



## Socio-Psychological Impact of Outdoor Sculptures in Nigeria Urban Cities

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**Abstract.** One major element that finds expression at road intersections, parks, gardens, square and open spaces in the urban landscape are outdoor sculptures. Of great significance is the historical information they disseminate, the visual impressions they convey and the aesthetic value they add to the quality of the city. From 1960s and after the civil war, the uses of sculptures for embellishments in public places have increased tremendously in Nigeria. However, outdoor sculpture for the purpose of recreation and relaxation in our built environment has not been adequately addressed scholastically in Nigeria. This paper, therefore, focuses on the social values derivable from the use of sculpture in urban design and the losses that could accrue to the social system if not adequately managed. The values of these sculptures to the socio-psychological development of Nigerians and the beautification of the urban environment are equally emphasized. The study shows that incorporating sculptures into public places without doubt will heighten public appreciation and aesthetic perception and make Nigerian cities unique and vibrant.

**Keywords:** *Nigeria urban cities; socio-psychological impact; outdoor sculptures.*

### 1 Introduction

Before the opening up of the country to the powerful foreign influences, man in the Nigerian environment use the locally sourced clay or mud as his building materials and developed a fascinating spatial concept and house form. According to Aradeon [1], settlements and cities among the tribes that made Nigeria exemplify the dwelling houses, depending on the size and complexity of the family. For instance, the courtyard dwelling house, with a compound, is dependent on the complexity of the family constructed it. The courtyard, the neighborhood and the city squares are the physical manifestations of the hierarchical social organization among the Yoruba and the Binis [1]. Oba's palace dominates the squares, the market, so does the district chief dominates the surrounding area of the city square. In contrast to this Yoruba and Bini parameter, the Igbo built environments are in clusters [1]. Each house is noted for their spatial setting. However, within a tight urban structure, the Hausa of the northern Nigeria built their houses with both an exterior and interior

orientations. Their spaces are nucleated but continuous, each being conceived and spanned separately. Overall, the building of Nigeria as a multi-national state began in 1900 with the creation of Northern and Southern Protectorates along with the colony of Lagos by the British government [2].

Further efforts to unify and integrate this multi-national state were made in May 1906 when the colony of Lagos and the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria, which had existed separately, were eventually amalgamated to become the Colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria [3]. Lagos, the city of aquatic splendor, became an administrative nerve-centre and a heartland for trade and a setting for social revolution that resulted from inevitable cultural intercourse between foreign administrators, missionaries and business entrepreneur on the one hand and the indigenes on the other hand. It is from this cultural contact that emerged a new Nigeria whose values are dominated by a preference for European cultural models, and which action prompted the popular comment by the Yoruba people of the southwestern Nigeria that says *aye d'aye oyinbo* (the world has become a white man's world) and this, soon, set a pace for the new life and the new Nigerian artistic tradition.

With this Western influence, however, the Nigerian ways of living, to a major extent, gave way to modernistic tendencies: a propensity that evolved from physical arrangement of city structures, guided architectural forms—high rise engineering and land—development criteria. The incorporation of landscapes and sculptural pieces, which has served the dual purpose of alleviating the negative effects of rampant tight traditional urban structure, was introduced by the British colonial government in Nigeria public places around 1900 [2]. The intended purpose of beautification and the commemoration of historical figures and events were also enriched by the colonial government in Nigeria, just like other cities world over.

Sculpture as a means of high expression is of great significance to the traditional and modern Nigeria. In this respect, alfresco sculpture was introduced into the Nigerian public places as a result of contact with the European life style. During the colonial period the British established a Public Works Department (PWD) in the Southern Protectorate, and later in Nigeria, when the northern and southern protectorates were amalgamated. This Department saw to the maintenance of roads and public places. It was also empowered to beautify the environment most of which were done between 1906 and 1914 [2] and it commenced this function much later in other parts of Nigeria.

Among the notable outdoor sculptures commissioned at that period were *Soja Idumota* and *Emotan* [4]. *Soja Idumota*, commissioned circa 1948 [5] and [6],

was formerly erected in Lagos and later relocated to Abuja, the Federal Capital of Nigeria. The work was a memorial sculpture to immortalise Nigerian soldiers that died during the Second World War. *Emotan*, a female bronze statue, was erected in Oba market in Benin and was sculpted by John Danford of the British Council [7]. The *Emotan* statue replaced a sacred tree *Uruche* planted on the spot where she usually sat at Oba Market when she was living [8]. The historical image of the *Emotan* became relevant to the Edo tradition because of her sacrificial importance to the entire Edo kingdom. The sovereignty could have been erased from existence if not for her voluntary decision to pacify and counsel the Edo king, Ewuare, who was banished from the throne. But Ewuare later regained his crown on the very day *Emotan* died. Thus, this statue was erected in her memory [8]. Among other statues in the category of early colonial outdoor sculptures was *Mary Slessor*, located in Calabar. Obelisk Shaped Pillar erected at Lokoja in 1900 is another notable one. This obelisk has been asserted as the earliest sculptural pieces in Nigeria, sooner than *Ogedengbe* and *Soldier Idumota* [9]. These sculptures were produced by foreign sculptors, while a few other remarkable ones that were also produced by Nigerians on or before Nigeria's independence.

Ben Enwonwu, the first formally trained Nigerian sculptor who was trained abroad set the pace for the modern sculpture practice in Nigeria [10]. He produced many remarkable sculptures which include *Anyanwu* now hoisted at the National Museum premises in Lagos and, *Sango*, the Yoruba god of thunder, a sculpture presently in front of the former headquarter of National Electric Power Authority (NEPA) now re-named Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN), in Lagos. Enwonwu also produced the corporate icon of the Nigerian Telecommunications (NITEL) [11]. These sculptures are the pioneer modern outdoor sculptures executed by a Nigeria artist. From the late 1960s, especially after the Nigerian civil war, memorial and architectural sculptures have become increasingly popular. Sculptural pieces are noticeable on the landscape of urban cities particularly, Lagos and its environs. They can also be found in all the cities of thirty-six states of the federation including Abuja, the recent capital of Nigeria. The acceptance of figural and non-figural sculptures spread more like wide fire in Abuja, the capital city of Nigeria and in the south, especially, south-south and south-east, while non-representation sculptures are prominent in the northern cities, particularly Kwara, Kaduna, Sokoto, among others. Since then, the upsurge of out-door sculpture became fashionable to beautify the environment throughout all levels of government and the public in Nigeria.

## 2 Sculpture in Urban City in Nigeria

Sculpture has long been noted for its importance as a veritable means of recording people and events in a two- or three-dimensional form. This function has also not diminished in today's importance of sculpture, and even in the other spheres of artistic expression in human evolution. Thus, the modern trends in art in Nigeria (not to talk about the unimaginable acceleration at which the Western world is deconstructing and constructing artistic events and cultural philosophies) are nothing more than the attempts to stimulate growth and avoid sterility through stagnation. The singular effect of modern technology and the unprecedented adventure into inventions have made the human race more concerned with the environment, positively or otherwise, and consciously or unconsciously. In this study, the sociological implication of things has regularly come to the fore among the concerned.

Generally, there are literature materials that documented processes of any disciplines' historical and developmental past, as well as the present state of affairs and the projections into the future. Such literatures also abound in the visual arts. Some fall under the Western perception on traditional and modern sculpture the world over [4]. These publications are not specifically concerned about outdoor sculptures adornment. They are simple syntheses of world artistic notions, influences and histories. The publications, however, provide useful reference material for general study on sculpture. Other published and unpublished papers, dissertations and monographs [5], [12], [13], [14], [6] and [15] among others, cover contemporary outdoor sculptures in public spheres, particularly in the southwest and eastern part of Nigeria. This notwithstanding, no specific research has been carried out on the study of the sociological impact of sculpture in some cities in southwest Nigeria. This paper, therefore, examines the major sculptures that find expressions at road intersections, parks, gardens, square and open spaces in the urban landscape with the primary intention of examining their sociological relevance. Of great significance is the historical information they disseminate, the visual impression they convey, the aesthetic value they add to the quality of the city and the possible dimensions their being would have affect the impulse of passersby and the generality of the public sphere.

From the 1960s and after the Nigeria civil war, the uses of sculpture for embellishments in public places increased tremendously. However, the purpose of outdoor sculpture for recreation and relaxation in our natural environment has not been adequately addressed. More so, the existing ones have been grossly abused and improperly managed. While this paper principally focuses on some of these impressive sculptures, it is in addition addresses the sociological implications derivable from the use of sculpture in urban design and

beautification, and further discusses the losses their mistreatment can extend to the Nigerian social system. The paper also makes efforts to explore the urban planning regulations that govern the location, size and mode of display of the sculptures, if there are. In essence, therefore, the value and need of these sculptures to the sociological developments of Nigeria urban environment are equally highlight. The spatial scope of the study covers prominent sculptures in a few major cities in southwestern Nigeria. These places are Lagos, Abeokuta, Ibadan, Osogbo, Ondo and Ado-Ekiti.

### **3 Socio-psychological Impact of Outdoor Sculpture on the Nigerian Public**

Nigerian art, generally, will not be complete without mentioning the development that took place in the visual arts between the early 1950s and 1960s, when contemporary art was liberated beyond the naturalistic and realistic renditions by the early artistic progenitor in favour of new, radical approaches to art forms and cultural backgrounds. This manifestation became glaring in the perception of the Nigerian artists from being outward-looking to being more inward-looking in their conceptual visualization which was in tandem with multi-universal source of concept and style. Expectedly, the latter attendant development from this attitude, an alternative attitude also developed in the art connoisseurs and critics. This vision, with time, became acceptable to many and the level of art appreciation among the general public gradually increased. A general survey of the public outdoor sculptures in the urban cities of the southwest of Nigeria reveals highly favoured realistic expression of forms [6]. The themes of these works revolved around the representation of divinity and heroic with individual artistic styles dominating the sculptures, influenced by postmodernism.

Even though there are several sculptural works, mostly in-the-round, erected in cities in southwest Nigeria, no written has sufficiently and critically survey these works in detailed, scholarly perspective. Nevertheless, this paper has, appropriately stratified these sculptural works into only eight; three from Lagos metropolis and one each for five other cities in southwest. Then, an aggregated discourse would be inferred with a view to deduce their socio-psychological impact on the populace.

The sculpture work representing Madam Efunroye Tinubu, born in 1810 died in 1887 (Figure 1) is a prominent outdoor sculpture in Tinubu Square, central Lagos. In Lagos metropolis, the realistic figure of Madam Efunroye Tinubu, a replacement of the former Tinubu fibre glass water fountain. The civic sculpture of this renowned female aristocrat is located in the busy commercial district of

western Lagos Island popularly known as *Tinubu* Square designed in 1960. It is a life-size monument was erected on a high pedestal of about 270cm [6].



**Figure 1** Efunroye Tinubu , Fibre-glass. Tinubu Square Garden Lagos  
<https://www.google.com.ng/search?q=Efunroye+Tinubu+sculpture&biw=1616&bih=887>.

The sculpture is a blend of the Yoruba cultural tradition with the Western tradition, which can be appreciated by all persons irrespective of their cultural origin. The location in which the figure was installed harmonized with the surrounding high-rise buildings and uniqueness of its landscape demystifies the boundary between sculpture and architecture. No doubt that by its monumental scale, this work testifies to the importance of individuals and events as expressed through landmarks, monuments, architectural embellishments and other forms of cultural symbolism. The figure no doubt will inspire women to act heroically and sacrifice for common good and the environment will also serve as social arena for the people.

Apart from the figure of Efunroye Tinubu, there are other sculptures in the metropolis. One of such is the *Eyo Idumota* (Figure 2), which is a statue displayed on a designed platform with Yoruba traditional motifs particularly that of Lagosians. The *Eyo* sculpture represents a masquerade that comes out in Lagos Island and the festival is celebrated with all pageantry. The *Eyo* festival may be held in honour of a chief or an elder of a ruling family or a king who had died (<http://www.eyofestivallagos.com>). *Eyo* , which is primarily the

festival of the *Isale Eko* people, is costumed in white flowing *agbada* (gown), *akete* (hat), *aropale* (wrapper) with a mantle cover the face area, while the *opambata* (decorated palm branch) is held with the two hands. It is obvious that sculpture has played a major role in the historical evolution of Lagos culture.



**Figure 2** Eyo cenotaph that replaced Soja Idumota, Lagos <http://yorubaunion.se/?p=4228,2015/http://www.eyofestivallagos.com>.

The statue of three Lagos white cap chiefs (*Agba-gba Meta*) is one of the most famous monuments in Lagos (Figure 3), was commissioned by the then military government of Lagos state, in person of Col. Raji Rasaki. The statue, representing three *Idejo* chiefs in traditional greeting mode, of about 12 feet tall, formerly stood on the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway, perhaps welcoming travelers into the city [16]. The sculpture has been moved to the Lagos-Ibadan expressway bypass, near the Maruwa Garden Estate. The images stretch their fists forward in the air possibly welcoming all categories of people from near and far to come and try their lucks in the business in the city [6]. But such form of clenched fists, in such movement, portrays a traditional way of greeting and acknowledging a respected person in the community. It also could be said to allusion to the greeting of highly placed traditional personality, especially the king of Benin Kingdom, accompanied with the words *oba atop aye*, meaning long live the king.



**Figure 3** Biodun Shodeinde, *Three White Cap Idejo Chiefs*, Fibre-glass. Photograph by Sola Ogunfuwa, 2007.

The city of Ibadan, with her adjoining towns popularly refer to as “Pace-setter”, is blessed with business opportunities and tourist centres. In Ibadan, particularly a place called Beere, a core and busy municipality of Ibadan, there it is situated a sculpture *Iba Oluyole* (Figure 4) on a high pedestal. The sculpture was chosen to determine the socio-significance of public sculpture amongst other numerous sculptures in Ibadan. The sculpture portrays a nineteenth century Ibadan warlord [6]. The sculpture, which was created with reference to the four cardinal planes of Ibadan metropolis with a possible intention of bringing harmony among the sculpture, the viewer and its surroundings, and for people to appreciate its value, has been being ritualized instead of changing human behaviour toward a better environment. However, the sculpture’s physical presence makes it an ideal form of public art that everyone should appreciate.

Since outdoor sculptures are made principally to beautify the public environment, Osogbo, the capital city of Osun State, is highly rated for its exhibition of outdoor sculptures. But for this study, only one out of the numerous sculptures in Osogbo will be discussed based on its sociological importance. The work is located at Ayetoro junction in Osogbo. The figure, sculpted in realistic form, wears *dansiki*, a traditional Yoruba dress and was placed on a high pedestal. The figure is filled with great fluidity and a great sense of balance is displayed at its finger tip exuding the *baba*’s dexterity in playing with the *sekere* (musical instrument) A sense of moralization, accompanied by a touch of wisdom and determination, is inextricably displayed



in the work and this makes the sculpture very popular at Osogbo as *Baba Onisekere* (Figure 5) environment. The sculpture radiates an undeniable link with the viewer and at the same time with the society.



**Figure 4** Tiri Oladimeji, *Iba- Oluyle* sculpture, Ibadan. Photograph by Femi Akande, 2015.



**Figure 5** Moses Akintonde, *Baba Onisekere* at Ayetoro Junction, Osogbo. Photograph by Moses Akintonde, 2007.

Today, Nigerian cities, particularly, have experienced new academic works of art substituting indigenous cult images, even though as insightful as some of these are in the public places. It is discovered that most outdoor sculptures are either life size or beyond. As such, many are monumental. The statue of Brigadier Ademulegun (Figure 6) in Ondo town is one of such monumental pieces and it an emblematic of a brave soldier who was assassinated just before the Nigerian civil war started in 1967. The regularity of the heraldic posture of the figure on the high pedestal mounted at the roundabout of Akure, Ore and Ondo junction makes its socio-political context vivid thereby enhancing its setting.



**Figure 6** Adeola Balogun, *Statue of Brigadier Ademulegun*, Ondo. Photograph by Moses Akintonde, 2007

Form has also greatly assisted the visual presentation *Alu Gbedu* (*Gbedu Drummer*) (Figure 7) in Abeokuta, Ogun State. The forms employed in this figure, especially the fridity or freeze-like pose of the drummer, accentuates the symmetrical balance of the work. This could be said to have heightened stylistic and thematic success of the work. Conversely, provision for large space for outdoor sculptures within the community seems to be a problem. But if aesthetic and utilitarian/functional purposes can be taken into consideration when creating sculpture idea, art would have served the sake of art and of life at the same time. With this the work creates its fundamental functionality with

recreational advantage for the benefit of the society. The *Gbedu drummer* sculpture should therefore be praised of its environmental setting when assessed with the myriad of sculptures in Abeokuta metropolis.



**Figure 7** *Alu Gbedu (Gbedu Drummer)* Abeokuta. Photograph by Moses Akintonde, 2007.

Art is humane in nature and all functions and fundamentals should be explored to their fullest in which every community art breaths [4]. One could argue that outdoor sculpture has relationship with its surroundings. It is planned for a particular site, and the qualities of that site influence the making of the artwork. The statue of Adekunle Fajuyi, made of concrete cement of about 210cm height, by Olutunde Makinde at Fajuyi Park, Ado-Ekiti in 1999 [6] attests to this fact. Adekunle Fajuyi Memorial Park, Ado-Ekiti, built in memory of the first military governor of the old Western Region, Col. Adekunle Fajuyi, who was murdered alongside Gen. Aguiyi Ironsi during the first military coup in Nigeria in 1966, is the official resting place of the late hero. The figure is the soldier in full military regalia. Our attitude towards this image has been observed to be bounded together by three psychological components: the cognitive, the affective and the behavioral objectives. The cognitive expresses what an individual objectively understands about the “form”: what it is like; the affective, what a person feels about the entity: how favourable or unfavourable is evaluated, reflecting its place in the person’s scale of value; and the behavioral, how a person actually responds to the “figure” [17]. The painted figure and its site, which have just had a facelift, become one integrated unit:

the two working together to create a unified atmosphere for the viewer of the sculpture



**Figure 8** The Statue of Adekunle Fajuyi, by Olutunde Makinde, 1999.  
<http://sunnewsonline.com/new/fajuyi-park-serving-neither-the-heros-memory-nor-ekitis-recreational-needs/>.

#### 4 Conclusion and Recommendation

The very nature of sculpture brings awareness to people most times through its location. It is a powerful tool for presenting limitless realities about humankind. It is noteworthy to stress that creating the sculpture for the adornment of the public sphere is a necessary interpose in the understanding of the human-society development, which has ultimately impact on the human psyche and the development of his/her creative endeavours. For example, our ability to think about external things and to steadily improve our understanding of them rests upon our experience. Extending non-aesthetic experience may lead to frustration and impatience, whereas drawing out aesthetic experience may increase a feeling of pleasure. John Dewey, comprehensiveness to art issues. Examine several qualities that are common to all works of art. He discusses the feeling of a “total seizure”, a sense of “an inclusive whole not yet articulated” that one feels immediately in the experiencing of a work of art. This sense of wholeness, of all the parts of the work coalescing, can only be intuited. Parts of the work of art may be discriminated, but their sense of coalescence is a quality of intuition. Without this “intuited enveloping quality, parts are external to one another and mechanically related [18].” His down-to-earth discourse resonates, the significance of art as embodying what can be ascribed as a two interchanging parallels; of the one side is the experiential process of art by a

people in the society and the people of a society being influence after experiencing the art. In such circumstance, the art would be of utmost value to mankind if it is placed where it can interrogated, positively or otherwise, and in addition add to the aesthetic uplift of the environment. One of such paramount places is the public sphere.

In Europe and many other parts of world, it is not uncommon to come across wonderful and powerful displays of sculpture (reliefs, in-the-rounds, installations, among others) in strategic, public arenas. Many of these works stimulate some kind of connection of the viewer, sculpture, the built environment and, most of all, the teeming society. As such, outdoor sculpture has a possibility of transforming the society for the better. The Nigerian public sphere is not totally annihilable to this sort of sociological position and psychological mindset. However, several steps would be involved towing a profitable and more appreciable direction.

The appreciation of such a work would gradually developed in environment. Then ultimately, the people in such an environment would be influenced by occupation of such work in their public sphere, thereby leading to a change in their behaviour towards the socio-geography and socio-cultural perception of these individuals for a better socio-economy. Aristotle, the philosopher, once posited that art brings pleasure to people, the pleasure which enable one to relax and find enjoyment in contemplation without any harmful effects either to him or to others

That as it may the impact of environmental sculptures in Nigerian urban cities would likely not be felt if production of such works and their erections are done without adequate planning. In Nigeria the regulation of “land use” and the physical arrangement of land city structures are handled by the Town Planning section under Land and Housing Unit. Since the environment is summed up as the aggregation of surrounding things, conditions, or influences, it is these aforementioned factors that react to form the catalyst that makes sculpture and the environment perceptible in an acceptable unison.

Generally in Nigeria, from the late1960s—excluding the period of the Nigerian civil war—the use of sculpture as memorial embellishment in the public places increased tremendously in almost all the thirty six States including Abuja the federal capital. Cities where some of these environmental sculptures erected usually re-vibrate order, beauty and an urbaneness that tries to exude comfort, peace and longevity of life, for art is therapeutic by nature. If it is well packaged, its sensual effect on the human mind will produce calmness that eliminating anger and frustration [6]. The impact of these sculptural genres on the human mind and the immediate environment need continuous appraisal, in

order to map out a trajectory to navigate the field of art criticism and appreciation in Nigerian art. And if all the potentials of the sculptures are adequately harnessed, it would further fulfill its function as a tourist centre, a recreation ground, a relaxation and meditation spot, a green conservation environment, an exploration ground, and a statement-making provider for sculptor. Again, it is important that the maintenance and sustainability of these environmental sculptures should be done by the Nigerian government, at local, state and federal levels and by extension corporate body. This, however, should be placed under the supervision of Public Commission Control in collaboration with the Society of Nigeria Artists body. This, again, should not be without the involvement and cooperation of the builders, architects and town planners in the transformation of environmental sculpture to suite the purpose for which it was meant to serve.

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