



Environmental Management in Nigeria: An Artist's Response Towards Recycling of Plastic Waste in the 21st Century

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ABSTRACT

It is no more news that our day-to-day activities in Nigeria have degraded and devastated the environment at an alarming rate, so much so that life expectancy has been reduced due to health hazards from the polluted environment. This morbid situation in the country has been worsened by the poor environmental practices of improper disposal of waste products. This conventional practice has destroyed the environment, life, and traditional occupation of the people, leading to high rates of mental disorders, diseases, and poverty. This paper examines the plastic sculptures of Adesanya Clement an artist works with discarded materials and rendered his artistic expression and his single-mindedness which is reflected in his environmental output. Clement's phenomenal plastic sculptures bring together animal memorabilia, architectural design, and waste objects in widely imaginative arrangements that tackle issues of environmental degradation. Photographs of the works were taken and the procedures involved in executing the works were highlighted.

Keywords: *Waste, Plastic, Management, Environment, Recycling*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The waste situation in Nigeria is alarming. The rapid increase in population across the country is not matched by improved waste infrastructure. Even the little we are discarding is polluting the environment every day. To worsen, there is no intention or move on the part of the government to create investments in the area. The environment suffers calculable damage that threatens its existence. The destruction of the environment is not just the annihilation of living things that depends solely on nature for their survival, it is also the extermination of the human race. The prevention of this likely self-destruction has become a concern for everybody (Whetto, 2019). These wastes exist in different natures. One of the prominent wastes in this discussion is plastic.

Plastic was considered a miracle material as its synthesis polymers give it astonishing durability. However today it is filling up our oceans and destroying marine life and even invading our food chains to get into our bodies (Kurnal, 2022). This worrisome part is that over 40% of the total plastic consumption is in the form of single-use items, including plastic carry bags. They have limited period utility but high littering potential (Kurnal, 2022). Plastics are not found in nature. We produce them in the lab. Hardy and pliable, they have made much of modern life remarkably convenient. But it's generally easier and cheaper to make new plastic than it is to recycle old ones. This means that about 90% of plastic has never been recycled at all, however diligently we fill up over bins. Sherryn (2022), asserts, that almost every piece of plastic ever made is still with us. Breakdown plastic doesn't go anywhere, it fractures into pieces, tiny beads called micro-plastics, smaller again and you get non-plastics. Scientists estimate each of us ingests the equivalent of one credit card's worth of plastic every week.

The solution is not to stop using plastics altogether because they are incredibly useful. For example, plastic bottles are far lighter than glass ones, even though transportation is far lesser and requires less energy. But we need a revolution in how we handle plastics and this is where recycling comes in. recycling is the processing of wastes materials into new products to prevent the disposal of potentially useful materials, reduce the consumption of fresh materials and the energy required for fresh produce and reduce the effects of disposed of wastes on the environment (Oligbinde, Adesanya & Oyeniyi, 2022). According to Okeke (2004), he describes recycling is a key component of modern waste reduction. It is the third component of reduce, reuse, and recycle waste hierarchy.

Artists all over Nigeria and the globe have contributed to managing and reducing waste by employing them in their works. This has put visual artists at the forefront in reducing, reusing, and recycling waste (Umoru & Adekambi, 2018).

2.0 REVIEW OF EXISTING LITERATURE

The plastic pollution problem is familiar distress, but many organizations are working to reduce it. Plastic waste management is becoming a challenging task for countries across the globe and Nigeria is no exception to it. The use of plastic is on the rise while its disposal and safe management hasn't been

commensurate with increased usage. This has resulted in the creation of landfills and land garbage patches in oceans (Greg, 2022). Waste management involves scientific, artistic, and technological approaches to waste control, disposal, and conversion to other useful materials beneficial to man and the environment (Bassey & Akpan, 2020). Though artists are increasingly using waste plastic as a form of surface finishing, modeled or melted material, or in combination with other materials, to provide interesting qualitative contrast between them.

From the beginning of the twentieth century, non-art objects draw the attention of artists. This idea is to find a connection between the environment and the artist. The use of these objects plays a significant role in the development of art through time. These objects dramatically changed the way people look at art (Whetto, 2019). These objects are not commonly recognized as art materials often because they already have a non-art function and place in society (Sobowale, 2015). Their place in society and people's minds commonly have a different meanings. Beyond that, artists started to use them for their purposes. Thus, these objects gained different meanings and usages in the hand of artists.

The usage of non-art objects can be considered as a moving array from the purification of art which is also a significant movement in modern art. Purification argues for the separation of art and others. Abstract and minimalist works can be given as an example of purification. However, methods such as collage and assemblage are a composition of different fragments and pieces. Rather than the traditional way of painting on canvas modern artists composed their work with a combination of various objects from different contexts (Mustapha, 2005). With this approach, works can be examined in a multi-dimensional context. This also represents another key branch in modern art.

Artists have long interrogated the significance of the use of materials in the art for their conceptual importance. The significance of the materials required reflects the environment in which the artist is working from where they got them. Recycled art, according to Okeke (2014), has its basis in the found objects in a revolution in visual arts. The new trends in art help in reducing the quantity of litter in our environment. It is an avenue to sensitize the public on the approach towards waste management. The artist's approach to waste management is better understood and workable in solid wastes which can be seen. Such solid wastes include combustible waste such as paper, wood, and cloth and non-combustible items are animal bones, vehicle parts, computer remnants, and other related items.

Sobowale and Ademuleya (2017) describing one of the works of El Anatsui, noted the amazing thing about working with this discarded material is that the poverty of the materials used in no way precludes the telling of rich and wonderful stories. He is one of the experimental artists who have explored many materials for creative expression in Nigeria. In his recent works, he used discarded materials like bottle tops, tops of evaporated milk tins, and rusty metal cloths. He says he is inspired by huge piles of detritus from consumption (Adewumi, 2007). His style and technique have created waves for him across the globe making him one of the fine recipients of the 2017 Premium Imperial Award for Sculpture.

Yusuf Durodola is another experimental artist whose works speak in response to the global reality of literal and figurative environmental pollution. He is an integrative multimedia recycled art specialist with boundless power to refine hazardous materials that are constantly bullying humanity's longevity. His recycled art concepts, styles, and visual ideas are distinctively developed from his in-depth cognizance of the pattern of individual irresponsible behavior and manufacturer's antipathetic thinking opposing the fight for the reduction in usage including improper creation of the elements that make up his mixed media waste recycled art pieces. Durodola moves within the framework of African sciences and ideals with cultural and ethological impact on the arts industry and wellbeing.

However, the work in discourse showcases assemblage which is a means of fitting found objects for an artist's expression in sculptural construction (Oligbinde, Adesanya & Oyeniyi, 2022). It implies the process of articulating from objects to make a sculpture. The artist has combined various traditional and contemporary devices to articulate ideas that highlight his understanding of indigenous African aesthetics, as well as his solid grounding in transforming waste into aesthetic value. He is the fulcrum around which the artwork rotates.

Another prominent artist that has worked with discarded materials is Olojede Ifeoluwa. A Nigerian-based experimentalist uses waste to call attention to imbalances being exerted by man's domestic and industrial activities on earth's ecosystem. Rather than look into man-made waste, other artists have looked into nature for sourcing materials for expression, such as the case of the aboriginal painters in Australia, tree barks serve as the canvas on which they paint (Ajiboye, 2018). Olojede (2018) emphasized that creating these works not only takes patience but precision. In the course of experimenting, he has been able to explore tree barks both with acrylic paint and extensively without any conventional medium. Olojede has continued to experiment throughout his successful corners, employing a wide range of painting techniques. Through his works, Olojede often makes comments on proverbs, wisdom, and contemporary social and political issues.

It is evident to know that all reviewed relevant literature on new mediums from waste as a medium of expression in art is a continuous process for every practicing artist who delves into that area of creativity. Adesanya Clement's relentlessness, his ability or rather his talent for conveying grace, action in repose, or wordiness in waste sculpture, enabled him to evoke sensations whose intensity shifted in response to a host of chance factors making him a command in environmental issues. This relatively new process uses discarded thermoplastic to the coast or forms an outer form of a sculpture. The plastic is first cleaned by washing the cuts to precise shapes, then used as a form of surface finishing. The thickness of the plastic is controlled by the temperature of heat and adheres to its surface.

3.0 THE ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

It is most necessary to conduct a background biography of the artist to get a better understanding of him and his works. This will further give us an accurate understanding of his monolith, the grinding force in his work, and the indication of the mind of the sculptor. Clement Olumide Adesanya was born in the 70s in Lagos state and hails from Abeokuta-Ogun State. He attended Itire/Ikate Primary School, Eleja Mushin Lagos (1988), Onitolo

Community High School, Surelere Lagos (1994), National Diploma, General Art (2001) recipient of A.G. Leventis (Egba) Scholarship Award for his Higher National Diploma at Yaba College of Technology, Yaba-Lagos (2005) where he graduated as the best student with distinction in Sculpture. He also obtained a B. A degree (2011) in Fine.. and Applied Arts and M.F.A. in Sculpture (2015) from Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. Clement is a recipient of numerous awards, notably among his: inaugural awardees of Professor Babatunde Lawal and Professor John Rowland Oluwafemi Ojo prize awards for the best graduating student in the Department of Fine and Applied Arts, Faculty of Environmental Design and Management (2010/2011 session). He is a Part-time Sculpture Lecturer at the Department of Art and Industrial Design, Lagos State Polytechnic, Ikorodu. Currently studying for his Ph.D. in Sculpture at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, he has participated in various exhibitions, as a Staffer at Lagos State University Ojo, Lagos.

He works predominantly with High-Density Polyethylene. His powerful sculptures are recognized and prized in the Nigerian contemporary art tradition; their lucid figurative and abstract formal language tends to blow with their ambiguous title, to make the viewer understand the physical experiences that he has translated into sculptural expression.

4.0 ANALYSIS OF THE WORKS OF THE ARTIST



Plate 1:Rhinos

Medium: High-Density Polyethylene

Size: 430by180by120cm

Year of Production: 2015

Artist: Clement Adesanya

"Rhinos" The above-over-life sculpture of the Rhinos imposes presence and is established by the combination of extensive binding with untouched areas of space serving for the tone. Clement used a heavy application of three different colors on his rhinos to unify the image and give it a different texture and also to give it a lively sense of natural habitat. He captured the real logo of the plastic maker "storex-tank" which is a Rhinos to establish the fact that the water tank product which is made of Polyethylene is durable and strong indeed like the strength, of an actual Rhinos. The body of the animal is dominated by black, having a touch of blue colour as the horn, inner ear, bottom belly, and claws. The grass is depicted as a natural green colour. The eyes are also covered with an aluminum plate. The anatomy of the fore and hind leg is made in cubism. The legs are block-like and rigid while the body is well crafted to get a roundish belly anatomically formed.

Clement describes his works and working methods as drawing is always the basis of his waste sculptures. He works with animals and the environment, which he then placed into an imaginary setting. Plastic has an interesting way of picking up on the contours of the face and the body mass.

The sculpture 'Rhinos' is a symbol; it depicts mass 'animal mass' based on the nature of the animal itself. The rhinos is admired for its strength and size. Being depicted by Adesanya is a symbol of what the animal represents naturally. The rhino which is an over-life sculpture is a bit of an exaggeration, it emphasizes the nature and abilities of the animal which, ordinarily people could not see in their daily lives.

The rhino symbolizes the environment in the present-day world. The rhino which is sculpted with high-density polyethylene describes the human behavior of consumption and waste management particularly 'plastic waste. The animal's large appetite for consumption, described through the over-life representation of the animal, is an imagery of the present-day world's consumers' capacity, our capacity to consume products that end up as bio-degradable waste. The Rhino is shown consuming green plastics instead of green plants tells the story of the world's wrong habit, of which the larger proportion of the animal's daily consumption is stored in its stomach.

However, "The Plastic Rhino Sculpture" is making a statement that; 'you are what you consume. An environment that consumes natural products would eventually become an epitome of nature, while an environment that consumes synthetic products which cannot fully be degraded would equally flourish in its wastes.



Plate 2: Crocodile

Medium: High-Density Polyethylene

Size: 380by120by80cm

Year: 2014

Artist: Adesanya Clement

"Crocodile" Shifts in aesthetic bravery are something that Clement has had personal experience with during his proceeding art career. The use of plastic was Clement favoured vehicle of artistic expression and his single-mindedness is reflected in his environmental output. The vigorous motion of the aggressive crocodile, charging, is a celebrated example of Clement's talent for finding a pose that captures the essence of a narrative. His success in addressing profound philosophical and theological issues through the movement and forms of his figures flowed from the subtle calibrations made to their poses whilst sculpting. The figures imposing charging presence is established by the combination of extensive binding with untouched areas of space serving for the tone.

Although, the alligator is depicted as an aggressive animal. It represents the reaction expected from nature when her survival is jeopardized by a habit of lack of waste management. The crocodile in its figure and nature represents the emerging danger our environment is about to face if we do not stop. It is saying; this waste will fight us, it will hunt us and come after us all except the start to handle the issue of waste properly, through recycling.

In essence, the crocodile is more than just an art piece created using plastic, the subject of the representation 'of the crocodile' and the media of representation of high-density polythene' are both coming together as a commentary on the subject matter "waste management".

More so, crocodiles are wild, yet, they have the roles they play in the environment, ranging from zoology, wildlife, medicine, textile, industry, etc. which is possible only if these creatures are properly managed.

Clement's creativity certainly influenced his immensely tactile description of the crocodile sculpture, but its idealized body also exemplified the ideology belief that man's beauty is not complete without animals' skin.

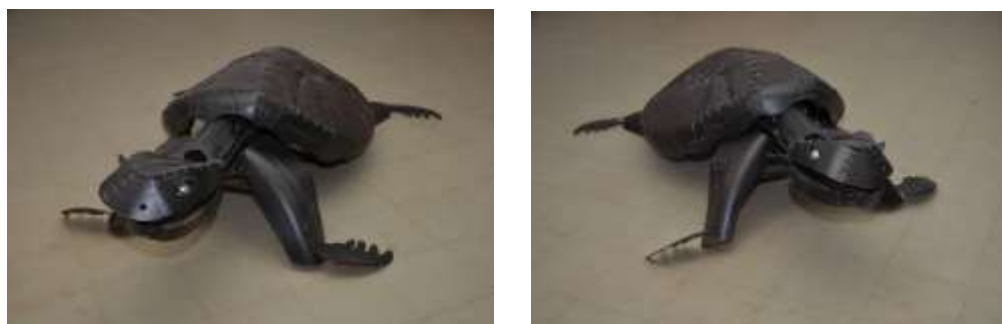


Plate 3: (Ijapa) Tortoise

Medium: High-Density Polyethylene

Size: 200by150by60xm

Year: 2014

Artist: Adesanya Clement

"(Ijapa) Tortoise" Various approaches have been adopted to the study of folklore by folklorists and other scholars in related fields over the years, and there have been varying submissions on the discipline. This notwithstanding, it is generally agreed that the study of folklore should be a thing of necessity and not a matter of off-hand, jocular treatment (Adekola, 1991). Apart from the fact that folklore studies are necessary for the modern-day context, it is equally significant to note that all the man does or believes is entrenched in folklore. The attitude of the tortoise could best be viewed from some notable

texts on the folklore of Ijapa (Okunade, 2003). Likewise, Odeyemi (1980) observed, the physical features of Ijapa as an animal, to make the children appreciate Ijapa's stories and his tricks. Being a reptile, Ijapa lives inside holes and is found in the Savannah area. It loves sweet fruits and can survive long droughts naturally. Tortoise is one of the peculiarities of all Ijapa story plots. Its present-day size according to a particular tale is a repercussion of one of his tricks.

Hence, folklore is an aesthetic product of a society, mirroring its values and offering a projective screen that illuminates its fantasies. Therefore, considering all varieties with folk themes, folklore should be accepted as part of a continuous human process to be studied in its social, cultural, and psychological dimensions, or as part of a diffusing and evolutionary process.

The turtle sculpture remains an intellectual awareness, the turtle as a marine animal is one major victim out of millions of sea creatures being affected by improper waste disposal. The turtle in this context is depicted as a helpless creature that cannot save itself from the environmental mess created by the world today. However, the turtle has played an important role in the development of human history. Just as the turtle can be exempted from the arts and literature again. Our moral stories, oral cultures, and histories are all constructed around this fascinating being. We have heard of cultures in Asia, whose creation stories (myth) are built around the turtle and its incredible qualities. The animal represents the link between nature itself and humans as an important agent affecting nature in various forms. The sculpture is an imagery of how nature is subjected to the environmental vices of humans.

Clement's sculpture talks about the inner style of consciousness. Animal figures have always fascinated him, and it is through figure sculpture that he reaches out to the world.



Plate 4:*B.B.O.G., The time is now!*

Medium: *High-Density Polyethylene and Acrylic Paint*

Size: *90cm diameter*

Year: *2015*

Artist: *Adesanya Clement*

The visual elements, line, shape, form, light, texture, and colour are controlled with great mastery in the exquisite wall clock. Each is treated rhythmically and in well-proportioned sequences. The unconventional nature of his sculpture reveals how the medium offered clement an outlet to explore ideas with complete freedom. This unfettered, individual approach can be seen again in the wall clock. Clement created this valuable collection of ornamental and decorative models for interior architecture to demonstrate the kidnapping of the Chibok girls and how a judicious architect can make use of discarded waste for today's fashions. He tends his voice to the nonchalant attitude of the government in releasing the Chibok girls that were kidnapped by terrorists.

The work BBOG is an assemblage of the cultural essence of time, trend, and protest. The artist with the use of plastic made a statement of solidarity and unionism with the parents of the kidnapped girls. The assemblage wall clock is relevant in its meaning as a pointer to the importance of time in the events which surround the kidnapped Chibok girls. The wall clock assemblage is used to suggest the time government wasted before taking action, time to the girls was of utmost importance in the recovery of the kidnapped girls. To regain what is lost, time is of utmost importance.

The work also exemplifies Clement's conviction that waste plastic as a form of architectural design in sculpture can make waste useful not only to critics and scholars in their studies but also students and the general public in their work.



Plate 5: Eja aaro (Catfish)

Medium: High-Density Polyethylene, aluminum plate, galvanized binding wire, spring, mental tubing

Size: 220 by 150 by 60 cm

Year: 2011

Artist: Adesanya Clement

"Eja-aaro (Catfish)" In the study of the catfish, clement characteristically paid the greatest attention to the movement and resemblance. The area of the body that most forcefully communicated an impression of movement. The work is a kinetic sculpture undulated by the power of the spring. His skill as a draughtsman can be seen in his exceptional ability to suggest the volume and motion of a figure by minutely changing the thickness and direction of a contour. His delicate touch was informed by his profound anatomical expertise, which was focused on the articulation of the out form and rendition, as well as by intense powers of observation developed through years of drawing from life. These qualities enabled him to explore certain entails of an animal without making the overall effect look unnatural, as can be seen from the rarely remarked upon the impossibility of the catfish.

The fish is an important symbol of ocean life. Every time the marine environment is abused, it affects marine life. The fish depicted as being suspended in the atmosphere talks about the impending danger of stripping marine creatures from their habitat through improper waste disposal and management culture, just as a fish cannot survive in a space different from water. The fish sculpture focuses more on the natural essence of space for the survival of life.

5.0 CONCLUSION

This paper, having dwelt extensively on the issue of waste, art and artist had come a long way in Nigeria. They have been major factors in the equation of Nigeria's greatness. The people in the environment were unaware of the beauty that could be found in discarded plastics. There are lots of measures that can be put into place to keep the environment clean. One of the ways is by sensitizing people, families, and businesses on how to segregate waste. They should be enlightened that the waste can be repurposed and could serve as a utility function in the home or offices.

Clement waste plastic incorporates found plastic and objects. He sees his works as putting together ordinary materials in unusual ways to create a compressed animal kingdom and architectural beauty that present the "Safe Planet Earth".

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