

Igbo Art: A Reflection of the Igbo's Visual Culture

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Abstract : Visual culture is the expression of the norms and social behavior of a society in visual images. A reflection simply shows you how you look when you stand before a mirror, a clear water or stream. The mirror does not alter, improve or distort your original appearance, neither does it show you a caricature of what stands before it, this is the case with visual images created by a tribe or society. The 'uli' is hand drawn body design done on Igbo women and speaks of a culture of body adornment which is a practice that is appreciated by that tribe. The use of pattern of the gliding python snake 'ije eke' or 'ijeagwo' for wall painting speaks of the Igbo culture as one that appreciates wall paintings based on these patterns. Modern life came and brought a lot of change to the Igbo-speaking people of Nigeria. Change cloaked in the garment of Westernization has influenced the culture of the Igbos. This has resulted in a problem which is a break in the cultural practice that has also affected art produced by the Igbos. Before the colonial masters arrived and changed the established culture practiced by the Igbos, visual images were created that retained the culture of this people. To bring this point to limelight, this paper has adopted a historical method. A large number of works produced during pre and post-colonial era which range from sculptural pieces, paintings and other artifacts, just to mention a few, were studied carefully and it was discovered that the visual images hold the culture or aspects of the culture of the Igbos in their renditions and can rightly serve as a mirror of the Igbo visual culture.

Keywords : artistic renditions, historical method, Igbo visual culture, changes

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