

Management and Maintenance of Public Outdoor Sculpture in Nigeria: An Example of Oduduwa Statue Restoration in Ile-Ife

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ABSTRACT

Several millions of Naira is spent by government and private organizations in Southwestern Nigeria every year to produce public outdoor sculpture without appropriate maintenance scheme. Invariably the Nigeria cities have been littered with debris of deplorable and unkempt monuments. This phenomenon, fleeting and ephemeral in nature, has not gained deserved and sufficient scholarship in art historical discourse in Nigerian contemporary art. In the light of the foregoing, the study examined the management features of public art generally and the practice in Southwestern Nigeria. Appropriateness of public outdoor sculpture maintenance was however underscored in the study with the examples of the deplorable situation of some sculptures and particularly the Oduduwa sculpture which was recently systematically restored. The study noted that so far, competent management scheme with budgetary provision is not made for the maintenance and control of abuse against the public outdoor sculpture. Since the negligence is yet to be stemmed, the Nigeria cities will paradoxically continue to witness absurdity in beauty, rather than the realities of order and pleasurable public environment.

Keywords: Sculpture management, sculpture maintenance, Public outdoor sculpture, statue restoration, Oduduwa statue

INTRODUCTION

Public outdoor sculpture is an art fast growing in Southwestern Nigeria albeit some attendant problems. The problems are not new in art historical discussion. Indeed, publications of Odiboh (1987), Adelowo (1999), Akintonde (2008a: 17-39) and Oladugbagbe (2005: 143-148 and 2012), Akintonde and Kalilu (2013: 88-103), amongst others have critically examined different issues in the praxes of outdoor sculpture in the zone. Omisore, Ikpo and Oseghale (2009: 225–268) had earlier discussed the state of disrepute of the cultural heritage sites in Ile-Ife. The monument dwell upon are shrines, grooves, the Palace of Ooni and National Commission for Museum and Monument building at Enuwa proximally located to the Palace of Ooni, Ile-Ife. Although, public outdoor sculpture images such as *Oduduwa*, *Moremi*, *Obafemi Awolowo*, *Omotoso Eluyemi* and *Unknown Soldier* were located around the area of their study. The deteriorating states of the images were not mentioned before they were recently renovated. In addition to that, issues such as renovation and restoration of deteriorating images in Southwestern Nigeria, very germane to the development of art history have not been given adequate scholarly attention in the broad spectrum of art management; invariably the subject remains nebulous.

This discussion specifically focused attention on restoration of the deteriorating state of *Oduduwa statue* (plate 1) in Ile-Ife. Nevertheless, similar issue in the art practice which have direct impact on poor condition of many outdoor sculptures in the Southwest of Nigeria were briefly discussed with relevant examples as an anchor to the main discussion. The *statue of Oduduwa* neglect and its eventual restoration had been chosen for this discussion being a

good quality art work among the public outdoor sculpture in Nigeria and for its importance in the history of Ile-Ife, the cradle of Yorubaland. Its significance lies in the history and religion of the town, the Yoruba and the Yoruba in diaspora. The importance also hinged on socio-economic factor of tourism in the town, and the inherent aesthetic values in the statue. This study examined the general neglect and staggering decay of the monuments in Ile-Ife and particularly observed the deteriorating state of *Oduduwa statue*. It discussed a renovation made; restore the statue to its original state. It also alluded to the neglect of monuments in Ile-Ife generally.



Plate 1: *Statue of Oduduwa* screened for the restoration exercise. Photograph by Moses Akintonde, 2015

ART MANAGEMENT AND PUBLIC SCULPTURE: THE EXAMPLE OF SOUTHWESTERN NIGERIA

The aspect of art management in the modern world generally saddled art manager with the responsibility of care taking public art. Their main duty is to ensure good presentation of public art especially outdoor sculpture as well as improving the life-span of the art. This main objective ensured primal fulfillment of art aesthetic pleasantry, memorializing functions and civic education to the public (Akintonde, 2008b; Akintonde and Kalilu, 2013: 88-103 and Akintonde, 2013: 97-111). Right from the unveiling of public sculptures, the art managers were usually appointed either by the government or voluntary social organization and charged to ensure constant electricity and water supply within the sculptures environment as the case may be. Water Fountain units of statues were kept running, flowers, and lawn in the garden built within statues environment were also kept clean and green at all time. All form of abuses against statues or their environments were well prevented and prosecuted whenever it occurred. Art manager recommended renovation or restoration of work when necessary and in some cases, supervised the process, such as oversight function carried out by Heritage Preservation - an American non-profit organization founded in 1973 (Wikipedia 2015) whose mission is to preserve the American nation's heritage through various practicable means such as non-profit organization intervention scheme.

This type of government support organization is yet unknown in the management and preservation processes of outdoor sculpture in Nigeria except for the occasional type such as a foreign support exercise executed by the artist of New Sacred Art Movement in collaboration with The Republic of Austria in 2012 on Susan Wenger's works at Osun shrine in Osogbo. Currently there is no known non-profit well organized manager of public outdoor sculpture in the Southwestern Nigeria. Although, management of some public outdoor sculptures in the zone by some individual became evident around 2005, it was however not well organized and it was contractually based to make monetary gains.

Government at all levels who are the custodian of the public outdoor sculpture did not even have any substantive scheme through which their agents could manage the art. Out of negligence, they hardly take cognizance of managing the art for good preservation, prompt intervening on the restoration of degrading public sculpture images. Akintonde (2008a: 19-39 and 2013: 97-111) observed this problem. He cited the badly damaged statue of *Iya Oye* (plate 2) located at Mushin, Lagos State and *Iba Oluyole* in Ibadan that were allowed on display for several years. *Iba Oluyole* was never attended to since 2004 until 2012 when it was renovated by the Oyo State Government.



Plate 2: *Iya Oye*, located at Olu Aina Street, Isolo, Lagos The statue fell and remained in the same position for over two years. Photograph by Moses Akintonde, 2007

CURRENT TYPE OF PUBLIC OUTDOOR SCULPTURE MANAGEMENT IN THE SOUTHWESTERN NIGERIA

The earliest fairly organized but now moribund art management scheme in Osun State was the one established by Capital Territory Development Authority, in 1998. In 1998 the agency commissioned a set of urban beautification units comprising of two statues, *Trumpeter* (plate 3), *Dundun Drummer* and two monogram letter "OS" column representing Osun State, located at the end of Iwo-Ibadan road and Ikirun-Ilorin roads in Osogbo respectively. However, as soon as the works were unveiled in August 1998, the agency directed its gardeners to all the sites of public outdoor sculptures, only in Osogbo specifically to clean the statues' environments. No other intervention work was done to maintain the statues. However, since Murele the General Manager of the agency retired from the services of Osun State Government, there has not been a body purposely designated to maintenance the public outdoor sculpture environment in the state.



Plate 3: Trumpeter, one of the statues in Osogbo formally maintained by Osun State Capital territory Development Authority now neglected. Photograph by Moses Akintonde, 2009.



Plate 4: *Unknown Soldier*, cement, 1990, Fajuyi Park, Ado Ekiti. Photograph by Moses Akintonde, 2015

In Ado Ekiti, two gardeners were employed to manage the Fajuyi Park in 2006. Again, their work was limited to the cleanliness of the environment. In other states of the Southwestern Nigeria, attempt was not made to employ gardener to take care of the public sculpture environment on permanent basis. Government only intervenes in the renovation or restoration of outdoor sculpture only when it is extremely necessary. Nonetheless, because of the symbolic importance of the cenotaph of *Unknown soldier* and its yearly function in the Arm forces Remembrance Day ceremony usually held at the site of the image (plate 4), largely for this reasons, the statues of *Unknown soldiers* country-wide are always maintained at least once in every year.

In the emerging public outdoor sculpture management scheme type in Southwest of Nigeria scenario, contractors who did not have art background usually received art commissions. They undertake the commission through their proxy who in many cases were unprofessional artists. The contractors also assumed the position of art managers. They employed a set of labourers who maintain outdoor sculpture sites. Arrangement for the maintenance of statues and their environment were usually made for a period of time that may be five years. The fees charged for the services were normally included in the contractual fees for the construction of public statues as observed in the agreement made in 2010 between Osun State Government and two liquor companies; Seaman Schnapps Company and Eagle Aromatic Schnapps who sponsored the renovation of some public sculptures in Osogbo.

Nevertheless, when the first five years of maintenance services expired, a new contractual agreement would be entered into based on an agreed fee. However, it has been observed that after the first five years of maintenance, such services were not allowed to continue because of the government lack of commitment to projects that may not boast their political gains (Akintonde 2008a: 17-39). The statue and their environment are usually left unkempt. For instance, out of the three statues under the maintenance of Seaman Schnapps and Eagle Aromatic Schnapps companies, only the composite statue (plate 5) located at Ilobu junction, Ring Road, Osogbo is still being maintained since 2010. However, in Lagos similar scheme successfully operates for statues such as *Tinubu Square* (plate 6) and *Obafemi Awolowo* at Allen, Ikeja.



Plate 5: Seaman Schnapps advertisement outdoor sculpture; the only statue still maintained in Osogbo. Photograph by Moses Akintonde, 2014



Plate 6: Aerial view of well-maintained New Tinubu Square, Lagos. Photograph by Ayo Akinyemi, 2013

PROCEDURES IN PUBLIC OUTDOOR SCULPTURES RENOVATION AND RESTORATION

A good renovation and restoration exercise on public outdoor sculpture can only be executed to satisfaction by professionals who have excellent pedigrees. When selecting a competent team for restoration of statues in Euro-American countries, credentials of professional artists that may also include allied professionals were usually thoroughly scrutinized by a high power jurist. The commission for renovation or restoration of public sculpture is as keenly contested as when a new outdoor sculpture was commissioned. Hoffman (1992: 113-146) and Akintonde (2008b: 271 and 2013: 97-111) highlighted the procedures in their separate publication. However, the procedure used in commissioning expert to undertake the restoration of the *Statue of Liberty* as well as renovation and maintenance of other statues in America (Wikipedia 2015) also buttressed their observations. Step taken in the project were carefully planned and monitored by a committee known as the committee for the Restoration of the *Statue of Liberty* under the surveillance of the Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation in collaboration with National Park Service (NPS). The committee hired the services of high level experts in various fields necessary for the restoration exercise which provided resounding success.

Tangential to the above is Hirzy's observation in the following statement:

The ultimate responsibility (of a good conservator) is to preserve a work of art an irreplaceable treasure which must be approached with utmost care, skill, and sensitivity. ... When conservator is usually sensitive to aesthetic and art historical concerns and knowledgeable about material and methods, the results brings new life to the sculpture (Hirzy, nd: 1).

Giametti (1996: 3) also observed that before a public sculpture is produced, strategies for maintenance must be developed and a good conservator must be consulted or employed to make periodic restoration maintenance work on sculptures.

However, outdoor sculpture renovation and restoration processes in Southwest of Nigeria have been usually unprofessionally executed. Generally, renovation works were entrusted to novice or road-side artists. These "artists" lack adequate theoretical knowledge in the concept on which the production of sculptural works were based. The factor would have guided them through restoration or renovation of works to achieve near original level of success.

Invariably, due to lack of the requisite knowledge, sculpture renovation had been usually haphazardly made. For instance, statues that were sculpted in metallic patina purposely to simulate bronze or brass shimmering gilts have been completely altered and crudely painted in ordinary gloss colour. Sometime brown has been used to simulate body completion while other hues were used to accentuate the textile form and quality of statues. Attempts were usually made to paint paraphernalia such as: cutlass, sword, rattle gourd, scepter, charms among others associated with statues in varying hues to stimulate liveliness.

The color effect on statues being renovated is usually awful and repulsive; degrading the aim and the entire processes for which monuments were produced. Public outdoor sculpture images in Ile-Ife such as: *Awolowo* (plate 7), *Moremi*, *bust of Oduduwa*, and statues of *Oduduwa* (plate 1) have been so treated. So were the statues of *Agbe*, and *Iya'la* (plate 8) ineptly renovated in Ila-Orangun. The *Unknown Soldier* at Bode Osi, *Iba Oluyole* in Ibadan and *Alago Oba* in Abeokuta *etcetera* were also poorly renovated. Apart from this, the accumulation of paints used in the renovation of statues over a long period of time usually occasioned strains on the walls of images made with polyester resin due to abrasion caused by contraction and expansion effect of high humidity and excessive tropical Nigeria heat.



Plate 7

The unprofessionally renovated,
Awolowo bust, Enuwa, Ile-Ife.
Photograph by Moses Akintonde, 2013



Plate 8

Moses Akintonde, *Iya'la*, cement,
2004, Ila-Orangun.
Photograph by Moses Akintonde, 2014

THE STATUE OF ODUDUWA AND ITS RESTORATION WORK

Until recently no complete restoration work was carried out on the public outdoor sculpture in Southwestern Nigeria except the restoration work executed on *Obokun* in Ilesa in 1997 about eleven years after the original work was made. The steady deterioration of the statue was occasioned by poor technical handling of polyester resin in the production processes of the statue which broke in two halves along seam lines after a year it was produced.

The statue of *Oduduwa* (plate 1) was the second public outdoor sculpture that restoration work had ever been executed in Southwestern Nigeria. The statue was commissioned by the Department of Ife Affairs to Abuede, a Lagos based sculptor in 1998. The Late Dr. Omotoso Eluyemi, an Archeologist who was then a lecturer at Obafemi Awolowo University coordinated and supervised the project. The statue was erected on the long stretch frontage

courtyard of Ooni's Palace Ile-Ife, on a spot over-looking, *Ile-Oduduwa* (Oduduwa grove) about 300 meters away. The statue was made in the image of Oduduwa the progenitor of the Yoruba race. It is 220cm in height and it was expressed in naturalism. Since every reigning *Ooni* (official title of the King of Ife) had the transposition of the *Oduduwa's* spirit and authority through a face mask worn during a crucial aspect of the coronation rituals; by this tradition, the current *Ooni* is also referred to as *Oduduwa* or *Oodua*. For this reason, the statue gained more prominence, for its implicitness in the Yoruba socio-political and religions interest. Since its production, the statue has been attracting different Yoruba sub-groups and the Yoruba in diaspora social-cultural groups and most importantly Yoruba traditional religious bodies. For instance, at every important Yoruba traditional festivals such as *Olojo* festival, The *Odua* Progressive Union - a Yoruba Socio-political pressure group across Southwestern Nigeria and local social clubs usually visit the statue site to behold "their progenitor, Oduduwa in the image". It is for this reason and its inherent aesthetic derivable pleasure in the image, that it is sacrosanct to keep the statue and the environment clean and functional.

For about six years after the erection of the statue it was left in its original dark metallic patination. However, on the directives of the palace authority, the statues and three other outdoor sculpture images located in the palace proximity were repainted in white gloss colour. Since then, the *Oduduwa* has always been repainted in the same colour yearly, in the last ten years.

FACTORS OF GRADUAL DISINTEGRATION OF THE STATUE

Oduduwa was said to have been renovated always by road side artist-a sign writer according to *Sarun Ooni*, Oyelami Awoyode - the head of palace servants. Over the years, the gloss paint used for the painting of the work had gradually accumulated into a thick hard surface on the work. As a result of harsh weather intense heat and high humidity impact, abrasion processes in the work became steady. Invariably, the accumulated paint developed cracks at the convex points. These actions further allowed rain water to percolate through the cracks and strained the fibre glass walls to bloat and burst, degenerating into eventual rots in some parts of the statue. The problem further set in motion chemical reactions in the water contents always stored in the walls which also triggered biodegradation process on the statue through fungi growth, heightened by lizard and wall-gecko wastes and their other activities observed in the cracks and grooves in the works.

Added to the rapid process of disintegration of the work was the poor use of material for certain portion of the statue. For examples the major parts of the image was made of polyester resin but the strings of bead attached to the crown was made of young bamboo stem, a material which is susceptible to cracks due to harsh weather pressure. The staff held by the right hand (plate 9) was also made of galvanised pipe. The direct contact between the two forms (one a fiber material, the other a galvanised metal) definitely yielded to pressure, generated by cold and hot weather induced contraction and expansion. Arising from this actions, the staff made of galvanize pipe, evidently pull the fiber hand usually during expansion on sunny day heat. It releases it again at the cool of the night. The continual pressure on the hand, invariable broke apart the fingers of the image's right hand. The wrist and the upper arm at the scapula joints were also broken (plate 10). The entire arm was loosely held together only by few fiber yarn and a corroded tiny metal armature.

Human physical actions on the image were also noticed. Obviously because the expansive courtyard environment location of the statue was often used for ceremonies, it apparently opened the statue to direct human actions. People moved very close to the image during

parties and ritual ceremonies. Street orphans who usually mill around the image also, often abuse it. Left-over of food items, each time a ceremony (plate 11) was held in the environment has been noticed on the pedestal of the statue. Ritual materials have also been occasionally left on the lower part of the image.

In fact, during the current restoration exercise, Akintonde who executed the project met fresh ritual items on the base of the image. A fifty Naira note (about 1/4 of a dollar), a mobile phone sim card were also found in the cavity of the *ase* (medicinal horn of authority essence) held by the left hand of the image. The sim card was however handed over to The *Sarun Ooni* while the fifty Naira note and pieces of rags found in the metal gongs attached to the staff were promptly disposed off. At the second day of the restoration exercise, more extraneous materials and a new fifty Naira note had been tucked into the *ase* again. There was no idea of who were infringing on the work in this manner. All these cryptic, esoteric and sordid human actions in many ways contributed immensely to the degeneration of the image.



Plate 9
Oduduwa staff made of galvanize pipe
Photograph by Olaleye Olaoye, 2015



Plate10
The broken right hand fingers, wrist
and the upper arm of *Oduduwa*
Photograph by Olaleye Olaoye, 2015



Plate 11: Obatala ritual ceremony session around the statue of *Oduduwa*. Photograph by Olaleye Olaoye, 2015

RESTORATION OF ODUDUWA STATUE

Restoration work started on the statue by January 20, 2015 and did not complete until February 24, 2015. The work was done in stages for proper technical management. First, the thick layer of accumulated surface color from previous renovation and fungi growth were removed. Some problems were experienced in the removal of the crack color. On thorough observation the thick accumulated color on many parts of the statue still cleft strongly into the fiber glass walls of the statue, by capillary attraction starting from the first coat of gloss color used on the image during the various renovation exercises. Subsequently, it built up gradually and in some cases, filled up cavities in the forms of the image, as well as the surface texture recesses; which grew up as much as 1.00mm in the concave areas of breast bead and thread lines; about 2.1mm at the convex and as much as 3.0mm at the cavities in the recesses of the fold, clavicle bone region *etcetera*.

Removal of Accumulated Color Pigment

Local gloss color solvents were initially thought to be appropriate for the removal of the thick layer of the surface color of the image. However all solvents applied failed, due to the degree of thickness and hardness of the layers of color. The option of solvent or acid wash was dropped as the former only had little effect in the removal of the color pigments; the later however might severely damage the fiber walls.

In order to retain the delicate forms and the textural effect in the work, gradual scarping and flaking off of the color was employed. The color pigments were flaked off gently by tapping with small scrapper edge on the surface of the image which induced cracks and flakes in the accumulated color, especially along the contour lines. The pigment was carefully detached off or scrapped until everything was removed; the left over in the cavities were difficult to remove. But little gentle tap by a light hammer on such area with chisel successfully removed the pigments in the recesses.

All the broken seam lines, cracks and torn fiber walls were remoulded with jell-coat polyester resin mix. The badly disintegrated right upper hands at the ball and socket scapula joints were remoulded. The cracked elbow joint and the fingers that had broken some months earlier were remoulded. The broken beads at the base of the lower part of the crown region (plates 10 and 11) were put in place. Fifty strings of 75cm length of beads were made and used to replace those that have been disintegrated.

The head of the cockerel, a part of the composite statue, which had been completely detached was also remoulded. The rust gongs on the metal staff held by the image were also carefully grinded and kept in proper shape. The entire surface of the statue was washed and allowed to dry before two coat of an auto-based white gloss color was lightly sprayed on it. The pedestal of the statue were repainted in their former cream color and deep blue lining on the upper and the lower parts of the structure. The fence in the statue environment was also painted while the walk-ways were re-constructed.

The restoration work was carefully made to bring the work to its former state (plate 13). The main problem is the surface texture which had reduced a little in quality. The accumulation effect of previous color pigment had eaten deep into the fiber wall of the statue. The abrasive effect on the surface texture over time had also weakened it. When the colour pigment layer was removed, some delicate textured forms had become powdery and flaked. Even, at the crown area where not much color pigments accumulation was notice; its surface had been gradually eroded. As a result of this, the intricate beaded crown decoration form had reduced in value. Despite the loss in tactile quality of the original image, the restoration exercise

bounces the work to life very close to its original state. The restoration achieved high percentage, and has immensely saved the statue from total degradation.



Plate 13: The successfully restored Oduduwa statue. Photograph by Moses Akintonde, 2015

CONCLUSION

Various levels of government in Nigeria generally have made great effort to create order and beauty in the public environment, part of the effort is the commissioning and erection of monuments in strategic locations in the Nigeria cities and sub-urban towns. Certainly, there is evidence of sanity in Southwestern Nigeria public environment. Part of this is the order, aesthetic pleasantry and patriotic civic enlightenment in the heroic deeds of some of the personality interred through the images, usually creatively expressed to invoke aesthetic

pleasure. The overall effect is also involuntarily therapeutic and soothing to the public psyche.

Nevertheless, as good as the idea to the well-being of the public and human development, there still exist a problem of management and control of the monuments to ensure frequent maintenance, renovation and restoration of public monuments as and when due. Although the monuments particularly, public outdoor sculptures are already growing in number and value, there is no known formal organization; government agents or voluntary groups handling the maintenance of the images. Casual maintenance was only given to the works usually at critical stage of disrepute. Examples of such public outdoor sculptures in distress are still in the cities of Southwestern Nigeria. Many of the monuments in their present state are grossly unsightly appalling and certainly incongruous to the spirit of beauty and orderliness in urban planning and visual creative agreement.

Although, efforts have been usually made to renovate or restore a few number of outdoor sculptures in the Southwestern Nigeria, the exercise have always been entrusted to mediocre, the results of many of the renovation exercises have caused much harm to the works. An example of this experience is the *Oduduwa statue* in Ile-Ife which has just been properly restored. For the past fifteen years much damage had been done to the forms and surface quality of the work, through inadequate and poor renovation exercise. However, a recent systematic restoration executed on the work by a competent artist brought the work back to life. Nonetheless, the continual exposure of the work to various types of abuse observed after the restoration may subject it to precarious state. Further lack of attention to it and a well formulated maintenance scheme and budgetary provision for the exercise will soon accelerate the statue to a state of disrepute.

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