Art and Architecture in the Emergence of Symbolic Expressions: A Discourse

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Abstract
The paper tries to contextually define Art and Architecture from the interplay of roles and functions performed in human activities and its environment, with a view to drawing a nexus in the emergence of symbolic expressions. Information was gathered from literature, field observations from case studies of Artistic and Architectural works. These were complimented with opinion poll in form of interviews conducted on selected students of Moshood Abiola Polytechnic, Abeokuta, to finding their understanding and interpretation of motifs, signs, configurations, forms/shapes and material choice and usage as symbolic expressions on selected building structures, in terms of owners' corporate identity, functions, activities and/or image. These were reviewed and descriptively presented. Findings amongst others reveal a high level of correctness in their understanding and interpretation of the messages conveyed through the identified motifs, signs, configurations, forms/shapes and material choice and usage etc as symbolic expressions on the selected building structures; and that there is a high level of interconnectivity and interrelationship of the two as art and science capable of transmuting or conveying messages through symbolic expressions. The paper posits that, the duo helps in the conception, development and execution of strategies for Corporate/National identity, branding and image, if and when effectively deployed through artefacts and designs using available human, material and financial resources. It therefore recommends that, artist and architects should take into consideration or draw inspiration from the glorious past, climatic, socio-cultural, geo-political values and the users' objectives in the composition of forms, signs, relics, etc in the emergence of symbolic expressions.

Keywords: art, architecture, expression, corporate image/identity, symbols

INTRODUCTION

Art and Architecture Defined
Art is the imaginative, creative, and non-scientific branches of knowledge considered collectively, especially as studied academically (Collins English Dictionary). Similarly, Irish Art Encyclopedia defines Art as something created when an artist creates a beautiful object or produces a stimulating experience that is considered by his audience to have artistic merit.

Aside of these dictionary definitions, Arts has also been severally defined and/or described along thoughts, functions, periods and phraseology like Rococo-Romantic Arts, Arts & Crafts Nouveau, Renaissance/modern arts, Fine Arts, Visual Arts, Crafts, Performing Arts, Motifs, Applied Arts, etc without any consensus. They include the one which defined Art as:

"The production of some permanent object or passing action, which is fitted not only to supply an active enjoyment to the producer, but to convey a pleasurable impression to a number of spectators or listeners, quite apart from any personal advantage to be derived from it. (Sully, retrieved 2014);"

Thus, art generally refers to the product of creative human activities and skills by which materials are shaped or selected to convey ideas, emotion or interesting visual forms. Other thoughts defined Art as the study and creation of things in forms, texture, lines and colours which give pleasure to the mind and satisfy our sense of beauty. This is what is referred to as Fine and Applied Arts (Ogumor, 1993). It is the means of expressing our inner-most feeling (a non verbal means of expression) in a beautiful form (Banjoko, 2000), while Adejumo (1986) sees art as the first form of human expression and one of the media for calculating the stages of intellectual advancement of human races from the period of Dark Ages to present time. Wangboje (1982), also described Art as both a process and a product......the process involving the manipulation of materials to produce an end result which becomes the product........ Similarly, Majemite (1990) opined that Art is self expression of our sense of creativity, bringing into existence what was not in existence before through the ordering or arranging of certain (classic) elements, materials, points, lines, shapes, forms, notes, motifs, colours, rhythms, etc to effect a creation which is beautiful, cultural and a (universal) language of communication. It then holds that, Art is work produced by human creative skill and
imagination. It is the liberal arts evident in literature, history, social science etc and creative (arts) human activity resulting in the production of visual arts such as paintings, drawings, or sculpture, fine art, crafts, on one hand and Performing Arts like music, dance (ballet), theater (drama) arts etc on the other hand.

Consequently, it implies that Art is the human creative activity that is both functional and aesthetically pleasing, but subjective and capable of making different meanings to different people and at different period of time. It could also be referred to as the collection of arts and artifacts of the Renaissance/modern times for historic preservation of records. Art may them be described as a form and content. A form, in terms of the elements of art contained therein. Its design principles and materials choice and usage., and a Content in terms of adopted/adapted idea and its ability/capability to effectively convey the message through the symbolic expressions therewith, to the correct interpretation and understanding of the targeted publics. Hence, it is the expression or application of human creative skill and imagination, typically in a visual form as paintings or sculpture, motifs, crafting, carvings etc for producing works to be appreciated primarily for cultural, historical, value, aesthetics or emotional, image and identity expressions in contrast to Architecture as an Art and Science.

Whereas, Architecture is:

The art and science in theory and practice of design, erection, commissioning, maintenance and management and coordination of allied professional inputs thereto buildings or part thereof and the layout and master plan of such building or groups of buildings forming a comprehensive institution, establishment or neighbourhood as well as any other organised space, enclosed or opened required for human and other activities. (Architects’ Registration Council etc., CAP 19, LFN 2004)

Jolaoso (2000), further defined architecture as:

A continuous creative process of art and science, put together in response to human needs/activities, using available resources like materials, man, money and machinery.

This may not really provide the definition of architecture in terms of the functions it performs and its ubiquity in the emergence of symbolic expressions in the built environment. It transcends designing and constructing building(s). It is an effective medium for presenting ideas and values, be it historical, political, socio-cultural identity, etc that combine the knowledge of ergonometric as initiated and demonstrated in the works of the likes of William Morris, Augustus Perret, Anthony Gaudi, Le-Corbusier, Frank Lloyd Wright, etc, of the Art and craft movement, Renaissance and Contemporary periods of architecture. Thus, architecture has the ability and capability of creating physical forms for the preservation of history, ideals, values and memories. It expresses, illustrates or demonstrates and symbolises. (Jolaoso & Adefolakan, 2014). People have been motivated to buy a particular car, furniture, domestics product etc just because of the design and shape of the seats, dashboard and body moulds etc. The application of knowledge of materials, anthropometry/ergonometric, colour-manipulation and user’s reaction to colour, shapes, forms and signs etc and perception of the overall activities of the organisation might have perhaps informed their choice. It was in this sense that, Jolaoso (2003) revealed that architecture takes the credit for the wrapper, packaging kit and engineering products; and of course mass media in the areas of illustration, page-planning, lettering; in the use of light colour which implies spaciousness as in public buildings and the use of earth-like colours which implies identity for shrines, museum, temples; while the usage of multi-colours expresses identity for resort-related structures.

ART AND ARCHITECTURE: THE NEXUS

From the foregoing definitions and descriptions, the interconnectivity and interrelationship of the duo can then be established as:

- Both are creative Art and social science that deals with forms/shapes and contents
- Both are inseparable skills required for achieving symbolic objectives in a built environment.
- Both are veritable communication tools or strategies for creating positive or negative mental perception and preservation of historical and socio-cultural values/records
- Both are essential tools for expressing and demonstrating ideas, values, identity and image
- Both are instruments for developing strategies for Corporate/National identity and projection.

Suffice it is to say that, Art and Architecture can efficiently and effectively be put together to illustrate or demonstrate and/or symbolically express for creating convivial things that are capable of projecting the corporate or National image and identity in the good light. This has therefore, led us to have a cursory look at the interconnectivity with the concept of image.
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The Concept of Image

Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary defines image as the impression a person, an organization or a product, etc gives to the public. It is the combination and interplay/interconnectivity of activities deployed as symbolic expression for creating a mental picture of an organization or its products before the general or specific public. Different types of images exist as had been identified and supported by different scholars, it includes, but not limited to mirror images, current image, wish image, corporate image, multiple images, good or bad image. Dokunmu (2006) describes image as the picture, reflection or appearance of someone or something and the impression, perception, feeling or opinion these create in people’s mind. Keghku (2007) summed up the different types of images that scholars and practitioners have identified and conclude that image is the symbol or perception associated with representations of organisations and judged by others as positive or negative. This perhaps accounts for why, in recent times, Image is given so much consideration by managers of organisations because the people’s opinions about an organisation usually inform their disposition to such organization, its activities and products (Jolaoso et al, 2014). It thus imply that, the makers of these symbols, whether physical or abstract significantly includes the practitioners of Art and Architecture which are physical or abstract significantly includes the picture, reflection or appearance of someone or something and the impression, perception, feeling or opinion these create in people’s mind.

Emergence of Symbolic Expressions: The thrust for Corporate Image/Identity

The concern here is to establish how the emergence of symbolic expressions has over the years been influenced by art and architecture and concomitant effects on the corporate image/identity.

Recalling the important roles played by the artworks of the Yoruba people in the preservation of traditions (such as, telling the past of the Yoruba, as it is a common characteristic of African art), Parrinder (1962) states: "Since African art was the only written fact known in the whole of tropical Africa, it was used to interpret life in every aspect. It shows man in his stage of existence, both life and death.

What Parrinder stated about African art is quite evident in the Yoruba paintings, sculptures, ceramic and textile. Then, the traditional artists/designer/craftsmen were not oblivious of their environment as they introduced into their works: motifs, design forms or configurations and symbolic expressions many visible choice of available materials, be it skeumorphic (man-made), zoomorphic (animals) or anthropomorphic (human) in nature, as employed in the adornment of the human body and decorations in the façade/walls of shrines and buildings, and all of these holding and expressing one meaning or the other.

Similarly, Ojo (1966) noted that: "Modern art does not reflect the immediate environment as the traditional did. Rather, it is drawing more copiously on an ever expanding and sometimes distant environment.

It therefore suggests that, an artist through his work, preserves records of events, be it social, cultural, traditional, religious, political, or economic etc. Yoruba as an ethnic group enjoys the expression and preservation of the records of events that recalls old memories of their joy, sorrow and happy moments through their artworks. Perhaps, that explains why Plant (1971) posited that: "The Yoruba works convey facts and condition of the social World. The presentation of the World of man’s inferiority is restricted to stories and more recently to painting.

Plant's position was somehow demonstrated by Omoyele (2005), in form of folktales using the experience of earth woven into stories of characters in animal, spirit or human form, in order to teach philosophy of action on one hand, and reaction, punishment and reward on the other hand. Then, the characters of animal or human spirits were demonstrated in paintings and other art pieces as zoomorphic, skeumorphic or anthropomorphic figures that include lizards, tortoise, alligator, concentric circles, snake, bird, elephants, chameleon, stars, Ooya and ilarun (both traditional wooden combs), Opọn Ifa (divination tray), snakes, cock, etc which were holding and symbolically expressing one meaning or the other.
Similarly, in an exhibition catalogue titled “Beyond Indigo” by Carr (2001), a procession of lizards and chameleons coconooned in geometric patterns, as well as a variety of birds ranging from crane to ostriches are laid out in intriguing patterns. Some are mere silhouette in motion and are reminiscent of the symbols and motifs depicted in traditional Yoruba textiles like adire eleko and batik. These symbols and symbolic expressions on shrines like the Obatala, Alaje and Oniporogun cults, facades/walls, courtyards etc (especially amongst the Yorubas) are often richly embroidered fabrics, apart from serving decorative purpose, also delineate the hierarchy between the rich and poor in the society.

In support of these, Drewal and Pemberton’s (1989) asserted:

In Yoruba view, all the arts are closely related and are often meant to be understood and seen as images on the mind and eyes.

It therefore suggests that the usage of traditional pattern, images and symbol is not limited to a specific craft, but guided by cultural ideas, where and when the fulfilment and cultural satisfaction comes into play., and as such, it is imperative to carry out an in-depth analysis of embedded symbolic connotations. For all of these to be meaningful, the skills and knowledge of art, architecture and Public Relations must be effectively deployed to evolve sound corporate image and identity. Therefore, the emergence of symbolic expression for an impressive corporate image and identity must also conform with the principles of corporate profile, corporate policies, corporate exposure and communication as posited by Byrnes, In Caldwell (1999), which requires efficient and effective communication tools of art and architecture for expressing and demonstrating ideas, values, identity and image. These principles are relevant in view of Nwosu’s (1996) definition of corporate image as the overall reputation of an organisation as determined by various pictures, impressions, symbols, knowledge, information and perception the public of that organisation have about it. Similarly, Olukotun (2012) therefore suggests that images about a place or country, once formed, tend to ossify and are not easily amendable to change even when the realities of a country has changed or are changing for the better or indeed for worse. That explains why many organisations today and the people who manage them are extremely sensitive about the way they are perceived by their critical publics (Seitel, 1987). Examples of such include the aggressive use of rubble stones and wrought iron on facades as symbolic identity of dominance security, power and strength; and such as peculiar with the military barrack, police stations, banks’ vaults, prisons buildings. These were evident in the products of art and architecture like:

- The Bank of the North, Kano, which is a symbolic example of a 3-dimensional representation of the Arewa Logo of the Northern Nigeria;
- The Nigeria National Shipping Line (NNSL), Abuja and the Chief Sunny Odogwu’s private home, Kaduna, which are ship-like shape structures and as such symbolic about the ownership, functions, activities and users of the property;
- The Obafemi Awolowo Mausoleum at Ikenne, Nigeria (1986) which expresses two hands, joined in prayer, when viewed from the front as a symbol of religiosity of the personality of late chief obafemi Awolowo;
- The University Library at Delta University, Abraka, which is a reflection of the blend of vernacular architecture with that of international style on one hand, and the use of artworks like sculpture, trees, other landscaping elements to create its distinct character within the campus
- The Senate Building of the Kogi State University, Akunba, an imposing white-painted building with vertical elements contrast beautifully positioned to blend with the forest background and depicting a responsive post-modern architecture to the climatic environment;
- The Senate Building of the University of Lagos (designed by James Cubit & Partners), which is an imposing but simple building form/work of art and architecture, depicting verticality and horizontality with the coordinated use of fins and beautiful colour-combinations at different heights and a projecting semi-cylindrical form from the approach elevation, expressing growth, spread/dissemination and development of knowledge as power.
- The Faculty of Social Science of the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife (designed by Niger Consultants), which is expression of Egyptian architecture, but a suitable modern architecture for the Nigerian climate, with the slanting repeated columns depicting prism-like shape and magnified by projected roof slab and over-hanging slab expressing an inverted pyramid and shading device respectively.
- Fela Anikulapo-Kuti’s Mausoleum- The Kalakuta Museum Lagos, designed by Theo Lawson: houses the tomb of Fela designed in the form of a geometric and symbolic pyramid sitting on a square base, made of marble with abstract mosaic patterns and inscription of Fela 1938-1997. The essential components therewith include Stone which depicts Fela’s origin from Abeokuta; wood which shows his naturalness; then, the iron, representing his strength and the glass which radiates his transparency. Language of expressions are mostly in pigin English Going in and out of The Kalakuta Museum, it gives a feeling of the essence of the man called Fela; his
living, dressing, sang and his defensive human rights disposition through his songs. The Museum, in the interior components presents the legendary in Fela holding his saxophone, his record of 27 Dancers- wives in black and white photographs taken up-close on a 2.4 x 3.0 m frame; three pants of different colours were displayed on the wall on three iron hangers. A manual typewriter which he used to type his political views; hung black and white pictures of Fela on the piano, smiling inside one of his cars and also presenting a gift to a Caucasian lady; he wore just his pants; pictures taken from the film, Black Presidents; pictures of his famous dancers. Also notable is the manifesto of his party (Movement of the People) was spread across wooden wall boards and gave an insight into the vision Fela had for the country. Part of the manifesto which was planned to be a four year developmental plan for economic, cultural, social, political, technological and ideology reconstruction of Nigeria in particular and Africa in general were divided into two schematic phases from 1st November 1979-1st November 1981 and then 1st November 1981-1st November 1983, which is an expression of his political Afrocentric disposition/ideology of Pan-African advocacy or participatory democratic governance.

- The Burj Khalifah (2004) at Dubai designed by Kidmore Owings and Merrill Up. The current world’s tallest building which expresses a display of affluence, a beacon of progress and world’s reference point;
- The Archipelago Arena designed by Ridwan Kamil at the interception nodes of Jalan Gerbanq Pemuda and Jalan Asia-Africa. It is a winding cyclically and helically structure for International Events which expresses and symbolises the importance of socio-interaction, sports, exhibition etc.
- The Kansas Cite Public Library designed by Henry Williams in USA which was built to help pick highly influential books that represented Kansas City. This was reflected in the design of the façade (exterior) of the parking garages, to inspire people to utilise the downtown central library;
- The Dancing Tower designed by Architect Zaha Hadi, in New York, which expresses and reflects the rapid changing characteristics of the development scenario in Dubai;
- The Kuwait Cobra house designed by Architect Armin Fisher in Auckland, Bandra, which expresses and celebrated the importance of Cobra in that environment;
- The Crocodile Moath in the Gagudju Crocodile Hotel Inn designed by John Wilkins, in Australia, which similarly expresses and celebrated the importance of Crocodile in that environment;
- The Piano House (2008, in Kyainan City of China) designed and built by Kenneth Tan, with the use of violin/piano-like shaped with diagonally (propped) supported roofing in an opening position to express the functional relevance of the structure.

These examples presents the nature and activities of art and architecture in the emergence of symbolic expression as veritable communication tools for creating positive or negative mental perception and preservation of historical and socio-cultural values/records, as well as, as instruments for developing strategies for Corporate Image/identity and projection.

METHODOLOGY
Information was essentially collected from relevant literature published and unpublished), drawings, pictures, architectural models/imageries, field survey or observations from case studies of art and architectural works. These were complimented with opinion polls (purposive) in the form of interviews conducted on selected 200 students of Moshood Abiola Polytechnic, Abeokuta, Nigeria, to finding their understanding and interpretation of motifs, signs, configurations, forms/shapes and material choice and usage as form of symbolic expressions on selected building structures, in terms of owners’ corporate identity, functions, activities and/or image. The selected Building structures were provided and presented in the form of pictures, architectural perspective drawings and models to the respondents with a view to determining the level of correctness of their understanding and interpretation of the messages openly or inherently portrayed by the images/building structures in relation to the owners’ corporate image and identity.

A purposive sample size of 200 respondents was drawn from the Students’ enrolment lists of the Departments of Architecture and Art & Industrial Design for the 2013/2014 academic session was used for the study. The levels of correctness in respect of the respondents’ understanding were rated as very high, high, average, low and very low; while the level of correctness in respect of interpretation were rated as correct and incorrect. Results were thereafter discussed and descriptively presented.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1: Understanding and Interpretation of Motifs, Configurations and Symbolic Expressions in Building Structures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Correctness</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very high</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>31.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>28.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>34.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>04.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorrect</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>02.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1. revealed that about 93.5% of the respondents have a reasonable level of correctness of the understanding and interpretation of the messages covertly or overtly revealed by the Motifs, Configurations and Symbolic expressions in the provided building structures/samples through pictures, architectural perspective drawings and models, in relation to the designers'/owners' corporate image and/or identity.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION
It is apt to note that designing only for the sake of art or architecture and traditions leads to less patronage, but should rather include designing for the client's interest without prejudice to the safety of the built environment and public good health, social values and needs. This will consequently promote public confidence, professional integrity and endear advocacy response through symbolic expression resulting from articulate, efficient and effective deployment of the skills and knowledge of art and architecture on one hand, and professional expertise of Public Relations on the other at achieving organisational objectives, Corporate Identity and Image. It is thus instructive that, art and architecture are inseparable skills and veritable communication tools for symbolic expression and demonstration of ideas, preservation of historical and socio-cultural values and corporate image/identity. It is therefore recommended that, artist and architects should take into consideration or draw inspiration from the glorious past, socio-cultural, geo-political values, climate of the environment and the users' objectives in the composition of forms, signs, relics, functions, activities etc in the emergence of symbolic expressions.

REFERENCES


website