they re-appropriated their craft, for various advocacies that, in their diverse opinions, will help in fostering sustainable and effective development of their societies, as creatively illustrated in Okwui Enwezor's 1997 exhibition in Johannesburg – The Short Century Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa 1945 – 1994 (Enwezor, 2001). Thus, African artists practised art that was relevant to their immediate society and in doing so aligned with their contemporaries in politics, science, and engineering, for what is generally known as nationalist efforts at developing their societies. According to Hassan (2002: 234), such efforts were predictable as the emphasis on politics was strongest in post-colonial societies and the need for change was imperative in the face of persistent poverty, disease, and corruption.

African art and artists, within the context of modernism, worked to be relevant in their societies. According to Snyder (2022: 1), "modernity was associated with individual subjectivity, scientific explanation and rationalisation, a decline in

emphasis on religious worldview, the emergence of bureaucracy, rapid urbanisation, the rise of nation-states, and accelerated financial exchange and communication". Thus, as most of the African societies continued to evolve, the realisation that the level of development within the nation-states limited their acceptance among the developed states, led to a deliberate and conscious effort to establish themselves as equals. Hence, Mudimbe (1991: 35-36) notes that they refused to be pushed aside. Thus, they gave expression to new ideas. For example, they were ready to work for different clients, fulfilling new functions, and adopting new materials, as well as, being inspired by foreign art. However, a combination of the commodification and manipulative neo-colonialist tendencies of art patrons, as largely championed by galleries, later led to certain new reactions within Africa. Regrettably, in this paper's opinion, such reactions led contemporary African artists into a 'blind plunge' that is today referred to, as postmodernism in art.

Postmodernist Trends and some Nigerian Artists' Responses

The attempt by contemporary African artists to free themselves from the structured modernist principles, which were allegedly being manipulated by art patrons, in the opinion of this paper, led them to blindly embrace postmodernist tendencies. Blindly because, as this paper believes, some of the trends being expressed are not "reflective, emblematic and representative of their place, time and circumstances of the environment" (Preziosi, 2009: 7). For the avoidance of doubt, the African environment, using Nigeria for instance, is replete with socio-economic difficulties, poverty, diseases, religious extremism, and security challenges; modernism seeks to address and indeed, have largely been addressed in societies referred to as developed. Within that context, one is tempted to ask if there is sufficient justification for postmodernism practices.

Fundamentally, most postmodern arts possess political dimensions, if you like, agenda to them (Butler, 2002: 2). At the very core, is the desire to question structures and status-quo, and perhaps, to introduce a dangerous possibility of open-endedness to existing formalities, art without borders and spaces without boundaries. In Melville's (2004: 83) quest to capture the essence of postmodernism by way of definition, he tenders that "postmodernism is just the collapse of universals, so it can only ever be local and strategic." It is possible to argue that this implies that the neatly constructed meanings of language, signs, symbols, and objects do not and will not matter to the postmodernist. Thus, postmodernism strategically "announces itself only in order to disqualify all those terms that would let it mean and matter the way 'modern' and 'modernist' have" (Melville, 2004: 83). So, once postmodernism is invoked, it is expected that established meanings and structures of creative logic and formality in art, culture, and society cease to be universal. It is this nature of postmodernism, which sometimes eludes logical and formal apprehension and comprehension, that birthed Butler's (2002: 12) submission in his very short introduction on postmodernism that "we should be prepared to see many postmodernist ideas as very interesting and influential, and as the key to some good experimental art – but at best confused, and at worst simply untrue."

Postmodernist principles are based on a direct rejection of most, if not all, of the bases for which modernism thrived. For example, while modernism, among other things, is also an understanding of a generation's technology, its innovations, governance, and socio-economics, as well as, an engagement in organisational and knowledge advances; postmodernism on the other hand, is of the view that (i) there is no objective reality (ii) there is no scientific or historical truth (iii) reason and logic are more conceptual constructs (iv) language is semantically self-contained, or self-referential, and (v) reject philosophical foundationalism among several other principles. In other words, it is a direct rejection of all that modernity stands for. Postmodernism has, therefore, opened the door for, in this paper's opinion, rejection of order and structure, as well as anything that encourages organisation, fairness, and nationalism or patriotism. This is because of its highly subjective reliance on individual ideas, vision, history and economics, and individuality in social structure, on the basis of individual freedom, generally upheld as fundamental human rights. It is within the context of postmodernism principles, to be fair to it, that contemporary African art and artists became largely freer. This helped them to determine their creative world, whom they work for and what they express, by participating in a globalised world, whose creation is a result of 'advanced modernism'. Unfortunately, and to some extent, unknowingly to them, the 'freedom' is controlled freedom by advanced socio-economic and technological societies, through their stronghold of the super-highway called The Global Village. Several examples are there, as realities of this trend.

For example, Jelili Atiku, a Nigerian performance artist, expresses himself in a postmodernist form, but whose art content is modernist in nature. This is because, his performances thematically confront issues of political manipulation in Nigeria, poverty and social injustice (Chaturvedi, 2016). Similarly, Gbaden (b. 1966) justifies his postmodernist practice on the basis of the leverage postmodernism provides for the "blurring of the hard edges of materials and formats especially as media matter, text, time-based…" (Gbaden, 2014: viii quoting Kleiner and Mamiya, 2005 and Sullivan, 2005). He therefore embarked on an exploration that produced kinetic hangings that were mounted on-site as commentaries on the social barriers found in Nigeria. Gbaden (2014: viii) emphatically states that his "ideology requires breaking most art rules since traditional vocabulary is insufficient." Consequently, he went ahead to produce mounted hangings, which he christened 'walls', based on specific themes. Incidentally, they all sought to address issues that modernism grapples with. Among them are race, religion, gender, power, politics, ethnicity, and poverty, just to mention six. An exemplary instance of his installations can be observed in Plate III, where he presents the thought-provoking *Wall of Gender*. Through this work, Gbaden seeks to engage viewers in a dialogue surrounding the complexities and dynamics inherent in gender-related discussions, which span from the current gender identity crises to the issues surrounding the socio-cultural compartmentalisation and the discriminatory allocation of gender roles and expectations.

Plate iii: Gbaden Blaise, Wall of Gender, 2010. Hanging Canvas, Acrylic and Ropes, 336 x 503cm (Gbaden 2014: 244)

Correlations can be drawn from South African artists, who, like their Nigerian counterparts, practice what this paper will refer to, as adaptive postmodernist trends. Two examples are Penny Siopsis (b. 1953) and William Kentridge (b.1955). Kentridge for example, is reported to express himself in prints, drawings, and more recently animated films (Harvard Film Archive, 2012). The animated films are products of the creative use of his skills in drawing and his leveraging of filming technology, to create scenes. Perhaps, another major trend of postmodernism in contemporary African art practice is the foray, as a result of the freedom it offers to creatives, without any background training in mainstream visual art practice; this is with due respect to such artists' attainments and achievements. An immediate example, in this case, is Victor Ehikhamenor (b. 1970). His educational background is in English literature, which itself is a form of artistic expression. However, he is mostly known for his visual art creations, culminating in designing book covers for renowned authors such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (Tyburn Gallery, 2016). He was to later acquire a Master of Fine Art (MFA) degree. This example might not be the perfect one, as there are many untrained artists who postmodernism has provided the leverage to be the artists they wanted to be.

Last but not least, among these examples, are postmodernist trends by contemporary African artists that speak to international issues, explore forms and materials that have no geographical restrictions or alignments and hence, are loyal to whoever is interested. Thus, they seek to be global citizens and therefore, reject supremist arguments of "us and the other" as copiously enumerated by scholars such as Araeen (1999: 233) and Mudimbe (1991:35-36). Buhari (b.1959) is an example. Buhari is a trained Nigerian artist, who has explored diverse media in the art. However, he has been engaged in installation art and paintings dealing with climate change and global warming due to his extensive exposure.

Plate iv: Jerry Buhari, Melting Planet II, 2012. Oil on Board, 98cm (AskArt 2023).

For instance, Buhari's artwork titled Melting Planet II (see Plate IV) exemplifies the artist's 'glocal' concerns, reflecting not only the local context but also transcending geographical boundaries to address global issues. With a focus on the pressing matters of global warming and climate change, the artwork resonates with international research and engagements that have been ongoing for more than a decade. While the world continues to explore sustainable solutions for preserving the ecosystem, artists like Buhari utilise their creative voices to raise awareness about the urgency of this global menace and awaken people's consciousness regarding the implications of their choices on environmental sustainability. In its symbolic portrayal, Melting Planet II features a meandered and uncoordinated arrangement of dark, grey, and red hues, evoking a sombre atmosphere that depicts the current state and impending future of our planet if decisive action is not taken. The artwork's meandering and uncoordinated display serves as a powerful visual representation of the challenges we face. Thus, the work evokes a sense of caution and emphasises the need for collective responsibility in safeguarding our planet and securing a sustainable future.

Implications and Discussion

Generally, contemporary African artists, using Nigeria as an example, have been embracing postmodernist trends of conceptual art, minimalism, installation, video, and performance art expressions, as ways of keeping pace with global artistic trends. The implication here is that the larger society, which has just been warming up to the relevance and usefulness of modernist trends, is put off, and consequently, disconnected from the art. Expressing a similar worry about the implications and confusing influence of postmodernism on the arts, Butler (2002: 6) finds postmodernists' privileging of the porously interpretive ideas over the formal finesse of modern art problematic, as it disrupts "the enjoyable artistic embodiment and formal sophistication which so many had learned to appreciate in modern art." This is despite significant postmodernist efforts to highlight the capabilities, ingenuity, and equality of African artists in comparison to their counterparts in other regions, this recognition remains limited.

The embrace of postmodernist trends by some contemporary Nigerian artists raises an important implication, which is the potential tendency to prioritise global discourse and overlook pressing local issues. This phenomenon is exemplified by ongoing crises in Nigeria, such as the farmer-herder conflicts and the removal of fuel subsidies, which have inflicted significant hardships on the average Nigerian population. The farmer-herder crisis, as documented by Peter Yikwab and Tade (2022), has resulted in the loss of numerous lives and the displacement of entire communities. This is not to suggest that Nigerian artists should completely abandon postmodernism and solely adhere to modernism. However, striking a balance between the two artistic trends is essential. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected and art serves as a universal language, it is crucial to recognise and address the distinct nuances and local inflexions within this universal language. Nigerian artists can navigate this complex landscape by incorporating both global and local perspectives in their artistic expressions, thereby engaging with the broader discourse while maintaining a keen awareness of the specific socio-cultural issues faced within their own communities.

It is important to also clarify that while the primary focus of the discussion centres on Nigerian artists and their practices, the significance of the discourse extends to artists across numerous African countries. Additionally, the three outlined categories serve as a broad foundation, but a more in-depth exploration would uncover subcategories that may not be explicitly addressed in the paper. Moreover, it is important to acknowledge that other categories may exist in different regions of Africa, influenced by unique experiences and contexts. It is also important to note that the selected artists offer a diverse representation of contemporary Nigerian art, encompassing various age groups and artistic practices. For instance, Jerry Buhari, known for his paintings and installations, represents the established generation of contemporary artists. On the other hand, Jelili Atiku, trained as a sculptor but practising performance art, embodies the younger generation's more postmodernist approach. Blaise Gbaden, also from the younger generation, explores postmodernist techniques in his installations alongside his background as a painter. Together, these artists provide a fair representation of the breadth and depth of contemporary artistic expression in Nigeria. Whatever one's understanding of postmodernism is, it is recommended that lessons should be learnt from contemporary African music and film. This is because these forms of contemporary African art expressions have maintained modernist characteristics in order to remain relevant in their societies and use postmodernist approaches to marketing, whether rightly or wrongly. This has located them right in the centre of the globalised world, rather than the hitherto "other" that has been their label.

A glimpse into some perceptions of postmodernism might help in the understanding of the quagmire some progressively conscious scholars find themselves. For instance, Hewison (1987, as cited in The Art Story Foundation, 2023) states that "postmodernism is modernism with the optimism taken out." Baudrillard (1990: 171) is of the view that "postmodernism is the simultaneity of the destruction of earlier values and their reconstruction. It is renovation within ruination." For Pinter (2005: 1), "There are no hard distinctions between what is real and what is unreal. Nor between what is true and what is false." Within the context of these perceptions, would it not be correct to say that contemporary African artists are practising adaptive postmodernist art or surrealist modernism? It is submitted here that, from the examples given and many more not referenced here, contemporary artists' postmodernist trends are such that can be categorised into three. Those who aspire faithfully to postmodernist principles like Jerry Buhari; those who are inspired by postmodernism but want to progress their society through socio-political and economic reflections, criticism, and advocacies like Jelili Atiku and lastly; those who ordinarily would not have been artists perhaps, if not for the freedom provided by postmodernism. What is, however, very consistent in most artists discussed here, is their embrace of postmodernist forms and materials from their glimpses of it through travel interests or opportunities, while thematically discussing their peculiar and immediate issues.

There is also, the dependence of postmodernist artists on Western grants, fellowships, and residences, in order to survive, sustain, and practice postmodernist trends. This is largely due to the lack of funding within Africa for such art expressions. Regrettably, they are not appreciated enough to be paid for by individuals within the immediate societies of the practitioners.

Conclusion

This paper shall conclude its arguments as it reflects on two anecdotal incidents. A conference organised by the Faculty of Environmental Design, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria took place from 29 June to 2 July 2021. At the conference, a professor of graphic design, who was presenting one of the lead papers, shocked the audience with his presentation. This was because he compiled a number of conceptual artworks, as well as, installation arts, largely produced by faculty members including that of Blaise Gbaden discussed herein and, in his naivety, he asked, 'What are these?' While one may be genuinely disappointed at the Professor's simple display of academic and creative ignorance (or bias), it is also necessary to recall Ihab Hassan's thoughts on such an open show of intellectual biases on the premise of postmodernity. In the words of Hassan (1985: 120-121), "the reception or denial of postmodernism thus remains contingent on the psycho-politics of academic life – including the various dispositions of people and power in our universities, of critical factions and personal frictions, of boundaries that arbitrarily include or exclude…" Perhaps the Professor's "goof" was a deliberate attempt to exclude and dismiss artworks he did not understand as the "other" by exploiting the socio-political loopholes that postmodernism presents. In October 2021, a popular Nigerian female artist's sex tape was leaked on social media and trended for several weeks. In the discussions that followed the release of the

sex tape, two streams of arguments stood out. The first was that an opportunist who came across the tape wanted to blackmail her into giving money. This narrative was indeed what she also explained to the entire world. However, the second line of argument gained ground owing to the illogical nature of her storyline. This was that she pre-arranged the sex tape to draw attention to herself and to enable her to 'trend' on social media. The number of subsequent sex tapes that followed seemed to give credence to this narrative, particularly that she and the subsequent 'victim's' body language did not show any kind of remorseful attitude, largely expected of Africans in such situations. Thus, one is tempted to wonder if it is not a postmodernist approach to attaining popularity.

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