

# A GENERAL REVIEW OF 2006/2007 SESSION FINAL YEAR PAINTING EXHIBITION OF STUDENTS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF FINE ARTS, AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY, ZARIA

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## **Abstract:**

This paper focused on the exhibition done by the 400 level graduating painting specialising students of 2006/2007 session of Department of Fine Arts, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria and pointed out the advantages and disadvantages of exhibitions. The paper evaluated the exhibition, discussed things in a general review of some selected works on display. These were reviewed in relation to styles, technique, subject matter and it was recommended that institutions should assist in enhancing art through exhibitions and people acquiring the works (Paintings) will go a long way to uplift such exercises, by encouraging the artist.

## **Introduction**

Tracing the history of exhibition, Mbahi (2006) revealed that, "the origin of art exhibitions dates back to 1920s, when four craftsmen from the arts and crafts school attended the British empire exhibition in 1925". Today in art institution, like polytechnics, colleges of education, universities and even primary and secondary schools conduct exhibitions for their art students. Exhibition or Exposition is a display of works of Art to the general public. According to Brian and Thomas (1999),



*Works on exhibition stands. Source: Sani, M.M. 2007.*

Art exhibitions are traditionally the space in which art objects (in the most general sense) meet an audience. The exhibit is universally understood to be for some temporary period unless, as is rarely true, it is stated to be a permanent exhibition

*Exhibition can be done in several places such as in galleries, museums, private galleries, studios, libraries for educational purposes and they further elaborated on exhibition (ibid) that,*

*such expositions (exhibition) may present pictures, drawings, video, sound, installation, performance, interactive art or sculptures by individual artists, groups of artists or collections of a specific form of art. The art works maybe presented in museums, art halls, art clubs or private art galleries, or at some place the principal business of which is not the display or sale of art, such as a coffee house.*

In Nigeria, Babalola (2004) noted that "art galleries were initially few", but today apart from the universities that offer arts and exhibits their students in the institution studios, other areas started

allocating spaces for art shows like the art expo Las Vegas, an annual international exhibition. Now due to advancement, exhibitions are held in various places, some could be the traditional places exhibitions holds and different types with different purposes, as illustrated by Anati (1981),

There are different kinds of art exhibitions, for example retrospectives, which look back over the work of a single artist, individual expositions, group expositions or expositions on a specific theme or topic. Travelling exhibition is another category of art exhibitions"

Assessment exhibition like that of the final year student of Fine Arts Department, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria is another type of exposition, that it is a very important aspect for an artist who is about to be a professional. Foreign cultural centres, like Italian Cultural centre, Goethe Institut of Germany, British Council and Alliance Fran9oise, a French Cultural centre in Kaduna, according to Agada (2004) thus,

"organises and holds exhibitions at its gallery, works of young talented Nigerian artists especially from Zaria Art School, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. The centre has done a lot in the development, encouragement and sponsorship of artists who exhibit in the gallery.

Therefore, this paper discussed exhibition in general, its advantages and the disadvantages, it also reviewed the exposition in general, with some selected works done by exhibiting students, summary, conclusion and recommendations are inclusive.

### **Advantages and Disadvantages of Exhibition**

Exhibition is indeed a very important event in artistic circle, whether it is encouraging or not, no artist known today without exhibiting for people to see his or her creative works so that he can be recognised as an artist. Advantages of exhibition are overwhelming, whether in academic circle or not, therefore exhibition:

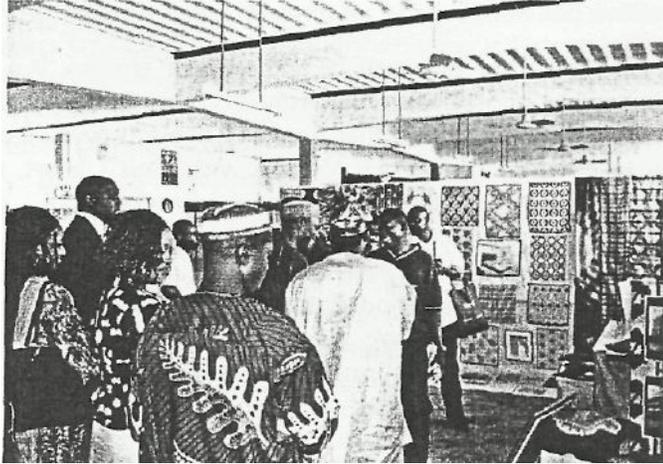
- a. helps in educating individuals and the general public,
- b. helps in exposing the students and trains the students to sell and exhibit their work of Arts.
- c. creates job opportunities for the artists.
- d. teaches the artists how to exhibit his or her works (Paintings) after graduation.
- e. in education circle, it helps the teacher to assess the ability of his students.
  
- f. And Agada (2004) slates that exhibition "encourage research works or activities on art in the country.

It is noted that sometimes exhibition is an avenue that mar artists and this problem could be as a results of:

- a. Lack of publicity or awareness.
- b. Not enough room for carrying or displaying art works and also the location.
- c. No sales when the purpose was to achieve that.
- d. Exposes student's negative ability in academic exercise.
- e. Bad comments on the works.

### **A Review of Exhibition in General**

Exhibition is traditionally a space in which art objects (in the most general sense) meet an audience. It is also a display of works of Arts to the general public and such exhibitions contains expositions which may present pictures, drawings, video, sound, installations, interactive performances, art or sculpture by individual artists, groups of artists or collections of a specific



**Visitors at an academic exhibition. Source: Sani, M.M. 2008**

Form of art. Exhibitions can be done in museums for example; National Gallery Abuja conduct exhibitions, art halls, art clubs or private art galleries etc. Types of exhibitions include solo expositions, group expositions on specific themes or topics. This exhibition is no other exhibition beyond the usual type, it is an academic exhibition that was assessed and was opened for the public to see the product of the graduating students. Best (1985) in Mbahi (2005) believed that "to assess and consider creativity we have to concentrate on the product (Art work)" before we can see, review, critique and award marks as it is tenable in the final exhibition. General review was discussed based on these points; i) styles, ii) techniques and iii) subject matter.

#### **i) Styles**

Looking at the exhibited works one will agree with Akudu (2001) in his general observation of Nigerian Artists that,

One other major influence on the work of art in Nigeria today is Western influence. Since the colonial period, artistically talented people have been attracted into the European educational system and they have directed their talents along European lines.

Contemporary Nigerian artists have been trained along the western orientation and many of them see the traditional art of their own society from the angle of European culture rather than from their own culture.

This greatly affects the young upcoming artists that European influences affect the style, for example, some Nigerian artists will like their brush strokes to look like Rembrandt or paint Mona Lisa in African skin. Nigerian may not have an independent style that will be considered individualistic. Anyway, several colours on the exhibited works suggested the Zaria art school style.

#### **ii) Techniques**

The techniques employed in their works are primarily vibrant brush strokes. As it was generally observed, each student struggled to see himself different from his class mates in terms of technique; this is as a result of the leverage given to them so that they can explore every technique with the hope to discover a unique way of expression. On like Nsukka with their Uli art, a Zaria graduate expresses himself in terms of technique that you can easily notice the freedom.

#### **iii) Subject Matter**

The Subject matter usually are inspired by the Zaria locality and students at their will paint scene (Subject matter) of their choice. Where assignments are given the ingenuity of the student comes in. For example, landscape painting done in abstract forms like that of Emmanuel Adeyemi (U04FA2007) Titled "African Motifs" on traditional African Walls oil on canvas, 80cm x 100cm, the

subject matter in the work is depicting Africa through its motifs and forms.

### **Graduation in Fine Arts of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria**

Graduation is the act of receiving or conferring an academic degree or the associated ceremony. One of the requirements for graduation if you are specializing in painting is the 'exhibition'. 400 level is the final undergraduate level in fine arts, that as a specializing student in the studio areas of painting and sculpture, at the end of its 400level's 2 semester, exhibition marks the final and students of that level look forward to it in order to graduate.

### **Review of 400 Level Specializing Painting Exhibition**

The graduating students of painting are eight (8) males and two (2) females exhibiting in the three (3) painting section studios of the Department of Fine Arts, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. They were assigned studios for their exposition as follows:

- 1) 400 Level Studio with four students exhibiting - three boys and one girl.
- 2) 300 Level Studio with four students exhibiting - three boys and one girl.
- 3) 200 Level Studio with two students exhibiting - two boys only.

Generally, the exhibition was a success but however, the works are expressed by the individuals, showed that every student has his/her own colour scheme, according to Akodu (2001) that "in any artwork, today the symbolic significance of colours is believed to be fundamental in any painting composition", presentations and above all style. Three student works were reviewed in a general term while two other paintings done by two different artists were included in this review because of the uniqueness of the works. The chosen paintings that were discussed are representations of the Zaria ideology. Though looking at the entire exhibitions one cannot run away from the fact that these graduating students are trained in the Department of Fine Arts, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria.

### **Reviewed of Some Selected Works**

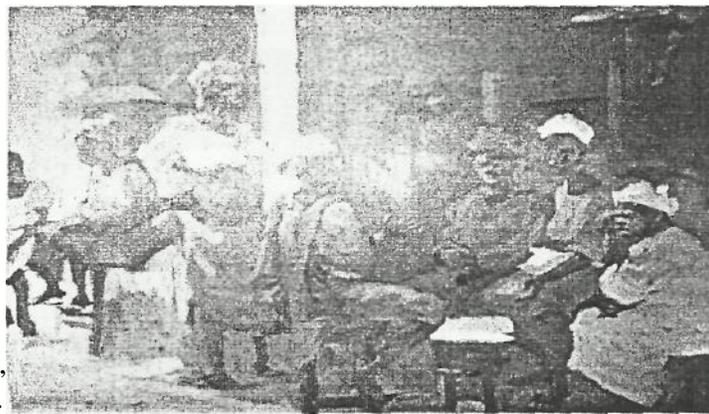
Welpton (1970) conceived an art work and noted that,  
Behind this art is the idea that painl itself, in all its varied possibilities of colour and texture, can be a work of art and need not depict anything and above all, need not be confined within a rectangle or a given flat surface.

Some of the works done by the specializing students (graduating) were selected and reviewed according to their styles, techniques of execution and surface on which the works are done. However; the artists will be discussed mildly or critiqued alongside his approach to painting with the look at what he has showed on his exhibition stand.

#### **I. Munza Danladi Samaila:**

In recent time, according to Akodu (2001) that "Newton (1931) was credited for laying a foundation for the physical understanding of colour phenomena when he split up sunlight with a prime into its monochromatic components" Munza's works enjoy this freedom, having done some of his works on an unusual surface, Welpton B (1970) (Ibid) "some painters, have a genius for a magical laying on of paint in 'bleeding' veils of radiant colour" of other surfaces.

In his work "The Meeting" 2008 oil on canvas suggested in warm colours are typical/reminiscent of the Zaria art school and the composition shows how women comes together



The Meeting" 2008,  
Source: Sani, M.M.

and decide on issues selfishly to them which perhaps are not progressive ideas but

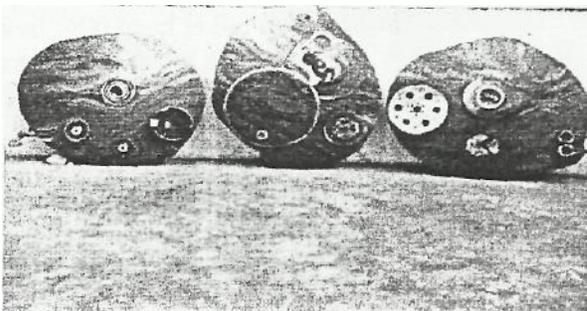
Retrogressive ones. His stand shows more colours that are synonymous to Zaria colours at a glance without a second thought. His compositions ranging from maternity which he called "Bele" to drunkenness called "Please". His polygon compositions were not left behind like "Zaria Arc", "The Model" which is an exam piece were treated with hard edged approach. The "Royalty" is a classic of an artist who understands colours and it is executed in polygon style.

One of his works that capture writers interest was "Operation Yaki"; it is also an exam piece on display. It shows in its colours, the mastery of draughtsmanship, it evident in the colours of the army and the police brutality dealing with people. The brush strokes are suggestive, of actions that are commonly seen with the law enforcement agents.



**Operation Yaki" 2008 Munza Dililimi oil on canvas, Source; Sani, M.M. 2007**

Munza has exhibited quality works and some of them were on experimental surfaces which could be viewed unusual surfaces like in his project he called "Globalization", This work is in three pieces put together as one composition. This project was done in mixed media which he used three slices of tree trunks as support and



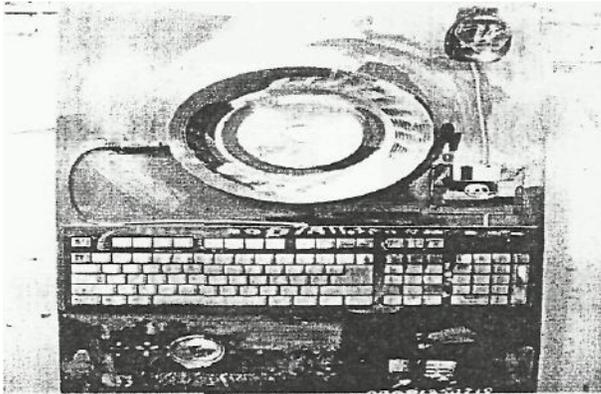
**Globalization " 2008 Munza Dihilimi oil on canvas, Source: Sani, M.M. 2007.**

Each one carried a combination of found objects such as engine parts, ring boilers, cooker boiler, including plastics to suggest the message of globalization.

## 2. Emmanuel **Gbemileke** Adelola:

An art work titled "Art, Communication, Technology" by Gbemileke (2007) a mixed media (47cm x 80cm) shows installation that represents the section of Art, Communication and Technology. In this work, electric circuit is present and a keyboard that represents Technology and the GSM phone represents communication, the cloth and colour representing Arts. Because of the style and

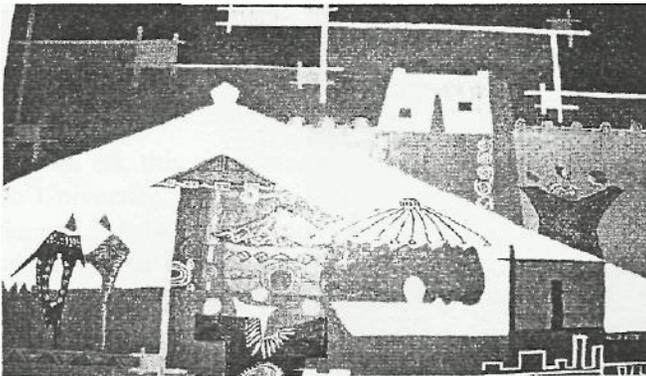
techniques executed by this artist made his work peculiar.



**Art, Communication, Technology.** Source: Sani, M.M. 2008.

### **3. Emmanuel Adeyemi:**

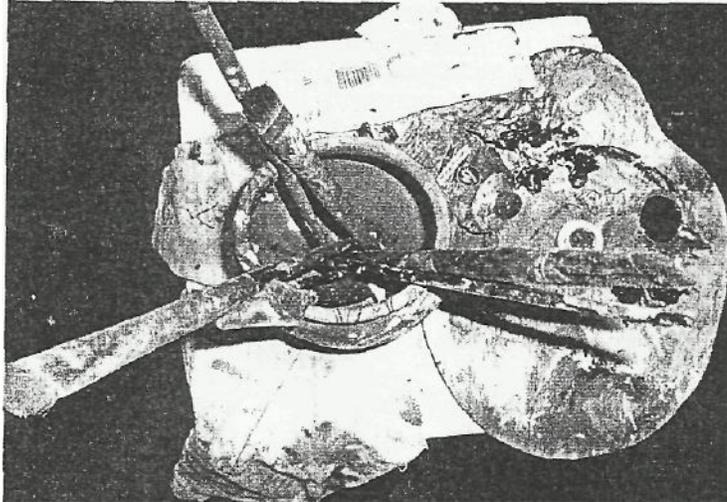
Adeyemi (2007) in his work titled "African Motifs on Architectural Design" oil on canvas (80cm x 100cm) shows the Northern and Western architectural designs of building and motifs represented on the cloth along side with the buildings. The colours used by the artist, are violet and purple which suggest royalty. Although purple and violet in large amounts are unsuitable for environmental settings. It is an Abstract work executed with pallet knife and brush to bring out the decorative motif



"African Motifs on Architectural Design" oil on canvas (80x100cm) Source: Sani, M.M. 2007

### **4. Miss Hope Achema:**

**Another selected work by Miss Achema Titled "After Work" is an installation work that shows a unique form of art. The technique used by this artist is unique more especially when you look at her techniques in other works she has done.**



After Work, 2008, an installation work, Hope Achema, Source: Sani, M.M. 2007

**This work include a long bar of rectangle made of wood containing a palette and oil colours on it, also a ceramic verse with brushes and palette knives, with a bag beside the bar on the floor. Looking at this work we can say the work is peculiar to the artists and the installation is**



Angel of Faith " (37x 42cm) oil on canva, Musa Abduls Source: Sani, M.M. 2007  
**suggestive of tiredness/hard work.**

##### **5. Abdul Musa:**

Another selected work is that of Musa Titled "Angel of Faith" (37cm x 42cm) oil on canvas, also showing a unique way of representation of the painting with mild colours and applying linear Islamic writings was suggestive of a mastery of Islamic traditions, as seen on the piece of the art work.



**DG National Gallery at Emmanuel Gbemiteke Adelola Exhibition Corner, Source: Sani, MM. 2007**

### **General Observations**

The exhibition was the products of the students and it was assessed as part of the requirements for the award of Bachelor of Arts, Fine Arts of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. The exhibition was generally seen as one of the Zaria Art School outings, as observed by Balarabe (2007) that "Zaria colours are uniquely shown in the students painting exhibition". Another observation was made by a Professor of Art History in the same department where the exhibition is taking place, Babalola (2007) that, "in the exhibition you can see Mu'azu colours and Zaria colours". It was noted that Zaria Art School in its student's exhibitions over the years has seen the individual uniqueness and the overriding and usual colour statements of the institution's arts; it shows how the students actually demonstrated the ability and mastery of the colours.

### **Summary**

In all, this exhibition held in the painting studios of the Department of Fine Arts, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, serves as a step for students going into the labour market to sell their art works and secure jobs in various areas. It will also help in training the students on how to showcase and exhibit their works in future. However, the exhibition serves for both teachers and lecturers as an assessment of the year's teaching and learning.

### **Conclusion**

Looking at this year's 400 level graduating student's exhibition, they have performed and done well individually. It was an exhibition of their best as it was assessed as part of their requirement to graduate. They indeed exhibit the tradition of the Zaria Art School in terms of their colours, styles, techniques, subject matter and freedom of expressions. To conclude therefore, Mbahi (1997) was emphatic about success in art, and he believed that,

Art calls for drive, energy, ability, personality, business acumen and personal sacrifice. The will to persevere and overcome all impediments is the most important character trait in the successful artist.

Indeed success of a graduating student must have undergone all these impediments and the teacher's assessment will be a total judgement of all the above requirements as Mbahi observed.

### **Recommendations**

It is therefore recommended that:

1. The institution should assist in enhancing art through commissions,
2. Authority should give recognitions to outstanding students, and expositions to exhibition.
3. Publicity should also be made to the general public and to individuals before exhibition takes

- place.
4. Since this type of exhibition is a requirement for graduation then it is important therefore, that the chief executive of the university (Vice Chancellor) be invited to attend the exhibition so that the vice chancellor can understand what it is to read fine arts and perhaps he may also wish to acquire some paintings for the university.
  5. It is also recommended as advised by Mbahi (1997) that, "Art teachers should develop and stimulate artistic interest in the primary school pupils", this will grow interest and the creativity of such pupils will develop strongly up to university level.

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[www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/graduation.](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/graduation)

### **Notes**

- 1) Babalola D. O. (2007) is a Professor of Art History in Art History Section of Department of Fine Arts, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.
- 2) Balarabe Hassan (2007) is a Graphic Artist and he lectures graphics in the Department of Industrial Design, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.