

Monni Adam's 'African visual art from an art historical perspective': A book review**Samuel Prophask Asamoah¹, Dickson Adom^{2*}, Babaaradio Kombui³**^{1&3}Department of Painting and Sculpture, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana.prophask1@gmail.com¹ babaaradio@gmail.com³^{2*}Department of Educational Innovations in Science and Technology, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana. dickson.adom@knust.edu.gh*Correspondence: dickson.adom@knust.edu.gh**Received:** 01 December, 2023 | **Accepted:** 10 January, 2024 | **Published:** 12 January, 2024

Abstract: The purpose of this study was to conduct a comprehensive and critical review of the book 'African Visual Art from an Art Historical Perspective' authored by Monni Adams published in 1989. The book is focused on the study of artworks from Sub-Saharan indigenous societies based on the perspectives of Art Historians in the United States. The book has been an indispensable teaching and research resource for practitioners, teachers, researchers, and students of art history as well as all those who are interested in acquiring in-depth knowledge in the history of the visual arts of the African continent, especially sub-Sahara Africa. However, 35 years after it was written, there has not been any academic rigorous review of the book although it is still used as a theoretical bedrock in the African art history discipline. Hence, this critical and comprehensive review of the book scholarly discusses the context of the book within its scope of African visual art history while intelligently appraising and critiquing its contents and/or arguments while shedding light on its strengths and weaknesses.

Keywords: African Art, Art History, African Studies, Indigenous Societies, Sub-Saharan Arts, Visual Arts

1. Introduction

Monni Adams was an Associate Professor in History and Anthropology at the Department of Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology. She holds a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Primitive Art. This book is her last comprehensive historiography of the field of African art history. The book was published in 1989. It is focused on the study of artworks from Sub-Saharan indigenous societies based on the perspectives of Art Historians in the United States (US). Monni Adams (1989) makes us understand that Sub-Saharan African art came to the limelight in the 1950s by some scholars who embarked on studies of the style and functions of sculptural works from the West and the Central Regions of Africa. With time, diverse analytical approaches were adopted by later scholars in studying varied artistic productions in these regions of the continent. Nevertheless, sub-Saharan art still lacks the needed recognition in the global art history in the academe, probably due to its non-conformance with the Western art historians' canons/criteria of aesthetics. The book is embedded with knowledge for academicians, constituting, art historians, as well as the general public especially those who are interested in acquiring in-depth knowledge in the art of the sub-Sahara Africa and the entire African continent. This book is divided into four main sections or parts with each having a peculiar content.

The first section gives an insightful introduction to the content of the book. A brief historical narrative on the study of sub-Saharan art in the academe was given. This part constitutes the genesis of African art studies in the academe, scholars who have played a pivotal role in the discipline. The section further outlines various

analytical approaches used by the earlier sub-Saharan art scholars (before the 70s), what necessitates their studies, and the area of focus. Adams moreover, highlighted the problematic areas of their studies (concerning the approach and the focus), and why there is a need for some improved alternatives. Sub topics encapsulated in this section are: *Introduction, The Double Heritage, Style and the Aesthetics of Art Historians, Content, Strategies of accommodation*, under that are auxiliaries such as; *Academic art historians, Sub-Saharan art scholars, Early Academic Leaders, and Problematic Aspects*.

The second section outlines major paradigm adopted by the later scholars, thus, those in the 70s and 80s, for their studies. The focus of these scholars was the classification of the works from sub-Saharan Africa. Although there was an improvement in the research conducted in this period, there were some neglected areas. Topics that constitutes this section are: *Major Paradigm of the 70s and 80s: Style*. The supplementary topics under this topic are; *Connoisseurship, Type, and Style Area, Style and Rank, Style and Seriation, Style History, Style Development and the Artist*, as well as, *Arts other than Wood Sculpture*. Apart from Style, another paradigm adopted is, *Paradigm: Identification of Imagery*. Adams also elaborately discussed *Paradigm: Process and Function*. The next paradigm highlighted is, *Search for Meaning*. Under this are the following auxiliaries: *Symbolic Analysis, Art as a Strategy in Social and Political Affairs, The Concept of Power*, and, *Art and Gender*. The last paradigm explored is, *Paradigm: History of Art*. Although these approaches contributed positively to the advancement of researches conducted in the 70s and 80s, Adams revealed that areas such as *Aesthetics; Innovation, Patronage, Changes*; as well as *Collectors, the Market, and Art Scholars*, seemed lacking in their studies. These are the discussions constituting the third section of the review.

Despite some studies conducted by anthropologists and ethnographers, scholarly publications on the art of the sub-Sahara are still unsatisfactory. However, in the fourth section Adams discussed the contributing factors and proposed possible potential solutions. Moreover, criticisms of the adoption of Western standards for art for the study of sub-Saharan art incorporated in this section. Adams further criticized the representation of art from in African museums and other exhibition spaces as well as its emplacement in global art history. All the areas mentioned were subsumed under a topic; *Publishing and Exhibitions* with subsidiary, *Exhibitions*. This formed the fourth section of the book. The conclusion part of the essay highlighted on the *Shifts in Art History*, as a result of the adoption of Marxism in the mid-20th century that aroused the interest of art historians to adopt anthropological methods in the study of art. Thus, involving the perspectives of the creators. Adams finally concluded by making recommendations that will improve the standard of African art for future research. These were elaborated under a topic, *Future Practice of Sub-Sahara Art History*.

1.1. The Double Heritage

Although wooden sculpture from sub-Sahara Africa gained recognition in Europe in the early 20th century, it still lacks absolute recognition in scholarly art historical studies in Europe. Modernization and the allied modern art movement in the United States, and the significant role African art played in this transition aroused the interest of historians, collectors, and museums. However, in the US, unlike in Europe, African art was studied as a course at the highest academic level, noticeably, the Colombia University, and the New York University, and were tutored by Paul Wingert and Robert Goldwater respectively. In these early years, the study of Sub-Saharan art was solely focused on figurative wooden and metal sculptures while their analysis was linked to anthropology. Even though the creators of these items may have not considered them as art based on the Western canon, scholars in the United States viewed these creative works through both the artistic and anthropological perspectives. These dual perspectives are what is referred to as “double heritage”, and are a recognized problem by the Sub-Saharan art scholars for the lagged African art studies in global art history. In view of that, the author of this essay aimed to throw light on the problems associated with art history in the 50s and 60s and also to

appraise the studies conducted in the 70s and 80s to ascertain the potential principal reasons for the unsatisfactory acknowledgment of the existence of Sab-Saharan art in the discipline of art studies.

1.2. Style and the Aesthetics of Art Historians

One of the analytical approaches to art historical writing is stylistic analysis. To agree with (Adams, 1989), this is the classification of works of art is based on the manner in which they are articulated. The collections (artworks) from Sub-Saharan Africa that were exhibited in the Ethnological museums in Europe were devoid of sufficient documentation that will assist interested art historians in their studies. However, William Fagg who was the keeper of the African collections at the British Museum, and other authors relied on style as an approach- although this stylistic analysis was peculiar to the classification of paintings and naturalistic sculpture mainly practiced in the Western world- to classify works distinct to various societies.

Generally, the Western historians' criteria for aesthetics was a barrier to the acceptance of these "objects" from sub-Sahara Africa as art and therefore not worthy of academic study. From the European art historians' perspective, a work of art must possess some inherent formal qualities. Moreover, attributes such as uniqueness, non-reproducibility, complexity, irreplaceability, and many others were associated with art (Kleinbauer, 1971: 2), alas, the qualities herein were lacking in the earlier works of art from the Sab-Sahara that migrated to Europe. Additionally, from the Westerner's perspective, art is expected to solely serve the purpose of art, not as a tool, or any other function of worldly imperative or material value. Without the knowledge of or access to the original meaning and socio-political significance of these objects as theoretical baggage, the only way to make them appreciated in historical writings is to place value on style.

1.3. Content

Due to Erwin Panofsky's tripartite stages in Iconographic analysis introduced in art historical writing, art historians in the United States began to pay attention to the content of a work of art in the mid-20th century. The first stage of this analytical approach is focused on the formal or visual qualities of a piece of work. The second stage delves deeper into the historical, religious, political, and socio-cultural narratives in connection with the work under study. The third or the iconological level identifies symbolisms, and also unearths the poetic, and philosophical significance. The physical features of the native works from Sub-Sahara and the lack of in-depth explanatory documentation or contextual clues made it difficult to analyze them using Panofsky's analytical approach.

1.4. Strategies of Accommodation: Academic Art Historians

In the mid-twentieth century (the 50s and 60s), European art historians posited that studying art from Sub-Sahara Africa in the scope of European art is an erroneous positioning. Historians such as H. W. Jarson (1969) and a few other historians classified these works as "post-prehistoric" (next to prehistoric) art practiced before the Egyptian civilization in the history of art (Blier, 1989). Due to the distinctiveness of this kind of art in comparison with European art, it was ignorantly tagged with pejorative terms such as primitive, illiterate, uncivilized, and many others that demean its status in global art history. Ernest Gumbrecht (1960), and Hebert Read (1956) also perceived these works as childlike expressions in contrast with art intrinsic to European civilization.

1.5. Strategies of Accommodation: Sub-Saharan Art Scholars

Sub-Sahara arts had been perceived by European scholars as childlike savages since they do not fit in the Eurocentric criteria of aesthetics. However, they were not accepted to be worthy of study. In the late 60s and 70s, some scholars embarked on studies to decolonize this Eurocentric classification of art from other cultures as objects. These scholars adopted various paradigms such as functionalism in anthropology and few others as

alternative approaches to investigating these so called objects. This assisted in the elevation of the status of art from sub-Saharan Africa since they were viewed through the lens of the context in which they were made.

1.6. Strategies of Accommodation: Early Academic Leaders

The emancipatory socio-political movements in the United States and some parts of the world, which emerged in the 60s (e.g. civil rights movements etc.) played a very vital role in the inclusion of sub-Sahara art in the academe. Three art historians who played a very pivotal role in the study of sub-Sahara art in the major Universities in America are; Douglas Fraser at Colombia, Robert Farris Thompson at Yale, and Roy Sieber at Indiana. All these three professors required their students enrolled in a Ph.D. Program to embark on ethnographic studies in Africa to stretch the boundaries of art history. In their studies, they adopted approaches that highlight content, function, origin, history, style, sequences, dating, and evaluation to dissolve the notion of ignorant savages tagged with artistic creations from Africa. This radical shift from the Eurocentric perspective on aesthetics prioritized the creators' point of view is much deeper than the superficial survey that concentrates on the visible features.

1.7. Strategies of Accommodation: Problematic Aspects

After the realization of the impacts of colonialism and the rapid changes in the art practice in the post-colonial era, there was an assumption that the undiluted/uncontaminated art of Africa would soon disappear. However, ethnographic studies (fieldwork) became very intense in the 70s and 80s and the scope of research also widened to cover other works other than figurative metal and wooden sculptures. In this same period, the geographical scope also expanded to some societies in Central Africa. The following discussions are some of the problems discovered in this period: Some of the scholars were not trained anthropologists, and also an over-reliance on positive functionalist explanations that were outmoded in the field of anthropology. This practice was also common among some sub-Saharan art scholars. Some of these scholars were doubted of authenticity, objectiveness, and completeness of the data collected. Any of these suspicions violates the standards of anthropology. To improve on the qualities of studies, diversified paradigms were embraced in the 70s and 80s, which expanded the methods in the study of sub-Saharan art. Discussions in the next section sequentially outline the order in which the paradigms emerged.

2. Major Paradigm of The 70s And 80s: Style

2.1. Connoisseurship, Type, and Style Area

In order to exhibit a high level of connoisseurship, art scholars in the United States perceived it as needful to embark on the classification of artistic creations from West and Central Africa through a stylistic analytical approach. This was done through ethnographic studies in various indigenous societies, prioritizing sculpture and architecture (Glaze, 1981; Prussin, 1969). In their studies, they encountered difficulties in the affirmation of the provenance of a particular style. To improve on the effectiveness, scholars such as Louis Perrois reintroduced comparative morphological analysis formerly used by Frans Olbrechts in 1946. Despite it being an advanced version of stylistic analysis, it equally faced criticisms by scholars like James Fernandez. The argument was grounded on the fact that creators can be influenced by other cultures (Fernandez, 1977a) due to the peripatetic nature of the local artisans. Jan Vansina (1984:87-9) also questioned the authenticity of this paradigm since subjectivity and biases cannot be avoided, especially when one decides to draw a line between originality and replication.

2.2. Style and Rank

According to Fraser and Cole who authored a book titled, "African Art and Leadership" (1972), the style of a particular artifact/art determines the owner's rank or status in society. It was discovered that more precious materials and more complex motifs (designs) are peculiar or distinctive to objects owned by the royals or the elites in the society.

2.3. Style and Seriation

Through style and Seriation of size and stylistic details, scholars such as Fagg (1963), Dark (1975), and Willet (1967) detect the linkage of art traditions of some ethnic societies. They arranged these artistic objects chronologically, creating their own timelines to establish affirmation of the developmental stages of forms. This assumed linkage of art traditions of societies based on style, was critiqued by scholars; Ribin (1970), Fraser (1972), and Shaw (1978). They described this stylistic categorization to be without factual basis since the early period for some pieces were wrongfully considered late (Vansins, 1984).

2.4. Style History

The style was perceived to be influenced by historical experiences (Poynor, 1987). Despite the similarities in style among some ethnic societies, it was difficult to conclude that one borrowed from another since these art traditions reflect socio-religious life or the worldview of people who practice it. It was realized that changes came about as a result of external influences such as clients' and patrons' specifications as well as conformance to the accepted societal standards. The historical evidence of style and the series of transformations can be illuminated through an oral tradition of a particular society (Vasina, 1965). The barriers of communication that could possibly distort the authenticity of oral narratives made the researchers widen the scope to draw information from other potential sources.

2.5. Style Development and the Artist

Unearthing the biography of an artist and the artistic style distinctive to him/her, has been a very complicated task for art historians in relation to the study of sub-Sahara African art. From the studies conducted by some ethnologists, traditional artisans from sub-Saharan Africa undergo training through a peculiar set of procedures. The possible available means of linking a style to an artist is placing it within a social organization or the craft community he/she was trained.

2.6. Arts other than Wood Sculpture

The artists who practice other genres different from wood and metal sculpture began to gain attention in the 70s and 80s. This period which falls within the contemporary timelines in the generic art history in the global sense is undeniably tagged with innovations. Many of these artists of diverse genres who were discovered in this period have distinctive ways of expressing their creative ideas. Some of their works are non-traditional and others are a deliberate innovative deviation from traditional standards and are mainly for commercial purposes. From Perani's (1977) perspective, stylistic developments and transformations occur as a result of the changing conditions of patronage. Scholars at this time improved on connoisseurship by adopting diverse analytical approaches and broke away from fixing a particular style within a distinct ethnic society. However, the attention shifted from tribal boundaries to individual artists and their distinct techniques and style of execution.

3. Paradigm: Identification of Imagery

Despite the numerous studies conducted by anthropologists and ethnologists on the art forms of sub-Saharan Africa, little was known in terms of imagery analysis. Throughout the studies conducted on the arts of sub-

Sahara Africa, much attention is geared toward the classification of style, and the linkage of various artistic works with ethnic societies. However, the signification of forms, the detailed interpretation, and the significance of the motifs on these works were lacking in these scholarly documentations. To illuminate this aspect of artistic tradition, scholars such as Barbara Blackmun (1984; 1988) embarked on the documentation of the carved ivory tusk from the Benin Kingdom with an analysis of the imagery. Houlberg (1973), and Drewal (1977), also embarked on the studies of Yoruba sculpture. Van Beek (1988) highlighted the imagery of Sanga's sculptural works. Philips (1979) and Boone (1986) interpreted the various designs on the masks used during the initiation of the girls in Mende society. Their studies were improved on by Frederick Lamp who interpreted these same types of masks used in the Temne society. Ross (1983) transcribed and documented the proverbial meanings of Asante court staffs. A very interesting discovery made in this period was that apart from imagery, of the individual works, and motifs, sometimes a number of artworks – sometimes diverse – are assembled to convey a particular philosophical message. The researchers also discovered that although the names of plants are sometimes embedded in the meaning of some designs, plants are rarely depicted in the art of sub-Saharan Africa.

4. Paradigm: Process and Function

The art tradition of sub-Sahara Africa cannot be appreciated without having knowledge of their roles or the purpose of their creation. Undeniably, every art in sub-Saharan Africa has a distinctive role in the physical or spiritual aspect of culture. However, this inquiry has been a leitmotif in the documentation of sub-Saharan art with the scope covering the role in social functions and philosophical underpinnings. Harley (1950) and Sieber (1962) regarded masking rituals as a medium of social control. After long sequential studies of social function, and performances in diverse societies, it came to light that over-reliance on the physical appearance or the atmospheric nature at the moment of the display can sometimes be misleading. This is especially when one backs his/her perspective with the Eurocentric form-identity relationship. Due to the notion of violence, tension, and other negative attributes tagged with anything African, the beneficent aspects of the art forms are sometimes overlooked by some researchers. A typical example is the interpretation of the funerary rites of the Senufo people in an essay titled "Art and Death in a Senufo Village" by Anita Glaze (1981). Her interpretation of the masker over a corps as "initiation" or a symbolic birth of an ancestor was later debunked by Jamin and Coulibali (1979). Another example is Drewa's (1983) study on the Gelede festival in Yoruba Society. His earlier interpretation of the attitude of men towards women was also noticed as erroneous, but rather a moment to honor women (Adams, 1984, 1987b). To avoid these misinterpretations, it is advisable for researchers to give priority to the perspectives of the studied communities or those who own the art of study.

5. Search for Meaning

5.1. Symbolic Analysis

An analytical approach adopted by some anthropologists and ethnographers is symbolic analysis, analogous to the structuralist method. One of the few art scholars who applied this method in their studies was Barbara DeMott (1982). She investigated the masking rituals of the Dogon people. Her focus of the study was on the binary oppositions in a ritual performance team. She interpreted the symbolisms and the cognitive effects on the spectators or the society as a whole. Cole and Aniako (1984) also embarked on a study on Igbo art adopting the broader structuralist paradigm. They interpreted both the conventional meaning and the intangible philosophical undertone. Although they also threw light on the structural dualisms discovered, and the social relations, they refrained from viewing them through a single lens. Suzanne Blier (1994) also used symbolic analysis to study the architecture of the Batammaliba. She documented both tangible and intangible symbolisms in this architectonic study which uncovered its relations with cosmology. In Blier's (1988a: 83-4) essay, she criticized the overreliance on Erwin Panofsky's Iconographic analysis in art historical writing. She realized that

it is not always applicable as far as sub-Saharan art is concerned. Her argument was based on the fact that some art forms in the region possess variant and divergent meanings, however, they do not fit in that hierarchical frame (Adams, 1989; Blier, 1988).

Sarah Catherine Brett-Smith (1982) came up with her unique approach to studying the practices of the Kolokani sector of the Bamana society situating it within its own logic. Her discussions were perceived to be different from the accepted scholarly art discourse but were premised on local beliefs and practices.

5.2. Art as a Strategy in Social and Political Affairs

The re-embrace of Marxism in the mid-20th century opened doors for several social movements against practices that seem to be discriminatory. Many scholars also began to critique pro-capitalist theories, ideologies, cultures, and other systems that perpetuate exploitation, oppression, and inequality. In this period attention of some art scholars was drawn to the role of art in social transformation especially, in the implementation, and sustenance of political ideas. These scholars embarked on numerous studies to unveil how Africans construct their society and how art is used to create distinctions between royals and the commoners as well as other classes in the society. Ben-Amos (1984) researched the imagery of the royal staff in the Benin Kingdom and how that is associated with power. Other art forms such as costumes, masking, regalia, et cetera were also studied in other societies like Akan, Bamana, Mende, and many others.

5.3. The Concept of Power

The use of imagery to portray the concept of power is a common practice in the Art of the sub-Saharan Africa. The hierarchy of power and the representational motifs has been a research topic for many art scholars. A typical example is animal imagery in Benin art which was documented by Ben-Amos (1976). Traditional rulers (Kings, Priests, and many more) are believed to possess special power that can be compared with, or that are attributed to other creatures such as animals, et cetera. Apart from rulers, other people who are believed to possess special powers, and however, are respected and feared are those with special knowledge or skill to perform dangerous tasks. For instance, cavers, blacksmiths, and many others. Apart from humans, the hierarchy of power is also applied in the categorization of some artforms, such as masks, stools, costumes, and many others. More powerful arts are used in major social functions (see, McNaughton, 1979, 1988; Weil, 1988).

5.4. Art and Gender

Gender and the associated skepticism became an area of interest in many academic fields in the second half of the 20th century. Art scholars and anthropologists made inquiries into the gender relationships: balances, complements, rites, and imbalances in the art tradition, and the generic cultural practices of the sub-Saharan Africa. It is evidently clear that distinct roles are assigned to each sex in art production and ritual performances in every society. Adams (1989) revealed that this division of labor does not necessarily relate to the status of that sex group in society. To deduce from that, traditionally, harder and more dangerous tasks and ritual performance is assigned to the men while the women take the softer assignments. Nevertheless, both tasks are equally important for societal development. Gender issues have been a very sensitive area such that, preconceptions normally affect the research results. Premise on that, Adams (1989) stated, "Whether one seeks to delineate aspects of the social or symbolically defined role of the women or examine gender practice as power strategy, will determine research results". This subjectivity leads to contrasting views when the same geographical area is studied by two or more people or a distinct group of researchers. A typical example is Bledsoe's (1980) and Jedrej's (1980) research in the Sande society among the Mendes.

6. Paradigm: History of Art

Throughout the period before the 1970s, ethnographic research conducted on the art of sub-Saharan Africa was focused on the classification of style, functions of the artistic objects, and the linkage with some ethnic societies. Historical studies and possible chronological changes (transformations) as a result of contact with foreign cultures through colonization and trade were not given much attention. Due to that, Rene Bravmann (1974) threw light on the influence of Islamic culture on the art of the sub-Saharan. Undeniably, the art of sub-Saharan Africa has mainly been impacted by European and Islamic cultures. However, research by Timothy Garrard (1982) and Marian Johnson (1980) revealed that there are still recognizable imagery and other aspects of the art tradition that can be traced to the pre-colonial era. Christraud Geary (1982) and Ben-Amos (1983b) also discovered this linkage between the art of the past and the present in some societies. Despite the effort of the scholars mentioned above, historical studies were still minimal in regard to sub-Saharan art. However, Vansina (1984) criticized this unsatisfactory documentation of the history of Sub-Saharan art, which was analogous to Bravmann's (1981) publication. From this time onwards, criticisms and critiques of art scholars' works began to increase.

7. Neglected Topics

In spite of the improvement in the research on the function, style, and iconography in sub-Saharan art, there were not much evidence of the production of catalogues apart from the ones produced by Johnson (1980) on gold, and Curnow (1983) on ivories. Sadly, both were not published. Moreover, discoveries so far indicate that there were not much scholarly studies on sub-Saharan art that highlight the following areas:

- Aesthetics
- Innovation, Patronage, and Change
- Collectors, the Market, and Art Scholars

7.1. Aesthetics

Although aesthetic studies are traditionally not included in art history, anthropologists began to include this aspect of philosophy in the study of sub-Saharan art (Adams, 1989). These scholars are of the view that this philosophical inquiry will improve on the appreciation, and nonetheless, also dispute the notion that sub-Saharan Africa culturally lacks aesthetic appreciation. Some of the scholars who applied aesthetic studies in that context are; Thomson (1973, 1974), Vogel (1973, 1980), and Boone (1986). These scholars interpreted these artworks from the historical, cultural, and social-political context involving the perspectives of those who practice that art. These were done using simple survey methods until Borgatti (1982, 1988) introduced more sophisticated means. The application of aesthetics has since been very common, especially among many African writers.

7.2. Innovation Patronage and Change

Historically, the encounter with the Europeans impacted the primary objective of art-making in sub-Saharan Africa. The commercialization of art resulted in the deliberate deviation from the conventional forms in order to meet the specifications of foreign buyers/patrons. This significant transformation in sub-Saharan art lacked sufficient scholarly documentation since that strand was not within the purview of art historians until the 1970s. Silver (1981) is among the few scholars who have highlighted the transformative aspect of sub-Saharan art by studying the innovative changes in the Asante carvings. Although artists and buyers/patrons' interactions have been emphasized as the contributing factor or a determinant for the transformation in the art of sub-Saharan Africa, Blier (1988a: 79) criticized this conception since that soils the reputation of the sub-Saharan artists as far as innovativeness/creativity is concerned. To deduce from her stance, sub-Saharan artists, just like artists in

other parts of the world sometimes willingly express their creative abilities which results in new innovative forms.

7.3. Collectors, the Market, and Art Scholars

The market, collectors, and art scholars are among the supporting systems intimately interwoven to form the art world. All these entities influence one another to enhance the work of an artist. For instance, increase in scholarly publication on art particular work arouse the interest of collectors, hence, positively impacts the art market. Conversely, the escalation of the art market allure scholars to embark on studies and publications in that field. Artworks from the sub-Saharan states have currently been an area of interest for both local and foreign collectors, as well as, scholars all over the world, noticeably, due to the earlier classic works acquired through both licit and illicit means mainly by Euro-Americans. These earlier acquisitions played a very influential role in Euro-American modernism in art history. Appropriation and imitation of the earlier sacred relics is now a common practice among art producers in sub-Saharan Africa due to the rising demand by both local and foreign buyers. This has greatly and positively contributed to the improvement and sustenance of the art tradition in this region.

8. Publishing and Exhibitions

Despite some studies conducted by anthropologists and ethnographers, scholarly publications on the art of the sub-Sahara are still unsatisfactory. Apart from university presses, there were limited opportunities for full-length specialized studies (Adams, 1989). The known publication that encapsulates diverse studies conducted by 73 scholars who have contributed to the knowledge of sub-Sahara art was by Vogel (1981). Adams (1989) revealed that one of the contributing factors to the marginal status of sub-Saharan art studies is that scholars rely mainly on magazines (such as *African art*) for the publication of their studies. However, sadly, these outlets do not support in-depth theoretical studies. One may disagree with Adams since the situation has currently improved due to globalization, it is still advisable for the researchers to sort for more outlets that can accommodate in-depth theoretical studies for a wider audience.

9. Exhibitions

Many scholars use exhibitions and the associated catalogues as means of reaching a wider audience. This has been a way of spotlighting other innovative works from sub-Saharan Africa. Exhibitions in museums and other spaces have really improved the status of sub-Saharan Art and enhanced the admiration of African art in general. How works are displayed in museums and other exhibition spaces has a greater impact on the visitors' perception of the exhibits. How the African objects have been displayed/presented in the history of the exhibition has impacted how they are valued. To address this, concerns have been raised by some scholars, advocating for decolonization from the international art regime.

10. Shifts in Art History

Before the 1970s, art works from sub-Saharan Africa were not considered art in the traditional academic study of art history. This is due to the formulated hierarchy of art genres based on western standards. However, the 1970s marked a period of experimentation and innovation in the art world. During this period many artists around the world explored new techniques and mediums. This resulted in many artistic movements that pushed the boundaries of Eurocentric conventions. This changed the perspective of art from sub-Saharan Africa in academic art history as well as its placement in museums and other exhibition spaces. An article by Alpers (1977) interrogates these classifications and placements. Henri Zerner (1982) also critiques this Eurocentric ideology and proposed reconsideration.

The embracement of Marxism in the mid-20th century aroused the interest of art historians to adopt anthropological methods in the study of art. Thus, involving the perspectives of the creators. Hans Belting's (1987) book titled, "The end of the History of Art?" enlightens the idea of expanding the analytical approaches to art history in order to place it in its rightful position. This and Baxandall's (1980) research of limewood sculpture in Renaissance Germany –although he defended his stance – affirmed the need for new approaches to the study of sub-Saharan art. Shiff (1988) highlighted that the expanded intellectual currents have encouraged many scholars to include rhetorical theory, psychoanalysis, and semiotics as well as new developments in linguistics to the approach to art history. These and the use of critical theory have brought about a radical change in global art history. This significant shift based on new approaches questions the authenticity of the positivist approach as far as the study of art is concerned. These new approaches rely on interpretive multiplicity based on multiple factors. These currents parallel postmodern reflexivity in practice, in art history, and seem to be evidence of the merger of what is referred to as "double heritage". According to Adams (1989), Blier (1987a: 14) advised that the training given to sub-Saharan art scholars should be broadened beyond the basic knowledge or basic techniques/skills of art history.

11. Future Practice of Sub-Sahara Art History

The current technique of using multiple approaches to the study of art has improved the status of sub-Saharan art and enhanced its admiration in the global art world. Nevertheless, Adams (1989) advised that there is still a need for historical mapping of sub-Saharan art, outlining the evolutionary transformations that have taken place, and the factors leading to the transformations (being, religious, trade, political, etc.) need to be documented. Such a historical study should be expanded to the entire African continent, in order to place the art of Africa more firmly in the discipline of art history. To realize this intended goal, African art historians and other art historians around the world should collaborate and reciprocate the exchange of information. Secondly, there should always be a dialogue between researchers and the researched to unearth the contextual value of the studied work.

Despite the current globalization in art practice and its impact on contemporary African Art, it is important to note that the academic study of sub-Saharan art was a result of the interest in the classic modern art style and its functional importance. This classic modern art has undergone constant modifications, even though there are still some traces in the current art production. Due to the fading out of these classical forms, and functions, there is an assumption that the future generation would adopt elements and idioms in their art practice, which would lead to a massive decline or complete disappearance of the classical forms. Due to that, the reviewer agrees with Adams (1989) in stating, "It is important to bring scholarship to bear on these evolving genres, as they are the potential grounds for future development".

To achieve this, African art scholars should not isolate themselves, by focusing solely on the study of art in the continent, but rather immerse themselves in the broader global art history. To deduce from Adams (1989), they should partake in global art conferences as well as test their mental mettle by engaging in discourses with scholars from related disciplines such as archaeology, anthropology, history, and ethno-history.

12. Conclusion

Adam's essay is one of the best scholarly documentation summarising many of the studies conducted on the arts of sub-Sahara Africa up to the period of its publication. It gives a forecast of the current state of the art, making it relevant, albeit, there has been some improvement in terms of the recognition of the work from sub-Sahara Africa in the West. From our perspective, this improvement is a result of the intensity of diversified advocacy on decolonization, globalization, and the advancement of technology. Also, this is due to the increase of documentation and exhibitions of art from sub-Sahara Africa in Europe and other parts of the

world. Apparently, many museums, galleries, and other exhibition spaces as well as some institutions from the art world are currently decolonizing from the Eurocentric/colonial world powers and their hierarchy of genres that made the art of the colonizers dominant. Moreover, the institutionalization of so-called International Art Expositions that projected the art of the colonizers has faced a lot of criticism since the motif of showing the art of the colonized was somehow to demean their culture. However, the current embracement of the Global Art paradigm has brought about radical inclusivity that has paved a way for many contemporary artists, curators, galleries, and other art segments of African origin. To mention a few, artists such as Cheri Samba, El Anatsui, Julie Mehretu, Ibrahim Mahama, and a few others have infiltrated the boundaries of the monopolistic art world. Moreover, curators such as Okwui Enwezor, Simon Njami, Bisi Silver, Koyo Kouoh, Olu Oguibe, and a few others who are working tirelessly have served as a catalyst or impetus in the inclusivity of the long-marginalized art of Africa in the global art world. Nevertheless, writers, scholars, and consent institutions cannot be neglected in such acknowledgments. Because all these segmental entities are interwoven together to make the art world, there is an increasing awareness of the relevance of including art and artists of African origin in academic studies, even though the more projected herein are the contemporary ones. Moreover, the institutionalization of African art studies in some higher academic institutions in Africa such as Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology and a few others, sometimes, as a section or department has played a very pivotal role. Sometimes, students enrolled in such programs are enlightened on both documented and undocumented arts and artists of African origin either resident in the continent or in the diaspora.

We side with Adams that it is very important to document the chronological modification and the contributing factors, and more importantly, indicate timelines for the recognized transformation apiece. Undeniably, many recognized contemporary African artists have made a detour from African classicism in order to gain global recognition. This is a clear justification of Adams' view of the gradual fading out of African classical forms which may lead to its massive decline or complete disappearance. However, documentation of the historical transformations would serve as a "scripture" for the generations to come, furnishing them with the past to learn from, and to improve on the current in order to set greater goals for the future. Although African art (African classicism) has made its way into academic art studies, its placement after prehistoric art is misleading. Moreover, limiting its scope to the art of sub-Sahara Africa, and excluding the Great Pyramids of Egypt and other art forms created during the Egyptian civilization is as well erroneous. The Pyramids of Egypt and most of the discovered ancient art forms were created c. 2686 – 2181 BCE. However, ignorantly classifying Egyptian art under Islamic art is nonsensical. Evidently, the Arab Islamic Conquest led by Amr ibn al-As arrived in Egypt around 639-640 CE, hence the genesis of the Islamic art influence in Egypt. In conclusion, the future of sub-Sahara art history will remain bleak without a restructuring of the existing world art history. The proper positioning of African art and its history in global art studies would undeniably expose the gaps in the existing history and further break the boundaries of Euro-American standards for art.

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