

An Anthropologist Considers Contemporary Nigerian Art

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I wrote my abstract for this presentation before the paper, like an artist's pencil sketch before a painting. Having begun the paper I found that, as sometimes happens with an artist, my creative urges took a hold of me and has led me in somewhat different directions. I apologize for misleading those of you who have read my abstract.

After years of research and writing as an anthropologist on the traditional aspects of the culture and art of several Igbo groups in Nigeria, notably at Afikpo, I have taken it into my head to learn about contemporary Nigerian art, a curiosity that began in the mid-sixties with the purchase of several art works in your country, simply because they attracted me. My reasons are now more scholarly, for it is in the contemporary forms that much of the creativity of Nigerians in the visual arts is occurring today. Recently, I have begun to explore the contemporary arts and artists at Nsukka and Enugu, and I have done a little work at Afikpo.² I am far from ready to write on my preliminary researches, but I thought I would present something of my impressions of contemporary Nigerian art, limited as my experience has been so far.

As a scholar, but not an artist, I am a product of Western culture, from America. Yet I have followed Nigerian matters for some forty years, having begun my research at Afikpo in 1952, coming back to this wondrous country again and again for research and for visits; this is my second home. I live in two worlds. I am frequently in the dilemma of viewing things from my Western scholarly experience and also from a Nigerian perspective; the two often differ. And I am now also between seeing matters in art and culture from both a contemporary and a traditional viewpoint. These two sets of contrasts frame my thinking in this paper.

The Western world from which I come has played a hegemonic role towards traditional African art, acquiring what the West often considers

to be Africa's finest traditional works, sometimes honestly, sometimes by deceit, occasionally by military capture or other forced appropriations, a world which denied that Africans had worthwhile art, yet took much of it away. A world, which due to its financial and other resources, educational institutions and scholarly training has dominated the study of traditional African art, and trained many of the first generation of African contemporary artists, either in the West or in Africa.

This Western world is rich in African objects to contemplate, with impressive numbers of publications on African art, and with plentiful scholars and meetings. Virtually every major museum and many minor ones in the United States have had a least one exhibit of traditional African art in the past fifteen years or so. While a small number of anthropologists formerly dominated the study of African art in the West, it is now a larger number of art historians, particularly in America

The West has its own intellectual agenda with regard to traditional African art, its own conceptions as what to include as art and what to exclude, and its own ideas as to what is beautiful and ugly and interesting. At an earlier time much what is today considered art was classified as ethnographic object. The first to be recognized as art was sculpture, in the form of masks and figures, then gradually textiles, pottery, basketwork, beadwork, dress, household objects, and so on.

In the Western world ideas about African art continually change, as fashions in Western contemporary art alter about each decade; now traditional African art is quite fashionable in a Western world not only of scholars, but of rich patrons, wealthy sectors of a society turning to play with something new, perhaps bored with the creative art forms in their own country; having the power to play with the arts of other cultures. The West also purchases most of the tourist arts from Africa and elsewhere.

The very phrase "contemporary art" has a Western ring to it, what Susan Vogel improperly calls International Art.³ Contemporary art is

probably as muddled a concept as is "tradition,"⁴ as difficult to delineate, since "contemporary" refers to time, not to a particular quality of art. Is not work done by traditional artists today, by sign and lorry artists, also contemporary? There is a sort of general understanding that the West means by contemporary art in Africa; it is what the West considers equivalent to fine art, work involving some criteria of skill, essentially non-repetitive, emphasizing innovation, and involving objects that sell at a fair price.

Yet in the West in recent years there has been considerable scholarly self-criticism Western notions of African traditional artistry, as well how the West understands and makes use of the arts of the American Indian and peoples of the Pacific.⁵ These self critiques, however, have had little influence upon collectors, auction houses and certain other aspects of the Western art market, though slowly influencing how this art is presented and interpreted in museum exhibits in the West, as well as in scholarship. On the positive side, the West has helped stimulate African contemporary art through individuals, such as in Nigeria, Kenneth Murray, Suzanne Wenger, the Beiers and the Wolfords, as others elsewhere in Africa,⁶ though with some of these figures there have been disagreements as to how positive their influence has been. Yet, the presence of these individuals balanced, at least a little, the absence of or the dismal record of teaching arts in African primary and secondary schools. And Nigerians have been trained by Westerners in Africa and the West and brought to the West for exhibits, tours, and so on. Whether one feels that these resources have assisted or distorted the development of African and Nigerian contemporary art or not, is always up for discussion. I bring up these points, largely known to you, since there is evidence that the West now has a growing interest in contemporary Third world art, including African forms: it is likely that contemporary African art will become more fashionable in the West in the near future, as traditional African art has. The Center for African Art (now The Museum for African Art) in New

York recently held an exhibit of twentieth century African art, Africa Explores, although much criticized by Olu Oguibe,⁷. There was a well received exhibit in 1990 at the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York City, entitled "Contemporary African Artists," at which two of the nine artists were Nigerian residents, El Anatsui and Bruce Onobrakpeya.⁸ There are now four or five galleries in London which regularly exhibit contemporary African art, one in New York City, and a number in Paris. The National Museum of African Art in Washington, D.C. is becoming interested in contemporary work, and there is growing interest among members of the Arts Council of the African Studies Association in the United States.

At the same time I understand that Nigeria's internal art market for contemporary art is increasing--although slowed by the economic situation--with the growth of art patronage and an increasing interest of some members of the public, with a larger percentage of internal sales for some artists. From what I read and hear from Nigerian artists they very much desire this internal growth and see it as a positive step. So Nigerian and contemporary arts are increasingly being pulled in both directions, internally and toward the West. From the West will come some of the undesirable as well as desirable qualities that have occurred with involvement in traditional African art. Western criteria of aesthetics may dominate. Many of the top pieces may go to the West where the top money lies. Much of the publications on contemporary art may originate in the West.

But there are differences from the case of traditional African art. The traditional artist received very little money by Western standards for his work that went to the West, and in some cases none at all as objects were taken by force, stolen from shrines, purchased through a dubious third hand, or the artist had died. The traditional artist, unless interviewed by a scholar, had no voice at all; the West interpreted his objects as they wished. Even when a research scholar existed his interpretations often served his own academic concerns, rather than the

artist's. The traditional artist was silent in the West; he did not publish his views. Yet, everywhere that scholars have studied the matter, they have found a lively critical and evaluative sense among the traditional artists and their public; there was no silence at home. The traditional artist was not invited to come to the West to show his skills and work, except at international World Fairs, mostly in Paris and America, where he was on exhibit as a craftsman, sometimes living in a reconstructed tribal village! The West had almost complete control over the interpretation of his or her art work.

Now many of these features differ for the contemporary African artist. In Nigeria they often have catalogues published of their exhibits, frequently write on contemporary art, and their shows are reviewed in newspapers and magazines, sometimes by other artists. Artists publish books, and write poetry and illustrate books of their own and other authors, and their ideas are expressed in print, teaching and at meetings in the West and sometimes in other African countries. They are heard beyond their local areas of work and residence in Nigeria, as teachers and in other ways. This conference is testimony to that fact. Unlike the traditional artist, the contemporary artist is not silent to the West and the West can listen and engage in dialogue with them. Unlike the traditional artists, the contemporary artists are paid more substantially for their work, although often still not enough.

From the Western viewpoint traditional African art has often been seen as valuable not only because it was old but because it was authentic. Contemporary African art is gradually developing an authenticity outside and inside Africa, though this is a slow process. In Nigeria at a national and regional level artists, scholars, critics, and patrons have developed standards as to what is high quality work and what is not, although there is considerable differences of opinion among them about what the art should be like⁹. Various so-called "schools" of contemporary Nigerian art have developed their own traditions, and the field is old enough so that

it is now has a history, covering at least three generations, discussed in the writings of Fosu, Jegede, Okeke, Kennedy, Beier and others.¹⁰ There is no reason that contemporary art cannot be as creative as traditional art has been, and modern artists may produce even greater masterpieces, instead of living in the shadow of a magnificent past, one so loved in the West. So I believe that contemporary Nigerian artists have the strengths to withstand the undesirable aspects of Western pressures and to take advantage of its desirable qualities.

If Nigerian artists and their critics, galleries and museums have a variety of ideas of what is quality in Nigerian contemporary art, Westerners generally do not. Should it be art forms most equivalent to Western standards (over which standards there is, in fact, rarely agreement)? Is it forms closest to traditional African art pieces, or that echo them, sometimes called neo-traditional art in Nigeria? Is it what Africans themselves say is of the highest aesthetic quality? Of so, which Africans? I have been asked a number of times in the West, if one were to put on an exhibit of this art, or collect it, how does one decide what is good?. What has strongest aesthetic qualities? The difficulties here in the West may be a function of a newly developed contemporary art world in Nigeria, and/or of Western ignorance of this art. Curiously, as an anthropologist, I was trained not to make judgments about other cultures and their arts, but to accept that what their members like is what they like, what their aesthetic criteria are is what I make note of (though of course, there is never full agreement on this among them). So now, when I look at contemporary African art I have judgmental difficulties. But the question is raised for Nigeria. Who determines quality and how is it determined?. Is it what sells in the Nigerian art world? Is what the university scholars say is quality. Is it what the artists and their critics proclaim? Or all of these?

In any case, relationships of contemporary African artists to the West cannot be eliminated, even if this were desirable. There has been

dependency but also gains. Numerous Nigerian artists have had exhibits at the Goethe Institute, the British Council, the Alliance Francaise, the Italian Center, the USIA, and have come to the West to study, to teach, to practice their arts for long or short times, whether they always like the experience or not. Some have sold their work to institutions and collectors in the West and some have benefited from the stimulus and support of individuals from the West in Nigeria, and from Western travel grants and fellowships.

So the West paradoxically to Africa (as Africa is often a paradox to the West), offers benefits to African artists and scholars of African art while it is also hegemonic in its demands, its selfishness, its acquisitiveness, its stereotyping of African peoples and their culture and art. And now the positive and negative benefits are being increasingly brought to contemporary African art, as the West's interest in it increases. On the one hand some in the West feel that since it is not traditional art it is of little value, that modern African art is a mere copy of the European and what the African artist does in art is borrowed from the Western world. This is nonsense, of course. On the other hand, there is danger of a growing Western fashion in contemporary African art, to collect it for spurious reasons rather than out of genuine interest, even to purchase it as an investment alone. Incidentally, while William Fagg is often cited as one who denigrated contemporary African art, considering it worthless, it is not well known that he also could not stand Western contemporary art.

But pressures of the market place and of artistic fashion among patrons, collectors, museums, and so on, within Nigeria also may some day create dangers of dominating the artists work, of over directing it. And there is always the question of the relationship of art to government, at the national, state and local level. Scholars employ the concept of "the rationalization of culture," by which they mean the way governments direct and manipulate traditional and contemporary culture for their own

interests, for example, to minimize or to stress its ethnic components, through sponsoring and not sponsoring exhibits, museums, art festivals and in other ways. These problems are not only internal and external to Nigeria, but fundamental in the relationships of artists to any society. Such issues have to be watched, so that the Nigerian art world does not become a copy of the worst features of the Western art world on a smaller scale.

Today, projects involving the West with Nigerians or other Africans should be done in the sense of a firm collaboration. Africans should insist on this collaborative approach, which is the richest of all ways of doing things. A fine recent example is the publishing of the book with information on over 350 Nigerian artists,¹¹ compiled by Bernice M. Kelly and Edited by Janet L. Stanley of the National Museum of African Art, which could not have been done without the strong cooperation of Nigerian artists, and which should be an invaluable reference for them, and for scholars, teachers, curators and others.

There is, of course, a very basic, underlying association between Africa and the West which greatly influences Nigerian contemporary art and artists, and which is so evident in Nigeria today. This is the ways that Nigerian economics is linked to the world markets, which means in Nigeria, a difficult economic time for many artists. Nigerian artists cannot themselves resolve this link to the West. Yet I am surprised, and very much pleased, that despite the difficult economic situation here, that Nigerian art appears lively and thriving and able to express artists' feelings about economic, social and political problems, and with the hope that these will improve, views shared by Westerners familiar with Nigeria. What import the statements of the artists in their work have on Nigeria is hard for me to say, though it is clear that these come deeply from the heart of their creators, from their personal experiences. Saying is better than not saying; it reinforces the beliefs and ideas of others in the country desirous of change, and saying gives vent to personal anger and

disgust. Contemporary South African protest art is now becoming fashionable in the West, so we have exhibits and publications and a growing Western market for the art. Nigerian social art is less well known in the West, is not called protest art, and is sometimes subtle rather than direct. Whatever it is called in Nigeria it is there, and will be until the general situation in the country improves. Clearly hampered by the country's economy, international connections are important to Nigerian artists. At the same time economic problems in the West, though by no means as great as in Nigeria or elsewhere in Africa, have meant cutbacks in financial support for African art and artists. The links between Africa and the West in the artistic sphere are sensitive and changing.

Being an anthropologist, I would now like to comment on tradition, and its relationship to contemporary Nigerian art. The colonial world, and its post-colonial influence did much to destroy traditional culture, religion and art, sometimes directly and intentionally, as through missionary work, sometimes indirectly, as in the colonial schools. Tradition continues to exist in some spheres, though at times increasingly encapsulated and isolated and otherwise turned into government sponsored arts festivals and fairs. It would appear that there is great discontinuity between the modern world of contemporary art and its artists, representing present time, some of whom give scholarly papers in a Western language, teach at Western-style universities or hold government posts and who travel abroad, and on the other hand, the traditional world, which represents past time. The idea of discontinuity relates to the considerable destruction of the past in Nigeria, for which there are mixed feelings of regret, nostalgia and loss, yet knowledge that in the modern world there are exciting challenges and creative opportunities.

I would like to argue that this discontinuity, which suggests a sharp break from the past, is mostly an illusion, certainly in contemporary art. The artists themselves are of various cultural ancestries, speaking languages of their culture, and they often draw their

cultural background into their art, through traditional tales and myths, images of traditional persons and the use of traditional design patterns, though not all contemporary artists do so, nor those that do so do so all the time. So there are continuities here between the traditional and the modern.

Continuity also exists if we reject a popular idea that traditional art is functional and contemporary is not, in the sense that traditional art often functions in ritual, religious and social events and contemporary art has no such functions.¹² But contemporary art does function, expressing the experiences and views of the modern Nigerian artist and his social backgrounds, in its involvement in status and elite issues of artists, patrons, museums and the like, and in the decoration of government edifices and religious buildings. It is not functionless. The idea that it lacks functions tends to denigrate contemporary art as against the apparent authenticity of traditional forms.

The notion that traditional art is repetitious but contemporary art is not is also an exaggeration, suggesting discontinuity between the two. In fact there is often much variation in the style of traditional forms¹³ and individual contemporary artists frequently work for considerable periods within a specific style and set of images. Another overrated distinction which implies discontinuity between the traditional and contemporary art is the idea that in the former the meanings of the art are generally agreed upon by the people involved, but contemporary art is too individualistic for this to be so. This is true to some extent, but scholars have found that persons in traditional cultures often have variable interpretations of the meanings of the objects and their use. And in contemporary Nigerian art concerned with social problems and modern urban images there are general understandings of the meanings that suggests that national interpretations exist, as it does with the idea of the artistic blending of tradition and modernity, even if the specific details vary.

There is also the idea that much of traditional Nigerian art tends toward representation of some sort, while the contemporary work sometimes draws on abstraction, seen as having a European origin. Yet there are strong elements in some traditional cultures of abstract forms: in some ways the uli and nsibidi designs are abstract. And certainly some of the earlier contemporary artists in Nigeria, such as Onobolu, Lasekan and Enwonwu, in drawing from a European tradition of naturalism in art appear contemporary in the Nigerian setting, but some qualities of their naturalism seem related to Nigerian traditional art forms. So that the relationships between the traditional and the contemporary in Nigerian art are anything but simple.

The terms "tradition" and "traditional" which derive from the Latin tradidere, "to hand on," or "to hand over," are Western ones, and yet are of Nigerian interest, as a recent book edited by Moyo Okediji, responding to a paper by Picton John,¹⁴ suggests. Tradition and traditional do have value laden meanings in the West, as I suppose they do everywhere that a like term exists, suggesting in the West, the authentic, the good and the hallowed, though the West does much to destroy its own traditions, particularly in America, projecting its nostalgia for the past upon traditional African art and culture and that of other Third and Fourth World peoples. The interpretations of the terms "tradition" and "traditional" in the West suggests attempts to deal with their own past, as well as that of Africa and other parts of the world, sometimes in myopic ways, at other times reflectively. For present day Africa does not fit Western images of what societies should be like, even if the West does not fit its own image. Each culture creates its own illusions of itself and its past and this influences its artistic forms, and its attitudes toward the arts of its own and other cultures.

I personally find the terms tradition and traditional ambiguous and uncomfortable, but cannot seem to find better ones. Susan Vogel and Ima Ebong¹⁵ define traditional art "as that art that emphasizes its

connection to received forms more than the invention of the individual artist." "Received forms" seems limiting to me, so drawing from the Okediji volume, I prefer to use traditional to refer to cultural practices of the pre-colonial period and colonial period, including those that have survived until today, often in modified form, understanding that these practices have generally been changing, and that tradition does not have a static quality but involves innovation, creativity and change. The traditional in Nigerian art does not imply a lack of innovation; we know that there were great changes in art forms in pre-colonial times, as the way Ife metal sculpture became modified in Benin. What is considered traditional in Nigerian art often has had a long history of change.

So I see a flow of traditional art forms from the past to contemporary art today, though some past traditions have been destroyed (but not always information about them and their memory) and others modified. There is continuity. It is expressed not only in the use by some contemporary artists of images and designs from earlier times, but in the tendency of these artists to write poetry, occasionally to title their works with reference to Nigerian literature or tales, and the fact that some visual artists are involved in the dramatic arts. These features, to me, relate to the indigenous Nigerian practices of integrating different art forms, where in the West visual art and poetry and drama have often been distinct.

It seems to me that some of the older and middle generations of Nigerian artists have drawn a great deal from traditional African materials, or from traditional European naturalistic work, identifying these as their artistic ancestors, but that the more recent generation, perhaps less tied to the rural and more to an urban world, there is sometimes a restlessness with older images as not being as relevant to their lives, and producing more abstract art not linked to tradition, or dealing with the contemporary scene. It may be that the younger generation of artists will more and more put the traditional aside in grappling with

their immediate world, only to have the next generation or two return to exploring tradition, for there are generational processes in the arts as there are in family life and in attitudes toward culture. Anthropologists call one such generational pattern "the theory of alternate generations," by which is meant that children reject their parents values and culture but willingly accept or return to those of their grandparents' generation. This may also occur with contemporary artists, who in their uses of the past link their own personal lives in positive ways with the lives of their own earlier generations, or they are rejective of these; a particular artist may go from one position to the other, and even back again, in a lifetime.

Some of the current Nigerian art work, particularly, I think, the more academically located work, is strong in its critique of current social and political problems. There is a message that things were better in the past, and sometimes a hope for the future. But which past? This is not always clear to me. I do not think it generally refers to precolonial times, but rather to the early days of independence, when there was a relatively democratic government and a great deal of expectation in the air, or it refers to the time of the oil boom, when the quality of living was high even though the standard of government may not always have been so. But for the West the authentic past in Africa is often the pre-colonial one, although most of the objects which the West have collected were, in fact, gathered during in the colonial period.

Some contemporary art from Nigeria that I have seen which incorporates both traditional and contemporary images, reflects an analogy to what linguists call "code switching" in language, when a speaker goes back and forth between two languages in the same sentence or one after the other, say between English and Yoruba in Nigeria or French and Wolof in Senegal, often between a modern Western language and a non-Western tongue.¹⁶ I am not referring to pidgin speech. This practice enriches speech for those involved. And it is the particular kinds of blending of

traditional and contemporary themes in some contemporary Nigerian art which gives it its interest, as the blending of uli designs with a contemporary scene of human suffering, when the mixture provides a quality of historical depth and change, uniting the pre-colonial past with the post-colonial present. I call this process artistic code switching. Some work of an artist may deal with traditional or neo-traditional themes, while other work relates to modernity, so that the code switching occurs among the art pieces of a single artist, rather than within a single piece. Thus one has to view a number of his or her works in order to understand the artist's relationship to the past and the present.

Joining the past to the present through putting images of the past into the contemporary mediums such as silkscreen, etching, gouache, or acrylic, is another form of artistic code switching, the blending of past images and present mediums. In any case the images from the past in the contemporary art suggest a long voyage from a quieter, less restless time to the present, though this may be an illusion; pre-colonial times were not always peaceful. While these traditional images are sometimes figures of warriors or of conflictual matters, it is a past which is generally taken as pleasant, non-conflictual, almost idyllic, and the present which is antagonistic, disturbing, oppressive, an integration of the artist's believed past with the experienced present. Whether the contemporary artist draws from the past or entirely from the present, Mudimbe¹⁷ argues that these artists are close together. Both kinds of artists are responding to changes brought about by the colonial and post-colonial situation, and both reveal the consciousness and the artistic identity of their makers.

There is also the question of the use of pseudo-traditional images and forms in contemporary Nigerian art. Lawal suggests that for some Osogbo art, while "Yoruba folklore supplied the theme of the painting, that the work owed nothing to Yoruba tradition,"¹⁸ and that even some of the titles of the works presumably relating to myths were afterthoughts,

though the work gives the impression of deriving from tradition to tourists and other buyers. Rather, Lawal feels that the art derives from "subconscious artistic impulses."¹⁹ This is possibly true, but given that most of the original Osogbo artists were relatively unschooled in the Western sense and were Yoruba, it is hard to see that the images that they have created do not have some relationship to tradition, even if they do not particularly link to tales or myths. If not, where could they have come from? Even the subconscious has cultural associations.

This matter raises the issue of how accurate the uses of the past are in contemporary Nigerian art. To me it is always an interpretation and there is nothing wrong with that. When a contemporary artist employs uli designs, he may in a painting use those which come from different areas of Igboland and were never seen together on any Igbo women's body, or the artist may put designs from one place together in a non-traditional manner, but neither of these acts mean that this is wrong. It rather expresses a concern with Igbo culture in general, a concern with overall values. This is in the same manner that a traditional artist in the past might draw images and designs from neighboring peoples of the same or a different culture and integrate them with his own artistic work. I see tradition as a large array of cultural materials from which the contemporary artist draws as he chooses, blending as he wishes. The anthropologist, as myself, of course is interested in why particular choices from the past are made, at particular times, by particular artists.

Many of the issues of contemporary art and its relationships to traditional aesthetics in Nigeria and in other parts of Africa are being explored by artists and scholars in other regions of the world, as with the American Indian, and in Thailand and Indonesia.²⁰ Similar issues exist as to how the reconcile a greatly disturbed past through Western contact, existing in real and imagined form, with the present in the arts, why artists make particular choices as to how much they draw from the past

and the present, and how these choices change from generation to generation.

Tradition and the contemporary in Nigerian art also have reference to whether the artist sees himself or herself primarily in terms of being a Nigerian artist, a regional one, or one most closely related to an ethnic group, and how this varies from time to time. Years ago I was in a gallery in Jamaica viewing some art pieces signed with a Chinese name and others with a name from India, although both employed Jamaican images. I mentioned these backgrounds to the gallery manager, who stated with a certain approbation that these were all Jamaican artists. Clearly my anthropological tendency to ethnicize had led me astray. Nigerian artists probably have multiple identities, international, national, regional, and cultural, which vary in significance according to the social situation, and are a natural outgrowth of the artistic roles that they have today. A further identity, of course, may be as a member or associate of a certain "school" of art, such as Osogbo, ONA, the Ulists, or of a collectivity of artists working in different styles, such as AKA.

Tradition in contemporary Nigerian art also has another referent than the cultural past, referring to the tradition in which the artist has been trained or associates with, which he or she may accept, modify or break away from at various times. Such an artistic tradition likely has a viewpoint on cultural tradition and the past; so that for artists there is a doubling quality in regard to tradition: the artist's own personal experience with cultural tradition and the tradition of the artistic school with which he or she is involved. There is likely a complex interplay here. Sometimes there is a willing acceptance of aspects of a tradition outside one's own through this artistic school, as several non-Igbo artists have taken to Igbo uli design. Sometimes there is a movement away from a particular tradition to see oneself as a totally Nigerian artist, drawing images from various Nigerian cultures.

In the dialogue between contemporary and traditional art, I would be

interested to know to what extent contemporary Nigerian and other African artists meet, or have met with more traditional artists, often living in the rural areas today, to learn their techniques and images and their ideas, or do they mostly draw from the literature of scholars, travellers, government officials and missionaries? I do know that some student artists at the University of Nigeria at Nsukka have had direct contact with traditional artists and their art for their Masters' degrees. And how frequently has a traditional artist turned himself into a contemporary one, as Okoche Ota of Afikpo, who has gone from making traditional Afikpo masks for use in local masquerades to making them for museums, tourists and export, and has now moved into contemporary work, sometimes drawing from traditional themes, sometimes not.

If I have dwelt a great deal on questions of the traditional world and the contemporary one in this paper it is not only because I am an anthropologist, but because I am also moving from research in the first to the second scene, struggling as to how to conceive the contemporary world in anthropological terms. I might say, that I struggle with delight, for I have had very great cooperation from Nigerian artists, and I want, in closing, simply to thank them for making my work possible and pleasurable. I hope that I can repay them in kind.

Notes

1. I wish to thank the National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. for generously providing my travel fare which has allowed me to participate in this conference. The views expressed in this paper are my own and not those of this institution.
2. Simon Ottenberg, "'We Are Becoming Art Minded.'" Afikpo Arts 1988." African Arts 22:4, 58-67, 1989.
3. Susan Vogel (ed.), assisted by Ima Ebong, Africa Explores: 20th Century Art, New York: Center for African Art, 1991.
4. Moyo Okediji (ed.), Principles of 'Traditional' African Art. Ibadan: Bard Publishers, 1992.

5. Sally Price, Primitive Art in Civilized Places. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989. Marianna Torgovnick, Gone Primitive: Savage Intellectuals, Modern Lives. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990. Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine (eds.), Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display. Washington, D.C. Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991.
6. Frank McEwen on contemporary Shona sculpture in Zimbabwe, Romain-Desfosses and Victor Wallanda in Zaire, Margaret Trowell in Uganda, among others. See V.Y. Mudimbe, "'Reprendre.'" Enunciation and Strategies in Contemporary African Art," pp. 276-287 in Vogel and Ebong, op.cit.
7. Olu Oguibe, "Review" of Susan Vogel (ed.) assisted by Ima Ebong, Africa Explores: 20th Century Art. New York: Center for African Art, 1991, in African Arts, 26:1, 16-18, 20-22, 1993.
8. Mudimbe, op.cit., 281.
9. For example see Obioro Udechukwu, "Observations on Art Criticism in Nigeria," Nigeria Magazine 126-127, 1978, 35-43.
10. Uche Okeke, "History of Modern Nigerian Art," Nigeria Magazine 128-129, 100-118, 1979. Dele Jegede, Trends in Contemporary Nigerian Art: A Historical Analysis, Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Fine Arts, Indiana University, 1983. Kojo Fosu, 20th Century Art of Africa, Zaria: Gaskiya Corporation, 1986. Jean Kennedy, New Currents, Ancient Rivers: Contemporary African Artists in a Generation of Change, Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992, Ulli Beier, Contemporary Art in Africa, London: Pall Mall, 1968. Ulli Beier, Thirty Years of Oshogbo Art, Bayreuth: Iwalewa, 1991.
11. Bernice M. Kelly (compiler) and Janet L. Stanley (editor), Nigerian Artists: A Who's Who and Bibliography. London: Hans Zell, 1993.
12. Mudimbe, op.cit., 186-187
13. For an excellent example see Robert Thompson, "Abatan: A Master Potter of the Egbado Yoruba," pp. 120-182 in Daniel Biebuyck (ed.), Tradition and Creativity in Tribal Art, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969.
14. John Picton, "On the Invention of 'Traditional' Art," pp. 1-17 in Okediji op.cit.
15. Vogel and Ebong, op.cit., 10.
16. Monica Heller (ed.), Codeswitching: Anthropological and Sociolinguistic Perspectives, Berlin: Mouton, 1988. Leigh Swigart, Practice and Perception: Language Use and Attitude in Dakar. Ph.D. dissertation, Anthropology, University of Washington, 1992.
17. Mudimbe, op.cit., 287.
18. Babatunde Lawal, "The Search for Identity in Contemporary Nigerian Art," Studio International, 193:986, 145, 1977.
19. Ibid.

20. Edwin L. Wade (ed.), The Arts of the North American Indian: Native Traditions in Evolution, New York, Hudson Hills Press, 1986. Herbert P. Phillips, The Integrative Art of Modern Thailand, Berkeley: Lowie Museum of Anthropology, University of California. Joseph Fischer (ed.), Modern Indonesian Art: Three Generations of Tradition and Change, Jakarta and New York: Panitia Pameran KIAS, Festival of Indonesia, 1990.