POTTERY AND DECORATION: EXAMPLE OF WARRI METROPOLIS

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Abstract
Pottery has been used as a means of identification of a people. It has also stood as instrument of cultural recording of events through the ages. More also, its decorative aspects has been highly cherished and admired. It has also salvage the African continent so much when one talks about it utility. Apart from it economic advantage, it has been an avenue to show for the skills of plagues that serve as architectural embellishment. Although, pottery as interior decoration in private home has been well established and investigated. This study therefore looks at the usage of pottery in public places; such as banks, hospitals, administrative blocks, civil hall and hotels. Ten (10) hotels were randomly sampled in Warn Metropolis for this study. Personal observation and oral interview was the technique used to elicit information. The results of respondents were calculated using simple percentage rating. It was observed that pottery objects amongst others objects were found listed second to the list. This therefore shows that pottery objects are not popular in public decoration. The study therefore recommends that more efforts should be made by potters and the education sector to revive this important area of aesthetic value.

Introduction

Pottery is a craft that is being practiced in almost every community in Nigeria. Pottery, whether tradition or modern is perhaps the most appealing of all the crafts and certainly the most widely practices (Greg, 2004). Pottery products cut across utility, ceremonial, ritual and beautification objects. In most homes today, pottery wares serve many functions. This includes water cooler, storage container for drinking water and even as decorative pieces. The art of pot making is practiced all over the world. It has been found to be a common sight in both developed and developing nations. Adetoro (1978) states that pottery started in Egypt as a result of the invention of potter's wheel that can produce a good number of pots within a short time. The art has since spread to other parts of the world: China, Britain, Brazil and Korea.

Nigeria has immense variety of traditions of pot making. Many of these pottery traditions are represented in the unique pottery section of the museum at Jos. The art of pot making in Nigeria received great stimuli for development as a venture when Abuja potters center was established at the advice of Michael Cardew, a British ceramist who conducted several researches on pottery in Nigeria. To buttress this, Fagg (1990) stated that Nigeria pottery traditions are prominent in lion, Isan-Ekiti and Imope in Ogun state also, he noticed that within Edo and Delta States, pottery tradition exist within these ethnic groups Ishan, Ora, Benin, Urhobo, Itsekiri, Izon, Ukwani and Ibo speaking people.

Despite the fact that pottery production is common to almost all traditions, the production of pottery wares is still limited to objects that could be used for utility and beautification in private homes. However, the use of pottery in private homes has been well established and investigated and its use in public places such as hospitals, international airports, conference halls, administrative blocks, court environs and modern hotels does not seem to have been adequately investigated and documented. This paper therefore investigates modern hotels in Warn metropolis with a view of ascertaining the utilization of pottery in comparison with other objects used for decoration.

In Nigeria, pottery products (wares) are made to depict the cultural values as it is with other aspects of Fine and Applied Arts. To buttress this, Oyelola (1980) states that majority of the patrons of Nigerian art works are expatriates, who are looking for a work (of art), which represents some aspects of traditional culture. Ikwemesi (1996) also observes that it is only in Africa that artists are conscious of their identity. An artist's work at any time or place is always influenced by the physical and socio-historical factors in the environment in which he lives or works. The reason is not

farfetched, the artist (potter) lives and grew up in the midst of people who maintained and obeyed certain rules and also have great value for some acceptable norms in their societies, which are then summed up to represent culture.

Culture, then can be seen as acceptable norms by a people within a geographical enclave. Fagg (in Eyo 1977) refers to the art produced by people within a said geographical entity as "tribal art". Tribal art is never created outside the tribal boundaries.Each tribe is an artistic universe on its own; its art is not understood or appreciated by those outside the tribe, for it expresses the philosophy and religious belief peculiar to the tribe. Eyo objected to the opinion of William Fagg by stating that although it is true that certain art styles are peculiar to certain ethnic group but it does not follow that the art works from one group cannot be understood or appreciated by other groups. Eyo's argument is based on the fact that aesthetic appreciation is a subjective matter and that everybody's cognitive powers are not the same. People from different ethnic groups who are not even literate have been known to admire some works from other ethnic groups, just as Europeans admired some, but not all that is displayed in our museums. It becomes important here to note that no art piece, whether admire by people or not, is completely useless. There is even sense in the ugly.

Pottery Wares and Utility

It is fascinating to know that pots have a particular place in the grammar (and presentation) of African objects. Moreover, pots are intimately connected with social and cultural milieu that creates them (Barley 1994). Pots in Africa (Nigeria) in particular are presumed to be ordinarily used for storage of liquids and cooking. Sometimes, there are also seen as decorative pieces for private homes and public places. However, one begins to wonder why pots are not commonly used in public places as decoration pieces, especially, in the southern part of Nigeria (Warn metropolis in particular).

Agbaria in Ojie (2002), states that works of art speak. This is the major reason why artist and others could interpret the works of art produced outside their own cultures. He went further to ascertain that when one visits a museum with the aid of art pieces available, the person would be able to write considerable length of literature about such culture. He concluded by saying that pottery being an aspect of the visual art has the same attributes that art itself has. This negligence of not using pottery objects as decoration pieces should be checked; especially, when pottery has influenced the social and cultural life of people immensely. Pots have a concrete embodiment of the transmission of culture values. They are capable of telling stories about the culture of a people in different countries. An example of this is the large pottery vessels ornamented with snakes and lizard by Ijaw people of Okrika, in the southern part of Nigeria, Barley (1994).

However, Peter (1985) explains several methods of decoration that are used potters. Some among the lot is sgraffito ***. Sgrafitto is done by scratching the surface of green wares with a pointed tool, like folk or comb to produce an incised design. Although, the potter can buy other forms of tools to achieve the different scratching patterns to inform several of sgraffitto designs as decorations, but household implements are just as good.

Apart from sgraffitto, there are other forms of designs, which are not as popular as sgraffitto among traditional potters but among formal potters. However, lack of equipment to empower formal potters to show forth knowledge they have acquired *** though training is the problem. The non-availability of equipment has made these decorations to be silent to an extent among known potters especially in Nigeria (Delta State in particular). Rollers can be used to create different forms of decoration. Here, one can buy rollers, which have a continuous pattern cut into a cylinder and roll the cylinder onto the surface of your clay to obtain a pattern.

Kitchen tools for making pastry will also offer continuous pattern. Beaters such as paddles can be used. Beat your pot carefully (support it from the inside with your free hand) to impart textures and patterns. Stamp is another method of decoration. This is the one that is most common to potters in the southern part of Nigeria, but their representation, they look stiff. Using this type of decoration, one can make his stamps from a small piece of plaster of Paris (P. O. P). Fire the stamp and gum unto the body of the ware with slip to make the stamp hold unto the ware. There

is still another type known as piercing and cutting. In using this type, holes are pieced in a decorative pattern right through the walls of your pot, or cut away sections to produce a design. Engobo - this is also a decoration method made from slip mixture coloured with oxide. The slip paste is painted onto the surface of the unfired clay.

Objects of different kinds are also used for decorative impressions. In other to create these forms rightly, the right tools should be used. Tools such as ruler edges, modeling tools and other objects like nails and screw heads, bits of machinery, keys, leaf forms, twigs, shells, buttons as well as coins.

Brief History of Warri

The territory of Warri has been associated with a lot of fight and confusion. The history of Warri cannot be complete without at one time or the other making references to the problem of who is the owner of Warri. However, some scholars - Okumagba, D.; Clerk E.K.; J.O.E Sagay and Professor V. F. Peretomode have written extensively about the city of Warri. In summary of all these write-ups, it became obvious that Warri is owned by three major tribes: The Urhobos, Ijaws, and Itsekiries.

The ruler ship of Warri is still an issue of controversy till tomorrow. However, the Delta State Government has made some tangible efforts to install kings for the other tribes in the Warri city, apart from the Olu that has been. The Ovie of AgbarhaAme, the Ovie of Okere re Urhobo and the Pere of Ogbe-ljaw. Warri is now being referred to as a metropolis because it has swallowed all the surrounding clans within the environs. For example, the Uvwie, Udu, and part Okpe clan have been swallowed up into Warri metropolis.

Methodology

Ten hotels were randomly selected for the study in Warri metropolis. All the hotels are modern hotels exception of one classified as five star hotels (Wellington Hotel) in Effuwn. For each of the ten hotels visited, it was obviously proven that sculptural and other forms of craft were predominant in amongst the artistically objects used for decoration.

Simple percentage was used for the calculation of the responses collected as shown in the table. The table above shows the kinds of decoration objects found in each of the ten hotels sample for the study. These hotels are: Hotel De Mark, Cassa d'Pedro, Sylvia Link, Hotel Excel, Navana Hotel, Oru Standard, Osasis Hotel, Biland Hotel, Delta Palace Hotel and Wellington Hotel.

Calculation in Percentages

Graphics Decor 2/156 x 100/1 = 1.3%
Raffia Decor 14/156 x 100/1 = 1.9%
Sculptural Decor 51/1 56 x 100/1 = 32.7%
Pottery Decor 4/156 x 100/1 = 2.6%
Plastic Decor 48/156 x 100/1 = 30.8%
Paintings Decor 27/156 x 100/1 = 17.3%
Textile Decor 10/156 x 100/1 = 6.4%
Total = 100%

From the Table the number of plastic vases and sculptural pieces are more 30.8% and 32.7% respectively when compared to other items used for decoration. Raffia pieces or objects are just 8.9% and painting is 17.3%. Graphics is the list 1 .3% followed by pottery decoration 2.6% and textile 6.4%. From the calculation of the responses pottery enlisted second to the list. This shows that pottery is not popular among objects of decoration in hotels in Warri Metropolis. There are abundant earthen raw materials needed for the production of pottery in the Delta area of Nigeria. The basic raw material is clay. In spite, of the abundance presences of the raw material there is a low usage or presence of the pottery products in public places as decorative pieces. The question one may tend to ask is what may be responsible for this low usage/present of pottery wares in public places in Delta region despite the abundance of clay. The researcher having conducted oral interview with hotel managers and other elites was able deduce some the followings as reasons responsible the low usage pottery decorative pieces in public places. These are: religious value, high cost of ceramic equipment, high cost of ceramic wares in comparison with other close substitutes. With these alternatives have led to having low aesthetic value by owners of these hotels therefore causing low usage of pottery for decoration in the hotels and may be others public places.

1. Religious Factors

Before the advent of western civilization in the Niger-Delta, our people were mainly African tradition religious worshippers (A.T.R). In A.T.R, it is believed that the omnipotent and omnipresence God is too big for any mortal being to see directly or make any request to him. You have to make your request known to him through other smaller gods who are known as his messengers or at best, intermediaries between God and man, Nabofa (2004). Consciously or unconsciously, people developed interest in calving using wood as medium, various representations of these gods acting as messengers of God. The skills derived from calving have helped to influence and promote sculptural aesthetic values vis-aviz the high presence of sculpture pieces in public places. Religiously, this cannot be said to be the same with Pottery. In pre-colonial Niger-Delta, especially among the Urhobos, Ijaws, lsoko and Itsekiri, pots that were locally fired without glaze were limited to domestic usage such as storage of water and serving of food for ritual purposes. However, the trade was of course, seen as a menial occupation for women. The notion today, is still in one way or the other having its negative influence in pottery / ceramic appreciation. If one takes the pain to compile student's enrolment in ceramics unit of the Department of Fine and Applied Arts, Delta State University Abraka, for the past nine to ten years, one will observe that female enrolment into the ceramics unit is higher than that of male.

2. High cost of Ceramic Equipment and Materials

Ceramic production has not moved much above its crude (terra-cotter) production stage in the Niger-Delta. This scenario exists due to high cost of importation of ceramic equipment and materials such as kiln, potter's wheel, plungers, ball-mills, stains and oxide. local attempt at fabricating these equipment has not achieved the desired result. What this implies is that both the local potters, those who have graduated from ceramic departments in high institutions as well as students in training are either finding it difficult to advance in the ceramic profession or they are finding it difficult to exploit and exhibit their full potentials. These kinds of frustrating situations will negatively affect the production standard pots and influence promotion mass-production / high aesthetic appreciation of pottery wares.

3. High Cost of Ceramic wares in Comparison with other close Subtitles

High cost of ceramic equipment translates into high cost of production. The high cost 'Of production as a practice is usually transferred to the end user who is ready to buy and pay the price. Where there are no willing and ready buyers, you should expect the industry to fold-up. This was the position when a local industry situated along Orhuwhorun road, (Pidev Pottery) had to fold up within a year (1992). The ceramic company could not cope with the high cost of production coupled with low patronage, cheap prices of plastic wares serving as very close substitute. The presence of China and England pottery wares available at prices cheaper than the few locally produced pottery wares did not help the situation.

4. **Forms/Decorative Patterns of Finished Products**

Most of the Pottery pieces found in the country (Nigeria) are mostly left at the terra- cotter state. Some of the few that are glazed do not have interesting spiral pattern or bold lines (sgraffito) pattern as designs over the body of the pots. Also, bright colours that can attract attention are not used. Instead, the pots are coated (glazed) with mat glazes. Mat glazes do not have the truce quality that can make pots to shine to elicit attention. Because of these factors, hence, decorators not to buy pots for the sole purpose of decoration.

Conclusion

The circumstances surrounding the low usage of pottery pieces for decoration is obviously responsible to the factors earlier stated in this paper. Pottery being regarded as a guide by 1-lorbert Read (in Greg: 14) opines that because of its abstract, unconscious widespread and made by common people, is losing value in some regions of the world, and particularly in Ward metropolis of Delta State, Nigeria. The factors earlier mentioned in this paper are responsible for this poor state of pottery usage as means of decorator in modern hotels amongst other

decorative alternatives. Some of the factors are lack of awareness, religious beliefs, high cost of pottery equipment and materials, high cost of ceramic products in comparison to other decorative patterns. This paper therefore suggests that pottery collectors should include Warn metropolis to their sales program where owners of hotels can have easy access to purchase wares to decorate their hotels.

Potters within the Warn axis should also look beyond the conservative attitudes of pottery representation both in forms and decorative strategies. The use of attractive glazes should be considered for pottery finishing. Schooled potters should also endeavour to hold seminar programmes with owners of private and public establishments. This would help to create awareness on the value of artistry.

Table 1: Decoration Objects found in the Hotels

Hotels	Graphics decor	Raffia decor	Sculptural wood & metal	Ceramics decor	Plastic decor	Painting decor	Textile woven material and paper design
Hotels Mark	-	1	5	-	7	4	1
Cassa d'Pedro	-	1	6	2	6	-	-
Sylvia Link	-	-	4	1	4	5	-
Hotel Excel	-	2	7	-	5	3	-
Navana Hotel	-	1	5	-	4	3	1
Oru Standard		-	5	-	3	-	1
Osasis Hotels		3	3	-	6	4	-
Biland Hotels		2	6	-	4	3	3
Delta Palace Hotel	1	4	5	1	5	-	2
Wellington Hotel	1	-	5	-	4	5	2
Total	2	14	51	4	48	27	10

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