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RESEARCH SECTION "ARTS & AESTHETICS"

Rethinking the Artistic Trajectory of African Women Artists

Summary

This research critically analyses the artistic trajectory of two women artists in Africa as a starting point into broader and more complex conversations about the conservancy and alternative archiving of artistic practices on the continent. The two artists include Agness Buya Yombwe from Zambia and Elizabeth Olowu who is of Nigerian descent. While there is considerable information about female artists in the West, there is a gaping lack of knowledge about African women artists of specific generations that are based on the continent. This research identifies this gap also in the study of women artists in Africa within the field of the contemporary arts of Africa, as such it foregrounds the importance of roles by women in African societies and highlights the need for their inclusion in the writing of a holistic global history. On one layer this research provides an in-depth engagement with each of the two artists' practices, while on another level it offers a comparative analysis of artistic discourses of women artists between the Nigerian and Zambian contexts. Last but not least, this research offers insights into how women artists navigate hierarchical and masculine socio-political and religious contexts that are prevalent in their geographic locations.

Key Questions

Two dominant questions guide our research:

- This research critically analyses select women artists' practices as a means of contributing to knowledges about contemporary artistic practices in Nigeria and Zambia. The study also elucidates the gendered biases therein.
- This research builds a repository of materials that have hitherto not been in the public domain such that the dearth in the scholarship of these artists in a sense, lies in the unavailability of proper documentation and photographic evidence of the artist oeuvre. Critical to this research is the creation of an inventory of works of these artists to serve as a basis for further research.

PROJECT TEAM



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Methods and Concepts

This research identifies select women artists whose work will be studied and documented, which will, in turn, form part of an alternative archive of women artists in Africa. Artists like Dorothy Amenuke, Fatric Bewong, Tracy Thompson, and Adjo Kisser (Ghana), Victoria Ekpei, Chris Funke Ifeta and Kaltume Bulama Gana (Nigeria) have been identified as artists in need of a similar documentation effort. However, in this phase of research, we identify two African women artists; Agness Buya Yombwe (Zambia) and Elizabeth Olowu (Nigeria). The research is structured through workshops and extensive fieldwork in Nigeria and Zambia. Interviews with the artists and contemporaries will be conducted. So much of women's history has been glossed over for lack of proper documentation.

Vision

This research seeks to contribute towards documenting the work of African women artists as a way of positioning women in global art history. The lack of women artists' biographies and critical analysis of their works contribute in no small measure to the erasure that has been identified and stated. In many countries in Africa such as Zambia, Zimbabwe, Congo and others, there are women artists, who like Omogbai, have become invisible due to the lack of early and proper documentation of their work.

Contribution to the Cluster's Aims & Goals

This research provides an in-depth study of the works of two female artists from the African continent. In terms of relationality, the research sheds light on various contexts – social, political, religious that impacted the art of these two female artists. It feels a gap in the dearth of documentation of black artists. A vital aspect of this study is to provide an archive of information and analysis of works on the artists under study.

Further Links

Find more information here: https://iads.unilag.edu.ng/lacc/?page_id=1770



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