

THE IMPACT OF GLOBAL TURBULENCE ON VISUAL ARTS

Emmanuel Jebechi Ofili & Ijeoma Felicia Urien

Abstract

The paper examined the impact of global turbulence era on visual arts. The major purpose is to re-examine the effects of COVID-19 pandemic on the visual artists, and the place of art during the pandemic era. The study is cross sectional in nature and was carried out using descriptive design to collect data from respondents and three respondents were used for the study. Data from both primary and secondary sources were collected using interviews and personal observation and later analysed and presented accordingly qualitative formats. This paper also reviewed the existing literature as obtained from academic research reports and online articles. The study however, concluded that the limitation of social activities led to the changes in the sales and exhibition of arts; mostly conducted via the internet, the art appreciation in exhibition. Activities found in art spaces or galleries also changed and there was a rapid growth in the use of digital communication technologies (social media) in publicizing art. The paper also concluded that the impact of the global turbulence experienced in 2020 affected so many sectors all over the world in which the visual art sector was not excluded. It suggested that artists should intensify use of social media platforms to promote the image of visual arts and sales of art products as well as intensify the use of improvised tools and materials as experienced during the pandemic era in 2020 to promote the use of locally made goods in favour of the nation's economy as being currently solicited by the Federal Government of Nigeria.

Key words: Turbulence, Pandemic, Art appreciation, and digital art.

Introduction

This paper is a study that helps to examine the impact of the turbulence era that was experienced in various sectors all over the world including the field of visual arts. Following the announcement of social restrictions as a result of the outbreak of corona virus in 2020, all social interactions and physical activities suddenly changed. It started from social restrictions to self-quarantine and finally ended with

inscriptions such as on hashtags stay-at-home on social media. Almost all activities outside the home were grounded; schools, offices, art exhibitions, performances, and many others. Many activities were carried out indoor and visual arts activities like paintings, drawings, sculptures, ceramics, textiles to mention but few then relied on digital communication technology commonly known as the internet to advertise and to exhibit works of art to the public.

According to Marilena et al, (2022), the COVID-19 pandemic is one of the most substantial recent challenges facing business and governments this century. It has generated health concerns as well as an unprecedented social and economic crisis, which has particularly hit service industries hard and induced an acceleration of digitalization practices. The COVID-19 pandemic is very different from other forms of crisis, for instance, financial and political, because it has had a significant overall impact on all business models, organizations, creative workers and users. It is a health crisis, which specifically affects both the outdoor and indoor leisure industry.

Florida and Seman (2020) also opined that this pandemic is characterized by some specific aspects: first, its non-linear character contra the one assumed by traditional crisis lifecycle models, as it may flare up again in intensity following a first wave and ebb as has been predicted by medical experts. Second, far from being an imminent or emerging crisis, it is a sustained crisis as it can last for months or years, over a very long crisis existence phase and being cyclical crisis as well because of the different contagious waves. All the restrictions and measures taken to reduce human contact and

movement to slow down the spread of the virus together with relevant challenges represent a discontinuity, breaking from the past reality. From a management perspective, COVID-19 represents a huge strategic challenge as it disrupts the mechanisms of demand and supply, and production capacity, contributes to increased uncertainty as well as financial instability leading to unpredictable scenarios, unforeseeable in a pre-crisis time. (Kim S, et al., 2020)

The Impact of the Turbulence Era on Art

An interview with Olumide who is an expressionist painter at the Universal Studio of Art, Iganmu Lagos Nigeria; helps to further understand that the recent lock down experienced during the COVID-19 has a great influence on both the art, the artists, art exhibition and the art business. He explained that making artwork itself is an activity that can still be done when social restrictions is imposed unlike some other professions such as the builders, drivers, engineers, and so on; that have to be in the field or on the road but had to forcibly stay at home while doing nothing but engaged in some activities that would make them catch fun at home. Olumide further explained that *“though, the lock down was not really easy on the artists too but they were able to survive and even*

used art as a tool for therapy to encourage people especially the public as not to take their own life but by adhering to all the instructions given by the government so as to be safe.’’

Furthermore, the turbulence era had a great impact on the artists’ ideology in his artistic

creation and subject matter of his works, which was mostly geared toward the situation face by every individual, communities, countries and the world as a whole during the COVID



Title: Isolation

Artist: Tobi Nancy Keshinro,

Medium: Acrylic on Canvas, **Year:** 2020

Photograph: Amao Ranti M., 2022.

The above picture is a canvas painting titled ‘Isolation’, executed by a Nigerian female painter; Nansy Keshinro, 2020. The painting features a reclining female figure lying helplessly on a couch in her sitting room, stretching her left hand down to the foreground of the painting, which creates a foreshortening perspective effect. The figure

is partly dressed as clothe covers only the breast and the hip region and the hair, having a shabby shaggy look without treatment. She holds a black nose mask in her right hand, tilted toward the edge of the couch, almost dropping off to the floor. Behind her is a large window with curtain opened to the two sides to brighten up the room and a door entrance

leading to the living room. The overall painting is executed in naturalistic form showing the angular view of the room while, the wall is painted in yellow with a poster having the caption “STAY SAFE”.

The artist uses this painting as a visual representation to explain and expressed the impact of the turbulence era (COVID 19) during the lockdown days. The lady in the painting is used as a an oxymoron to show how the lockdown was to keep people safe from the pandemic, and how the lockdown boredom almost rendered people useless and sick on the kind of lifestyle they had to adapt to without any other choice. The caption on the wall and the nose mask are used as a means to educate the public on how to protect themselves during the lockdown period to avoid contracting the deadly virus. In addition, from another point of view, the lady could be seen as someone who was quarantined and isolated from the public so as not to affect others with the deadly disease she had contracted. However the psychological assessment of this painting speaks volume on the danger one could encounter, haven been exposed to the deadly virus.

Impacts of Lockdown on the Artists

As an artist and art educator whom have been in practice for many years, I cannot deny the fact that the pandemic really affected the artists’ both in positive and negative ways. It increasingly influences how people create and maintain social relationships, structure their social networks, do their jobs, meet their partners, educate their children, how they shop, relaxing, present themselves to the world and retain their memories.

The Positive impacts

It has been discovered from various studies that the turbulence era really had positive impact on some artists during the lock down because it helped them to discover themselves. To some, they were able to explore new styles of creating works of arts while the period availed many the opportunity to create more visual art forms of different themes with various subject matters of great magnitude. This period also helped many artists to do more of online exhibitions through various social media platforms, which subsequently helped them to make appreciable sales.

Hensel (2022), a multidisciplinary artist in New York also gave her opinion in her article on how she made lots of sales in arts using the social media during the lockdown thus;



Susan Hensel

Artists changed the way that they create, interact, and do business and there is no turning back. Technological advancements will lead to more digital channels and tools for art. The art industry will continue to host virtual galleries and online exhibitions. Art will become more of a financial product than a collector's piece. Fine art has become an asset class, along with gold, stocks, and real estate. There has been more of a demand than ever for blue-chip artists.

I had been observing the changes happening with online sales. All indications were that this segment would grow during the pandemic, reduce somewhat as it died down, but remain at 15-25% of sales going forward. Subsequently, several things intersected as I looked to take a more online approach to my sales. I had hired Faceless Marketing, a full-service marketing agency prior to COVID, to re-brand my business, polish up my personal website as well as my gallery website, and create a real presence on the internet. I was looking for more ways to exhibit, even though galleries and museums were shut down. The first thing I did was begin to create, small, thematic, [pop-up exhibitions](#) on my own much-improved website—much like many artists and arts organizations have taken to.

The Negative Impacts

According to Dennis (2022), since the pandemic (COVID 19) did not allow people to go out; some artists had to go out of the spotlight for a while. Some took break from it and just live the normal life, while some were cooped in their own creativity indoors

cooking up songs to surprise their fans or just express themselves. Some artists could not really practice because of the unavailability of some art materials while some were depressed because they could not travel for their already planned exhibitions and some could not even sell any of their art pieces.

Significant of Negative and Positive Impact of COVID 19 Pandemic on Visual Arts

Negative Impact

- **Economic impact:** The pandemic has led to a decline in funding, cancelled exhibitions, and decreased sales of artworks, causing financial strain for artists, galleries, and cultural institutions (Buchholz et al., 2020).
- **Reduced exposure and opportunities:** Cancelled events, exhibitions, and art fairs have reduced opportunities for artists to showcase their work, network, and gain exposure (Comunian and England 2020).
- **Shift to digital platforms:** While online exhibitions and digital platforms have provided alternative avenues for showcasing art, they cannot fully replicate the experience of viewing art in person (Pesce et al, 2019).
- **Impact on mental health:** The pandemic has taken a toll on artists' mental health, as financial stress, isolation, and creative block can

exacerbate anxiety and depression (Chmiel et al, 2022).

These challenges have underscored the vulnerability of the arts sector in times of crisis and highlighted the need for greater support for artists and cultural institutions.

Positive Impact

Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been some positive impacts on the visual arts:

- **Digital innovation:** Artists, galleries, and museums have embraced digital platforms and technologies, such as virtual exhibitions, online performances, and digital art, to reach a wider audience and create new forms of artistic expression (Giannini and Bowen 2022).
- **Accessibility:** The shift to online platforms has made art more accessible to people who may not have had the opportunity to visit galleries or museums in person due to geographic, physical, or financial constraints.
- **Community support:** The pandemic has spurred a sense of solidarity within the arts community, leading to initiatives that provide financial

assistance, emotional support, and resources for artists in need (Bradbury et al, 2021).

- Re-evaluation and introspection: The pandemic has prompted artists and arts organizations to reflect on their practices and priorities, leading to a renewed focus on inclusivity, sustainability, and community engagement.
- New themes and narratives: The pandemic has inspired artists to create work that reflects on the current moment, leading to powerful artworks that capture the zeitgeist and foster empathy and connection (Culleton and Radley, 2021).

These positive developments demonstrate the resilience and adaptability of the arts sector in times of crisis, underscore the vital role that art plays in helping us navigate, and understand turbulent times.

Conclusion

This study found out that visual arts served as the tool to bring out the image of COVID 19 since the virus was not very visible and therefore could not be seen with naked eyes except under electron microscope. The visual representation of COVID 19 in colours has aided peoples “visual comprehension of the

shape which in turn made people to wonder more on the danger this virus might portend. Artists as different themes or subjects for discourse to make its essence and visibility more comprehensible to the public did the representation of the virus through different media such as colours, digital, metal and plastics. It also found out that artists and artisans responded in different forms during the pandemic. One of the responses was the production and sales of nose masks when it became clear that imported facemasks were scarce and costly since March 2020. This added to the economic boom of the artists, which was a positive one.

The impact of the turbulence era on visual arts as narrated in this study was both positive and negative. The effects were in such a way that some of the artists have continued to make waves in the art industry both at home and in Diaspora while some are still counting their losses till date. Worthy of note is the fact that the turbulent era has made artists to be more active on internet as they now use it frequently to update their artworks, status, lifestyles etc. through posts, tweets and the rest. It is certain that we do not pray for this turbulent era to resurface because of its overwhelming negative effects, however, few positive effects were still experienced

and it is on this basis that it is hereby suggested that artists should continue with the spirit of dedication to work with utmost focus as experienced during the pandemic restriction and use their artworks as tools to address pressing issues in the society. Artists should intensify the use of social media to promote importance of visual arts across the globe as well as increase sales of art products.

In addition, the use of improvised art materials and tools generally experienced during the pandemic era because of the lack of accessibility to foreign ones should be sustained and improved upon to promote locally made goods in favour of the nation's economy as aggressively canvassed for by the Federal Government of Nigeria.

References

- Alexandra Bradbury, Katey Warran, Hei Mak, Daisy Fancourt (2022). University College London(UCL).
https://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&as_sdt=0%2C5&q=Community+support%3A+The+pandemic+has+spurred+a+sense+of+solidarity+within+the+arts+community%2C+leading+to+initiatives+that+provide+financial+assistance%2C+emotional+support%2C+and+resources+for+artists+in+need+&btnG=#d=gs_qabs&t=1716463524990&u=%23p%3DAjbxHk1PTIJ
- Anthony Chmiel, Frederic Kiernan, Sandra Garrido, Sarah Lensen, Martha Hickey, Jane W Davidson (2022). *Frontiers in Psychology* 13, 993259.
https://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&as_sdt=0%2C5&q=Impact+on+mental+health%3A+The+pandemic+has+taken+a+toll+on+artists%27+mental+health%2C+as+financia+stress%2C+isolation%2C+and+creative+block+can+exacerbate+anxiety+and+depressi+on&btnG=#d=gs_qabs&t=1716463189280&u=%23p%3DakLOpLSKloQJ
- Danilo Pesce, Paolo Neirotti, Emilio Paolucci (2019). *Current Issues in Tourism* 22 (15), 1883-1903.
https://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&as_sdt=0%2C5&q=Shift+to+digital+platforms%3A+While+online+exhibitions+and+digital+platforms+have+provided+alternative+avenues+for+showcasing+art%2C+they+cannot+fully+replicate+the+experience+of+viewin+g+art+in+person&btnG=#d=gs_qabs&t=1716462941853&u=%23p%3DfcDcMbeCX38J
- Florida, R., & Seman, M. (2020). *Lost art: Measuring COVID-19's devastating impact on America's creative economy*. The Brookings Institution, Washington, DC, 11 August 2020.
https://www.brookings.edu/wpcontent/uploads/2020/08/20200810_brookingsmetro_COVID19-and-creative-economy_final.pdf. Retrieved on 7th of Nov. 2022
- Jim Culleton, Emma Radley (2021). *Irish University Review* 51 (2), 200-208,2021.
https://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&as_sdt=0%2C5&q=New+themes+and+narrati+ves%3A+The+pandemic+has+inspired+artists+to+create+work+that+reflects+on+the+cu+rrent+moment%2C+leading+to+powerful+artworks+that+capture+the+zeitgeist+and+fos+ter+empathy+and+connection&btnG=#d=gs_qabs&t=1716463826071&u=%23p%3DmXWL3ajB68EJ
- Kim, S., Parboteeah, K. P., & Cullen, J. B. (2020). *The COVID-19 Crisis Management in the Republic of Korea*. In *International Case Studies in the Management of Disasters*. Emerald Publishing Limited.
https://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&as_sdt=0%2C5&q=The+COVID-19+Crisis+Management+in+the+Republic+of+Korea.+In%2%A0International+Case+S+tudies+in+the+Management+of+Disasters.+Emerald+Publishing+Limited&btnG=#d=gs_qabs&t=1716464395789&u=%23p%3DtvMQiyihqkYJ

- Larissa Buchholz, Gary Alan Fine, Hannah Wohl (2020). American journal of cultural sociology 8,462-476.
https://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&as_sdt=0%2C5&q=Economic+impact%3A+The+pandemic+has+led+to+a+decline+in+funding%2C+anceled+exhibitions%2C+and+decreased+sales+of+artworks%2C+causing+financial+strain+for+artists%2C+galleries%2C+and+cultural+institutions+&btnG=#d=gs_qabs&t=1716461931052&u=%23p%3DLqXc_gYMwHoJ
- Marilena V, Martin C., Paul V., Eveline D. W, Ena I., Sofia M. & Nazarejova, M. (2022). *The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on creative industries, cultural institutions, education and research*. International Bureau of the World Intellectual Property Organization.
https://www.wipo.int/edocs/mdocs/copyright/en/wipo_cr_COVID_19_ge_22/wipo_cr_COVID_19_ge_22_study.pdf
- Roberta Comunian, Lauren (2020). England Cultural Trends 29 (2), 112-128.
https://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&as_sdt=0%2C5&q=Reduced+exposure+and+opportunities%3A+Canceled+events%2C+exhibitions%2C+and+art+fairs+have+reduced+opportunities+for+artists+to+showcase+their+work%2C+network%2C+and+gain+exposure&btnG=#d=gs_qabs&t=1716465076537&u=%23p%3DDi6l9mE5hX8J
- [Susan, H.](#) (2022, November 5). “One artist's perspective on how COVID affected the art industry chromatic wave1”. <https://www.artworkarchive.com/blog/one-artist-s-perspective-on-how-COVID-affected-the-art-industry>.
- Travkina, E., & Sacco, P. L. (2020). Culture shock: COVID-19 and the cultural and creative sectors. OECD. https://read.oecdilibrary.org/view/?ref=135_135961nenh9f2w7a&title=Culture-shock-COVID-19-and-the-cultural-and-creativesectors.
- Tula Giannini, Jonathan P Bowen Heritage (2022) 5 (1), 192-214.
https://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&as_sdt=0%2C5&q=Digital+innovation%3A+Artists%2C+galleries%2C+and+museums+have+embraced+digital+platforms+and+technologies%2C+such+as+virtual+exhibitions%2C+online+performances%2C+and+digital+art%2C+to+reach+a+wider+audience+and+create+new+forms+of+artistic+expression&btnG=#d=gs_qabs&t=1716463305525&u=%23p%3D5F-0V54wyLYJ

PERSONAL INTERVIEW

Olumide Daniel (05/11/2022), Age: 30years old, Venue: surulere Lagos; 11:20 a.m.

Okoni Dennis (06/11/2022), Age: 28years old, Venue: Orile iganmu, Lagos; 4:00p.m.