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African Arts in Postcolonial Context: New Old Meaning for Sculptures in Nigeria

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Abstract: This study traces the non-accordance of traditional African works of arts like sculptures their real artistic values until the latter half of the last century. Western missionary and military colonisers initially approached African sculptures not as sculptures but as uncontemplated fetish, tribal and nonsensical products. One of the reasons why western colonisers could not understand was because sculpture's (art) such as masks, totems and statues functioned in religious, fertility and other social contexts. And they were not, for display sake, exhibited in western-styled museums or galleries just for audiences to admire. Whereas this erroneous approach to African sculptures was made by western people that did not understand nonwestern and unfamiliar artistic idiom, today in urban Nigeria, Africans themselves are now repudiating and denying African artistic products like sculptures as works of art. They do so on the basis of a new Christian episteme which is different from but evolved out of the colonial missionary Christianity that initially denied African arts. This study seeks to analyze how this postcolonial Christian episteme fundamentally beclouds the apprehension of art among Africans today making them see sculptures as idols, fetishes and works of the devil the same age-old, negative and problematic categorisations brought to bear upon Africa by western colonial missionaries.

Key words: African arts, sculptures, postcolonial, christian episteme, social, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Some of the most enduring legacies Africa has bequeathed to the world are its very diverse and beautiful artistic traditions. Among these are sculptural artefacts made in mediums ranging from wood, raffia, leather, bones, terracotta, ivory, bronze, brass, gold, iron and several other organic and inorganic materials. Very often, diverse symbols and patterns were etched onto the bodies of sculptures and also employed as motifs on African fabrics. In turn, as Jewel notes, many contemporary textiles produced by fashion designers in the West take designs and motifs from African traditional cloths. And just as today's Western artisans from different locales may network, traditional African artists also exchanged skills in artistic production where a piece of fabric may be woven by one society and another does the embroidery (Picton and Mack, 1989) just as a group of Hausa men now cast contemporary Asante gold weights around Kumasi in Ghana (Jewel, 1994). Regardless of the multifaceted and inspiring nature of African sculptures, they were hardly accorded their real artistic values until the latter half of the last century. The most compelling reason for the initial lack of acceptance of African sculptures as sculptures is the denial by western military and missionary colonizers who contemplated the works as fetish, tribal and nonsensical rather than as works of art demanding of merit. At the initial time of encounter between African sculpted forms and western colonizers, the works were considered only as colonial trophies and weird museum objects attractive to the curiosity of certain Europeans. Whereas African sculptures were a highly developed and extremely sophisticated artistic category with thousands of years of history behind them yet, they were (and are still sometimes) discussed as a subdivision of primitive art. This is largely because of lack of understanding of what Abiodun (1994) has termed a nonwestern and unfamiliar artistic idiom (1994) or what Achebe (1995) calls colonialist criticism.

Sculpture is a predominant form of art among the African people. This is so basically because of sculpture's functions in the African social and religious contexts. In attestation to the predominance and importance of sculpture as an artistic category in Africa, one finds that the most commonly found sculptural works are masks, totems and statues which are extensively employed in religious, fertility and other social ceremonies. Owing to their production and use in social and religious contexts, African art works are ostensibly functional rather than static as it is believed by some art critics. Greene (1941) confirms that whatever the medium, works of art like those of Africa have an organic character that is not internally undifferentiated and homogeneous but complex in quality and structure. This differentiation and none-homogeneity applies also to African sculptures. These qualities of African art was partly responsible for the difficulty western art collectors had in finding, collecting and documenting works of art in Africa. This

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was because African sculptures were not found displayed on walls or other public spaces as western art is contemplated. Rather, western incursion confronted African arts in palaces, shrines and vital cultural spaces where they were linked to social and religious continuities. In a very clear sense, this connection between African arts and social and religious continuity is as old as the African. According to Honour and Fleming (1982) the history of techniques that have enabled the human race to dominate the environment began >2 million years ago in East Central Africa when rudimentary tools were made by breaking off part of the surfaces of pebbles. Besides tools, paintings were also executed on the walls of the caves in which the people dwelled which acted as sympathetic and magical inspiration for their hunting.

From the foregoing, it seems clear that African arts have always had transcendental and socially functional attributes. And there has always been a certain mystical quality about arts such as those from Africa. Osborne (1976) also confirms that to properly appreciate such works of art, one needs be acquainted with the mysteries and transcendental philosophy of the culture that produces it. This last part of understanding peculiar cultural philosophy as a key to understanding African art is perhaps the most vital issue in today's world. It is not only so called western people that are unable to place African art in perspective but that in many parts of urban Africa today, Africans who have been born into the continent's rich philosophies of cultural production are now repudiating and denying African sculptures as works of art. Africans are doing so on the basis of a new Christian episteme which is different from but evolved out of the colonial missionary Christianity that initially denied African arts. This study seeks to analyze how this postcolonial Christian episteme fundamentally beclouds the apprehension of art among Africans today, making them see sculptures as idols, fetishes and works of the devil the same age-old, negative and problematic categorisations brought to bear upon Africa by colonial missionaries.

AFRICAN ARTISTIC PHILOSOPHY

To understand the functions of African art, one needs unearth the belief of the people or the philosophy behind the production of the works. Philosophy is an alternative means of interpreting the objectivities of experimentation. Art whether African or Western can be considered as an experiment aimed at producing or reproducing experience. African artists of all milieu have had beliefs that made them produce the works the way they did or made them use the materials and methods they employed in the production and consumption of the work of art. In a basic sense African sculptures especially were produced as intermediaries between man's actual realm and the virtual realm of God and the gods. So, they produced a lot of ancestral figures and masks that were to represent their dead heroes, kings, priests whom they believed could intercede on their behalf since, they were no more in the physical. Willett (1975) mentions a modern Guro carver that said he never carved a human face to look like any individual so that he may not be accused of witchcraft. It may have been a similar reason that made the NOK artists to produce their human figures in a stylized manner whereas their animal figures were remarkably naturalistic. Since, they could produce such naturalistic animal forms, it is clear that they could easily have produced naturalistic human figures also. Thus, if the NOK people employed stylisations in representing human figures, they most likely did so consciously and deliberately to confront the reality of their society and belief systems at the time. This is precisely what other African cultures also did.

As another illustration, the Egyptians believed in eternity. It was their philosophy that there was life after death because of their experiences and observations of nature. The experience they had with the rising and setting sun, consistently, day after day including the seasonal overflowing of the Nile made them to reason that there was continuity after man's death. Thus, they built themselves structures like the pyramids that were to house the essences of their dead kings and heroes. In the light of findings by archaeologists working in Egyptian sites, Willett (1975) confirms that for the Egyptians, art is a very practical affair, designed to perpetrate the magic of immortality of the represented person rather than to move the emotions of spectators.

From the foregoing, it is clear that art for Africans has always been rooted in their beliefs in the supernatural and supremacy of God and the gods that had control over nature and natural incidents like thunder, lightning, waves of the sea, etc., against which forces, man was helpless. In the final analysis, cultures like those of Africa produced arts like sculptures as objects that extended their belief systems and worship rather than as things to be mounted on rostrums and admired by detached spectators. Perhaps an apt example of this is the sculpture representing Sango (The Yoruba god of thunder). Whether in Yoruba land itself or in the Americas where Yoruba traditions were exported by slaves, sculptures representing Sango are made and located in or around the shrine or within the living space of the god's priest/priestess (Fig. 1). The Yoruba have never placed a sculpture representing Sango or any other gods for that matter in an exhibition space

Fig. 1: Sango figures like this doll (1890) from Cuba was employed in ceremonies and kept in priestly custody rather than in public spaces as objects of admiration Mason (1994)

just for audiences to come and look at it. Such a purely aesthetic function of art is at best, parochial in terms of the seriousness with which Africans apprehend their sculptures as extensions of life, death and the hereafter. Thus, in contrast to how a work of art may be exhibited in a western-styled museum, African sculptural pieces acted as a link between the realms of man and God, the actual and virtual worlds that represent the core of African belief systems. Some of the sculptures may be made as small art pieces for fertility or other curative purposes while some may be made in the appearance of gods and as tokens for initiations into cults or age grades. Whichever style or size of a traditional work of art, Mbiti (1992) reminds us that African arts have protective and curative purposes. This means that art is linked with the very essence and survival of man as a free moral agent whose quest to find equilibrium in the physical and spiritual worlds that form his belief system takes him through transcendental moments in which he makes and uses works of art.

One way to differentiate the meaning of art for traditional Africa is to explore the definition that western scholars give it. Osborne (1976) for instance, writes that an art work requires intelligent spectators that must negate the pleasure of the eyes and express judgment and argue the reasons for what is seen. In the light of this western understanding, many critics of African art have failed to see beyond the image itself and thereby managed to judge the works as primitive art. They do this by compelling African arts to fit principles of visual design such as balance, ratio, form and style, etc. which are all established by the west, rendering negative other categories that do not fit. Many African artists, old and new have produced works with representational and presentational forms that fit African visual design principles (rather than western) that to a western caste of mind, look stylized and unfinished. Yet, from all indications, the stylised and unfinished nature of some African arts is an art style rather than static primitivism or a lack of creativity in their works. For, according to Willett (1975), African art is often discussed as if it was perpetually static but it has been evolving continuously from time to time and locale to locale. As Funk and Wagnal have written, traditional African art is based upon both worlds of reality and of mythology.

While modes of expressing the real and mythological worlds vary from region to region in some areas the art is entirely or partly naturalistic and in others, it is highly stylized and abstract. Thus one can say that African art is dynamic and multifaceted in style, materials and production paradigms, rather than static.

However, the ways that a western caste of mind perceives African art is merely a part of the problem. The other part of the problem is that certain Africans themselves have also come to perceive African artistic expressions as negative and devilish vis a vis notions imbibed from a new Christian episteme defined by so called born-again ideologies. Born again is a fervent and multidenominational Christian revivalist movement which is global in extent but local in its application. The born again episteme is based upon a movement towards what Nigerian Christians term holiness and a separation of the individual personality from the world. The world in this case means material concerns of the physical world including social and cultural institutions/practices that are perceived to be unscriptural or not supported by the Bible. However, every church and each born again Christian has a unique interpretation of the scriptures which makes notions of holiness or the born again creed as a whole highly personal and subjective. This means that anything can be scriptural or unscriptural depending on who is looking at it and whose advantage is served. In the light of this interesting Christian episteme, several born again Africans have come to tag African artistic expressions as negative, evil, devilish and unscriptural. There are no doubts at all that this development is very negative for African social, economic and cultural development. Several cultural systems, performances and products are fading out because the miss-applied born again episteme has made Africans to jettison that which is African for that which is western on the erroneous basis that cultural products of Africa are devilish while those of the west are godly, scriptural and therefore holly. So called born again Christians no longer want to perform

or watch African events such as New Yam Festivals just as they frown upon sculptures made in Africa. Some of these same Africans who deny African sculptures and performances are those that travel to western countries and enjoy the lustre of European and American sculptures and yearly festivals. Besides, even the Christmas celebrations with Santa clause and his reindeers are in no way scriptural but purely western cultural products which Africans have taken as universal, humanist and holy while at the same time, denying their own. In order to fully rationalise the dynamics of African cultural art, it is important to outline some of its contexts of production and uses.

RELIGIOUS CONTEXTS OF AFRICAN ART

In his African art Willett (1975) opines that early European travellers tell us too little about the sculptures that Africans produced for their own uses. He also says that Paclieco Pereira for example, repeatedly refers to Africans as idolaters but does not describe the so called African idols. Describing the Western corner of the Niger Delta about 1506-8 Pereira says: there is nothing on which to make a profit which signifies by the way that Europeans like himself came to Africa basically to make profit. By profit Pereira means agricultural or mineral commodities that were marketable at the time. Rather than high-profit mechanise what Pereira saw was a profusion of works of arts kept in shrines, palaces and dedicated spaces and not being sold by Africans for the benefit of people like himself. And he simply could not from his narrow western perspective, understand why Africans were so attached to their works and not selling them or displaying them in public places like museums as it was done in the west. Since, Pereira could not understand the unique relationship between the Africans and their works of arts, he denied African arts altogether. It is much the same sense in which born again Africans themselves deny African arts and label it idol, devilish and evil because the arts do not fit their narrow, parochial and judgemental notions of universal and so called Christian ideals. As Barber (1997) has argued because certain cultural products do not fit what is known and accepted in westernised binary thinking, they tend to be denied.

One reason why early colonisers like Pereira could not find African arts on the streets and public spaces was because the people did not display arts and cultural artefacts for display sake but for the sake of that which is congruous with their belief system and worldview. As far as African belief system goes, art has a function that is transcendental. It is transcendental in the sense that the physical and spiritual worlds are one continuous whole and there is constant interaction between man and the beings that dwell in the hereafter. Thus, as cultural products inspired by God, gods and deities, art is very important because it serves transcendental functions in Africa. And because of art's importance in African cultural psyche, it is traditionally located in (and around) dedicated spaces such as shrines, palaces, ancestral rooms and village squares where the purposes of man and the beings that populate his beliefs are served. In a critical way therefore, the lack of a proper knowledge about these purposes of African art will impede a non-African's understandings (Gillon, 1979).

As Gillon (1979) notes, ritual performances as well as the production and use of certain key art objects are often under the regulation of powerful cultural institutions like secret societies. African religious rituals themselves are enacted in relation to the seasons of sowing, harvesting, desire for increase and fertility of the families and of their livestock and their fields. In some other cases, houses may need totems, people may need effigies or warriors may need charms to protect themselves. Wrestlers, barren women, initiates into various grades need sculpted artefacts to indicate their ranks or identification just as well as they may need body markings. The traditional priest/priestess uses varieties of masks and images to deal with rituals, celebrations, healing, counselling or for divination. Generally, the type of image or art employed in the ritual space depends on the particular society and the kinds of materials available in their natural environment. Societies in the forest belts will employ wood and metals while those at riversides/seaside will employ raffia, fish bones and corals, etc.

Whatever the materiality of the artistic, religious or ritual object, the African belief system is universal with variations that do not necessarily deny the fluid universality of the realms of the living, the dead and spirits. According to Abasiattai (1987) the traditions of the peoples of Cross River and Akwa Ibom states of Nigeria, for example is based on divinities and spirits as essential elements of prevailing traditional religions. And as he says, the divinities vary from society to society and are known by various names among the different ethnic groups in the two regions. Whether male or female, malevolent or benevolent, these divinities, he suggests have places of abode such as hills, rivers, the sea, trees, forest or rocks depending on where the people choose to locate the entity and its attributes. To these attributes of the entities in African belief systems, people channel their supplications and assuages. For instance, the spirit of a departed ancestor or of a felled tree may constitute certain dangers to the corporate identity of the people, until assuaged by sacrifices and other rituals in which cultural products like sculptures may play roles (Gillon, 1979). In

the case of the dead ancestor, Gillon writes that a sculpture or a mask may have to be made to provide a home for the wandering soul and to focus his life force or power to help the living.

The power attributed to the wild animal or the departed ancestor is sympathetically transferred to the visual representation such as the mask, the ancestor or the animal. The Supreme God and Creator is not a subject for visual representation among Africans as they do not conceive that a limited visual form like a sculpture or effigy is capable of containing an entity that is Divine and limitless. Thus, in religious and visual representation, God is rather addressed through secondary deities, messengers, mythical founders of the tribe, primordial and immediate ancestors or personal and village protectors. This is basically the reason why Africans produce sculptural pieces as the intermediary between man and the Creator. In that sense, African religion is not polytheistic in that the people believe in one Supreme God. Sculptures and other cultural artefacts of religion are mere beacons to the physical man as he transcends the gulf between this life and those of the Creator. It is much in the same sense in which Roman Catholics use the crucifix and images of Mary without being labelled polytheists.

THE SOCIAL CONTEXTS OF AFRICAN ART

There are no doubts at all that African arts also play roles that are social rather than religious. According to Newman (1974) masks, for instance are used by Africans in several contexts that include initiations into age-grades and social cults. Aye (1967) also describes the Ekpe masquerade found among the Efiks of Calabar. He writes that Ekpe means a leopard and is said to be a mysterious and stealthy inhabitant of the forest. The leopard is so stealthy in the forest that it is very difficult for the uninitiated that is one who is not knowledgeable, to see it. The Ekpe masquerade is represented in a multicoloured costume called esik. Around its waist is a bell. The bell tolls occasionally to announce the approach of this otherwise dangerous masquerade (Fig. 2).

According to Aye, the Ekpe fraternity was originally for religious purposes. However, as the Efik society became more sophisticated and cash driven owing to the new wealth which trade with Europeans brought, the Ekpe was quickly adapted to fulfil other economic, civic or social functions. These functions included promulgating and enforcing laws. The Ekpe courts also judged important cases and recovered debts especially bad ones. Within a short time, according to Aye, every aspect of Efik life became permeated by Ekpe, whether political, social, economic or religious. Today among the Efik of Calabar, the Ekpe masquerades are now used for

Fig. 2: An Ekpe masquerade showing a crowd of people looking from a safe distance. Notice the stick in its hands which can be used on anyone that gets too close; Omekpe Omon in 2010

entertainment. Their performances are also used to welcome important visitors including tourists. Thus, it is clear that the Ekpe has transited from religious to purely social function in the Efik society. The Ekpe mask was a secret and sacred sculpture, found only in shrines and with the custodians of traditional culture. Today, some of these masks and other sculptures that were previously linked to cultural and religious institutions are used as decorations for domestic and other public spaces. From a cultural perspective deducible from the foregoing discussion, the display of works of art for its own sake in personal and public spaces is not a traditionally African method of artistic consumption. Rather, such exhibitions of art should be seen in the light of globalisation and what Appadurai (2000) terms the movement of techniques in social rupture. For, as African societies changed or ruptured into cash economies driven by western ideals, previous self-contained cultural patterns and commodities acculturated to fit the new frames dictated by the imperatives of globalisation. In the final analysis, dedicated African sculptures for instance, became undedicated and dislodged from previous religious and cultural confines until they now fit western notions of art. If today, Africans no longer consider ethereal those arts that were previously so considered, it is because the people now see art as western man sees it not least because of colonial and postcolonial re-educations in modes of artistic and cultural seeing.

From 4th March-6th June 2010, the British Museum held an exhibition of 14-15th Century Yoruba works of art. The collection included several bronze, copper, terracotta

Fig. 3: Bronze figure of Obalufon, the 14th Century King of the Yoruba Kingdom of Ife

and stone works from the period in what was termed the largest collections of ancient Yoruba art. The images included several human, domestic and wild animal subjects. These sculptures, made about 700 years ago are beautiful, no doubt. However, more than the parochial sense of beauty that the works possess today, they each must have had other functions that mattered to the producers. For instance, the sculpture (Fig. 3) shows Obalufon, an Ife King who reigned in the late 14-15th Century. By all standards the sculpture is beautiful. But the Obalufon sculpture was never meant to be displayed at any public museum or any such spaces. It was a court art commissioned and made for the King's Court. Its purpose was to immortalise the kingly essence of Obalufon. In other words, the sculpture had a transcendental function in that the king was both the leading man and spiritual head of the kingdom. He was therefore, the link between his kingdom and the spiritual world of ancestors, spirits and gods. In the ritual sense compatible with the Yoruba worldview, the sculptural image is wholly the king and a visual gateway for making supplications and curses as the case may be. For, in all ritual, religious and ancestral functions, genealogical recitation is very important in the African sense of it. Thus, prior to his death, King Obalufon's name would already have been included in the oriki (oral historical and praise poetry) of the court's patrilineage which may precede rituals, religious, communal and even certain purely social events. In that respect, the sculpture representing Obalufon would only have been one among several representing past kings of the Ife kingdom. But one needs not lose sight of the fact that the social

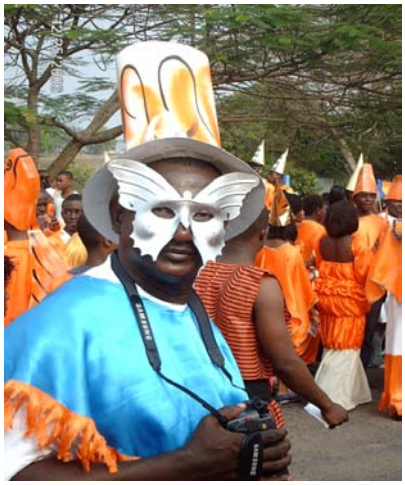

Fig 4: As against the Ekpo mask (Fig. 2) this contemporary mask worn during the Annual Calabar Carnival in Nigeria is not traditionally African in design, materiality and function (Babson Ajibade in 2007)

functions of the Obalufon sculpture outlined here represent a traditional and pre-colonial African mode of seeing and using artistic products.

It is also important to note that the postcolonial modes of artistic and cultural seeing prevailing in Africa today are neither traditional nor are they purely western. The modes of making, seeing and using artworks like sculptures in Africa today neither fit neatly into what one may call traditional nor western. At best they are a syncretised and eclectic hybrid taking on new local and global materials, methods and meaning as social changes occur. One way to experience the current local/global hybrid in artistic production and consumption in Africa is to take a look at a contemporary cultural product like the annual Calabar Carnival in Cross River state, Nigeria. The carnival which holds on the 27th of every December is part of a month-long Christmas festival. Often dubbed the biggest street party in Africa, the carnival is a diverse congregation of masquerade groups, children and parade troupes dancing through the streets. In terms of costuming, body adornment, props and the use of masks and other sculptural forms, the carnival subsumes a whole array of cultural patterns and visual elements that are supposedly African but are in fact far from it (Fig. 4). The costumes are often designed to represent ethnic types while props and other visual innuendoes are produced and used not in any sense of trueness to strict local cultural patterns. Rather, individual and group costumes for the Calabar Carnival are motivated and driven by the

Fig. 5: The costume shown above with the orange feathered head covering, shoulder garbs and waist pouch including the made in China imitation kente print represent an ambiguous and eclectic cultural product that is more spectacular and less African (Babson Ajibade in 2007)

Fig. 6: This young woman's hairdo, facial marks and spaghetti singlet reading Curry Girl are not essentially African. Just as the mask in Fig. 4, they are cultural materials taken spontaneously from whatever source available at the time of performance (Babson Ajibade in 2007)

quest for spectacle. Participants or performers determine what idea, object, colour or cultural materials add up to their costumes. An individual might even wear Scottish kilts on a t-shirt that reads Obama with the colours of the Nigerian flag masking the face. Likewise masks that are employed in creating the Calabar Carnival spectacles are not those in art historical or ethnographic anthologies but those produced spontaneously by the wearer or made in China and sold in Nigerian shops. In the end, these eclectic and spectacular visual cultural products made, used and seen in the Calabar Carnival are cultural ambiguities. They are African' mainly because they are used by Africans and not because the cultural products are inherently African in any systemic way.

From Fig. 5-7, it is clear that neither the fabrics, headdresses, props and general outlook of the Calabar carnival is particularly African. Rather what prevails is that cultural producers, performers and diverse social actors simply appropriate whatever visual materials of whatever local/global culture they can find to produce spectacle in its loudest form. In the end, the social context of the visual culture produced, used and seen in the Calabar Carnival is not traditional in the sense that it fits or even acknowledges what might be intrinsically African. More than anything else, perhaps, this ambivalent and ambiguous visual culture produced in Calabar is modernity in that it enables individuals to show how far they have travelled or how knowledgeable they are about global places. One social actor may use a Brazilian

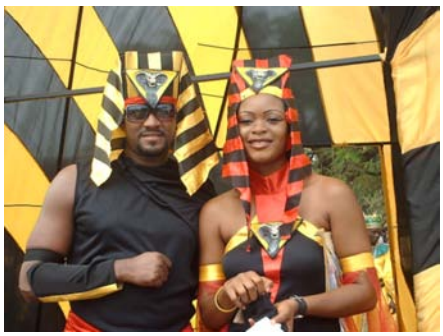

Fig. 7: In this picture, there is slight allusion to Egypt in the headdress and choice of gold and black theme. Notice the modified Rosicrucian triangle on the man's temple and the woman's chest, in which a cobra replaces the rose (Babson Ajibade in 2007)

mask, another wears an American t-shirt while yet another employs Egyptian symbols punctuated by dark sunshades (Fig. 7). All these actors are merely contesting new identities by displaying their own modernity represented by the exotic global materials they have drafted into their local performances.

CONCLUSION

From this study, we concluded that new urban and contemporary African visual practice, this modernity is not traditional and has little or no precolonial justification (Picton, 1994). Yet, in born again episteme, the Calabar

Carnival (as well as contemporary African sculptures) is understood as traditional and therefore anti-Christian, rather than as a contemporary unreligious practice. And during the festivities, born again churches try to schedule their own programmes to coincide and draw their members away from the evil ceremony (they also frown at ownership of sculptures). As identities, these attempts to define holiness by distancing from cultural products like sculptures and the Calabar Carnival is an invention in line with Peel's suggestion that Yoruba identity of the 20th century was the invention of the milieu's Christian and Muslim intelligentsia. In the same vein, so called born again pastors and adherents in Nigeria have now invented a new negative identity for artistic products like African sculptures that is based on a new Christian episteme. While this episteme itself is different from and in a way contradicts the missionary Christianity instituted in Africa by western colonisers, it nonetheless beclouds the apprehension of art among Africans today, making them see sculptures as idols, fetishes and works of the devil. And if arts, its functions and roles in traditional society has evolved or changed and Africans no longer limit art to dedicated spaces like palaces and shrines but also place works in galleries, it is because the world has globalised and global ideas, technologies and techniques have filtered into the continent. As African culture producers and consumers internalise and localise global approaches to art and make meaning of new found born again Christian episteme, new ways of making, seeing and using arts evolve in a very untidy fashion. From all indications social change has and is still occurring in the Nigerian visual artistic scene. Whether in the galleries or during festivals like the Calabar Carnival, social and cultural nuances that resurrect older and problematic modes of categorising African arts has evolved, courtesy of Africans themselves. Just as it was in the early years of Africa's interaction with westerners, African sculptures for instance have again become idols, devilish and evil at the instance of Africans themselves. As yet, certain Africans are so categorising their own arts not because they are judging unfamiliar cultural products but because they are subjecting these arts to conform to a new, postcolonial born again mode of seeing images. In doing this, Africans are themselves are producing what Bhabha (1995) terms an ambivalence that reimplicates differential relations of colonial normalisation in order to preserve the authority of its identity. Essentially because of their belonging to a new Christian epistemic citizenship, born again Africans have achieved a reversal of perspectives (Bouillon, 2002), in which labels such as fetish, evil, devilish, etc. frowned at when colonial westerners applied it to African arts are now reinstated. In the end, predominant African art forms like sculptures are repudiated and denied as born again Africans connect them with an invented religious identity of a postcolonial urban world. As evidence of social change, this development has a negative effect for Africa because it directly impacts upon social, economic and cultural developments at all levels as artistic productions and consumption are forced to decline.

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