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# Public Sculptures in Lagos Metropolis; a Brief History and Critique

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**To cite this article:**

Adeyemi Akande. Public Sculptures in Lagos Metropolis; a Brief History and Critique. *Urban and Regional Planning*. Vol. 5, No. 3, 2020, pp. 88-96. doi: 10.11648/j.urp.20200503.12

**Received:** August 12, 2020; **Accepted:** August 26, 2020; **Published:** September 8, 2020

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**Abstract:** This study takes a look at the public sculpture enterprise in Lagos, Nigeria. It examines its background and the philosophical framework guiding the practice. Because a huge amount of resources, both financial and otherwise, go into the production and installation of public sculpture, it becomes important to appraise the ‘success’ of these works, particular as many are seen to have fallen short of expected impact. This study adopted qualitative research methods and it relied mainly on secondary data, though extensive physical observation of the discussed sculptural pieces was also carried out. This paper presents an inventory of major sculptural installation in Lagos Metropolis since 1945 when the first public sculpture is believed to have been installed. The study assesses the corpus of Lagos’ public sculpture, testing them against three variables of size, location and subject content. The results show that an underlining tension exists between expected impact of public sculpture and a reality of irreverence from the people in Lagos. It was found that this gap stems from early subliminal doctrines of traditional Yoruba religion and the consequent confusion of the purpose of public sculpture. This study concludes that to mitigate on this gap, feasibility tests focused on size, location and meaning of proposed sculpture must be rigorously carried out in order to increase the ‘success’ and acceptance rates of public sculpture projects.

**Keywords:** Public Sculpture, Urban Art, Monument, Lagos

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## 1. Introduction

It may be beneficial to introduce this study, by referring to one of the earliest examples of public sculpture in known history-The Colossus of Rhodes. This male figure statue, created to honour the Greek sun-god Helios, is famed to be the tallest and most ambitious statue of the Hellenistic period. It is a massive thirty-meter bronze piece sited at the harbour of the Greek island of Rhodes [1]. The 98ft sculpture, built by Charles of Lindos in 280 B. C., peaked at an imposing total height of about 113ft above the sea level as it was positioned on a 15ft white marble platform. Ships far at sea see the Colossus as a guiding beacon to the island of Rhodes and according to the Greek historian Pliny the elder, it was the pride of the people. The edifice which became a place marker at the intersection of the Aegean and Mediterranean seas was however brought down by an earthquake only fifty-four years after it was built, but its magnificence and popularity continue to arrest the mind of urban historians and enthusiasts alike. In 2015, a consortium of European experts

was formed with the sole aim to revive and rebuild the Colossus of Rhodes.

On a preliminary study of the Colossus of Rhodes, one can safely suggest here without reservations, that the ‘success’ of this monument was due to three key factors: its size, location and subject (this will be used interchangeably with *meaning*)-hereafter, these factors may be referred to as the ‘success quotients’ (SQs). This study reasons that on consideration of size, no other sculptural work appears to be close-by any measure-to the size of the Colossus. Certainly, there were plentiful life-size and less than life-size sculptures on the Island of Rhodes before the Colossus. In fact, without very evident testaments to the skill and prowess of Charles of Lindos in smaller renditions, it is quite doubtful that a massive commission such as this would have been offered to him. On meaning and location, numerous sculptural works would have embodied meaning as a symbol of gratitude or dedicated to several local gods before the Colossus and without doubt, many sculptural pieces have lined the streets and public squares of the ancient Greek cities before the

Colossus. What is important to note here, is that no example is known of any work that combines the three mentioned success quotients in a manner that produced the attention received by the Colossus of Rhodes. Thus, this study presumes that these three factors of size, location and meaning, possess a type of potency, when productively combined in the creation and deployment of public sculpture. A hypothesis can thus be put forth—a public piece is assured of ‘success’ when the three success quotient are productively combined in the creation and deployment of a public sculpture. This premise will be the basis for this study’s argument and evaluation of public sculpture in Lagos, Nigeria. Sculptural monuments in public places have always been a vital component of great cities and civilizations. While some have argued that public sculpture—in its broadest sense—is not in itself, evidence of societal development, it is certainly, to some extent, an expression of a collective consciousness of a society and a subtle desire to induce a sense of place.

This study will limit its scope to Lagos Metropolitan Area or what is also known as Greater Lagos. Greater Lagos is comprised of the early areas known as the Lagos city, and the other areas later added which includes the following Areas: Ojo, Ikeja, Alimosho, Agege, Oshodi/Isolo, Mushin, Ifako Ijaye, Kosofe, Shomolu and Ikeja. The Lagos Metropolitan Area captures well over 75% of the total political space of Lagos and the area is an adequate sample size and laboratory for the soul of the state. Further, the core of the historical mass of Lagos is contained within this area and it is home to more than three-quarters of Lagos’ inhabitants.

## 2. Background of Study

In 2003, a 12ft tall statue of the late sage and patriarch of Yoruba politics, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, was decapitated and all together pulled down from its pedestal right in front of the Government House in Agodi, Ibadan, Oyo state barely 48 hours after it was officially commissioned by the executive governor of the state. The sculpture was reported to have cost four million Naira at the time and it replaced an older public sculpture known as the ‘Unknown Soldier’—a cenotaph in honour of fallen soldiers [2]. Tensions, mostly of a political nature, rose throughout the town and the fear of unrest was rife. One must understand the severity of the act committed in the context of Yoruba traditional codes and invariably, its implications for peace in the state. Accusations and counter-accusations continued from several factions but no one was ever arrested or prosecuted for the act. This type of strong reaction to public sculpture is, in fact, frequent and often wrought with deep emotions that fuel actions of immoderacy. The Thatcher statue case can be sited here. Early in July 2002, Paul Kelleher walked into the Guildhall in London armed with a cricket bat and decapitated a statue of the former British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher worth £150,000. Kelleher said the attack was a protest against the ills of the world's political system [3]. Clearly, to Kelleher, even in a static solid-state, Margret Thatcher

epitomized the political system he felt so strongly about. What is important here is that the act of vandalising the sculpture, gave Kelleher a type of satisfaction as if to say he has decisively dealt with the said global political ill. This shows the power of personification that sculpture embodies.

In the 1989 article, *What we have learned about Modern Sculpture*, Elsen discusses the imperative role public sculpture now plays in the creation of social consciousness and thought [4]. He writes about the 1983 sculpture by Red Grooms, titled the *Shoot-Out*, which sparked huge public outrage from many, including feminists and Native Americans, over the trivializing of violence, persecution and the public belittling Indians are still subjected to. On account of these protests, the sculpture had to be relocated three times and finally removed to a walled courtyard of the Denver Art Museum. This, and many more examples, demonstrates the immense capacity of public sculpture to engage and inspire society. Also, public sculpture is in many ways an element of the urban fabric and the process of commissioning it entails an enormous investment of public resources: financial and otherwise. It becomes necessary for thinkers to understudy every aspect of the process. Because of the inherent power and potential a public piece has in instigating or inspiring the public, society must be more purposeful about the choice (subject) of work as well as the designated location. Through informed learning, scholarship must make viable suggestions to relevant authorities on how the potentials of public sculpture can be optimized.

Against this backdrop, this study aims to critically discuss the state of public sculptural monuments in Lagos and argue for the three aforementioned fundamental variables (Success Quotient) as being necessary to the ‘success’ of public sculpture in Lagos. The study draws examples from global perspectives in its arguments and relates it to local parallels. This critique will predominantly rely on secondary data from published materials on global best practices for public sculpture.

## 3. Some Thoughts on Public Sculpture

Intellectual discuss on public sculpture is quite progressive and many studies have been published on the different aspects of sculpture in public spaces [5-12]. The essay by Stalker & Glymour, *The malignant object: thoughts on public sculpture*, deserves a brief discussion here. In it, a most frontal critique of public sculpture was presented. The duo spiritedly questioned the purpose of public sculpture at such cost, when it does little or nothing to commemorate or represent the people or events associated with the site. Though their article was focused on what they termed “contemporary art”, it vehemently decried the imbalance between the millions spent on public sculpture and the projected (and often unrealized) impact on the host society. Stalker & Glymour, in what they believe to be an elitist ideology, cited the main justification often put forth by the art community. Public wellbeing, ‘humanising the environment’ and perhaps enlightenment of the people, were in the centre

of the argument. These notions were tackled and rendered void by Stalker & Glymour suggesting that these justifications provide nothing but a trifling apology for the artistic enterprise and that public contemporary sculpture does little to enhance the quality of life of the generality and no evidence has been presented otherwise. Further, the work reacted to another overused and popular justification that public art allegedly has economic benefits for the towns that have them. Stalker & Glymour argued that considering the cost involved in making them, perhaps the capital spent on the production of several public arts (which is often in millions) may have been more reasonably appropriated if channelled towards public amenities that actively generate returns and local jobs like an amusement park or even giving steady subsidies to local businesses. They believe that for the arts, alternative forms which attract people and their money may very well be music concerts, theatres and museums rather than public sculpture. Conclusively, Stalker & Glymour states, that if public sculpture is not really enjoyed for its aesthetic qualities, and if it carries no effective or important message which will enlighten the public, how does it then improve the quality of life? Claims that exposure to such pieces just makes people better off, whether the people know it or not are just unacceptable for intangible and unmeasurable benefits, they say, are no benefits at all.

The arguments of Stalker & Glymour are quite potent and relevant still today, irrespective of location. In a less spirited response, Eckardt, in what one might call the cliché idealism of an art critic, presents an opposing view to the central position of Messrs. Stalker & Glymour [13]. His argument, lacking in measurable facts, relied solely on artistic sentiments which are often understood only by the art community. Eckardt implicitly suggests that irrespective of the intolerance and ignorance of the many, art, in all its character will survive the degenerate ideas of the people. Credit must, however, be given to Eckardt's attempt as it succeeded in tempering the rough edges of Stalker & Glymour's hard line position of public art. Eckardt states that art, like philosophy, cannot be judged by a popularity contest and as a democracy cannot survive without its experts so does society need and must trust art experts for understanding. Despite Eckardt, the fundamental issues raised on the relevance and duty of public sculpture and at what cost, remain valid and they further strengthen the need for rigorous cost-impact analysis and prioritisation. Also, it presents a formal justification for diligence in producing 'successful' public sculptures only.

Sert, Leger & Geidion seminal treatises make a simple but clever declaration on monumentality. Though the thoughts behind their presentations were generally inclined towards structures, not necessarily anthropomorphic in nature, nonetheless, the underpinning philosophy presents the purpose of symbolism for man's ideas as landmarks intended to subsist the creators [14]. Nine key points that were presented covers all aspects of the character and meaning of public monument and society. However, a point that encapsulates this present discuss here, is that monuments are

the expression of man's highest cultural needs. The most vital monuments, they stated, are those which express the feeling and thinking of a collective force-the people. This assertion is critical to our present understanding of what the purpose and nature of public sculpture should be.

The body of works on sculpture in public spaces in Africa is nowhere as varied as the corpus in Europe or the United States. Sculpture on this continent was-and still is-vibrant in other contexts other than public monuments. Urban public sculpture, is a fairly recent colonial-era phenomenon. However recent it is, it has a significant footprint in many African urban centres. One can only presume that this growth is not unconnected to the prior familiarity to sculpture as an authoritative medium for cultural and spiritual communication by the different cultures. In Nigeria, scholarly discuss on public sculpture leaves much to be desired. Materials available have been the production of a small circle of scholars with interest in what might best be described as peripheral engagement with the basic aspects of the subject. Odiboh [15]; Ikpakoronyi [16]; Folarin [17]; Adisa [18]; Akintonde [19]; Akintonde and Kalilu [20], have done appreciable work on public sculpture in the lower half of Nigeria and must be commended. Though not much discussion on the philosophical engagement of public sculpture is to be seen in any of the works. Each work focused on different locations and dealt mostly with itemisation and description of available works. This collection of materials on public sculpture in Western Nigeria has failed to address the holistic impact of public sculpture in the different locations by hitting on both the peculiar issues of the different locations and the generic challenges of determining how or if a commissioned piece will be 'successful' in a chosen location. The individualised approach, of 'artists and their work', used by the above studies, have provided us with little significant assessment of the state of success or failure of these public monuments as a whole, let alone offer any insight and directions for the future of public sculpture in the region. This paper hopes to make an attempt to fill this lacuna, however modestly.

#### 4. Philosophy of Public Sculpture in Yoruba Lagos

Lagos is unquestionably Yoruba by location. Though mostly muffled, it appears that the values from where the state's character and ideology are derived are essentially Yoruba. This is evident in the state's approach to public sculpture management. There is to be seen, a marked difference, between the early European attempts at public sculpture enterprise and the later local efforts. This will be elaborated upon later. We will concern ourselves here with only public monuments of anthropomorphic nature, hence, some popular early Lagos monuments like the Afro-Portuguese styled cenotaph of *Taiwo Olowo*, the Oshodi Tapa obelisk and the 1936 Clock tower monument donated by the Syrian community will conspicuously get no attention [21].

Akintonde and Kalilu have noted that the emergence of 'outdoor' (public) sculpture, in the modern sense of the word, in Nigeria started in 1934 when the colonial government of south-western Nigeria commissioned an artist to produce a monument titled *Ogedengbe Staff* in honour of the *Ijesa* warlord [20]. This 14ft staff is located in front of the royal palace in Ilesa, Osun state. Further, and more important to this study, they assert, that the genesis of modern public sculpture in Lagos is to be seen in the 1948 war memorial to the unknown soldier-*soja 'dumota* located in Idumota area.

While there are no materials available to suggest an older public sculpture in Lagos, and such we must agree the with literature that *soja 'dumota* is the premier piece in the study area, one other piece deserves a mention here. Though sceptics might quite easily designate the work as architectural sculpture, but on account of its central location and placement (on the roof top) which effectively presents the work in three-dimension, gives it visibility and consequent popularity, it may well pass for 'Public' sculpture. The *glazed angel* has stood firm on the parapet of Casa da Fernandez (Ilojo Bar) in Tinubu square since 1855. This is ninety-three years before *soja 'dumota* was installed. The sculpture survived till 2016 when the building was demolished by the government, making it arguably the longest surviving public sculpture in Lagos with a lifespan of one hundred and sixty-one years. It must be stressed, that the presentation of the *glazed angel* as an alternative option for the position of first public sculpture in Lagos should not take away attention from the 1948 *soja 'dumota*. It only presents a basis for arguments on how we define what public sculpture is in the context of Western Nigeria. Many, if not all 'outdoor' sculpture referred to by some works as the earliest expressions of 'public' sculpture in western Nigeria, are nothing but as architectural sculpture. There is of course a marked difference in the nature, ideology and purpose of the architectural sculpture and public sculpture. The plentiful low-bas relief sculpture one may find on walls of some Yoruba buildings may well be in public view but does not quite qualify to be public sculpture particularly if we see public sculpture in context of three-dimensionality. Ordinarily, public sculpture should be experienced in three-dimension in a public space like market squares, major city pathways or open spaces. Yoruba (traditional) architectural sculptures, are arrayed mostly as veranda pole art, shrine wall relief, courtyard or piazza pieces or personal deity effigies and such are not usually presented in the outer façade of buildings, therefore to suggest that the earliest Yoruba 'outdoor' sculpture are the very beginnings of public sculpture in western Nigeria is flawed.

Whether one accepts Akintonde and Kalilu's submission on which public monument is the first in Western Nigeria or not, one thing we cannot fault is that the emergence of the idea and practice of erecting public sculpture as an integral member of the urban fabric in Nigeria is directly linked with colonial-or perhaps more broadly stated, foreign-influence. It is thus safe to say that the practice of erecting public sculpture or monument in Lagos effectively started at the turn

of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Shortly after its inception, it will appear that the locals, who were to a large extent still traditional Yoruba in mind and character, took well to the idea and much later, also inculcated the practice of memorial monuments as evident in parts of early post-colonial Lagos. Quite contrary to this notion that Yoruba sensibilities were inclined to, and in fact practised the use of public sculpture for urban and environmental beautification, the Yoruba are in fact rather apathetic to this idea, if not altogether averse to it, however passively. There exists no socio-spiritual framework for this enterprise in traditional Yoruba make-up as sculpture already had a defined and deep foundation in religious and aesthetic communication of a more covert nature. On this account, this study believes that this unfamiliar system which finds no true foundations in Yoruba cultural framework may well be a potent factor in the failed effort to engender the idea of public sculpture as urban beautification, into Yoruba psycho-social framework. While the Yoruba generally responds favourably to sculpture, albeit in context of religious or aesthetic dynamics, it may continue to find it difficult to establish this alternative presentation of public sculpture outside the spiritual framework it is already used to.

Traditionally among the Yoruba, monuments or memorials are fundamentally not separate from the religious structure. Memorials in the form of naturalistic or neo-naturalistic sculpture are extremely rare and when they occur, are almost always in the context of a religious or cult framework. Further, it must be noted that monuments or memorials to a persona, culture or spiritual hero, intended for public display outside the context of a shrine or other religious spaces, are always abstracted and symbolic-visually representing or celebrating certain pivotal attributes of the persona. They are never realistic; neither do they exhibit any attempt of a true representation of the persona. Some examples are to be seen on ancient war standards of culture heroes or notable generals, assemblages- a manifestation of the complex *aroko* system of non-verbal communication among the Yoruba. Ogundeji has discussed the *aroko* system at length and it needs no further attention here [22]. To the connoisseur of Yoruba sculpture, a question may arise here of the Ife heads or other celebrated pieces like *Idena* or *Ako* effigies; while these works are clearly memorials of some sort and are mostly naturalistic in nature, they were never meant for public display outside the context of certain rituals, cultic or religious proceeding. The *Ako* effigies, for instance, were specifically sculpted solely for the ritual burial procession of a subject.

This pre-existing code in the Yoruba is perhaps responsible for Lagos' unconscious and persistent preference for the deployment of public sculpture in traditional socio-sacred contexts. The *orita* (junction), *igun* (corners), *ojubo* (scared epicentre) and *èba onà* (pathway) public sculpture location ideologies from Yoruba traditional religion appears to be the implicit and unconscious locational theory for the placement of public sculpture by past governments in Lagos and all through western Nigeria. Evidence is seen in the preference for roundabout (Oba Akran Statue in Ikeja), trio and tetra-

head junctions (*Fish* statue in Lekki-Epe [see figure 1], Herbert Macaulay Statue, Sabo) and sometimes very clustered corners (Youth Empowerment, Sabo). As against accessible open packs and spaces which affords the most functional and effective location for active interaction with the pieces. The traditional encryption in the Yoruba, that situates sculpture in the open only within religious contexts appears to still have its reigns in modern policies of Lagos. While one may argue that there is nothing wrong with this in itself, after all, a people have the right to, and must in fact, remain true to certain pillars of their origin, for their cultural identity and essence to be preserved.



Figure 1. Fish Statue, Lekki-Epe, Lagos. Source: Lagos Guide Connect.

The problem here, however, is that the end consumer (the public) is essentially, no longer traditional. Having been transformed in mind and character by foreign religion but still under the control of their traditional quintessence, we now have a public that professes Anglo-modernism but is still quite traditional in the core. This is undoubtedly a recipe for cultural and psycho-social confusion. Because of the pre-set cultural and religious programming in the Yoruba, this study believes that some of the challenges that Lagos faces with low-value-returns in its public sculpture enterprise, may not be unrelated to these covert but inherent ideological convictions sutured into the cultural framework of Lagos on account of its Yoruba origin.

## 5. An Assessment of the Current Works in Lagos

There are approximately seventy-five, public sculptures in Lagos Metropolis depending on which criteria are used to qualify the scope. (See Table 1). Some prominent sculpture appears in central parts of the metropolis but in enclosed mega-compounds. Some examples of this can be found with pieces within University of Lagos campus like the *Sofoluwe memorial statue* and *the Scholar*. These were excluded in the count. About two-thirds of these Public sculptures are located at roundabouts and trio and tetra-head junctions. As already discussed, this location does little for the active interaction of the work with the public. This study is convinced that public sculpture and public open space are impenitent bed-fellows and that one without the other is quite frankly a formula for the imminent failure of either. The latter may thrive without the former, however, the former most certainly requires the latter to a great extent to do well in even the most enthusiastic environments. It is important to admit that there exist examples where public sculpture has succeeded rather well without it paired with an open space of whatever kind. This, however, is indeed an exception rather than the rule. More assuredly, the two, deployed in the company of each other, will always result in legibility and this often achieves the goal of spatial and social transformation of any public space. In recent years, Lagos authorities have seen this to be of profit and noticeable efforts to marry sculpture with open spaces can be seen in the Johnson Jakande Tinubu Park (JJT), Alausa. Isolation of public sculpture, on the other hand, can be gravely detrimental to the concerned work and this directly affects both its acceptance and its overall success. Isolation may be either physically: by faulty location or by fence barriers around it, or implicitly by creating a sense of passive hostility around the location. The sometimes subtle message that people are not welcomed here can very easily be achieved by not providing outdoor furniture or shaded areas to attract people. It is expedient to mention however, that the reason for the fence barriers around some of the notable works by the government is to forestall vandalism; a very present challenge in Lagos.

Table 1. Some notable public sculptures in Lagos metropolis as at March 2020.

| LIST OF SOME NOTABLE PUBLIC SCULPTURE IN LAGOS METROPOLIS |                                    |                          |       |                   |                     |
|---|------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------|-------------------|---------------------|
|   | Name of Piece                      | Location                 | Date  | Dimension/height  | Artist              |
| 1   | *Unknown Soldier- Soja'dumota      | Idumota                  | 1945  | Approx. life size | unnamed             |
|   | Eyo Idunmota Statue                | Idumota                  | 1987  | Approx. 12ft      | unnamed             |
| 2   | Sir. Herbert Macaulay- Full Figure | Sabo, Yaba               | 1986  | 7ft               | Tolu Filani         |
| 3   | Sir. Herbert Macaulay- Full Figure | Bookshop House. CMS      | 1973? | Life Size         | G. Cappa            |
| 4   | Tai Solarin- Full Figure           | Yaba Bus Stop            | 1996  | Life Size         | Tolu Filani         |
| 5   | Mobolaji Bank Anthony-Full Figure  | Bank Anthony Way, Ikeja  | 1989  | 12ft              | Nwadugu, Bane et al |
| 6   | Sango- Full Figure                 | NEPA House broad Street  | 1964  | 14ft              | Ben Enwonwu         |
| 7   | Madam Tinubu-Full Figure           | Tinubu Sq, Lagos Island  | 2007  | 9ft               | Kenny Adamson       |
| 8   | Oba Akran-Full Figure              | Ogba Roundabout          | -     | 14ft              | -                   |
| 9   | Aro Meta-Idejo Chiefs              | Lagos/Ibadan Express.    | 1993  | 12ft              | Biodun Sodehinde    |
| 10  | Mother & Child                     | Ayike House, Ikeja       | 1991  | 5ft               | Tony Emodi          |
| 11  | Mother & Child                     | Marina Under bridge      | 1986  | 8ft               | -                   |
| 12  | Funso Williams-Full Figure         | Costain roundabout       | 2007  | 18ft              | Deola Balogun       |
| 13  | Monument to Kudirat Abiola         | Seven-up junction Oregon | 2004  | 12ft              | Kenny Adamson       |

| LIST OF SOME NOTABLE PUBLIC SCULPTURE IN LAGOS METROPOLIS |                                      |                          |      |                  |                 |
|---|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|------|------------------|-----------------|
|   | Name of Piece                        | Location                 | Date | Dimension/height | Artist          |
| 14  | Mother Africa                        | National Arts Theatre    | 1979 | 15ft             | Felix Idubor    |
| 15  | Beko Ransom Kuti                     | Oshodi Express Way       | 2010 | 14ft             | -               |
| 16  | Prof. Ayodele Awojobi                | Onike Roundabout, Akoka  | 2009 | 12ft             | -               |
| 17  | Tribute to Sam Okwaraji- Burst       | Nat. Stadium, Surulere   | 1990 | 2ft              | Sam Mbakwe      |
| 18  | King Ado                             | Tafawa Balewa Square     | 2017 | 10ft             | Modupe Studio   |
| 19  | Prince Olofin Atekoye                | Ijora olapa, Ido         | 2017 | 10ft             | Modupe Studio   |
| 20  | Igunnuko Masquerade                  | Isheri Ikotun roundabout | 2017 | 35ft             | Veronica Ekpei  |
| 21  | The Fish                             | Lekki Epe Expressway     | 2017 | 30ft             | Hamza Atta      |
| 22  | Fisherman                            | Soglo way, Badagry       | 2017 | 30ft             | Chinedu Ogbakwu |
| 23  | **Liberation Statue- Fela            | Allen roundabout         | 2017 | 35ft             | Abolore Sobayo  |
| 24  | Gani Fewehinmi-Full Figure           | Liberty Park, Ojota      | 2017 | 44ft             | Olurotimi Ajayi |
| 25  | Obafemi Awolowo                      | LTV Junction, Ikeja      | 2017 | 30ft             | Hamza Atta      |
| 26  | M. K. O. Abiola                      | M. K. O Park, Ketu       | 2018 | 37ft             | Olurotimi Ajayi |
| 27  | The Big Foot                         | Ojodu, Berger            | 2017 | 30ft             | Hamza Atta      |
| 28  | Ma'ami Statue                        | Muri Okunola Park        | 2017 | 40ft             | Modupe Studio   |
| 29  | The Drummer                          | Ipakodu, Ikorodu         | 2017 | 35ft             | Chinedu Ogbakwu |
| 30  | The Nerve Centre (50fig. collection) | Maryland                 | 2017 | 35ft             | Gerald Chukwuma |
| 31  | Possibilities                        | Gani Fawehinmi Park      | 2017 | 35ft             | Bunmi Babatunde |
| 32  | Youth Empowerment                    | Sabo, Yaba               | 2017 | 35ft             | Umeh Bede       |

\*Now removed and replaced with Eyo Idunmota. \*\* Now removed. To be reinstalled at another location.

Lagos, being principally a Yoruba natured city, both in character and psycho-social demeanour, is trapped in a cultural quagmire. In spite of its best efforts, it unconsciously struggles in an envelope of traditional values that frustrates its efforts to carry on modern best practices as a metropolitan enclave. In 2017, the Lagos State Government championed the commissioning of a series of new sculptures in public spaces across the state. This was to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the state. Over twenty new sculptures were commissioned across the state. While this initiative is laudable, it is apparent that the authorities, in spite of their best efforts, continue to suffer from an absence of efficient strategy that will assure a high-value return on the difficult and sometimes intangible investment in public sculpture. Quite praiseworthy are the improvements in scale and size, subject and meaning, but location and accessibility continue to plague the state's efforts. There is a need for the review of the state public monument policy. The policy review must be premised on the philosophy that to get all but one right is the same as getting none at all. Key components of scale and size, location and meaning must be holistically considered for the success of public sculpture as suggested here while paying attention to approvals of sculptures that present a culturally inclusive approach to changing societal dynamics on account of the metropolitan nature of the state.

## 6. Discussion of Results

### 6.1. On Size and Public Sculpture

Even if on account a visibility alone, surely size is a key factor to consider in the success of any public monument. Size is one thing, scale is another. Size refers to monumentality; which is the largeness or smallness of the work in itself. Whereas, scale is concerned with the ratio of the sculpture to other physical elements in the surroundings

like trees, buildings and so forth. In the introduction of this paper, the Colossus of Rhodes was cited as an example of how size can affect the reverence given to a sculptural work. Generally, man is awed by larger than life objects. In many cultures, 'larger than normal' is seen as otherworldly or special. Traditional cultures see immensity or vastness as a visual metaphor for things deserving of attention and reverence-the god factor. Psychologically, the individual, aside from the influence of its host society, also responds to largeness. To the mind, it is an enigma. These same ideologies work well for public sculpture. Several public sculptures have benefited from the enigma of sheer size. The Mount Rushmore Memorial in South Dakota, Statue of Liberty on Liberty Island, New York Harbour, the 131ft Genghis Khan equestrian monument in Mongolia. Despite the relative seclusion of all the above-mentioned statues, on account of their size, millions of visitors still travel great distances to interact and experience the sculpture first hand.

While it is quite apparent that not all public sculpture that succeeds is of colossal size, indeed, practically all colossal size public monument, enjoy a rather robust success and attention. This is notable and quite telling and it shows the significance of size in the presentation of public sculpture. There is not a single public monument in memory, particularly those of anthropomorphic characters, that is colossal in size and have not received meaningful attention from the public. It must be said nevertheless, that the attention one speaks of here can be both positive or negative in nature. The nature of the attention, not the attention itself, is always a result of several factors that may include: subject depicted, the skill of the artist, style of the piece, socio-spiritual or socio-cultural meaning to the host society and so forth. An example of a public monument that scored prodigiously well in size and scale but has significantly fallen short in complementary aspects that may aid its success is the 160ft colossal *Le Monument de la Renaissance Africaine* (African Renaissance Monument) in



Dakar, Senegal. While it captures negritude and the overcoming of odds to emerge free, the soviet communist style of the work has given rise to some reservations about the work and heated political discussions. Nonetheless, the work has enjoyed enormous pilgrimage from the public despite the gruelling 204 steps one must conquer to reach the base of the work.

In the 2017 effort by Lagos to increase the presence of public sculpture in the urban fabric of the state, some attention was paid to size and scale, though nothing near the size achieved in other climes. The *Obafemi Awolowo* statue at Ikeja, *Fisherman* at Soglo way, Badagry, *Big Foot* at Ojodu Berger, are some examples, all recording heights of 30ft and above. The *Aro Meta* white cap statue erected in 1991 gives only a semblance of colossality on account of its integrated pedestal which on its own is about 10ft high pushing the whole installation to an adequate 23ft. The *Aro Meta*, however, in spite of its core meaning and relevance to the native indigence of Lagos, has suffered a rather staggering draw back on account of its location.

## 6.2. On Location and Public Sculpture

The Location for a proposed public sculpture is a critical factor to consider in the success or failure of the work. Of the three success quotients proposed by this study for public sculpture, location is perhaps the most difficult and dishevelled to get right. About half of the major pieces of public sculptural monuments in Lagos are located at roundabouts or in the middle of two highways. Roundabout locations are faulty and impractical, if not altogether counterproductive. While it may remain the most feasible location for public sculpture considering the availability of space, it must be clear that for the full impact of public sculpture to be felt, roundabout locations cannot be the state's major location policy. Roundabouts will at best, give a 'drive-by' appreciation to the public and this is often not enough. This type of access germinates no credible interest in people's minds because the work becomes distant from them physically and mentally on account of its position and consequent inaccessibility. This distance may sooner or later breed possible contempt and it certainly does not encourage sublime appreciation of both the work, the meaning or the artist.

Akintonde and kalilu asserts that public sculpture possesses the "capacity for the enhancement of easy traffic flow at roundabouts and T-junctions, and compliment environmental beautification with sensual appeal" [20]. This notion is a farce, to say the least, and a gross misunderstanding of the true nature of the impact of sculpture quite defectively located at roundabouts and T-junctions. It must be argued that in actual fact, roundabout sculptures have little or no effect at all on 'easy flowing traffic'. If traffic flows at any roundabout, this is the sole effort of the roundabout itself which is a mechanism designed to orchestrate vehicular movement in a manner that diminishes grid-locks at cross junctions. An example can be made of the *Liberation Statue* commissioned by the government of Akinwunmi Ambode in 2017 to commemorate

the 79<sup>th</sup> birthday of the music icon Fela Anikulapo Kuti. On a promise of relocation, the statue has now been taken down on account of its location. The authorities have identified the location as one of the four roundabouts causing major traffic gridlock in Lagos State [23]. Surely, in such instance, sculpture will very likely contribute to the disturbance of free-flowing traffic as it may, among other things, present itself as a nuisance to visibility and a major element of distraction. The inconvenience caused by the visual interruption and the cost for the relocating the statue may have altogether been avoided. As for the aspect of "environmental beautification", it is safe to say that public sculpture in itself will significantly fail in the beautification of the environment in its usual austere and matted colours and finishing as it is characteristic of pieces seen in Lagos. Many of the public pieces in Lagos are made of fibre-glass and the dull finishing colour in many instances can hardly be made out from the clutter of rustic buildings in the background which regrettably is typical of Lagos. Sculpture will serve the host community little profit for beautification and will fair flagrantly less than the efforts of well-coiffured flowering plants at these roundabouts. This study posits that about 70% of public sculpture in Lagos is ill located and this continues to frustrate the noble intentions of the state. If at all sculpture is to create beauty in the environment, one must make correct siting of the works a starting point. Shahhosseini has said, sculpture in the right place is an element for the creation of beautiful or special meaning for citizens [24]. Far more than the trivialities of 'beautification' though, sculpture possesses greater power of influence for collective consciousness and an outlet for communal emotions. Recent developments in modern public sculpture suggest that there remains the need for memorials through which the community may publicly express private grief. Contradicting the view that modern sculpture lacks the power of past public art are examples of artists treating controversial subjects in ways that have stirred the community [4].

Public sculpture will be effectively rendered sterile when it is located in such a manner that it is impracticable for it to vigorously interact with the people. Its potency to inspire, or in the very least, to influence thoughts is neutralised. Public sculpture succeeds when it communicates with the public. Wu explains, in English, it is called "Public Art". From its Chinese character, it emphasizes the participation and interaction of the public [12]. Clearly one of the very necessary characters of public sculpture is that it must be situated in a place and manner where it optimally engages with the public. By this we mean, people get full access to engage or physically interact with the object in question by all progressive means which must include critiquing it, asking questions about it, discussing it or even an innocent holiday photo with it. Cultures of barricading the space or situating the sculpture at awkward locations such as the middle of two busy highways or in areas with questionable security, do nothing in favour of the success of the piece. This seeming flippant feature of placement that will encourage people to get up close with the sculpture is often overlooked by authorities and it almost always proves costly.

It may cumulate in the redundancy of the monument in the host society.

### 6.3. On Meaning and Public Sculpture

Sculpture embodies the potential for surrogate representation of an ideology or an alter-representation of an individual's energy. In 1966, shortly after the government of the then Ghanaian nationalist, Kwame Nkrumah, was toppled in a military coup, the commotion that erupted saw the destruction of Nkrumah's statue sited in front of the Parliament House. The public piece was pulled down from the pedestal on which it stood and later decapitated [25]. The decapitated body and the detached head was later to be reinstalled as two separate piece side by side years after Nkrumah's death, to represent and commemorate the travails of African nascent democracy of the 1960s. The same fate befell the public monument of the Iraqi former leader, Saddam Hussein in Firdaus Square, Baghdad. On April 3, 2003, severe damage was done to the statue by men brandishing sledgehammers. The whole structure was later to be pulled down by the US troops. These examples of the reactions to sculpture are plentiful in recent histories. It underscores the capacity of sculpture to embody a belief or an ideology. The potency of surrogacy seen in sculpture, particularly those of naturalistic style is palpable and it does transcend cultures and time.

The Yoruba are well known for their advance use and relationship with sculpture as already discussed in this study. One example of the centrality of sculpture to their belief system can be seen in the representation and transference of reality into the *ere ibeji* sculptural effigies in the practice of *ibeji* (twins) worship [26-28]. To the Yoruba, the statues become an actual mass of reality to the individual. The sculptures become the life of that which it represents and occasions have been recorded where the bearer will see no abnormality in feeding and bathing the wooden statues. The same ideological system can be seen in Yoruba use of sculpture in traditional medicine [29]. Because of the potency of sculpture in Yoruba culture, ample attention must be paid to the choice of subject for a proposed public piece in Lagos. Authorities, through scholarship and cultural art researchers, must investigate the cultural, spiritual and contemporary meanings or connotation of a proposed subject to the public, particularly of a proposed location. The thin line between choosing right or wrong can be a driving factor in the acceptability of the work. Adejumo, Okedele & Adebamowo states that incorporating public art driven by mythology, historic events and people enhances attachment to open spaces. Public art centred on exploits made by local heroes and outstanding opinion leaders reflect communal aspiration [30]. Some examples of this hypothesis already exist in the study area. *King Ado* in Tafawa Balewa Square, *Prince Olofin Atekoye* in Ido and the *Igunnuko Masquerade* in Ikotun are noteworthy. The full impact of these works are however yet to be seen as they suffer from the debilitating strangulation of some other sub factors like accessibility and lack of pairing with open spaces.

In negotiating the dynamics of commissioning a public monument in a chosen location, it is tempting to argue that none of these success quotients, is more important than the other and irrespective of the deterministic quotient in a particular project, the results will not be significantly different provided it is a good sculpture. This will be a fallacy of the actual fact. While the permutation of the three variables can in fact create a mildly complex equation that may inform us to pay attention to one over the other, owing to supplementary factors that may subvert an honest effort to equally consider all three, it is expedient to assign due considerations for all three variables in a manner that gives a close-to-accurate judgment of desired results. Indeed, due considerations for all three variables does not mean, for instance, that one will always have a colossal sculpture. Sometimes a well-fitting size for a chosen location may well be a petit piece. What is most important is that the subject of this small-sized sculpture has meaning to the locale and that the chosen location is such that allows for a vibrant interaction and engagement with the piece. Certainly, this act of varying the different elements to give the most pleasing outcome is a skill that must be learnt and perfected in time by authorities responsible for the decisions that concern the fate of public monument in Lagos.

## 7. Conclusion

In this study, an attempt was made at the history and philosophical background of public sculpture in Lagos metropolis. The findings show that Yoruba trade-religious ethics and principles unconsciously continue to determine the manner through which the public sculpture enterprise in Lagos is run. While this in itself may not be a bad thing, early approaches however fail to accommodate and respond to the changing demands of urban-and-people dynamics. An update to the process and policy guiding conceptualization, production and citing of public sculpture becomes important, particular as it concerns considerations for the factors that assure the success of public pieces laid out in this study.

Public monument policies or strategies that fail to consider the success quotient suggested is at a risk of being ineffective and void of any influence whatsoever. The success of public sculpture, on account of the complexity of issues riding on it, has now become a matter that is non-negotiable.

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