The Transvangarde and Consequence in Nigerian Professional Art: Matters arising

By

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Abstract

"Natural synthesis" labelled the Nigerian art world. This essay unpacks how leading contemporary artists like EL Anatsui, in a "selective critiquing and re-evaluation of self" dared to "wriggle out" of that quagmire. Reactivating the dynamic terrain that lives and is vibrant from within the soul of artists, they forged a new path of creativity. With empirical analysis and the engagement of storytelling mechanisms, this article unreels that artistry. Despite formal accademisisation and art practice, specific contemporary Nigerian artists discussed in this paper dared a diversion to the traditions of their African art world; and for some, the world/touts lemonde! EL detours to cloth making craft traditions, chiefly the Kente weave and its autography for inspiration. Hence, the "vital and enabling" intellectual paradigm "resumptions, disappearances, and repetitions" makes possible an intersection with knowledge; while the "uniting representation" of the synthesis in the adoption of Memory and Interview grounds the contexts art is experienced. EL's "non-fixed forms" make visible the temerity of new shapes and forms forged directly from the wellsprings and fecundity of African roots as exemplars of the art of the transvangardist dawn. Deconstructions of specific artworks reveal the groundings of their discourses on assemblages of "Forgotten Biography" and the engagement of "mythopoetic imagination" (Marina Paolo Banchetti-Robino, 2011) in the recalibration of personal expression in imageries that inflect spiritual ties to ancestry and memory. The artworksare an unspooling revelation of new grounds of discourses and sleights of aesthetics. The essay draws attention tothe emergent Transvangandisation and consequences in Nigerian professional art.

Keywords: transvangard, knowledge; "mythopoetic imagination", deconstruction, forms and shapes; and transvangardisation.

Introduction

Academe is the kernel of the *transvangardeimage turn*. These images in their varied envelopes, shapes and composite forms have been the subject of major exhibitions. Presenting a convivial platform of African artistic modernism in the 20th century, Shows maintained expositions as epistemological grounds for congenial links of African history and art history. As art chronological storylines, however, Exhibitions do not only serve as sites of display but are active agents in telling stories that reflect the times and spaces of emergent visual histories**.**

Distinctive European sponsored exhibitions, have been influential gatekeepers keeping a monitor on stylistic trends across Africa. Among these are: *Africa Explores,* Museum of African Art, New York (1991); *Seven Stories about Modern Art in Africa,* the Whitechapel gallery, London(1995); *The Short Century* (Museum Villa Stuck, Munich, (2001); Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin (2001); Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, (2001); P.S.1 New York (2002); and *Africa Remix* (Museum Kunst Palast, Du¨sseldorf(2004); Hayward Gallery, London (2005); Centre Georges Pompidou(2005); Mori Art Museum 2006); Johannesburg Art Gallery (2007). Exhibitions articulated wide-ranging contexts of African artistic modernity in the 20th century, employing frameworks that put exhibitions as epistemological grounds for engaging the intersection of African history and art history. Hans Belting, empathising on the role of museum exhibitions in the creation of art historical narratives, says that museum displays in the past did not only serve as shows but were active agents*" in narrating history in the mirror of its own history"* (Belting 2009, 54).

The emergence of *Dak'Art* as the first biennial in Africa, in the 1990s, re-shaped Africa's engagement with the international art world. It catalysed changes inartistic identity, proficiency, and mobility by African artists everywhere, who began to construct new forms of social engagement and aesthetic production.
Budgetary limitations have troubled support for the arts in Africa, the *Dak'Art* biennial, now in its 14th edition, is funded solely by the government of Senegal.

Beyond*Tendances etConfrontations (1966)*, *Africa Explores* (1991); *Seven Stories* (1995) and even *Africa Remix*(2007),a modernist era representing key junctures put the more contemporary with its insistent *transvangardisation*, stylistic and conceptual complexities, origins and intellectual paths in perspective.

Reflecting the millennium and man's being-in-the-world is symbolised in the *trancevangarde* art works as icons that tell of that time and space. Space permits understanding of how things and events relate to one another. The concept of time plays a crucial role in that analogy. Exhibitions are readings of the sequence of **arty** things. The celebration of happenings defines time. Hence, defining time relative to happenings, **shows** appear as benchmarks. Space translates to a void when devoid of occasions that define time (Frank Ugiomoh, 2022:8). Space as an accessory to things locates images forged in time. Consciousness of time, **sequestering** in what humans do, is man's prerogative. Such awareness undergirds the expectations in exhibitions. Artists' creations translate as cultural codes that define time within the limitlessness of space.

This paper focuses on (I) a discourse of a new dawn in Nigerian artistic production symbolised by a synegisation of the Studio and Textual intellectual traditions latched on the forge of the workshop. Indeed, metaphorically exemplified in *"I Ndaffa"*, a *Serer* expression that insinuates *"Out of the Fire" (*EL Hadji Ndiaye, 2022*);* alluding to a blacksmith's forge, where material is transformed and meanings are made. The college workshop is the *defacto* training-ground for the emergent professional artists. Hence, I put EL Anatsu's paradigmatic lead in academe as meteorin that epistemic shift; and the Nsukka school as exemplar and leading light in the forging of the artists of the new artistic turn;(II)Alook at the postmodernist image turn and its impact on professionalism and art interpretation ; (III) a hermeneutic discourse of three (3) artworks to demonstrate the inflection of the new regime of images and imageries that state the spirit of the age.

"In a bloom of one thousand flowers", Nigerian (and other African) artists in exhibitions like *Seven Stories*(1995), but significantly in *Dak'Art 2022;* in a fever of post-modernism expressed in their art the ethos of freedom and in personal expressions reflected spontaneous emotions and sensibilities that echoed the remnant of self. Art aggregates to the remnants of an artist's encounter with the

sensible world of sight, touch, and feeling (Ben Shahn, 1957). The effect **was** romanticism undergirding personal self-interests, unpacked narcissisms inflecting a withdrawal to interiority, subjectivism and the interrogation of self. In celebrations of diversity the artists presented ways of seeing their art worlds. In adroit narratives and engaging new materials: the renewables and the ready-mades, artists broke away from the One Story/ One Narrative and totalisation of knowledge.

Indeed, with a nose in the air for the spirit of the dawn, artists foisted their own discourses. Hence, in unique feats of shapes and forms, visual metaphors crystalise the accumulation of human actions symbolically arrested and stored as cultural codes that the artworks recite. This is the demand that this study as *"history of things"* represents.

The visual artist plays diverse roles as a visible member of community, within its social and cultural space. Artists generate metaphors, as much as they make up the ever changing identity of themselves and society. **Artists'** memories are dependable retrievers, crystalised as Images and imageries driven on as visual information.

Gleaning the Groundings of Artistic Substance

"The mythopoetic imagination"

The artist in Sartrean language is likened, thusly:

"*Orpheus going to claim Eurydice from Plato….it is by letting himself fall in trance, by rolling on the ground like a possessed man tormented by himself, by singing his own anger, by exhibiting his wounds, his life torn short, by becoming most lyrical, that the black poet is most certain of creating a great collective poetry"* (Jean-Paul Sartre, 1967)

In dream-like fashion, the artist's decent into himself dares like Sartre's *"Orpheus to claim Eurydice from Pluto"*; transposes the pictorial elements. For example, the artist EL Anatsui engaging *a montage of wire sewn wrappers tapestry s*imulates the *"weave and weft processes* of *Kente* making and its design elements onto his artworks by becoming lyrical in thoughts and imaginative creation, the consciousness of his world unfolds. In rejection of rationalist "*natural synthesis*", but in espousal of the *mythopoeic* imagination EL plunges deep into his true world of *"dream and childhood*

innocence", connecting to nature, culture, ancestry and history. True to the *Sankofa* dicta, a resort to *"the aesthetic principles and values of the past"*, as a groundswell for understanding the intuitions of modern expression (Kofi Antubam, 1963; Kwame Nkrumah, 1965; Leopold Senghor, 1963); EL tapped into the *"collective consciousness"* to recast cultural memories engaging the strategies and media of modernism. Thusly, enacting a personalised discursive space for the narrating of postcolonial production that shocked the world, Anatsui made Africa's contribution to *"universal civilization"*.

Anatsui's art offers nuanced commencements in surfeits of fleeting memorials that set a razor-cutting *pictorial turn*. Parting ways with the academy and set traditions of exhibition-making, instead inserting storylines rooted in idiosyncrasies of artistic slants, distinctive oeuvres and contexts; histories and styles emerged. Hence, with perspectives that recognised the former colonial places' sovereignty, and the critical lenses of academe's leading lights like Jean-Paul Sartre and a host of others, who debunked western arrogance; the West made gestures supportive of art and artistic styles from the emergent world of Africa and Oceania.

Well-travelled artists, therefore, became the meteors of the new art world canvassed by *RN* and *N*. Crucial to the role of providers of essential changes and of transformations heralded by exhibitions and the Texts that they recited, there **was** the urgency to take stock of the complex phenomena represented by *transvangardism*. **Anatsui** should be perceived as a qualified individual straddling the hypothesised new tracks of artistic globalisation initiated by *RN*&*N*, allhemmed on the coat-tails of key European sponsored Shows of the time: *Seven Stories about Africa* (1969), *Magiciens de la Terre* (1989) and *Africa-Remix* (2007) offer a short-term reaping of that artistic substance.

Single-mindedness in salvaging what society creates is the artist's sterling quality. Efficiently acting on short-term memory artists offer society labyrinths derived from external stimuli, either iconic or semantic; engaging general information fabricated over years of storing and sorting different stimuli and their value-effects. Indeed, in the re-calibrations of imageries, the diverse artworks of EL declaim the universalist dicta of *Dakaro is* negritude, inflecting the outlining of *RN* & *N* as the intellectual foundations that inspired the 1960's paradigm shift.

A hermeneutic discourse of the artworks of three (3) visual artists follow to demonstrate the inflection of a new regime of images and imageries reflecting the epistemology. With heroic verve and the ludic playfulness of art, these artists engage commonplace materials: the recycled, and factory ready-mades as art materials and tools to bear witness to the joy, anxiety and worry in our reality of independence and freedom. In this presence they cause a reflection upon the relationship between life and death; between tradition and the reality of a postindustrial age.

The sculpture Obinnah Makatah employed factory crafted plastic fillets to convey radical and subversive themes in a socially concerned narrative. In an increasingly fragile, polarised world, Obinnah engaged a nuanced discourse of the ever tense relationship between the ecosystem and man's use and abuse of it. Daringly he ventures to discourse the darker, lesser reported history of development and international Humanitarian Aid in a ludic subversive protest narrative. In folkloric gestures, Ngozi-Omeje Ezema grounds her discourses on vernacular anecdotal slants, in conceptual visuals alloyed in metaphors to inflect the virtues of hard work and perseverance as sterling virtues for artistic development. EL Anatsuidadaistically created artworks that state the postindustrial synthetic machine made as statements of the alternative for the now!

Many Voices, Art Speaks

Beyond the pale of contemporary African art and its validation by western standards *via* galleries, collectors and auction houses, whose attention oils stars and apportions values; *2022's* artists deftly speak in distinctively independent voices. With a nose in the air for the epistemic pool of *R N* and *N* dicta; and the overarching political consciousness of the afrocentricism framed in the pan Africanist stances of leading independent African countries like Kwame Nkrumah's Ghana.

It is informative to recognise the impact of 20th century intellectual sparkles culled from ethnographic research in Francophone West Africa that grounded exposés in Phenomenology. Besides the 20th century witnessed the fashionableness of "recycled materials and the recourse to materials from heterogeneous sources".

African artistry simply reflected these trends. In simulacra's of the Kwame Nkrumah (1965) ideological *cultural turn and the fever of independence,* reflecting ways of being African in singular expressions that affect differences between Africa and Africans, between identity and nationality; between expression and politics (Simon Njami,2016; EL Hadji Ndiaye,2022).

In fact, African artists wondered aloud "where we are today, hence, what is the discursive binge that enflames our consciousness? What art to expect in this spirited consciousness is the anxiety and expectation of the astounding world art viewers?

African artists keen on reflecting the ethos like the chameleon in *simulacra* of the new being-in-the-world ethos took on the mantra of the rebel *a laZarianists*, 1960s Nigeria. EL, Makata and Ezema indulged "*Sankofo*", *"Go home and pick"*

Anatsui, Obinnah and Ngozimade existential choices by grounding their discourses on assemblages of *"Forgotten Biography"* in recalibration of personal expressions; in language and imageries that inflect individual spiritual ties to ancestry and the reality of a cosmopolitan inflexion with a global world view. In fact, wresting all into a momentous symbol, thusly registering knowledge production, art and art history as groundings that intuit display but also active agents in "narrating history of the soul of African black folks".

Dak'Artists 2022 did not only *"go home to their pasts"*, but dared an alchemy beyond *"natural synthesis"* to fuse other art worlds; histories of indigenous and multi-sited modernist experiences to forge new expressions and narratives. Reflecting the post *Dakarois* ethos, the nascent images and imageries speak volumes in modernist artistry that reimage and redefine the cosmopolitanism and global contemporary art scene. Little wonder, therefore, with the "many voices" cursing stream-like from 2016 to *Dak'Art* 2022; there is an overriding maneuver between the a historical, traditional and the postcolonial "contemporary" in the vibes of these images.

Presence Consciousness, the Wordless Spectacle of Interpretation
OLD MAN'S Cloth (Fig. 1)
Made of foil liquor bottle wrappers linked together in a technique that El describes as part of the "nomadic aesthetic", in *MAN'S CLOTH*. With the fluidity of forms and indeterminacy in the envelopes and shapes that typify his work, EL breaks new ground in art making. The curators and their handymen are authorised to try their hands at forming what the artist has provided as a starting point (Anatsui, 2011). The mosaic of brands of liquor labels and their inscriptions have names linked to events, people; allusions to *Kente* congruent traditions of same practice. History in Africa finds its "dialogue" in cloth!

Despite the conversion of real bottle wrappers, the grim realities of the Middle Passage, in which liquor was primary commodity exchanged for the human cargo of slaves, is memorialised. For Anatsui the wrappers were iconic to a history. "Bottles capping" fashioned in Europe for the transfer of drinks from European merchants to African markets (transformed to flat wrappers, as artifacts) is symbolised as historical ground breaking technology. Borne out of the coinage of trade, the important development of trade and merchandising in Africa from Europe beyond the slave trade is signified: *"So I think drink has a lot to do with the link between the continents; that is a historical fact!"* (Anatsui, 2011).

EL mined his landscape for locally available materials and idioms of expression; made them personal creations with an entirely new syntax. Embracing a visual language culled from the colours and patterns of Ewe and Asante strip weave; swarmed in *Adinkra* motifs, he appropriated the glittering legacy of those millennial textile traditions with echoes of their cultural significance.

Gangs of men (under the master's gaze) produced screens of giant montage-like bottle-wrapper metallic tapestries. These installations resemble paintings when viewed from a distance. Made-up of hundreds of synthetic polygon pieces sewn from colorful bottle wrappers, products of the large consumption of liquor. Anatsui consciously employs the wrappers as ingenious motifs to tell the story of migration and displacement of peoples from the colonial territories; the story of the exchange of goods and the consolidation of trade between Europe and West Africa. EL dadaistically employs factory made specific colours simulated from the

bottle-wrappers to stress themes of social history. He connects African symbolisms with western modernist graphic elements in colourful compositions akin to a symphony, the layering inflect sculptural tactility, but Tapirs-like create a playground for light and shadow.

Engaging the viewer's eyes is an encounter simulacra's of reading a book, watching a movie, or even hallucinating (Claire Bishop, 2005). Affecting illusionary picture making techniques of post antiquity civil architecture paintings commonplace in Papal palaces but standard in Jesuit Baroque architecture (Oliver Grau, 2003), an illusionary immersion of the viewers, implodes. In fact, this technique of affective *"total immersion and illusion"* is ingenious of filmic landscape vistas.

EL exploits creative artistry engaging synthetic materials to create alternative sceneries. The artworks are poetic reflections utilising materials full of aesthetic qualities. These are eddy response to Simon Njami's curatorial concept of a reincarnation grounded in the poem, *The City in the Blue Daylight*. The suitability of the dream scenario as enabling instrumentality foregrounding **Anatsui's** installations is hinged on the total effect of the artwork on the viewers. That engineering of the artworks is the activation of the wheel of associations: cultural, everyday analogies, even personal memories.

Obinnah MAKATAH

Against the apartheid in the Dak'Art 22's arrangement, *Palais de Justice* and *L'OFF* Exhibition spaces, the Show's *piece de resistence* and protest***MEDICINE AFTER DEATH*** (Fig.3) a 9 meter high installation composed of machine crafted fiber-glass molds to represent a sinister theater of objects: bones, the human skeleton effigy; sub-machine gun stationed on a cartridge chain recharge carrier. This installation defies definition. With a title echoing a foreboding of disaster, the mystery of a first look is deepened. A critical re-look unravels the reality of the message in this assemblage. Steering emotions that bring the *literati* and everyday people to the reality of Africa, albeit the developing world, the viewer's come to terms not only of own mortality but the part own lives have to play in the larger theater of human history.

In pursuit of a socially committed discourse, Makatah employs *ready-mades*: medical syringes and synthetic human skeleton and bones to impel a critique of western hypocrisy in Aid/Humanitarian relief and the contradictions of armament supply to nations at war. In ***MEDICINE AFTER DEATH*** (Fig.3) Makatah deploys key icons of the industrial revolution and medical science technology and its practice as symbolic metaphors to weave a narrative. Syringes, atypical symbols of health delivery, framed in the story of a condition of war, are fashioned as bullet chain-rounds for the AK47 submachine gun: symbol of desecration that create bones and skeletons as features of death, decay and destruction (Fig 3B).

In conversation Obinnah reiterated the real life description of the double sidedness of Humanitarian Aid with a *picturesque* Igbo metaphor *"onye ana gwoo ebi afor a nae for nya"*, translatable reflects the "picturesque imagery of a mouse munching away at uncleansed fingers of a sleeping child after a late supper. Indeed in viciousness: *"blowing hot and cold"*, while chopping away even inflicting blisters on the skin of the innocent victim".

With grotesque imageries, Obinnah casts the viewers' mind to a refugee camp scenario in Africa and the Dollars of Western Aid and humanitarian social welfare money expended. Analogously ***DEATH*** intuits a war situation and the constant resupply of arms and weapons of mass destruction symbolised by the AK47 and bullet chain complex (Fig. 3B) in seemed trade by barter exchange for mineral resources and scarce foreign exchange.

Obi retorts and queries the scenario: as palpable hypocrisy and treachery with the proverb "*Amosu gbulum mmadi na anyasi bia eebee akwa nu ututu"*, translation inflects: *"the witch that killed in the night is the same witch that comes in the morning to sympathise with the deceased's family"*. Makatah advances the argument and debate over the sincerity and genuineness of so called Aid packages to war victims in Africa, albeit all the third world's war ravaged countries; indeed, Aid donors' technology aides and abates the many wars!

Ngozi Omeje EZEMA

Keen acolyte of her dotting father *'Ori Eme Enyi', the tireless worker with the strength of an elephant*: a muse and metal craftsman; and a home full of childhood rhythms, all in a festive country setting. Ngozi-Omeje fashioned her world view on the wisdom espoused in poetic anecdotes spurred aloud at home and in her father's workshop. *"Creativity, passion and keen hard work is the key to success"*, she avers, *"Eka (hand) ejega nee buta Onee mannu"."Dirty hands bring dirty ugly hands";"No success without Huddles"; "The Energy you put into your work, is the raison d'etre for the successful outcome of your artwork", but hands symbolically put together make light work"* Anecdotallity trails her creativity.

CUP and TEA POT… THINK Tea THINK CUP, (Fig. 4) elucidates Omeje's world view. Symbolically CUP signifies her goal, Tea as an appetizer is representative of stimuli to work harder; *TEA POT* (a virtual creation spurn out of a castellation of miniature cups) is representative of passionate engaged efforts leading to achievements; the contents of the POT reflect micro efforts. The miniature cups, therefore, symbolically are the micro efforts that together lead to the passionate goal. Hence, CUP and TEA POT come together to achieve goal.

Deploying miniature stoneware versions of the giant tea cup Omeje strings all together in an *antimacassar* weave latched onto a labyrinth of (synthetic Fishing-net) string suspensions conceptually creates the virtual form that metaphorically inflects*"TEA CUP AND KETTLE*". Otherwise, this installation is collapsible to a heap of miniatures and strings transportable as a sleeping bag luggage for movement from a local site like the Nigerian Center of Contemporary Art (CCA) Yaba, Lagos to Biennales in faraway China and Japan. Impermanence, migration and displacement are highlights in the discourse of *TEACUP and KETTLE*. Symbolic celebration of the international favorite Tea, native to Asia but popular refresher of travelers everywhere puts this artwork on the global turf!

Recalling her inspiration for "*TEA CUP"*, Ezema (in conversation) metaphorically recited her first encounter with **winter** on the first day of her Houseman-ship tour (Seattle, Washington, DC, May 2010): "J*ourney Just Come"* requested for a cup of tea. Clasping the tea-cup in the cusp of her hands she sipped hot tea to keep warm; while contemplating the houseman project "job in hand". Carrying on with the

anecdotal imagery *'Ori Eeme Enyi', 'the tireless worker with the strength of an elephant'* Ngozi makes her artwork a message for the society where the virtues of hard work and rewards are increasingly perceived as old fashioned in sync with the Nigerian artist-crusader *Ijalobomo* (2019 & 2022) in the exhibition: *ISE NI OUN ISE "MURA SI ISE ORE MI" Work is the antidote for poverty.*

In a narrative scheme engaging moral lessons encrypted in folklore, Ngozi's discourses interrogate the loss of hard work and its morals encrypted in childhood values. In scenic metaphors Ngozi seizes lively imageries, pulls them out of their obsessive twilight, and turns them intopalpable free-standing forms. For example, a *"cup in the cusp of hands"* is a provocative and quaint metaphor. The cup represents the goal to be achieved by passionate, perseverant effort. The hands clasping the bowl reflect energetic keen hands of the long suffering and perseverant creativity of hard work. Indeed a fulfilment of *'Ori Eme Enyi', 'the tireless worker with the strength of an elephant'.* That is the attitude to work that breeds success! *CUP* is a *metonai* of hard work and creativity. Indeed the overriding message of *CUP* to a world where technology in her swiftness tends to make people lazy is: *"a regimen of passionate hard work pays"!*

Consequences

The shedding of the canon made the reading and interpretation of *transvangardist* artworks problematic for the professional art critic not steeped in the exhibition encrypted history that this paper undergirds. Witness the otherwise acceptance of *"natural-synthesis"* and the western canon (p.6 above). The *image turn*, burst asunder with a gamut of strange images/imageries never tolerated before. This was the first consequence for the enjoyment of art loversin the Nigerian art world. For the professional art critic and historian, it was an offer of a new set of iconographies for analysis.

Anatsui, Makatah and Ezema make visible the emancipation of the autonomous African voice, debunking universalisations of *oeuvre*. Hard-nosedly, their works project the recalibration of *Africanite* from the stand-point and sensibilities of codes, individual tastes and choices, imploding trans*avant-gardesism*.

Ezema's and Makatah'sart inflect the knack for "*becoming*" endogenous in ideas, imploding notions of *"at homesness"* and rootedness in Africa. In protean language, revaluation of Roots and recreations hinged on *africanite* is the ethos. Spiritualisation and intellectual underpinnings grounded in local roots is the logos that inflects refreshment, rejuvenation and the rooting for the ethos that entrustsre inventions.

In shapes and volumes reminiscent of the playfulness of art Anatsui, Makatah and Ezema returned to "childhood innocence" saying "Dada" like the Zurich artists 100+ years ago. In concert with the kin-folk consciousness of the erstwhile cultural policies of Senghor, the artists' utilised endogenous cosmological imageries, even **synthetic materials** to create artworks. These creations, distinguished by their characteristic transience, simply played out the texts of the fiesta. Epitomising "recycling", these are directed to all/ *tout le monde* to read as images cast in front of them.

Dak'Art22 demonstrates how artists in heroic gestures have engaged the material resources of the millennium as tools of narration. Indeed, this is hermeneutically espoused in the Ibo metaphor, *"nku di naamba ne yellum mba nnee"*appropriately inflects cleverly *"it is the people's wood that is the source of their cooking fire"*.

Retorting to the mythical *"eternal return of the same"*, in a poly-temporal analogy (Bruno Latour,1993) I engaged the metaphor of the "Python's Eye" (E.J. Alagoa, 1997) to kernel the discourse of the new imaginary. Insisting on personalised ways of "seeing", artists' creativity imploded meanings through the consciousness of this new gaze. This is the penumbra, resorted to for illumination and rootedness. Beset, therefore, in deconstructing a past and daring to invent a future in a present time that is synced to perpetual renewals akin to the symbolic python movement, artists dared to create art that inflected the times. *Nigerian artists in Dak'Art 2022*, over fifty years after the *Zarianists'* shedding of the Canon*(*ChikaOkeke-Agulu,1999:203*)*; in *transavangardist* mien imbibing the strides of EL Anatsui, imploded Art that Speaks in Many Voices. That demanded a reinvention of self, fusing a language that echoed that aspiration in a lexicon logy decipherable by all, irrespective of history and milieu.

EL, Makatah and Omeje (and the other artists) turned mere objects of representation, thrust them into a deliberate art world of the millennium where they demand interpretation. Hence, Peter McCormick citing *Arthur Danto (1990:3)*, asserts that "*interpretation like baptism, endows a mere thing with "a new life, identity, participation in the community of the elite"*. Danto, indeed, acclaims, that works of art in definite contrast with mere pictures, use the modicum of the image in a way that is not profoundly stated when we have fully indicated what is being epitomized. Danto also echoed the historical connection between works of art and history. For if works of art are connected with interpretation, which changes historically, they also have essential connection with history. These works of art are the grounding narrative in the discourse of history of the evolution of styles.

Arthur Danto closes with an allusion to languages, pictures, ideas, or beliefs, *that "every presentation has two sides, one as an ordinary thing in the world and the other as an icon of the world. So representation seem to be both inside the world and outside it. The key to this puzzle is interpretation. Interpretation binds thoughts and symbols to facts!*

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Ngozi-Omeje Ezema (2022/29/08).



FIG. 1: **OLD MAN'S CLOTH, Artist: El anatsuie, Anatsuie Foundation Collection, 2019.**



Fig. 2: ***CUP and TEA Cup***, Ngozi-Omeje Ezema, Installation (fired clay nuggets and threads), © Ezema Artist Foundations, 2022.



Fig. 3: ***MEDICINE AFTER DEATH***, Obinnah Makatah,
Installation (factory-made syringe modules, copper wire and adhesives), © Obinna Makatah, 2022.



Fig. 3B: ***MEDICINE AFTER DEATH.*** Obinnah Makatah (Detail)