

“Africanizing” A Modern African Art History Curriculum from the Perspectives of an Insider (Pp. 451-467)

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Abstract

Until recent, the lack of perception that dogged the early study of traditional art by members of Western culture seem to have reappeared in the study or (non study) of modern African art. Currently, modern African art is engaging the attention of western art historians' scholarly enquiry. However, there is a need for a well educated and articulate art historical practice to develop all over Africa, if the pre-conceived neo-colonial and xenophobic attitudes of some western curators and scholars must be addressed. Besides, African terminologies and nomenclatures, words, classification and definition of terms are necessary for African situations and experiences. Some questions are tackled in this paper such as; what aspects of the existing African art history are problematic? Why is the need to Africanize African Art history? Whose insider perspective is the focus of the paper? “Africanizing” a modern African Art History Curriculum’ as used in this paper refers to the needed reformation in the current African art history practice and study in the tertiary institutions towards a progressive, developmental and Africa centred art history. It is about evolving a contemporary African art history that is historical, unbiased and factual about Africa

Introduction

Late Ben Enwonwu, Nigeria's foremost modernist artist had asserted that Africans must be prepared to tell their own stories as a reflection of the struggle of their age, and their right to self actualization (Ogbechie Sylvester, 2005). Ogbuche maintained that it is increasingly obvious that Enwonwu was

very prescient in his views considering western prejudicial narrative of African contemporary practice that is based on an irrational focus on the idea that for art to be legitimate it must conform to western prescriptions. Although modern African art is now being considered in art historical discipline as worthy of an art historian's scholarly enquiry and some attempts have been made in recent time to focus on modern/contemporary African art. It is apparent that much attention is still being dissipated on the art of the pre-colonial period in the West almost to the detriment of the nascent but ever increasing developments in the modern art scene. As a result, the same lack of perception that dogged the early study of traditional art by members of western culture remains in the study (or non-study) of modern African art. There is still that tendency by Western scholars to ignore indigenous historical perceptions and constructs. Olu Oguibe (2004; 6) observes that often, 'the outsider whether occidental scholarship or Diaspora Negro discourse, quickly establishes delineations without acknowledging the possibility that these may not be shared by those whose histories are at the centre of discourse'

It is therefore necessary that a well educated and articulate art historical practice; develop all over Africa if the current perceived neo-colonial and xenophobic attitudes of western scholars, curators and art historians must be addressed. However, this would be impossible, unless the Art history study programmes are structured or restructured in a manner that would effectively equip African scholars towards effecting a change in the prevailing trend. More so, it has been observed that in most of the Universities in Africa, Art History is currently either non-existent or weakly developed or teaching initiatives are needed for really establishing the subject within an African context (Posnansky, 1998: 6). The current position further strengthens the underlying position of African art in western perspectives. The state of affairs seeks Africans, who have the requisite training to appropriate artistic developments.

This paper therefore addresses such questions as; what is African art history? What aspect of the existing African art history is problematic? Whose insider perspective is the focus of the paper? "Africanizing" modern African Art History' as used in this paper refers to the needed reformation in the current African art history practice and study in the tertiary institutions towards a progressive, developmental as well as Africa centered art history. It is about evolving a contemporary art history that is historical, factual and unbiased

about Africa. ‘The perspective of an insider’ is indicative of the author’s identity as an African living in Africa; it also reflects his position as an observer and participant, being a University academic, teaching art history in Nigeria. This paper emphasizes the need for Africans to tell their own story and attention has been drawn to some problem of modern African art history and solutions are suggested.

What is Art History and How Does It Differ From Other Studies of Art?

Art History is the study of the visual arts. It is concerned with identifying, classifying, describing, evaluating, interpreting and understanding the art products and historic development of the fields of painting, sculpture, architecture, the decorative arts, drawing, printmaking, photography, interior design among others. Art History also embraces a variety of intellectual studies, from cataloguing of museum collections, where the primary objects is to establish a body of relationship of art and society or the nature of beauty. Art history is a scholarly engagement that addresses among other things, how a work of art was produced, about the context in which it was created, about the meaning it had for the audience to whom it was initially addressed, it also tries to explain why people respond to art work the way they do and why one art work should be classified as art and another as advertisement.

As an academic discipline, art history was developed in Germany in the 19th Century, but its origin stretches back to the renaissance period in the 16th century. However, in most educational institutions art history is usually restricted to sculpture, painting and architecture. In modern practice, art history involves a wide range of exploration with things that belong in whole or part to our every day cultural experience, these include television, film, videos, advertisement, signs and symbols in public places and at work, graffiti on buildings and photographs in tabloid newspapers, pictures in the galleries as well as serial stripe cartoon, and packaging on consumer goods (Pointon, 1992).

African art History is an aspect of the general discipline of Art history and it has spanned over four decades. Sequel to the development of African Studies as a discipline in Europe and the United States, sub-units of African studies were established in institutions. By 1945, a specialization in African art had emerged in Anthropology. In the 1950s, requests for research grants

for art historians in America and Europe were becoming very competitive and intellectually elitist. Only top art historians received awards from foundations in Europe and America. But nearly all Anthropologists, Sociologists and Ethnographers got grants to write about the culture events of Africa. They started writing books on African art, while western art historians were still busy looking for subjects that were actually art historical and would make them compete for research grants to write on American and European art. In a little while the Anthropologists had made themselves masters of traditional African art. They did not however regard themselves as art historians. They were known as scholars of African art. For the scholars in African art, the 1960s was the dawn of an era, as Foundations in the United States made funds available for the purpose of scholarship, including conferences, seminars, and publications on African art. So in the 60s, Art historians who had degree in American and European art history sooner joined to compete with Anthropologists and Ethnographers for subjects that would attract grants. When they started writing on traditional art and architecture of Africa, the western art historians still regarded themselves naturally as art historians because they were already art historians of their own art culture. As the Anthropologists and Ethnographers noticed that they were writing on subjects of the same cultural base as these art historians, the anthropologists naturally saw themselves as art historians as well. It was Roy Sieber who in 1957 first wrote a Ph.D. Dissertation in the USA on African traditional art. When he finished, he automatically became the historian or an expert on African traditional art. He never wrote on modern African art experiences of Africa. He joined his colleagues in Anthropology in legitimizing the traditional art culture which was christened art history. Eventually, African art that was once found within the discipline of Anthropology became an aspect of art history discipline.

Art History and Related Disciplines:

Art is something that is often seen and it therefore sets Art History apart from its fellow and interdependent disciplines, such as Anthropology, Psychology, Languages, Archaeology, Literary History, and Sociology. Generally, the barriers between these disciplines have been broken in recent years to benefit both sides. For example, Pointon (1986; 20) points out that the student of English may feel a thrill of excitement on first reading King Lear and may be moved to go and read Shakespeare's other plays just as the student of history of art who is stirred by the sight of Titian's Bacchus and Ariadne may seek out other paintings by the same artist. Moreover, with the

help of psychology, archaeology and chemistry, it is possible for the art historian to know a little more about what colour means in our attempt to commute pictorially through the ages (Pointon 1986, 28-29). Some art historians have turned to Freudian and post Freudian psychoanalytical techniques in an attempt to reach a greater degree of understanding of the meaning of works of art and how they are interpreted. There are many close ties between Art History and literary History too. The study of painting which treat subjects from literature and, connected with this, the field of book illustration, can be extremely rewarding for Art History especially if one literary text is followed through a variety of pictorial interpretations.

One significant aspect of art history as a discipline is that the art historian is expected to discuss how all the variables of art production are involved and the inter-relationship of art, artists and the art market.

Art History, African Art and the Art Market:

It was not until decades after Europe had learned to recognize aesthetic value in the art objects from Africa in the twentieth Century that the academic discipline of art history opened its doors to African art. Before then, the art works for years shared the title ‘Primitive Art’ with other non-Western art and went on to acquire a rubric of its own that is, traditional African art. Dealers of Africa art, who are often Africans, also help to wet this western appetite for the ‘authentic’ African art work. Over time, their interactions with western buyers in the art trade often enable them to discern certain underlying western definitions of authenticity and therefore can predict which objects will fetch the highest market price .With such experience in the trade, many of them often manipulate objects in other to meet the demands for the perceived ‘authentic’ African in the art market. (Steiner, 2006; 455). On the contrary, contemporary or modern African art is not a profitable commodity in this market because it challenges exiting myths of authenticity and otherness that most Western connoisseurs so zealously protect.

Some Problems of Modern African Art History

The problem with the existing African art history can be viewed from divergent perspectives and foremost is its source and origin or foundation:

Constraint of Foundation of African Art History:

Basically, art history developed its concepts in relation to Western art and culture, but African art history also developed within the discipline of anthropology. Thus, anthropological perspectives and methods have been critical for the discourse on African art history. This reflected in a number of anomalies in the history and early study of African art. For example, in the early writings on pre-colonial African art history, focus is on culture regions as producers of art works instead of the artist. It is to be contrasted with what obtains in western art history that identifies artists as authentic producers of particular works. 'Unfortunately, when African students, travelled to study art history, they were trained by these same people in the academic culture that they had already "cultured", that is, giving the study, what they saw as African art a full dose of anthropology'. (Oloidi, 2002; 39)

Prejudices of International Art Market against Modern African Art:

As was the case with early art from Africa, which was regarded as not being art until much later, the work of the African artist with academic training today faces challenges from two sectors: the art market and the academia.

Since African art objects moved from ethnology to art museums through the first half of the twentieth century, they also acquired a secure status as celebrated signifiers of an 'authentic/pristine/traditional' other, an image that has since played a central role in the collection, exhibition, and critique of much of African art. This myth of authenticity still persists, and has often helped to elevate the market value of such art works. On the contrary, the works of academic or modern African artists that are not conforming to that normative expectation are usually "dismissed as 'contaminated' or 'corrupted' in order to gag the question of diversity of Africa's cultural representations, and thereby safeguard the myth" (Sanyal, 2002:134-135).

The experience is unfavourable to progressive documentation and study of modern African art history because the character of art and formal representation has never been monolithic, in Africa or elsewhere. To generalize in this manner about African art is to radically oversimplify the situation and it is often promoted by negative academic discussion such as obtained in the colonial and immediate postcolonial period.

Western Scholarship versus Africa: Another problem is that the West still largely orchestrates the tempo and character of art in postcolonial Africa and

Western Critics and historians often apply equivocal considerations of modern, post-modern art styles to the analysis of modern African art. In spite of the ramifying experiences of globalization which is based on the idea of connectivity between the local and the international in a seamless world, Africa is often disadvantaged in this unequal global combination. Sanyal Sunandal (2002:135) observed that John Picton’s observation on a related issue germane to this context, is that ‘it seems that people in Africa can never win, for if they remain attached to the traditions of the past, they are innocent and exotic, and if they move into the present they are merely foolish.’

Western art establishment has continued to insist on an ethnic identification for African art. On the contrary, Modern trends in Western art render anonymous the artist and his /her ethnic affiliations altogether rather than anonymising the artist and accentuating his ethnic affiliations. By this, the western artist is often positioned in a limitless, borderless and infinite centre; but the non-European and African artists are constrained to attest identity and authenticity (Oguibe 2004)

Berlo (1999:183) opines that there is a peculiar blindness to individuality and creativity created under conditions of a prevailing aesthetic different from that of the West. Pertinently, despite the increasing interest in modern/contemporary African art that has resulted in numerous exhibitions in the past decade in the United States and Europe; including ‘Seven Stories About modern African Art’ in Africa, an exhibition ,mounted at the White Chapel Art Gallery in London as part of Africa 95, the British based Festival of African Arts held during the autumn of 1995 and the recent one in 2005; it is a fact that the emphasis in these exhibits has remained the identification and promotion of artists whose work fit into western critical paradigms, ignoring the values and tastes of their native peoples. In my recent visits to the United States and the United Kingdom as well as to significant places like the Smithsonian Institution’s Museum of African Art, I found out that little interest is reserved for African artists who do not belong to the corps of elite African artists –those who produce to specification to curry the west’s curatorial sympathy. Such regulatory strategy continues to distort artistic productions, presenting a problem for a coherent progressive and developmental study.

Euro-America Resident ‘International’ African Artists versus Africa based Art and Artists:

Presently, many of the popular African artists paraded as modern in western critical idioms are not known at home in Africa. Most Art history students and teachers in Nigeria for example, are not conversant with the art works of Nigerian artists in the west like the much-celebrated Yinka Shonibare, Sokari Douglas Camp and Late Rotimi Fani Kayode. Ironically, these are the frontline African artists recognized in the West as echoing the mind of the African way back in the homeland. As contestable as this is, it is noteworthy that majority of the so-called international African artists who reside in the west are very vast in western artistic taste and knowledgeable on the normative expectancy of the west concerning African art and in the attempt to survive or to be relevant in the West, often, they compromise the true African artistic creativity and do not present things as they are presently in Africa. This is also problematic for a progressive account of modern African artistic productions and its history.

Socio-Economic and Political Situation in Africa and Their Effects on Education:

Aside from the thrust of the arts in Africa being preponderantly western, the socio-economic and political situation on the continent, which has hindered progress and economic development; has not been favourable to the emergence of a quantum and quality local patronage as well as critical art historical practice that can properly correct the art history records initiated by the West. To exacerbate this situation is the atrophy that has been the bane of most African educational systems, since the middle of the 1980s as a result of obnoxious policies of the World Bank, such as the Educational Policy for Sub-Saharan Africa (EPSSA). It ushered into most sub-Saharan African nations the condemnable World Bank Education loan as well as its structural adjustment programme (SAP). Unfortunately, such adverse socio-economic policies engaged in by African governments including official corruption, and erratic change in governance have had a debilitating effect on every aspect of the peoples’ life including education ,art and its history.

Frustrating Local Learning Environment Leading To Mimicry of Western Scholarship:

Due to the above dilemma, there has been lack of text books, journals, recorders, slides, films and other information on the current state of the discipline in most of Africa. In Nigeria, this has been quite discouraging to

scholars and students who want to enter into the discipline. How many art history teachers use slides, videos and other visuals to teach today? The lack of such research materials as literature on modern African art resulted in the unsavoury inclination of a large number of Nigerian art historians to traditional African art because of the abundant availability of materials for the researcher on pre-colonial African art. Consequently, efforts made so far in researching on modern African art history have been negligible. In fact, in Nigeria, what obtains is a collection of writings of all kinds which poses the problem of classifying the various writings on modern Nigerian art. Many of these writings are what Art Historian and Critic, Professor Ola Oloidi ((2002) sees as ‘art historical Collage and Art History without history’. In some cases, they are not in-depth and historical; at times, they are mere reportage of interviews.

Limited Information Available to African Scholars and Unwillingness of Western Publishers:

Many books on modern African art, produced in Europe and America are not easily accessible to scholars and students of art history in Africa .Some of these books have been written by Diaspora Africans, while others written by Euro-American scholars are supposed to be read through Western eyes. In fact, some art historians in history find it difficult to have their works published abroad. Moreover, the opinion of art historians whose ideas do not coalesce with the interest and views of the publishers are likely to be countenanced with suspicion .Till date a greater number of enlightened readership for those researches exist outside Africa. The demand of this popular market force continues to influence and at times distort factual history (Afigbo, 1992).

Although there are a number of African art historians now residing in the West including those from Nigeria like Roland Abiodun, Babatunde lawal, Moyosore Benjamin Okediji, Olu Oguibe and Sylvester Ogbechie; others include Stanley Okoye, Chika Okeke; in spite of this, the state of art history practice and education in Nigeria (Oloidi, 2002:39) as in most parts of Africa is begging for advancement. There is yet the need to increase the number of Africa resident professionals to literarily educate modern African artistic trends on a one sided western critical discipline.

Towards Africanizing Modern African Art History Curriculum

The task of Africanizing modern African art history and its study in Africa must involve the following:

Re-Examination of Existing Programmes:

There is a need to re-examine existing programme contents offered in the art departments. This is with a view to engendering art history programmes that are not necessarily consolidating on inherited defective Western colonial course contents. What is needed where necessary are changes involving innovations, revision or diversification of existing programmes, a re-examination of students' admission requirements, and possibly an improvement on faculty recruitment.

Presently, some of the visual art programmes in some Nigerian art Departments are structured in such a manner that there is need in some cases to improve on their historical contents rather than any outmoded western anthropological outlook. An examination of the various topics written by African and non Africans say so much about the subject of modern African art history being heavily woven around anthropology. Oloidi (2002;39) outlines some of the titles of some researches in modern Nigerian art history; "Motifs on the traditional Carved Doors of the Yorubas", "Adaptations of Uli Designs to Modern Textile Art" Traditional Spoons and Carved Doors of the Fulani, "Art Associated with Masquerades among Igala". "Form and Function of Shango Staff", "Divination Implements of the Ijaws"; and concludes that "these are engrossingly anthropological".

The proposal here is that the interest of modern African art history scholarship should be historical, based on current artistic development, towards appropriate documentation. Art history programme therefore should equip an art history student for this responsibility. A sample of the expected content of a Modern African Art History Degree programme at the Master of Arts (M.A.) or Bachelors of Arts specializing class is proposed here:

First Semester: [I] Geography of Africa [Pre-Colonial to Modern]; [II] Traditional African Art and Philosophy of African Production (Pre-colonial to Post- Independence); [III] Anthropology and Africa; [IV] Modern African Art History I (Colonial History and Art in the Colonies 1880 to 1960s); [V] Skills of Writing in Modern African Art History ; [VI] European Art (Renaissance, Modern and Post-modern)

Second Semester :[VII] Modern African Art History II (African Nationalism and Post-Colonial Art in Africa): [VIII]Comparative Studies of Modern Art, the Orient, West and Us(Africa) : [IX] Diaspora Art in America (Including Harlem Renaissance) and the West Indies: [X] Formal and Informal art Schools (Workshop and Western type Academies): [XI] Art Schools and Movements in Modern Africa: [XII] Politics in Africa, Art and the International Art Market: [XII] Methodology of Art Historical Research

While not suggesting in this paper that modern African art history study programme be limited to Africa and its people alone; because such would consign it to the realm of African Studies; it is important that emphasis should be given to the historical aspects. Again, it should be unbiased and devoid of factual distortions. The nature of Art history as a wide subject covering the artistic experiences of mankind all over the globe must be stressed.

Improvement on Teaching Personnel:

Teaching initiatives would be really needed for establishing art history within an African context⁸. It would therefore be in the right direction to engage personnel who are adequately trained in art history epistemology towards improving the programme as well as stimulating an Africa-centred content. Besides, Art history academics teaching the subject should be graduates of art history and not African studies, religion or philosophy.

Evolving African Terminologies for Art History and Relating Works To Existing Art Theories:

Moreover, almost all the terminologies currently used in African art history are still basically western; and it is time to address this, including finding terms, words and new classification to replace Western nomenclature that may not be the same when analysing African artistic experiences in terms like Dadaism, Modern art, Post-modern or Global art styles.

Modern African art history is still evolving and there is possibility for progressive academic development as well as chances to revise aberrations towards an African centered art history. It must be noted that daily the knowledge of art is constantly being updated, revised and reconsidered and the latest attribution is not necessarily the correct one and it would need consistent reading through specialist local and international Art history journals, books and the internet to be current . More so there is a need to

evolve art theories that are African in thoughts that would provoke international art thoughts and responses. This gap has led to asking questions about who the primary target of African art history scholars are? Is it just to be limited to Africa and Africans?

Comparative Study of Modernities and Decolonizing Western Knowledge:

Towards this, it would be necessary that the programme content in the academic institutions should include comparative study of modernities vis-à-vis the Orient, the West and Africa to draw out from artistic experiences the common humanity of man. It is instructive that Western civilization or modernity is undisputedly the hegemonic centre and the task for the African scholarship is to decolonize knowledge offered in the institutions. Ali Mazrui (2003) posits that World culture is evolving fast, and the task is to save it from excessive Eurocentrism. He maintains that the question which arises is how this is to be achieved. Decolonizing knowledge within art historical context is to seek cultural nearness of western phenomena, with a view to comparing and contrasting them with those of African society as well as enabling a socio-linguistic usage in modern African art history with African perspectives.

Need for Competence in African Language for Students of African Art History:

What's more, there can also be innovation in the admission requirements for students that would like to read art history in the institutions and this could include at least the ability to read or write or verbally communicate in one or more African languages. This will enable socio-linguistic development of terms in the discipline that would be ecological to modern Africa.

The Differences of Western Modern Art and Modern African Art: After all, modern African art did not evolve in the same manner as in the West. Modern art in Europe and America represent a departure from western traditions of representation and the depiction of actual world experiences. In western modern art, the concern of the artist shifted from physical embodiment to the idea .It is often assumed that the embodiment itself is no longer of great importance. A few statements on a piece of paper can serve just as well as a work produced in traditionally accepted materials by traditional methods , for the work of art can be seen as the map of a thought process. In most of Africa, (especially those areas with a history of artistic

production), modern art involves adaptation of traditional or pre-colonial African art form with the ethos and idioms of western academy art type. Such was the style of art taught in the formal institutions developed during the colonial period in Africa.

Instilling Appropriate Art History Epistemology and Methodology In Would Be Art Historians:

Above all, it is important to instil proper art history epistemology and methodology in would be art historians in the institutions. This cannot be done haphazardly or spuriously, it has to be methodical, developmental and purpose-directed. The first attempt towards this would be the development of proper literature for the teaching of the course .It is greatly needed if the future of the discipline is to be improved. If we are to successfully attract students to the course, we must provide them with appropriate literature similar to Jansen, Gardner, and Hartt books on the history of western art (Eyo, 1987:116). Books written by westerners and other non-westerners including Africans should be included in the reading list of students to acquaint students with the writings, thoughts and views of authors from different backgrounds for comparative purposes.

Training in modern African art history should consider how artistic materials ought to be used by art historians and compared to those specializing in other disciplines like psychology, history anthropology and sociology. It should be emphasized to trainees as stated before that the barrier between these disciplines have been broken in recent years in a way that links them all, but every one of the disciplines have their individual epistemology and disciplinary characteristics.

Invariably, students must be taught to equip themselves with art historical techniques of inquiry. For example, in art history, the process is often such that one starts with an end product which is the art work, and works backwards, exploring and analyzing the process, which brought it into being.

Employing Qualified and Certified Teaching Staff as well as Establishing Creditable Journals:

Further, qualified and certified persons with the knowledge of Art History epistemology ought to be employed to teach the subject in the departments. Importantly, faculty teaching Art History must be knowledgeable and ready to avail themselves of current developments in the discipline. Besides, the establishment of creditable journals and provision of avenues for the

publication of original and genuine research on modern African art by African scholars would be a progressive step towards achieving a proper documentation and teaching of modern African Art history. Such Publications as these should be regular and made available locally in Africa and to western audience(s) as a counter penetrative strategy, for the balancing of reports, views, documentation and assessment of modern art of Africa.

Improving Learning Environment towards a viable Scholarship:

Most significantly, research students in the field need to be equipped with necessary enabling academic environment such as relevant textbooks, journals, magazines, monographs, slides, films, computer and internet or virtual library facility and all other information on the current state of research and scholarship in the discipline. It is as well necessary to emphasis that contrary to early and immediate postcolonial Western scholarship, the evaluation of art works from Africa does not need esoteric parameters

Need For an Umbrella Body/Association of Researchers and intellectuals based in Africa:

There is also the need for an umbrella body or association of researchers, intellectuals and scholars like the Association of Art Historians (AAH), London; CIHA (Comite Internationale d'Histoire de l'art) based in Switzerland or the College Association of America (CAA) for the needed germination of ideas and establishment of standards to help advance modern African art historical studies all over Africa. This is necessary because such bodies act as channels for constant flow of information and communication among members, to exchange ideas, and for up-dates. The implication of this is far reaching for the expected reformation of the existing art history curriculum.

Collaborative Work Between Western Based African Scholars And Those In Africa:

Moreover, it is essential to narrow the gap between Western based African art history scholars and those in Africa. Collaborative work between Western based African scholars and those in Africa may be an incentive that could help to hasten the much needed reforms towards Africanizing the current modern African art history and its study. Such collaborative 'endeavour must be ingrained and mutually responsive' (Adogame, 2004:380) and this can be

in the form of intellectual support by western based scholars to scholars in Africa through making books and research findings available to them. On their part, Africa based scholars will supply data and information to advance the ‘theoretical grid making’ of their western based counterparts (ibid).

Conclusion

The above observations and proposal, if considered, should be reciprocally beneficial towards Africanizing the scholarship of modern African art history. The Art Council of African Studies Association (ACASA) based in the United States is probably the biggest of all African Studies Associations based in Europe and America to which the whole body of African art Historians in the world can be affiliated. The issues of interest of such African Studies Associations are mostly anthropological or ethnographical. It is therefore urgent that an International Association of African Art Historians with its base in Africa (IAAAH) should evolve and in partnership with African scholars based in the West to produce enduring scholarship in modern African art history.

The proposal of this paper is towards historical perspective and African view to issues in African visual art history particularly the contemporary/modern art. American and British art history from pre-historic to modern and from modern to the present were written by art historians. Americans and Europeans wrote the history of their art. Lamentably, some of the books from the stable of most Western publishers on modern African art history do habitually incorporate a few African scholars resident in the West to validate their publications-however skewed

By now, there ought to have been a comprehensive book on the history of modern African art, written primarily by African scholars, a compendium or reference materials that is sequential, and methodical and detailed book like Monica.B. Visona et al, on traditional African art, *A History of Art in Africa*, (2001) or Sidney Kasfir’s comprehensive and illustrative book, *Contemporary African art* (1999). Such books should be projects that emanate from collaborative work by African scholars, written with deep insight and authentic knowledge devoid of biases or sentiments.

Brief Biographical Description

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