



Painting as an Investment Opportunity in a Developing Economy

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Abstract. This paper discusses the potentials of painting as a form of investment opportunities in Nigeria. Painting as an aspect of creativity has emerged since 20th-21st century as a major means of generating income opportunities for art collectors, foreign enthusiast, culture lovers, investors, active business men and future projectors in the business world. However, this business potential in painting is not limited to only business mogul and entrepreneurs, but also to some working middle class-civil servants have acute mercantile acumen engage in buying paintings to secure their future after retirement. Prominent artists are often commissioned to produce quality and interesting paintings that appeals to the public taste in painting which also stands the test of time thus earning unprecedented returns at public auctions, exhibitions, and public bazaars in many parts of the world. Therefore, this paper also mentioned and discussed in details the values found in paintings as artwork - as it relates to investment in a mono economy like Nigeria. It is worthy to note, however, that there is great value in collecting paintings as alternative source of income thereby creating wealth for business men who understands the intrinsic pleasure from creativity of Nigerian cultural traditions in expanding personal and collective prosperity. On the other hand, the paper will also highlight the challenges facing the art industry - which includes low patronage, lack of funding to the artist and the limited sponsor/ art patrons, cost of materials and low public awareness, and the absence of a well-structured art market to engage art lovers and viewers. It further highlights the success stories of notable Nigerian artists and galleries, showcasing the opportunities for economic growth through the art sector. However, it is noteworthy in showcasing the practices of foreign countries where there is need for strategic investment, institutional support, and public-private collaboration to reveal the economic value of painting in Nigeria as well as other climes. Ultimately, the paper interrogates market potentials in arts through the instrument of painting as a tangible asset of cultural prosperity, propagation and appreciation. In the midst of high

inflation and unfavorable economic climate, Nigeria can transform its art industry into a significant driver of wealth creation, employment, and cultural preservation. This paper aims to contribute to the discourse on art's economic potential, particularly painting in inspiring policies and initiatives that position painting as a sustainable investment avenue for populace of Lagos, Nigerians and Sub region of West Africa.

Keyword: Visual Art, Art Industry, Wealth creation, Economy challenges, Investment

1. Introduction

utilization of painting-artwork-as a form of investment opportunity in Nigeria especially amongst art collectors, art enthusiast and foreign investors became noticeable to the Nigerian audience in the late 20th century. This mercantilist trends whereby paintings is bought for the purpose of investment - are sold at auctions at biennales/art exhibitions private viewing inclusive became noticeable to prominent Artpreneur and Nigerians who lives in exclusive and elitist areas such GRA of Lagos State. Notable personalities conversant with great business acumen abandoned stock exchange and tied their money to creativity for long time investment through commissioning of artists or outright purchase of paintings –artworks- of serious hardworking painters/artists. Filani (2015) argues that the dynamics of change in the 20th century Africa, particularly, Lagos has considerably transformed the art landscape to a financially healthy and robust one – which thus enlarge the art market into global and lucrative enterprise. Interestingly, most art collectors and gallery owners presently, finds profitable in mass acquisition of different specialty in painting to create avenue for auctioning of paintings that also synonymously promote culture. It is instructive note that lovers and consumers of art desire tastefully painted indigenous artistic traditions found in the various creative cultures that constitute modern statecraft of the present-day Nigeria. The internal

purchase of art rather than encourage capital flight abroad promote the gross domestic product of our economy. It also promotes the entire value chain of painting materials such as brushes, oil colors of different hues, frames, linseed oil, turpentine and so on. In this sense, art works-paintings thus command medium and high prices not only for aesthetics purposes but also invest money for the future in the form art collection (Filani, 2015). Despite the staggered beginnings of contemporary (art) paintings as a form of investment in Nigeria, to be specific, Lagos State, a more systematic classification and articulation of formal and contextual approach to painting as means of generating income and retaining wealth among others cannot be overlooked. Paradoxically, the situation in Nigeria –Lagos and other economically viable states are in throes of inflationary challenge which leaves most of the citizens with little hope of survival and future economic stability. This is due to mono directional focus of the resources which is crude oil and also the mismanagement of the country’s natural resources, from both past and current group of leaders/politicians. The citizens by extension also lack the creative initiative to utilize and harness the country's potentials to the optimum (Iyama and Chukwuka 2024). Over the years, it is evident that Nigeria solely relies on the oil sector as a primary source of wealth and economic sustenance, while neglecting other areas that could significantly contribute to investment and generation of wealth for the nation. The elites understand the value of art which increases value even better than real estate business as such they massively invest in paintings to secure their future and those of their offspring yet unborn children. The activity of these elites is also to

forecast and to forestall any eventuality that may arise as a result of global crash in Nigeria oil industry (Naira).

2. Painting and its Types

Painting is a creative work done in two-dimensional art forms expressed in colour pigments in various sizes and types that connote different functions and meaning. It is a product of years of practice in colour usage that is aesthetically superior which has visual appeal or beauty. For the purpose of this paper, a good deal of discussion and analysis is necessary to draw us more into interrogating the concept of painting. The philosophy of visual art fits into the realm of intellection and at the same time cultural capital which aligns with painting. In this instance then, the paper recognizes that – there are some underlying facts that need to be recognized underpinning the appreciation of paintings addressed to the aim of putting the reader to understand what buyers and art collectors needs search for when buying quality artwork [painting]. One fact particularly is the acceptability of indigenous aesthetics inherent in painting to the consuming public and other audience who could be made to comprehend value of art as investment opportunity. Painting is classified into two types – abstract and realism. According to Kandinsky (1910) abstract art does not attempt to represent an accurate depiction of a visual reality but instead uses shapes, colours, forms and gestural marks to achieve its effect. Most African art which includes Nigeria favors expressionism which aligns with stories and vivid imagery. However, informed modern buyers of African painting still find it profitable to invest in abstractions. Find below example of abstract painting – fig 1



Fig 1: Artist Abiodun Kafaru: Abstract Representation on Paper Year of production (2012)

3. Medium Acrylic on Paper and colored pencil

This is an example of abstract painting rendered with colour pigment acrylic and pencil on paper which shows the cultural tradition of the Yoruba sub-ethnic group. According to Dantos, aesthetic theory of art leads us to the

understanding that not all forms of creativity need to be aesthetically beautiful, meaningful or interesting to look at before gaining acceptability for investment. However, the argument is anchored on the fact that public acceptability of painting is deeply rooted within the frame work of preference, trend or marketability of such creative enterprise. In the figure above, the artwork is comfortably located within interpretive theory – which defines its value within the context of acceptability that is widely acceptable to both the artist and the audience based on private and individualistic interpretation. Based on the explanation, art lovers, art collectors and art enthusiasts can make informed investment in abstraction by collecting, warehousing and sales of painting to secure a financially stable future.



Fig 2: Abiodun Kafaru Title Collective Gesture, Year of production 2021

Secondly, from the perspective of realism, the taste of African buyers and collectors seem tied to emotion and consciousness of lived experiences. Realism in the art is the accurate, detailed, unembellished depiction of nature or contemporary life. The above painted form is a realistic rendition painting in oil colour pigment that captures Yoruba traditional setting in celebration of togetherness in a social situation. The central importance of this painting is purely to reveal forms/humans showing western skill rendition of figurative objects that is definitive of what most understand as real art object but captured within African aesthetics. Interestingly, the embrace of cross-cultural form, context and content is geared towards universal appeal to investors in art whose interest is to sell their creative merchandise for profit. On another hand, the placement of common interest is a skill that's paramount as a form of critical judgment on when investors in painting are subject of interest. Figure 2 painting is difference to the one above because – the first is interpretive artwork while the second image is based within the frame work of institutional theory which shears ideas at instance of historical coherence of interpretation (Vogel, 2005).

4. How DO We Define Painting As Investment?

This is a means of acquiring good quality piece of any artwork – painting for business, aesthetics and making gain - money. It can even be more profitable if the artist whose work is bought gains popularity, importance and serious market value for his art in the

long run. Often times, most art collectors and art enthusiast buy/collect artworks paintings especially for re-sale. Some others collect painting for the purpose of appreciating beauty/aesthetics or to even build a gallery of their own. It is sufficed to stress here that art investment is not new to Nigeria and to some Nigerian audience since 21st century – it has been a real business amongst the elites who lives in big metropolis all over Nigeria. More often, it is part of the post-colonial inheritance or cultural legacy of the British colonizers that modern exquisite living requires us to value art for safe keeping and obviously for sale. However, for Africans collecting arts in the former times is strongly tied to rituals worship or a particular societal function. Today, there is a paradigmatic shift in the value of painting wherein the elites keep art in the long term to sell for money and in the process promoting the artist. Art collection is a major point of concern in this paper because it considers art for not just its sake but a means of preserving generational wealth for their collectors in the face of corruption and dwindling fortune of the Nigerian currency. This trend actually came to bear amongst art collectors, art enthusiasts and art promoters in Nigeria at the early turn of the nineteen century. Paintings and sculptures are acquired/bought at the open show, direct from the artists, or at the art market or during exhibitions for sole purpose of appreciation, aesthetics or safe keeping and in turn sell it in form of investment. Unfortunately, most of the work or artists of Nigerian descent oftentimes do not command the right price in the western world. Proceeds made from the sales of their efforts when

collectors who bought them early in their active stage of practice bought the art pieces for ridiculous prices due to their lack of recognition. Unlike most of the works of elite artists purchased profitably at auctions for instance the works of Picasso, Van Gogh and Leonardo Da Vinci to mention just a few. It is interesting to say here again that investing art is equally like investing into one life because compels you to look into the future. The value of art does not only look at the financial gains only but rather it preservation of the presents for the future and it means you believe the artists.

5. Why invest in painting?

Investing in painting/artwork is not new in Nigeria since the beginning of the 20th century. Lots of art auctions in the form of investment have been taking place amongst prominent art collectors such people like, Yemisi Shylon, Rasheed Gbadamosi, Sam Olagbaju and Chief Torch Taire to mention a just few of them - where paintings of Professor Ben Enwogu, Bruce Onabrakpeye, Ablade Glover and Yusuf Grillo paintings were sold at high prices to a willing audience who can afford to pay. This trend has been a pointer to the advantages one can derive in investing money into art collections, particularly painting. This has equally created an ample opportunity for active art collectors, art lovers and businessmen to look inward to start investing into collection of artworks, specifically painting for business or keeping money for the future. The art market is often managed by private individual without any interference of the government which invariably means that it is devoid of any security issue or economic fluctuations of the exchange naira rate. As painting gets older in the custody of collectors the more the value increases and in turn also adds value to the artist who produces the artwork. The act of investing in artwork is different from re-selling for survival, it is a means retaining wealth, and this is equally the same practice all over the world for business men who wanted to keep on preserving their hard-earn money without losing value. Globally, there is no concrete evidence or statistics that measures the levels at which one can invest or buy artworks that can earn such collectors the quality of how much he/she can generate when buying any artist products for the future re-sale perhaps.

6. Economic implication of Investing in Art - Painting

Acquiring artworks – paintings in the form of investment has lots of gains and advantages. Art sales are thriving in Nigeria most especially in cosmopolitan state of Lagos. Art collectors and art-lovers and art

enthusiasts who understand the market as means of making money, gathering wealth's and short-term survival among others. There are some financial benefits in investing in painting [arts] investment:

Appreciation – Art [painting] pieces can appreciate in value over time, providing a potential long-time investment return. This appreciation goes beyond monetary gains, rather it gives an apparent denigration in the contemporary art world of the idea of seeing 'visual intelligence,' whether we can still consider this aspect of arts painting a viable business//explanation – that reveals knowledge through the lens of painting [two-dimensional surface]. If we are to argue that an artwork – painting or practical visual research outcome can stand alone as a form of business, an embodiment of knowledge, and as product of appreciation then we need more exhaustive study into how this may possible. The fact also further tells that at present we are not in a position to explain how the practical outcomes we produce actually embody knowledge has an enormous implication for an activity such as investment [research], in which the contribution to knowledge is of paramount concern.

Diversification – Adding art to a diversified investment portfolio can reduce risk and increase potential returns. Reflecting on painting [artwork] as means of making money and survival has been a key factor in creating wealth, job and avenue for human convenience.

Liquidity – Art Pieces can be sold or traded providing liquidity when needed. However, to see the art object as embodying and conveying knowledge is an outdated conception of art within the contemporary art world. When considering about investing in painting it is difficult to avoid the text becoming instrumental to see the usefulness in acquiring painting to reserve money in form of liquid cash.

7. Emotional and Personal Benefits

Aesthetic Pleasure – Owing a piece of art – painting can bring joy and personal satisfaction. In the same vein, not every work of art – painting are beautiful or even interesting to look at, but it will be a work of art if it is implicitly interpreted in the idea that reveals the principle of practice that is founded within an art-historical tradition. At least its characteristics feel also bear the hallmarks of modernity that gives pleasure and entertainment in one sense to the owner or viewer.

Cultural Significance – Investing in art – painting can support emerging artists, as well as promote cultural institutions, and preservation of cultural heritage. Cultural strands was a key factor in any society who

uses organized natural materials in creating embellishments which in turn serves as means of generating revenue.

Personal Legacy – Art collections can be passed down to future generations, creating a lasting legacy. In an efforts by artists and philosophers to expound, their horizon on issues pertaining to individual legacy from generation to generations and intentions on types of arts or themes of paintings, in the English speaking world some notable critics as Roger Fry – a Briton; who at the beginning of the twentieth century decided to lunch a platform starting fully with his first Solo art exploits [Exhibition] from collections of paintings/drawing he had acquired of the years titled - "Bloomsbury" indeed, this gesture by implication inspired lots of art collectors, artists and critics, while all this event enhanced the formation of other well-known activities which of course this action spur the series of crafts design technology in creating revenue among other (Kafaru, 2015) cited in Staff (2005).

8. Tax Benefits

Tax Deductions: Donating art to charitable organizations can provide tax deductions. Most of the paintings donated to NGO's are good means extending the personal worth and value placed on creative piece by adding to the monetary gains of the art collectors and value placed on the real artists in general.

Capital Gains Tax: In some countries, art investments may be excepted from capital gains tax or have reduce tax rates. Which also need to be exemplified in Nigeria setting? A change in the administration of Nigeria government after 2015 for example would certainly have an impact among the speed of comodification and may also affect the change we all opted for re-working it into more politically accepted forms for a new lift of life for young artists/ adults

Other Benefits

Social Status: Ownership of a valuable art collection can convey social status and prestige to the collectors and the creator of the artistic pieces.

Networking Opportunities: Investing in art can provide opportunities to connect with other art collectors, dealers and industry professionals.

Educational Opportunities: Investing in art can provide a unique opportunity to learn about art history, techniques, and market trends.

It is essential to note that investing in art also comes with heavy risk, such as market fluctuations, forgery, and deterioration issues which arises from artists not using the right kinds of materials, without considering the life-span of the artwork before sale. It is crucial to

conduct thorough research; one should locate reputable dealers, and consider seeking professional advice before investing in art – painting. It is worthy of note, that the real essence of acquiring artworks is profitable outcome before considering exoteric framework of the painting. However, art collectors should consider taste, preference and quality to ensure it is worth its while to invest in such painting to secure the future. Towards a lasting solution to the prevailing downturn in Nigeria's economy, it is important for Nigerian citizens and government to adopt an alternative economic innovation by looking towards the arts and its hidden economic potentials to create clean wealth. Ikwuegbu (2010) states that one of many the many forms of human development which could yield advancement in Nigeria's economy is venturing into the creative/entertainment industry. Today, Nigeria's creative and entertainment industry is rapidly growing, and it is massively recognized in the global stage, with an immense significant potential to generate income. As the most populous black nation in the world, the vast array of ethic creativity displayed by the Nigeria entertainment industry are flourishing and could boast of numerous unique achievement and global recognition which encompasses various areas of disciplines such as music, film, art, fashion, digital content creation etc. Unfortunately, one of the most overlooked and underexplored branches of the creative industry is the 'visual art' particularly painting which holds skills that can create pathway to self-discovery, self-sustenance and financial independence.

The uniqueness of the Nigerian painting is influenced by its exciting admixture of culture and tradition it practiced over the centuries. This has accounted for its rapid spread into the global market. The painting exhibition by iconic artists such as Ben Enwonwu, Bruce Onobrakpeya, and Yusuf Grillo has fetched record-breaking prices at international auctions and spread its fame to the utmost end of the earth. The thirst and demand for the Nigerian paintings has broadened its financial potential and consolidated its popularity as a marketable artwork worthy of investment. Therefore, the practice of visual arts particularly (painting) is one that could command better pricing, economic prosperity and preserve our ancient ways. (Chukwuma and Imide, 2024).

9. Painting as an Asset, Investment and means of Income Generation

Painting has proven to be unique form of profitable business and investment - assets within the frame work of building wealth. Over the years, painting has been a creative item serving as a means of income for

artists, art enthusiasts, and art collectors in Nigeria and across the world. Artists, art collectors and some non-artist alike believe that painting/artwork is a form of investment can stand the test of time when it comes to making profitable return in the future. An evergreen example is, the painting by Leonardo da Vinci (1503) titled “*Mona Lisa*” which is arguably one of the most famous paintings in history, considered priceless, experts have estimated it’s valued at over \$900 million. Another one is Pablo Picasso’s “*Les Femmes d’Alger*” was sold for \$179.4 million in 2015. In recent years, the financial value of these artworks has been increasing, making them one of the most valuable assets in the art world. Clearly, these investments are yielding good returns for art collectors, and it is hereby yielding appreciation of artworks as time goes. However, it is important that Nigerian policy makers consider and explore the economic potentials of painting and the role of art in terms of wealth creation for the nation. Global events have shown evidence that the market value of painting was and is transforming the lives of many notable and contemporary artists in Nigeria and across the world. Today in Nigeria, the art scene has witnessed a remarkable growth, with several contemporary artists attaining international fame and financial progress. Joshua (2015) posed a question that how can it be

imagined that a single painting in Nigeria could worth \$300million? For example, Ben Enwogu’s painting titled “*Tutu*” which is dubbed as the “*African Monalisa*”, the painting was found to have reemerged on the global stage after several years it went underground and was sold for €1.2 million in 2018. Joshua (2015) further posited that the worth of a single painting, could cater for the constructions of roads such as *Ore* or Lekki-Epe express road, which was a hazard to road users particularly motorists. As the art market grows, so does the potential for painting serve as a lucrative means of attaining international fame and financial progress. Joshua (2015) posed a question that how can it be imagined that a single painting in Nigeria could worth \$300million? For example, Ben Enwogu’s painting titled “*Tutu*” which is dubbed as the “*African Monalisa*”, the painting was found to have reemerged on the global stage after several years it went underground and was sold for €1.2 million in 2018. Joshua (2015) further posited that the worth of a single painting, could cater for the constructions of roads such as *Ore* or Lekki-Epe express road, which was a hazard to road users particularly motorists. As the art market grows, so does the potential for painting serve as a lucrative means.



Tutu by Ben Enwogu, 1974 sourced: [www. Obeliks](http://www.Obeliks.com)

Art History this is a painting done by Ben Enwogu in a blue schema. This painting is relevant to the main essence of why artwork serve as wealth creation. It is worthy to say that this is one of the foremost among the kinds of paintings placed at auctions in the early stage of promoting art for investment. Ben Enwogu as artist educator, their narratives about their lives as teachers were partitioned from their discourses about their lives as an artist and about their art works. The work – painting reflects basically Yoruba tradition, rather than reflecting on the skill, values and meanings which underpin artists art practices – which invariably falls within the purview of romantic rhetoric about the

nature of creativity, or, on the other means of generating wealth among other.

10. Contextual Discourse on the use of Painting as Investment

There are, however, a number of difficulties thrown up by developing this parallel between knowledge in general artwork/painting and investment as interrelated in business world. In part, these derive from problems that are arguably already germane to the philosophical arguments in them. Ryle’s (2019) discussions of “knowing how,” for example, emphasizes that there is no necessary connection

between the success of an artist's outcome and while linking the reasoning process behind making investing or selling artwork – painting for survival. As Ryle argued that:

“there need be no visible or audible differences between an action done with skill and one done from sheer habit, blind impulse or in a fit of absence of mind”, from the foregoing, there is clear indication that for one to interpret or verify an action invoke into a painting as intelligent/aesthetical or beautiful, one needs some way of checking that it was underscored by creativity injected in one sense. This, in turn, implies a need for practical reasoning to be formalized – or symbolically articulated in a way or format than that of the artwork/painting.

11. Conclusion

The musing of this paper has been able to reveal and articulate some points that painting can be used as a source of investment opportunity for people who desire to eradicate poverty. Globally and locally, the function of art as paraphernalia of self-sustenance has assumed the position of immense proportion capable of elevating people with poor background and also propelling the elites who are already socially established. Investment in art, particularly painting is a lucrative business venture that can help us reveal a new boundary between business management and the arts marketing particularly in painting. It is instructive to note that beyond material advantages art sales can expound and expand the level of intuition of both the artist and the art collectors respectively. The collection of quality artworks or paintings combines the aesthetics of modernity and post-modernity which serves as a scaffolding for employability for the artist, artpreneurship for businessmen and prosperity for the nation. This paper further serves as a template or platform for articulating importance of art collections and harnessing its massive potential as means of creating wealth and stocking up generational wealth for future investment.

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