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### **Impacts of Digital Technology on Art Practice in Nigeria**

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#### **Abstract**

It is a common fact that there is a new sensibility making wave across discipline and it is being occasioned by technology; lots of technology abound, this study is narrowed to investigate the impacts of digital technology on art practice in Nigeria, exploring how digital tools and systems have transformed the creative process, artistic expression, and dissemination of art in the country. Through a mixed-methods approach, combining interviews, and case studies, the study examines ways in which digital technology has influenced various aspects of art practice. Its findings reveal that digital technology has opened up new avenues for creativity, innovation, and expression, including enabling Nigerian artists to showcase their work globally and connect with international audiences. However, it also identifies challenges and limitations, including limited access to digital tools and infrastructure, copyright infringement, and the need for digital literacy training as the downside of digital technology in arts. The study contributes to the ongoing discourse on the intersection of art and technology, highlighting the potential of digital technology to shape the future of art.

*Keywords: Digital Arts, Digital Technology, Art practice in Nigeria*

#### **Introduction**

Nigeria, according to Idoko (2023), is a country with a rich cultural heritage that has a long history of traditional art forms that are made from bronze casting, pottery, woodcarving, metal smithing, sculpture, textile designs, ceramics, painting, architecture, and weaving. These art forms have played significant roles in Nigerian culture for centuries. Traditional Nigerian art is known for its vibrant colours, intricate patterns, and symbolism. Many of these art forms were influenced by the various ethnic groups that make up the Nigerian population, each with their unique artistic

traditions. From the Nok terracotta sculptures dating back to 500 BC to the Benin bronze sculptures of the 16th century, Nigerian artists have long been using visual communication to express their cultural identities and convey messages. The traditional art of Nigeria includes Nok, Benin, Ife, Igbo Ukwu, Tsoede, Ibibio, Mbari, Owo, Ikom monolith, Esie, and other monuments (Joyogueh, 2020). These art forms are used for historical, domestic, religious, ritualistic, and social purposes and are a means of livelihood for the craftsmen. Nigeria has over 250 ethnic tribes, and the three largest and most dominant ethnic groups are the Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo. The country has 527 languages, seven of which are extinct, and over 1150 dialects and ethnic groups (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nigeria, 2024, Idoko 2023 )

As mentioned above, art practice in Nigeria has a rich and diverse history, spanning thousands of years, from the ancient cultures to the contemporary art scene, Nigerian art has evolved through various periods and styles (Okeke-Agulu, 2015). The traditional era gave rise to art forms such as wood carvings, bronze castings, and textiles which were integral of Nigerian cultural path (Azuhoro, 2017). The Benin Empire, for example, was renowned for its intricate bronze castings and sculptures, Nok for its terracotta and other art culture abound (Ezewuiro, 2013).

In the modern era, Nigerian art was shaped by colonialism, independence, and political instability. Artists like Ben Enwonwu and Yusuf Grillo emerged in the 1950s and 1960s, creating works that reflected the country's cultural heritage and political climate (Grillo, 2013; Okeke-Agulu, 2015). Recently, contemporary Nigerian art has gained international recognition, with artists like Olalekan Jeyifous, Moshood Olawale, and Peju Alatise pushing the boundaries of creativity and innovation (Jeyifous, 2020; Olawale, 2019; Alatise, 2018). Despite challenges like limited funding, infrastructure, and piracy, Nigerian artists continue to thrive, exploring new mediums and technologies to express their unique perspectives and experiences (Katie, 2020). However, studies has shown that, there is a new consciousness in town that has revolutionaries'

how arts is made and appreciated within Nigeria creative milieu and that consciousness is known as digital technology.

Digital arts in Nigeria, (arts made with the aid of digital technology) have evolved, it has become a powerful and dynamic medium, which has the potential to revolutionize the landscape of artistic expression and offer up new channels for creative and innovative endeavors. These art genres include digital painting, animation, and interactive installations. It is from the above creative permutation that the objective of this paper is birthed. The study seeks to investigate the numerous digital art trends that have emerged and ways in which digital tools is democratizing the process of creating and distributing art in Nigeria.

### **Digital arts, an overview**

Digital arts refer to artistic creations that utilize digital technologies as a medium or tool for expression (Paul, 2003). This encompasses a broad range of creative disciplines, including digital painting, graphic design, digital photography, animation, video art, virtual reality, and digital installations (Lopes, 2017). According to artist and curator, Christiane Paul, "Digital art is a form of art that uses digital technologies as a medium or tool for creative expression" ( Paul, 2003 ).

Digital arts often involve the use of software, computer programs, and digital devices to create, manipulate, and display digital artworks (Lopes, 2017). These artworks can take many forms, from static images to interactive installations and immersive experiences (Murray, 2018). As art historian and critic, Lucy Lippard notes, "Digital art is not just about technology, but about the ideas and emotions it conveys" (Lippard, 2014).

Grau, (2016). see's digital arts as a visually powerful, interactive media art, often supported by databases or the World Wide Web, the author further opined that this form of art is offering more and more freedom for creative expression and evidently is much better equipped to directly address the challenges of our complex times within the very medium that shapes them.

On the whole, digital arts represent a dynamic and evolving field that continues to push the boundaries of creativity, innovation, and artistic expression. ( Unimke, 2023 ) summarized it by

saying, ‘the blending of design, digital tech, and art in Nigeria is rapidly changing and offering new opportunities for creativity and innovation’.

The advent of digital arts can be traced to a techno-cultural concept known as digital culture; this has to do with ways in which technology is transforming human culture and society. These aspects respectively create room for the emergence of new community, identity, privacy, and social life requirements of people in contemporary societies. As such, to succeed in the twenty-first century and manage social life, it is vital to have a solid understanding of digital culture. This means digital culture refers to the behaviours, beliefs, and life patterns that the age of digital technology and internet connectivity has introduced to society. It is a period that is commonly characterized by global connections through cell phones, the wireless internet, and other technological enhancements ( Anikpe et-al; 2023 ).

Therefore, digital culture is the driven force of digital technology and is one of the major factors influencing the process of digitization. It is a triumph factor that showcases how people participate in society as well as how they consume information through interaction with digital technology, one another, the outside world, the environment, and themselves. In contemporary society, technology is gradually becoming a personal instrument that is influencing our self-perception in addition to being useful for work, study, and other aspects of life. Today, it is apparent that most aspects of the modern world will not function properly or totally without certain forms of technology. The system is characterized by the effectiveness of user-generated material and participatory culture, made possible by websites like Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, and many more. Art, whether as digital or not has been greatly influence by digital culture and it is seriously changing the perception and techniques of contemporary practice. ( Anikpe et-al; 2023, Babalola (2014) )

### **Digital Art Forms in Nigeria**

The digital art scene in Nigeria covers a wide variety of artistic styles and practices, which are reflections of the country's rich cultural legacy as well as its embrace of modern technology.

Nigerian artists are utilizing the power of digital tools to create works of art that are both unique and visually spectacular. These works range from digital painting and illustration to animation and interactive installations:

### **Digital Painting and Illustration:**

Digital painting and illustration are becoming increasingly popular among Nigerian artists. This is because they enable them to experiment with new techniques and styles while yet preserving the emotive elements of conventional painting. Williams Chechet and Osaze Amadasun are two examples of artists who are well-known for their vivid and imaginative digital artworks. These works frequently feature vivid colors, intricate details, and dramatic compositions. Through the use of digital painting, these artists are able to experiment with a variety of brushes, textures, and effects, which allows them to push the limits of their creativity and produce works that are visually spectacular and captivating to audiences.

### **Animation:**

They are raising number of artists and companies in Nigeria that are making animated shorts, music videos, and commercials. Nigerian animators such as Eri Umusu and Ayodele Elegba are gaining acclaim for their unique storytelling and animation techniques. They draw inspiration from Nigerian folklore, popular culture, and societal themes in their work. These artists are able to bring characters and settings to life through the medium of animation in ways that go beyond the conventional bounds of animation, thereby engaging viewers of all ages and come from a variety of backgrounds.

### **Interactive Installations:**

Interactive installations are a relatively new kind of digital art in Nigeria, but they are fast expanding. Artists use technology to create immersive and engaging experiences for audiences, and they are becoming increasingly popular. Emeka Ogboh's "iOpenEye" project, which is situated in Lagos, is an example of a project that brings together sound, video, and interactive elements in order to investigate topics such as urban life, migration, and cultural identity. The barriers between art and technology are blurred in interactive installations because they invite

viewers to interact with the artwork through touch, movement, and sound. This transforms viewers from passive spectators into active participants in the creative process.

**Impacts of Digital Art in Nigeria:**

**Democratization of Art Production and Distribution in Nigeria:**

One of the most significant effect that digital art has had in Nigeria is the role it has played in democratizing the process of creating and distributing art. This has made it easier for artists and audiences alike to access the work. Through the use of digital technologies and platforms, artists have been given the ability to circumvent the old gatekeepers and directly share their work with audiences all over the world, regardless of their socioeconomic status or geographic location. Thus, Artists benefit from digital tools, which provides them with opportunities to experiment, collaborate, and express themselves without visible boundaries.

Lately, social media platforms including Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook have emerged as powerful instruments for Nigerian artists to exhibit their work, establish connections with their audience, and work together with other creative individuals. By using hash tags and participating in online forums, artists are able to circumvent the requirement for traditional galleries or art dealers and reach thousands of followers and potential purchasers. Nigerian artists have been able to obtain prominence on the worldwide scale as a result of the democratization of art distribution, which has attracted the attention of collectors, curators, and critics from all over the world.

**Increase in market and Funding:**

Nigerian artists who are interested in monetizing their work and funding their creative initiatives have found that internet markets and crowd funding platforms, in addition to social media, have emerged as significant resources. Etsy, Society6, and Patreon are examples of platforms that enable artists to sell prints, goods, and digital downloads directly to consumers. This eliminates the need for intermediaries and allows artists to maintain a higher degree of control over their artistic practice. Artists are able to generate cash for exhibitions, residencies, and other artistic activities through the use of crowd funding platforms such as Kickstarter and

Indiegogo. These platforms allow artists to tap into a global network of supporters who are enthusiastic about supporting developing talent.

### **Easy development:**

The advancement of digital art tools and software has made it simpler than ever before for aspiring artists to begin their artistic careers and develop their abilities. There is an abundance of tools available to artists that can assist them in learning, experimenting, and developing their creative abilities. These resources range from free tutorials and online classes to economical software subscriptions and digital drawing tablets. Consequently, the democratization of the art creation process has resulted in the blossoming of a community of digital artists in Nigeria. This community is comprised of individuals from a wide range of backgrounds who come together to exchange ideas, work together on projects, and support one another's creative pursuits.

### **Pros and Cons of Digital Arts in Nigeria**

The evolving nature of digital arts in Nigeria and the world at large has opened channels for global collaboration and visibility. Findings from a study by Anikpe et al., ( 2023 ) revealed that digitized visual arts have the potential to generate economic opportunities, promote culture and identity, enhance education, and promote social cohesion in Nigeria. In the same vein, Bisschoff, (2017 ), is of the view that African artists are utilizing this digital space to create, recreate and disseminate new images of Africa in inventive and socio-culturally conscious ways.

Again, in the various tertiary art institutions in Nigeria, digital tool enhances faster learning and knowledge gaining. A survey of Digital Technology Utilization in Tertiary Institutions of North-Central Geo-Political Zone, Nigeria was carried out by Olatayo and Odewumi ( 2018 ), one of the findings confirmed that learners fully acquire skills, knowledge and competencies in and through digital technologies, within and outside the four walls of the classroom. Furthermore, the impact of digital art is glaring, which is why Bramantyo ( 2021 ) is of the opinion that, ever since the invention of communication technology, which was then followed by the invention of the internet, the two apparatuses have become a very important part of our daily life.

However, studies have shown that the advent of digital technology has its sets back. From the Nigerian perspective, it can be argued that the digitalization of arts has the ability to limit originality. This is because, although arts intersect at crossroads, there is a possibility that alien ideas which do no resonate with the cultural identity of the Nigerian space can be imported. This in turn can widen the gap between foreign and traditional art themes as the contemporary Nigeria artist might be caught in the web of not producing digital art that carries in them traditional themes- it is expedient that within the context of producing digital arts, Nigerian or African themes should be a factor to consider. ( citation )

**The positive impacts briefly outlined:**

1. Increased accessibility: Digital technology has made it easier for artists to access global audiences, markets, and resources
2. New creative possibilities: Digital tools have expanded the creative possibilities for artists, enabling new forms of expression and innovation.
3. Improved efficiency: Digital technology has streamlined artistic processes, saving time and increasing productivity.
4. Enhanced collaboration: Digital platforms have facilitated collaboration among artists, both locally and globally.
5. Preservation and documentation: Digital technology has enabled the preservation and documentation of Nigerian art, culture, and history.
6. Democratization of art: Digital technology has democratized art, providing opportunities for emerging artists to showcase their work.
7. New business models: Digital technology has enabled new business models, such as online sales and digital commissions.
8. Art education and training: Digital technology has expanded access to art education and training, both locally and globally.



9. Cultural exchange: Digital technology has facilitated cultural exchange between Nigerian artists and the global art community.

10. Increased visibility: Digital technology has increased the visibility of Nigerian art, both locally and globally

**Negative impacts are as follows:**

1. Loss of traditional skills: Over-reliance on digital tools can lead to a decline in traditional art-making skills.

2. Homogenization of styles: Digital technology can result in a homogenization of artistic styles, as artists may rely on similar software and techniques.

3. Dependence on technology: Artists may become too dependent on digital tools, limiting their creativity and ability to work without them.

4. Copyright and ownership issues: Digital technology raises concerns about copyright and ownership, as digital artworks can be easily reproduced and shared without permission.

5. Limited accessibility: Digital technology can create a barrier to entry for artists who do not have access to the necessary tools and training.

6. Ephemeral nature of digital art: Digital artworks can be ephemeral and impermanent, existing only in the digital realm.

7. Lack of tangible engagement: Digital technology can limit the tangible engagement between the artist, artwork, and viewer (Agwu, 2018, Eze, 2019, Okoro, 2019, Okeke, 2020, Nwachukwu, 2020,).

**Some works of Nigerian digital artists that are breaking boundaries**

We will examine the work of three Nigerian artists that are pushing the frontiers of digital art and defying the conventions that have been established in the field. This will allow us to demonstrate the variety and originality that can be found in Nigerian digital art.

**Temitayo Ogunbiyi** is a Nigerian digital artist who is well-known for her surreal and ethereal digital paintings. Her paintings frequently depict magical landscapes, mystical animals, and dreamlike atmospheres. Temitayo Ogunbiyi is noted for her work. The work of Ogunbiyi blurs the barriers between reality and imagination, encouraging viewers to explore regions that are unearthly and to contemplate the secrets of existence. Ogunbiyi makes visually breathtaking artworks that catch the imagination and excite the soul. She accomplishes this by employing vivid colours, exquisite details, and emotive symbolism in her work.



**Artist:** Temitayo Ogunbiyi; **Work Title:** playground-for-social-justice  
**Source:** <https://contemporaryand.com/magazines/a-playground-for-social-justice/>

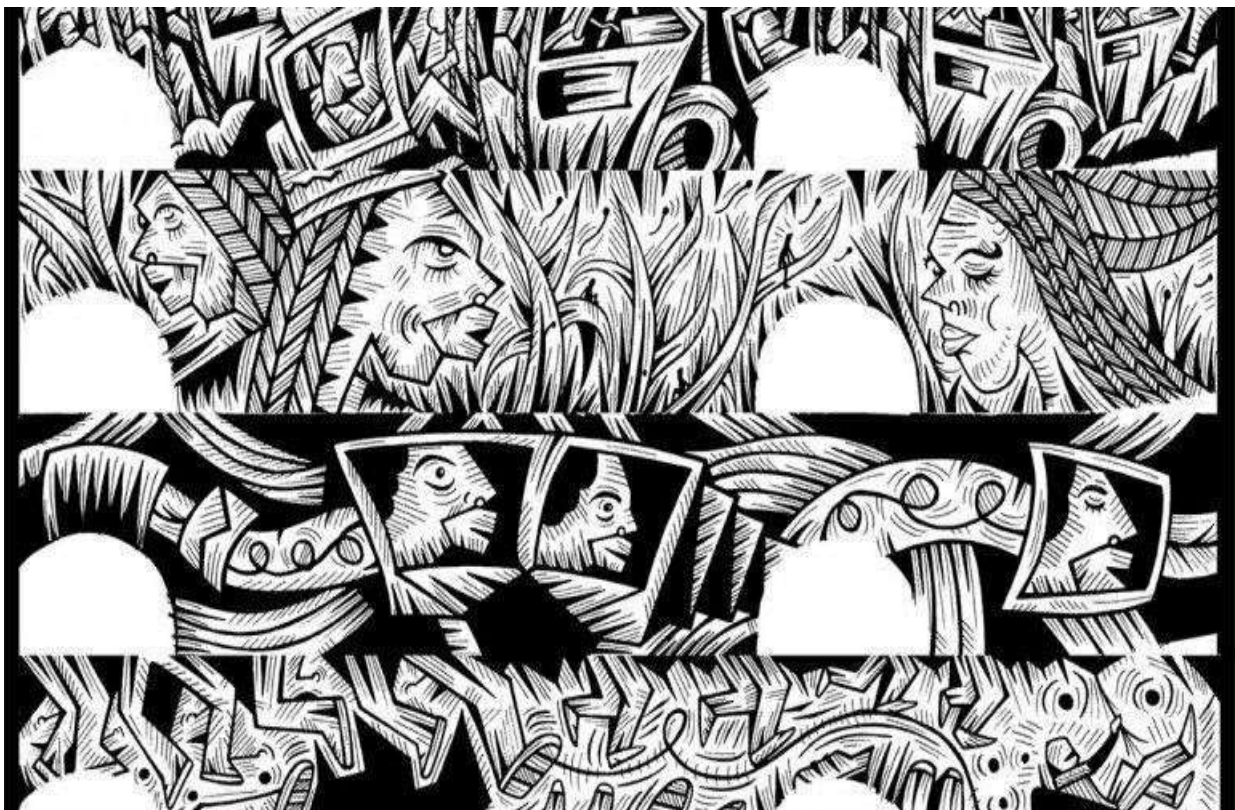
**Osa Seven** is a Nigerian street artist and digital illustrator whose work examines topics such as social justice, political action, and cultural identity. Osa Seven is a representative of the Nigerian artistic community. Osa Seven's goal is to inspire positive change in his community and bring attention to important social issues through the use of his digital murals, which are vibrant and lively. The artist frequently uses powerful images of African celebrities, activists, and everyday heroes in his murals, which are meant to celebrate the tenacity and spirit of the Nigerian people. By displaying the beauty, richness, and power of Nigerian culture via his artwork, Osa Seven tackles the assumptions and misconceptions that people have about Africa.



*Artist: Osa Seven;*

*Work title :( Cognac decanter) Hennessy; Source:<https://asia.hennessy.com/>*

**Karo Akpokiere** is a multidisciplinary artist whose work includes animation, interactive installations, and illustrations. Karo Akpokiere is a multidisciplinary artist. His experiences growing up in Lagos, Nigeria, were as a source of inspiration for Akpokiere's digital graphics, which frequently investigate topics such as urban life, globalization, and cultural identity.



*A cartoon illustration by Karo Akpokiere*

*Source: <https://www.cartoonbrew.com/tag/nigeria>*

Akpokiere makes vivid and dynamic artworks that portray the excitement and turmoil of city life through his use of bold colors, geometric patterns, and playful characters. His artworks are a reflection of the city life lifestyle. Through the use of interactive installations, he encourages viewers to interact with his artwork in novel ways, so blurring the barriers between physical and digital space and challenging conventional concepts of art and audience participation.

### **Conclusion**

This study was focused on assessing the impacts of digital technology on arts practice in Nigeria, as part of its findings, it concludes that there is a vast and active digital art scene in Nigeria, where originality has no limits and innovation abounds. These artists are just a small sampling of the rich and dynamic environment that exists in Nigeria. The digital artists of Nigeria are pushing limits, questioning norms, and changing the future of art not only in Nigeria but even beyond the country's borders with the bold and conceptual artworks they create.

As a result of the ongoing development of technology and the growing incorporation of digital art into popular culture, the possibilities for artistic expression in Nigeria are virtually endless. This opens up new avenues for creative endeavours, opportunities for cooperation, and the interchange of cultural ideas. However, the study has also identified some factors limiting these artists from un-tapping their full techno-creative potential; such as digital literacy, copyright infringements, limited access to digital tools and infrastructure. It recommends that if the problems highlighted can be addressed, the Nigeria digital arts practitioners will be the envy of the art world.

### **Recommendations**

Commendably, Nigeria digital art is on the rise and its impacts on the growth and development of the arts world are germane. However, over reliance on this form of arts will affect various aspects and techniques of art making and appreciation. It is therefore from the above findings that these recommendations are made:

- i. Nigeria digital artists should engage themes and techniques that mirror their traditional society.

ii. Digital arts are usually created using software's, therefore most time, works created using such software tend to showcase semblance and deprives the works of the element of variety, to avoid such situation, digital artists should use techniques that enables different versions of their works and the government is also expected to invest in the development of local software's that will suit Nigeria creative permutation.

iii. Laws guiding art creation should be develop to cover the copy rights concern of Nigeria artists

iv, Over dependence on technology can impact on creativity negatively, therefore digital artists should try and combine the non-digital techniques with the digital ones to create a creative balance.

vi. Babalola ( 2014 ), stated that, a country's economic status quo may be the factor that will boost its link with digital activities. Compared to low-income countries, high-income countries may see a higher rate of participation in digital activities. Therefore, Nigeria leaders should try to improve the country's economy, as this will in turn help artists develop their creative digital sensibility.

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