

BEN ENWONWU

Distinguished Lecture Series

Rasheed A. Gbadamosi, OFR

The Place of Creative Art in the History of Man

NIGERIAN INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS



Knowledge 1963, bronze

Photo. Kelechi Amadi-Obi

CO N T E N T S

Biography of Chief Rasheed Gbadamosi, OFR

Opening remarks by Chief Arthur C.I. Mbanefo, MFR, CON, FCA

Lecture - *The Place of Creative Art in the History of Man*

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THE BEN ENWONWU FOUNDATION

Distinguished Lecture Series

**Delivered on the 25th February, 2004 at
THE NIGERIAN INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, LAGOS**

Chief Rasheed A. Gbadamosi, OFR
The Place of Creative Art in the History of Man

under the distinguished chairmanship of

Chief Arthur Mbanefo, MFR, CON, FCA
Former Nigerian Permanent Representative to the UN

Guests of honour

General Yakubu Gowon Rtd GCFR
Former Head of State and Commander - in - Chief of the Nigerian Armed Forces

His Excellency, Sir Philip Thomas
The British High Commissioner to Nigeria

BIOGRAPH Y OF RASH EED GBADAMOSI, OFR

Chief Rasheed Abiodun Gbadamosi is a trustee and the Vice-Chairman of the Visual Arts Society of Nigeria (VASON). He is an accomplished playwright and has published 6 plays and 30 short stories. Gbadamosi is also a renowned economist and businessman who has brought his wealth of experience to bear in his appointments as a member of many governmental institutions such as the Governing Council, Lagos State University (1985-87), Constitutional Drafting Committee (1976-77) and Nigeria's external debt rescheduling team (1986). He was also a member, Board of Directors, National Electric Power Authority from 1976-79.

He has also served as Chairman, Nigerian Industrial Development Bank Ltd (1986-94), Chairman, National Committee on Industrial Development (1989-98), Chairman, Petroleum Products Pricing Regulatory Agency (2000) and Chairman, Governing Council, Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research (NISER).

Chief Gbadamosi was born on December 7, 1943 and holds a BA in Economics (1966) from the University of Manchester, England and an MA in Economics (1969) from the University of New Hampshire, United States.

He sits on the board of many business concerns including Cappa D'Alberto Plc, Lucky Fibres Plc, American International Insurance Company Plc (AIICO) and Agro Commodities Handling Services Ltd. He is also the Chairman of Ragolis Waters Ltd, Vono Products, Syndicated Metal Industries Ltd, Commercial and Scientific Computing Nigeria Ltd. He is the Managing Director of R.A.G and Company Ltd.

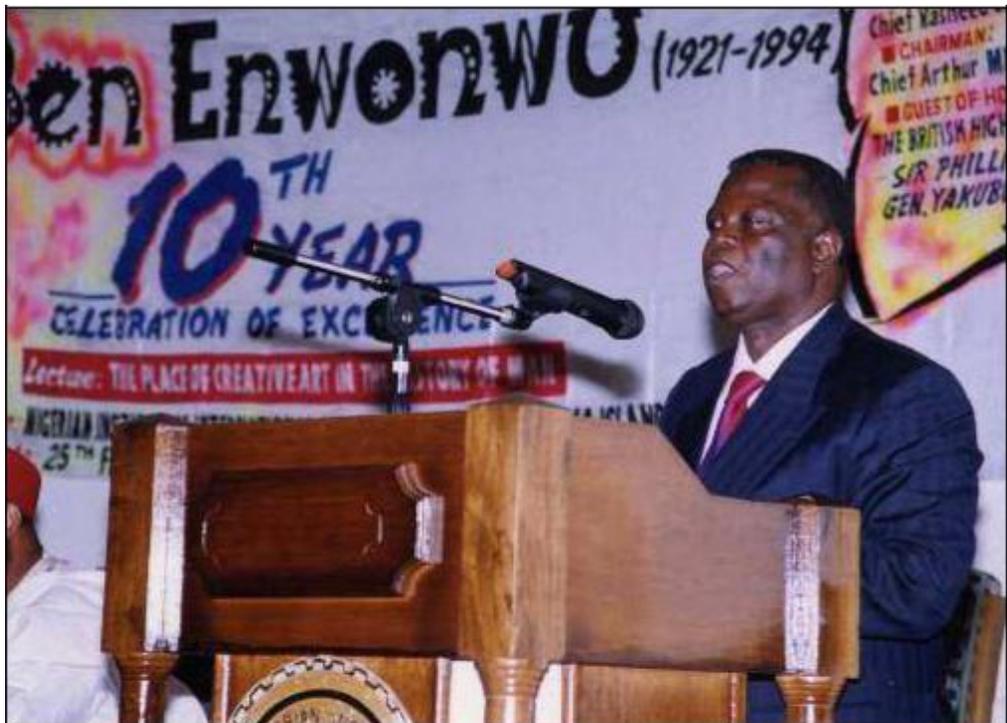
From 1973-75, Chief Gbadamosi served as Commissioner for Economic Development and Establishments, Lagos State. He has held many other public appointments and was Federal Minister of National Planning (1998-99) Gbadamosi has received many awards, including the National Honour of Officer of Order of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (OFR) in 2001.

Gbadamosi is the author of many short stories and plays for radio, television and the



theatre including 'Behold, my Redeemer', 'Echoes from the Lagoon' and 'Sunset over Nairobi,' which won first prize in radio Nederlands Golden Windmill short story competition (1970).

Chief Rasheed Gbadamosi is the patron of the Association of Nigerian Authors, Lagos state and an avid art collector. He is a past chairman of the Musical Society of Nigeria (MUSON) and a member, Board of Directors of the Ben Enwonwu Foundation.



OPENING REMARKS BY CHIEF ARTIST UR C.I. MBAN EFO, MFR, CON , FCA

Let me start by thanking the Ben Enwonwu Foundation for inviting me to this special event to mark the 10th year remembrance of the death of Professor Ben Enwonwu and the formal launching of the Foundation itself.

Exactly 10 years and 20 days ago today, the cold hands of death snatched from us our Professor Odinigwemmadu Ben Chukwukadibia Enwonwu. He was a member of the distinguished Order of the British Empire, MBE, Fellow of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland (F.R.A.I) Doctor of Letters, Honoris Causa, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria (D.Litt), Nigerian National Merit Award winner (NNMA), member of the exclusive Hampstead Arts and Artists International and member of the revered Agbalanze Society of Onitsha.



For many of us, Professor Enwonwu represents many things, but we must all agree that even now, his works and exhibitions secured for him fame as 'Africa's greatest artist'. His life is a challenge to the Foundation, which must do all it can to delve into the history of the man and his works, if only to correct the disservice art history and historians have so far done to him and his memory. Volumes can be written about this icon who began his formal education in the Nigerian colonial educational system under Mr. Ken C. Murray with whom he studied from 1933 to 1937, and who exhibited the works of his students including Enwonwu in London in 1937. Professor Enwonwu and four other students collectively known as the Murray School formed the first group of Nigerian students trained in European techniques of visual representation by the British colonial government. He completed his formal education at the Slade School of Fine Art of the University of London and subsequently became the first African to achieve international acclaim as a contemporary artist.

He remained active until his last days in 1994. His career, which straddled the

colonial and post-colonial periods of 20th century Nigerian art, was full and fulfilled.

Enwonwu challenged Nigerian artists to create a contemporary art with the same cultural significance the arts enjoyed in indigenous context. Hear him! “The preservation and continuity of the characteristic quality of African art depends largely on how the modern artist can borrow the techniques of the west without copying European art.” This was precisely what he practiced.

Professor Enwonwu, born a twin, created the perception that he was imbued with multiple personalities. Stories abound that refer to his mercurial nature and a predilection for contradictory behaviour that most of his critics defined as a form of pathology. Many though see such criticisms as representing colonial interpretation of African modernity. As a first, he had to break new grounds and this by itself generated envy and unnecessary controversies. His European contemporaries could not just understand the confidence he exuded even in those colonial days that some were compelled to portray him as one with an inclination to unruly behaviour. This divergent personality was indeed the hidden strength of this genius, which defined his work and set him apart from the rest.

There is so much that can be said about Ben, his work and life but to delve in to this would mean another lecture which I am sure you do not require from me. Suffice it to say however, that among his many patrons is Her Royal Majesty Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain. His works will be found at the United Nations in New York and several organizations and homes of individuals around the world. Indeed, as I think of his many works, I can see his son, Oliver, saying, like the son of Sir Christopher Wren who designed St. Paul's Cathedral in London- “if you seek my monument, look around you”. I can think of so many places near and far where Ben's significant works are standing; the NEPA headquarters, NITEL headquarters, NAL Bank building, National Museum, University of Ibadan Chapel of Resurrection, Daily Mirror headquarters at High Holborn in London, to name only a few.

Ben was an artist's artist. He was one of the best-dressed artists that I know of. He cut a perfect image always of a well-dressed accountant or lawyer. When he worked, he either wore a full-length apron or dressed in a white lab coat, often wearing a tie. This was different from most artists of the present time who think that to be an artist you must be untidy or unkempt. Ben had special attachment to his works and was



always reluctant to sell them, as many of his friends will easily testify.

The non-artist Ben however, was a tender loving and generous person with a bubbly sense of humour. When he was in his elements, and for me that was often, he often shared freely. No doubt he left for me memories that would suggest that he lived his life to the fullest. Ben must be counted as a rare and complete human being who traversed this planet in our recent memory. He was friendly and was respected by his peers and acquaintances alike.

I have tried so hard to restrain myself in these remarks from discussing Ben's work or delving deep into his biography or even his simple but complex curriculum vitae. But I must crave your indulgence to make just this final remark, the thought of which has always hurt me.

This icon has achieved and done so much to put Nigerian and African art on the global platform. For example, in 1966 as the Cultural and Art Adviser to the Federal Government (a post he held from 1959 to 1968), he led the Nigerian contingent to the first World Festival of Negro Arts in Dakar, Senegal. Also in 1977, he served as a special consultant to the Federal Government of Nigeria for hosting the Second World Black Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC). Despite all this and more, no Nigerian Government has found it fit to present him with a National Honour. The colonial government was able to recognize him in 1954, six years before our political independence, when it awarded him an MBE. This was long before the Queen of England sat for him in 1956. All it means is that his talent and contributions were recognized by the then colonial government early in his career. This is a typical case of a prophet being with honour, save in his own country. For me this smarts of grave injustice, which is another challenge I expect the Foundation to take up with the Federal Government. This indeed, is a debt this country owes this Nigerian icon, this great patriot and indeed Nigeria's greatest art ambassador.

You need to visit the United Nations Delegates' wing to see the prominence given to his work that Nigeria presented to the UN in 1961. Placed in the hallway to the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, all delegates and visitors alike are obliged to stop and look at his 'Anyanwu' each time they pass by.

In conclusion, let me once again thank the Ben Enwonwu Foundation and its Board of Trustees for mounting this event today for us to celebrate the life of a great

son of Africa. Let me however, suggest, as I have earlier mentioned, that you, the Foundation, take urgent steps to ensure that people get to know more about the work of Professor Ben Enwonwu and his artistic philosophy and inventions. For example, an art historian in the USA writing about him in the Journal of Contemporary African Art said:

“He is famed to have invented a complex visual language whose formal structures and ideological assertions provided a conceptual framework against which many significant Nigerian artists defined themselves in the colonial and post colonial periods. The achievements mark him out as a pivotal figure in 20th century African culture”.

These and many other specialists of his artistry should be explored and manifested.

Now let me especially recognise Mr. Oliver Enwonwu who with his mother has worked relentlessly to immortalize their father, husband and our dear friend. As he, Oliver, reminds all of us,

“It is a well-known fact that heroes are quickly forgot ten if nothing is done to preserve their achievements, works and footprints in the sands of time.”

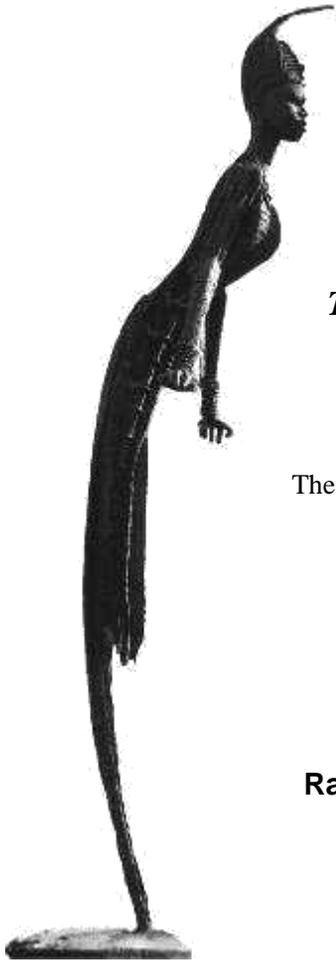
Your father indeed, is a hero and together we shall all work to promote and immortalize his work and all that he lived for. The first step in this journey has been taken with establishing the Foundation.

Long Live the Ben Enwonwu Foundation!



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*The Place of Creative Art
in the History of Man*

The First Distinguished Ben Enwonwu
Annual Lecture

Rasheed A. Gbadamosi, O FR

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

What might have compelled members of the Ben Enwonwu Foundation to ask me to give today's lecture could be that I am a low-level collector of paintings and some sculptural works. I recently acquired 'Tutu' one of the late Ben Enwonwu's celebrated paintings, which now adorns a wall in my living room. With the late artist's landmark sculptural legacies such as 'Sango', emplaced outside NEPA Marina office, 'The Drummer', stitched on the NITEL Marina edifice, and not in least, the commissioned, enduring, regal, fully seated bronze cast of the youthful Queen of England, today's gathering is an appropriate celebration of a departed giant in the realm of human creativity. Today is indeed, a manifestation of an admonition within our national anthem, "the labour of our heroes' past shall never be in vain". I regard Ben Enwonwu indeed, a hero of Nigeria.

May I therefore, offer my felicitations to the organizers of this memorial lecture and to all of you present here. I should also commend the sponsors of this event for indeed the creative arts are best nurtured when individuals and organizations in the society make conscious efforts to provide the resources that enable us enjoy works of creativity, which underscore one purpose of our existence on earth. Man, as specie unlike other inhabitants of the globe, does not just ravage mindlessly the planet of its bounties to survive. He endeavours to leave behind legacies of the application of his mind. Among the individuals in the family of man are creative artists who in their lifetime earn immortality. Through the works they create, they leave behind legacies for generations unborn to venerate and uphold as testimony their great contribution to the society.

Ladies and gentlemen, one of such men is Ben Enwonwu. Apart from his numerous paintings and indestructible sculptures, members of the family of the late artist are equally enduring and can indeed claim basic responsibility for today's event!

In researching today's topic, 'The Place of Creative Art in the History of Man', I have had to reckon with issues of definition. Should the discourse dwell on a narrow field in deference to the late artist whom we are honouring today, as he was a proponent of fine art such as painting and sculpture? Or, should the discourse dwell on the expansive notion of creative arts which influenced the evolution of courses in American universities? For each theatres of human creative energy, such as drama,

music dance, literature, sculpture, painting, and so on, merits distinct treatment when a survey of their individual place in the history of man is contemplated. For example, where do the arts and scientific progress converge? It is, therefore, almost an impossible task to cover the richness of the topic and do justice to the exposition at one afternoon lecture! We must, however, remember too that Ben Enwonwu not only trained at the famous Slade School of Art in the United Kingdom, he also read sociology and anthropology at the London University.

*For man, as specie, and unlike other inhabitants of the globe,
does not just ravage mindlessly the planet of its bounties in order to survive, he
endeavours to leave behind legacies of the application of his mind.*

If I may therefore satisfy the indulgence of the audience, I propose to race through my non-academic understanding of the place of creative arts in the historical process of our living through several centuries on earth. I will be drawing on what is known accurately or conjecturally of prehistoric times and make some deductions from historical occurrences since man embarked on record-keeping through fine art and writing. I shall dwell on the jumble of movements in the arts at various locations or centres of explosion of human creative energy, and the spread of the influence of movements in artistic experience across boundaries through academic tutorship, colonial domination and the shrinking of the globe through scientific knowledge and dispersal of cultural attributes of mankind across racial groups, geographical frontiers and sociological barriers.

May I perhaps first seek your permission to ramble and proffer some random thoughts that have been buzzing in my mind as I dug into the myriad of fat publications on today's topic?

The Palaeolithic Age, 20,000 to 10,000 BC must have caught the imagination of chroniclers as the beginning of the history of creative art. The artist of that period was a caveman and he was reported to have drawn on cave walls images, which he was only conscious of their reality and not of their symbolism or spiritual essence. The

period is referred to as the prehistoric age when man took shelter in caves that were dark and dank, indeed, an era also known as the Ice Age.

It has been conjectured the Neolithic Age, 10,000BC to 1,000BC or better still, the Stone Age followed the Ice Age when man had made the transition from wandering and hunting to that of herding and farming and perhaps living in a community. It has been deduced that whereas the system of beliefs of the cave man revolved around magic, the man of the Neolithic Age commenced the rudiment of religion otherwise known as animism and transformed himself into the artist of implements, decorations, ancestral tombs and so on. Thus, in the Ice Age the caves of Altamira in northern Spain and Lascaux in France harboured wall decorations of animal objects spontaneously emplaced by what was taught us in school as the cave paintings of the early man. Later, philosophy taught at the university denoted the early man by Thomas Hobbes as existing in the state of nature, whose life was nasty, brutish and short and who was predisposed to bludgeoning his fellow creatures on the head at the slightest provocation.

In the history of creative art, man took his time before he perhaps objectified his origin and attributed it to an unseen being that he later symbolized in objects around which, as his faculty developed, he adapted his creative impulses to turn into spiritual or ritual objects.

Latterly, man redirected his creative art impulses to the objectification of instruments he had to use in the conquest of his environment. And as he moved to master his world and dominate all other living things, his progression was naturally to entertain himself and his fellow men with superior creativity. He was perhaps imbibing some element of competitiveness and the evolution of song and dance complemented by the making of early musical instruments such as drums from animal skin and flutes from wooden reeds.

The period 20,000 BC till today will encompass several millennia of the earth's occupation by man. How man emerged on the surface of the earth had for instance,

been captured in the Old Testament story of the creation of Adam and Eve by God. This is a heritage of the three great religions of the Mediterranean; Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Also, the nineteenth century counter-religion Darwinian notion of the origin of the species would not contradict that in the primordial state, that primate called man did indeed scurry into a cave to protect himself from the elements while he contemplated what he was to make of his new being.

In the history of creative art, man took his time before he perhaps objectified his origin and attributed it to an unseen being that he later symbolized in objects which, as his faculty developed, he adapted his creative impulses to turn into spiritual or ritual objects. Imagine that those objects such as African masks and statues which for centuries were classified as fetish objects and were perhaps condescendingly acknowledged latterly as great works of art, had to have respectability bestowed on them by the Cubist movement in European art at the turn of the twentieth century. Yet it took European art going the full circle from reverence for religious painting which imprisoned artistic expression in the first century right through the Middle Ages, the emergence of the Flemish school, the Italian Renaissance and the borrowing of themes from nature before the spontaneity and depth of the so-called African primitive art was elevated from tourist curio to that of high art.

Yet creating artistic works all through the ages in awe of religious inclinations had bequeathed wondrous testaments of man's creative capacities in other realms and in response to several episodes of movements in art. The Egyptians revered the dead and funerary art attested to it; the Chinese were not too dissimilar and captured the essence of their creative talents like the Japanese in funeral sculpture. By the third millennium, Mesopotamian art and themes from Greek culture were meant to assist men in not being strangers to the world, but participants in its existence.

Religion however persisted for a long time in creative art. Pre-Christianity Greek and Roman gods were embodied in fine sculptural heritage, succeeded for several millennia by Christian religious art which reigned through the fifteenth and sixteenth century before bolder and secular motifs made their entry in paintings and sculpture.

Artistic heritage should however, be grateful to the several movements. For instance, if Greek naturalism had not existed, Ife art might not be acknowledged from the perspective of experience elsewhere which had extolled naturalism. The enduring



Doric and Ionic columns which are in the vogue in constructing bank façades and opulent homes in Nigeria today would not have easy copies of architectural adornment if the Romans and Greeks had not designed them.

We must be grateful for the fifteenth century Flemish artists such as Jan van Eyck who illustrated the symbolic synthesis of the mundane and the theological and paved the way for commencing secular, non-religious art of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

If the paintings of Veronese and Tintoretto had exemplified the beginning of counter-Renaissance, Leonardo Da Vinci's legacies to creative art have endured, not because they are immersed in the religious hold of Italian Renaissance but because 'Mona Lisa' and 'The Last Supper' are manifestations of irreplaceable artistic heritage no matter their periods of creation. The Spanish El Greco's unique style was inventive and perhaps nonconformist while the Flemish painter, Paul Rubens glorified the voluptuousness of the human flesh while still hobnobbing with religious sensibilities.

The marriage between sculpture and paintings in Renaissance art could be exemplified by the exploits of the Italian artist, Michelangelo Buonarroti. He brought major talents to bear on creative art and man. Michelangelo left an almost unsurpassable portfolio of a creative genius who had achieved immortality. He created the sculptures of Moses, and indeed David; a work he spent 3 years in carving. He was the architect of the fresco, 'The Last Judgment', and het painter of the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel at the Vatican City.

Religions had indeed been a great inspiration to creative art. The mosques at Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia inspire awe despite the fact the Islamic religion disallows representing parsonages as motifs in paintings and sculpture. The creative energy that has gone into Islamic art is enduring in many monuments scattered all over the world. The Taj Mahal remains as one of the world's sublime memorials to beauty and love but on whose exterior the entire passages of the Quran had been inscribed.

Buddhist temples in their grand designs and geometric superlatives dot several Asian countries as vocal representation of religious piety. In other words, we must be grateful to all religions for inspiring artists for the artistic heritage they have bequeathed to humanity.

Religion had indeed been a great inspiration to creative art. The mosques at Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia inspire awe despite the fact that the Islamic religion disallows the representation of parsonages as motifs in paintings and sculpture.

Glorifying earthly life and beauty as distinct from the artistic output of church-inspired creation, which marked the Renaissance era, held sway for decades. Art for art's sake, which was the mantra of Greek and Roman art, had been revived by the Florentines. The seed that was sown by Rembrandt, the Dutch painter of the seventeenth century in the sense of his defying convention and his individualistic approach and the resistance of form, marked a historical break in the history of human artistic creativity. Above all, Rembrandt's approach was imbued with a strong sense of humanism and his use of light to bridge the inner and outer world left a legacy of the liberated spirit in painting, which trailed to the Impressionist era of the nineteenth century. By this period, individual, perhaps egoistic imprints by various artists, themes, colours, landscapes, farms, cities and the entire terrain of the world attracted differing interpretations by a new generation of artists.

In the nineteenth century, European horizons broadened with expanding foreign trade and consolidating colonialism. Artists were brought into touch with new forms and now moved towards new styles. Gauguin in the South Seas picked up new influences, while African form presaged the birth of cubism. Impressionists had elected to present subjects in instantaneous terms. In England, the great landscapists J.M.W. Turner and John Constable had flourished up to the midnineteenth century stressing the relationship of the artist with outdoor feelings of landscape. And Turner in particular, enthroned the moving reflections particularly the effect of light from the sun.

But the epoch saw the awakening of the French Impressionists. This established a long list of evergreen works; Manet, Monet, Renoir, Degas, Lautrec and even the great sculptor, Auguste Rodin, with his faint apology to classicism, flourished. Yet, the Japanese-derived vantage point perspectives found adoption in

the works of these artists particularly Vincent Van Gogh. A couple of years ago, a nineteenth century work of Van Gogh sold for almost \$40million, a record at an art auction in recent times.

I have attempted to sketch a canvas of creative man in history by touching on the general transition from one mode of human experience to another, concentrating perhaps, on the European heritage. Perhaps, one footnote is desirable here and that is the concomitant march of intellectual evolution and its influence on artistic expression. The Renaissance in Europe faced art from too much religious dogma and allowed a new orientation. The Industrial Revolution and the imperatives of commerce set man on new experiences outside his country and continent. The Europeans consolidated their occupation of North America, took over Africa and extended their reach to large parts of Asia and Latin America. Consequently, art flourished in the affluent regions of the world and patronage moved away from church-commissioned works to rich patrons who also collected the output of painters and sculptors. When the celebrated Pablo Picasso blossomed on the art world, the financial security of a good artist was no longer an issue.

While Picasso and the Cubist movement, indeed his iconoclastic, individualistic aesthetic attitudes defined what was new in the art world, other forms of man's artistic heritage; music, architecture, poetry, drama and were also metamorphosing. The new affluence of the twentieth century especially after the Second World War expanded the numbers of citizens of the world who appreciate and patronize art. What is worthy of note is the socialist realism inclinations of communist countries in art forms which denigrated non-socialist artistic emergence of modern art in the west as decadent, has itself withered away and indeed postmodernism has found acceptance all over the world.

When the African took percussive music with them to the New World, what emerged were the blues; concocting the sorrows of enslavement and powerlessness, which developed into jazz as a universal, serious music genre.

The second footnote I would venture is the cross-continental drift of forms and style in art, in all its ways where Frank Lloyd Wright, the architect, embraced Declassicism and Le Corbusier, the painter - architect in the quest for the Purism movement, elected to view buildings as machines for living. In sculpture, Classicism gave way to the Abstract; Henry Moore gave us the reclining figures and Barbara Hepworth restated sculpturing with an eye on subtlety and graceful fragility. Between Matisse and Picasso they redefined modern sculpture and broke a new dawn in fine art.

Politics and art or the impulses to create by man have never been far apart in history. Pablo Picasso's politics gave birth to his memorable 'Guernica' which was a violent denunciation of the Fascist bombardment of an unarmed Basque city during the Spanish Civil War of the 1930s.

For the spread of artistic influences around the globe, one artist expressed it thus "Picasso borrowed from all of us and yet beat us at our own game". This statement is not too far-fetched when we look at the artistry of music making. When the African took percussive music with them to the New World, what emerged were the blues; concocting the sorrows of enslavement and powerlessness, which developed into jazz as a universal, serious music genre. No wonder therefore, that percussive music liberating the soul and limbs of mankind are now a light entertainment fare universally. The spirit of the liberated man to renew art is a logical occurrence so long as his individuality continues to be unfettered in his absorption of concepts and ideas in a changing and shrinking world. Let us recall too the invention of Afro-beat music by that great son of Nigeria, Fela Anikulapo-Kuti. In this ground-breaking creation is the fusion of classical music which he studied, jazz and our home-grown music, high life.

Yet, the 22,000-year span of man's art in history which this lecture has attempted to encapsulate is bewildering. For instance, the caveman of primeval reference instinctively elected to be sheltered and from there he developed the art and indeed sciences of building construction. As his environment became subdued, he evolved and invented entertainment forms qualifying as high art such as classical music, drama, opera, dancing, the ballet, as well as various categories of light entertainment. street entertainment of immemorial antiquity evincing democratic and populous art has proven its resilience in the form carnivals of universal appeal in

Brazil, the Caribbean and Notting Hill Gate in London. While the art of constructing the theatre, concert halls, opera and ballet houses continues to fire the imagination of man in the quest to preserve the artistic heritage of man. Also, the Sydney Opera House in Australia is a treasure of art and architecture, both the Lincoln Centre and the Kennedy Centre for the Performing Arts in USA contrast beautifully with the classical Paris Opera, the Covent Garden in London and the La Scala in Milan. They are all edifices of human heritage.

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the actor cannot but act, the dancer cannot but dance, the
writer cannot but write, and the painter cannot but paint.
Therefore, the place of the creative arts is self-expression
and self-fulfilment of its proponent, as well as the cultural
elevation of the society to which he belongs.*

This lecture would like to wind up on four propositions:

Firstly, the great diversity of the arts notwithstanding, common threads bind their various disciplines. There are also similar ways in which artists prosecute their different types of expression. The artist forms on an outer medium, such as canvas, marble, stone, paper and score-sheet, an ideation or idealization of an inner vision, or insight. Thus what the artist produces is what he has drawn, or what has passed through him or what he has altered himself with. This is at the personal and impersonal, objective and subjective, distinct and indistinct levels. Thus, in the creative arts, the adept of these arts act as an inner compulsion. The actor cannot but act, the dancer cannot but dance, the writer cannot but write, and the painter cannot but paint. Therefore, the place of the creative arts is self-expression and self-fulfilment of its proponent, as well as the cultural elevation of the society to which he belongs.

Secondly, a measure of the potency, relevance or excellence of any genre of creative arts is its durability. The paintings that exist in the Louvre Museum till the present day are there because they are valuable not only for now, but for all times as well. The symphonies of Mozart, Beethoven and Hyden, are played today with a regularity that surpasses that of even contemporary composers, because they are of

relevance and excellence for the present day. Therefore, time is the sieve or screen that separates the genuine from the mediocre, and any art, artist, performer or performance that does not in its essence succeed in tapping into the essence of genuine creativity, runs the risk of falling behind, or of being sealed with the implacable stamp of oblivion! Ben Enwonwu is being celebrated today because of the potency, relevance and excellence of his opus. In the great sculptures adorning Lagos, Ibadan and even the United Nation's headquarters in New York, the artist in him lives on in his works.

*... a measure of the potency, relevance or excellence
of any genre of creative arts is its durability.*

Thirdly, another question today is; where are Ben Enwonwu's successors? I make bold to call on Ben Osawe, Abayomi Barber, Kolade Oshinowo, Yusuf Grillo, Bruce Onokpabreya, Lamidi Fakeye of the older art movements of Zaria, Yaba, Auchi, Enugu, Ife, Osogbo to uphold the spirit of excellence which I am dreaming of and I am convinced Ben Enwonwu never took to his grave ten years ago. I implore Sam Ovranti, Lanre Ayoade, Ini-Brown and Zino Orara to continue to sing the lament of the Delta region with colours on canvas that symbolize the fire spewing out remorselessly from the oilfields of the region. I implore our private gallery owners, Jibunoh, Simi Ogunsanya, and Frank Okonta to fish out hidden talents among the colony of impecunious young artists waiting to be accorded the glory that should be theirs. What about the nation's leadership? However scarce funds may be, no matter the compelling alternatives, money must still be devoted to creating monuments of artistry, which future generations will indeed use to celebrate their past heroes. Such pleasant memories will go beyond the footnote acknowledgment of the patrons and financiers. So let us leave this hall pledging to sponsor at least, one artist in our lifetime. Will you join me in this endeavour?

Fourthly, it is one thing to give thanks to the wave of artists that our evolution has implanted in the history of creative arts. Humanity deserves congratulations on the conscious efforts to preserve the legacies of the lives and achievements of those special men of history in museums and private galleries. We should extol the

preserver; Louvre Museum in Paris, Prado Museum in Spain, the Hermitage in St. Petersburg, Metropolitan Museum and the Museum of Fine Art, in New York City, the National Gallery, the New Tate Gallery and Royal Academy in London, the Vatican City and Florence as a city of fine art hosting the Uffizi Gallery. Man's appreciation for their inspiration cannot be quantified. Also, those donors and public bodies who give bequests and funds from lotteries to art houses are equally heroes of history.

Coming home to Nigeria however, I feel rather diminished by the under performance of the government and the citizens in encouraging and preserving artistic heritage. For example, our new nation's capital, Abuja can hardly boast of a monument designated as a museum despite a millennium of spectacular heritage of the arts such as the Nok, Ife and Benin art. There is hardly any thought given to a centre for the performing arts where exhibitions and serious shows can be mounted. We have a Nobel Laureate and several winners of poetry, prose and theatre competitions, but a real theatre is still an illusory pursuit. On the contrary, the National Theatre, a legacy of the high point of the African Renaissance as manifested in FESTAC 77 is in decay and on the auction block for the would be rescuer. A nation like ours with a fine tradition of playwriting, artistic expression and excellence on the international scene, appears to be condoning the desecration of the National Museum, Onikan. Instead of expanding it to create a modern section, has surrendered the frontage to developers of a shopping mall. Why are we allowing philistines to overwhelm the sensitive art lovers among us? In which national monuments are we going to preserve the inheritance of the Nigerian man as exemplified by Ben Enwonwu in the history of creative arts?

Finally, let us all remind ourselves that money, like life itself is ephemeral and do we ever ponder that our support for that object of art, which takes on the life of permanence because it was born of an artist, is a superior memorial to how our life would be measured by our contribution to the society.

I thank you for your attention.

RELATED RESOURCES

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WEBSITES:

The major periods of Greek architecture are the Doric and the Ionic. Doric columns are the simplest; they have a capital (the top, or crown) made of a circle topped by a square. The shaft (the tall part of the column) is plain and has 20 sides. There is no base in the Doric order. The Ionic are more highly decorative, Ionic shafts are taller than Doric ones. This makes the columns look slender. They also had flutes, which are lines carved into them from top to bottom.

<http://www.cmhpf.org/kids/dictionary/ClassicalOrders.html>

The Greek naturalism was an epoch when artists made men as they really looked and felt and other natural things. Retrieve November 2008

http://www.usask.ca/antiquities/Collection/Classical_Art.html

Egyptians consider the cycles of human life, rebirth, and afterlife as mirroring the reproductive cycles that surrounded them in the natural world. After death, the Egyptians looked forward to continuing their daily lives as an invisible spirit among their descendents on Earth in Egypt as vividly depicted in the sculptures, reliefs, and wall paintings of Egyptian tombs, with the deceased portrayed in the way he or she wished to remain forever accompanied by images of family and servants. These forms of art not only reflect the Egyptians' love of life but also by their very presence, made the afterlife a reality. <http://www.crystalinks.com/egyptafterlife.html>

The Chinese carve tombs into the rock of mountains, and reliefs are placed along tomb chamber walls. Images of rural and daily life are illustrated in tombs, particularly in the form of reliefs, wall paintings, and tomb ceramics known as mingqi. This comes

from the desire to represent both earthly existence and to portray evolving conceptions of the heavenly realm.

http://www.nga.gov/education/chinatp_pt4.htm

Guernica is a painting by Pablo Picasso, showing the Nazi German bombing of Guernica, Spain, by twenty-eight bombers, on April 26, 1937 during the Spanish Civil War. The attack killed between 250 and 1,600 people, and many more were injured. 'Guernica' is one of Pablo Picasso's most famous works of art. It was commissioned by the, then republican, Spanish Government for the World's Fair in Paris in 1937. It is a massive canvas and measures 349cm by 776cm. Retrieved November 2008 from <http://www.web.org.uk>

Industrial Revolution

The era known as the Industrial Revolution was a period in which fundamental changes occurred in agriculture, textile and metal manufacture, transportation, economic policies and the social structure in England. This period is appropriately labeled "revolution," for it thoroughly destroyed the old manner of doing things; yet the term is simultaneously inappropriate, for it connotes abrupt change. The changes that occurred during this period (1760-1850), in fact, occurred gradually. The year 1760 is generally accepted as the "eve" of the Industrial Revolution. Retrieved November 2008 from <http://www.yale.edu>

THOMAS HOBBES

Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) maintained that man and all his works and institutions are materialistic. Hobbes' philosophical system is a synthesis of materialism and Rationalism. The fundamental points of his system are: All reality is matter and motion; Intellectual, moral and political life are the object of mathematical calculation. In 1651, Hobbes wrote his most famous work, entitled Leviathan. In it, he argued that people were naturally wicked and could not be trusted to govern. Therefore, Hobbes believed that an absolute monarchy - a government that gave all power to a king or queen - was best. Retrieved November 2008 from <http://www.rjgeib.com>

ICE AGE

The Great Ice Age, a recent chapter in the Earth's history, was a period of recurring widespread glaciations. Mountain glaciers formed on all continents, the icecaps of Antarctica and Greenland were more extensive and thicker than today, and vast glaciers, in places as much as several thousand feet thick, spread across North America and Eurasia. Retrieved November 2008 from http://pubs.usgs.gov/gip/ice_age/

PALEOTHIC AGE

The Stone Age (known to scholars as the Paleolithic era) in human prehistory is the name given to the period between about 2.5 million and 20,000 years ago. It begins with the earliest human-like behaviors of crude stone tool manufacture, and ends with fully modern human hunting and gathering societies. The Paleolithic is the earliest archaeology; anything older is paleontology. Retrieved November 2008 from <http://archaeology.about.com/od/pathroughpd/g/paleolithic.htm>

GREEK MYTHOLOGY

The Greeks were polytheistic in their religious beliefs. Polytheistic means they believed in and worshiped many different gods. In Greek mythology, the gods often represented different forms of nature. Their religion/mythology had no formal structure with the exception of various festivals held in honor of the gods. There was no sacred book or code of conduct to live by. The most powerful Greek gods were known as the Olympians. The Greeks believed the Olympians lived on the highest mountain in Greece, Mount Olympus. The Olympian gods included: Zeus, Hera, Apollo, Aphrodite, Ares, Artemis, Athena, Demeter, Hades, Hermes, Hephaestus, Poseidon and Hestia or later she was replaced in some lists by Dionysus.

Retrieved November 2008 from

<http://archaeology.about.com/od/pathroughpd/g/paleolithic.htm>

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ROMAN MYTHOLOGY

Roman Mythology can be described as the mythological beliefs of Ancient Rome. The Romans had no sequential narratives about their gods comparable to the Titanomachy or the seduction of Zeus by Hera until their poets began to adopt Greek models in the later part of the Roman Republic. What the Romans did have, however, were: a highly developed system of rituals, priestly colleges, and pantheons of related gods. a rich set of historical myths about the foundation and rise of their city involving human actors, with occasional divine interventions. Retrieved November 2008 from <http://www.paralumun.com/mythroman.htm>

Darwin's Basic Premise

Darwin's *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*, made several points that had major impact on nineteenth-century thought:

[http:// www.....](http://www.....)

Here's a press release by Christies auction house about the Van Gogh painting..

New York On May 2 2006, Christie's New York will lead the impressionist and modern art collecting world to new heights when Van Gogh's magnificent painting *L'Arlésienne, Madame Ginoux*, will be offered during the Impressionist and Modern Art evening sale at Rockefeller Center. From the Bakwin Family Collection, *L'Arlésienne* is expected to realize in excess of \$40 million, and to take a key position in the impressive group of paintings by Van Gogh that have been sold by Christie's in

New York and London over the years. L'Arlésienne is the most important painting from a series of five oils that Van Gogh executed in February 1890 as an homage to his good friend and collaborator Paul Gauguin, and the only painting of the series which was intended specifically for Gauguin himself. Retrieved November 2008 from <http://www.Art News Blog>

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