

Art Exhibition as Advert Promo and Facilitator for Artistic Production in Colleges and Universities

Dr Godwin Ogheneruemu Iriwieri arpa*

Department of Fine and Applied Arts Delta State University, Abraka, Delta State, Nigeria.

*E-mail: profgirivwieri@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper presents Art Exhibition as an Advertising medium for the sale of artworks apart from its aesthetic and entertainment value to which it is often been put in contemporary society. It is however observed that a number of budding artists in colleges and universities and even a number of professional artists scarcely know the skills involved, the chemistry and what it takes to undertake a major and successful exhibition that could possibly bring them to limelight. It is on this backdrop that the writer seeks to showcase Art Exhibition as a veritable medium in the educational setting particularly for students in the visual arts scene and practicing artists in society to eke a living from the business of Art Exhibition, particularly, during this period of global economic recession. Through a review of a number of literatures and personal involvement in this unique subject matter, a number of issues were discussed and highlighted. They include, what Art Exhibition means, the social perspectives of Curating Art Shows, and the Conventional Art Exhibition Format. Others are Art Gallery/Studio Operations, Preservation Issues of Exhibited Art works and the Facilities for the Art Studio that will create enabling environment for optimal artistic production. It is found out that Art Exhibition demands constant planning, thinking, dreaming, organizing, adapting, researching, experimenting, motivating, evaluating and resource-building. It is thus a marketing tool for the exposition of the works of art in society.

Keywords: Art Exhibition, Advertising, facilitator, Artistic Production, Marketing tool, Preservation.

1. Introduction

In a computer age, every body appears to be in haste to accomplish one task or the other. To arrest the attention of the target audience therefore demands a process whereby certain structures are put in place to create full awareness about the existence of a product, service or an idea. To further stimulate a response of the target market in response to the intention of the sponsor of a message, persuasion is the key. This is to be expected because those who have something to sell will want to persuade others to buy. Advertisement thus is the process of disseminating information about the existence of a product, service or idea, to compel action in accordance with the intent of the advertiser (Sandage and Fryburger, 1975).

In the same context, art exhibition is perhaps often taken as the hallmark of determining the level of proficiency of the artist in terms of artistic production by visual artists and students in different higher institutions of learning globally. Art provides an atmosphere of self-actualization through personal creativity. It is the belief of the writer that art should create an atmosphere where one becomes aware of a social consciousness through art Shows-Solo or group projects. After all one of the goals of education in art should be for the learners to express in artform the inner characteristics of themselves, realizing that these are the inner characteristics of mankind. Art shows reflect what could be referred to as Art study fora without walls, since both the informed and uninformed about visual arts practices, have the privilege of exercising their visual sense of aesthetics through the artworks on display, as guided and appreciated by the Guest Artist. The opportunity to learn about art is thus opened to all and sundry. At the end, one is better informed, develop commitment to higher learning, fulfilled and convinced on the roles art plays in contemporary society.

The Artworks thus displayed are commentaries on societal issues that bother on our earthly existence. Since the artist is a member of the society, he cannot divorce his works from the dictates of the people. The artworks on exhibition are visual essays and so considered as “intellectual properties” which involve mental and academic exercises that express visuals rather than words and thus speak volumes. It is not a gainsay therefore to support and further reaffirm the claim that, in no part of modern communication can a picture (artwork) be said to be worth more than a thousand words than in advertising as show cased through Art Exhibition.

Over the years, Art Exhibitions have continued to gain momentum in society with the populace hardly knowing that, it is another marketing fora where artworks are sold by the artist for monetary gains apart from its aesthetic intent and documentation purposes. A number of budding artists scarcely know how to go about their works in order to bring them to limelight. It is on this backdrop that the writer seeks to showcase Art Exhibition as a very important tool in the educational setting, particularly for students in the visual arts scene. This will in effect create a lasting impact that will generate employment opportunities for the teeming number of artists in this

period of global recession in the world of work (Entrepreneurship). By and large, reviewing a number of literatures, coupled with personal experience from Art Exhibitions show cased, attempt will be made in this paper to state what Art Exhibition means. Effort will also be made to discuss the Social Perspectives of Curating Art Shows, Art Gallery/Studio operations, Preservation Issues of Exhibited Art Works and Art Facilities for the Art Studio that will make for optimal production of art works. At the end, Budding artists can then, be well equipped with robust creative insights that will position them comfortably in the world art market place.

2. Art Exhibition

Art Exhibitions are traditionally exposition of artworks in the public domain for people to view, enjoy and acquire to satisfy a need. Such expositions may present pictures, drawings, video, sound, installation, performance, interactive art or sculptures by individual artists, group of artists or collection of a specific form of art. The artworks may be presented in museums, art halls, art clubs, private art galleries or at some place the principal business of which is not the display or sale of art, such as coffee house. Sometimes, the event is organized on a specific occasion like anniversary or commemoration. It is aimed at shaping the aesthetic trends and development in art (Wikipedia). Art Exhibitions have a history that dates back to 1623. It is thought that the first Solo exhibition in Britain was staged by Joseph Wright of Derby in 1785, the year after he refused to become a Royal Academician. Art Galleries became numerous in large cities during the 19th century and flourished during the 20th century often becoming included among stores in small towns as well, after the middle of the 20th century. Generally, as artists begin to show their works, they are accepted by commercial gallery owners for display among the works of many or among others who work in the same area. The works of the artists are sold and the galleries take commissions. As artists gain stature and attract a following who will purchase their works in greater numbers, gallery owners promote their works in Solo shows with a great deal of publicity about the show. The artists with greatest appeal to a gallery's clients may be invited to be represented by that gallery consistently, developing a constant relationship that even may develop into exclusive rights to offer the sale of the works by those artists. Once artists become recognized for their skills among critics and collectors through representation at galleries, museum directors and staff members may begin to purchase the works of the artists for museum collection (Talbot and Howard, 2005).

Art Exhibition has played a crucial part in the market for new art since the 18th and 19th centuries. These exhibitions receive lengthy and detailed reviews in the press, which were the main vehicle for the art criticism of the day. Critics held their readers attention by sharply divergent reviews of different works, praising some extravagantly and giving others the most Savage put downs they could think of. Many of the works are sold, but success at these exhibitions is a crucial way for an artist to attract more commissions (Altshuler, 2008).

2.1 Types of Art Exhibition

There are different kinds of art exhibitions. There is a distinction between commercial and non-commercial exhibitions. Temporary museum exhibitions typically display items from the museums own collection on a particular period, theme or topic, supplemented by loans from other collections, mostly those of other museums. They normally include no items for sale. They are distinguished from the museum permanent displays. Most large museums set aside a space for temporary exhibitions. Exhibitions in commercial galleries are often entirely made up of items that are for sale, but may be supplemented by other items that are not.

The works of a single artist i.e individual expositions is referred to as a "Solo show". Joint Exhibition is an exposition by two artists. Group exhibition is a collective exhibition or expositions on a specific theme or topic. The Biennale is a large exhibition held every two years, often intending to gather the best of international art. There is a Travelling exhibition which is showcased within and outside the country. It is organized in collaboration with State Art Councils, Institutions of higher learning and culture related agencies. It is designed to give a wider audience, the opportunity to access the new direction of art aesthetics. The objective is to promote national and international awareness, national consciousness and pride in our traditional ingenuity and to redirect and harness our energies, reliance and self-sufficiency (Aig-Imuokhuede, 1988:81)

Exhibition of new or recent art can be juried, invitational or open

- A Juried exhibition such as the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition in London, the Chianciano Biennale at Chianciano Museum of Art, NAFESTAC Exhibition has an individual (or group) acting as judge of the submitted artworks, selecting which are to be shown. If prizes are to be awarded, the judge or panel of judges will usually select the prize winners as well.
- In an Invitational exhibition, such as the Whitney Biennale; 1998 NGA organized Exhibition of the so-called Zaria Rebels, the organizer of the show asks certain artists to supply artworks and exhibits them.

- An open or “non-juried” exhibition allows anybody to enter artworks and shows them all. A type of exhibition that is usually non-juried is a mail art exhibition (Wikipedia).

3. Social Perspectives of Curating Art Shows

Art Exhibition is an effective marketing tool for the artist. It promotes not only aesthetics but serves as an educative medium for enlightenment as well as source of empowerment for its practitioners and the society (Ochigbo, 2006: 281). Before a formalized Art Gallery came into being in Nigeria, Onabolu and his followers exhibited artworks in both public and private places-Glover Memorial Hall in Lagos in 1942 and at Private Halls at Ebute meta, Lagos in 1954. In 1946 an exhibition centre was established at Marina, Lagos under the directorship of Michael Crowder. In 1958, Felix Idubor established the Arts and Crafts centre. From 1950 till date, museums are not left out in the promotion and sales of artworks through exhibitions.

According to Uche Okeke, Art shows became part of the socio-cultural life of such Urban centres as Lagos, Ibadan, Oshogbo, Benin, Enugu, Nsukka, Port Harcourt, Jos, Kaduna and Kano. Among the early exhibitions are the “Contemporary Nigerian Paintings and Drawings in Jos in 1956, Independence Exhibition in Lagos in 1960, Nigerian National Exhibition of Contemporary Visual Arts in Lagos in 1977. Art Exhibition then from Nigeria, were organized as part of the cultural exchange scheme, reflecting on the political status of the country as a sovereign state with foreign countries like the US, UK, France, India and Germany. The Mbari writers and Artist Club, Ibadan is probably the first body to bring together all facets of creativity in the arts in 1961(Ikpakronyi, 2002). Others followed, organized at will by individuals or sponsored by government or corporate bodies.

Exhibitions are to be seen as efforts aimed at enhancing the ultimate triumph of art in any society, hence the works, artists and the exhibitions have social and cultural relevance for the upliftment of the background from which they derive. Art is concerned with permanent values, not transient ones. Hence, the need for exhibited works to be created with intent of purpose, ingenuity, originality and character for an enduring substance. By this, exhibits should have a universal appeal instead of depending on topical subject matters for its meaning (Canaday, 1980).

The unseemingly growth rate of exhibitions today disregards the lofty ideals of standards, and this is as a result of the commercial value attached to creative artworks. With the tendency to make quick cash, a lot of exhibitors are no longer sincere with the quality of works they produce. This, to a large extent, affect the aesthetics and heuristic intent of works on display. There is therefore the need for a systematic evaluation and control procedure to check the excesses of a number of not serious minded and over ambitious artists, so as to restore collectors’ confidence in art exhibitions. The present economic depression in Nigeria today has greatly affected patronage as studio artist go about hawking their creative works for mere pittance. With this, patrons find it difficult to distinguish a standard work from the substandard work (Ochigbo, 2006:284).

4. Conventional Art Exhibition Format

Whether you are exhibiting your own artwork or someone else’s, setting up an art exhibition can be a creative, fulfilling endeavour in and of itself. However, it does have its challenges and you will need good planning to put it off. It is basic to first choose a theme with a focus, which indeed doubles as a marketing technique that will draw people who are specifically interested in the concept being explored. The exhibition title should be so definite and expressive so that the theme of the exhibition can be easily discerned. The history of the exhibition should provide valuable background information about the artworks on display (Alles, 1973:17).

Successful exhibition demands adequate management technique so as to check poor outing. The location of an exhibition is very significant - the distance determine the cost of movement of persons and exhibits which can affect the level of participation. Set a date to possibly include weekend. This will allow those working during week days to attend and often families will make an outing of the event. The timing of an exhibition is very important. The duration of the show should be such that it is not affected by other events so as to give visitors a much better chance to select the most convenient time for their visit. The exhibition catalogue, which serves as reference book, which is informative, is a vital element in the art exhibition and thus should be well planned. (Ochigbo, 2006: 285-286). Set prices on the works considering all of your costs including the fee for renting the space, the materials, -advertising, the artist’s share, your share and any percentage donated to charity. Be Sales-savvy. In addition to selling the artworks, it can also be profitable to print cards with photos of the artwork and sell it in packs of five or so. If a percentage (or all) of the proceeds go to charity, there is a better chance that people will come and buy the artwork. Advertise the exhibition. Create Post cards and consider press releases for higher-level exhibits. Put up posters around local art schools, universities, trendy areas, cafes, clubs, or even

supermarket, bulletin board. Get in touch with local newspapers and tell them about the upcoming exhibition. Entertain guests with light refreshment of food and drinks particularly during the opening ceremony. If possible, provide soft music at the background in the exhibition space while conducting guests through the exhibits displayed.

5. Art Gallery/Studio Operations

The Art Gallery which serves as a repository of trends and movements in art is established among other reasons to prevent the drain abroad of master pieces of art and to establish a ready avenue for making art accessible to the general public.

In the gallery setting, is a Supervisor, who is responsible for the administrative, supervisory and technical work. He coordinates, supervise and participate in the design, construction and installation of art exhibition display materials. The supervisor participates in the development of policies and procedures relating to the gallery operation, over seeing the development of the gallery budget, including the preparation of the budget requirements for the technical facilities, recommending the purchase of equipment and reviewing and revising technical procedures to meet changing conditions.

The employee performs work with considerable initiative and independence under the direction of the Director. Work is reviewed through reports, discussion and observation of results obtained. Starting an Art Gallery demands a lot of effort, be it commercial or public. The first step is to put up a sizeable building which should be located in an accessible place to visitors, prospects, collectors and artists. The services of a skilled artist, well informed intellectually and academically about the operations of the Art Gallery is required. Some fund to meet promotional expenses (catalogues, advertising cost, press releases, hosting and management of exhibits, sales and patrons services are to be provided by the gallery (Obrist, 2008).

For most Commercial Galleries, they receive commission on Artworks that are sold. Most of the time 50 to 60 percent is what gallery owners charge. The galleries have become accustomed to have the artist bare the burden of much of this cost. A Gallery has to be well funded to be successful just like any other business. For gallery owner to expect that the artists are going to bare the cost of its operations is unrealistic. Most successful galleries do meet half of the bargain (Hugh, 2007).

A number of solid programmes are carried out to make for a successful operation of the gallery. These include

- Charging entry or jury fees to evaluate artists work. Several hundred entries add up to significant income for the organization and not much action for the artist.
- Asking the artist to prepare the artwork for exhibition (framing and so forth)
- Asking the artist to pay for transportation to and fro the venue of the exhibition. The artist has to also package the work.
- Artist are also required to insure the works while in transit.
- Through promotional programme to patrons, a lot of fund is collected by way of showing the works as exhibits.
- A percentage of 30 percent is charged for every work that is sold.

However, most Galleries believe that the artist should not bare the cost of an exhibition. But the practical needs of the real world still exist and that is not entirely possible.

Some Galleries offers the artist venues to tour their works for a fee that covers the expenses of the exhibits. Artists still may have to pay cost, up front with smaller organizations but larger galleries may pay those initial expenses. Some Galleries also attract patrons or donors that award grants to artists to help with the cost of exhibiting their artworks.

6. Preservation Issues of Exhibited Artworks

The issue of preservation of artworks during the exhibition process is significant so that possible damage to the collections is minimized. It is essential that art works are displayed with care since not all materials are able to withstand the rigors of an exhibition. When exhibited items are archival arte-facts or paper- based objects, preservation considerations need be emphasized because damage and change in such materials is cumulative and irreversible.

Five main preservation/categories have been established as recorded in the National Preservation Office (2000), to help contain the deleterious effects of exhibitions on library and archival materials. There are;

- 6.1 Environmental concerns of the exhibition space.
- 6.2 Length of the exhibition
- 6.3 Individual Cases
- 6.4 Display methods used on individual objects.
- 6.5 Security

6.1 Environmental concerns of the exhibition space

The main concerns of exhibition environments include light, relative humidity and temperature.

Light

Light wavelength, intensity and duration contribute collectively to the rate of material degradation in exhibitions. The intensity of visible light in the display space should be low enough to avoid object deterioration but bright enough for viewing. Exposure to natural light is understandable because of its intensity and high ultraviolet content. When such exposure is unavoidable, preventive measures must be taken to control ultra violet radiation including the use of blind, shades, curtains, ultra violet filtering, film, and ultra-violet panels in windows or cases. Artificial light sources are safer options for exhibition. Incandescent lamps are most suitable because they emit little or no ultraviolet radiation.

Florescent lamps may be used only when they produce low ultraviolet output and when covered with plastic sleeves before exhibition. Light should be lowered or turned off completely when visitors are not in the exhibition space.

Relative Humidity

The exhibition space's relative humidity should be set to a value between 35% to 50%.

Temperature

For preservation purposes, cooler temperatures are always recommended. The temperature of the display space should not exceed 72⁰F. Controlling the environment with 24 hour air-conditioning and dehumidification is the most effective way of protecting an exhibition from serious fluctuations.

6.2 Length of the Exhibition

The longer an item is exposed to harmful environmental conditions, the more likely that it will experience deterioration. Many Museums and libraries have permanent exhibitions and installed exhibitions which have the potential to be on the view without any changes for years. Damage from a long exhibition is usually caused by light. For paper based items the suggested maximum length of time that they should be on display is three months per year. It is recommended that high quality facsimiles of especially delicate or fragile materials be displayed in lieu of original for longer exhibitions.

6.3 Individual Cases

Library or archival materials are usually displayed in Cases or Frames. Cases provide a physically and chemically secure environment. Vertical Cases are acceptable for small or single-sheet items and horizontal Cases can be used for a variety of objects including three-dimensional items such as opened or closed books and flat paper items. Case materials should be carefully chosen so that they are not source of pollutants or harmful fumes for displayed objects.

6.4 Display Methods

The observance of proper display conditions will help minimize any potential physical damage. All items displayed must be adequately supported and secured.

Unbound materials, usually single-sheet items, need to be attached securely to the mounts, unless matted or encapsulated. Metal fasteners, pins, screws and thumbtacks should not come in direct contact with any exhibit items. Objects in frames should be separated from harmful materials through matting, glazing and backing layers. Frames should be well sealed and hung securely, allowing a space for air circulation between the frame and the wall.

Bound materials should be displayed closed and lying horizontally. If the volume of a book is shown open the object should be open only as much as its binding allows. Blocks or wedges hold a book cover to reduce strain at the book hinge. Cradles which support bound volumes as they lay open without stress to the binding structure and polyester film strips, which help to secure open leaves. Any book that is kept open for long period regardless of these support can cause damage. One should turn an exhibited book pages every few days in order to protect pages from over exposure to light and spread any strain on the binding structure. (Glaser, 2009).

6.5 Security

A high level of security is demanded to seduce the risk of loss from theft or vandalism. Whenever possible; the exhibition area should be patrolled. A 24-hour security is recommended when precious treasures are exhibited.

7. Facilities for the Art Studio

For an Art studio to be functional, adequate facilities need to be provided, with a setting that is well planned and accessible for the expression of design project in the diverse areas of art. As reflected in the works of Wachwiak and Ramsay (1971:247-250), the following indices could be used in the creation of an ideal Art Studio.

7.1 Location: It should be accessible. The studio should be planned to provide adequate space at the rear of the room and along one or two walls for storage, clean-up (sink) facility and counter or surface working areas. There should be sufficient space at the rear to allow for one or more large tables that could be re-arranged for group projects or special art activity and also guarantee free flow of traffic to storage, display and clean up areas.

7.2 Furniture: Desk and Table surfaces of non-glare, water proof and scratch-resistant material are recommended. White formica working surfaces have many advantages *but* they must be protected during projects involving cutting or hammering. Table and Desks should be adjustable for height and easily movable to provide for group or project activities. In the multi purpose art studio, stools which can be recessed under tables can ease the traffic problem. Free-standing easels can effectively augment the limited table and desk painting surfaces.

7.3 Storage: There should be adequate storage for art supplies, tools, visual aids, projects in process and completed art work reserved for display. Supply storage should be provided for assorted art papers, (drawers or slots) should have inside measurements slightly longer than the size of the paper itself. Adjustable shelves are recommended for these supplies. A simple pegboard panel attached to a wall and the necessary accompanying hardware will alleviate the most pressing tool storage problems.

7.4 Clean-Up Facilities: In order to minimize traffic problems, the sinks should be easily accessible from all parts of the studio. Multiple mixing faucets and heavy duty drains and sink traps are recommended. Sinks should be large enough to allow several youngsters to use them at the same time.

7.5 Display Facilities: A generous amount of space should be allotted for display purpose and for instructional bulletin boards. Surfaces should be soft, matte finish with easy pinning or stapling properties such as cork or cloth-covered celotex. Random-punch butt-end acoustic tile can be glued directly to wall surfaces or to masonite panels to form a simple yet effective display facility.

7.6 Other Specifications: Floors should be of nonskid material, hard, yet resilient and easily cleaned. Neutral coloured asphalt or plastic tile is generally recommended. Lighting should be of sufficient kilowatt intensity to provide adequate light with minimum glare. Electric outlets should be provided at intervals within the studio.

7.7 Special Equipment: The following items are generally recommended among other studio equipment in the Art studio. A complete Desktop Computer with all the accessories, Telecommunication facilities and Delivery Van should be provided. There should also be Air conditioning and Reprographic equipment among other specialized tools.

8. Conclusion

From the foregoing, Art Exhibition if well planned and executed with the skill required, could provide earning to budding artists in Colleges and Universities. It is thus a marketing tool for the exposition of the works of art in society. This, according to (Wachowiak, 1971) demands constant planning, thinking, dreaming organizing, adapting, researching, experimenting, motivating, evaluating and resource-building. These are the challenging and often enervating responsibilities of successful art exhibition today. Sometimes (more than not) it pays off to be an artist for art's sake in the main, but for an artist to make a living takes flexibility and smart tactics in marketing and salesmanship. Art is an adventure, a science and a discipline with its own singular skills, its own unique core of learnings and its own incomparable rewards. This paper thus provides art business service and

information to both the artist collectors and art professionals that will position them adequately in the art business market place.

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Biography

Dr. Godwin Ogheneruemu Iriwieri is a prolific creative writer since 1986, author of a number of books since 1997, a Graphic and Advertising Practitioner in 2000, Art Historian and Art Critic since 2005. He is also a Senior Lecturer and a former Head of Department of Fine & Applied Arts, Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria in 1999 and 2006 respectively. He is also a Fellow of the strategic Institute for Human Resource and Development, Abuja, Nigeria in 2011.

Iriwieri hails from Oria-Abraka, Delta State Nigeria, Born in June 16, 1956. He attended Government College, Ughelli, the University of Benin, Benin-City and Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria. He obtained a B.Ed Hons degree (Second Class (Hons) Upper Division, in Fine and Applied Arts in 1986, MFA degree in Graphics in 1991 from the University of Benin, Benin-City, Nigeria.

He also obtained a Ph.D degree in Art History in 2005 from the Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria.

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