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WEYA COMMUNITY ART AND ITS RELEVANCE TO ART EDUCATION IN ZIMBABWE: A POST-COLONIAL PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

The last century was marked by the availability to African artists of unprecedented range of media and patrons. This case study sought to investigate the philosophy, media, themes, and styles, of Weya art and its relevance to Art Education in Zimbabwe. Data was collected and analysed qualitatively. The study had a sample of 30 female artists. Unstructured interviews were used to gather data from artists trained by Noy. Semi-structured interviews were used to gather data from 2nd generation artists (artists trained after Noy's departure). Non-participant observations were done on the methods and techniques of Weya artists. Weya art is a result of post-colonial approaches. Post-colonial theory deals with cultural identities of the colonized people, critically looking at their dilemmas that relates to attempts at developing national identities after the collapse of colonial rule. Hence Weya women chose to produce appliqué wall-hanging in pictorial compositions showing the women's experience as Africans in Africa. "The postcolonial theory is also about the colonized and formerly colonized announcing their presence and identity as well as reclaiming their past that was lost and distorted because of being othered by colonialism" (Mapara 2009,141). Themes of Weya art range from village scenes to changing roles of women. Recommendations about the relevance of Weya art to Art Education in Zimbabwe are made in light of findings from the study.

Background to the study

INTRODUCTION

The study examined the practices and methods of Weya artists. Weya Community is in Rusape East district, Manicaland Province. Weya art is unique in that it does not fit into the pattern of many earlier workshops throughout Africa e.g. the brass guilds in Benin, Mbiri and Oshogo Nigeria, Polly Street, Johannesburg South Africa and Atelier de Hangar in Democratic Republic of Congo. Its uniqueness rests on its genesis. The workshop was set up and co-ordinated by a cultural outsider Ilse Noy a German expatriate in 1987. The centre was initially set up as Weya Community Training Centre at Mukute Farm in Chendambuya area, where emphasis was on providing the community with vocational skills; carpentry, metal

work building for men and dressmaking for women. The dressmaking project failed for women because of its capital intensity. Their rural neighbours were also too poor to buy the dresses the women made (Noy, 1992). The aim of the workshop was to provide courses to the community and quickly earn them money to supplement subsistence farming. This aim was never realized, early in 1987 the training centre replaced the unsuccessful sewing machines with hand-sewing.

Noy and Agnes Shapeta a local dressmaking instructor at Weya Community Training Centre started teaching women how to make narrative compositions using various techniques. In her own words Ilse Noy says, “The women asked for a course that would not only save costs but also earn them money” (Noy, 199:1) Noy looked for something African that would sell in the Western market hence the introduction of appliqué. As a result most of Weya art themes are based on the women’s rural life, mythology, cosmology, and daily routine village parochialism.

EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA

The Makonde Sculpture (Mozambique)

“The Makonde sculptors of Mozambique and Tanzania raise awkward questions for Western Museums regarding the entangled issue of commodification”. (Kasfir, 1999; 109). The other producers of art are the Kamba whose art is more commercial. It is on the commercial side of the art/commodity division of Western classification, because it is marketed through cooperatives and is geared towards curio markets at home and abroad. The Makonde sculpture has a long history with pre-colonial examples in many ethnology collections, which predates its entry into the export market.

According to Vogel (1994; 40-10). “The Makonde of Mozambique were subject to extensive secularization during the colonial period, nationalist African politics have made many of them refugees, often in the Tanzania capital Dares Salaam”. They have started making carvings for the tourist market. The youth can no longer retire to initiation camps in the bush. Initiation is done in suburban houses where Mapiko mask dances occur as they did before. Mapiko mask is “produced by sculptors in small family groups, who regard themselves as having a deep cultural connection to their works... Since 1930s, most of them have resisted commercial opportunities to produce curios according to specifications from patrons in the manner of Kamba carvers in Kenya”. (Kasfir, 1999: 109). The Makonde mask carvers are somehow cultural conservatists. They hold fast to Makonde marks of identity, they continue to file their teeth; they wear the upper lip plug and display elaborate facial scarifications.

However, despite cultural conservatism their art or sculpture has expanded the repertoire of local characters. Their masks depictions "...include not only Makonde personages but Indians, Arabs, Portuguese and guerilla fighters". (Vogel, 1994: 42) The earliest known Makonde masks are morphologically similar to those used today. The masks still consist of a whole head and neck worn on top of a dancer's head.

Contemporary Makonde sculpture

"Contemporary sculpture is dominated by forms that are radical departures from their Pre-colonial art". (Kasfir, 1999: 109-11) The new genre and style is called *nmandenga* in the Kinakonde language better known in Kiswahili as *jinnji* (satan). It began appearing in Tanzania in 1959. The first artist to produce this was Samaki Likonkoa. Unlike the angular realism that had characterized the much of the pre-colonial Makonde figures sculpture "...the new sculpture was serious anti-naturalistic and frequently employed erotic and social caricature". (Kasfir, 1999: 111) Through seemingly a new sculpture genre and to a large extent a new style, the iconography of *nmandenga* was drawn from Makonde oral traditions concerning nature spirits and from a masquerade of the same name. It is important to note that no Makonde person would purchase or use such figures. They were intended as art-market commodities. The marketing success of the Makonde sculpture is largely attributed to Mohammed Peera, who like Tom Blomefield in Rhodesia, encouraged carvers to find their own direction. Peera was a knowledgeable curio and gemstone dealer in Dares Salaam. As a result the Makonde have bifurcated their art production. Makonde *mapico* initiations masks continue to be made and used by the Makonde themselves while new genre, which is the bulk of their production, are made by the same group for a complete different audience. Kasfir, says that Makonde sculpture does not fit into either an 'art' or a 'commodity' categories of Western aesthetics. "Some European museums especially in Germany and France have admitted contemporary Makonde Sculpture into the 'priveleged shere of art'" (Kasfir, 1999: 110). This just shows how difficult it is to try and use Western standards on anything African. Furthermore in 1989 a Makonde sculptor John Fundi was included in the high-profile *magiciens de la Terre* exhibition in Paris.

In 1991 there was the New York African Explores show. "Makonde art was effectively divided into two irreconcilable entities-initiation masks from Western collections were featured as fine examples of 'traditional' art. While contemporary Makonde genres were omitted from the exhibition" (Kasfir, 1999: 110). This is an indication of the West's large appetite for tribal art which they think is 'unspoiled' by social intercourse and European

influence. ‘..Only mentioned dismissively in the catalogue as fantastically misshapen which response to Western buyers...’ Kasfir argues that in this kind of judgement Makonde sculpture is not treated as the work of individual artists, some who are master sculptors worthy our attention. It is further argued that the art has been rejected because it is made for non-Makonde patrons. There is wrong assumption that the art has no connection with culture from which it springs. Thus Makonde art commodity status costs it into a limbo from which it is difficult to escape. In myriad ways Makonde art has been subjected to continual reinvention by both its supporters and its makers. Today in Nairobi gallery owner believes that the hidden meaning of Makonde art is only revealed by allowing it to cast its own shadow. He exhibits the sculpture using special lighting. Some dealers go on to authenticate these sculptures by creating narratives around each piece, which are sold as texts along with the sculpture. Makonde sculpture stands outside the stylistic range of pre and early colonial African sculpture. It runs counter to established tastes among collectors of colonial African sculpture. These means collectors of contemporary Makonde sculpture are not collectors of classic genre. The Makonde involved a partnership between kin-based carving workshops and local trader dealers who market their work beyond the region. The works are marketed in elite urban areas or abroad.

Informal training of African artists in Mozambique (workshop)

“Informal school implies art workshops of varying scope and duration aimed at producing artists with minimum fuss and exposure”. (Aschaffenburg, 1998: 211). The distinct characteristic of workshops as already mentioned is that they are irregular, very flexible in terms of preadmission qualifications and teaching methods. They are operated on ad-hoc basis. This is the case with the informal school held in Mozambique in 1960.

Pancho Guedes a Portuguese architect turned his house in Lourenco Marques (Maputo) into a meeting place for young artists who showed interest in visual art. Ulli Beier (1968: 62). Guedes holds no formal classes but he encourages, criticizes, buys work and at times provides monthly allowances that enables artists to work full-time without financial worries”. Guedes assumes the role of a father and again his method of teaching is the same as that of Romain –Desfosses of Le Hangar in Congo. “This kind of teaching embraces the Jungian notion of collective unconscious in which artists retained deeply ingrained archetypal ideas of form, imprinted as cultural memory”. (Kasfir, 1999: 51).

Such ideas were also very dominant in the USA in the 1950s. In New York avant-garde tribal artist was seen as someone living in a familiar relationship with the mythic past, only half touched by the colonial experience here in Africa.

The most outstanding artist from the Maputo experiment was Valente Malangatana, whose painting is of twisted emotionally charged figures who appear in acid hues of yellow, green, orange, blue and blood red. His works include the “Last judgment”, (1961). “Visit to the Dentist”, (1981). The Portuguese authorities once imprisoned him for his revolutionary idea. Malangatana has been lately engaged in teaching young artists to relate their art to their culture. This is in line with Susan Vogel’s (1994: 178) assertion, “From the beginning of the century some artists asserted their right ...to use any media within their command, others wanted to search for an inner Africanness that they consider innate”. Nearly African artists respond to the widely known philosophy of “negritude”, which has exerted a great influence on nearly all contemporary African artists directly or indirectly. The Maputo workshop impressed Ulli Beier who invited Guedes to Ibadan Nigeria where the first workshop of Mbari was held in 1961.

Tinga-Tinga: The art of East Africa (Tanzania)

Origins

This art is so common in East Africa “whether you are in Nairobi or Mombasa, Zanzibar, or Arusha, Lamu or Tanga, there are hundreds of Tinga artists”. (Williams, 2005: 30). It is an art form that is not traditional. It is part and parcel of contemporary African culture. Its provenance can be one artist - Edward Saidi Tingatinga. He was born in 1932 in a small village Nakapanya in Southern Tanzania close to Mozambiquan border. Tingatinga became a street vendor after he lost his job as a gardener. Each day he visited the fruit and vegetable market to buy produce and cycle to Oyster Bay district to sell door-to-door. It is said during this time he tried his hands on many things like embroidering household linen, like tablecloth and bed sheets. He also wove baskets and mats to earn a living.

It is said during this time he began offering his skills as a painter, decorating houses and producing wall paintings. From this activity, he was able to collect tins and scraps of hardboard and in his spare time began to paint animals and other scenes for his own amusement (William, 2005).

In 1970, Tinga-Tinga got married and had to find another source of income. He got employed at Mulimbili Medical Clinic as a porter. His wife took to selling fruit and vegetables as well

as his crafts and paintings at Oyster Bay shopping centre. A tourist bought one of his works and began to promote it. “His paintings were soon in high demand”.

Themes of Tinga-Tinga art

“Tinga-Tinga art is particularly tourist art found throughout East Africa”. (Williams, 2005:33). It has been popularized by the demand for it among tourists. Tinga –Tinga art themes range from colourful wildlife to ice-capped mountains full of dreamy like flora.

Theoretical framework

Media, methods, ideas about African Art

“Artists are poets (poiein : to make) in the literal sense of the Greek word .They are ‘makers’ in the sense that any artwork is the transformation of a medium into artistic form (Vansina,1984:56).Creative concept coupled with skillful manipulation of medium is necessary if a work of art is to be affine one. In Africa, South of the Sahara transformation of the raw material into similar medium is something attributed to spirits of the invisible world. Making is not prosaic in traditional Africa as Vogel (1994:10, 14) point out:

African art had along appreciation of innovation, and its willingness to adopt new ideas and forms. Throughout history and under different circumstances ranging from war, slavery, climatic upheaval to colonialism. There is creation of entirely new art forms that respond to the social, cultural situations peculiar to Africa.

Vogel (1994) notes that there is remarkable continuity in African artistic vision. African artist from the beginning to the present manifest the same idea about the humane purpose of art. Its functional content therefore is of primary importance to both critics and audience who expect that the work of art should have a readable message or story , that it “should instruct ,inform, ridicule bad behavior....” (Kasfir, 1999:16).In the African or ‘ubuntu’ tradition. Weya art enables another angle from which to examine the construction of narratives and their role in the construction of social realities including practices, traditions, strategies and economies which translate into signs of cultural resilience in the sense that the formerly colonized are announcing their presence and identity.

The Workshop tradition in the pre-colonial period

In African art history the institution where works of art were produced was the workshop. Since time immemorial “....an artist working alone constituted a workshop .It is there that youngsters learnt the craft as apprentices”. (Vansina, 1994:52).Vansina notes that large portions of production process took place there. Artists were artisans and to the public their skills or specialization was what made them different from other people. Just as in all

pre-industrial societies most craftsmen/ artists put their hands to many different tasks. In Africa South of the Sahara, woodcarving or weaving was known to most men while women did pottery and wall decorations. Division of labour between sexes left masculine jobs like carving, metalwork and building to men. Workshops were large or small depending the technique being taught. The commercial value of production should never be forgotten because workshops had production costs and these had to be met (Willett, 1987). The same can be said of most informal and formal workshops that were set up in Africa by white patron-cum-brokers in the colonial period like McEwen and Romain- Deffoisses, Tom Blomfield to name but just a few.

Purpose of the colonial workshops and the underpinning philosophies

In the paradigm of colonialism the purpose of workshops practical level was to provide would be participants with practical skills. However, philosophically “the workshop purpose was to release the creative energies which were thought to lie deep within the African participants. This belief has its historical and intellectual origins in Rousseauian ideas of integrated culture which is destroyed by the civilizing process...” (Kasfir, 1999:50-1). The nature of traditional society are idealized as pure sources of artistic inspiration, at the same time devaluating other forms of cultural expression, which arose out of colonial conquest of Africa. In this case colonialism was a kind of bondage from which workshop artists were expected to break free. Unfortunately, the type of reflective consciousness required to set this alternative culture of resistance in motion must come from the colonizing culture. Workshop culture and practice thus resides within the struggles of identity and domination central to the nature and content of the colonial and post-colonial subject.

Workshops elsewhere in Africa showed a lot of the patron –cum-broker’s influence. In Belgian Congo now (Democratic Republic of Congo DRC). Romain –Defoisses was a romantic, celebrating his pupils’ creativity as springing from pure and fresh sources as opposed to what he called “Western degeneracy” background which worshipped nature. The painters he trained are Pili Pili Molongoy, Mwenze, Bella and Kabala developed individual styles based on a finely detailed representation of flora and fauna on a flat pictorial surface. This style has innocuous dream-like appeal, which makes it easily acceptable to a European audience, “a Douanier Rousseau in Central Africa...” (Kasfir, 1999:55). In other words there was a great influence on the students ‘paintings exerted by the mentor, who when asked would profess that students’ work is neither influenced by them (mentors) or European art.

Post-colonial Theory

The postcolonial theory is about the colonized and formerly colonised, announcing their presence and identity as well as reclaiming their past that was lost or distorted because of being othered by colonialism. The wikipedia also supports that post-colonialism is not just literary theory that deals with the literature produced in countries that were former colonies of countries such as Britain, France, Portugal and Spain. It deals with the cultural identities of the colonized peoples, focusing largely on their dilemmas that relate to attempts at developing national identities after the demise of colonial rule. It also deals with the way in which writers articulate and celebrate that identity. As a theory, it also anchored on binary oppositions where white is presented as superior while black and oriental are inferior. In all representations, in both the arts and sciences, the West is always presented as the standard, while non-Europeans are inferior and have to have their sensibilities and values cultivated so that they become like those of the Europeans, or at least approximate them.

Postcolonial theory has among its major proponents Franz Fanon and Edward Said. In his book *Black Skin, White Mask*, Fanon suggests that colonialism, because of its explicit promotion of white racial superiority over non-white colonial peoples, has created sense of division and alienation in the self-identity of the colonized. He argues that under colonialism, the history, language, culture, customs as well as belief systems of the white colonizer are to be considered as universal and normative as well as superior to the knowledge systems of the colonized that are treated as the inferior other. Mapara (2009) argues that the proliferation and perpetuation of this myth leads to a strong sense of inferiority in most of the colonized such that they adopt almost all the colonizer's identity as their own. He asserts that they end up using the colonizer's language, culture and customs.

Post-colonial African philosophies of Art

Negritude (Ecole de Dakar)

The surge of nationalism crested in 1960s, when many black African states became independent. There was an overt expectation that art would express and to a large extent aid the creation of a new Africa. Political freedom must clothe itself with colours of culture. The artist must help society to be less confused and more peaceful. In modern Africa art is supposed to play a political, social, and moral role. Since independence in Senegal, the state has defined the new African culture as "negritude". Vogel (1998:185) says "...negritude, holds that African artists should reject outside influences and materials. They should draw inspiration from their inner Africanness". According to Ebong (1998:191) "...the case of

Senegal where the post-colonial state tried to develop a culture that incorporates the modern and the traditional, and the poetic, the flag and the masks.” Vogel (1994:185) says “...negritude, holds that Africa artists should reject outside influences and materials. They should draw inspiration from their inner Africanness”. Negritude became the national discourse that decided which groups in art were to be aided by the state. President Senghor (1960- 1980) was the architect of the international philosophy of negritude. Senghor played several roles: as patron, poet, cultural promoter, politician and state president. Senghor emphasized that “...the functional aspect of the arts should be promoting a kind of development aesthetics that could support the economic and social agenda.” (Vogel, 1994: 184). Senghor liked to link his concept of “negritude” to modern art.

Two contrasting views of art emerged in Senghor’s writing, “...he believed that artists should shape an identity faithful to African ancestral traditions and to traditional art” (Ebong,1991:200).This idea is embraced almost in all post-colonial art in Africa. In Nigeria the ideology of art was a commitment to a national cultural identity while embracing the ideology of negritude. Hence, most African artists sought to limit their themes and materials to those they considered “African”. They literally returned to traditional materials and techniques which they elaborated in contemporary styles. That is to say post-colonial African artists would uphold the nation, rather than tribal or regional references in their art. Leading Nigerian artists Bruce Onobrakpeya and Uche Okeke clearly show this post –colonial Nigeria cultural ideology when they stress that, “Our new society calls for a synthesis of old and new of functional art and art for its own sake” (Kasfir,1999:181).This is the direction of contemporary African art. Weya art therefore conceptualizes both tribal and national references. Tribal in that they depict life within their village belief system and national in that they depict socio-cultural themes of Zimbabwe.

Therefore an analysis of the above discourse emphasises that post-colonial is a response by the formerly colonized to their being treated as the inferior other. Mapara (2009:143) rightly asserts that, “what is also clear about this theory is that it evolves around identity and representation”. It is about the formerly colonized reclaiming their dignity and humanity that they have robbed by colonial is. It is the world that they are not the other or significant other, but equals to the former colonizers, they are asserting their visibility. Hence the inception of Weya art after the Zimbabwean independence

Research Questions

The study was therefore guided by the following research questions:

- i. What is the theoretical identity of Weya art?
- ii. What are the organizational philosophies and nature of its pedagogy?
- iii. How successful was Weya as an educational establishment?
- iv. What are the implications of Weya art for education in Zimbabwe?

METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

This section of methodology will highlight the methods and techniques that were used to realize the objectives. Research methodology means, “the way we proceed to solve problems”. (Leedy, 1993: 8). In this study the qualitative approach was used.

RESEARCH DESIGN

A qualitative approach to the study is preferred due to its flexibility and the fact that it allows “....A systematic collection of data by penetrating a society that is otherwise ‘closed’ or inaccessible (Nherera, et al 1999: 41). “It also allows one ...to develop an understanding of individuals and events in their natural state, taking into account the relevant context”. (Borg and Gall, 1993: 194) This is true when one takes into account the research topic: “The Art Artists of Weya Community and Implications for Art Education in Zimbabwe. A case study” Here the researcher is trying to understand phenomenological reality of individuals, perceptions, inner experience and the world around. This is based on the belief that “events must be studied in natural settings ...Field based events can not be understood unless one understands how they are perceived and interpreted by the people who participated in them”. (Wilson, 1977 cited in Tuckman, 1988: 389). Now, because the researcher is going to be focused on one particular group it is going to be a case study. “A case study is a detailed examination of one setting or a single depository of documents, or a particular event”. (Bogddan and Biklen, 1992: 587). When one carries out a case study, one can observe events as they happen in their natural settings, h/she can also interview participants. Case studies involve “multiple data sources...it does not claim any particular (techniques) for data collection or analysis .”. (Meriam, 1988: 10). The above assertion implies that the researcher is free to use any data collection techniques. In this particular study the researcher used these data collection techniques: unstructured interviews using tape-recorders, semi-structured interviews using interview schedules, observations and camera.

STUDY SETTING AND RATIONALE FOR SELECTION

Weya Art Community is in Makoni North District Manical and Province about 170 kilometres South East of Harare. It was chosen because of a number of reasons:

- i) Weya Art Community is a paradigmatic workshop by a cultural outsider.
- ii) It was set up because women wanted a course that was income generating, as such the founder and instructor Ilse Noy introduced a borrowed idea from outside the repertory knowledge of the women, appliqué –which is African but from Abomey in Benin.
- iii) Weya art was chosen because it is mainly women art, which is the strength of its uniqueness.
- iv) Weya art community is the biggest and only centre where appliqué, batik, sadza and board painting is done.

Population and sample

Sample

A sample of 30 artists was used in the study. Purposively sampling was used, “in this method the researchers select particular subjects to include because they are believed to facilitate the expansion of the developing theory that is sampling to ensure that the characteristics of the subjects in your study appear in the total population”. (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992: 71-72).

Systematic sampling was used because there are more artists who were trained by the senior artists after the departure of Ilse Noy, from each of the seven groups, which form the Weya Art Community. Therefore systematic sampling is “similar to simple random sampling the only difference is that all individuals in the defined population are on a list such as membership directory...” (Borg and Gall, 1993; 97). This is easier when there is a list of the population like in the Weya Art Community case.

Instrumentation

In this study the instruments used were unstructured interviews using a tape recorder, semi-structured interviews using interview schedules non- observation and a camera.

Data collection procedure

Data was collected over a period of time. The following techniques were used:

- i) Unstructured interviews were the first data gathering technique. Proceedings were recorded using a tape recorder. This type of interview was for the senior artists only. Those who were trained by Ilse Noy during the years 1987 to 1990.

- ii) Semi-structured interviews on interview schedules were conducted. These were for artists who trained after the departure of Ilse Noy. These artists joined Weya Art Community after its successful exhibitions, as such these artists are many so to deal these big numbers, the researcher adopted semi-structured interviews.
- iii) On-site observations were carried over a period of time. The researcher observed each group's i.e. painting, appliqué, batik methods and techniques.

Data presentation and analysis

Data was presented and analysed in thematic pattern. It was mainly descriptive in nature since it was a case study which focused on phenomenologies. There were about 120 artists at Weya at the time of the analysis. A sample of 30 artists was used. Senior artists constituted 40% of the sample while 2nd generation artists (those who after Noy's departure) constituted 60% of the sample. There are more 2nd generation artists which means there is continuity and enthusiasm for art.

Unstructured interviews with the senior artists were ideal because they could solicit more information from the interviewee. All artists are female. It was found from the interviews that artists joined Weya Workshop because they saw it as a source of income. Most were poverty-stricken prior to joining Weya Community Art including a number of women who were also widowed.

Interview schedules were also used to solicit information from 2nd generation artists who were trained by senior artists after the departure of Noy (post Noy). Second generation artists constituted the majority of the artists. Of these 36.9% of the artists interviewed specialized in appliqué, while 23.1% specialize in board painting, appliqué is the most popular area of specialization among women because of their natural sewing skills.

Semiotic analysis of Weya art

It was found from the analysis that Weya artists produce their art in these four categories: applique, embroidery, painting and sadza batik. All Weya art is in form of pictorial composition. The composition tells part of the story in squares. Weya artists use a social documentary approach depicting village life, sex, prostitution, witchcraft, drunkenness and anything which pictorial narrative could be constructed. Many of the topics done by Weya women are openly transgressive-topics which women would not speak of in the presence of men.

There is less compositional sophistication and less realistic modeling of figures, due to limitations of cloth applique, training in manipulative skills and partly due to less frequent exposure of rural people to pictorial icons and billboards. This means Weya art conforms

closely to the Western notion of 'folk art'. Folk art refers to subjects made in traditional fashion by craftsman without formal art training. The applique technique does not allow the use of text and as a result the story itself is not inscribed into the picture. To explain the often long complex narratives to customers the text is written separately on pieces of school notebook paper and sold with the picture. The texts are as important as the pictures themselves because they narrate what is happening in the painting.

Themes range from village life scenes, love and marriage. African marriage is theme among post Noy artists, elopement (kutizira mukumbo), divorce, love portion (mupfuhwira) used by wives to tame their wayward husbands and equal rights.

Painting

At Weya painting was introduced to diversify the didactics techniques used by the workshop. It was found out that all board painters are female Board painters constitute 23.1% of the sample. Painters use plywood board, water based paint, smooth brushes ,pencils for sketching on the board clear varnish turpentine and an exercise book to write a brief description of the painting Painting themes range from traditional life, beer brewed for rainmaking (chipwa), cleansing ceremony for the deceased spirit (chenura), polygamy-a serious social problem (barika) The researcher wanted to find out the reaction of the artists. 85% of the female artists said that they would leave the husband if he marries a second wife. The reason for deserting the husband was that polygamy is seen as burdensome .Equal rights and folk tales (ngano) are equally popular themes with painters.

Embroidery

Embroidery employs one technique of decorative sewing done on a single piece of drill measuring 60cm x60 cm, 80 cm x 80cm, or 90 cm x 90

The most popular theme in embroidered work is hair-style. In the Weya art context and around the Weya Community 'hair-style' is a sign of modernity .A break away from the past where women used to wear head scarfs and doeks. Most embroiderers use different hair-styles, ranging from permed braids and locks to tints. Folk tales (ngano) is another popular theme with embroiderers. Wild animals are done in unnatural colours, for example a blue jackal. Rural life and traditional dance are also very popular themes. All these themes are used because they are marketable overseas where the art is sold. This shows the influence of globalization in which the world is seen as one village with no cultural, social and economical boundaries.

Batik (sadza painting)

It was found in the study that due to persistent droughts and severe maize shortages in recent years .Weya women artists have changed their technical procedure for batik . Two new techniques are now in use instead of the sadza. They are the dry soap resist and straight sketching on the fabric.

Visual content and themes of Weya art`

It has been observed that Weya art has less compositional and less realistic modeling of figures. It employs a social documentary approach .Weya art themes are purely African, people are trying to redefine themselves as a nation . As a result their themes are wide-ranging from village life, love portion (mupfuhwira), diviner (n'anga), equal rights to changing roles of women.

Weya art like the urban artists of Congo and Nigeria are not concerned with the issue of style or technique. They are concerned with communicating their message as directly as possible. Weya is also post-colonial in that it does not mimic any Western form of art. It is about the formerly colonized announcing their presence, identity and reclaiming their past that was distorted by colonialism.

Discussion

Weya artists reflected that art has enabled them to fend for their families to them art is a form of employment which generate money for their livelihood. Art is also a way of expressing deep emotions and observations that would not be said in front of men e.g. Nelisa Mugadza's 'Beer Drinking', where a drunken man is fondling and kissing a woman just behind a hut. There is another woman urinating just close to those making love in the composition. The artists generally agree that art has ushered a general freedom of expression and thought. The artists' perception of is that, society at large has been too oppressive to women. Weya art to a large extent shows that women need to be socially and economically free. This is well reflected themes like; 'Equal rights,' 'Plight of an unmarried woman,' 'Death of an unmarried woman', 'Equal right' etc. All these themes show how harsh society has been to women. The artists are of the opinion that they need more innovative techniques and art education so as improve their art. Weya art also falls in the folk art category because of its naivety. Weya art can thus be included in art education curricula in Zimbabwe due to the richness of subject matter. It fits rather well in the post-modern, post-colonial model of "little narratives".

Weya art like most post – colonial workshops was initiated by a cultural outsider . The workshop co-ordinator Noy, introduced a foreign idea to participants. The genre which she taught these women, was appliqué practiced in Dehomey/Benin. From the findings the Weya art project was initiated as an income generating project for women not as an art training centre. The aim was to generate money for as many participants as possible.

There are four main areas of specialization in Weya art: appliqué, painting, embroidery, and sadza batik to cater for as many women as possible. Weya has also promoted a brand name for marketing reasons, instead of individual artists. More so, those who are artistically gifted are used as inspirational forces for the programme and for continuity. However, this has been criticized as suppression of the female artist because of their gender. If one compares Weya and other workshops like the old National Art Gallery and Vukutu workshops we see that all outstanding male artists who excelled got recognition as individual artists. Even at Tengenenge Workshop run by Tom Bloomfield, male artists also excelled and got recognition worldwide. These include Henry Munyaradzi, Nicholas Mukomberanwa, John Takawira, Joram Mariga to name but just a few. All Weya art use a social documentary approach, it is naïve therefore it falls in the folk art category. Weya art has feminist elements. Weya art like most feminist art is in the form of social documentary, it is not interested in aesthetics as such but rather it is concerned with the situation of women, society and history. This is depicted these themes ; the changing role of women as bread winners, violence against women, equal rights and plight of unmarried women. “Feminists effort went into art which is ephemeral, and which survived in the shape of documentary and written accounts”.(Lucie-Smith,1999:461). Here, instead of photographs and video clips and written accounts, Weya art uses appliqué, batik, embroidery and painting as forms of visual discourse which undermines the hegemony of the male dominated official art world.

Post –colonial elements of Weya art

Weya art like all contemporary African art asserts the right to use any media. Weya art shows a lot of elements of the post-colonial philosophy which argues that under colonialism ,the history language, culture, customs as well as belief systems of the white colonizers are to be considered as universal and normative as well as superior to the knowledge systems of the colonized that are treated as the inferior others. Weya art is a redefinition of the local people, the formerly colonized announcing their presence and identity. This is well illustrated in these themes; ‘African marriage, (chipwa) rainmaking ceremony, beer brewing, village life,(n’anga) diviner’ and many other cultural and traditional themes. Weya art is important

in post-colonial discourse because it has a purely African inspiration. There also post-modern elements in Weya art. The post-modern project focuses on one's particularity with a clear conscience at the same time trying to find ways of putting it to international discourse. Post-modernism tries to make art from other culture useful, readable and relevant to receptors that are from other ethnicities. Weya artists are therefore trying to make female art from Zimbabwe readable at the time putting it to international discourse. Weya art is therefore both post-colonial and post-modern, it is not mimicry, that is it does not ape or copy any Western style, theme, or subject matter. As such Weya artists create their own which celebrate our identity as Zimbabweans in Africa.

Relevance of Weya art to art education in Zimbabwe

Weya art is post-colonial and relevant to art education in Zimbabwe because it is about the formerly colonized reclaiming and reconstructing their own history and culture. The art produced at Weya is original, it is not mimicry it does not imitate and denigrate our African identity. It promotes diversity. Post-colonial theory juxtaposes post-modern theory in that post-modern is a shift in attitudes and styles, away from modernism, especially its formalist inclinations towards interest in semiotics and renewed concern with history and traditions. Hence the post-modern approach aims to move away from art with a capital 'A'. "The key to this shift is a democratization of artistry.... The focus shifts from past to present from cultural others to cultural brothers and sisters." (Hanson cited in McDowell, 1987:3). Thus in a classroom situation focus will no longer be on art done by old European Masters like Leonardo Da Vinci, Picasso, Raphael, Michelangelo, Titian etc. Instead it should focus on the process and art done by the students' and how it is done. Students can come to realize that they can be counted in the ranks of artists.

Weya art may be consistent with student values, backgrounds, and knowledge to a large extent since it has cultural themes like, (barika) polygamy, (n'anga) diviner etc. Students can look for connections among Weya art and contemporary African art, the avant-garde elite art, and commercial products. This in turn enables the students to understand the universality of artistic production and will be in better position to assess its societal ascribed valuation. Weya art can therefore be taught as an indigenous art program aimed at making students and teachers have a great acceptance and understanding of the variety of human expression and aesthetics.

Weya art is a post- modern project which can be easily integrated into the Zimbabwe art education program. This is in line with the post- modern perspective that students should learn art that is within their cultural context. There are a number of post-modern, feminist, and globalization elements in Weya art. Weya art is a female art phenomenon in Zimbabwe, and has less compositional sophistication. It dwells on the same themes (reprise) like any other contemporary African art and is a post – colonial phenomenon.

Conclusion and Recommendations

To conclude the study recommends Weya as a post-colonial project which can be easily integrated into Zimbabwe art education programs. This is in line with the post –colonial perspective that students should learn art that is within their cultural context. There are a number of post-colonial, post-modern, feminist, and globalization themes in Weya art as a female phenomenon specific to Zimbabwe.

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