



African Art Indispensable To Change And Development — CBAAC boss

FOR THE umpteenth time, the Director-General of the Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization, CBAAC, Professor Tunde Babawale, has restated that the value of the indigenous African Art to life is hardly quantifiable as it enriches peoples' knowledge of the past even as it helps to guide the present to a purposeful future.

The CBAAC boss made this known at the main auditorium of the University of Lagos recently in his address as the Special Guest of Honour at the Dr. Peju Layiwola organised colloquium/exhibition titled Benin 1897.com. CBAAC was a party to the exhibition/colloquium

The artifacts on display are mainly terracotta replicas of the looted bronze originals and, painted calabash installation pieces intended to sensitize the mind towards empathizing with a desecrated people and memories

According to Prof. Babawale, what we know about many past civilizations are what we could make out of their art which is life because life itself is also some art. "African art has always been in the service of humankind" he emphasized.

"Apart from being a record of events, art has also been the harbinger of development. The idea that later manifested into air planes

Layiwola has called "our attention to this oversight and it is in our collective interest to ensure that African art; both of the past and the present are deployed to their rightful uses"

"This is why this exhibition, **Benin**

1897.Com, that should be a purely artistic and academic feat will be appreciated beyond the scope of art. Its multi-disciplinary theme and advocacy to right the wrongs of the past could not have come at a better time"

While acknowledging that it is not unusual for artists to employ their art to address topical societal issues, the CBAAC Director-General commended Dr. Olayiwola for the focus and weight of this particular exhibition having elevated it beyond being mere artistic expressions, to the realms of politics, diplomacy and advocacy.

"Beyond the opportunity of allowing us to partake of the beautifully executed art works, this colloquium/exhibition presents another medium for initiating a reassessment and renegotiation with the West, the issue of restitution of Nigeria's stolen artifacts dispersed all over Europe and America" said Prof Babawale.

He added that the exhibition has opened new vistas for artists, scholars, cultural activists and other stakeholders to re-open the chapter of the clamor for the return of the stolen artifacts.

In his comprehensive overview of the efforts of the artist, the Sub-Dean of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, Dr. Sola Olorunyomi noted that a major

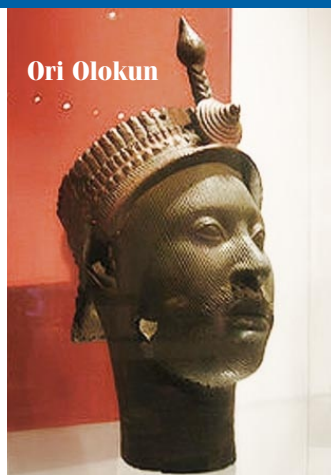


Nok Terracota

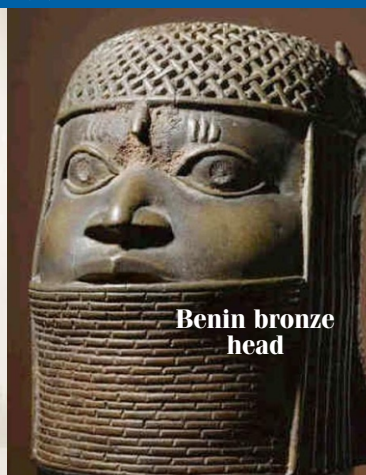
“ Apart from being a record of events, art has also been the harbinger of development. The idea that later manifested into air planes was first conceived by an artist, Leonardo da Vinci, who made precise drawings detailing the mechanical processes and possibility that took science four hundred years after to catch up with ”

was first conceived by an artist, Leonardo da Vinci, who made precise drawings detailing the mechanical processes and possibility that took science four hundred years after to catch up with. That art again is at the forefront of the clamor for the redress of the monumental injustice meted to the Benin people in 1897 is a pointer to the fact that we are presently under using art in our quest for change and development in all spheres of our national life" recalled the CBAAC boss.

He then argued that Dr



Ori Olokun



Benin bronze head

significance of the project lies in its reminder function of the rampaging imperialists' despoliation of not only Benin Kingdom but the long time intellectual headquarters of Africa, Timbuktu in Mali

The colloquium/exhibition was graced by renowned artists and art enthusiasts. These include Dr. Bruce Onobrakpeya, Prof. Dele Jegede, former Chairman of the Petroleum Products Pricing Regulatory Authority, PPPRA, Chief Rasheed Gbadamosi and former CBAAC Director, Prof Duro Oni who also stood in for the university's Vice-Chancellor. ■

And The Winner Is...



A group of awardees, some management staff with CBAAC Board Chairman, Chief Bakinson, (8th from left) and Ms Ajagu, the chairperson next to him.

...CBAAC!

Gaily dressed in well cut, assorted attires, the entire CBAAC *family* radiated conspicuous radiance. For no fewer than four hours beginning at about mid-day, the whole workforce of the Centre was literally immersed in a gale of celebrations. The day was Thursday March 25, 2010 at the National Arts Theatre Annex, Ijora-Lagos.

One after the other, as many as twenty five staffers of the Centre were called out for special recognition and thunderous applause of colleagues and friends. Each of those called out got warm handshake from distinguished guests at the occasion.

The first set of the awardees were received by the CBAAC Board Chairman, Chief Semiu Bakinson while the Founder of the Youth and Gender Network, a **Non Governmental Organization**, Ms Anuli Ajagu, who chaired the ceremony received the rest. All the awardees were presented with a plaque and a gift each to commemorate their feat.

Both Chief Bakinson and Ms Ajagu, distinguished by their brilliant native white and all-yellow flowing apparel respectively, commended those who made the list of "awardees this time" and called on the rest to see their colleagues as sources of inspiration.

"Because of the importance I attach to this event, I had to re-order my schedule. By now I should be in Abeokuta for a crucial political meeting. But this isn't any less important to me as a believer in diligent service and good reward system, so I made up my mind, I must be here to felicitate with you all. Accept my congratulations" said Chief Bakinson.

Chief Bakinson's expression of solidarity was like a directive as food and drinks flowed freely immediately afterwards even as the mega speakers blared popular, numbers echoed by almost everyone around. It was the

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apex of a collective recognition for CBAAC that commenced a couple of months back.

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Witnesses to Prof Babawale's deserved elevation cut across all the strata of CBAAC's numerous collaborators, friends and beneficiaries all through the previous year and even before.

Just before the year was rounded off, CBAAC played host to hundreds of school children from all over Lagos to brighten their Christmas season and make their first term break more charming.

Culture Courier can recall that at the height of the colourful party which had Distinguished Senator Grace Folashade Bent as chairperson, no one at the event was left in doubt about the commitment of the CBAAC team to its responsibilities. Visibly overwhelmed, Senator Bent, with a conspicuous nod from another senator at the event, Yisa Braimah, announced that she would vigorously back the motion to make CBAAC enjoy a more robust appropriation in the coming years to enable it cope with its responsibilities which it discharges so efficiently.

A strong team leader, Prof Babawale had, before all the recent public reckoning for CBAAC and its staff, made the CBAAC staff realize that they constituted a worthy group.

Four years ago, he instituted annual merit and long service award ceremonies which has also served to round off the years for the staff on a happy note. The 2009 edition of the ceremony was delayed into the new year, 2010 but not devoid of its essence. So, together with the upgrading of CBAAC as a whole came with rewards for all members of the family. ■