

Harmattan Workshop of Bruce Onobrakpeya Foundation: A Booster of Artistic Eloquence among Many Artists in Nigeria

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Abstract- Harmattan workshop holds annually at Agbarha-Otor in Delta state of Nigeria. It is a realization of a vision of a great artist-Bruce Onobrakpeya who established Bruce Onobrakpeya Foundation (BOF). He focuses his contributions towards the realization of African identity through his artistic medium. Artists and associates from Africa and outside participate in this annual art practice, discussions and exhibition shows. The innovative works of art produced and exhibited there are applauded by many. Onobrakpeya generates inspiration from different issues among which include; traditional issues, design discovery, motif manipulation, plastograph experiments, tryptilinen, plastocast, zerograph, installation and others. It is worthwhile to have an experience of the harmattan workshop in order to have a taste of African identity through art.

I. INTRODUCTION

This paper on the Harmattan workshop springs out from Bruce Onobrakpeya Foundation (BOF). It is a package of art endeavors which cut across training, production, interaction, experiment and search as well as residency in art programme. The serene location of the workshop adds beauty to the uniqueness of the programme. Agbarha-otor is the venue of the famous harmattan workshop. It situates in Delta State of Niger Delta Area in Southern Nigeria.

Harmattan workshop is a realization of a great art vision which has brought succor to Nigeria art and indeed African art with its identity. According to Akatakpo (1998:139), while discussing Bruce Onobrakpeya concluded by saying, "We shall then conclude by stressing his contributions towards the restitution of African identity through his artistic medium". The bolt step of this great vision to establish the noble art centre stems from the early years of his significant and buoyant art influence at Nigerian College of Arts, Science and Technology in the 1950s at Zaria.

The serene environment where the harmattan workshop situates leaves no participant untouched and uninfluenced by the consummating bliss of art influence and radiation. No doubt the participation cut across artists within and outside Nigeria. Many testimonies abound from numerous previous participants who have experienced the art endowment and provision of the Harmattan workshop programme. The firsthand impression of the participants at the centre leaves them to be excited about the great vision of Bruce Onobrakpeya Foundation and its realization in the present generation.

II. FEATURES OF THE HARMATTAN WORKSHOP PROGRAMME

All involvement by the participants during each harmattan workshop gear towards the realization of artists growth through interaction, experiment and search as the watch words of the centre. The fact in many aspect still remains that seeing is believing as exemplified in the outlook of the centre and its activities. The journey to the centre might not be quite interesting, but at reaching the centre and getting involved in the activities thrill the participants. The routine daily training and integration among the participants give everyone the sense of fulfillment. Participants adapt easily to Aybrah-Otor Harmattan programme, just like Onobrakpeya according to Dike and Oyelola (1998, 184) responded to the new Zaria environmental experiences.

According to Linus (2016:3); this implies that many ways and techniques have developed today with abundance new materials and innovations, all giving an innovative person a vast source of materials to choose from in making prints. One of such good example is the master printer, Bruce Onobrakpeya, the pioneer inventor of artist photography printing technique.

The researcher's experience while viewing innovative works of art in the "hall of great art" at Agbarha-Otor noticed tremendous insight into art that could change the world. In his observation "innovative design and art can give unlimited direction to the global adventurous movement". It is in the same vein that Onobrakpeya (1995:195) states, "the revolutionary art movement by the zariantists was to examine how their study of academic art could be related to their society which was emerging from the transitional to modern"

Really, the concept of innovation and invention in art practice deserves a big boost. Onobrakpeya generating inspiration from traditional issues, motifs, design discovery, motif manipulation for design ideas, photograph experiments, painting experiment, tryptilinen painting, acrylic painting, low and relief sculpture, plastocast relief montage, plastocast and metal foil, xerograph, installation, Atasa and other versions of his workers. His innovative works of art which are applauded within Nigeria and outside are outstanding modern Nigerian art.

Prospects of Harmattan Workshop

Experiential attestation to the great and positive impact of the harmattan workshop training on the participants are overwhelming. Participation in the programme cuts across different nations. The scenery and the content of the programme

have met international taste in view of the testimonies by the participants including the researcher. The writers visits the artcentres and workshops in the United Kingdom and the United States of America in 2013 and 2014 respectively give the privilege to compare notes in respect to art workshops and practice. The harmattan workshop at Agbarha – Otor is significant and can favourably compete with other international workshops. It is a good and unique art package which is capable of accommodating different artists from different backgrounds. The art process, materials, techniques, innovations and envisaged end-products are worth experiencing. It encourages adaptability to the culture and the society with a view engendering newness of ideas and creative and products.

The exhibition arena displays works of ingenuity. Installation arts and the displays are captivating. These developments have brought common understandings in the modes of delivering exhibitions in both public and private sectors. Exhibition which is known as the collection of items for display, may be permanent displays or temporary displays, although exhibitions are mostly temporary and usually scheduled to open and close on specific dates. The harmattan workshop engages in the permanent exhibition but also has the capacity for temporary exhibition.

Frank (2013), discusses on the exhibition and its involvement, and notes that some exhibitions are shown in just one venue, while some are shown in multiple locations and are known as online exhibition. He sees exhibition as ranging from an extraordinary large event such as a world fair exposition to smaller artist solo show on a display of one item. The curators select the items in an exhibition, the writer and editors write the text, labels and accompanying printed works such as catalogs and books. Architects, exhibition designers, graphic designers and other designers are required to shape the exhibition space and give form to the editorial content. Indeed, organizing and holding exhibitions require effective event planning, logistic and proper management. The standard of exhibition at harmattan workshop, Agborha-otor is encouraging, although still requires more sophisticated approach.

Today, exhibition organization has increasingly accepted a digital global community approach to maintain their relevance to a generation of potential creative customers, corporations and institutions within and far.

The Agbarha-Otorart centre has accommodated members of the immediate communities in Art and craft training. The oil corporations have also sponsored some people to be trained in relevant skills available at the centre in an attempt to alleviate poverty and unemployment problem particularly in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. The prospects of the centre cannot be overstretched, since it can empower the youths and adults to develop creative skills. It can take art residency for all the year round to sharpen innovative and creative minds for more unique items and creation of end products.

The retiring civil servants can get further trained in relevant and available skills in order to continue as well as sustain their productive endeavours.

The centre is well disposed to undertake entrepreneurial programme to salvage the deepening austerity in the country. Peters (2015:52) observes:

One tempting entrepreneurial area in the arts that is yet to be explored in Nigeria is the ceramics/ ceramic sculpture. It is interesting to know that the basic materials required to display this innovational potential is found all round. Different types of clays have been delivered from different parts of Nigeria from desert Sokoto area to Riverine Delta area and from Rocky Jos to costal Badagery.

It is possible to make the centre a household name in entrepreneurial practice with the available facilities at the workshop. Ceramics, sculpture, textiles innovative painting graphics and printing have entrepreneurship potentials to take a portion of the nation's economic endeavours to a higher level and sustenance in this twenty-first century.

III. CONCLUSION / RECOMMENDATION

The great determination to adopt to new experiences with curiosity is the barebones of Harmattan workshop at Agbarha-Otor. This is the irony of a real “change paradigm” which the centre is envisaged to experience with the advent of adapting entrepreneurship programme, and also allowing it to become an art tourist location. The young and the old would be given the long desired opportunity to be involved in the activities of the centre when such doors are opened. This may not necessarily be for business sake only but also for self fulfillment. This assertion is exemplified in the experience of Obobrakpeyaduring his exhibition in caitiff as observed by Dike and Oyelola (1998:186):

In Cardiff in an exhibition of contemporary African Art organized by Dennis Duerden, which as part of the commonwealth Festival of works by Bruce Onobrapeya attracted the attention of the Duke of Edinburgh who brought some of his prints. Then he made a limited number of prints each design and converted the blocks into unique, pleasantly bronze reliefs, a few of which were exhibited at the exhibition centre, Marina from 18th to 28th April, 1966.

The parlance of “change” is hovering in the air in Nigeria and could also select Agbarha –Otorcentre as one of the settling locations of creative innovations and entrepreneurship programme are given change to accommodate more categories of people. The spirit that is moving things in the centre is the right one and has come at the right time to give succor to this generation and generation yet unborn. It is referred to in this study as the “right sprit of innovative art”

Therefore, the uncounted labours of our hero artist Bruce Onobrakpeyein art over the years have indeed seen the light of this day and the light of tomorrow.



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Bruce Onobrakpeya in Exhibition Hall

COURTESY: GOOGLE.COM(2016)



Bruce Onobrakpeya

COURTESY: GOOGLE.COM(2016)



Exhibition of Art works at Agbarha-OtorCentre

COURTESY: GOOGLE.COM(2016)