

# Quantum Leap beyond the Frontiers: ‘Currentism’ in Visual Arts Production in the Nsukka School

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## Abstract

There exists no scholarly publication espousing on the driving force behind the restless aspirations of the Nsukka artists towards searching for and using commonplace materials that the potent environment provides for supports and media for studio art production. Following this, my intent is to discuss the Nsukka artists’ creative inclinations, bordering on styles, ideas, forms, materials and technique. Through hermeneutical analysis, I examine some useful insights in the formal and conceptual principles for which their recent and current artworks are foregrounded. Relying on historical, interpretative and analytical methods of data illumination, I engage some selected unusual artworks executed between 1999 and 2017 by some selected Nsukka artists to authenticate the fact that Nsukka artists have taken a quantum leap beyond the frontiers of the human consciousness and in so doing, have mastered their oeuvres, bringing about great ingenuity and some unprecedented innovations in the execution of breath-taking postmodernist artworks whose formal contents and thematic probing interrogate germane issues.

**Keywords:** quantum leap, frontiers, currentism, visual arts, production, Nsukka School

## 1. Introduction

Even though the trajectory of modern Nigerian art including the Department of Fine and Applied Arts (here referred to as the Nsukka School) has been written by some authorities like Uche Okeke, Ola Olodi, Chike Aniakor, Chika Okeke-Agulu, Sylvester Ogbechie, Krydz Ikwumesi, among others, it is for the purpose of setting the tone for this study, important that I briefly re-emphasize and espouse on it, after all “the historic mission of the University of Nigeria’s School of Fine Arts cannot be over emphasized” (Okeke, 1991, p. 5). Therefore situating, as well as periodizing the quantum leap and paradigm shift in the art productions in the Nsukka School are in two episodes - a developed situation that is integral to but separate from continuous narrative and an event that is distinctive and separate although part of larger series. The first leg was when Uche Okeke and Chike Aniakor, “one of the finest theorists to come from Africa” (Ezeh, 2005, p. 62), arrived at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka in 1971 to teach art and started the *uli* experiments. During this experimentation, students namely; Obiora Udechukwu, Paul Igbanugo, Ray Obeta, Bons Nwabiani, Osita Njelita, among others were carried along. These students along with the lecturers embarked on several field research trips in some Igbo communities where they viewed first hand some *uli* women painters at work, documented the *uli* body and wall

decorations and paintings, as well as incorporated the *uli* motifs into their own studio works. According Ikwemesi (2011) “this sparked off endless waves of experimentation in the studios at the University of Nigeria and also created a remarkable new departure in history of Nigerian art” (p. 10). Providing a broad context for interrogation and understanding of the advent of *uli* art in the Nsukka School, as an active player, Aniakor (2015) writes, “it was by history’s unceasing favour that I began to teach African Art and Mixed Media Painting to the post-civil war students in 1970 by empowering them through seminars and field works on how to re-excavate their cultural past with stress on Igbo *uli* art tradition as a tool for individual artistic and creative re-empowerment and as a shared group experience” (pp. 16-17). Two decade later, those *uli* dance steps had attracted many to the wider circle of dance at Nsukka and quickly transformed our corporate primal visions into those of generations of students who have studied at Nsukka” (Aniakor, 1991, p. 8).

From 1971 up to 1997, *uli* ideogram shaped entirely the Nsukka artist’s art. This informed an *uli* art exhibition of seven artists of the Nsukka group curated by Emeritus Professor Simon Otternberg and shown at the Museum of African Studies, Smithsonian Institute, NY, USA, in 1997.

According to Ene-Orji (2019) “the creative firmament in Nigeria (**Nsukka in particular**, emphasis, mine) has broadened and deepened, with artists engaging new initiative” (p. 48). This has brought about shifts in entirely new direction, beyond the employment of *uli* idiom into artworks in Nsukka School. This direction which is here, regarded as second leg of the episodes has yielded and is still yielding postmodernist artworks in Nsukka School. Confirming this, Aniakor (2015) adduces the following:

We are in a postmodern age. But because of globalization and its attendant effects, some authorities may quarrel with this assertion. Nevertheless, the characterization of postmodern age are fragmentation, trans-historical experiences, shifting boundaries and sites, an easy access to art materials where artists destroy only to constitute as a voice of their creative freedom away from patronizing institutions. Their creative choices are unbounded while their creative directions know no limits. They have replaced institutional patronage with the triumph of a radical creative temperament and innovation. They have become critical to society and even his own being, while seeking inner redemption of their creative soul, brazen and creatively experimental, their creative works explore inner and outer boundaries of art making. (p. 43).

The desire to extend creative frontiers and through travels to the West by some enterprising and eclectic artists as El Anatsui, an internationally renowned sculptor, who according to Morgan (2016) has been described as “possibly the most relevant living African artist of this time” (p. 87) sparked off postmodern artworks that hinge on appropriation, grouping, assemblage and installation. According to Oloidi (2003), “postmodern sculpture began in Nsukka art school under the magnetic, domineering influence of El Anatsui in 1995. Ever since that time up to now, he had and is still attracting many acolytes, particularly from his Nsukka environment” (p. 7). Until his meritorious retirement in 2012,

El Anatsui taught sculpture at the Department of Fine and Applied Arts, University of Nigeria, Nsukka since 1975. During his creative tutelage, he encouraged students to use cheap materials around them in making strong artistic statements. This is not unconnected with the fact that “the ability to shape and thereby exert some control over the untidy material of everyday life is a well-known benefit of the art” (Dissanayake, 1992, p. 79).

Today, relying more on the commonplace materials that the potent environment provides is the vogue, not just among the sculpture students but also to ceramics, painting and textile students alike. Validating this, Anatsui’s former student, Chijioke Onuora writes that “El Anatsui encouraged students to take interest in exploring and investigating the world around them by delving deeper below the surface of event, object, people and experiences, in an attempt to seek for unusual meanings and truths, to distill essences, to decipher symbolic contents” (Onuora, 2001, p. 96). Without doubt, it was this creative spirit that spurred the Nsukka artists to the restless search for down – to – earth materials to executing works of art whose outcomes have been superlative, highly evocative and have been shown in notable galleries, world over. Examples of notable Nsukka artists, who trained under Anatsui and whose works have been shown in some notable galleries are Nnenna Okore, Bright Eke and Eva Obodo, whose artworks have been offered at auction many times. In fact, the quiet Anatsui art movement has been infesting conceptual ideology of other young artists such as Gerald Chukwuma, Victoria Idondian and others who have nothing to do with the master’s formal tutelage (Sowole, 2017).

Undoubtedly, Anatsui is the embodiment of currentist/postmodernist art. He brought its modes and ethos in Nigeria art scene, particularly in the art department of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka and “has arguably, influenced more of the artists from Nsukka art school than any of his peers” (Nwigwe, 2018, p. 3). His restless search for commonplace materials for art making, has influenced other numerous artists in other areas of specialty in the art department. According to Odoh (2011), “Anatsui articulated a new shift in the creative direction of the Nsukka School and encouraged his students to become aware of the change in global art trends and attune themselves with its varying modes of presentation” (pp. 30-31). Harkening to this, postmodernist considerations now shapes the creative consciousness of art students in the art department till date.

So, right from the 1970s to present the driving force of studio art production in Nsukka School has been exploration and experimentation with *uli* motifs and common place materials. These have been yielding results in the execution of artworks on supports like raffia mats, oil bean pods, cast paper, PVC pipes, among many other materials. This will form the subjects of discussion of this study.

### **What are *Uli*, Nsukka School and Currentism?**

Even though, definitions are by their nature very limited, going further in this discussion requires one to know what *Uli*, Nsukka School, and Currentism mean, so as to understand subsequent exegesis. *Uli* is “the Igbo name for the indigo dye obtained from several species of plants identified with the following botanical names: *Rothmania whitfield* *Rothmania*

*hispiola*, *Rothmania cuspidata*, and *Rothmania urcellii*. In art, it is not just plants, dye or pigment, it stands for the drawing made on the body or wall with the dye or pigment; it is also the name of the entire art tradition in which the indigo dye or earth pigments were used on Igbo land (Ikwuemesi, 2011, p. 5). In 1958 at the Nigerian College of Arts, Science, and Technology (NCAST), later named Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, *uli* became a part of creative resources as a result of 'Natural Synthesis' ideology propagated by Uche Okeke that "merged the best of indigenous art traditions forms and ideas with useful ones from Western cultures to create a uniquely Nigeria aesthetic perspective" (Lathop, 2017).

Nsukka School refers to the Department of Fine and Applied Arts, University of Nigeria, Nsukka which was established in 1961. Because of Nigeria/Biafra civil war (1967-1970) the art department was closed down and was later reopened in 1970. Although the department was established in 1961, unarguably, it is post Nigeria civil war art tradition which developed in the early 1970s that has significantly impacted on the aesthetic contours of modern Nigerian art (Anueyiogu, 2017, p. 6). It is so called because of its creative ideology which anchors on the *uli* art idiom which is "emblematic of an artistic phenomenon that occupies an inimitable position in contemporary art practice in Nigeria" (Anueyiagu, 2017, p. 6). Today the Nsukka School is known for its crusading influences and contributions to art and national development (Oloidi, 2008, p. 16). Right from its establishment in 1961, the Nsukka School has moved from one level of achievement to another. Not only did it set the pace and example for most post-independence art departments in Nigerian universities to follow in terms of curriculum, it also became, and continues to be, a hotbed for experimentalist avant-garde art. Not only that. The department has been blessed with some of the finest faculty in the profession, and has in turn, produced a good number of art greats in these parts (Achebe, 2017, p. 5).

Currentism is the highly experimental and creative developmental period between 1995 to date, which brought about a total shift from modernism, where the conventional creative boundaries have been crossed and anything goes, bringing about postmodern ethos, "a return to pattern and decoration, allegory, narrative, figuration and a new type of historicism," whose "hallmarks are grouping, assemblage and installation" ((Clark, 2001, p. 10).

## **2. Categories of Paintings on different Supports by some selected Nsukka Artists**

Here effort will be made towards engaging with paintings that are executed on unconventional supports by some Nsukka artists. Due to the high level of exploration and experimentation in Nsukka School as noted earlier, raffia mats, cane sieves, earthen pots, among others are being profusely used as painting supports, thereby making it easy and cheap, especially for students who are the direct beneficiaries of the harsh economic conditions in Nigeria. These and other supports alike are gradually replacing canvas, board, among others for painting in Nsukka School. Of a fact, these improvisations have helped in the execution of breath taking veritable works of art. Example are Joseph Eze's series of paintings executed on mats with deft titles like "Trees undressing in the yard/farewell to

summer” adapted from “Haiku,” a poem from Obiora Udechukwu’s collection, *What the Madman Said* and “So long a letter” that is after Miriama Ba’s novel. In the execution of this body of works, Eze combined grasses with acrylic, enamel and gouache, executing on local mat very poetic pieces that borrow their sensitivity from the *Uli* aesthetics (Onuzulike (2001, p. 12). In the landscape format mixed media painting *Trees undressing in the yard/farewell to summer* (Figure 1) are two staggering trees, whose leaves have already waned and withered and whose two branches crisscross, forming a gateway-like shape. Tactile quality has been added to the work through the artist’s use of dry leaves which he painted over with brown colour and seen on the bottom to the centre of the surface to depict the ‘undressing’ leaves. Through the background, peep geometric shapes of blues, yellows and reds which activate the mat surface. Very conspicuous is a round white shape that depicts the sun. In its opulent splendour, confetti and decoupage effects, the piece creates a uniquely innovative artwork.



Figure 1: *Trees undressing in the garden...*, 1999, gouache and dry leaves on raffia mat, 180 cm x 120 cm. Photo: The artist.

Another example is Kelvin Ogbangba’s painting entitled *Even the King is also a Slave* (Figure 2). Carrying out studio experiment in 2015, the artist executed this painting on raffia cane meshes. In this particular painting, is seen the faces of a woman and a king configured with *uli* symbols, appearing in brown, yellow and white colours. The left and right upper corners retain the natural brown of the raffia mesh. In the painting, the king’s head forms one of the woman’s eyes and the king’s hand holding a jingle as her ear. This according to the artist depicts a woman seeing the society through the king and who she in turn, uses as a play tool towards getting whatever she needs in the name of love. The work is a fit metaphor for the enormous controlling powers of women over men. Through the piece, the artist buttresses the fact that women have always manipulated men while complaining and pretending to be the oppressed sex.



Figure 2: *Even the King is a Slave*, 2015, Mixed media on cane mesh, 60 x 60 cm.  
Photo: The author.

Recently, Nigeria faced economic recession. This condition hit hard on the Nigerian populace. Prizes of things became exorbitant, so much so that hunger ravished the people. Thematically, *Of People and Economic Recession* (Figure 3) in its postmodernist form, portrays this condition. The oil bean pod in its dry state usually coils and curves. And this 'coil-curving' represents in this work the suffocating and harsh situations Nigerians are facing. The human forms and imageries as seen in the artwork are Nigerians who were trapped in this economic quagmire. *Of People and Economic Recession* in its technical handling agrees with Aniakor (2005, 88) position that "art is a product of construction." Contemplating these artworks one is faced with new attitude to material. The evocative work shows good evidence of craftsmanship and colour rhythms in their pulsations and harmonies.



Figure 3: *Of People and Economic Recession*, 2017, gouache on oil bean pods. Photo: The author.

On paper cast of varied sizes of round shapes, numbering eleven, Nneka Odoh, a female artist of the Nsukka School, painted a highly aesthetical work bordering on the title *Nkoli Ka* (Figure 4). According Shyllon (2017) "African names are mostly embodiments of philosophy and the collective wisdom. Among the Igbo, there are a number of names that aptly capture the vicissitudes of existence in their content and meaning. One such name is



*Nkoli Ka*, “recalling is greatest” (*à la* Achebe), usually given to Igbo girls. As Achebe himself explains it in *Anthills of the Savannah*, *Nkoli Ka* celebrates memory and history as the cornerstones of experience, if not, of the existence itself” (p. 8). It is also an “expression of the Igbo of Southeastern Nigeria that underscores the cultural and social excellence of recalling and fruitful conversations” (Nwigwe, 2018, p. 3). Relying heavily on and also drawing from the Igbo *uli* ideogram, Odoh, like the *Sankofa* which according to Ikwuemesi (1999) is the name of a bird in Ghanaian mythical known for its habit of always turning back in its track in search of nourishment (p. 21), presents to us again *uli* painting, this time on a different support other than the conventional painting canvas. This creative sensibility again proves that experimentation and exploration drive the creative spirit in Nsukka School. In its asymmetrical arrangement on the wall, the interplay of colours, the sinuous lines and the resulting imageries, the artwork commands an affecting presence.



Figure 4: *Nkoli Ka*, 2016, oil on cast paper, varied sizes. Photo source: *Nkoli Ka catalogue*.

Exploring the tactile quality of earthen ware pots, sand and colour, Chukwuemeka Okpara in the work entitled *Ascending Spirit* (Figure 5) demonstrated how painting can be executed on fourteen varied sizes of pots, which he turned upside down, and carefully and skillfully painted on them variety of colours, hemmed with the *ntụkpọ* (dots), *anyanwụ* (sun) and *agwọlagwọ* (concentric circle) *uli* motifs and symbols. With this installation piece, the artist has explored into African painting forms, design motifs and symbols on traditional clay pots as support bases. For the artist, it is an encouragement on the contemporary African painters to explore similar African traditional objects in making visual statements. In its deft design and assemblages, the artwork “stir out emotions apparently because the end product is aesthetical” (Aniakor, 2005, p. 31).



Figure 5: *Ascending Spirit*, 2015, acrylic and sand on clay pots, varied sizes. Photo: The artist.

It needs to be stated that although the *uli* motifs form the formal properties of the art works, they hinge on innovation, in terms of the materials as well as the techniques of handling.

### 3. Visual discourse of Artworks Executed with divers Media

According to Picton (2000), “Art making, one could say, is generally speaking always of two kinds. There are those wherein form and intention are largely determined by some immediately useful purpose. The second is “those in which the figurative and/or the decorative intrude upon the perception of an immediacy of purpose” (p. 105). Art is a way of thinking and doing of which the brain and hands are involved to be able to translate intangibility into tangibility, the works of art. It is also “when the hands and tools are set forth into artistic motion” (Aniakor, 2005, p. 71). For Jonathan Bantel, “art happens not by some magical transubstantiation of materials but through the intelligent labour of the hand” (Bantel, 1979). For Chike Aniakor, “art making, may also be a product of the selection and interrogation of applicable media so that through the creative process, art is transformed into a visual product” (Aniakor, 2015, p. 16). Who opposes that art is not a process of construction. Of course, it is. And the Nsukka artists have become aware of this in creating artworks that are deep, both in configurations and meanings. Examples of such artworks are entitled *Channel of Discussion*, *Out of Belly*, *No Rest, No Comfort*, *Confusion Everywhere*, *Cultural Remix*, *Syncretism*, *Fulani Headsmen*, *Sagging: Manhood in Dilemma*, *People of Umuofia*, and *Untitled*. These artworks are striking installation, which affirm in a strong terms, the creative shift from modernist aesthetics to postmodern. They and others are testimonies, reaffirming Aniakor (2005) position that this paradigm shifts “provide ample indices into the spirit of age and the outburst of the creative consciousness in the fullness of season.” (p. 35).

Using Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC) pipes that are mainly used for plumbing and relying on the fusion technique, Thaddeus Ochiebo created and installed eight human-like skeletal headless figures, seated on blue plastic chairs, round a table as though, they are having a



round table discussion. For the artist, the holes of the PVC pipes are metaphor and channel through which discussions flow, hence the title *Chanel of Discussion* (Figure 6).



Figure 6: *Channels of Discussion*, 2017, PVC pipes, plastic chairs and wooden tables, varied sizes. Photo: The artist.

Figure seven entitled *Out of Belly* is an installation executed with discarded water plastic cans of different colours of blue, red, orange, green and white. These plastic cans were cut into pieces and used skillfully by the artist to form the shape of public water tap as seen in Nigeria and elsewhere. The installation work addresses the many resources in Nigeria which apart from the oil, have remained untapped. They are cocoa, rubber, and so on, that are flowing like water from a tap. It also interrogates the untapped potentials and talents of the Nigerian youths, who are roaming the street without hope for tomorrow.



Figure 7: *Out of Belly*, 2017, plastic can, varied sizes. Photo: The author.

A piece titled *No Rest, No Comfort, Confusion Everywhere* (Figure 8) by Sabastine Ugwuoke is an installation of a bed which on its foam, two small sized pillows and wooden

body are stuck thousands of *tooth-picks* which Morgan (2017) “described as a tool well-known in Nigeria for addressing dental food remains.” Pieces of coiled aluminum form the foot match. The work which won the National Art Competition first prize money award, organized by the African Artist Foundation (AAF) with the support of Nigerian Brewery PLC in 2016, addresses the issue of insecurity in Nigeria, especially in the North-East, where the terrorist Islamic group known as the Boko Haram, formed by Mohammed Yusuf in 2002 has been kidnapping people, including Chibok schoolgirls and bombing places, killing innocent souls and destroying properties worth billions of naira. The artist through the work is of the view that if this terrorist group is not defeated; their activities would spread across the entire Nation, thereby, becoming a torn in the flesh of the citizens. And that if it escalates beyond control and overpowers the security agents, most especially the Nigerian Armed Forces, getting sleep will become a serious problem as everyone’s bed will become uncomfortable to the extent that one would have no option but to be sleeping in the bush. Here, bed has become a fit metaphor for discomfort wrought by insecurity not only in Nigeria but also elsewhere, where terrorism is ragging like a wild fire.



**Figure 8: *No Rest, No Comfort, Confusion Everywhere*, 2017, tooth pick, aluminum, wood and foam, 80 x 40 cm. Photo: The artist.**

Kenechukwu Udejaja’s gigantic royal chair he executed with fibre glass, metal, ribbon, jewelry, and necklaces, bracelets, wool and other accoutrements is an installation titled *Cultural Remix* (Figure 9) and depicts the greatness of a king in Igboland. The king’s royal chair, among other appurtenances is symbol of authority in Igboland. It is dense with the allegory of Igbo traditional authority. Udejaja “arguably outmoded cultural elements and shows how they can be reinvented and mixed up for contemporary artistic purpose” (Nwigwe, 2017, 6). The artwork in its opulent splendor shows the artist’s creative ability and mastery in manipulating new media into forms and shapes.



Figure 9: *Cultural Remix*, 2016, fibre, wool and glass.

coloured material, metal, ribbon,  
Photo: The author.

*Syncretism* (Figure 10) by Livinus Ngwu demonstrates how carved wood can also be bedecked with some other synthetic materials, a hat and necklace made of aluminum of different colours. In his words, “it is better to marry modernity and tradition together. We should not be carried away by the reigning modernism. I am of the argument that we should not lose focus of the fact that African art was rooted in wood carving before embracing the modern ways of art making and therefore, mine is to use foreign materials to embellish my wood carvings” (K. Ngwu, personal communication, April 14, 2017). This can be seen in his skillful combination of stylized carved wood, sewn pieces of rubber derived from motor-tire-tube and empty can. His ability to appropriate these mediums in a profound manner as seen in *Syncretism*, buttresses his argument.



Figure 10: *Syncretism*, 2017, carved wood, rubber and can, 5ft high. Photo: The author.

In Obochi’s *Fulani Headsmen* (Figure 11), one contemplates pieces of fired clay of different shapes and earth colours that are carefully and skillfully sewn together with wire

to form human shapes, all hanging frontally. Aluminum and sticks have been used to form their heads and hands. They appear in two rows, holding one another's shoulder. These figures are hanged on a black board for the sake of legibility. For the artist, the work tells the story of dastardly retrogressive acts that are being perpetrated in the country, Nigeria by the Fulani marauders and how to curb the menace. It represents an open letter to the person in authority, informing him of the ills, so as to nip them in the bud.



**Figure 11, *Fulani Herdsmen*, 2017, clay, aluminum, and stick on black board, 200 x 120 cm. Photo: The artist.**

A freely standing work entitled, *Sagging: Manhood in Dilemma* (Figure 12) is a headless mannequin that is bedecked with a loosely cloth-like material, spreading backward on the ground, craftily crafted by a female fashion designer, Tochukwu Okpara. With thousands of pieces of wood gummed firmly together on a tarpaulin and coloured one after the other with red, white, and black for effectiveness and visual agitation, the installation which speaks to the sagging of trousers that is the vogue among young men. In its aesthetic quality, the installation delights one's sensory perception.



**Figure 12, *Sagging: Manhood in Dilemma*, 2017, glue, colour, tarpaulin and mannequin.  
Photo: The author.**

With knitting method of textile production that required a lot of concentration and tenacity, another restless female artist of the Nsukka School, Rita-Doris Uba on her own



part grouped, assembled, as well as installed dolls of white and red, white and blue and other colour combinations. This work is titled *People of Umuofia* (Figure 13). Thematically, it takes after the name Umuofia, Okonkwo’s village in Chinua Achebe’s epic novel, *Things Fall Apart*. The work insinuates abandonment, neglect and degradation to knitting method of textile production, which she reinvigorates, with a view to turning this conventional method into a conceptualized body of works. Of note is that Uba and Okpara’s works affirm the creative shift from both textiles (batik, and tie and dye) and fashion design (clothing construction) conventional ways of production in the Nsukka School.



Figure 13: *People of varied sizes*. Photo: The

*Umuofia*, 2017, mixed media, author.

Ngozi Omeje, another female artist of the Nsukka School, through *In my Garden are many Colours* (Figure 14) extends further the boundaries of ceramics. It is a hanging installation piece executed with thousands of sliced flip-flop soles of different colour variations and pieces of small curled fired clay. Technically, strings are tied to these small pieces of hundreds of curled fired clay. Also, strings are passed through thousands of perforated pieces of flip-flop soles. The strings are in turn, skillfully tied vertically to those of the horizontal ropes that are also tied to four constructed standing iron poles, in such a way that they congregate, hang, suspend and cascade. The piece activates space, even as it is not site specific but mobile. The artwork addresses the issue surrounding feminism. In the words of the artist, “I use it to discuss my dreams as a woman. And the expectation is that my dreams hopefully will one day come true. As an artist and a married African woman with children, there are some restrictions which militate against my art practice of which my dream is that one day the shackle of these restrictions will be broken” (N. Omeje, personal communication, April 14, 2017).





**Figure 14: *Untitled*, 2017, pieces of slippers, 1string, rope and iron. Photo: The author.**

These artworks are those of the numerous outcomes in visual art practice arising from exploration and experimentation in modern and postmodern visual art. There other artworks of other genres like fashion design and photography that are highly innovative and breath-taking too.

### **3. Conclusion**

Certainly, “when one considers the trajectory of Nsukka art, one would come to realize that it has not wavered. The Impetus and spirit that initiated the creative experiment of Nsukka School can still be located in the works and theories of the scion of the school’s creative philosophy” (Ene-Orji, 2011, p. 1). In the last two decades, a new texture of art, largely woven on the strength of materials implored, has been emerging from the same Nsukka art school (Sowole, 2017). Well over ten artworks used for this study created by some of the Nsukka artists namely; Joseph Eze, Kelvin Ogbangba, Nneka Odoh and Martins Okoro, Thaddeus Ochiebo, Samson Ejiofor, Kenechukwu Udeaaja, Sabastine Ugwoke, Livinus Ngwu, Joe Obochi, Tochukwu Okpara, Rita-Doris Uba and Ngozi Omeje simply attest to the above assertion. Making use of formal language in different ways these artists have demonstrated the manipulative possibilities of their chosen media and supports such as raffia mats, cane sieve, among others. They have demonstrated that there exits many possibilities in art making which can manifest through pushing the boundaries of art beyond its elastic limits. This they do through down-to-earth search for alternative materials, grounds and supports for painting and other art genre, bearing in mind that art is a way of seeing, a way of doing and way of thinking - a philosophical method (Aniakor 1990) and that art approximates performance, where creative ideas like a congealed capsule, media, supports, grounds and technical processes bring about the escorting visual sounds.

There are plethora of artworks that are executed with other numerous discarded materials that their experimental underpinnings affirm in strong term the quantum leap beyond the frontiers of art productions in the Nsukka School. With these postmodern artworks of small and large scale, rooted in exploration of and experimentation with these

materials, Nsukka artists have proved this point beyond reasonable doubts. This is as a result of the over two decades of “slowly and steadily wading into the tick forest of conceptualization, exploration, experimentation and daring improvisation” and shows that “the boundaries between the different genres at Nsukka have increasingly thinned out – leaving, where they exit at all, only a thin tread of demarcation” (Onuzulike, 2001, p. 8). The result of this endeavour shows that artworks are not just objects of decoration or of merchandise but are also important historical document and medium of (re)engagement (Onuzulike, 2012). They pose challenges towards generating new ideas, thereby opening up good potentials for artists, as well as their creative imaginations. The lessons to be learnt will be indeed useful to other studio artists who would become interested in these creative concern and initiative.

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