



## An Examination of Postmodernism in Sculptural Practices in Some Nigerian Art Schools

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**Abstract.** Postmodernism, a Western artistic concept, affects sculptural practices in Nigerian art schools. Sculptures are consequently getting extremely subjective as students use postmodernism to avoid learning classical sculptural principles. Therefore, this study examined postmodernism in sculpture in Nigerian art schools with a view to finding ways by which postmodernism can be incorporated into practice in Nigerian art schools. The study used data collected through field research at three art schools between 2010 and 2021. Nine (10%) out of 89 postmodern sculptures observed in the three art schools were randomly selected for formal analysis. The findings indicate that the exploration of found objects and the production of sculptures that provoke deeper conceptual meanings of subjects have become the norm, triggered by the socio-cultural conditions and geography in the art schools' locations. It is concluded that postmodernism can be incorporated into sculptural training in Nigerian art schools without inhibiting the development of knowledge and skills according to classical and artistic principles and values.

**Keywords:** *postmodernism; sculptural practices; Nigerian art schools; sculpture; Nigerian art.*

### 1 Introduction

Postmodernism is a style and conceptual theory in fine art that is characterized by a general distrust in classical or traditional ideologies and a rather difficult relationship with what constitutes art [1]. Postmodernism, a subject of many contentions started in Western Europe in the late twentieth century [2]. Many scholarly articles have been published arguing over even the basis of what the term means. Theoreticians, philosophers, critics, and even psychologists have used the notion of postmodernism in their respective fields and given it operational definitions that vary from one field to another [3]. Scholars disagree on the exact date of the beginning of postmodernism, but most agree that it was sometime during the 1970s because of the tumultuous socio-political period of the 1960s and 1970s that led to many artistic reactions [4]. The quest to set

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aside conventions died naturally when it seemed that all rules had been broken. The radicalism of some conceptual and site-specific works of the 1970s possibly signaled the end of the era. Significantly, postmodernism is a concept that questions the direction, order, coherence, ability, simplicity, control, autonomy, and universality of modern art. Due to its multiple concepts and implications, postmodernism is a wide topic to cover, but for the purpose of this study, the process of its interface and integration with art, particularly sculpture, will be briefly discussed.

Philosophers such as Jean Baudrillard, Jean Francois Lyotard, Martin Heidegger, Michel Foucault, Richard Rorty and Jacques Derrida have worked extensively on the differences between modern and postmodern ideas in literature [3]. These scholars advocated that postmodernism is another incarnation of modernist art. However, Jean Francois Lyotard in his *Postmodern Condition Culture, Technology and Epistemology*, published in 1979 by the University of Minnesota [3], theoretically reacted against the modernist universal truth called the 'grand narrative'.

Hartness [4] argued that knowledge cannot claim to be offering truth in any absolute sense but depends on tricks of language that are only relevant to specific contexts. He adopted Wittgenstein's concept of 'language game', that is, a parameter that makes it possible to identify, produce signs, and establish relationships of meaning and representation. Kant used his theory of the 'aesthetic'—a feeling that is based on pleasure or displeasure—to establish the rejection of high art. According to Lyotard, a methodological representation of postmodernism consists of a multifarious and fragmented language game, a game that is flexible. He used this to capture the pluralism and multiplicity of current developments in art. Lyotard therefore focused on the experimentation of avant-garde artists that took their privilege with abstract expressionism and created a distinction between categories of modern and postmodern in art [3].

Similarly, avant-garde art has lost its distinctiveness as a source of innovation. In the past, it was a small group that cared about the innovations of a small number of artists, serving as a support group for modern artists. Hartness [4] observes that there are distinct stylistic and theoretical differences between these two artistic movements and cites Eleanor Heartney (*Postmodernism*, 2001), who stated that "[4] whether the relationship is defined as parasitic, cannibalistic, symbiotic, or revolutionary, one thing is clear: you cannot have postmodernism without modernism." Postmodernism is indefinable; it is a critical, strategic, and rhetorical practice that employs concepts such as differentiation, duplication, traces, hesitance, and everyday experience to undermine the concept of modernity. If the dominant tendency of modern art was questioning and rejecting, finding a similar unifying concept for

postmodern art is difficult. In that sense, postmodern art reflects a pluralistic and globalized society in which innovation can happen at any place.

The craving for a modern artistic expression, which took its turn in the nineteenth century, spanned an age of radical investigation during which the world because of technological and political revolutions took on a new shape [2]. As traditions in art were rapidly receding, a unique new presence asserted its originality in the new age that is now known as modernity. Modernity is therefore defined as a social existence that is significantly different from all the past forms of human experience. It was a period in which artists showed interest in re-imagining, interpreting, and even rejecting the traditional aesthetic values of the preceding styles. Modernity is also a full explosion of artistic expressions as a result of an unprecedented insurrection that was punctuated by counter and conformist artists who intended to unify or diversify art.

This idea was later fragmented by the new atmosphere of independent experimentalists called 'avant-garde' [5]. By and large, many artists encouraged these changes while several others dismantled the traditional and sought something utterly novel. The modernists were replaced by the avant-garde, who were active from the 1920s to the 1950s [6] through a radical approach initiated by Dada, Neo-Dada, and Pop artists and shifted the focus of modern art conventions towards mass media and found objects, as well as a penchant for artistic presentation. These belligerent artists, such as Marcel Duchamp, Naum Gabo, Alberto Giacometti, Claes Oldenburg, Andy Warhol, Antoine Pevsner, and David Smith among others, provoked art through covert strategies—mocking and celebrating consumer culture and uniting in opposing conventions of abstraction and realism. They also disregarded boundaries between media through experimentation with assemblages, performances, and many other hybrid fusions.

Postmodernism is typified by a general distrust in modernist ideologies as well as a rather difficult relationship with what constitutes art. Different activities precipitating postmodernism and the eventual prevailing conditions can be traced back to individuals (and much later, groups of individuals) and events that ultimately set out to discredit regular, traditional and quasi-traditional approaches to artistic and theoretical concepts, and the unusual modernist art appreciation methods and their pervasive expansion set in. By and large, extreme expressionist, impressionist and neo-Dadaist expressions in thought, visual art, literature, and physical actions that basically were not regular art forms started gaining ground. The rigid, formal and technical boundaries of what constitutes art, and particularly sculpture, instantly thinned out from the great mist, and dark clouds covered the face of the art world. Systematically, a

dawn of 'one-man movements and crazes emerged. Individual creativity and interpretation became wider than gradual acquisition of artistic and literary skill. The attainment of this new kind of skill and practice emerged from the growth of a consumerist society and the possibility of instant gratification of desires rejuvenated in the twenty-first century. This social circumstance automatically had a huge impact on the arts, and particularly sculpture. In response, many artists, curators, and other professionals explored this new attitude to turn art into a 'product', a 'brand' [6]. For instance, Western artists' installations and video clips allowed the audience to experience art in a much more pro-active and sometimes provocative way, through the apprehension of new artistic subject matters, like an irregular display of a dead shark, huge ice-sculptures, a crowd of nudes, an island wrapped in pink polypropylene fabric, earth art, and much more. This is the idea, the philosophy commonly referred to as conceptual art, largely linked at its beginning to Marcel Duchamp [7]. And from this instance, many unimaginable, 'artistic' concepts germinated, from which postmodernism got its 'post' affixation. This started in the late 1970s and many art forms (like installations, earth art and kinetic arts) and social ideologies that were already gaining public attention were also noted as being postmodernist-driven.



**Figure 1** Christo, Valley Curtain, 1971-72, 200,000 sq. ft. of nylon polyamide; 10,000 lbs of steel cables, height: 185-365 sq. ft., span: 1250 ft, Grand Hogback, Rifle, Colorado, USA. (Photo: Shunk-Kender [8]).

Furthermore, individual or groups of postmodern sculptors worked on different planes to actualize their imaginations in relation to their social and cultural contexts. Thus, the postmodern development further opened new trajectories for theories, concepts and manifestoes, which directly or indirectly enriched the production of what we now see and ultimately concretize as postmodern sculpture. For instance, the large-scale fabric sculpture of Christos' *Valley Curtain* (see Figure1) [8] and *Untitled (Tangle)*, (see Figure2) [9], showing an accumulation of soft materials spill across the floor of a gallery space, are typical of this postmodern exploration. These sculptures are an interesting and

daring breakaway from traditional materials and the definition of medium manipulation.

In Nigeria, the issue of 'modern', 'modernity' or 'modernism' came with the imposition of social and economic transformations based on colonialist theories about improving the natives [10]. Kasfir views modernity as a mixed bag that contains good things such as education, medical care, consumer goods, but regrettably also bad things, such as power excesses, which undermine traditional values [10].



**Figure 2** Robert Morris, Untitled (Tangle), 1967, dimensions: variable, approximately 9'8"x 8'10"x 58 (296.7 x 269.3 x 147.4cm [9].

In early postcolonial Nigeria, beginning from 1960, a few artists explored mimetic art forms and competed favorably with the European standard of classical art [11]. This development made it possible for some of the few early Nigerian artists to receive formal training in the arts, thereby exposing them to Western aesthetic conventions. Thus, the modern trend of art in Nigeria was initiated by Aina Onabolu with the expressionist art approach of Kenneth Murray, which began to yield fruitful results, as can be seen from the emergence of a new breed of modern Nigerian artists [11]. Foremost among them was Ben Enwonwu, who studied art under Murray. He later graduated from Slade School of Fine Art in London [11]. Enwonwu eventually laid the foundation for higher academic art training in Nigeria. One of his scholarly and intellectual works originated from his sensitivity towards Leopold Sedar Senghor's philosophy of Negritude, an affirmation of black identity and solidarity [12]. This new language in art offered individuals or groups of artists in the early 1950s the opportunity to search for much-needed style and direction. This, then, built the foundations for the different styles found in Nigerian art schools today.

## **2 Statement of the Research Problem and the Study**

Modernist artists can be considered artists of necessity; they are counter-normal and reactionaries to classical aesthetics. The pluralities of modernist art are used as reactions against the long-established art academic principles of the Western classical art traditions of harmony, balance and regulated mathematical proportion. Their primary goal, according to Greenberg, was to create art of quality with an emphasis on aesthetic value and excellence for its own sake and an end in itself [12]. The modernist's antipathy towards the classical academy's curriculum invariably had a momentous impact on art schools, particularly in Nigeria, where art curricula were originally fashioned after the contents of British academies, but which, to a degree, later also allowed freedom of self-expression. Demonstrations of modernist creativity became very prominent in various manifestations and a syncretism of sculpture forms, styles, themes, and media usage.

The art schools in Nigeria, beside the academic principles, began to create and re-create using knockoffs and recycled materials in a bid to create something novel. Many scholars in this field were unable to recognize the interplay between the contextual and the classic that came together to provide solid receptacles as metaphorical forms, styles, and themes as contained in some of the sculptures displayed in Nigerian art schools for the past twenty years (2000-2020). The approach of art schools to postmodern sculpture combined with the classical mode of artistic representation has become popular. It has encouraged students to dream up nifty ideas. The challenges posed by these ingenious sculptures in the art schools today are immense and easily observable. They are an antithesis to the classical cultural heritages of Nigeria. Significantly, students in the art schools use postmodernism as an escape from learning classical artistic and sculptural principles. Invariably, the overwhelming postmodern ideology with the catchphrase that 'all types of sculptures are legitimate and logically valid' [14], if not checked, can lead to the disintegration of the traditional artistic values and technical skills.

Against this background, the present study is an examination of postmodern tendencies in sculpture at Nigerian art schools. The study covered a period of twenty years, between 2000 and 2020. This period was vital because innovations in art, questioning of past traditions, and individual expression of rule-breaking permeated sculpture practices. The study was conducted with a view to finding ways by which postmodernism can be incorporated into practice in the art schools without inhibiting the development of knowledge and skills according to artistic and classical principles.

### 3 Review of Literature

As far as postmodern sculpture is concerned, at least six of the foremost art schools in Nigeria have more or less the same morphological process at their beginnings but gradually became diverse in response to modern artistic changes. Development and growth, therefore, have been espoused in some studies. Kalilu and Oladugbagbe [15,16] in two separate studies examined sculptural pieces from some of these art schools and analyzed their form, style, themes, and materials. Their studies also championed the benefit of art schools' sculpture gardens as an avenue to exhibit talents among sculpture students from these school communities. Their samples, however, did not go beyond a perceptual framework for this modern trend.

Other studies (Odiboh [17]; Ikpakoronyi [18]; Odewale [19]; Akintonde [20] among others) covered outdoor sculptures in public space, particularly in the southwest and eastern parts of Nigeria. They provided various useful records for a broader understanding of these outdoor sculptures on the one hand, and some parameters to further study outdoor sculpture in Nigeria on the other hand. However, none of them delved into the postmodernist trends of form, style, themes, and media of these recent sculptures in Nigerian art schools, particularly in the past twenty years (2000-2020). This has left a critical gap in this area of postmodern sculpture.

Hypothetically, the present study adopts the definition of 'postmodern' of Lyotard [3], employing Wittgenstein's language games and Kant's aesthetic theory. Lyotard's postmodern condition indicates that knowledge cannot claim to be offering truth in any absolute sense; it depends on language tricks that are always relevant to a specific context. He describes this language theory concept as a combination of two different games, that of the philosopher and that of the expert.

Where the expert knows what he knows and what he does not know, the philosopher knows neither, but poses questions. And the aesthetic judgment does not produce denotative knowledge about determinable states of affairs, but a knowledge that moves from one mode of phrasing to another—denotative, prescriptive, performative, cognitive, and artistic. This philosophical belief in the total transformation of these games of rules has been essential to the sculptural expressions featured in the Nigerian art schools for more than two decades. Many student sculptors in the respective art schools, as partakers of this new feeling, explored the multiplicity of these two movements in creating art forms from a rational understanding of postmodern aphorisms.

#### **4 Methodology**

Three out of nineteen art schools of higher education institutions that offer Fine and Applied Arts, Creative Art and Industrial Art Design were selected for this study. These were: Department of Fine and Applied Arts, University of Nigeria (UNN), Nsukka, Enugu State; Department of Fine and Applied Arts, University of Benin (UNIBEN), Benin, Edo State and Department of Fine and Applied Arts, Ladoké Akintola University of Technology (LAUTECH), Ogbomosho, Oyo State. The three selected art schools are outstanding in their artistic sculptural exploration and sculptural responses to social issues and poetic idiom of sculptural expressions.

Direct field research was employed to collect both primary and secondary data in the selected art schools. Random and stratified sampling techniques were used for data collection. Out of 89 postmodern sculptures observed in the field, UNN had 32, UNIBEN had 30, and LAUTECH had 27. Ten percent of the total number of sculptures in the art schools was selected. Therefore, the total number of works selected for this study was 9. The selection consisted of some of the most outstanding works in the garden of each art school. The collection was limited to sculptures in-the-round because three-dimensional sculptures fairly outnumbered relief sculptures, which were mostly hung on building walls or placed on the floors of locations in the selected art institutions. Related literature was also consulted, and the information obtained was used to facilitate the formal analysis of the sculptures.

#### **5 Postmodernism in Nigerian Schools of Art**

It is obvious that trained artists generally learn by working as an apprentice to become accomplished masters who are highly skilled in their craft and who, by length of experience, are qualified to teach novices. Through this practical experience, the apprentices gain the necessary skills and develop knowledge of their society's traditions. Today, most formally trained artists have studied in art schools or colleges. Learning in these settings usually refines their understanding of alternatives. Some trained artists show self-awareness of their relationship with art history and other global art practices, which most times provide a wealth of material experience. This often leads to an egocentric struggle within the artist to be profound and ultimately original. Thus, many trained artists are regarded as independent thinkers and often strive to go beyond a group mentality to offer not what others have seen but fresh insights that both extend and expand the experience of those who contemplate their art works.



There has also been a change of focus in most Nigerian artists to produce sculptures and other art forms that probe political and economic situations, especially in their own society. There are, nevertheless, various artistic activities going on among the gradually-increasing number of Nigerian artists. Many sculptors get involved in different emotionally-charged settings that enlarge their artistic, sociological, and psychological perspectives. This, interestingly, creates a two-way result, which is not peculiar to only Nigerian artists, it is a universal phenomenon. At the Nigerian higher institution art level, some works of sculpture can aesthetically be considered good or bad, yet they are produced by students simultaneously. This further supports the fact that art's relevance, interpretation, and appreciation are subjective. It is in this light that the discourse on these outdoor sculptures will reflect an understanding of the postmodernist trail of Nigerian art schools. From the 1970s to date, in Nigeria, sculpture (and other aspects generally) has adopted an admixture of styles, ranging from naturalism to abstraction and extreme expressionism. It is therefore common to see many art schools develop and encourage aesthetic preferences for abstraction, indigenous iconography, symbolism, and personal statements.

## **6 Postmodern Sculptural Forms, Media, and Techniques at the Art Schools: An Analysis**

Today, the choice and application of materials is still expanding, and advanced technologies make artistic manifestations more vivid and richer. This further makes many sculptures in Nigerian art schools more flexible and eclectic. The works, therefore, accentuate a variety of new forms, media, and techniques. This also attests to the fact that many contemporary artists are constantly developing over time through the help of constant developments in motion and animated arts, photography, equipment, and space management—all of which have resulted in a diversity of techniques as required by the ever-evolving new media for artist creation.

Some art schools stand out in the production of sculptures in their immediate and sometimes their extended environment. Many of the works in these art schools were expertly produced, thereby making them exemplary. Several others are also of immense historical and socio-cultural importance. Nevertheless, some are just expressions of the anatomical understanding of man and animal. Others are abstract explorations of the mind and the universe. What is glaringly obvious, however, is that the typicality of postmodernist expression in many of the recent works abound in the collections of the outdoor sculptures at these art schools.

Starting with the University of Nigeria (UNN), Nsukka Art School, at the inception of its art department in 1961, not much progress was made in terms of radical approaches to cultural values. At that time, art was not experimented upon. However, after the end of the Nigerian Civil War in 1970, social and economic dictates brought new awareness and orientation, and a re-examination of attitudes towards art and life. The most confronting postmodern tendency is in the creative impulses projected through thematic contexts and explorations of technologically-related objects and subjects. This standpoint also makes Nsukka Art School appear to have the strongest drive towards postmodernism and artistic radicalism among the three samples. This is not surprising, as the manifestation of postmodern thinking and exploring possibilities has developed strikingly in Nsukka Art School since their early exhibitions of traditional/cultural idioms, iconographies, and civil war influence in the late 1960s [21]. In relation to this, therefore, the influence of modernism with its postmodern effect is more prevalent at Nsukka, University of Nigeria than at the other two schools. A robust structural state of the sculptures as well as their forms is also pronounced in Nsukka Art School. For instance, a cursory assessment of some of these art works will buttress some of these points. The poetic nature of the selected works is immediately noticeable, particularly in *Riding Ghost* (see Figure 3), *Satire* (see Figure 4) and *Depersonalized Hand* (see Figure 5), which is abstracted. These sculptures explore both organic and inorganic forms.



**Figure 3** IgwuEjifor, *Riding Ghost*, 1975, concrete cement, height: 158 cm, width: 185 cm, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. (Photo: Allan Oladugbagbe, 2004).

*Riding Ghost* (see Figure 3) is biomorphic in character. It combines anthropomorphic and skeuomorphic forms. The work is scary and open in form; this perhaps symbolizes the fear of potential death captured in Okada rider. The work shows a skeletal figure rested on a geometric assemblage bike-like form with a trotting whalebone neck. *Satire* (see Figure 4) is another complex combination of biomorphic floral forms. The artwork is imbued with a deeper essence that transcends physical nature, and expands our outlook regarding what we consider an acceptable way of creating art. With this level of abstraction, one can feel there is life in the subject, though it looks fragile in its closed compositional form. On the other hand, *Offering* (see Figure 5) is whimsical, having characteristics of Igbo or Urhobo tradition, such as respect for the kola nut as a special gift to be desired. In this context there are increases in visual culture at Nsukka Art School, where all forms of media intersect with the crisis of globalization, which effectually overloads their recent sculpture production.



**Figure 4** Cosmos Mbawuife, *Satire*, 1975, concrete cement, height: 153 cm, width: 45 cm, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. (Photo: Allan Oladugbagbe, 2010).



**Figure 5** Offiong, *Offering*, (1999), concrete cement, height: 220 cm, width: 185 cm, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. (Photo: Allan Oladugbagbe, 2004).

Next is University of Benin (UNIBEN) Art School, which contributes to workforce development like the other art schools and increases the level of aesthetic consciousness of the nation through a series of sculptures displayed around the corridors of the art department. The institution's proximity to traditional and historic Benin art in the museum and the bronze artisans situated at Igun Street Benin, and the pavilion of the guild of bronze casters, perhaps has added to the stylistic tendencies of the Benin Art School. This, despite the fact that the art school's sculpture works are still largely individualistic, and many retain a bias for traditional explorations of form, material and content. The art school technically expanded the classical narrative combined with unusual subject matters. The first notable one among these works for this exemplification is *Reclining Nude* (see Figure 6).



**Figure 6** Paul Okocha, *Reclining Nude*, 1984, concrete cement, height: 120 cm, width: 190cm, University of Benin, Benin. (Photo: Allan Oladugbagbe, 2010).

In its complex form, it is horizontal and serpentine. The model used for this sculpture perhaps was very subdued; only her pose is transformed into a highly artistic concept that is reminiscent of some of Henry Moore's series of reclining figures [8]. The figure is like a breathing organic, symmetric, tectonic structure; monumental in disposition but also personal and open to different intellectual interpretations. We can perceive the fusion of forms as either a reference to the human body or to organic forms that emerge from the depth of the earth. The abstraction is so intense that the feeling of Picasso's or Braque's cubistic application and interpretation of forms can be perceived throughout the work. It is a reductionist's apprehension of nature in its simplified composition.



**Figure 7** Osagie, Omoigui. Omoigui, Africa's Dilemma, 2007, concrete cement, height: 308 cm, width: 125 cm, University of Benin, Benin. (Photo: Allan Oladugbagbe, 2010).

*Reclining Nude*, therefore, could easily pass for an architectural design rather than a young lady. In fact, the rigid slab forms readily contradict the curvilinear expansion and contraction that dominate the shape of the African woman. *Africa's Dilemma* (see Figure 7) is another visual epigram when compared with other recent works in the sculpture garden of Uniben Art School. The sculpture has stylized forms. The sensation created by the recumbent female figure is expressed with great intent and, at the same time, can be summarized as subordinate to the spirit of the work itself. This illustrates the artist's instinctive imagination and emphasizes the feminine body to create the eroticism expected of a beautifully crafted female nude.

*Interregnum* (see Figure 8) is a mixed-media work made of marble stone carving embellished with metal design. This is one of the sculptures that were erected in 2007. The work displays a great deal of belief in the new world of artistic thinking, testifying that abstraction, technology, conceptualism, and reductionism have been extensively explored. Notably, *Interregnum* signals the beginning of freedom and, typically, initiation into an unbridled exploration of a new space and new meaning. In this case, it is the engagement of a new form, medium and technique at Uniben Art School.

Generally, a statement on space occupation is uppermost in the visual colorization of these art schools' sculptural pronouncements. It is a contention for land and aerial spaces. This is the precursor of the school's assertion in and

celebration of monumentality. Victor Uwaifor, a lecturer at the Art Department of Uniben spoke in an interview on the idea of postmodernism that is glaringly seen in daunting form in space. He explained that before his first-degree program, most of the projects were small and his degree project, titled *Oba Esigie on Horseback*, was monumental and imposing, which later influenced other students' projects. The style of execution is multi-dimensional. Some students use mostly cement while others use metal, fiberglass or stone marble [22].



**Figure 8** Desmond DesmondUyii, *Interregnum*, 2007, height: 360 cm, width: 125 cm, University of Benin, Benin.(Photo: Allan Oladugbagbe, 2010).

The third sample is the Department of Fine and Applied Arts of Ladoke Akintola University of Technology (LAUTECH) Ogbomoso Art School. It is noteworthy that the curriculum of LAUTECH Art School gives preference to contextual and stylistic development. The sculpture *Wasp* (see Figure 9), in the Department of Fine and Applied Arts' sculpture garden, is an exciting form of postmodern expression. The art of forming, bending, cutting, joining, and twisting of metals is creatively applied in the work. The artist enlarged the stinging insect to a monumental scale, where humans can walk underneath it without losing cognizance of its awesome and architectonic significance. The sculptor took time to work on the anatomical structure of the wasp, paying attention to the developed wings, proboscis, and a stalk connecting the narrow abdomen with an exaggerated thorax. The slender legs, complemented by the open space, vividly evoke some features of insect life. The sculpture is a whimsical depiction of both the wasp's menace and grace.



**Figure 9** Oluwafemi Abisoye, *Wasp*, 2011, metal, height: 300 cm, width: 335 cm, LAUTECH. (Photo: Allan Oladugbagbe, 2020).

In some cases, artists in many ways have sought to criticize or influence values and public opinion through their works. A noteworthy example is *Social Protest* (Fig. 10). It is a caricature sculpture, that is, a comically-distorted image, created to satirize or ridicule the subject. Against this backdrop, world leaders are satirized, and military leaders are lampooned. Caricature art, particularly cartoons and illustrations, remains popular today in magazines and newspapers to poke fun at film stars, politicians, and celebrities. In sculpture, this form of expression is rarely found, except in Nigerian art school gardens, where they serve as a sarcastic probe of societal values. The artwork *Social Protest* features three hilarious and acrimonious men with different expressions: one is grimacing while the other two are poignant and brawny in action.



**Figure 10** Bola Anota, *Social Protest*, 2006, mixed media, height: 160 cm, width: 186 cm, LAUTECH. (Photo: Allan Oladugbagbe, 2020).

*Exhilarating Termite* (see Figure11) is another work in the garden of LAUTECH Art School. It is a mixed-media artwork with a combination of metal and fiberglass. The termite is a light-colored social insect that forms large colonies. Many species live in warm or tropical regions, feed on wood and are highly destructive to trees and wooden structures [23]. The artist displays one of the powerful soldiers, a maxilla termite with enlarged head, thick waist, and soft abdomen. The exhibit possibly displays the devastating presence of termites in the environment.



**Figure 11** Toyin Ojuade, *Exhilarating Termite*, 2003, fiber-glass, height: 90 cm, width: 270 cm, LAUTECH. (Photo: Allan Oladugbagbe, 2020).

Generally, the art schools explored elements, symbols, icons, and themes reminiscent of traditions peculiar to their local environments and ethnic peculiarities. These peculiarities are also reflected in many of the sculptures found in the art gardens located around the art department of each school. Some of the works address specific social contexts while others connote diversities in everyday common metaphors. Objects, whether found in nature, in a trash heap or elsewhere, are eligible for consideration as ‘art’ since the cubists made their first collages before World War I [12] and this has probably influenced some of the works displayed in the gardens. Found and ready-made objects became fascinating to sculptors through the first ready-made object of Marcel Duchamp, a bicycle wheel attached to a stool, which has fundamentally engendered modern and postmodern definitions of sculpture imagery.

## 7 Conclusion and Recommendations

Over the course of time, sculptures have undergone significant transformation and like many art forms, ideas in sculpture have become more subjective and personalized. Artists with true ingenuity see things—often displeased with them—in new ways. In contemporary times, sculpture production is crossing



limits concerning taste, style, innovation, and technological application. This has summoned up a new attitude in creativity. Technically, however, postmodernism is not a movement, but it can be summed up as a general attitude that reflects a widespread disillusionment with life as well as the effect of the power of the existing value system of technology.

This situation is also true of the ways sculptors in Nigerian art schools approach the production of sculptural works. Individuation has become a regular norm for originality and assessment. Many works executed in these art schools in the last two decades provoke thoughts that search for deeper conceptual meanings of subjects. There have also been material explorations from 2000 to date via clay models, cement casting, Styrofoam, direct cement modeling, concrete casting, wood molding, found objects, and any other imaginable media. This creative and intellectual inclination is present in all parts of their visual presentation. Perhaps the socio-cultural conditions surrounding the geographical environments of each art school were responsible for this sometimes-weird reactionary or revolutionary approach to their various sculpture productions. Nonetheless, this is a good development when one considers the highly-informative currency of the global artistic network.

It is, therefore, imperative for many of these art schools to have structural rebirths and research into forms and problem solving in sculpture. In this age, when unconventional sculptures often spurn pleasant surprises, flexibility in the choice of form, content, and style should be encouraged among students. Up until the present moment, only few Nigerian artists have tackled sculpture from a problem-solving perspective. Encouragement should be prioritized and explored to the fullest in the direction of the creative power of students and they should be geared towards solving specific problems relating to economic and political policies in Nigeria.

Our findings further showed that Nsukka Art School has the strongest drive towards postmodernism and artistic radicalism in sculpture. This perhaps may have originated from the influence of the novel art practice of El-Enatsui, a Ghanaian born active sculptor at the Department Fine and Applied Arts, Nsukka for much of his career [8]. Anatsui is known for his large-scale sculptures, composed of resources typically discarded, that draw connections between consumption, waste, and environment. Similarly, the forceful push of Benin indigenous art, particularly, bronze, brass, wood, ceramic, and ivory, could be a penchant for Benin Art School's quest for postmodern preference for stylization and the conception of mixed-media imagery. In the same vein, LAUTECH is the only art school in Nigeria that teaches skills in form and material technology; this may have increased the exploratory knowledge in the use of various media for sculptural conception. Notably, the three art schools (Nsukka,

Uniben and LAUTECH) still sustain the usual presentation of art in realistic, abstract, and architectonic appearance as well as logical ordering and nifty ideas.

Therefore, postmodernism to some extent is not an absolute evil, it has introduced a new era of freedom and a sense that anything that is art can be pleasant. Therefore, its positive impacts collapse the distinction between high art culture and bring sculptures to everyday life. Greenberg [13] asserts that the artist's primary goal is to create art of quality.

However, postmodern sculptures should be geared towards solving specific problems that have to do with material, technique, or form, which are at the same time aesthetically pleasing. Instead of nifty ideas, the sculptural ideologies in Nigerian art schools should be modified towards national developmental procedures, which emphasizes creative production, research, and documentation that seek to mobilize, motivate, disseminate, and propagate ideas that will not only promote national pride, solidarity and consciousness but also imperatively draw from our cultural roots as a binding foundation for progress and development. Thus, postmodernism can be incorporated into practice in Nigerian schools without inhibiting the development of knowledge and skills according to artistic and classical principles and values.

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