

## BEYOND FUNCTIONALITY: AN APPRAISSAL OF “SCULPTED BUILDINGS”

**AVAV, JOSHUA AONDONA**

Department of Visual and Creative Arts,  
Federal University Lafia  
P.M.B 146, Lafia  
Nasarawa State,  
Nigeria.  
joshuaavav@gmail.com

**UZOJI, GODWIN OKECHUKU**

Department of Visual and Creative Arts,  
Federal University Lafia  
P.M.B 146, Lafia  
Nasarawa State, Nigeria.  
godwinuzoji@yahoo.com

---

### Abstract

Art, over time, presents itself in different menu, from its plastic form, to dance, drama and music, of these variables of art, the plastic art is a more sustainable form of recording human history. Sculpted artifacts of figures and figurines, ancient buildings, provide a spy-hole through which past civilizations are read and understood. Edewor (2006) views that “these works provide insights into the ways of life, ethics and values, socio-political and cultural structures of their diverse cultures.” Art is holistic; it encompasses most aspects of human life, including structures built for human habitation. This paper appraises “sculpted buildings,” their role in boosting tourism, and by extension an alternative source of foreign exchange.

**Keywords:** Sculpted Buildings, Tourism, civilization, Artifacts, Sustainable

### Introduction

The term form, has various meanings in discussions of art, it could refer to any three dimensional object that has its own share of space, actual form as against illusory form, is in the round and posses tactile qualities. Ocvirk (2006) opines that “form refers to the essence of the sculpture as expressed in its total organization. Form is central to the creation and understanding of art”. In discussing content and form,

Krapivin (1985) posits that “the categories of content and form help to understand the essence of an object or phenomenon. All objects and phenomena have their own content and their own form. Content is the totality of those elements, aspects, processes and their relations which are basic to the existence of a given object or phenomenon and conditioned the development and change of its forms. Form is the mode of organization and existence of the content, the inner specific connection among the elements, aspects and processes of a given content which vest the latter with a measure of integrity in it interaction with external conditions. Content and form are the two inseparable side any object or phenomenon. There is nothing in the world without form or content. ”

Art and Architecture are offspring of the same parent; they share the same gene in the elements and principles that guides their creation. Not until recent history, an Artist was an Architect as well; Giovanni Bernini of the Italian renaissance was an Architect and a Sculptor, just as much as Michelangelo was a painter, Sculptor and Architect. The former and the later executed works across these divides of art. The “Artist”, the “Architect” divide is a dichotomy of convenience popularized mostly in the 18<sup>th</sup> century when science and technology began to have greater influence in architecture, and creativity became

supplementary. In architecture, Buser, (2006) argues that “architecture communicates its own personalized experience of living in space through a language of forms, materials and techniques. Sometimes, a building may stand out as the personal expression of an individual great architect. Just as often, a building communicates the ideas and aspirations of the society for which it was built.” Sculpture, as it is with all art forms also bares this expressive quality of projecting aspirations as well as values of individuals or communities as the case may be. If points of convergence is been sought, then it is located partly by the fact that, both sculpture and architecture occupies space in the environment, they are also made of forms, and sometimes similar materials such concrete and metal of all types. Relatively, Buser, further avers that,

Artists around the globe are experimenting with new forms of sculpture, combining materials in works of mixed media. Modern artists love to break down the boundaries between one art form and another and combine them, blurring even the distinction between architecture and sculpture. Some sculptors transform the whole of an interior space to create an environment into which the viewer enters and moves and which then surrounds the viewer on all sides.

Similar to the way a building creates and enclosure.

Dogo (2014) argues that “at some time in the past, architect were more often called engineers rather than artists, but today, Architecture is considered a Visual Art by many as some buildings are seen as Artworks”. In furthering this position, Brancusi, in Dogo, (2014) states that, “Architecture was inhabited sculpture”. This statement could be stretch further to insinuate that all three dimensional forms created are indeed works of sculpture. The theory of “sculpted buildings” is situated in this context.

### **Aesthetics and Functionality**

For the success of any design, in particular those of buildings, aesthetics and functionality are two anchor points that must be present, aesthetics deals with the visual appeal of the form while functionality is the utilitarian component of the form. In modern architecture as well as in modern art, issues of aesthetics has occupied a role of primacy, it has become a pivot on which buildings are appraised, McDermott (2008) states that “modernism provided a universal language for architects. It signalled the end to traditional hierarchies of buildings for example, the nineteenth-century tradition that the more important a building, the more ornate its decoration. Building would now share the same vocabulary, and architects believed that if you could reform architecture you could reform society, by making people healthier and society more stable. ” within this context of reform there was a need to create art forms that people could relate with, thus, buildings began to wear a highly radical form, it was no longer enough to erect “matchbox structures”, here, structures began to be storyboards, sometime displaying the aspirations of a people, as Ocvirk (2009), rightly posits that “when a form has an aesthetic appeal it transcends function and becomes a sculptural form”. If a building is now considered to be sculptural form, going by its aesthetic appeal,

would they designer now be considered to be sculptor or an architect or both? In any case, Ocvirk asserts further that “in many ways, architects are “building sculptors” and their designs require a thorough grounding in artistic principles as well as understanding of engineering concepts.”

### **An Appraisal of Sculpted Buildings/ Discussion**

Tourism has over time been linked to two factors, natural landmarks, on one hand and man-made landmarks, on the other hand. Landmarks made by humans have remained an important booster of tourism. Modernism has influenced the way and manner in which these man-made landmarks are created. “Modernism provided a universal language for architecture. It signalled an end to traditional hierarchies of buildings, for example, the nineteenth-century tradition that the more important a building, the more ornate its decoration.” McDermott, (2008) avers. And all these landmarks come in form of structures, buildings and sculptures, such as the Tag-Mahal, Eiffel Tower, and the African Renaissance sculpture, these are located in India, France and Senegal, respectively and they all fall in line within the three categories of man-made landmarks. Evidently, these tourists’ sites have contributed in boosting the tourism potentials of the countries in which they are sited. The aforementioned landmarks all fall within the purview of “sculpted buildings/forms”, in that; they elucidate an ingenious admixture of art and architecture in a duet that exemplifies how irresistible and inseparable art and architecture could be when effectively deployed in a project.

Nine works are captured in this paper, these are examples art and architecture mix, though, some buildings are less grandiose in scale, such as figure viii “Kettle House”, figure v “Pickle Barrel House”, and figure iv “The Hole House”. The choice of these works is deliberately informed by the fact that enormous financial resources might not be required in creating sculpted buildings as seen in the scale of these forms. It is our opinion that individuals could incorporate some degree of art into their buildings, even if at a less melodramatic scale, as it is with figure iv, figure v, and figure viii. On the other hand, figure vi, “The Basket Build”, figure ix “Dancing Building” and figure vii, “Kansas City Public Library”, are more suited as institutional buildings/structures because of their scale. Be they large or small in scale, their aesthetic impact is hardly questioned.

The argument here is that the more we have such structures/buildings in our environment, the more the psyches of inhabitants of such spaces are soothed. The visual impact heralded by such forms, be they artistic or architectural is felt directly by their ability to inspire or relax the nerves of those who dwell around and within these forms, as McDermott (2008) rightly notes “if you can reform architecture you could reform society by making people healthier and society more stable”.

## **Conclusion**

The new global economic reality calls for a diversification of revenue sources, more so for an ailing economy such as ours in Nigeria. With the virtual collapse of oil prices, tourism deserves an urgent attention by government, cooperate bodies and individuals, this we opine would be a panacea to revamp our economy in Nigeria. Other benefits of creating these forms (sculpted buildings) in cities and communities would be that it would provide an opportunity for people to live with art, irrespective of their financial status, since these forms are in actual sense “public art”, belonging to the community irrespective of the financiers. They occupy a public space, as such; and the generality of the public are percipients of these art forms.



**Figure: i**

**Title: Cubic Houses**

**Country: Rotterdam, Netherlands**

**Source: <http://en.ozonweb.com/architecture/worlds-50-strangest-buildings/Cubichouses-thumb09...>**



**Figure: ii**

**Title: Hang Nga Guesthouse a.k.a Crazy House**

**Country: Vietnam**

**Source: <http://en.ozonweb.com/architecture/worlds-50-strangest-buildings>**



**Figure: iii**

**Title: The UFO House**

**Country: Sanjhih, Taiwan**

**Source: <http://en.ozonweb.com/architecture/worlds-50-strangest-buildings>**



**Figure: iv**

**Title: The Hole House**

**Country: Texas, United States**

**Source: <http://en.ozonweb.com/architecture/worlds-50-strangest-buildings>**



**Figure: v**

**Title: Pickle Barrel House**

**Country: Grand Marais, Michigan, United States**

**Source: <http://en.ozonweb.com/architecture/worlds-50-strangest-buildings>**



**Figure: vi**

**Title: The Basket Building**

**Country: Ohio, United States**

**Source: <http://en.ozonweb.com/architecture/worlds-50-strangest-buildings>**





**Figure: vii**

**Title:** Kansas City Public Library

**Country:** Missouri, United States

**Source:** <http://en.ozonweb.com/architecture/worlds-50-strangest-buildings>



**Figure: viii**

**Title:** Kettle House

**Country:** Texas, United States

**Source:** <http://en.ozonweb.com/architecture/worlds-50-strangest-buildings>



**Figure: ix**

**Title: Dancing Building**

**Country: Prague, Czech Republic**

**Source: <http://en.ozonweb.com/architecture/worlds-50-strangest-buildings>**



## References

- Buser, T. (2006) *Experiencing Art Around Us*. Second Ed, Thomson Wadsworth, Belmont. Pp 255, 295
- Dodo, I. (2014) *Art and Architecture: A Synthesis*. Art Fair Kaduna, National Gallery of Art.
- Krapivin, V. (1985) What is Dialectical Materialism? Progress Publishers, Moscow. Pp 196- 197
- McDermott, C. (2008) Contemporary Design. Carlton Book. Pp42, 44, 53, 57,64,68, 77and 77
- Ocvirk, O.G, Stinson R.E, Wigg P.R, Bone R.O, & Cayton D.L (2009) Art Fundamentals,Theory and Practice. Eleventh Ed. McGraw-Hill. Boston P39
- Ocvirk, O. O.G, Stinson R.E, Wigg P.R, Bone R.O, & Cayton D.L. (2006) Art FundamentalsTheory and Practice. 10<sup>th</sup> Ed McGraw-Hill. Boston. P225, Pp 2- 3.
- Rendell, J. (n.d) Art and Architecture a Place Between. Retrieved January 20, 2016 from <http://www.janerendell.co.uk/books/art-architecture-a-place-between>.