

THE EFFECTS OF VISUAL DESIGNS ON AFRICAN EPIC DRAMA AND THEATRE:
A STUDY OF *LANGBODO* PRODUCTION

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Attestation Page

I, ADESINA GBENGA MICHAEL Hereby attest that this research report is carried out by me and that I am solely responsible for all errors and omissions, if any.

ADESINA GBENGA MICHAEL



.....
SIGNATURE AND DATE

DEDICATION

This project work is dedicated to my parents MR and MRS, O.S ADESINA for their prayer and financial support

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ABSTRACT

Visual designs in the theatre have received different touches from different scholars and theorists. Some theorists made it relevant while some believe that they are less important. This study examines the indispensability of visual designs (costume and make up, set props and light) in the African theatre in relation to Langbodo production as directed by Rasaki Ojo Bakare. Through participant observation, this study stressed the importance of these visual designs to the African drama and theatre. This study observes that emphasis should be laid on how these visual designs can affect the African culture and the overall aesthetics of the production. To explain its position, the study of adopts the theory of aesthetics as perceived by Dennis Dutton. This study argues that, in the African theatre some western ideologies that tend to demean the use of visual designs should not be embraced because the music, dance and drama of the African theatre depend on spectacles. If these arguments hold; it would represents the study's moderate contribution to knowledge.

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fall under the pre-literary era while the origin of visual designs in the literary era can be traced to the Alarinjo theatre of Hubert Ogunde. In this light Adegbite adduces that

Hubert Ogunde's theatre and design aesthetics were exemplified by his extensive use of realistic costumes of historical significance. But what could be deduced from his use of realistic scenery (batik clothing as a backdrop) and later, modern stage lighting is unconnected with his commitment to projecting African aesthetics and his exposure to the western world. His flair for stage decor and aesthetics prompted him into spending all he could on such designs and technical aids - as far back as 1947. Despite the foreign influence, he did not fail to constantly, inject the indigenous flavour in his design and technical concepts. (2009:57)

The above adduction shows how important visual designs are to Hubert Ogunde travelling theatre.

The western tradition of theatre began in ancient Greece. Ruins of the earliest theatres – great outdoor amphitheatres – are still standing in places like Greece, Italy and Turkey. What a treat to see these structures and marvel at how well they served their purpose. The designers of those theatres understood that maximum communication between the stage and audience was essential. Theatre was the place where citizens gathered to hear vital issues discussed, declaimed and dissected.

The tragedies and comedies of the great Classical playwrights stirred their audiences to passionate dialogue, argument and intense political engagement. Those huge amphitheatres allowed literally thousands of spectators to see, hear and share the onstage action that was so important to their daily lives, without the audio amplification that we now take for granted. Even then someone needed to make sure that actors were seen and heard in order for the dialogue to continue, and that hasn't changed.

Those early architects and builders considered How sound traveled both for the human voice and the accompanying music, What natural daylight would fall on the stage, What the actors would wear (masks and elevated shoes) and what stage machinery might enable the special effects needed to allow for the visits of gods to mortals. The actual set design as we think of it now was minimal. For the most part, the actor's voices, music and dance carried the story.

Costumes were chosen for maximum visibility for the actors, Lighting was the bright hot Mediterranean sun.

Moreover, some theorists argued that visual designs need not to be elaborate because they believe that audience is not to be carried away by visual designs in the theatre lest the audience lose focus from the central message of the production; therefore rendering the various aspect of visual design less important in the theatre. In this terrain, a British director Steven Berkoff of the Berkovian Aesthetics in an interview with the Japanese television in 1990 says:

I believe that you don't need anything more than just utter simplicity and that everything in my art must be created from the body onwards. The body and the voice. Everything else is an imposition and is an interference with the art of the actor: if it is too many light, too many props. So the simplicity in me is that I return the art of the actor to the actor; not give it to the sets or give it to the props or give it to the costumes or give it to the lights but give it to the performer. (Interview, Japanese Television; salome videotape. British Theatre Museum, 1990).

Berkoff believes that alleviating his productions from cumbersome sets, costumes, props, and lights will help free the audience's imagination. He believes that a representational visual aesthetic is a tranquilizer to the creative imagination of the audience, while is living environment is a stimulant. Other theorists who circumvent this ideology include; Jersey

Grotowski of the "Poor Theatre", Vsevolod Meyerhold of the "Biomechanics" and Bertolt Brecht of the "Alienation Theatre".

In contrast to the above disputation, Adegbite (2009:48) believes that "In the African theatre environment; the involvement of mostly visual elements normally adds value to the theatre experience." This implies that it is pertinent to use elaborate visual designs when staging a play most especially an African epic drama because these components of visual designs reflect the themes, mood, style and emotions of a play, as well as indicating the historical or geographic context of the production. Therefore, it is apparent that visual designs help to complement the actions occurring on stage and also contribute immensely to the meaning making of the production.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Across the Nigerian stage and other African theatrics, either professional or educational, theatre sometimes embraces western ideologies that tend to affect the African theatre negatively, most especially the total African aesthetics which is a reflection of our culture. A strand of this is reflected as regards the visual designs of the African theatrical performances. Theatrical personnel either the director or the producer label theatre under the axis of 'poor theatre'- which implies that theatre, can exist anywhere anytime without infusing the theatre histrionics that constitutes the *mise en scene*. It is unfortunate that most theatre personnel do not understand that this concept cannot thrive in the African environment because these theatrical ideologies such as the 'poor theatre', symbolism, biomechanics etc demean the totality of the African aesthetics. The theatre is a unique realm that must be identified with a particular culture, in other words, any performance projected

on stage must have societal indices that its audience can relate with. On this note, Clurman submits that “the theatre is a particular mode of expression through which a community realizes itself (155).

1.3 Purpose of the Study

Sequel to the introductory part of this essay, the nub of this research is to expound the effect of visual designs on the African epic drama, that is, the relevance and substantiality of visual designs on the African epic drama. In relation to this, Amali and Ekere (369) believe that “In the Nigerian theatre, stage setting is very important as it more than merely decorating the environment for theatrical activities. It underscores the role of scene design and aesthetics in play interpretation in the Nigerian theatre. ”

Vividly, set, costume, make up, light and props design is the visual aspect of the theatre that affects the creation and reception of a play and they work together to help establish the place, time, period and mood of a play.

These visual designs are created within a specific theatrical space for a specific period of performance. However, when all the visual elements combine, a sense of aesthetics is born and the full impact of the theatre experience can be interpreted by the audience.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This proposed academic essay sought to delineate how the visual elements can be utilized as the instruments for establishing the mood, time and locale of a play and moreover how they contribute to the meaning and overall visual essence of the play which aids audience to fathom the message of the play as intended by the director. Consequently, this

essay would explain why these visual elements must not be at loggerheads, in other words, there must be unity between these visual elements.

Furthermore, it's pertinent to know that visual designs in African epic plays help to project and preserve the African culture; therefore this essay will acknowledge the contribution of visual designs to the African culture.

Moreover, a stage design properly conceived and executed should express the core meaning of the play. Therefore, these visual designs are not just collection of images; they are the expression of mood, the presence that enhances and comments on the performance. Visual designs create dramatic action, causes tension in a visual form; it is a signifier of performance meaning. Design is an integral part of the whole production process; it's absurd to see designs which lack coherence and harmonization, therefore the designers must ensure the design elements of the mis-en-scene must merge to form a well-conceived unity.

1.5 Scope of the Study

In the course of analyzing this pedagogical essay, the researcher will expound the various aspect of visual designs (costume and make up, light design, set design and Props), African epic drama and theatre, the impact of visual designs on the African culture, an overview of *Langbodo* production as directed by Rasaki Ojo Bakare and finally elucidate the effects of visual designs on African epic drama as regard *Langbodo* production.

1.6 Limitations

However, in the course of this research work the major limitation is the dearth of related

text in the school Library to support my disputation as regard this topic. Another limitation is in the aspect of the stage production because there was no video coverage of the performance therefore restricting me from recollecting the performance perfectly.

1.7 Research Methodology

This research adopts participant observation to gather its information because of the stage production involve and also uses some relevant pictures, online materials (webliography) and the bibliotheca method, that is the use of related texts to corroborate the researcher's disputation.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 VISUAL DESIGNS IN THE THEATRE

Intrinsically, visual designs are visible to the human eye, therefore visual designs in the theatre can be said to be a creative art that combines line, form, shapes, dimension, mass, texture and colour together to create a concept for aesthetic and overall communication of a production.

In congruence with the above disputation, Adegbite (2009:9) views design as a “creative arrangement of visuals and emotional experience, which give harmony (cohesion), and thereby reflecting the aesthetic of object of contact.”

However, the term visual design can be used interchangeably with scene design. Against this backdrop, Asomba (2000:6) defines scene design as the “art of conceptualizing, planning or conceiving a suitable environment to house a dramatic environment in his context is the totality of all pieces of scenery including stage properties which culminates in the defining the locality of the action.” Asomba’s definition shows that visual/scene design is an aspect of theatrical production which helps the audience understand a play by providing the background and visual reinforcement of the production. Also this definition gives a wider approach to scene design that is; scene design has gone beyond the usual meaning of backdrop or painting at the back of stage. Hence it is now relatively design in the theatre that is visible to the human eye.

Furthermore, Abdumalik and Emele posit that:

The philosophy and aesthetics of scene design is thus a process of interpretation, evaluation, understanding and appreciation. The aesthetics of scene design in a production is also the beauty and the essence of the setting as it impacts contributes to the general viewing

pleasure; giving necessary and useful information, adding meaning and aiding in the understanding in the understanding and appreciation of the theatrical performance. (368)

Also, Nwadigwe (2002:95,96) affirms that 'the ultimate aim of scene design is to assist the performer interpret his part in a suitable environment and enhance the understanding and enjoyment of the production by the audience.'

2.2 THE ASPECTS OF VISUAL DESIGNS IN THE THEATRE

Costume design

Costume can be define as the overall attire worn by an actor or performer on stage or screen as well as the accessories he carries as part of his character. It is an aspect of scene design which gives a visual expression of a play production. According to Ohiri I.N (45) he defines costume as:

A live scenery worn by an actor in a particular role in a particular play...it is the exterior reflection of the actor's impersonation, which assumes that the person portrayed is someone other than the actor himself.

The Place of Costume Design in the Theatre

The phrase "Actors are seen before they are heard" unveils the substantiality and significance of costumes in theatre productions. In this regard, Nwadige (2004:292) posits that "Costume and make up is an integral part of the actor's personality, costume and make up act as moving scenery in film production, thereby attracting attention and conveying information and intensifying the narrative action." Nwadige's position reflects that costume is an essential feature of any dramatic production that constitutes the total visual appearance of the actor. Costume is an important fact of acting that goes beyond mere cladding the actor. In

this light, Abuku and Odi posit that:

Costume is an important fact of acting; therefore it is not mere covering for an actor. Thus its essence is rooted in the fact that the actor wears it, moves and speaks in it and is continually within the attention of the spectator. (190)

However, costume helps to reinforce characterization which enables audience to determine the age, social status, personality, nationality of an actor before he utters a word. Wilson (353) believes "costumes tell us about the personalities of character: a flamboyant person will wear flashy colours; a shy, retiring person will wear subdued clothing. Also, Gillette (393) posits that "social status has always been indicated with clothes. Someone dressed in shabby, ill-kempt clothes of rough homespun materials would rarely be mistaken for a member of the upper class". Edwin and Gillette affirmations reveals how costume can be used to reflect characters' social status and personality.

Moreover, costume also help to establish the relationship between characters on stage in accordance with their level of importance. For example, the costume of a king will be different from his chiefs and the costume of the chiefs will differ from the town's people's costume. For instance in *Langbodo* production, the king Oyo's costume is more elaborate than the chief (see image in chapter 3, fig 1). In this view Abuku and Odi affirms that:

Costume individualizes the character. By the colour and style of the costume and make up, a character is set apart from another character. This means that major characters can be made to stand out from minor ones by manipulating any or all principles of design. (192)

Furthermore, costumes indicate the period and location of a play: whether it is historical or modern, or whether it is set in a foreign country. In this view, Gillette adduces that:

Costumes make a statement that visually unifies the historical

period, the style of the script, and the Production concept. However, any historical period, regardless of whatever it is one or forty years long, has a plethora of design styles, and each of those styles has an overwhelming number of subtle variations. (393)

Sequel to Gillette's adduction, the historical period and the style of a production can be determined through the utilization of the costumes. For example in the *Langbodo* production, the costumes worn by actors on stage did not reflect an iota of civilization; therefore one could perceive that the play is situated in the pre-colonial epoch.

Make up Design

Make up is an essential aspect of every theatrical production; it is the act of preparing the face or body of an actor by the application of grease, paint, powder and hair etc. Make up involves the use of cosmetic material to highlight alter or change the facial appearance of an actor on stage or screen. Wilson (360) defines make up as "the application of costumes (paints, powder and rouges) to the face and body. With regard to age and the special facial features associated with ethnic origins, a key function of makeup is to help the performer personify and embody a character. Also Gillette (432) affirms that "make up is a vital element in creating the total appearance of the actor. To a great extent, the makeup design gives the audience its primary clue to the age, health, and vitality of the character". According to Brocket (615) make up is normally used to cover all parts of the actor's body not concealed by his costumes. However, this is to say that make up is not only limited to the face of the actor. Make up helps in understanding of a play thereby expressing the quality of the production as the actor's facial and colouration are analysed and compared with the ideal character for the production.

. Stage make up enhances the illusion that the actor has become the character. Also

effective make up will project the character (not the actor) to the audience.

Types of Make up

Straight Makeup: this is the most fundamental technique of any other form of makeup. This type of makeup is applied for the purpose of beautification; its function therefore is to enhance or define a person's face rather than to change.

Character Makeup: it is used to deceive by giving false appearance. It is use to change age from young to old. It gives an impression of a certain condition of an artist. Character make up is applied when the original features of an actor is to be altered or change. For example, a young girl made up to become an old woman, a handsome young man, made as a monster. A non beard man given bear or mustache.

Extreme make up: this is a type of make-up that is elaborate, often use in carnival or to make a character look scary to the audience in a production. See images in chapter 3, fig 14-16.

Special Effects: These types of make-up include blood effect, wounds, swollen eye, chicken pox effect, boils etc.

Light Design

Light Design in theatre is a visual design that uses colour to create visibility. According to Adegbite (2009:33) "theatrical lights are used to illuminate the actors and other design elements such as set, costume, make up and props. Enna (56) corroborates the above position by saying "light could serve as the playwright's ideas in term of space, atmosphere and visual symbols.

The Place of Light Design in the Theatre

Light design in the theatre goes beyond the boundary of mere illumination or visibility; it has numerous functions to perform in a production. In the course of expounding the imperativeness of light design, Gillette asserts that:

Obviously, there is something more to stage lighting than simply bathing the stage with light. Effective stage lighting not only lets the spectators see the action of the play but also ties together all the visual elements of the production and helps create an appropriate mood and atmosphere that heighten the audience's understanding and enjoyment of the play. (288)

In relation to Gillette's disputation, Asomba (1990:33) as cited in Adegbite (2009:34) describes stage lighting as "an expressive theatrical medium". However, when it provides only mere illumination or simple visibility", its expressive tendency deteriorates."

The above positions reflect that light can be used beyond the boundary of illumination and visibility. Asomba (1990:36) strengthen this position, he believes "it becomes art where and when it is expressive of the inner circumstances of the action".

Furthermore, light can be used to establish the mood of a particular scene or an overall mood of a production. This can be achieved through colour (desired colour can be achieved through gelatins) and the way a lighting designer manipulate the intensity of a lighting instrument. For example a blue light can be used to create a romantic ambience and a red light can be used to establish danger or war scene. A bright light can be used to evoke a gay mood while a dull light would evoke a sober mood.

Nevertheless, the colour, shade and intensity of lighting can be used to suggest the time and place of the day. Wilson affirms that "by its color, shade, and intensity, lighting can suggest the time of the day, giving us the pale light of dawn, the bright light of midday, the

vivid colors of sunset, or the muted light of evening.

Moreover, light can be used for selective visibility...this is when a director might want to reveal an object or an actor amongst other objects or actors on stage via special focus or emphasis. For example, if in a market scene the director needs to lay emphasis on a particular actor, the lighting designer may use follow spot- a type of spotlight that radiate light in a specific direction- to focus on that actor. However, naturally the human eye moves to an area of brightness. Gillette posits that:

Selective focus means directing the spectators' attention to a specific place. The lighting designer can selectively focus attention in a number of ways, but the primary method is by manipulating our instinctive response to light. Everybody has a strong instinct to look an area of brightness or movement in an otherwise neutral scene. By simply making one part of the stage brighter than the rest of the set, the lighting forces the spectators to look there. This technique of emphatic focus is amply demonstrated, for example, whenever a follow spot is used in a musical number. (289)

Light helps to reveal shapes and forms on stage. It is light that gives definition and a three dimensional quality to any performer or a piece of furniture (props). It is light (thrown from different angles) that helps to create the mass, the depth and the outline of everything on stage. Wilson argues that:

Any object onstage, whether a performer or a piece of furniture, acquires definition and a three-dimensional quality chiefly because of light. Light- including the angle from which it originates - creates the mass, the depth, and the outline of everything on stage. (370)

Set Design

Set design is the creation of theatrical scenery for stage. It is the stage picture and look or physical appearance of the stage for a play. Adegbite (2009:32) defines set design as "the

creation of physical environment for actor which serves as scenery or background for him - in two or three-dimensional form".

The Place of Set Design in the Theatre

Set design is not art for art sake; it goes beyond decoration and aesthetics. Nwadike (2002:94) argues that "it is not a mere embellishment but should seek to provide living, useful, and suitable environment for the characters. If set is conceived in this way, it would enhance the actor's performance, and help the audience to understand the play".

Furthermore, in the process of designing a set for the theatre performance, Enna (56), expresses that set "is compelled by the form, content of the play and the directorial principle, concept and approach.

The set design indicates the historical period in which a play is situated in. For example, in the African milieu we basically have three epoch; pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial. Therefore the set should reflect the period in which the play is situated.

However, set design is another aspect of scene design that helps to indicate the style of a production, most especially from a realistic theatre and a non-realistic theatre. In this view, Wilson argues that:

The stage designer's role is of special importance in distinguishing between realism and non realism. Realistic theatre calls for settings which look very much like their counterparts in real life. A kitchen resembles a kitchen; a dining room resembles a dining room, and so on. Nevertheless " a stage set should tell the audience where and when the play takes place. Is the locale a saloon? A bedroom? A courtroom? A palace? A forest? The set should also indicate the time and period. (329)

Props Design

Props are theatrical properties (object) that are use on stage by actor to further deeping

the storyline of a theatrical production. Basically, props are grouped into three;

Set Props: they are generally defined as larger moveable items, not built into the set, that are used in some way by the actors. This group would include such things as furniture, floor lamps, trees used in *Langbodo* production (see image in fig 17) etc.

Hand props: they are small items that are handled or carried by the actors. This group includes plates, cups, letters, books, lanterns etc.

Decorative props: Into the category of decorative props fall all the things that are used to enhance the setting visually but are not specifically touched by the actors, such items are window curtains, pictures, doilies, table lamps, and the books in a book case are typical of decorative, or tree props.

2.3 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ASPECTS OF VISUAL DESIGNS

In order for visual design to have a proper aesthetic effect and function on African Epic drama and theatre, unity, variety, balance and harmony must exist between the various aspects of visual designs. This means that the mass, line, colour, texture in costume, make up, set and lighting should appear to belong together. Nevertheless, the aspects of visual designs must not contradict each other, that is, the costume, make up, props, set and light of a particular production must reflect same setting and style.

These aspects of scene designs must merge to complement the action on stage by assisting the actors to tell the story to the audience. Sequel to this Nelms (159) affirms that "it is necessary that the lights and scenery work in complete harmony, for one is most dependants on the other in the total in effect and both are there only to help the actor to tell

the story". This assertion reveals that the aspects of visual designs are indispensable to each other and that they work together to assist the actor in conveying message to the audience. Also, Nwadigwe (2002:95-96) posits that "the ultimate aim of scene design is to assist the performer interpret his part in a suitable environment and enhance the understanding and enjoyment of the production by the audience."

The visual designs should be designed to be understood at a distance, most of the audience may be anywhere 20-25 ft away from the action, and so all aspect of the scene design must be simplified and exaggerated.

However, when the various aspects of visual designs is well unified and composed a sense of aesthetic is born and as well as influencing the audience reception of the play.

2.4 AFRICAN EPIC DRAMA AND THEATRE

The conventional African drama and theatre is influenced by the activities of the African early men in the pre-colonial days. These activities include story-telling, mime, ritual enactment, masquerade displays, festival performances and so on. In addition, Anigala (18) posits that "the traditional Nigerian theatre is related to rituals and seasonal festivals of different ethnic groups in sparse region across the country. It can be expressed as festival, folk, masquerade or ritual drama, etc." Anigala's position is mirrored in Wale Ogunyemi's *Langbodo*, because the play cut across the ethnic groups in Nigeria and virtually all the activities mentioned by Anigala could be found in the play. Initially, these activities were not documented but were passed from one generation to another. However, as a result of western education, these activities were transformed into text which led to the emergence of the conventional African drama and theatre which apparently is epic in nature.

The African epic drama and theatre is subsumed in the people's culture, therefore it encompasses several communal activities that reflect the people's belief, cosmology, way of life and so on. In relation to this Sofola defines theatre as:

an arena where human beings are presented in cosmic totality, acting and reacting to forces around them and within them, perceiving and being perceived by those interacting with them and by those in the audience who experience with them the enigma that is the common lot of humanity. (1)

Sofola (1) regarding theatre as a mirror of human existence stresses that "if we are 'holding up the mirror', we must hold it up for somebody to see something in himself and in the nature around him which is his environment, his cosmos, his society." This assertion implies that the drama and theatre of a particular society reflects the people's world.

Further, the African theatre often use narrator which could be likened to the act of storytelling, for example in the play text of Wale Ogunyemi's *Langbodo*, the old Akaara Oogun plays the role of a story teller and he appears at the inception of the play; however, this is one of the ways in which mutuality is created between the audience and performers. Sequel to this, Agboola (362) as cited in *The Dramaturgy of a Theatre Sociologist*, reveals that "the art of storytelling, a major part of African folk entertainment, and the episodic format of the epic theatre form,".

The African epic theatre employs the performative trinity (Dance, drama and music) also known as the total the theatre. In this light, Asomba posits that:

Therefore as a complex art, the nature of theatre, which is more pronounced in indigenous African theatres, demands the integration of various art forms, such as poetry, music, dance, dialogue, spectacle, painting, sculpture and architecture. (1990:72)

In support, Chukwuma (144) says “traditional drama is invariably music oriented with the attendant features of dance and song. Moreover the concept of the total theatre keeps the audience engrossed and also transforms the audience into the performance.”

2.5 RELEVANCE OF VISUAL DESIGNS TO AFRICAN EPIC DRAMA AND THEATRE

Visual designs are indispensable arts to the African epic drama and theatre; it is one the ways in which the African culture is identified and projected and also helps to bring out the aesthetic in our culture. Against this backdrop, Asomba, clarifies that:

African theatre have always been intimately and functionally linked to the socio-political and religious realities of the African society in concept and it goes beyond aesthetics reflection of reality...such objects as paintings statues, and mask most often employed in performances of African dramas are not mere contemplative objects but are intended to produce aesthetics as well as perform other social functions. Besides, they are employed in such drama as living elements of collective action of a people. (2000: xxi).

Therefore, it is important that the African theatre should employ the use of elaborate visual designs that is germane to the African environment.

Moreover, theorists like Jersey Grotoski, Bertolt Brecht, Steven Berkoff Vsevolod Meyerhold argue that visual designs like costume, scenery, light, props, make up and light should not be elaborate, therefore making them less important. Nevertheless, sticking to the nature of African theatre, if it should embrace this western ideology, it will lose its authenticity and originality.

Further, the aforementioned theorists believe(d) that audience's imagination needs to be

stimulated, hence, there is no need for elaborate or full costume, make up, props, set, and also light should not be used in suggesting the time of the day. Suffice to say, these theorists did not put into consideration the heterogeneous audience of which they possess different level of intelligence quotient. Further, in the African theatre, it is believed that the audience is expected to transform into the performance. Adegbite's view is relevant here (2009:51) "the African theatre is a living theatre, whose audience are also engrossed and, most times, transformed into performances." Hence it is required that the African audience is provided with appropriate visual designs that will complement the performative trinity (drama, music and dance) in order to fascinate them (audience) alongside keeping them from boredom. This is why Adegbite (2009:48) believes that "in the African theatre environment, the involvement of mostly visual elements normally adds value to theatrical experience."

Also, visual designs help the audience to understand a play; in response to this Amali and Ekere in *The Dramaturgy of a Theatre Sociologist* (368) affirm that "this makes scene design as an essential aspect of a theatrical production which helps the audience understands a play by providing the background and a visual reinforcement of the production concept." Also, Dapo Adelugba in *Ododo* (1988:108) adds that "the better the technical aids in the production the bigger the chances of making it real and concrete for the audience". To support this, Adedeji asserts that:

believes that, “the quintessence of this theatre is in the use of theatrical elements in the performance to effectively communicate with the audience. Thus, sets, costumes, dance, music, acting and lighting, as theatrical elements, play important roles in this theatre.

Consequently, visual designs like costumes, props and set help to establish the period and locale of the play which most times are not written in the script or mentioned by the actors on stage.

Apparently, the integration of these visual designs, in the African theatre helps to evoke mood alongside reinforcing the actions on stage.

Conclusively, the embellishments of the appropriate visual designs help to project the aesthetic in the African culture alongside distinguishing the African theatre from the European theatre.

2.6 AESTHETICS AS THE THEORETICAL FRAME WORK

Aesthetic is a branch of Philosophy; it is a theoretical principle that permits us to view works of art from a relative perspective, or philosophical concept of beauty, what constitute beauty from a relative perspective.

The relationship between visual designs can be traced to the below variables and controversies of aesthetics.

- Aesthetics does not respect universality: this implies that it is subjective and peculiar to a person or group of people with similar minds and culture.
- Aesthetic is basically emotional: this implies that it appeals to the mind.
- Aesthetic is culture based: this implies that aesthetic reflects the culture of a particular society and also culture use aesthetics as a means of projection.

- Aesthetics uses time to communicate: this implies that aesthetics reveals the period of an art work.
- Aesthetics encourages morality.

In this discourse, Dennis Dutton's theory of aesthetics will be examined.

Dennis Dutton was born in Los Angeles, U.S.A on the 9th of February. He specialized in art and researched on media and evolution. He was a professor of philosophy at the University of Canterbury in Christchurch, New Zealand.

He argues that Art itself is a cultural universal; that is, there are no known human cultures in which there cannot be found some form of what we might reasonably term aesthetic or artistic interest, performance, or artifact production —including sculptures and paintings, dancing and music, oral and written fictional narratives, body adornment, and decoration.

Further, he identified six universal signatures in human aesthetics

- ❖ He believed that art work reveals the expertise and virtuosity.
- ❖ He says Art reveals non-utilitarian pleasures; people appreciate arts and enjoy it.
- ❖ He believed that art has style: he says artistic object and performances satisfies rules of composition which place them in a recognizable style.
- ❖ Criticism: people tend to make logical point from judging, appreciating and interpreting the work of art.
- ❖ Imitation: art simulate real life that is, art presents life in a colourful and beautiful dimension.
- ❖ Special Focus: art is separated from ordinary life as viewed as dramatic experience.

CHAPTER THREE

DATA PRESENTATION AND DATA ANALYSIS

3.1 BACKGROUND OF WALE OGUNYEMI – THE PLAYWRIGHT

Wale Ogunyemi, was a major figure in Nigerian theatre: a charismatic actor for film and television, a prolific playwright and a scholar of the Yoruba world, who brought its history, myths and lore into his writing. Born in Igbajo in the west of Nigeria, his upbringing, as with so many of his generation, mixed Christian and Yoruba religious influences; and Yoruba culture inspired him throughout his creative life. His formal education was modest – a Government middle II certificate and subsequent secretarial studies - but his instinctive scholarship was a driving force.

In 1967 he became a drama student at Ibadan University, on a one-year professional course. At the same time he was appointed to Ibadan's Institute of African Studies as a research assistant and transcriber, and he stayed with the institute throughout his career, increasingly devoting himself to Yoruba studies.

3.2 BACKGROUND OF RASAKI OJO BAKARE – THE DIRECTOR

Bakare was born in Aramoko-Ekiti on November 8th1964, Rasaki Ojo Bakare is Nigeria's first professor of Choreography and Performing Aesthetics. From the humble beginning of being a theatre apprentice under Chief Jimoh Aliu and late Hubert Ogunde, Rasaki has grown to become a global personality in Theatre Scholarship and Practice. A holder of B.A(hons) Theatre Arts, UNICAL, M.A Play Directing and Playwriting (UNICAL) and Ph.D in Choreography and Dance Studies from ABU, Zaria, Prof Bakare is a career University Teacher. A multi-talented award-winning Artiste-Scholar, Prof. Bakare

has handled over 200 major command performances both nationally and internationally. He directed the command performances for the presidential inaugurations of Chief Obasanjo, Alhaji Yaradua and his successor Dr Goodluck Jonathan, the Opening ceremonies of National Sports Festival 2004, Under 17 World Cup 2009, NUGA 2008, NAFEST 2005 and others.

3.3 SYNOPSIS OF *LANGBODO* PRODUCTION: AS PERFORMED BY THE THEATRE ARTS DEPARTMENT OF FUOYE.

Oba of Oyo summoned the younger Akaraogun to his palace to embark on the heroic mission. Expectedly, Akaraogun demanded the support of other hunters as well as the people who did not hesitate. After offering sacrifices, seven brave hunters-Akaraogun, Kako, Olohun Iyo, Elegbede Ode, Efoye, Imodoye and AramondaOkunrin set out on the journey with a mission to bring an object (harbinger of peace and love) from Mountain Langbodo. At the outset, the seven hunters saw the mission not only as a heroic one but also as a rare opportunity to serve the people and their community. As they were setting out for the journey, Kako's newly wedded wife, Paminku, tried to stop him from joining his colleagues, but a more determined and courageous Kako shunned his wife, offering to place national assignment above his personal comfort.

The First Medium predicted doom for the seven hunters, blaming them for accepting such a dangerous and risky venture, while the Second Medium did otherwise praying for the warriors and wishing them success and safe return. These mediums (first and second) are two sides of human conscience. The journey took the hunters too many locations where they encountered different creatures such as birds, demons, lunatic of heaven and baboons, which

they had to fight to move on. In most of their difficult situations, the hunters were either rescued by providence or the Mother earth, who was always ready to give them succour. At the aesthetic level, many of the encounters were dramatised or interpreted through well-choreographed dance steps. As part of the new innovations to the production, different dance steps, songs and costumes from the major ethnic groups in the country, helped to add colours to the entire total theatre package. This concept identifies Bakare (director) and Ogunyemi (playwright) as artistes who embrace the total ensemble of the theatre. All the remaining three hunters who survived the journey were received at the palace by the king and the entire people of Langbodo. Instead offering them the object of peace, the king admonished them, and reminded them about their experiences during the expedition. The latter, according to the king, should teach them how to live and how to excel in whatever situation they find themselves. He, however, presented them a symbol of peace, a wooden object, which is painted in Nigeria's colours of Green and White. The message of peace was however threatened when the Devil hijacked the symbol from Akaraogun, leader of the hunters. Having lost four of their colleagues, and now the symbol, the hunters became frustrated, but with the support of the people, Akaraogun summoned courage and eventually snatched the symbol from the Devil. That says it all about the nation's quest for peace especially now when insecurity is threatening the unity of the country.

3.3 THE EFFECTS OF COSTUMES AND MAKE- UP AS USED IN THE LANGBODO

The king of Oyo, Oba of Benin and the chief of Calabar in *Langbodo* are represented below in fig 1, fig 2, and fig 3 respectively. The costumes worn by these actors present them

below in fig 1, fig 2, and fig 3 respectively. The costumes worn by these actors present them as traditional rulers of Yoruba, Edo and Calabar. These costumes coupled with the accessories made the actors look exactly like the character they are representing. Therefore, it is vivid that the costumes, accessories, in relation to the script helped to alter the total appearance of the actors which enhanced characterization and actors' carriage.

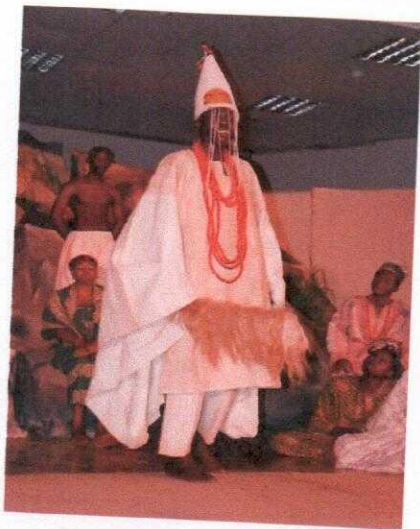


Fig 1: King of Oyo kingdom

In the above picture, the king of Oyo kingdom wears an "Agbada" that is made up of "Alari". However, "Agbada" is a Yoruba name for a type of flowing wide sleeved robe, usually decorated with embroidery which is mostly worn by important men; such as kings and chiefs on ceremonial occasions. Nevertheless, amongst most spectacular beaded objects from Africa are crowns of Yoruba kings. In the picture above, the king is seen wearing a crown which is cone-shaped with forms built up, then embellished over the entire surface with beads of vibrant colours. The crown which is simply known as "Ade" in Yoruba land is the most important object in royal Yoruba regalia, and the right to wear one is limited to a small number of kings (obas) descended from royal families. The beaded veil that hangs down from the headdress is an important part of the crown. By covering the king's face, the

veil downplays the king's identity as an individual and reinforces his role as a divine leader. The make-up applied on the face of the king, however helped to alter the look of the character, despite the fact that the character is young, the make-up applied helped to create an illusion of an aged king. Also, the chief sitting at the right hand of the king has a character-make up on his face. This make up transformed him from a young man to an old man. However from the above picture it can be deduced that costume and make up are indispensable to each other.



Fig 2: Calabar Chief and his Wives



Fig 3: Oba of Benin and his Aides

The Oba of Benin here is depicted in his full ceremonial robes. The crown collars and upper portion of the dress are made of thousands of coral beads. The Oba wears an elaborate shirt and skirt made of red felt and his neck is hung around with many collars of coral beads. In the actual sense, this ceremonial dress is of considerable weight and difficult to wear and it

is therefore usual for the Oba to be supported by attendants (aides) while walking in the public.

It can be deduced from the image below that the actors there, mirrors the Yoruba people; the costumes they are putting on are attires peculiar to the Yoruba people. The “ankaras”, “alaris”, “ofi”, “iro and buba” in the picture below are types of clothes that is common amongst the ancient people of the Yoruba environment before civilization.



Fig 4: Townspeople of Oyo

The image below captures the townspeople of Calabar in Langbodo production. The attires worn by the actors are also peculiar to the people Calabar. Thus, in the production, these costumes were used to distinguish status through the quality and elaborateness of costume.



Fig 5: Townspeople of Calabar

Nevertheless, Langbodo is a play that drives across the various ethnic groups in Nigeria; therefore, this was mainly established through the use of diverse costumes that are peculiar to each ethnic group in Nigeria. This can be perceived in the images above: fig 1- fig 5.

Langbodo is a play that involves the performative trinity (dance, drama and music) which is one of the major features of African theatre. Therefore it was necessary to use appropriate costumes to accompany the different ethnic and traditional dance in the play. Also, as regard the bright colours and the elaborate nature of the dance costume, a sense of aesthetics was born which arrested the audience's and kept them engrossed despite the lengthiness of the play. See images below, fig 6- fig 9.



Fig 6: Igbo Dancers

In the picture below, as part of the dancers' costume, their necks are adorned with elaborate colourful beads called "Nkwaesit itong". Across their shoulder they were bright coral beads called "Anana Ubok" as their arms are covered with coloured raffia called "Ekpiku Ubok". Their legs are also covered with raffia and bells called "Mkpat Elim". Some of the dancers wear around their waistline an "Akasi" made out of cane. This symbolizes the ideal beauty of an Efik woman full figured with a healthy waistline. The "Akasi" is covered with a large piece of fabric to show beauty, femininity and grace as the dances move their body.

The face and body painting with "Ndom" amongst the Efik people symbolizes purity and love.



Fig 7: Calabar Dancers

In the picture below are the "Ugo" dancers of the Benin kingdom. They are seen wearing felt tied around their chests down to their legs. A white piece of clothe is attached to their costume which was later used in the course of the dance. Their crown is made up of coral beads and also their neck is hung around two coral beads. The make-up applied on their face is known as straight make-up which is main purpose is to enhance their beauty and to make their face welcoming to the audience.



Fig 8: Edo dancers

The picture below captures the male dancers of the Fulani's sharo. They are putting on a sleeveless shirt and knicker and a cap alongside with a staff which helped to reinforce that they are nomadic farmers, which can be said to be the culture of the Fulanis.



Fig 9: Sharo dancers of the Fulanis

The play centres on the hunters and their task to help the king acquire the tusk, hence, in the play production, they were provided with sophisticated costumes which presented them as hunters who are in for a big task. According to the director, in the rehearsal process, he mentioned that each hunter represents a geo-political zone in Nigeria, therefore, this was reinforced through the caps worn by each hunter; they were given caps peculiar to each zone, while Nigeria as a country was represented through Akaraogun the leader of the hunters, that is why he is seen putting on a cap that has the colours of the

Nigerian flag – green, white, green. See the image in fig 10 below.



Fig 10: The Hunters

The first medium as represented in the image below is a powerful and wicked character that is full of mischief. These attributes informed the type of costumes that was given to him which gave a psychological comment about his character. This can be related to one of the functions of costume that costume comments on character's personality, because mere looking at the picture below one would suggest that the character is evil.



Fig 11: First medium

The second medium as we can see below is a good and powerful woman in the play; she is seen helping the hunters, however, to contribute to this attribute she was given a white wrapper coupled with white accessories (similar to the attire of an Osun priestess) to further depict the role she is playing.