

Environmental Pollutants: Creative Expression With Waste Plastics

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Abstract

In the recent time, natural disasters had created environmental consciousness that the immediate environment needs proper attention. Plastic pollution in its guises, continues to dominate international discourse agenda and headlines all across the globe. The factories, waste management organizations and the government encourage recycling of wastes in order to reduce its influence in causing natural disasters, most especially flood. These waste Plastic damage the environment, cripple the economy and humans. The erosions, wind, and weathering, breakdown this plastic into smaller pieces, if this pieces of litter don't affect something each day, it becomes macro plastics and the research shows that it goes into the food we eat. The idea of recycling discarded materials for creativity is no longer new. However, what is new is the rediscovery of materials discovered and new uses or expressive possibilities of materials earlier discovered. Turning wastes to tremendous works of aesthetic is now a global phenomenon. This paper reveals that one of the many ways of recycling plastic or finding alternative uses for waste plastic that may damage the environment is to find creative and artistic use for them.

Keywords: Wastes, Plastic wastes, Aesthetics, Plastic, Recycling, Waste Management, Environment

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I. Introduction

The world has a growing problem with waste plastics. Plastics are a serious problem to the environment because of the fossil fuel used in their production. It is not also new that the society is addicted to plastic because of what it gives us like the food pack, part cups, bowls, plate, nylons, appliance's, computers, and cellphones (Toluwalobori, 2019). Most of this plastic wastes emanate from homes, markets, restaurant, hotels and even industries. But many of them comes from home. These wastes have been dropped into the community's landfills or incinerator and unfortunately most of these landfills are filled up. However, these plastic wastes cannot breakdown well in landfills because of the presence of the methane inside, a greenhouse kind of gas that contribute to global warming.

Akinyemi (2004), elucidates that, though several experts and scholars have predicted that plastics would be the scourge for our generation and they were right. From the way things are, one does not foresee yet we do have a plastic free world due to its pollution in our environment. The waters in the oceans has gone out and left behind an enormous plastic. Though plastics are not wrong it is we the humans that are not getting it right and how to dispose of them rightly. We tend to dispose them anywhere and everywhere and they tend to come back to hurt us because we do not have a right perspective about how to dispose this waste plastic (Adedamola, 2008). If we take time to dispose them properly there are systems in place to recycle them.

Over the years, about 700 tonnes of wastes is produced and 10% of that is single use plastic which we only use once before it is discarded. Examples of this single use plastic are nylon, drinking bottle, and pet bottles. More than ten million of this waste are dropped in our surroundings every day and about 500million waste bottles are collected from the environment each year (Oyegoke, 2019). Unsurprisingly this has an impact not only on the humans but both animals and plants. It is also disheartening that more than 10million tonnes of this plastic ends up in the nations oceans each year. Adetona, (2019) asserted that, experts have exerted that by year 2060, if no drastic action is put into place, the amount of plastics in the oceans will weigh more than the fishes. That is a scary prediction though and a call for wildlife action should be put into place to make sure the animals are protected and safe.

All animals whether they live on the land or in the sea are not safe from the menace of waste plastic. They can get trapped in anyway from the clogs of this waste plastic. Fish, shellfish and even birds can mistake plastic for food when they have been broken down into smaller pieces. Kehinde (2019) recalled that, as each year goes by, it has been estimated that more than 100,000 animals are killed by plastic. This animal cannot

digest plastic, and when their stomach becomes full, they won't have a place to store food anymore and that leads to a painful death. If they are not helped now they will go into extinction including their habitat. We should not forget that when this animal eats this plastic especially the fishes, we consume the fishes, which will result to great calamity. Kim (2023) observes that the French government is taking legal action over an environmental nightmare caused by waves of tiny plastic beads washing up on the coast of Brittany.

There are many political gatherings, meetings, seminars and conferences in Nigeria but in most of all things meetings, hardly an issues relating to the environment is mentioned neither are measures put into place to stop it (Oluronke, 2013). Nigeria, like other counties, has over the time focused on crude oil, but much attention has not been given to the menace and hazard it causes in the society.

The problem associated with plastic waste has not really gotten the attention in the world of art, and the works of Oligbinde Rotimi can help inspire the government and the people to act accordingly. When one uses a medium like art and add it to recycling or repurposing, your kind of move people to think, and throw them a state of self-consciousness and awareness concerning their environment and how it should look like.

1.1 Statement of the Research

Folake (2023) stated that waste management and plastic pollution remains predominantly daunting pain point in our journey towards environmental sustainability, especially in the context of our Nigerian communities. Singled used plastic has become a problem in the nation, every of our materials we used each day is made of plastic making it an environmental nightmare. Our landfills or incinerator are running out of space each day, and plastic make up of 50% of the state's total municipal solid waste. Plastic industry is also flooding the market everyday with cheap, new, high-quality plastic, destroying the economics of recycling PET bottles. Katie (2023) noted that, plastic wastes had doubled globally in 20years and only nine percent is successfully recycled, according to the OECD group of developed countries.

1.2 Objectives of the Research

- i. To identify the problems associated with waste plastics in the environment.
- ii. To collect and sort different waste plastics for a creative expression in sculpture
- iii. To develop a creative idea towards the environmental sustainability.
- iv. To repurpose this collected plastic wastes.
- v. To sensitize the public about the issue of waste plastics.

1.3 Significance of the Study

One of the significance of the study is to draw attention to global plastic pollution crisis in the environment through the works of Oligbinde Rotimi. These waste plastics are identified, sorted, cleaned, pierced and cuts into different sizes required for the execution of this works. His works tends to transform discarded plastic into animal sculptures by significantly reducing the menace it causes in the environment. It also serves as a form of awareness to the general public to be fully alert by the way they are polluting the environment through their waste plastics.

II. Literature Review

2.1 Plastics

Waste are part of human lives. Waste pose serious environmental and health problems, promote insect vectors like mosquitoes and flies, rats and mice, cause fire hazards, flooding of streams, development of aquatic weeds, odour problems, nuisance, and so on. According to Oluronke (2013), the environmental impacts can be clustered into six categories which includes: global warming, photochemical oxidant creation, abiotic resource depletion, acidification and eutrophication. Some these major problems are related to their major constituents, carbon, nitrogen, phosphorus and Sulphur.

Some certain toxic heavy metals like lead, mercury, cadmium, minerals and manmade synthetic chemicals present in wastes may contribute to environmental degradation that leads to poor health, disease or death (Sridhar & Hammed, 2014).

Tasneem (2022) in her discussion observed that, the piling up of plastic waste is a worrisome development as it can have severe environmental consequences. Plastic is mostly made from natural materials such as cellulose, coal, natural gas, salt and crude oil through a polymerization or polycondensation process. She added that, and when this plastic is exposed to sun and heavy heat they emit greenhouse into the atmosphere. This also contribute to increase in temperature, which facilitate plastic in generating more dangerous gases, like methane and ethylene which can further increase the temperature creating more monstrous destruction.

Experts says there is a need to reduce the use of single-use plastic, which is often hard due to the nature of the toxic that is present in it. According to researchers, there are seven different types of plastic with their different

degrees of recyclability (Greg, 2020). The following are the various types of plastics, their meaning and the product they are associated with;

- PET or PETE (Polyethylene Terephthalate)- PET bottles are bottles which is also known as water bottles which is made from petroleum component. They are the convention plastic bottles found around us and in the environment.
- HDPE (High-Density Polyethylene)- HDPE consist our water containers, jugs are made of. They are thicker and stronger than the PET bottles depending on the type of product it is used to produce.
- PVC or Vinyl (Polyvinyl Chloride)-PVC in most cases are not recyclable. Household utensils and plastic tubes often contain PVC.
- LDPE (Low-Density Polyethylene)-It majorly appears in food storage and most plastic bags.
- PP (Polypropylene)-they are common in yogurt containers.
- PS or Styrofoam (Polystyrene)-It includes food containers and Styrofoam packaging.
- Other-Single stream is when different types of plastic is put along materials like paper, glass, aluminum, wood, metal unsorted is single stream.

2.2 Impact of Waste Plastic in the Environment

The idea of plastic waste management has been a keynote in the jotters of world leaders. Many nations are working tirelessly in finding a major breakthrough to the issue of plastic waste pollution (Greg, 2020). These discarded plastic has a lot of impact on our earth's most valuable natural resource. Though waste plastic management can be hard to collect, environmentally harmful when reprocessing, due to the presence of toxin materials in plastics it tends to contaminate recycling efforts, there is little economic value in recycling and plastic is virtually impossible to recycle (Greg, 2013).

One must not forget that not all plastics are created equal. According to researchers, most people assume that the chasing arrows on the bottom of bottles symbolizes that the product can be recycled but that is a wrong assumption. In most times the chasing arrows symbol on the bottom of the plastic connotes nothing about its recyclability.

Chukwuemeka (2021) observed that, Nigeria has a strained waste management system which relies mainly on landfills and is supported by a growing but marginalized informal waste sector. As a result, approximately 80,000 tonnes of plastic leaks into Nigerian environment each year, with plastic pollution infiltrating and blacking water and drainage systems, leading to increased flooding and spread of disease, harming biodiversity, and posing a threatening to human health and the economy.

For plastic to be recycled, it is first sorted, washed, shredded, melted at high temperatures, and then turned into pellets. During this process, the air is being polluted and toxins are being emitted as well. And if adequate measure is not put into place to curb it, it can contribute to short-term health problems, including asthma, acute respiratory infection, pulmonary disease, chronic obstructive and eye irritation (Nike, 2021). Researchers have also linked exposure to these air pollution and toxins to an increased risk of cancer, reproductive system harm and neurological impacts. In addition, plastics are made from toxic additives and fossil fuels and also release amount of greenhouse gas emissions, contributing to climate crisis.

Although pollution has been a problem before the advent of industrialization, it has gotten worse recently due to the use of pesticides, agricultural crop residues, urbanization, desert dust, forest fire and poor waste management. Adelani (2021) stated that improper management of dumpsites would put residents and waste pickers at risk of an epidemic. He added that, there are a lot of bacteria, viruses, parasites and these would always lead to diseases. Those around there would feel dizzy and tired. The decomposing gases such as Sulphur, methane, emitting from the dumpsite, if they are inhaled continually, the compilation of gases, as well as the odour, would affect the health of the people. Thus, this open dumps are breeding grounds for creatures that could spread diseases.

Ayo, (2022) elucidates that one of the major challenges affecting the total eradication of waste in the country is leadership, governance and development reversal. Providing comparative lessons from Asian countries which successfully industrialized within two decades and managed to drastically reduce poverty, the point was made that leadership failure is one of Nigeria's repeated problems, if not crisis. Nigeria lacks elite consensus on developmental goals as well as manifests a laid back posture in leadership on relation to the issues of industrialization and development.

The damage done to rivers through plastic pollution is beyond words, killing aquatic life, halting navigation and depriving riverine people of their livelihood and inflicting diseases on them (Mostafa, 2022). Many animals have suffered from the carelessness and negligence of humans due to what they are known about. When this clustered plastic wastes are dumped in the oceans and rivers it will become too hard for the fishes to navigate their way round the water, it will also cause slow movement of life underneath the water and that will eventually lead to death beneath the sea level.

The earth is known to be generous when it come to the issue of giving out mineral resources and nutrient. It is from the earth we plant and harvest. Whenever anything is given to the earth, it multiplies it. But when the earth that is known to be generous is destroyed, when plastic is burned on it, it will learn to mass starvation, because the nutrient in the earth we die and it will be difficult to cultivate on it, which will eventually lead to death or extinction of Man.

Also, one of the problems associated with improper disposal of waste plastic, is that, when some of this wastes find their way into the lakes especially hydroelectric plants, they cause break downs to this plants which leads to power cuts. That will lead to national grid and may likely crumble the economy of the nation if it is not properly addressed.

2.3 Solutions to Waste Plastic Pollution

- To tackle a problem, one must first of all identify the problem and also know that the problem exists. The government must recognize this public health hazard and the economic loss caused by it (Mostafa, 2022). More organizations should be encouraged to venture into waste management. These organizations should be enlightened more to work with bottling companies on how to minimize disposal of waste plastics and strive towards a cleaner and better community. The government also must have a comprehensive plan on how to curb this menace. The government should be endeavor to create a politic movement to battle plastic pollution.
- Bottling companies in the nation should be pushed to rise to the task of sensitizing the public on ensuring they adequately recycled their waste bottles. They can also help to collaborate with many estate and communities across the nation on how to find a lasting solution to this waste pollution.
- Socio-economic and environmental organizations should incorporate sustainability-inclined initiatives into their operations.
- Tasneem (2022) noted that given that plastic is not naturally biodegradable, the only way forward for plastic management is adopting a circular economic model to manage plastic waste. Policies should be formulated on plastic waste management. A policy which should be business-friendly and more encouraging in other to bring in more investors.
- A policy should also be created in other to identify the method in which plastic are been collected and their re-use should be noted also.
- Mostafa (2023) opines that in order to reduce its harmful impact on the environment, it is necessary to increase awareness on investment and creation of new entrepreneurship in the sector for reuse of used plastic through recycling.
- The government should pay more attention on the nations recycling sector along with the private sector. They should make sure they are adequately equipped and function properly.
- A local plastic recycling centre should be created in each of the communities, by doing this, it will reduce stress and time.
- Residents play a key role in recycling this material by enabling it to collected, by putting it into their bins or taking materials to depot (The Canadian Press, 2023).
- Government should make a regulatory body which will see to it that there should be a limit to the numbers of plastics produced by this product companies. They should stop selling too many plastic bottles. Tara (2023) claimed that, weneed to slow the spigot of plastic production to have a fighting chance to process all of the wasted plastic materials currently found to be mismanaged on land and in the oceans.

2.4 Artists and Waste Plastic

Odoja&Makine&Ajiboye and Fajuyigbe (2013) stated that, wastes or discarded items provide artists with invaluable materials with which, through the deployment of their creative talents and skills, they create works of arts. Realizing the urgency of managing plastic pollution, artists residing in Nigeria, in different ways has come up with different artistic concept of battling this menace and most of their action plans revolve around the 3R approach which is reduce, reuse and repurpose. This is done out of a motive for sustainable plastic management and is focused on the circular economic model and has set specific goals to reduce plastic waste in the environment. Recycling of plastic waste into work of art is birthed out of a way of reducing landfills(Folorunso, 2010).

OluwajuwonloAdeyemi is one of the finest female young Nigerian artists who has worked entirely on plastic. She is an environmentalist who believed in a built environment. Adeyemispecializes in turning discarded kegs into beautiful work of paintings. These kegs are sorted for in her environment, cuts from the top, while the handle of the keg represent the nose and the opened head of the keg represent the mouth. The other two sides are painted to represent eyes. This cut kegs are painted in form of African Traditional Mask. This mask representsprotagonist in her paintings. The protagonist is the major subject matters in her paintings. This protagonist speaks of the humans, the way we met the environment in a good condition then polluted it. Sofia

(2022) added that, through her work, Adeyemi also hopes drawing attention to her mother's discarded oil kegs will raise awareness about waste reduction.

Another prominent Nigerian artist who has work on waste is GbengaAdeku, an up cyclist, the founder of Xtetixupcycle, an art company aimed at fighting environmental pollution. He is currently an ambassador for IBplc and Father's Love Forum in Nigeria. Finding solutions to environmental pollution birthed his company. The Ile-Ife based artist create art sculptures that tackles climate change and he uses his work as a form of awareness to the public. He has high regards for plastics and he sees it as a premium art material due to its durability. Most of his works are in relief and some are also installations.

Emmanuel Adebayo Adeyemi is also a young Nigeria painter and a recycling artist who was inspired by his father and his dilapidated environment to venture into upcycling. He creates installation art and he believes in a healthy environment. His vision is to redeem the earth back to her original state by recreating her through his art and by bringing out the beauty in her. He often combines more than one materials to make his installation art. Emmanuel's work isn't about aesthetics or artistic intellect but calling the government and the masses about the issue of environmental degradation by taking meaningful action.

KehindeAdenugba is also another Nigeria painter, and also an experimentalist. Kehinde is a graduate of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State, in the department of Fine and Applied Arts, while completing his final year project got entangled with the poor state of the school environment, especially his department. He started collecting waste plastic and use it as a form of fencing unit to stop the incessant dropping of waste plastic around his department. He often cut the bottom of this waste plastic, wash them and use it as an advocate for the built environment. The works are bind together with the aid of a copper wire. He uses his work to preach sanitation in the environment. He works in installation they can be on display in the school departmental environment.

Adesanya Clement is another known Nigerian artist who works with waste plastic. He works with high-density polyethylene plastics. These waste plastics are often soft in the environment; they are mostly used as storage container. This plastic is sorted for, cut, wash, drill and bind together with the use of aluminum wire. His waste plastic sculptures are displayed in the environment of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State where he experimented on high-density polyethylene as a master's student. He uses his work to preach about the animal kingdom, despite the fact that their habitats are being destroyed daily and encroached into they still remain strong and solid. His powerful sculptures are recognized and prized in the Nigerian contemporary art tradition; their lucid figurative and abstract formal language tends to blow with their ambiguous title, to make the viewer understand the physical experiences that he has translated into sculptural expression (Oligbinde & Adesanya, 2022). Clement often combines different colours of his waste plastic to make animal sculptures.

AjiboyeOluronke is another female Nigerian painter who works with PET bottle tops. She creates extravagant eye-catching installations to document the menace of plastic debris in the environment and the waterways. Oluronke who is based in Lagos, has worked with different NGO's to collect wastes from the environment and the oceans. This idea of gathering wastes motivate Oluronke's practice, and she often works in collaboration with people in her community who has the same motive and goal of having a sustainable environment, translating the traditional, localized methods into contemporary contexts with universal themes of preservation and vitality.

III. The Artist Profile

The eccentric ever evolving Oligbinde Rotimi is one of Nigerian's fastest rising contemporary artists noted for his intricately crafted plastic sculptures. Rotimi is a native of Ogun State, from Abeokuta North precisely. He got engaged with art as a little child and since then has been motivated all by himself to become an artist. Having completed both his primary and secondary education in Ogun State went to Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State where he backed his first and second degree in Sculpture. Using an unconventional multitude of techniques, his unique approach to finding, sorting, cutting, washing and binding plastic of various types, sizes and colours captures a richly layered history imbedded with personal, politic and environmental meaning.

The use of plastic bottoms and the body of the plastics to depict the impact and catastrophe of done to the animal kingdom links his work to the way we use and destroy our environment. The transformation of this waste plastics into highly detailed artworks roots him firmly in the contemporary moment of rapid environmental and ecological change. He has a feeling that each waste plastic comes from a precious life with its own hidden energy. The final artwork is made with the accumulation of all the energies of the different waste plastic and has its own soul.

3.1 Conceptual Analysis of His works

Over more than 1000 discarded plastics were used to execute his works. Rotimi believes that the spirit of each plastic would appear as a ghost if it is maltreated anyhow. Now the spirit has appeared in animal forms

to remind the public how they are being treated unfairly. His works resonates an eco-friendly, waste-free world and sustainable environment. Rotimi's work has helped to educate, and bring to public awareness on how disruptive plastic waste can be to our earth ecosystems and particularly in the animal kingdom.

Rotimi's work serves as a model to other artists who believe only in aesthetic and making of money to take up the concern about protecting the earth. His works picture the impact of the human behaviour on the environment. When one studies the work, one could read the problems and challenges of having this waste in our environment. Creativity plays a major role in the plastic sculptures of Rotimi. Creativity is the act of turning new and imaginative ideas into reality. Creativity is characterized by the ability to perceive the world in new ways, to find hidden patterns, to make connections between seemingly unrelated phenomena, and to generate solutions (Ezekiel, 2016).

Rotimi manipulates his feelings in wastes, rendering the life in which ocean water, and the dry land holds these animals into hostages. Swirls of bright plastic colours and arrangements draw in the viewer's eye, only to realize that carefully crafted visual appealing animal compositions consist of waste plastic and plastic pellets, that animals have attempted to stew and digest. His work represents the voice of the nature and the animal kingdom. These animals cannot speak nor fight for themselves but his work serves as the voice for the voiceless.

Rotimi uses his works to speak up concerning the challenges the animals are enduring in their habitat living together with waste plastics. Of recent times one would have observed the influx of different animals into the human environment, attacking humans and the reason is only because humans have encroached into their habitat, destroy their habitat, and have taken over their habitat leaving the animals no choice but to fight back for their right through violence. Rotimi's work characteristically uses different PET bottles and at times combines it with another type to create experiential site-specific spaces that seamlessly incorporate visual, and sculptural elements

IV. Analysis of His Works

The works to be analyzed are categorized into three; which are, the land animal (Alert) (plate 1), the flying bird (The agony of mother earth) (plate 2) and the fish (Ori/Head) (plate 3). Rotimi uses his works to depict the three animal kingdom which are affected by waste plastics.



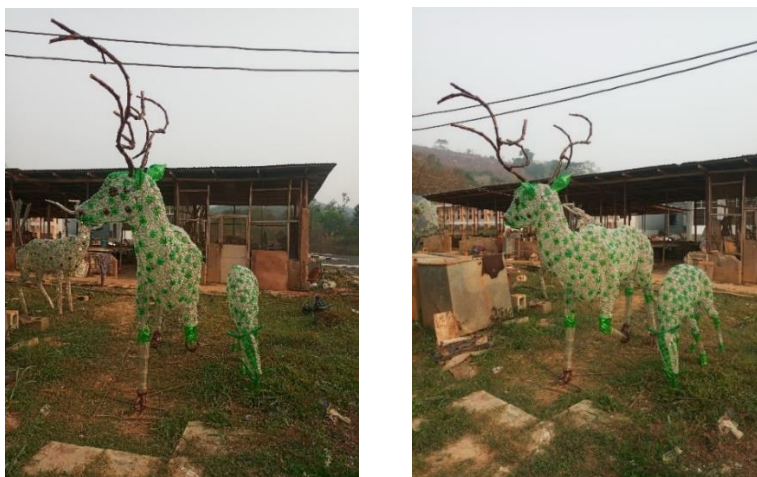


Plate 1: Oligbinde Rotimi, Alert, 13by4by9feet, WastePlastic, 2019.

Photograph by: Oligbinde Rotimi, 2019

The above work Alert is based on exploration of discarded plastic as a medium of creative expression in sculpture. The medium has been used to depict a standing sculptural composition of two Reindeers, a male and a calf. With the theme titled “ALERT”, using discarded plastics and carbonated copper wire as the binding agent. The word alert symbolizes two things, to be on guard against an incoming predator and to be at alert against the way we litter our environment with waste. Alert is a notification of higher importance than an advisory. It could also mean an alarm against an impending danger.

(Jill 2015) in her study, discusses that, the Reindeer are large deer of the Arctic tundra and northern boreal forests, having large hooves and long branched antlers in both sexes, and widely domesticated in Eurasia. The females are smaller than the males, but you may get thrown if you come across a particularly large female or small male. A healthy adult reindeer is usually safe from predators, especially in a large herd, where many individuals can watch for danger. It is the youngest reindeer calves that are most susceptible to predation. Reindeer are very social creatures, they chat with each other with snorts, grunts, and hoarse class, especially during the breeding season or rut.

Art is an expression of the emotion, imagination and conceptual ideas of its author, while deploying talent and technical skills to produce a work appreciated for its Beauty and impact. (Pat, 1976). Art basically stimulates an individual’s thought, emotions and the innate instinct to express and vent personal experiences and idea through creative vehicles. Art has also been defined as a vehicle for the expression or communication of emotions and ideas as a means for exploring and appreciating formal elements for their own sake, and as mimesis or representation (Oluronke, 2013).

The work Alert represent the gesture of a reindeer being aware of the impending danger of his environment, causing it to be tensed as a result of the inconvenience caused by the human factor in his environment. The plight of these animals is expressed with the waste plastic sourced from the immediate environment to show the deterioration of the state of the habitat of both humans and animals. The sculpture shows two animals in their habitat grazing, a full grown male reindeer and a calf. The position of the calf is seen grazing, while the adult male reindeer is seen standing, it had his head twisted to the right and its two ears facing the front with its left foreleg suspended backward like it’s about to take off.

The adult male reindeer is at alert or on guard position against an incoming predator. There is a golden rule in the wild life that is “Eat or get eaten” but since reindeer are herbivores and they eat grass instead of flesh, they run for their dear lives. It is observed that the ears of animal’s bend to an angle 180 degree in response to their present noise or sound in their environment. For example, when there is an impending danger it tends to turn to the front to pick up signal from the environment.

A close observation of the work Alert, one would have expected that, the work should be made of a female reindeer and her calve. But in this sense the work is between a male reindeer and a calve. It means that the male reindeer present the man. The man is the head of the family, the man must take up the responsible of training of their children to be responsible for their environment. The man must teach his children how to respect the environment and they must always leave it better the way they meant it.

The man must take up the leadership role of properlyguiding the children right from a tender age. It is true that when a child is taught and shown the right way it will be difficult for the child to deviate from when he or she grows up. When a sense of consciousness is embedded in little children they will live with it for the rest of their lives. The man must grow in knowledge and experience of a good environment. With this, he will be

able to pass sure consciousness to the child. Also the work, depict that the man must be a cover to the family. He must protect the family wholeheartedly.

The gesture of the male deer expresses loves and protection for his family. That is one of the duties of male reindeer, they sacrifice for their family. They protect and also carter for their family. The male reindeer looks out not for only himself but for its calf. It is not eating but it allows thee little calf to browse due to its low chance of survival. The art piece serves as an awareness to the society on how inappropriate waste management; to be precise plastic causes a great harm to the environment and the inhabitants therein.

When others are destroying the environment, he must make sure the family is safe from the menace. The man is responsible for the mental and physical developmental growth of the child. The man must teach and lead the children. When the man does his proper job on the child upbringing, there won't be hydra monsters in the society who believes only in destructions but people who will be concern about the sustainability development of the environment and the world at large.



Plate 2: *The Agony of Mother Earth, Waste Plastic, 3by2ft, 2022*

Photograph by: *Oligbinde Rotimi, 2022.*

This piece titled *The Agony of Mother Earth*, is one of the series of plastic waste sculptures created by Rotimi. The piece speaks about environmental degradation and waste hazards. Rotimi brings this new idea plastic waste sculpture to the centre of discourse of his concern environmental waste hazards. It is indeed important to note that improper disposal of waste is a major challenge in world societies where human beings can be found. Particularly, plastic waste is a menace caused by humans but threatening both the human and animal existence.

This morbid situation is being encouraged by our poor environmental practices such as improper waste disposal and unhealthy material culture. It is indeed disheartening but true to note that one of the ways in which our world is connected is through her wastes and waste habits. As a matter of fact, an art which addresses unhealthy waste habits, corrects her practices and prevents its aftermath, has no better place situated than in this exhibition.

The sculpture *The Agony of Mother Earth*, has its thematic emphasis on proactive and preventive measures which is always better than cure. Art has an incredible therapeutic ability to heal, it also has a super function to educate, create awareness and correct on some wrong habits and thereby, prevents its aftermath. The world is connected through art. The world is constantly connected together, but not everyone sees this, artists does see this connections, sometimes, they feel it, but most times they understand this connection which is why they create it, through paintings, sculptures, drawings, stories and various media. Our roles as artists is not just to portray the beautiful and pleasant connections of mother earth, but to make sure the parts essential to the world's healthy existence is made visible through arts, whether beautiful and pleasant or ugly and unpleasant.

The agony of mother earth depicts a flamingo in her two different phases. As a dependent creature and as an independent creature in which her child now depends on. The piece is made of plastic waste, coupled together using copper. The material which was intentionally chosen to describe one of the most popular human waste challenging nature's existence. The choice of subject a flamingo is balanced, as it is a bird which tours all the three habitat of the earth; air, ground and water. The word "mother" is often used to describe the origin or source of a thing. The sculptural piece is an intelligent visual discourse of both the medium and the subject matter in unison. Rotimi used this method to describe a universal truth about *Mother Earth*. The truth that our waste is killing *Mother Nature*, our wastes breeds the various terminal disease killing mother earth.

The posture of the bird sculpture evokes the feeling of alertness towards the negative factors affecting mother earth. The artist through his work creates an awareness of alertness. In the stead of cure, we could heal through prevention, only if hostile waste practices and unhealthy material culture is curbed. Another universal truth explored in the sculpture can be seen in second pose of the flamingo feeding her young one. It describes the mother earth as an important entity of the cosmic order and of her natural way of providing and caring for her own. All creatures derive their nature from Mother earth, if mother earth has her own way of processing waste, and if materials found in nature can be reprocessed and cannot harm. Then, it implies that human as higher beings of mother earth should not defile this natural order through wrong waste management and unhealthy material culture.

In conclusion, plastic is anti-nature, any material that cannot easily decay, decompose or reprocessed is anti-nature. Its practices and usage should be stopped and censored in his environment. The work depicts the plight of these birds whose immediate environment has deteriorates. The work is an environmental satire that points to the shortcomings of human beings concerning waste management in the environment. The art piece serves as an awareness to the society of how inappropriate waste management, particularly, plastic causes great harm to the environment and the inhabitants therein.



**Plate 3: Ori (Head), 7by2by9ft, discarded plastic, 2018
Photograph by: Oligbinde Rotimi, 2018.**

(Katie, 2023) stated that, The United Nations says the volume of plastic entering the oceans will nearly triple by 2040. The ocean and sea lives have suffered a lot from people's hand with the way they have managed them. The fishes and the animals are at the receiving end of it. Researchers now stated that whales eat nothing less than 1000 plastics each day and when they see that they cannot digest these plastics they get suffocated and died washing up to the edges of the seas and oceans.

The above work titled (Head) *Ori*, sculpted after a fish called tilapia. The Yoruba's and Africans believes that it is the head that will lead and guide one to his place of destiny. They also believe that the head is the seat of wisdom that is why their traditional sculptural works always have the head bigger than the rest of the body. The reason why the fish only has ahead is because the head speaks about identity of a personality. If the head is cut off, it becomes extremely difficult to identify whose body it is.

The head is strategically placed on top of the body. The head is such an important part of the body that if the head goes wrong, the body will follow. The head is the highest point of the body. It coordinates all other part of the body. Every part of the body has a link with the head and each takes instruction from the head through the nerves for its proper functioning. The special sense organs, the eyes, nose, ears and tongue are all located in the head. It is also the head that communicates with the external world through these sense organs. For example, the head gives out instructions through the mouth and takes in things from the surrounding world through the ears, nose, eyes and mouth.

The rest of the body has only one sense organ which is the skin, the sense of touch. The role of the human in the environment is not different from the head. Rotimi uses the fish head as a metaphor for people to make use of their head for a better living, leading and doings not to use it to pollute the environment. They should use their head to correct and reprove not to destroy or allow bad behavioural attitudes. The head is placed higher than the rest of the body in order for the head and the body to function effectively.

Though the body can perceive things through the sense of touch, its perception is not as accurate and specific as the head. The work also connotes that the human head has been endowed to perceive accurately and specifically for the body. The head should be able to control the hand from dropping wastes in the environment, it should be able to resist bad behaviour. When the body is separated from the head, the body will struggle for personal identity. In other words, if the humans don't take good care of their environment, they will suffer from their own identity which may lead to human extinction. The control of the head over the body is not external or audible but internal and unobtrusive, through the nerves. So also the humans must control their environment. We must control the environment by a quiet flow of life, a life that has impact, a life that commands a flowing and commands a submission.

In the work, Ori (Head), Rotimi has found a way to conquer how to combine two different coloured PET bottles together to catch the viewers' attention. He carefully arranges these plastic bottles on a welded metal armature which serves as the overall frame of the work. He has tried to see how two different PET bottles of different colours and sizes and shapes including thickness can co-exist and also in relation to humanity. People should be able to co-exist to fulfil their goals of a sustainable environment. When there is good coexistence, there will be movement and oneness. We will be like-minded, do things the proper way it should be done and well executed.

It's not about using a waste plastic to depict beauty but also to tell stories about the animal kingdom. Most people often see themselves useless when they are unable to reach their goals but in case of Rotimi, the Ogun State based artist makes use of waste plastic which people have condemned and disregarded to give hope to the common animal. Seeing his work primarily as a catalyst for experience, Rotimi's plastic sculptures have remarkable immersive characteristics which are often the result of collaborations with precise cutting and binding. Referencing traditions and prominent works in art history, Rotimi interprets figures through constructed plastic compositions. His work utilizes the metaphor of everyday living as a way to relate with others. He begins each piece with research around the subject matter and materials, and many of the artist's most recent works centre on philosophy.

Colours Symbolism

Colour is the language of vision that brings Chroma to the eyes. Any of manifold phenomenal of light or visual sensation or perception that enables one to differentiate object even when the objects may look (Aderogba, 2012). Impressionists believe that there are no lines in nature and that it is colours that take that place, making it more important than lines. This is so because you can paint without necessarily drawing lines; it thus becomes the most potent tool in the art of painting. Colour is life, and in essence a world without colour appears dead.

The hue of a colour is its location around the colour wheel. Each hue has its own name according to its position on the colour wheel. Colour is one of the most expressive elements in a work of art because its qualities affect our emotions directly (Oseghale, 2019). Man, easily relates to colour than form or style in a work of art. We appreciate and prefer certain colour scheme while we reject others, therefore the rhythm and harmonies of colour satisfies our aesthetic desires identified.

Colours can be used to subdue or advance object creating emphasis and significance (Odu, 1976). Whetto (2019) observes that, colour can also be used to create mood and other similar expression e.g. warm colours. It can be further advanced that colour can be used in subjective manner on a pictorial plane to represent or express meanings that are known or familiar to a particular culture or a group of cultures or people (Kehinde, 2019). Every country and culture attach certain symbolic values to colours. Many languages use names of colours to express moods and feelings. In all languages there are numerous expressions in which colour plays an important role (Oseghale, 2019). In most cases there is no equivalent in other languages and when translating them literally the meaning is lost. When colours are arranged according to their ability to create compositional depth and volume, it is referred to as plastic colour.

Four colours dominated the above sculptural works. Transparent white, sky blue, green and brown. The first colour is transparent white. White depicts innocence, perfection, cleanliness, safety and brilliance. It stimulates growth, hopefulness and creativity. White contains a balance of all colours in the spectrum that represents all the positive and negative aspects of colours (Odu, 1978). It is interesting to know that babies come into the world with a perfect shade of white colour ready to fill their lives with other colours. White protects and encourages. It offers a sense of peace and tranquility, comfort and hope and help to relief emotional disturbance. The white colour plays the most dominant colour in the execution of the project. It was used because of its availability. The white depicts the nature of the reindeer as an animal that is most concerned about its family. They love to protect and cater for their needs.

The second dominant colour is green. Green is everywhere. It is the most common colour in nature. Green stands for fertility, growth, good health and nature (Oluronke, 2013). Green plastic was used because it depicts the nature of reindeer as being herbivores, as well as the nutrient they get from feeding on plants and grasses. It also depicts the energy they have as creatures to nature. Green also represents the innate quality or instincts that reindeers have to escape danger and predator. It depicts the relationship they have with their natural habitat. The green played a dominant role in the project, the head of both the reindeers has more of green as dominant colour, likewise their ear and tail.

The brown colour is the third colour used for the execution of the works. Brown is the colour of the earth. It symbolizes comfort, nutrient and simplicity. Shades of brown when combined with green creates a palette often used to convey concepts of recycling, earth friendly, or all natural. Dark brown can be used in place of black and bring warmth to colour palettes. Brown colour was used to present the eyes of both reindeer, the adult reindeer's also the hoof and antlers are also in brown colour to give it a sense life. The brown also serves a contrast to both the green and the white colour.

The last colour is used is the sky blue. Blue symbolizes calmness, oneness and nature. Blue is the colour of water and the sky. Rotimi uses blue colour to represent the natural of fishes. The blue is juxtapose with the shades of white and green to depict the rapid rate fish's multiple in the ocean. Blue colour is distinct and it brings out any colour around it. The blue colour is also used to represent the anal and dorsal fin of the fish. It is also used to represent the leg of the flamingo (plate 2). Katie (2023) noted that there is a certain kind of beauty when light goes through these bottles and creates something that looks almost heavenly.

One can deduct from the foregoing that the conception of colour used for the project is polychromal. A single colour has several interpretations. In the Western world and orient, colour is discriminating and monochromal in conception (Rojuwa, 1997).

V. Findings and Conclusion

Nor (2023) observes that, plastic pollution is one of the most pressing environmental issues. Production of disposal plastic products has rapidly increased in the past two decades, overwhelming the world's ability to deal with them. Producing and using plastic comes with costs. It is our responsibility to reduce this waste and recycle them. The animals can't do it for us but only us the sole proprietorship of it creation can do it. This research is vital for fairness, democracy and to demand better performance from the government.

One of the major concerns today is that people read stories about the problems with plastic recycling and their takeaway is that recycling is a scam and waste cannot be eradicated. Most don't believe in recycling program. They believe there is no form of transparency into how much of it actually recycled and how much of it is dumped into other countries.

The works of Rotimi suggests that one could take a moral stand without necessarily having a pragmatic solution. His works has helped to see plastic in another dimension. His works should make people reflect on the problem of environmental pollution. It is an issue that people don't think about but with the help of the plastic sculptures, people will tend to think of it as their own personal problem to tackle.

Recycling more plastic is one piece of the puzzle that can be practiced everywhere. When we practice recycling every day, it will become part of us and before we know it, we will be eager to recycling every day. The moment we all take up the responsibility to recycle our waste, in not too far distance, the environment will become more conducive to live in.

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