

INCULCATING GOOD SOCIAL VALUE THROUGH PAINTING



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Abstract

Painting is the creation of images with colours on a surface. As a veritable vehicle of visual communication, it can interact with society and operate to strengthen the hold of established values by filling the imagination of the audience with forms, and coloured symbols suggestive of these values. It is, therefore, recommended as a purge to social ill and the elimination of other social injustice without casualty. The study is done along the following sub-headings of introduction, concept of painting, society, values social ills, painting and society and conclusion.

The art of painting is the process of applying colour onto a flat surface to produce an image, picture, or design. It developed from the primitive cave decoration to this present highly sophisticated and varied processes used today. As a branch of art, it is an instrument of preserving, promoting and presenting the culture of a people (Azeez, 2001:42).

Painting, like every other human activity, has its roots in the fundamental needs of man's nature. It provides one of the ways in which these needs find satisfaction. Hence, Carpenter and Graham (1971:87) asserted that, 'painting deals with human action'. So, when the elements of painting are combined, they create expressive decorative motifs to present real or supernatural phenomena, to interpret a narrative theme, or to create entirely visual relationship with the society.

Society is the mutual awareness and a sense of belonging together in relationships which arise because man is a social creature. In shepherd (1981:87), "Society is the largest and most nearly self-sufficient group in existence". Every society, modern and primitive inclusive, has principles embodying ideas which its members consider to be desirable. These enduring beliefs or embodiment of ideas which members of society hold that relate to their life goals and modes of behaviour are called values.

Values are important central beliefs of standard by which the norms can be judged (Hess, Markson and Stein, 1988: 67).

Against these desirable ideas and beliefs are the undesirable and hostile ideas carried out by an individual, group, or government to undo others. This is known as social-ill. The word 'ill' is something that is not in good health, harmful, bad, hostile, faulty and unfavourable. In line with this situation, painting becomes a veritable cite where struggle, change, continuities, novelty and hope are simultaneously interrogated and perpetuated. Gbaden (2001:70) stated that 'painting is a veritable vehicle for social commentary'. This paper is discussed along the following sub-headings: concept of painting, society, values, social ills, painting and society and conclusion.

Concept of Painting

Painting is an expressive art that consists of the organizing of ideas in terms of line and colour upon a two-dimensional plane. It is because of the very simplicity of the elements involved that the practice of painting is popular and universal. Ogumor (1993: 27) inferred that 'painting is the technique of applying paint on a flat surface such as paper, canvas, hardboard and walls.

Painting is like telling story; the more all the elements of fine art are used, the better the story is being told and, the easier the story becomes simplified and understood. Mervyn (1960: 134) opined that, 'painting is the most revealing form of autobiography'. The quality of painting depends on the extent of idea included in it.

It is also used to construct images and forms that carry meaning to create order and structure, to explore aesthetic possibilities. These characteristics seem to be part of human nature. Of the many paintings created by human beings, the most basic and important may be society. Uzoagba (2000:3) stated that, 'man responds to the colour, shape, surface and mass of things.'

So, society can enjoy paintings without an extensive knowledge of history, classical literature, or the Bible. This view shared by Carpenter and Graham (1971:5) that, "the ideas expressed by a painter in any age are not only personal, they are the ideas of the society in which he lives and works.'

Society

Society is a term used to cover the whole network of human relationships which result from individuals coming together in response to their basic urges towards self-preservation. Shepherd (1981: 87) wrote that, 'a society contains enough smaller social structure to fulfill all the needs of its members.'

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The development of a society is based on the desire in man to live in company with his fellow man, but this does not mean that it is his natural state. In the opinion of Wilkins (1976: 10), society does not come into existence in an absolute form, but changes as they are influenced by changing circumstances.' This indicates that, the live of every man may often be seriously affected by things or actions over which he has no proper control, sometimes by factors of which he has no proper knowledge, but all of which occur because man seek man in order to survive in his environment.

When, for example, a society is faced with problem of insecurity such as kidnapping and assassination, all its members may feel frightened, but the manifestation of their fear which may take many forms, could be eliminated through painting themes relating to the particular social ill. Mervyn, (1960:18) summarized this thus: 'painting is the community's medicine for the worst disease of mind and the corruption of consciousness.'

Values

Values are broad cultural principles comprising ideas about what most members of a society consider to be desirable. They signify what members of a given society prefer as well as what they find important and morally right or wrong. According to Schaefer and Lamm (1989:75), 'values are collective conceptions of what is considered good, desirable and proper, or bad, undesirable and improper in a culture.'

They have a tremendous influence on daily life because norms are based on them. In agreement, Schaefer and Lamm (1989:5) stated that, 'values influence peoples behaviour and serve as a criteria for evaluating the actions of others'. However, the values of a society may change but most of them remain relatively stable during any one person's lifetime. Socially shared and intensely felt, values are a fundamental part of the peoples lives in a society.

Societal values are categorical moral standards which an individual holds that relate to his or her life goals and modes of behavior. It is, however, difficult to state the values Nigerian society holds. This is because the practise is at variance with the belief and again, accountability is thrown overboard. Public officers who embezzle public funds are usually rewarded with more juicy appointments by subsequent administrations.

In an ideological system, painting can interact with society and operate to strengthen the hold of established values by filling man's imagination with forms and coloured symbols suggestive of these values. Carpenter and graham (1971:33) expressed that, 'colour is the most emotional and subjective element in art.' Colour has an effect

which depends upon its intrinsic quality, independent of all relation to the other constituents of the painting.

Social Ills

Social ill may be defined as the harmful or hostile behaviours carried out on an individual, group of people or government in a given society. In Nigeria for instance, there has been many known cases relating to social ill. This paper takes a look at some of the examples.

The reigns between the military regimes of General Buhari in 1983 and the time of late Abacha in 1998, no doubt, crushed and roasted the Nigerian press to 'red hot'. Decree No. 4 of 1984 was specifically promulgated to silence and stop the press, whose freedom tended to encroach into the military hidden agenda. Press men and women were harassed, beaten, imprisoned and killed without trial for trying to expose the ill of the military despots. Among the known affected press members then, are Senator Christy Anyanwu, Ray Ekpu and late Dele Giwa.

During this fourth democratic dispensation of President Olusegun Obasanjo, the likes of Chief Bola Ige, then Justice Minister and Attorney-General of the Federation was shot dead on the 23rd of December, 2001, in his bedroom at Bodija, Ibadan, Oyo State; Chief Aminasoari Dikibo, then National Vice Chairman (South-South) of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) was murdered on the 6th February, 2004, by unknown gunmen along Asaba Road in Delta State.

Further to these lines of political killings is the one that involved Barrister Barnabas Igwe, Chairman of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Onitsha branch and his wife Barrister Abigail Amaka Igwe, both were assassinated by gunmen in Onitsha on the 1st of September, 2002. Added to these dairy of killings was the Adoration massacre in Enugu State, on 7th of March, 2002, at their then GTC praying ground, where thirteen persons including a pregnant woman lost their lives.

These are examples of social ill in the society which an ordinary citizen or group of people cannot pursue or fight because of the forces behind these misdeeds. Painting could be used to commemorate, immortalize, criticize the misdeeds to expose the injustice and provide models of value without the painter suffering any consequence. Kate (2006) in Otoya (2011: 98), wrote that, "the artist takes the experiences of life and translates them into a visual objects, rich in colours, shapes and sizes for the entire world to observe".

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Painting and Society

Decorative painting has been an important quality of art for many ages and the artist is valued for his ability to make an accurate visual record of people and important events. Carpenter and Graham (1971:2) stated that, 'the quality in painting is the quality of expression through organization'. So, painting is something special and individual and the uniqueness depends on some quality which is absent in other forms of arts.

As a visual language of expression, it is a social activity which is important to man's progress and well-being in religion, science, politics, or any other human endeavour. The history of man is the history of his ever-growing understanding of himself, the world, and of his growing-control over the forces of nature. At every stage in this development, art, through painting has contributed to helping him to work better, feel better and understand more about reality. At this, Carpenter and Graham explained that, painting broadens and deepens man's understanding of reality and equips him to live more happily and effectively.

In view of the foregoing, a national culture cannot be contrived without credible roots. Painting as an art that belongs to the people must be deeply rooted among the people; it must be understood and loved by the people; it must rally the feelings, thoughts and will of the people, it must mobilize them, it must bring out the artists among the people and stimulate their development. The closer the society is coming to understand the need to commission painting in public places against social ills, the more of an artist there is in the people. Painting can show the hidden connection between things, it is religious and spiritual (Otoba, 2011:98).

Conclusion

One of the greatest contributions of creative-purposeful painting in a society like ours, is its ability to vitalize life by drawing attention to the quality of experience as it is. If painting is anything at all, it is a quality of life that is savored for itself. The art of painting is a form to be visually explored the rhythms of the work, its shape, its contour, its colour take one on a qualitative ride.

It is essential that painters regain their self-respect, their sense of social and moral responsibility. They must learn to take their places once again as useful members of society. This is a difficult condition to be achieved by the exertions of the artist alone. If it is to survive, Nigeria's orientation must extricate itself from the slime of cheap sensationalism of the Western influence which is one of the root causes of its moral decay.

Painting is a grassroots information-carrier capable of encouraging even-development through its colourful visual interaction with members of the society. It is a conveyor belt, a helper and channel through which society may reach God.

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