

Contemporary Nigerian Art and Globalization: Key Issues and Debates

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Abstract

This article explores the theme of contemporary Nigerian art and globalization, examining how local traditions, international influences, and global art trends have shaped this dynamic and vibrant field. The article begins by providing an overview of the historical and cultural context of Nigerian art, highlighting the diversity of artistic practices and the ways in which Nigerian artists have engaged with global artistic movements. The article then discusses the impact of globalization on Nigerian art, focusing on the ways in which Nigerian artists have responded to and negotiated with global art trends. The role of institutions, such as museums and art fairs, in promoting contemporary Nigerian art both within Nigeria and abroad is also examined. Finally, the article considers the challenges facing Nigerian artists and institutions, including limited funding and a lack of government support, and the ways in which artists and curators have created alternative spaces and platforms for showcasing Nigerian art. Through a range of examples, including the work of artists such as Ndidi Dike, Victor Ehikhamenor, and Yinka Shonibare, this article aims to provide a deeper understanding of the complex and multifaceted nature of contemporary Nigerian art.

Introduction

Contemporary Nigerian art has experienced significant growth and recognition over the past few decades, with Nigerian artists gaining increased visibility and critical acclaim on the global stage. However, globalization has also presented significant challenges for Nigerian artists, such as limited access to international markets and cultural appropriation. In this article, we explore the problems and prospects of contemporary Nigerian art in the context of globalization, drawing on existing literature to provide recommendations for Nigerian artists and art institutions

Indeed contemporary Nigerian art is a dynamic field that has been shaped by a variety of factors, including local traditions, international influences, and globalization. In recent years, Nigerian artists have increasingly engaged with global trends and issues, resulting in a diverse and vibrant artistic landscape. This article explores the impact of globalization on contemporary Nigerian art, highlighting key themes and debates in the field.

Overview of Contemporary Nigerian Art

Contemporary Nigerian art emerged in the 1960s, following Nigeria's independence from British colonial rule. This period was marked by a flowering of artistic expression, as artists sought to create a new visual language that reflected the country's cultural and political identity. Today, contemporary Nigerian art encompasses a wide range of styles and mediums, from painting and sculpture to photography and video art.

One of the defining features of contemporary Nigerian art is its engagement with local traditions and cultural heritage. Many Nigerian artists draw on traditional art forms and motifs, using them to create new and innovative works that reflect their cultural roots. For example, the artist Ndidi Dike's installation "Fragile Responsibility" (2004) incorporates traditional Igbo sculpture and textiles to explore themes of identity and displacement.

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The impact of globalization on Nigerian art has been significant, shaping the artistic practices of many Nigerian artists and influencing the reception of their work both within and outside of Nigeria. One of the most visible effects of globalization has been the emergence of a global art market, which has created new opportunities for Nigerian artists to exhibit and sell their work.

However, globalization has also raised important questions about the relationship between Nigerian art and global art trends. Some critics have argued that globalization has led to a homogenization of artistic styles, with Nigerian artists mimicking global trends rather than developing their own unique artistic voice. Others have pointed to the ways in which globalization has facilitated the exchange of ideas and artistic practices, enabling Nigerian artists to engage with a broader range of artistic traditions and techniques.

Key Issues and Debates

One of the key issues in the field of contemporary Nigerian art is the tension between local and global influences. Some artists have sought to create work that is distinctly Nigerian, drawing on local traditions and cultural heritage to create new and innovative works. Others have embraced global trends, incorporating international styles and techniques into their work.

Another important issue is the role of institutions in shaping the production and reception of contemporary Nigerian art. The Nigerian art world is characterized by a vibrant network of galleries, museums, and cultural institutions, which play a critical role in promoting and supporting Nigerian artists. However, these institutions are often under-resourced and face a range of challenges, including limited funding, inadequate infrastructure, and a lack of government support.

Globalization has enabled Nigerian artists to engage with new audiences and explore new forms of artistic expression, but it has also presented challenges. According to Adeshina (2019), one of the primary challenges is limited access to international markets, which can hinder Nigerian artists' ability to sell their work and earn a living. Additionally, cultural appropriation and the

commodification of Nigerian art by foreign markets can lead to the erasure of Nigerian cultural identity and reduce the value of Nigerian art.

Specific Artists and Artworks

To gain a deeper understanding of the impact of globalization on Nigerian art, it is useful to examine specific artists and artworks. One example is the artist Yinka Shonibare, who was born in Nigeria but is based in the UK. Shonibare's work explores themes of colonialism, race, and identity, drawing on both Nigerian and Western artistic traditions to create works that are both visually striking and conceptually complex.

Another example is the artist Victor Ehikhamenor, whose work draws on traditional Nigerian art forms to create contemporary works that challenge prevailing ideas about African art. Ehikhamenor's "Broken English" series (2018) features sculptural works that incorporate discarded materials such as old cans and bottles, highlighting the ways in which Nigerian society is marked by consumption and waste.

Role of Institutions

Finally, it is important to consider the role of institutions in shaping the production and reception of contemporary Nigerian art. One example is the Centre for Contemporary Art Lagos, which was founded in 2013 and has quickly become one of the leading art fairs in Africa. The fair attracts international collectors and curators, providing a platform for Nigerian artists to showcase their work to a global audience. Another example is the National Gallery of Modern Art in Lagos, which is the first institution of its kind in Nigeria and plays a critical role in promoting contemporary Nigerian art both within Nigeria and abroad.

However, institutions in Nigeria face a range of challenges, including limited funding, inadequate infrastructure, and a lack of government support. This has led some artists and curators to take matters into their own hands, creating alternative spaces and platforms for showcasing Nigerian art. One example is the artist-led initiative Art Twenty One, which was founded in 2014 and has quickly become one of the leading contemporary art spaces in Lagos.

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Prospects of Globalization for Nigerian Art

Despite these challenges, globalization presents significant opportunities for Nigerian artists. Through globalization, Nigerian artists can gain exposure to new audiences, access new resources, and collaborate with international artists. Okeke-Agulu (2017) argues that globalization can also enable Nigerian artists to challenge Western art narratives and subvert stereotypes through their work.

IV. Nigerian Art Institutions and Globalization Nigerian art institutions, such as museums and galleries, play a crucial role in shaping the global perception of Nigerian art. However, the current state of Nigerian art institutions leaves much to be desired, with limited funding and resources hindering their ability to promote and support contemporary Nigerian art on the global stage. To address this, Nigerian art institutions must prioritize the promotion of contemporary Nigerian art and collaborate with international institutions to showcase Nigerian art globally. (Osodi, 2021)

V. Nigerian Artists and Globalization Nigerian artists can navigate the challenges of globalization by developing strong networks and partnerships, leveraging digital platforms to reach global audiences, and collaborating with international artists. Nigerian artists can also participate in international art fairs and biennials to gain exposure and expand their reach. Through these strategies, Nigerian artists can promote their work and challenge existing narratives of Nigerian art. (Adeshina, 2019).

Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, contemporary Nigerian art is a dynamic and vibrant field that has been shaped by a range of factors, including local traditions, international influences, and globalization. While the impact of globalization on Nigerian art has been significant, it has also raised important questions about the relationship between Nigerian art and global art trends. By examining specific artists and artworks, as well as the role of institutions in shaping the production and

reception of contemporary Nigerian art, it is possible to gain a deeper understanding of the complex and multifaceted nature of this exciting and rapidly evolving field

Overall, globalization presents both opportunities and challenges for contemporary Nigerian art. To capitalize on the opportunities presented by globalization, Nigerian artists and art institutions must prioritize the promotion of contemporary Nigerian art on the global stage. To do so, Nigerian art institutions must receive adequate funding and resources to support contemporary Nigerian artists. Additionally, Nigerian artists must develop strong networks and partnerships, participate in international art fairs and biennials, and leverage digital platforms to promote their work. By doing so, Nigerian artists can challenge existing narratives of Nigerian art and promote the unique cultural identity of Nigeria on the global stage.

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