

INTEGRATING ART AND CULTURE INTO MODERN ARCHITECTURAL BUILDINGS IN IBADAN METROPOLITAN AREA

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1.0 CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF NIGERIAN ART AND ARCHITECTURE

Architecturally, Nigerian art and architecture serve as potent forms of cultural expression, embodying the beliefs, values, and experiences of its people. Traditional art forms, such as sculpture, painting, and textile design, are imbued with symbolism and meaning, often drawing inspiration from mythology, spirituality, and everyday life. For example, the iconic bronze sculptures of the ancient city of Ife are not merely esthetic objects but embodiments of royal power, craftsmanship, and spiritual reverence. Similarly, Nigerian architecture reflects the country's cultural diversity and historical narratives. Indigenous architectural styles, such as the mud-brick structures of the Hausa-Fulani or the compound houses of the Yoruba, are manifestations of community values, social organization, and environmental adaptation. These architectural forms often incorporate decorative motifs and symbolic elements that convey spiritual beliefs, social hierarchies, and communal identity as seen in the ancient Yoruba dwelling in Figure 1.

Nigerian art and architecture play pivotal roles in fostering community cohesion and social relationships. Traditional art forms, such as oral poetry, beadwork, and pottery, serve as repositories of historical knowledge, occasions for collective celebration, storytelling, and cultural transmission. Through these artistic expressions, communities reaffirm their shared values, histories, and identities, forging bonds of solidarity and belonging. Likewise, architectural spaces serve as hubs for social interaction, communal gatherings, and ritual activities. Village squares, marketplaces, and religious sites are not only functional spaces but also cultural landscapes that facilitate interpersonal relationships, exchange, and collective experiences. The design and layout of these spaces often reflect social norms, hierarchies, and values, reinforcing a sense of belonging and collective identity. Most established and lasting

places before Africa were colonized grew because of their concentrated rites, performances, and economic activities. Oliver refers to such cities before industrialization as symbols of power and influence.

Nigerian art and architecture play crucial roles in preserving and transmitting cultural heritage across generations. Traditional art forms, such as oral poetry, beadwork, and pottery, serve as repositories of historical knowledge, ancestral wisdom, and cultural practices. Through artistic production and performance, artisans and storytellers ensure the continuity of cultural traditions and the preservation of collective memory. Similarly, architectural landmarks and sacred sites serve as tangible reminders of Nigeria's rich cultural heritage and historical legacies. From the ancient city walls of Kano to the UNESCO World Heritage sites of Osun-Osogbo Grove and the Sukur Cultural Landscape, Nigerian architecture bears witness to centuries of human creativity, ingenuity, and resilience. For the Hausas, Daura was the spiritual haven more established among the old kingdoms; the same was the case of Ile-Ife for the Yorubas. From the 15th century, the mosque became one of the most recognized and popular buildings in Hausa settlements Prucnal-Ogunsote. Figure 2 shows an example of a traditional Hausa building. By safeguarding these architectural treasures, communities reaffirm their connections to the past and commit to preserving their cultural legacy for future generations.



Figure 1. An ancient Yoruba dwelling at Ile-Ife Source: A history of Yoruba people.



Figure 2. A typical example of a well-adorned wall in a traditional Hausa community

2.0 NEED FOR CULTURAL INCLUSION IN CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE

Contemporary architecture operates within a globalized context where cultural diversity is celebrated and valued. However, the architectural profession has historically struggled with issues of cultural exclusion, where certain cultural narratives, identities, and traditions have been marginalized or overlooked.

The history of architecture is replete with examples of cultural exclusion, where dominant narratives and esthetic paradigms have marginalized alternative viewpoints and traditions. Colonialism, globalization, and Western-centric architectural discourse have often perpetuated a homogenized architectural landscape that neglects the rich diversity of cultural expressions and identities worldwide. This legacy of exclusion has contributed to a built environment that fails to reflect the complex tapestry of human experience and heritage. When old communities were evolving, certain factors greatly influenced the construction styles, the internal arrangement of the rooms, and the form of most buildings. Cultural inclusion in architecture is essential for honoring the diverse identities, histories, and aspirations of communities around the world. Adeyemi¹¹ asserts that these traditional built forms became a reference point to the cultural settings in Nigeria and the basis of what evolved as vernacular architecture in Nigeria. Architecture is not merely a functional necessity but a reflection of cultural values, beliefs, and aspirations. By embracing diverse cultural perspectives, architects can create spaces that resonate with the lived experiences belonging, pride, and cultural continuity.

Moreover, cultural inclusion in architecture contributes to the preservation and revitalization of indigenous architectural traditions and vernacular building practices. By integrating local materials, construction techniques, and design motifs into contemporary architectural projects, architects can pay homage to cultural heritage while promoting sustainability, resilience, and community empowerment.¹ Inclusive architecture has the power to foster social cohesion, equity, and empowerment within diverse communities. By engaging stakeholders in the design process and prioritizing their needs, architects can create inclusive spaces that promote social interaction, accessibility, and inclusivity. Public buildings, such as libraries, schools, and community centers, serve as hubs for social exchange and collective engagement, where diverse voices and perspectives are valued and respected.

Furthermore, inclusive architecture can address issues of social justice and urban inequality by prioritizing the needs of marginalized communities and underserved populations. By designing affordable housing, public parks, and infrastructure projects that are responsive to local contexts and cultural preferences, architects can contribute to the creation of more equitable and inclusive cities. Cultural inclusion is imperative in contemporary architecture for honoring diversity, promoting social cohesion, and fostering equity and empowerment. Okwumabua¹² observed that the innovative residential designs in the Ibo culture resulted from the impact of colonization. By embracing diverse cultural perspectives, architects can create spaces that reflect the richness and complexity of human experience, while also contributing to the preservation and revitalization of indigenous architectural traditions. Moving forward, efforts to promote cultural inclusion in architecture must be prioritized to create built environments that are inclusive, equitable, and reflective of the diverse societies they serve. Denyer¹³ opines that the European styles of architecture and planning policies are still being practiced in Africa today, resulting in a less developed African traditional design style. As a result, many contemporary architectural landscapes lack cultural diversity and authenticity, perpetuating a one-size-fits-all approach to design.

3.0 IMPACT AND BENEFITS OF INTEGRATING ART AND CULTURE IN ARCHITECTURE

Integrating art and culture in architecture elevates the esthetic appeal of built environments, creating visually stimulating and emotionally resonant spaces. Recently, certain architects in Africa have created unique architectural forms that showcase the lifestyles of specific African cultures and aim to enhance and preserve the cultures and environment of their people Hughes.¹⁴ Artistic elements, such as murals, sculptures, and installations, serve as focal points that capture the imagination and evoke a range of emotions. Whether through vibrant street art in urban neighborhoods or intricately carved facades in historic buildings, art imbues architecture with a sense of vitality, creativity, and cultural richness. Moreover, cultural motifs, symbols, and patterns infuse architectural designs with layers of meaning and symbolism, enhancing their visual impact and resonance. From the geometric patterns of Islamic tile work to the organic forms of indigenous textiles, cultural esthetics contribute to the unique character and identity of architectural spaces, fostering a sense of place and belonging for users and visitors alike (Okwumabua, 2007).

These integrations of art and culture in architecture stimulate innovation and experimentation in design, leading to the creation of more dynamic and responsive built environments. Artists and architects collaborate to explore new materials, technologies, and spatial configurations that blur the boundaries between art and architecture. From interactive installations that invite user participation to kinetic sculptures that respond to environmental stimuli, art-driven interventions push the boundaries of conventional design paradigms, offering new possibilities for spatial expression and engagement Carrol. Furthermore, cultural considerations inform architectural solutions that are responsive to the needs, values, and aspirations of diverse communities. By incorporating local building traditions, social practices, and environmental knowledge into design processes, architects create spaces that resonate with the cultural identity and lived experiences of their users. This approach promotes inclusivity, sustainability, and resilience, fostering environments that are adaptable, accessible, and responsive to changing social and environmental contexts.

Integrating art and culture in architecture offers numerous benefits, including fostering social cohesion, cultural exchange, and community empowerment. Public art initiatives, such as murals, installations, and performances, activate urban spaces and bring people together, fostering a sense of collective ownership and pride in the built environment. Cultural events, festivals, and exhibitions hosted in architectural venues serve as platforms for cross-cultural dialogue, exchange, and collaboration, enriching public discourse and promoting intercultural understanding. Moreover, art-driven interventions in public spaces can address social issues, stimulate economic development, and revitalize communities. By transforming neglected areas into vibrant cultural hubs, architects and artists contribute to the revitalization of urban neighborhoods, fostering economic opportunities and improving the quality of life for residents. This holistic approach to place-making promotes social inclusion, civic engagement, and cultural diversity, cultivating more resilient and vibrant communities.

4.0 OYO STATE CULTURAL CENTER IN MOKOLA IBADAN, NIGERIA

Completed in 1977, the Oyo state cultural center was intended by Chief Obafemi Awolowo, the premier of the old western region at the time, to commemorate the festival of art and culture for that year (FESTAC '77). The aim was to create a totem of the art and culture of western Nigeria. As an emblem of culture, the center became iconic to Oyo state and its people in certain periods. Since then, the center has hosted numerous events in various capacities, ranging from state-organized programs to various privately organized events.

Perched beautifully atop the Mokola Hills, the cultural center's entrance is flanked by two elegant sculptures, as seen in Figure 7. One sculpture depicts a man carrying a traditional Yoruba drum called the *gangan*, while the other shows a man carrying a traditional Yoruba musical instrument called the *shekere*. Both figures are gorgeously dressed in traditional Yoruba attires. The building incorporates a great deal of elements that reflect Yoruba culture and indigenous art, evident in the large sculptures at the entrance of the complex. The embellishments on the walls, which include murals and sculpted patterns of various kinds (Figure 8), express ideas and concepts adapted from Yoruba history and tradition.

The main building features a blend of curvilinear and rectilinear forms. The most prominent space in the complex is the main auditorium, which includes two

elevated platforms: The proscenium and the thrust. Offices are attached to the back of the stage, arranged sequentially on two floors. The complex houses three halls: The main auditorium with a gallery, the rehearsal hall, and the cinema hall.

A craft village is also located within the complex, at the northeastern end of the main entrance. Buffered from the main building, it provides a serene environment for artists to work. The building's walls are constructed with sandcrete blocks, plastered with a mix of cement and sand (mortar), and finished with emulsion paints. Certain elements, such as the various shading devices and the dominant structures located at the entrance, were constructed using reinforced concrete to embellish the built form. Other materials used in the building include wood, granite, terrazzo, and more. The floors are finished in granite and terrazzo, while certain portions of the walls, especially the halls, are finished with tongue-and-groove polished wood. In the halls, due to the nature of activities, the ceilings are finished with materials that have good acoustic properties.





Figure 7. Exterior view toward the entrance of the Mokola cultural center showing sculptures of Yoruba music makers.

This particular building does not heavily incorporate local materials as major building elements. Except for certain interior areas where wood was used for flooring and ceilings, all other materials used in this development were not locally sourced.

Indigenous art and crafts are graciously celebrated in this building, with wall murals (Figure 9) and the sculptures at the entrance (Figure 7) being the most evident examples of local craftsmanship. The location of the art and craft village also highlights the significance of art in the area and reflects the living style of the community.

As a cultural center, the building reveals aspects of the Indigenous lifestyle. The activities carried out in the various spaces within the complex are culturally inspired. In addition, the building incorporates the courtyard system, adopted from Nigerian traditional architecture. It effectively showcases various crafts and skills of the local people, particularly the Ibadan community.

5.0 DECORATIVE ELEMENTS IN YORUBA PALACE ARCHITECTURE

Palace in Yorùbáland plays a significant role in the life of the Yorùbá people. As part of Yorùbá institutional buildings, palaces are held in high esteem by the culture and the people. As such, palace shrines and rituals contributes to the authority they hold within the town, hence they are centrally located in the planning of Yorùbá towns. They are a place for public assembly and state gods or deities and final resting place of deceased obas. As all power and authority lead to the divine king so is the road network and paths converge towards the àfin. The àfin serves as the fountain to the culture and identity of the kingdom it governs over.

i) The Perimeter Wall Fence

The place of the palace in Yorùbá land cannot be overemphasised and they are institutional structures that have withstood the test of time despite introduction of modern ideology and technology of construction. *Palaces are regarded emblems of what constitutes Yorùbá architecture and in entirety the culture of the people. Reflecting their belief system on the status and sacredness of the oba, the perimeter of the palace grounds is usually walled.* Constructed of earth, they are usual about 3feet wide and up to 12 - 18 feet in height to retain its prominence. Though conspicuous, the wall provides a sense of privacy for the oba according to Yorùbá culture. *The wall can be easily noticed from whichever direction the palace is approached since it is situated in the middle of the town (an example is the Alaafin's palace in Oyo town).*

Like every Yorùbá traditional architectural construction, the palace is a reflection of an intimate association with their vegetal environment as it reflects in the use of thatch and other vegetation in their roofing [9, 19]. Before contact with the west and introduction of new construction materials, Yorùbá palaces and houses were constructed to protect the people from the weather especially rain. As a result, more, attention is paid to making their structures rain proof. Adoption of the high-pitched roof allows for easy drain off of rain water. Same style roofing is adopted in a large scale for Yorùbá palaces.

The perimeter walls are often left bare and unfinished on purpose. It is left uncovered to inform the visitors and indigenes about the wealth surrounding the Yorùbá seat of power [12]. Different region have varied colour of laterite that ranges from cool reddish colour to lighter yellow that serves as identity marker. Besides the unfinished wall allows the visitor appreciate the good quality of laterite used for the construction. In some instances, the laterite elements used in constructing the wall is sometimes mixed with shear butter and palm oil instead of water thus, increasing the durability for much longer period.

ii) Oja Oba

Major architectural element of the Yorùbá palaces is the **entrance gate called oju abata**. Ojo argued that the gate is usually positioned along the side of the wall facing the marketplace known as **oja-oba** (king's market). The idea of the oja oba directly opposite the entrance gate to the palace is a common feature in Yorùbá towns. This is evident in major palaces like that of the Alaafin of Oyo with an elaborately designed oju abata. Oju abata is not a mere gate or gateway but one that informs visitors about the history, identity and culture of the people as zoomorphic representations are used as decorative elements. According to Ojo oju abata is like a tunnel connecting the outer world of the town with the inner world of the palace. In some cases, oju abata opens to a large open space overlooking the inner palace wall that has the entrance to the palace. In other instances, it opens to a large courtyard that serves as a communal space for different activities.

iii) Courtyard

Courtyard forms one of the five major element of Yorùbá architecture. Their palaces consist of many courtyards (ka) of varied sizes for different functions. The biggest of the **numerous courtyards is designed to break the massiveness of the built-up area of the palace**. Sizes of the courtyards vary greatly from palace to palace and dependent on the expanse of land occupied by the palace. Palace of the Alaafin of Oyo in the past had 100 courtyards which has been reduce to expand the built-up area. The function of the courtyards within the Yorùbá palaces includes enhancement of private family cohesion, ventilation, lighting, food storage, stable for horses, space for settling disputes, and spaces for various deities to mention a few. The courtyards contribute to the division of spaces into zones and help maintain the private area from the public and semi-public zones. Multiplicity of courtyards (ka) within Yorùbá palace has become a common element of their traditional architectural design and planning.

iv) Palace Entrance Porches

Protruding from the main palace wall to either the major road or the main courtyard are several porches that serves as an architectural element of Yorùbá palaces [12]. The porches tend to break the monotony of the stretched rectangular shape The courtyards are surrounded by verandas with roof supported on earthen columns or carved wooden posts. Wooden posts are another important element of Yorùbá

architecture. It is one element that also signifies status of the budling and the owner within the Yorùbá town. Carved posts in Yorùbá architecture are decorative elements that enhances the budling structurally and aesthetically.

v) Columns

The use of columns as architectural elements in Yorùbá palaces predates the contact with the west. The columns were used as structural elements in carrying roofs. The importance of the column is highlighted in the Yoruba proverb that distinct various uses and types of columns. They are usually carved with inscriptions and decorative motifs that tells a story and serves as tangible reminder of beliefs and culture. Such artistic skills are carried out by designated families known as the Olona who are carvers charged with the duty of carving. Their works included carved wooden veranda posts and carved wooden door panels, found in palaces and house of nobles. Such works are evident in Yoruba palaces as testaments to Yoruba artistic representation ingenuity and creativity. From the choice of hardwood to the distinct motifs demands a creative skill that is second to none.

Decorative and artistic taste of the Yorùbá people is determined by their environment, immediate society and their intangible spiritual orientation. As a result, Yorùbá architecture is emphasized through the use of decorative elements such as murals, motifs and carvings that indicates their religious affiliations, status and financial capability. Hence, the best of Yorùbá decorative elements is easily identified in palaces as the highest structure revered aside shrines. Long before colonization and influence, Yorùbá architectural main features are ornamentation in wood and carved motifs on doors and roof supports especially within palaces. Ornamentation is reflected in architectural elements fabricated by woodcarvers such as veranda post, doors panels, facia boards, doors and windows. Murals are also common place on the walls of palaces where animals and objects connected to divinity of the obas are depicted. A good example is the oju abata to the Alaafin of Oyo's palace with over 300 zoomorphic murals.

Àfins in Yorùbá land are built to house the whole community wealth, riches, cultural artifacts, beliefs and tradition that is reflected in the ornamentation [2]. Thus, the decorative and ornamental elements found in the Àfin (palace) are reflections of the rank and prestige of the Oba. This structural support though artistically finished are

integral and functional element of the building [12]. However, as decorative elements, they constitute master pieces of Yorùbá carvings and depicts integral part of their culture. As a result, each carved posts tells a story as it is used to record events in the absence of writing. Thus, serve as visual markers of identity and culture. In modern Yorùbá architecture, traditional decorative mouldings and ornamentations are nearly eliminated, paving way for a clean aesthetic where materials such as wood, brick and stone are used unornamented. Hence, the tradition is gradually fading away as modern designs emerge.

6.0 THE IREFIN PALACE

Àfin Irefin was built in the year 1910 on about 4 acres of land. It is an elaborate structure with 62 rooms contrary to 125 mentioned by the Oyo state government [14]. The four acre palace is bounded by Irefin oje road and Oke adu road. Today Àfin Irefin has lost most part of the palace grounds to remain only the palace structure. The palace structure constitutes four zones surrounding four courtyards with the largest measuring about 300sqm. It is situated on a hill top that allows a good view of surrounding landscape of Ibadan from the roof terrace. Bounded by Irefin Oje road by the side and the main entrance (Figure 1). Irefin Oje road can be accessed either through two major roads - Bashorun gate or oke adu road. The main entrance consists of five gable porches that serves as a market place (Figure 2). The market is in line with Yorùbá culture where the king's market is before the palace. A position that further highlights the relationship between both institutions of authority where the market is a citadel of political power and the Oba is the Oloja and oversee all activity within it.



Irefin Google Earth Map





7.0 CONCLUSION

This paper substantiates the essence of art and culture in architecture and its development. Undoubtedly, modern technological advancements have impacted architecture, causing a radical transformation in how architecture has metamorphosed. Incorporating indigenous art and culture does not necessarily mean returning to traditional forms of architecture; rather, a seemingly radical approach is sought to integrate art and culture into contemporary buildings. While trying to create a balance may not be an easy task, Idoko¹ suggested a potential strategy called “revivalism,” where elements of both traditional and modern are fused together in a building project without compromising either. Contemporary buildings ought to incorporate societal ideals in the way modern art does, rather than with rigid alignment of forms and spaces. Built forms should interact more expressively, and spatial configurations should align allegorically with cultural and societal ideals.

Integrating art and culture in architecture has a profound impact on esthetics, functionality, and social dynamics, enriching built environments and enhancing the human experience. By blurring the boundaries between art and architecture, designers create spaces that are visually captivating, emotionally engaging, and culturally resonant. Moving forward, efforts to promote interdisciplinary collaboration, cultural exchange, and community participation will be essential in harnessing the transformative potential of art and culture in shaping the future of architecture. Nigerian art and architecture are not merely esthetic phenomena but integral components of cultural identity, community cohesion, and heritage preservation. By understanding the cultural significance of Nigerian art and architecture, we gain insights into the complexities and richness of Nigeria’s cultural tapestry and the enduring resilience of its people. Summarily, this interconnection is profound in promoting Nigeria’s national identity. These architectural expressions could help Nigerians herald their unique cultural heritage. In the future, new architectural developments should consider prioritizing cultural designs and injecting innovations that preserve Nigeria’s cultural heritage. If this is sustained, Nigeria will continue to advance its course toward cultural diversity through art and architecture. Allu-Kangkum³ suggests that no matter the dynamism experienced in architecture, Nigerian society should not lose its cultural value and identity, especially in a changing world. This brings to mind the quote of the great architect Philip Johnson: “The future of architecture is culture.”