



Art Focus on Human Rights and Women's Rights: Nigeria

14.Dec.2017

ICMEMO ICOM's International Committee in Remembrance of the Victims of Public Crimes

ICOM Nigeria

ICAMT ICOM's International Committee of Architecture and Museum Techniques

Sites of Conscience

Summary of the Project

This project aims to raise consciousness about a range of issues affecting Nigeria today, and how they inevitably affect the rest of the world. We aim to target that sweet spot on the Venn diagram: issues of vital local and global importance, which are nevertheless routinely underemphasized and ignored by the fast-paced world of social media and the 24-hour news cycle. Through the means of carefully-curated art exhibits and a surrounding series of conferences, this project will allow us to collectively take a step back and confront these issues of vital importance which are all too often made invisible by the pace of our daily lives, from a fresh new angle which will set out the problems before us clearly, and at the same time, offer a ray of hope.

Nigerian society is dealing with a range of challenging issues which we wish to bring into the light. These include:

- Child abuse, particularly of girls
- Child labour
- Sex slavery
- Early and forced marriage

Our aim is to involve contemporary artists with a strong original vision and a passion for the world around them to interpret these issues through the prism of their art. These individual visions will come together into a powerful and meaningful exhibit, which will first be shown in key Nigerian museums, before touring internationally.

The core exhibit will be built around five artists from each of the world's five major continents. At each stop, local artists and curators will be invited to add their own insights and ideas to this core, creating a unique touring experience with a strong local footing and flavor, but orientated out towards the wider world.

Goals

1. Advocate for human rights
2. Create awareness internationally
3. Educate the public nationally
4. Create a new frame of narrative for the victims and survivors of these issues: one of celebration and acceptance rather than stigmatization

Specifications

2018 - 2021

Art Exhibits throughout Nigeria in partnership with the National Commission for Museums and Monuments, Nigeria. The exhibits aim to involve the local community through active participation in community driven programmes and educational activities in all six geopolitical regions, inclusive of its diverse ethnic groups and unique cultures. This grassroots approach will help us to garner the trust of the local people, enabling the aim of education to be understood as a positive, inclusive dialogue. In addition, this basis of authenticity will allow Nigerians themselves to define their own experience to the wider world, rather than having it imposed on them. Through this, the aims of spreading respect for human and women's rights through art and education, will be able to proceed in the smoothest way possible, in both directions, flowing cleanly from Nigeria to the world and back again.

2019 - 2021

A series of **conferences** based on the issues raised by the exhibit and the perspectives opened up by it will be held, first in Nigeria and then internationally. These will be organized by *ICMEMO* and *Sites of Conscience*, together with *NCMM* Education Department and will address the breach of human rights and women's rights which Nigeria is being challenged with today.

In addition, a **Travelling Art Exhibit**, curated by *NCMM* and *ARTE*, will take the core exhibit of five artists representing each one of the five continents, as well as a fine selection of the best and most thought-provoking additions by way of filmed exhibits and multi media. Once again, a fresh layer will be added to this new, expanded core: in each local stop, local artists, museums, galleries and curators will once again be invited to contribute their vision, tying the art communities around the world to contemporary global issues.

Historical Exhibits: Women as role models

That we call it women's rights or gender equality, the end is the same: To educate and inform in the hope that raising consciousness will improve the current state of things. If we emphasize the role of art by giving a voice to contemporary artists, it is only because we see a greater potential for a stronger, more lasting impact, necessarily accompanied by the historical background and recent past events that contextualize the issues being raised.

Researching and exhibiting the positive role of women in their contribution to society, helps us create role models to emulate.

Exposing the past and recent abuse, we hope, will help us invigorate and empower the viewer to change the status quo.

Conferences on the subject will be scheduled simultaneously with the opening of the exhibits in each city.

Reach

This project is aimed at a **diverse and wide general public**, both nationally and abroad. The issues which it discusses are ones which can only be tackled with the full force of a society united against injustice, within a framework of universal human rights. As a result, its message will be aimed, in a first instance, at the widest public possible.

However: although the solutions to these issues are widely collective, their main victims (directly and indirectly) are much more narrowly targeted. And so, a particular emphasis will be made to reach out to **women and girls**, who bear the brunt of the effects of the social ills we attempt to bring to light. Women and girls find themselves unfortunately cast as either voiceless pawns or powerless victims -- in either case, the passive recipients of a life imposed on them by "their betters," by force and even abduction. We will try to help these girls find a new self-understanding for themselves: one which they are at liberty to choose, free from coercion and preconceptions.

The venue for this outreach will predominantly be **public museums**, with a lesser involvement of private galleries. This approach comes with several noted **benefits**: access to public funds to emphasize issues which the market hasn't already taken up; access to a wide platform of civic engagement; an opening out to well-connected sectors of society, who can best influence national and international policy. The partner museums we are in conversation with will provide the widest outreach for an art project in Nigeria, each with tens of thousands of yearly visitors.

This venue also offers interesting **opportunities** for effecting a positive change. If this project were to launch, it would bring these issues into the heart of a world in which they are often obliterated, be it as a result of ignorance, social bias, or fear. Art museums can often become ivory towers -- islands of narcissistic beauty cut off from the mundane world around them. In marrying the best and truest of both worlds -- living, forward-looking artists with pressing real-world issues -- this project will help bridge a gap which has entrenched social problems, instead of becoming the impetus to solving them.

Thank you for your support.

Partnerships

Local

Museums:

National Museum Onikan, Lagos

National Museum Benin

Slave History Museum Calabar

Private Galleries:

Mydrim Gallery, Southwest Ikoyi, Lagos

CCA Gallery, Sabo, Yaba, Lagos

International

To be determined in 2018

Alliances

ICOM Nigeria / ICMEMO / ICAMT / Sites of Conscience

This project was conceived this year, when Louisa Nnenna Onuoha, Assistant Chief Museum Education Officer for the National Commission for Museums and Monuments in

Nigeria was invited to speak at the joint ICMEMO/ICAMT Conference in Cincinnati, Ohio, U.S.A.

With ICMEMO/ICOM Nigeria, ICAMT and Sites of Conscience coming together for 2018, we envision other European, U.S., Asian and African National Committees and Regional Alliances, as well as other International Committees, coming together for the benefit of expanding the reach of the project.

Signatories

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