



AESTHETIC VALUE OF RE-USE WASTE MATERIALS AS A PANACEA FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

(An Appraisal of Oligbinde's Creative Works)

¹Oligbinde, S.R, ²Adesanya, C.O and ³Oyeniye E, O

¹*Department of Art and Industrial Design, Moshood Abiola Polytechnic, Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria*

²*Centre for Museum and African Heritage (LASUCEMAH), Lagos State University, Ojo, Lagos State, Nigeria*

³*Department of Fine and Applied Arts, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria.*

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ABSTRACT

Discarded plastic and bottle tops are unwanted and seen as unusable materials that the initial user has no further use for or no longer considers of any significant value to retain. They are considered waste, thus, discarded after primary use. The indiscriminate disposal of such waste amounts to an alarming volume of them, however, wastes can be managed through recycling, repurposing and if well managed, a man stands at a vantage point economically, socially, and more importantly aesthetically – which affects our health on short and long terms. This paper examines the plastic sculptures of Oligbinde Rotimi with the concept of turning plastic waste into objects of aesthetic made from discarded plastics that are purposively selected for formal and contextual analysis. These works were produced as a source of inspiration for others to gainfully redeploy any plastic they see within their enabling environment to lay their hands on and thereby save the planet committed to us. Photographs of works are taken and the procedures involved in executing the works were highlighted.

KEYWORDS: *Aesthetic, Discarded plastic, Repurposing, Waste, Recycling, Environment.*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The volume of discarded waste materials is threatening to drown civilization on the globe. Dump sites, markets, open sewage, roadsides, and streets across cities in Nigeria were flooded with discarded materials. Meanwhile, the dangers of having these discarded materials around can also be injurious to our health and even cause damage to the ozone layer, thereby causing havoc in the community. To avoid the dangers of having these discarded materials around, this study aims at exhibiting the re-purposing of discarded plastics cited outdoor where they would be freely accessible by the general public.

Despite the long use of plastic for domestic purposes, packaging, building, and construction, furniture, transportation, medicine and health, electronic and electrical, and agricultural; there exists a large number of literature on the usage of discarded plastics as scholars have written extensively on them.

The world's first fully synthetic plastic was Bakelite, invented in New York in 1907 by Leo Baekeland who gave the name plastic to the substance. Science Matters, (2020), the successful introduction and consequent dominance of plastics starting in the early 20th century is a pungent environmental concern regarding its slow decomposition rate after being discarded as trash due to its composition of very large molecules. It is any material consisting of any wide range of synthetic or semi-synthetic organic compounds that are malleable and so can be molded into solid objects after subjecting it to some treatment like fire, or chemical treatment. Aminu Kano (2018), posits that 50% of plastic waste generated comes from inadequate management due to the lack of infrastructure associated with an ever-increasing population.

Waste materials are found everywhere within our environment. They are an inevitable part of human life and they are generated every time as situations demand. In an attempt to survive, man creates orderliness in his environment. The concept of waste is the ability



Industrial revolution brought a lot of changes in humans' endeavors which modern emerged as a reaction against mechanization and standardization of human life imposed by technology.

However, recycling is the processing of waste materials into new products to prevent the disposal of potentially useful materials, reduce the consumption of fresh materials and the energy required for fresh produce and reduce the effects of disposed of wastes on the environment. The term recycling involves processing the used materials (discarded substances of wastes) into new products, to fresh materials, reducing energy source utility, and then reducing water and pollution. Recycling is the third component of the 'reduce, reuse and recycle waste hierarchy. The material usage in sculpture in terms of recycled waste materials exploration helps a lot in redressing the environmental waste accumulation dilemma. Nonetheless, assemblage in sculptural construction is the artistic expression that employs wastes, which has led to innovative and enormous use of improvisation, through the exploration of visual language. The artwork that is displayed in alfresco is used as a very potent tool to the public, hence visual language. Aminu Kano (2018) opine that about 30 million tonnes of plastic are produced annually all over the world, with 8 million finding their way into the oceans while the rest litter the streets, clog the drainages, and some flying in the air, causing health problems.

2.0 REVIEW OF EXISTING LITERATURE

For ages, the artist has explored his environment to create and re-create objects for aesthetic purposes. The artist's approach to waste management is better understood and workable in solid waste which can be seen. Such solid wastes include combustible wastes such as paper, wood, and cloth and non-combustible wastes such as metal, glass, plastic, and ceramic items. Other waste items are animal bones, vehicle parts, computer remnants, shoes, knives, sawdust, and other related items.

The dexterous artists thus reduce a very large quantity of discarded materials in the environment. The intellectual ingenuity of the contemporary artists toward creativity brought about the rediscovery of waste as a source of artistic expression. The discarded materials have the potential for aesthetic and functional purposes if they are well harnessed. According to Olarewaju Tejuosho (2008), the waste to art straddled creativity and enterprise. The dexterous artists thus reduce a very large quantity of discarded materials in our environment. The concept of reducing, re-use, re-arrange, repurpose and recycle. The artists recover, re-use, re-arrange and translate them into works of art, to reflect interesting concepts for utilitarian purposes as well as restore aesthetics to the rejected material substances. The concept of waste and recycling in art is the ability of the artists to use their initiatives to create, recreate, and reuse the rejected and discarded materials in the production of artworks. These materials are thus given new functional values through artistic expression.

In today's world of creativity and amazing art, some of the world's most compelling and creative works have been borne out of the simplest and most abundant of materials: waste. Art is consistently evolving. Out of waste, artists are now creating beautiful things. They are becoming daring with the choice of materials they work with and are continuously trying their hands on new mediums, recycling wastes and turning them into priceless artwork. "Wastes to wealth have become a general dictum in contemporary Nigeria because of numerous advantages in wastes recycling". Generally, artworks are highly valued and appreciated particularly the ones produced with unique media (materials) generated from wastes. Most of the solid wastes such as metals, plastics, and wood serve as art materials in all ramifications. Wastes (solid wastes) occupy space and when the wastes are managed through recycling or reused in an artistic process, space is created. This therefore will enhance orderliness for human comfort.

Olanrewaju (2016), describes recycling as the processing of waste materials into new products to prevent the disposal of potentially useful materials, reduce the consumption of fresh materials and the energy required for fresh produce and reduce the effects of disposed of wastes on the environment. That is, recycling is the recovery or reuse of usable materials from waste. The term recycling involves processing the used materials (discarded substances of wastes) into new products, to fresh materials, reducing energy source utility, and then reducing water and pollution. Recycling is the third component of the 'reduce, reuse and recycle waste hierarchy. The material usage in sculpture in terms of recycled waste materials exploration helps a lot in redressing the environmental waste accumulation dilemma. Nonetheless, assemblage in sculptural construction is the artistic expression that employs wastes, this has led to innovative and enormous use of improvisation, through the exploration of visual language. The artwork that is displayed in alfresco is used as a very potent tool to the public, hence visual language.

However, the works in discourse showcase assemblage which is a means of fitting found objects for an artist's expression in sculptural construction. It implies the process of bringing together found objects to make a sculpture. The artist has the knack of seeing beyond the ordinary and the ugly to seek, identify and select these materials. Eventually, the artist collects, utilizes, and finally creates something useful and aesthetically meaningful, thereby giving the waste a new lease of life.

According to Ifeoma Anyeaji (2014) sees, the impact of waste transformation into wealth can revitalize and move the expectations of the unemployed into the vocations capable of realizing stable economic livelihood. If we, therefore, make a visual and ideological tour around the various waste dumps around us we are no doubt studying several economic feasibilities through which waste can be channeled into financially beneficial uses; in other words, the utilitarian potentials of these environmental litters can be

reconstructed into wealth. Jacob Jari (2017) opines that mankind looked forward to a new order of ever-expanding production of goods and services with ever-decreasing human toil. The artist effectively selects and organizes this under the subject matter "waste to wealth for artistic expression." The creative endowment of the artists enables them to transform the discarded materials into something useful.

Otikpa (2014), asserts, that the ability to identify taste in our values, to a great extent determines the wealth we make out of the ideology of repurposing, we can easily establish a suitable platform from which we would be able to satisfy a benchmark for identifying the categories of waste with the potency of re-grafting to wealth.

The artist understudy, Oligbinde Samuel Rotimi, is an upcoming contemporary Nigerian artist who belongs to this classification of repurposing field; as he repurposes waste objects such as plastic bottles and bottle tops mostly as his medium of expression in communicating his ideas on the happenings around him to his audience.

3.0 THE ARTIST'S BIOGRAPHY

It is necessary to give the background information of the artist to facilitate a better understanding of his works. This will provide information on his sociological influences as well as professional developments. Most importantly it provides a good foundation for contextual analysis of the selected works.

Oligbinde Samuel Rotimi is originally from a small urban Northern town in Abeokuta, Ogun State. He displayed an artistic talent at an early age. He has been sculpting at an early age. He fell in love with sculpture when he was a kid. His sculptures are an excellent depiction of the mastery of the art. Oligbinde Samuel Rotimi was born on the 7th of October 1989, in Abeokuta, Ogun State Nigeria. He attended both primary and secondary school, Saint Bernadette and Taidob College at Abeokuta in Ogun state respectively. Owing to his academic dexterity, prowess, and unparalleled and ardent performance he was admitted into Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife, into the prestigious Faculty of Environmental Design and Management where he bagged his bachelor's degree in Sculpture. Rotimi is one of the Contemporary Nigerian artists His area of focus involves plastic and metal sculptures and at times he combines more than one medium. His mastery of plastics can vividly be seen in his three-dimensional works where one can easily feel the celebration of colours carefully used on his figures. The experience he had when he was growing up fuelled the imagery and emotional quality of his works. His works usually start with an idea about a specific theme of contemporary issues in life and the environment and then he depicts them in common day-to-day activities. He is an artist known for his work with repurposed materials. He works with recycled materials and his art communicates a message about our fragile globe being overwhelmed by waste. He drew inspiration from the works of the legendary installation artist, El Anatsui. Rotimi Oligbinde is becoming recognized as a distinctive voice within the crop of young Nigerian artists whose works refer directly to issues of environmental degradation. His sculpture is labor intensive which engages the cutting of plastic bottles, washing the plastics, and piercing them to create a hole in which they could be bound together by copper wire.

4.0 ANALYSIS OF THE WORKS OF THE ARTIST



Plate 1: Uplifting Spirit
Artist: Oligbinde Rotimi, Installation,
Year of Production: 2018

1. *"Uplifting spirit"* is the composition of discarded bottle covers and discarded compact disks to create geometric forms based on design. The work is made up of bottle tops from discarded plastic and damaged disks mounted on a metal frame in squares graduating in sizes. The work is an abstract rich in meaning as it expresses meaning both in forms and the use of colours. It is a message to the present-day

society on the different spheres of human or individual development in the society itself. The work identifies the various characteristics of each individual as presented by each square; which examines how an individual struggles from cradle till he ascends to the position of authority and fame, and also how he assists others in reaching new heights.

The biggest square in the work is the representation of the masses who are characterized by penury, disguise, imitation, instability, and dents as suggested by the characteristics of the material used to decorate the boxes (discs), the disks with their shiny surface, and always changing attributes captures the characteristics of the masses as people with an unstable nature, disguise and always presents themselves higher than whom they are too unfamiliar personality. The masses are the majority, they look up to the few elites in the society, sometimes they dress and act as if they belong to that social caucus - the scratches and dents on the disc's surface which make it be discarded express the struggles of this majority in the society while the base material used expresses the discarded position which we occupy.

The second square which is smaller in size and made up of brighter colours emphasizes the transition of these individuals to a more stable life, but then dominated by blue meaning that they are still characterized by melancholy and gloom, as that of Pablo Picasso's blue period (Art in Focus). The green colour finding its way to this category means the growth and development being undergone by these people.

The colour red emphasized in the third section speaks of revolution as we can see the masses in the context of this work donated what has been dominating them for donkey years. The color yellow coming out brilliantly on the fourth phase of the design shows the people to have colonized (clarify) power and to have waxed strong as a result of "power" from the evolution. Even as the color yellow itself has to do with strength, energy, and Vitality

The last part of the design above, which is the part dominated by white with yellow in its center gives meaning to the perfect, purified state of this power. It connotes the excellence and perfection the people expect from this elitist minority. The concluding aspect of this design shows different bottle caps extending down from the top of the design, giving an ultimate instruction to the people out there in the position of authority and high places to remember its source by helping people from its source, as a proverb by the Yoruba people says that "a river that forgets its fountain often runs dry".



Plate 2: Hard Work
Artist: Oligbinde Rotimi,
Year of Production: 2018.

- 2. Hard Work:** Generally, and is seen as a symbol of hard work, determination, and focus, these attributes attracted the artist to represent ant with the use of discarded plastic, the representation which can serve as public art is meant to sensitize and challenge the public by studying the attributes of the ant generally. It should be a reminder of the diligent attitude of the ant to labour even just in the construction of their habitation. There is a scholarly saying that wisdom is the application of knowledge, the Bible reveres the ant as hard-working, which shows that the little knowledge they have about the environment is being applied. That is why the Bible concludes that humans should learn wisdom from these ants (New Living Bible, Proverbs 6:6-8). The ant labours relentlessly, knowing that time is not on its side, they gather enough food for the winter during summer, so that in the winter they will lack nothing. They work overnight building ant hill, just to preserve a secret, of how they collectively construct their buildings. These ants have just a little of this specialized knowledge, but putting them into practice effectively.

In summary, the figure representation of the ant challenges all mankind to rise to action in putting into action all the knowledge we have acquired in the course of our existence. We should make our coming to school functional i.e. make our B.sc, Ph.D., and all

sorts to reflect in our use of the environment that is when we can be referred to as being wise. Since all our B.Sc, M.sc, and Ph.D., cannot be referred to as wisdom if not applied effectively.

Since society will still be based on the decisions of the few i.e. based on our right knowledge in the society (James Surowiecki, 2004, Why Many Are Smarter Than the Few). Let us as human beings influence our society positively, by making the right decision just like the Ants.



Plate 3: Mask

Artist: Oligbinde Rotimi, Mixed Media

Year of Production: 2017.

- The Mask:** In African view has a connection with the head apart from being worn on the head, the mask in the African setting informs the world about the content, attributes, and spiritual implications or purpose of the head. The various characteristics of the mask denote something about the head or the wearer itself. The stylish elements in a mask look are codified by the tradition and may either identify a specific community or convey a specific meaning. Looking at some traits in the masks, the eyes are half closed (the inequality of the two eyes) symbolizing a peaceful attitude, self-control, and patience. While the large space of the forehead symbolizes the wisdom of the wearer of the mask, Africans pay utmost attention to the size.

The work is an exploration of plastics on a metal frame of a mask. Rotimi tests how plastic can be used to adorn an uninteresting metal frame to give it an expression of life, through the use of various vibrant colours and forms of different plastics. The work is not just a depiction of materials but ideas about the prevailing issue in the environment. Rotimi having studied the environment and developed a deep understanding of the problems of society in connection to plastic waste as a non-biodegradable material, Presents the human head in the icon of a mask to point out the dereliction and weaknesses of the human race as caused by the inappropriate use of our "heads", i.e. our reasoning. The work expresses the artist's plight concerning humans using their head ironically by presenting us with a mask since it is a general belief that the head is the seat of wisdom and there lies the human mind, and human beings possess more intelligence than any other animal in the world. How come we can create trash and we cannot get rid of it?

The mask represented by Rotimi, which takes the form of a shield connotes the responsibility of humanity in defending the general habitat of all living organisms against plastic waste. It calls humans of all races into action on standing up to our responsibility by using our intellect properly. Human beings are gods in their environment, we are responsible for all that affects our habitat. This is a general call to all mankind to forfend, secure, shield, and stand up in defense of our habitat.

The inequality of the eyes of the mask denotes patience. The artist emphasizes patience in the mask because the new world, the new generation of mankind lacks patience in using their endowment which is the head creatively. The brain is there, but not patient enough to manage waste creatively. One of the major developments in the world, contributing immensely to the problem of waste management is the recent increase in fast food. As we all know that fast food is mostly packaged in plastics which contributes largely to the number of plastic waste that adds up to our habitat every hour. Rotimi being aware of this phenomenon emphasizes that human being needs to be patient, which influences this question; why fast food?



The vibrant colours used on the mask also connote the different expectations of mankind as members of the living habitat, and what we should work towards, for example, green represents growth, yellow represents vitality and strength, red represents power, etc.

In conclusion, the art piece is giving us the assignment to think productively, neglect the culture of wistfulness, and utilize our potential as the cliché that says "there is the sense in nonsense".



Plate 4: Alert
Artist: Oligbinde Rotimi,
Year of Production: 2018.

4: Alert: this is a representation of a deer, titled Alert; a word used to express sadness, sorrow, and disappointment. The art piece represents the gesture of a deer being aware of the impending danger of his environment, causing it to be tensed as a result of the inconvenience caused by the human factor in his environment. Rotimi expresses the plight of these animals whose immediate environment as it deteriorates the habitat of both humans and animals. The work is an environmental satire that points to the shortcomings of human beings concerning waste management in the environment. The art piece serves as an awareness to the society of how inappropriate waste management, particularly, plastic causes great harm to the environment and the inhabitants therein. Alas is also an irony to express the stance that; if an animal could be alerted to danger, then the human being should have taken a marathon in challenging themselves to action concerning waste management in society. This ill of waste management in society has been challenged by Rotimi in creating an aesthetic public art. As we should know that public art is not only a form of art executed in the public but also art created to affect the mindset and the perspective of the general public. Alert is executed in a publicly accessible epicenter place of the university; therefore, the message is both to the members of the university community and all who come across it directly and indirectly.

5.0 CONCLUSION

Art is dynamic and evolving. The modern world is even more challenging and great in awakening the consciousness of everyone. Trends change, and so does taste. The aesthetic dimension to the repurposing of waste has generally impacted the development of our environment. However, the "waste to wealth" movement has also had economic, political, social, educational, and physiological significance on society, viewing it from the utilitarian lens. It leads to a reduction in the desecration of water bodies, protection of aquatic and land livestock, forest preservation, and employment of the youth. Salvaging the plastics from drowning the earth, Igboanugo(2013), affirms through the recovery of waste materials such as inner tubes from vehicle tyres, industrial packaging, and textiles combined with his use of paint and African fabric, he repurposes and reinterprets what others discard. Beyond the intentional recycling element of this process, the visual concepts he explores surface a range of pertinent issues. Recycling art is another way of educating people about their environment. Many artists in our society, especially sculptors are used to recycling art and they experience the pleasure of investing, inventing, and creating. Recycling art provides cheap materials for artistic creations, it can also be considered a solution to the phenomenon of pollution, most especially in this period of alarming effects of climate change.

It also helps in reducing and addressing the environmental waste accumulation dilemma. It will be an alternative use of waste to protect the environment. Calling the attention of individual artists to also make use of plastics and bottle caps as an alternative medium of expression in sculpture and installation art in general. The works hereby will inspire up-and-coming artists in exploring the artistic potential of plastics in our environment.

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