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Public Art in Zimbabwe: Perspectives for the Enhancement of the Art and Design Curriculum

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Abstract

This study interrogated public art as a social practice and its interface with art education. The central axis of public art is its dialogical engagement in the context of human relations and the development of critical consciousness. Interviews were conducted with five internationally renowned artists with regard to their practice and understanding of public art, its role in the national economy, and engagement with art in the school. Primary and secondary school art curricula were analyzed to determine the extent to which the curricula embraced public art and the pedagogies involved in its delivery. Results indicate that there is significant practice and appreciation of public art in Zimbabwe, which is imbedded in the curriculum at the two educational levels. However, instructional strategies alienate practicing artists from participating significantly in the learning programs. A pedagogical niche that teachers and artists in Zimbabwe and similar educational contexts can explore is suggested.

Introduction

This study considers public art as a social engagement and its interface with the art curriculum in Zimbabwe. It examines public art and attempts to locate it in educational practice and space. Public art is often a contested site of knowledge that opens up seemingly diverse ideas and debate (Alexenberg & Benjamin, 2004; Carpenter, 2004; Daichendt, 2013; Ozga, 2016; Parker & Khanyile, 2022; Pruitt, 2017; Smith, 2015). It usually provokes both physical and intellectual engagement with spectators' aesthetic sensibilities, resulting in what Efland (2004) calls pleasurable agitation. By definition, public art refers to permanent or durational artworks exhibited in public locations and often situated in unconventional spaces for societal dialogue and contemplation. Robidoux and Kovacs (2018, p. 159) opine that '[p]ublic art…is executed in the public realm in openly accessible locations and includes genres such as visual art, and musical performance." It parallels art that is curated in the gallery or museum space, which is mainly intended for the artistically acculturated (Cameron & Coaffee, 2006; Carpenter, 2004; Hall & Robertson, 2001; MacNeill, 2012; Pollock & Paddison, 2010).

Contemporary Nigeria, particularly urban centres, is endowed with public art such as commissioned murals, installations, traditional sculpture, and performances articulating culture, identity, corruption, human rights, social justice, and political commentary. Similarly, the Uhuru Monument (1973), known as the Freedom Statue, situated in the Uhuru Park in Nairobi, Kenya, was produced by James Mbuthia in collaboration with other artists. The statue represents Kenyan identity. The Independence Monument by Italian sculptor Mario Cioni, situated in Kampala, Uganda, was erected in 1962 as a symbol of freedom from colonial rule. The three figured sculpture portrays the country's independence and its future. A sculpture, Monument de la Reunification by Gedeon Mpando, was erected in 1974, signifying the reunification of the two Cameroonian territories, and is situated in the city of Yaounde.

Appreciation of public art by the Zimbabwean community is evident through canonical artworks such as Construction Workers (1993), and Ploughman (1992) by Adam Madebe (Samwanda & Schmahmann, 2014), and Tomb of the Unknown Soldier (1981-82) designed by the architect Moses Mabhida, which epitomize engagement in ideological, social, economic, political, and intellectual debates. The sculpture Mbuya Nehanda (2021) speaks to the national identity and heritage, similar to the value attributed to the Great Zimbabwe monuments that identify with the country's heritage. Thus, public art is a key social narrative that could be a critical pedagogical tool for learning in art.

Despite the significant practice of public art in Zimbabwe, like in other African countries such as Egypt, Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda, Cameroon, and South Africa, no local studies have examined artists' views concerning how public art can become an integral part of the art

education curriculum. Engaging public art in art education in schools includes learning about the artform and practicing artists, the relationship between public art and society, and engaging in the making of public art. Meanwhile, critical conversations about art curricula show that these have strong linkages with public art. For example, Song (2014) parsed the potential of ecological art, including public art, which supports and provokes thinking about a sustainable future at the elementary and post-secondary school level in the USA. She found that ecological art captivates learners and highlights ecological impacts in a manner that promotes thoughtful dialogue and change in learners' behavior towards the community and the environment. Similarly, Robidoux and Kovacs (2018) studied how ecological art promoted innovative thinking about community issues, resulting in youth programming for social change.

In Australia, a study by De Lorenzo (2000) revealed that public art is an interdisciplinary strategy for environmental sustainability and innovative educational goals. The Gateshead Art in the Public Places program was similarly conducted in the UK as part of an urban renaissance effort intended to promote partnerships among professional artists, communities, local schools, and care centers. A similar artist-led Thinkspace public art participatory project (Percy-Smith & Carney, 2011) involved engaging children in experiential learning of art and urban regeneration. Such dialogical engagements proffer alternative methodologies of inquiry (Ozga, 2016) and demonstrate that public art is imbibed with knowledge and skills that could positively impact the art curriculum. Thus, the questions guiding the study were:

- How do Zimbabwean artists conceptualize and practice public art?
- What pedagogical strategies can be used to engage public art in the school curriculum?
- What disciplinary content knowledge does public art imbue that practicing artists can contribute to the art curriculum?

Interfacing Public Art and the Art Curriculum

Public art occupies open and usually controversial spaces in the form of artistic heritage (Bowen, 1999; Bray, 2014; Marschall, 2010; Smith, 2015) in which no individual can claim to be privy to authorial meaning, owing to the autonomous character of any artwork. While institutionalized art is historicized, cataloged, and interpreted for the audience, there are no ready-packaged narratives in public art. This makes public art more accessible to the majority of viewers as it does not attempt to "[channel people] into thinking [in] a certain way or having one's gaze filtered through the eyes of another" (Frost, Laing, & Williams, 2015, p. 61). Instead, the viewer is invited to discover the work's inherent aesthetic qualities. For the artistically informed viewers, critical engagement with the work would entail considering the purpose and evolution of the commissioned public art, the commissioning institution or individual, and the classification and periodization of the work (Efland, 2004; Ozga, 2016).

Since the 1980s, public art has gained popularity and ubiquity in urban environments, particularly in some Western countries, where local government authorities have enacted policies such as the percentage for art toward urban regeneration (Frost, Laing, & Williams, 2015; Ozga, 2016; Pollock & Paddison, 2010; Roberts & Marsh, 1995). These mandatory policies meant that a percentage of the capital costs of building projects were set aside for the provision of artworks to enhance the aesthetic appeal of the built infrastructure and the immediate environments (Robidoux & Kovacs, 2018). Zimbabwe, too, has adopted similar agentic policy strategies (Zimbabwe Culture Policy, 2004) to augment efforts by local government authorities in enhancing the general ambiance of cities. Such efforts are also observed in South Africa (Guinard, 2021; Marschall, 2010; Parker & Khanyile, 2022; Schmahmann, 2018) and Egypt (Smith, 2015), including creatively utilizing open spaces and installing public art in a bid to animate and enliven their aesthetic outlook.

Among the available public art in Zimbabwe is uncommissioned art, normally depicted as a manifestation of the artist's discontentment with the malpractices and inequalities associated with the hegemony. An example of such art is graffiti art, also known as tagging (Baca, 1995; Bowen, 1999; Lachmann, 1988; McCray, 1997), which is considered by society as defiant defacement of order and "…may arise spontaneously and organically…" (Frost et al., 2015, p. 59) during the overt nightly painting expeditions. Cooper (2021) and Milohnic (2005) identify this form of public art as artivism in its diversity as similarly supported by social theorists and critics of contemporary art, such as Clare Bishop. Artists resort to "civil disobedience" through subtle anti-establishment art as a way of articulating social, political, environmental, and economic issues daunting society (Daichendt, 2013; Travis, 2018). Regionally in Africa, decorative art on public transport in Uganda, known as Boda Boda, and South African graffiti art as creative street discourse and mapping (Parker & Khanyile, 2022) are examples of a redefinition, repurposing and contemporaneity of public African art. This is similar to the colourful decoration and redesigning of public spaces in Cameroon, called Graffeur d'Afrique art. The Douala 'Art biennale mounted in the Douala city of Cameroon features installations which attract thousands of participants and viewers. Such social art practice as depicted in Grant Kester's (2021) dialogical aesthetics and Claire Bishop's participatory art involves artists collaborating with participants in broad discursive contexts: local government policies, corporate world ideologies, cultural narratives, and political contexts. Similarly, Nicolas Bourriaud's relational aesthetics emphasize the engagement of participatory installations and conceptual art (Bourriaud, 2002). This social turn approach engages audiences as co-authors and co-generators in the creative process as well as observers of the final public art.

Many scholars, among them Argiro (2004), Daichendt (2013), Kieffer (2000), and Russell (2004), have attested to the power of public art in enriching art education. Alexenberg and Benjamin (2004), for example, used a participatory approach involving students and

community elders in a public art project called Legacy throne aimed at enriching the school curriculum. The inter-generational pedagogical approach enabled students to learn about cultural issues from the culture bearers while the elders benefitted from the students' artistic skills. Such dialogical frameworks (Stephens, 2006; Travis, 2018) are explored by Nicolas Bourrriaud and Clare Bishop in their studies of shared ownership of decision-making in the creative process inspired by human relations, dialogue, and social context. To this end, Efland (2004), and Percy-Smith and Carney (2011) argue that social interaction is one of the recommended pedagogies for understanding visual culture. This justifies a recommendation by many scholars to have public art as a permanent feature of the art curriculum.

Theoretical Framework

In an endeavor to analyze public art, this study considered Knappett's (2005) object-oriented methodology that is used in the interpretation of archeological items for purposes of re-socializing artifacts. This actor-network model involves human-object interactions guided by a denominational system that is similar to George Dickie's aesthetic construct of disinterestedness and Croce Collingwood's construct of psychical distancing, both of which are derivatives of the 18th century aesthetic theses (Efland, 2004). The theory argues that there should be no ulterior motive influencing the interpretation and judgment of artworks, but rather the engagement of what Efland (2004) calls a formalist understanding of the purity of the art object. Thus, the theory "invests people, objects, and ideas with the agency, asserting that networks of all three achieve particular outcomes or produce meaning" (MacNeill, 2012, p. 17). The theory of object autonomy was used to explain artists' practice of public art, which imposes their aesthetic presence on both art experts and the novice. Knappett's (2005) framework is closely linked to the typology advanced by Frost et al. (2015), whose five constructs—commission (planned or organic), purpose, commissioner, artistic heritage, and historical period—have self-interpretation as their principal variable. These constructs explain the context in which the perception and interpretation of visual images, including public art, have populated visual culture. Public art manifests a free and individual approach to its appreciation. Artists, therefore, produce art in the context of a multi-prolonged approach to its interpretation. I, therefore, use this model to decipher participating artists' views with regard to the engagement of public art as a social learning encounter. This was achieved through interviewing artists on issues relating to the practice of public art, its appreciation in Zimbabwe, and its integration into the school curriculum. Answers to the questions, therefore, helped illuminate and situate the theoretical framework.

Methodology

This interview-based study was conducted to explore the views of five purposively selected contemporary Zimbabwean artists about the practice of public art and their role as artists

within the school curriculum. Equally critical was how the school curriculum would interface with public art as a social narrative in Zimbabwe (Russell, 2004; Samwanda & Schmahmann, 2014; Stephens, 2006). This targeted curricular gap has not been fully addressed, even though scholarly literature demonstrates that public art is imbued with knowledge and constructs that have the potential to enrich the school curriculum. The artists who were interviewed online are Dominic Benhura, Victor Nyakauru, Calvin Chimutua, Admire Kamudzengerere, and Israel Israel, who hereafter are called by their first names. The artists are actively engaged in the production of public art and participation in art programs in Zimbabwe, some in collaboration with international artists, while others have received several accolades and awards of excellence. The artists were selected using the purposive sampling technique. The artists are known to the author, who has interacted with them at different times, and that made access to the artists easier. This author's positionality also made the artists present open and candid views. The interview questions focused on two thematic areas: public art in practice and its integration into art education. The first set of questions sought information on; the prevalence of public art in Zimbabwe, the level of appreciation of public art by Zimbabweans, examples of public art in Zimbabwe and how these have been received by society, the general content dealt with in public art by Zimbabwean artists, the processes involved in commissioning of public art, and challenges encountered in embracing public art in Zimbabwe.

The second set of issues on the art curriculum sought information on: the educational value of public art; strategies for taking public art into the classroom; the role that public art producers (artists) play in the school and how best they can participate in the school programs; knowledge, skills and competences contained in public art which can benefit art education; challenges that are likely to arise from introducing public art in schools; and respondents' overall views regarding engaging public art in the school curriculum.

The interviews were transcribed and, through a heuristic and exploratory coding system (Mcleod, 2024; Mohajan & Mohajan, 2022), thematized into three major categories, namely, public art as a social narrative, benefits and challenges of embracing public art, and public art in educational programs and learning spaces. This inductive process emerging from participants' excerpts formed an integral part of data presentation and analysis. Thus pedagogical theories grounded in data and meta-coding (Brailas, Tragou, & Papachristopoulos, 2023; Holton, 2010) emerged from real world experienced by the artists. The author engaged critical friends to review data presentation as a strategy for validating analysis and interpretation. To fully comprehend the art curriculum, an exploratory content analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used to examine the primary and secondary school Competency Based Curriculum introduced in 2015 by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) to determine the extent to which the curriculum integrated

public art. MoPSE is responsible for the drafting, review, and implementation of the two national curricula in the country, which are centralised.

Findings and Discussion

In the sections below are the major findings that emanated from the study. The study revealed social narratives that include conceptualization of public art by artists, artists' views on how public art can benefit both the country and the education sector, challenges encountered in the attempt to embrace public art in the school curriculum, and programs and strategies that can facilitate integration of public art in educational learning spaces as part of social learning.

Public Art as A Social Narrative

Interview data revealed that public art is a common feature in Zimbabwe and its practice is on the rise, especially in the private sector, confirming observations by Samwanda and Schmahmann (2014). Comparatively, in Europe, Asia, and the Americas, public art is quite prevalent (Carpenter, 2004; Coutts, 2004). In that regard, Daichendt (2013) observed a proliferation of street art, including murals and graffiti. He cites Jonathan Paul, alias Desire Obtain Cherish's street painting titled "Who needs a gallery when I can paint here for free" indicating how artists have adopted available city spaces as a canvas. A dimension of conceptualizing public art, which tends to reorient and redefine Zimbabwean material culture as public art, was given by Calvin:

> I would look at masked dancers, installations of [the natural] balancing rocks, rock paintings, and those [ritual] remnants of broken, clay pots, needles, and eggshells at crossroads. It would be unfair to disregard settings that have arisen from apostolic sects that use fabrics of different colors, water reeds, and stones.

This conception is similarly observed by Lacy, cited in Carpenter (2004, p. 4), who reported a "new genre public art." These objects are now in the realm of contemporary Zimbabwean visual culture. Thus, the phenomenon of public art in both Western and non-Western traditions has extended the aesthetic boundaries to include emerging practices previously not considered in the realm of public art.

The role of an artist in public art is that of executing the work for others to contemplate on as illustrated by Admire:

> Art is by far more personal and intrinsically subjective to the viewer. How we perceive and read it is a more personal and vague right that is embedded in current issues within our society. What art is supposed to do would depend on where it is

installed, why, and how.

As espoused by the social engagement theory, it is collaboratively conceptualized and constructed. A conceptual artist, Luis Camnitzer, cited in Zorrilla and Tisdell (2016, p. 274), argues that "art is a dialogical process, and the work is only fully completed as a result of that dialogue." This view is supported by the social turn theory, which also argues for critical public pedagogy. Bishop, Bourriaud, and Kester have similarly argued for voluntary art engagement practices in the production of public art.

Benefits and Challenges of Embracing Public Art

The interviewed artists argue that there are vast employment opportunities created through public art. One of the aspects of a country's wealth is measured by how much art it has: art in its offices, museums, galleries, and streets. As Admire argues:

> An artist indirectly contributes to the employment of several people during the process of creating an artwork; the producer of paint, the producer of the canvas, the art critic, the catalog designer, the gallery and its employees, the press, magazine houses, and restaurants.

It is for these reasons that artists need to be informed about the importance of public art and what potential benefits it brings to the economy and the country's gross domestic product. This would enhance their understanding of public art even as they educate society to better appreciate the role of public art. The artists postulated that if children are continually exposed to public art, there is a high likelihood that some may be inspired as Dominic explains, "If children grow up seeing [public art] everywhere, there is a chance that some with talent may be inspired and become nation 'ambassadors' through their work globally."

Public art also opens pathways that promote critical dialogue among heritage custodians, artists, curators, art collectors, educators, and historians. The education sector benefits from information garnered from such discourse. Public art, therefore, becomes a reference point as embedded themes, content, intentions, and techniques can be analyzed and critiqued (Argiro, 2004). Some artworks are historically and culturally inspired, and scholars rely on them as references for research. Interview data support Travis' (2018) and Stephen's (2006) contention that apart from boosting tourism, public art is a form of documentation, an archive of cultural lives, and a celebration of heritage. Victor avers that "Indeed, tourists come from all over the world to see the beauty of the Zimbabwean environment and different genres of public art thereby the country generates revenue, which can be channeled to different investments." When international artists are invited to participate at public art symposiums, the works left behind are a treasure to the local authorities which appreciates with time.

International attractions such as the Statue of Liberty in the USA, the Eiffel Tower in France, and Peeing Boy in Belgium attract multitudes of visitors, who also purchase souvenirs designed from these art pieces. Artists thus perform the role of documenting means of cultural expression (Alexenberg & Benjamin, 2004), including polyculture expression through new African art amid other intercultural influences.

Artists enumerated challenges associated with attempts to embrace public art in Zimbabwe. This is similarly echoed by Zorrilla and Tisdell (2016) who observed limited studies on how public art affects viewers and the efforts artists put to educate through public art. The main obstacle that the artists cited was a lack of, or limited, funding from the private sector and the government for such public art projects, which generally require a substantial budget. Calvin explains the budgetary constraints, "They may not have the budgets to acquire [public art] like western world schools do. If there are no professional volunteer artists, schools may not have funds to pay artists and for organizing workshops." Local authorities are also not taking a lead in demonstrating an appreciation of the role of public art by allocating exhibition space for it. The other challenge was that art as a subject was not being taken seriously in schools, to the extent that students were leaving school without an appreciation of public art and art in general. In the future, such students are unlikely to invest in corporate art, as is the common practice in other countries.

Public Art in Educational Programs and Learning Spaces

Zorrila and Tisdell (2016) argue that public art can be used in education to facilitate understanding of the wider social, historical, political, and cultural aspects in society. It is thus a medium of expression that requires interrogation from within and outside the school curriculum from early learning stages. In this regard, the participating artists suggested the use of a pedagogical strategy known as the triad facilitator teaching concept, which involves three experts: an instructor, a mentor, and a practitioner. According to Dominic, the approach entails "Provision of materials from kindergarten age, and bring[ing] in successful artists to interact with the kids or alternatively take kids to artists' studios." Under such a triad arrangement, a student studying art is placed under three facilitators: a teacher who is responsible for a class and curriculum implementation, a mentor who is involved in the field as a professional guide, and the practitioner who produces the artwork. This collaborative approach, as also suggested by Kester's (2021) dialogical aesthetics, Bourriaud's (2002) relational aesthetics and Bishop's social participatory framework (Korte, 2013), will facilitate the integration of public art into the school curriculum. All artists expressed a willingness to participate in school programs. For example, Victor indicated that:

> Lusitania primary school in Harare, Zimbabwe once asked Crispen Matekenya to construct a public work at their Early Childhood Development classroom block. He

worked with wooden poles and tree trunks, which he cut, sculpted, and painted. Children now enjoy the colorful school premises, which are lively and educative as they learn about the different types of animals.

This approach, as recommended by Efland, Freedman, and Stuhr, quoted in Alexenberg and Benjamin (2004, p. 4), is collaborative and intergenerational, engaging both students and members of society in projects aimed "to promote deeper understandings of the social and cultural landscape." Such a participatory public art project approach, according to Stephens (2006), Percy-Smith and Carney (2011), and Vitkiene (2015), is holistic and multidisciplinary, thus promoting community-based learning and leading to improved civic responsibility. Luis Camnitzer argues for critical public pedagogy for critical consciousness as artists and society collaboratively engage issues of poverty, injustice, and identity construction.

In order to offer collaboration, artists could also be invited to share their experiences and even conduct workshops with students, during which they can initiate talks, conversations, and critiques. Indeed, offering workshops, master classes, and lectures to students can bring more insights into the value of public art and art in general. Moreover, compiling writings on public art, which resonates with national history, will make the introduction of art relevant and acceptable to society (Argiro, 2004) as Calvin explained:

> The Zimbabwe school curriculum can fuse local history through art, linking the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier with the Chimoio attack and the frontline experiences in Mozambique. The Seven Heroes Monument should be in all texts about the 1966 Chinhoyi Battle.

In this way, public art promotes historical and cultural knowledge, liberation heritage, and technological heritage. It also advances artistic skills, which transform ideas into tangible crafts through "high-technology tools and means such as graphic design, 3D printing, metal foundry, laser printing, and other methods of material science and technology" (Calvin). This is part of the heritage-based philosophy of Education 5.0 aimed at sustainable development, which is currently being propagated by the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Innovation Science, and Technology Development. The argument advanced by this policy is that development can come to fruition if it takes into cognizance national heritage as its principal axis. Public art in education will, therefore, be a great initiative and tool for research and posterity. This provides strong grounds for public art to be considered an integral part of the school curriculum. By extension, Coutts (2004) argues for a virtual visit as he further explores access to digital artworks on the World Wide Web for increased appreciation of public art.

Zorrilla and Tisdell (2016, p. 273) note that "public pedagogy assumes that much teaching and learning, education and miseducation happen in public venues that include… public arts such as murals, theater, and music; and places such as museums, and other public spaces." Thus, the following suggestions by participants will ensure the appreciation of public art by young people. There is a need to ensure that art syllabuses and programs from primary school through secondary up to tertiary education include public art. Indeed, an analysis of the Zimbabwe Art Syllabus Forms 1-4 (2015-2022) reveals that the concept of public art features for Forms 1 to 4. For Forms 1 to 3, it appears under "Evaluation, appreciation, and preservation of collections," while it appears again for Forms 3 and 4 under "Public art and nation building." Engaging public art in the school curriculum will, therefore, equip students with the knowledge they are likely to require as they mature artistically for self-expression and art appreciation. Jackson (2011), cited in Zorrilla and Tisdell (2016, p. 275), says public art can act as "the sites where aesthetic and social provocations coincide," and this is important in developing critical consciousness. These young people will appreciate the relevance and value of public art in different sectors of the economy. Generally, the participating artists noted that art can trigger debate and imaginative thought processes critical for the current and future generations. It pushes aesthetic boundaries in terms of production processes, widening the range of art materials used and innovative approaches, including the recycling of media (Travis, 2018). As Dominic argues, "The integration of public art into the school curriculum is long overdue in Zimbabwe. Indeed, its inclusion is critical since public art is part and parcel of the country's culture for generations to come."

Challenges of teaching public art in educational institutions include the non-engagement of professional artists as teachers, lecturers, or artists in residencies. As observed by Luis Camnitzer, cited in Zorrilla and Tisdell (2016, p. 281), art is a variant of pedagogy "if [it] is not providing an educative experience, it is bad art." As Calvin suggests, "Practicing artists provide insights into the execution of public artworks as knowledgeable, hands-on practitioners and it would therefore be critical to engage them."

The provision of equipment and materials needed to produce public art requires serious investment. A common observation by the artists was that, unlike their Western counterparts, most schools in Zimbabwe do not have the budgets for such equipment. Schools may not even have funding to engage artists in workshops, which is critical if students are to learn to appreciate public art. The lack of equipment was blamed on the attitude of some gatekeepers in the education system. Buy-in from them would, therefore, be critical; perhaps workshops and master classes should be conducted with these stakeholders so that they understand and appreciate the worth of public art. Even though public art is generally appreciated in Zimbabwe, most public art was done before the year 2000. The agrarian land reform, which started in 2000, negatively impacted the economy and equally affected the creative arts

industry, which witnessed a drastic decline in funding, commissioning of art, and tourist attractions. As a result, the public began missing out on new genres of art forms as Calvin observed, "[t]he ordinary citizen is less appreciative and rarely anticipates artworks in the public domain…the aesthetically converted will naturally accept and appreciate it."

Concluding Thoughts

Public art as a social narrative is a gradually expanding phenomenon in Zimbabwe. Although the British settlers introduced it in the early 20th century, it has taken relatively long to mainstream in art practice. Public art practice in Zimbabwe has been sporadic over the decades. However, recent developments reflect the significant intensification and participation of local artists in public art, particularly as a post-independence phenomenon. The critical role of public art in society cannot be over-emphasized, as echoed by many scholars and by the interviewed artists. It embeds cultural, historical, social, and economic functions evidenced by the many artworks that were cited by the artists as epitomizing practice in Zimbabwe. The zeitgeist is a critical condition raised by Suzanne Lacy as quoted in Carpenter (2004), who views public art as a new genre of art because of the contemporaneity of issues that 21st-century artists deal with. This is also characteristic of contemporary public art practice in Zimbabwe.

While public art plays a critical role in society, systematic educational programs are required for society to fully embrace it. One of the contexts for public art, that is, the classroom, is not adequately mainstreaming and programming it so that young learners develop a solid appreciation of such art. While the topic "public art" features in the Art Syllabus Forms 1-4 (2015-2022) under Forms 1-4 of the Zimbabwe secondary school art curriculum, it lacks the disciplinary and pedagogical emphasis evident in other genres to assist the practitioners. Through my years of experience in the art education field, which goes back to the late 1980s, I rarely came across public art production by school children, I rarely witnessed collaborations between schools and practicing artists, and I have not witnessed permanent standing art in public spaces, produced by schools, and yet these are a critical conduit between society and the learners. This is despite circumstantial evidence by local artists and methodological strategies suggested by authors such as Alexenberg and Benjamin (2004, p. 17), who cite an eminent shift from modernist to post-modernist pedagogies: "[i]nstead of a solitary role alone in one's studio, the postmodern paradigm finds the visual artist acting like a choreographer in dance, composer/conductor in music, playwright/director in theater and film, an art teacher/mentor in education."

Artists are custodians of culture, facilitators of cultural heritage, and cultural mediators who could play the dual role of facilitating the interconnectedness of society and educational institutions. As observed by Coutts (2004), the engagement of practicing artists in the

currently exclusive education system promotes the sharing of critical artistic knowledge, information, and skills. Coutts (2004) further observes, regarding the Scottish secondary school system, that art and design curricula in primary schools are delivered by non-specialist teachers while in secondary schools, it is delivered by specialist teachers. While this pedagogical approach, which also exists in Zimbabwe, is appreciated, there is a general lack of succinct information on the role of public art among classroom practitioners as custodians of societal norms and values. Artists who expressed willingness to participate in school programs echoed this missing link. Guided tours to public art sites, documenting and archiving information on public art, and engaging in collaborative projects are useful strategies to consider if the intended learning outcomes and goals are to be achieved (Coutts, 2004; Daichendt, 2013). Engaging school learners in social conversations and debate through public art interaction platforms also fosters freedom of expression, which is a critical attribute aimed at promoting democratic societies, as opined by Argiro (2004) and Kieffer (2000). The interviewed artists also argued that collaboration between schools and artists, therefore, develops this creative space for the articulation of social issues (Alexenberg & Benjamin, 2004; Becker, 2018; Guinard, 2021; Robidoux & Kovacs 2018; Schmahmann, 2018; Stephens 2006; Travis, 2018), establishing partnerships and programming to solve community problems. In this way, public art promotes social cohesion through inclusive and multicultural settings that transcend gender, age, and ethnicity.

A considerable amount of learning accompanies students' participation in public art. Teachers can utilize project-based approaches to promote creative thought, artistic skills, and togetherness among other attributes associated with the commissioning and installation of art in public spaces. Argiro's (2004) ideas of artistic expression are echoed by Stephens (2006, p. 45), who suggests that "such active student and community involvement provides ownership of the artwork while bringing a sense of civic pride and responsibility." Indeed, there is a lot that students learn in dialogical engagements during the process of appreciating public art. The following issues can, therefore, be interrogated and included in the school syllabuses and teachers' work plans. The concept of public art and its role in society can be engaged by learners in various ways, both in the classroom and outside the classroom. The curriculum should also spell out the knowledge bases that artists could bring into the art curriculum. Equally important, in attempts to foster an understanding of public art, is sharing of the criteria that could be used to evaluate public art as espoused by Russell (2004). Learners can engage in a variety of activities which include tours to local and national public art sites, diarizing/journalizing art visits, engaging in studio design tasks and production inspired by artists' talks, critical conversations, workshops, master classes, critiques of public art (verbal or written), filming documentaries on collaborative art projects, installation of public art, and engaging city fathers and communities in public art projects. This holistic approach will promote students' understanding and appreciation of public art and develop practical skills in

executing the art form.

In conclusion, public art is a vehicular mode for artistic expression that engages the cognitive skills, affective values, and physical faculties of viewers for a disinterested aesthetic experience. Viewers engage in the domain of aesthetic appreciation when confronted with a public artwork (Efland, 2004; Knappett, 2005; MacNeill, 2012) based on one's multi-sensory delivery strategies. Artists have embraced a broader conception of public art, and this can equally influence viewers' experiences with art. It is, therefore, important to make deliberate educational attempts to promote the aesthetic encounter with public art as an aesthetic object. Learning platforms that enable the artistic skills of hands-on practitioners to filter into the school curriculum should be established. Carpenter (2004, p. 45) succinctly puts this across when he said, "[F]or any meaningful understanding of public art, it must be viewed in the complex matrix in which it is conceived, commissioned, built, and finally, received." Despite the limitation of a few participants, the study findings can be extrapolated to similar educational contexts and the social practice of public art.

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