

Influence of Theories, Philosophy and Literature on the Discourse of Kalabari Otobo Masquerade Sculptures

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Abstract

*The use of art's theory predates modern research and its technicalities; philosophical theories are designed to stimulate understanding of research results, and in order words justify and effectuate peoples' emotion on art work, especially as it relates to people's culture and the arts. It also guides arts practitioners in the art world apply those principles underlining the theories. Hence, this research: **The influence of theories, philosophy and literature on the discourse of kalabari Otobo Masquerade Sculptures**, examines some of the philosophies and theories that stimulate and guide the studio exploration on **kalabari Otobo** masquerade headpieces in bronze production. The paper therefore discusses the various theories adopted in the study, analyse their relatedness, as well as the literature and conceptual framework. The result, having analysed the data qualitatively shows that, different form of art theories are adopted to guide the research, each of these theories have their theoretical and philosophical assumptions and perception and interpretation of the arts which clearly fit into the study. Despite the facts that, these theories have attracted lots of criticism and reservations, their usages are apt and espouse the essence of the research. Conversely, the study recommends that, students of art history, studio artists, and other ethnographic scholars should adopt relevant literature and theories to posit their theses on its value and credence for acceptance.*

Keywords: Art theories, Philosophy, Otobo Masquerade headpieces

Introduction

The need for philosophical theories in research is an overwhelming necessity, hence, they are designed to connect the proposed work to existing philosophical thoughts, in the process stimulate understanding of research results, and in order words justify and effectuate peoples' emotion on any work; nevertheless as it relates to people's culture and the arts. Also, it guides researchers and arts practitioners in the art world apply those principles underlining the theories. The origin of art philosophy and theories may have been lost in antiquity, for years, it has been a medium that has aided several people, especially of professional inclination and academics to better identify, explain, interpret and understand artworks and its investigations. It is therefore obvious that art theories have made known the essence of arts practice and its objectives, whether in their single or multiple key concepts such as **Expressionism** or **Representation**. The knowledge of art theories has in multidimensional means elucidated the oblique perception of people on the critical value of art and its place in society. In a nutshell, art philosophy carefully

examines and explains the concepts of art and distinguish them accordingly from other events. Therefore, art theory according to Collins English Dictionary (2017) is that formal idea or set of ideas that is intended to explain things. Also, Webster (2002) impresses on us that, it is the analysis of sets of facts in their relation to one another; hence through these sets of factual knowledge, the paper draws attention to the connection and relatedness of the **kalabari Otobo** masquerade and the philosophy therein presented for validation.

Conceptual Framework: Conceptual application to research is to guide the direction of the investigation, in order to situate the causes and effects of the study is the crux of the matter. Therefore, the decline of **Kalabari** masquerade traditions, depreciation of artifacts (masquerade sculptures or headpieces); is the need for cultural development, sustenance of masquerade traditions, crafts and arts practice in **Kalabari** society. For any people or ethnic group to maintain its identity, there is need for concerted efforts to **preserve** and **conserve** its **material culture**, device mechanism to keep its culture and tradition alive in the face of threatening foreign cultures, ideas, religious precepts and other globalizing agents. It is often argued that, continuous collection of objects of curiosity and notable artifacts for museum display do not merit a credible research; one that befits any objective research demands appropriate research methods and theoretical framework. Sheets and Quilter (1991) state that, **a theoretical framework gives us system of expected relationships, where a piece of data or an artifact can be related to broader field...**,in addition to others, they conclude that, **this allows an individual bit of data to be related to other artifacts and structures within an interpretive system.**

Therefore, to what extent can **Kalabari** masquerade art be reckoned with, within the array of theories of art; which are compelling, in-exhaustive and intelligently articulated discourse by scholars and philosophers? To begin with, Katz, Lankford and Plank (1995) simply define art theory as, **a carefully examined and explained concepts of art that serve to distinguish art from other kinds of objects and event.** The study is therefore set out to take cursory look at relevant theories that have some degree of bearing on this research. Some of which theories include Imitation and Representational, Formalism, Institution and Instrumentalism are discussed hereafter.

Art theories and their implications to kalabari masquerade sculptures and performances

This study is on four art philosophical theories namely: Imitational/Representational by Plato, Formalism art theory presented by Katz, Lankford and Plank (1995), Institution theory of art presented by Katz, Lankford and Plank (1995) and Instrumentalism theory of art presented by Katz Lankford and Plank (1995) and their credence on the writings and creation literature on **kalabari** masquerades

Imitation/Representational Theory, Plato (Carroll, 1994)

One of the most popular views of the representational theorists is that art should visibly represent living things and objects in our environment, hence artists have chosen to represent the world as they see it, whether it is good or bad, such as pleasant scenes, war, poverty, crime, suffering and pleasure. Other artists from their interpretations of the world around them depict it in their arts as idealized forms. Idealized art forms are not absolute reality, but perceptions of the artist, his ideals of the real world, and his perception of perfect beauty. This is definitely not absolute reality; whatever the artwork presents, such form is subjective.

The earliest form of imitation or representation theory of art was proposed by Plato and his student Aristotle (Carroll, 1994). Plato argues that, true form of an object is definitely God's handiwork, and that the artist's work is an imitation, a representation of something originated from God, made by another and represented by the artist. Lee and Lane (2007) opine that Plato argues that there are three sorts of bed, for illustration; that which exist in nature, which he says was made by god, but the one we can see is made by the carpenter and at last represented by the painter. This study derives its theoretical framework from the imitational/representational theory of Art and Form as postulated by Plato (Carroll 1994). By Plato's imitational/representation theory, **Kalabari** masquerade sculptures are art forms, though not presented in the Western styles and use, they are congruent with this theorization. According to the masquerade myths the form are derived from the spirits world, who ordered human partners to reproduce them for performance. It was at this instance the **Kalabari** artist created such masks in the form he was directed; devoid of his intuition or creative intent. The major contribution of the artist was his craftsmanship.

For confirmation, **Omuaru** (1993) reports that, Horton holds similar view; hence, in his narrative, he says, the carver was possessed by the spirit and led to produce the forms, which became a standard to follow in the culture. In whatever direction the argument goes, the theory of imitation as a representation concurs to this thesis. Undoubtedly no criticism will obliterate the facts that mask forms are imitational art. Carroll (1994) in his critical analyses on Plato and Aristotle argues that; the theory of imitation is obviously false, reason be that abstract art such as mark Rothko and Yves are major works of the twentieth century art. Therefore Carroll concludes, too much of what we know to be art does not meet the alleged necessary requirement that anything that is art be imitative, (Carroll, 1994).

The exclusiveness of this theory as against modern forms of art is not in doubt, especially on analytic abstract art, nevertheless, the **kalabari** masquerade sculptures, in spite of its obvious imitation relatedness exhibit clear characteristics of abstract art; yet, falls within this theory. In this study the theory of imitational representation is applied because it encourages the derivation from an interface between the human beings and the spirits. It encourages the replication of endangered **Kalabari Otobo** wooden masquerade headpieces in bronze metal.

Formalism theory of Art, Katz, Lankford and Plank (1995)

The theory is subtle with critical considerations, adapted for art criticism for centuries past, yet today, useful in art history studies. The elements of the theory are the physical characteristics of any work of art billed for consideration. The basic tenets of the theory dwells on the arts elements such as lines, colours, textures, shapes, space and the manner with which they are contrived to make formal meaning as well as creating form for aesthetic enjoyment. Formalism theory is unique, because, it espouses the formal qualities of a work of art through which, depending on the ingenuity of the artist and aesthetic experience so realized. This is without recourse to what style of art was presented, albeit, painting in realism or abstracts in sculpture. **Kalabari** art works have unique visual characteristics distinct formal features; where the masquerade headpieces are totally abstracted or realistic, creating sensuous feeling to viewers. Although the works are not created for decorative utility, but the forms evoke aesthetic feelings, especially to those who utilise them and understand the artistic qualities. The sculptures are not as refined in terms of some decorative objects of the West - they are produced through

unrefined or local implements; local tools such as machetes, native gauges and found objects of useful disposition. Most of the sculptures are carved in single log wood, and are diagonally formatted; a direction the artist/carver would follow to create the form. The sculptures are made facing the sky when worn as headpiece on the head of a human being, costumed to form the masquerade. The forms are either zoomorphic or anthropomorphic, or a combination of the two.

There are two basic elements in the theory of formalism; first, there are visible elements and composition of artworks and secondly, the manner with which people relate to those compositions. The theory upholds that, the art elements, such as lines, colours, textures, shapes, space and their distinctive arrangement will stimulate aesthetic feeling. Katz, Lankford and Plank (1995) as earlier stated, define aesthetic experience as that strong feeling which we experience when we appreciate and respond to visual artwork having been impacted upon. They point out that, to some, it may be deeply moving and feel gratified, an accomplishment.

The uniqueness of the formalism theory is on the structure resulting from the ingenuity applied by the artist to produce unique, appreciable and appealing art form that touch and move people. The most important character of a work of art is its features, the form that the artist creates, and its composition. In the twentieth century, it became more popular, because of the abstractness embodied in the arts. It does not regard the content in a work of art, but the formal characteristics, which evoke pleasure, for the sake of the artwork than any derived meaning. We can hereby draw inference from formalism theory to the **Kalabari** art form; in the first place, the sculptures (headpieces) are not the masquerades, unless they are co-joined with costumes on human being before it becomes one. Let us therefore, analyse these sculptures on their merit as art form; it is not surprising, earlier anthropologists who first studied the art could not analyse the forms to any meaningful degree. With respect to this, Horton (1965) clearly illustrates his frustration in describing the forms when he says; *Kalabari* sculptures appear to consist of varying combinations of quite as small number of motifs: unfortunately, the author could not classify these few combination or recombination. But he emphasized that the sculptures are rather compared in their naming systems, through phrases. In addition, to a person's aesthetic emotion, as Bell (1977) puts it. There is also lack of arts historical professional competence; this was confirmed by Horton in his writing, when he pointed out, that: **I have written as an anthropologist who has no special training in the study of the arts; therefore, he made it clear that, hence any text is almost lacking in much of the sort of information that an art historian would regard as crucial for his analysis.**

The sculptures are basically wooden materials, carved with local tools by native carvers. The logs are diagonally formatted, giving the carver the direction to follow. All masquerade sculptures of **Ekine** descent are faced up, usually worn on the head, known as headdress or headpiece. The masquerade sculpture can be divided into three segments, each with certain features, simplified and abstracted in high relief. The rear is similar to the front; for instance the **Otobo** mask, the mouth is the jaw of hippopotamus, while the back view has four projections. The sculpture is a combination of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic form, which is half man, half animal, characterized by high relief. The nose is elongated from the forehead to two broad pangs, the eyes are slightly concave and convex, all flattened at the same level. The art work was then painted in dotted blue, black and white on brown background.

The relevance of the **kalabari** masquerade aesthetics draws significance from Bell's **Art as significant form**; he, opines that, the starting point for all systems of aesthetics must be the personal experience of a peculiar emotion. The objects that provoke this emotion we call works of art. Naturally, to those who have knowledge of the artistic relevance of the masquerade in the culture when confronted with one is aesthetically moved; most times conjures different emotions to people, awe and fear. **Omuaru** (1993) summarizes such event as inspiring, in the emotion laden departure of some masquerade spectators at the end of the year ceremony, thus, **spectators leave for home in their numbers, discussing the year's performance. Their faces were shining with satisfaction and their hearts filled with joy and hope to witness the following year's performances.**

Institution Theory of Art: Katz, Lankford and Plank (1995)

Institutional theory was developed as a result of dissatisfaction or reaction of the open concepts theory. Retrospectively, the open theorists criticized the traditional theories – imitation, instrumentalism and formalism, all having spelt out their characteristics of arts showed no signs of flexibility. Each holding tenaciously to its principles, therefore in reaction to this dogmatic position, open theorists argue that, there is no true theory, even theirs is no theory, hence Katz, Lankford and Plank (1995) aver that, **its chief claim to fame is its contention that there can be no true theory of art. Basing its claim to the reason that, art as a practice and form is always changing.**

The critical question and the point of view of institutional theorists to open theory was that, how could an art be determined by an object's resemblance to an artwork objectifies it being an artwork. Therefore the theory of family resemblance was discountenanced, reasoning that, two individuals looking alike may not have generic ties. Hence, it propounded that, to identify a work of art, which it names as a candidate; therefore, must be perceived and acknowledged by members of collective group which they call **Art World**. What is an art world and what is social institution? The art world according to Katz, Lankford and Plank(1995); Is a large and diverse group of people scattered throughout the world, who share much of the same tools, terms, symbols, values and goals related to art. They pointed out that the art world is not an organisation; therefore do not have official rules, dues and membership identity cards. However, they have common interest but may not agree on art issues. Nonetheless, they may be referred to as a social institution. In subsequent analyses of this subject, Carroll (1994) elaborately submits that, in standard cases, it is the artist who has the authority to confer the status of candidacy on an art work for appreciation; however, others may function in this role or capacity. For example, a curator, a critic or a distributor might decide to elect an object as a candidate for appreciation and put it forward for display for public viewing and acknowledgements.

Recently, it was told that, the art historian, Mia Fineman recommended the painting of elephants for public attention (Katz, Lankford and Plank, 1995), though, argued that it was an exceptional case, it is, and purported that, the artist who should confer a status on the artefact on behalf of the art world. The transcendence of **Kalabari** masquerade headpiece as an art form needs no appeal for justification, because it dully reflects the substance of the form presented to occupy the assumed status. Nonetheless, in **Kalabari**, it is the responsibility of the artist to carve out the form in the log of wood, but it was submitted by Horton (1965) that, the idea of the form which the sculpture would take was dictated by the spirit beings. He says, **No traditional**

Kalabari carver had doodled any piece of art work for his own satisfaction. The commonest form of headpiece is one for the replacement of a decayed cult object (Horton 1965). Also, past and present observations have shown that, hardly, does one find innovations in masquerade headpiece carving, was always at the calls of the spirit medium neither of the carvers' intuitive for stylization or variation within the cultural context.

Nevertheless, certain factors differ significantly, between the Western conferment of status to art and that of the **kalabari**, the reason is that, the utility and patronage and art dealing significantly disparages the two scenarios. While one deals on the art with the purpose of its aesthetics, decorative functionality and the desire of its producer for wealth and fame, the other was essentially produced for religious purposes. However, the new world order has impacted on all the world's arts as having the propensity to be elected as works of art if they meet the requirement, and therefore for such reasons, most **kalabari** masquerade headpieces are found in Western institutional museums.

Instrumentalism Theory of Arts, Katz, Lankford and Plank (1995)

Instrumentalism theory of art is noted as one of the traditional arts theories; its point of view is of the artist's inert underlying the creation of that art piece. There are several reasons behind the creation of a work of art, some are to promote certain ideas and point of view – or vision on some issues. Others produce art to promote religious ideals – such as morals, propagating righteousness and highlighting evil deeds of people in the society. Some projects that the icons are represented in religions are for deification and worship, and the glorification of kings and queens. It is in this respect that Katz, Lankford and Plank (1995) state that, a work of art would be judged by how effectively it conveyed its message or lesson to viewers. From this perspective, instrumentalism theory implies that, a good work of art communicates its meaning, its point of view about what's right or wrong, good or bad, or worthy or unworthy of support.

The general attitude of portrayal of **Kalabari** art forms is representation of religious icons, deification of gods as well as glorification and personification of royals, wealthy men and kings. But significantly, the underlining purpose is that art is an instrument of the aforementioned ideals of the society. Horton highlights us further that the sculpture of the masquerade headpiece was conscripted to transport the spirit being to have contact with mankind in the form of masquerades, often referred to as 'Gods as guests'. In this visitation, several manifestations (the mime, the masquerade and possession), are made especially, in the case of the masquerade, which suits the present narrative. For the masquerade, Horton in **Ogumbiyi**, (1981) narrates that, the celebration of the Village heroes, Water people and the Dead are on all occasions represented by means of masquerade; but those most frequently treated in this way are the water people.

In **Kalabari** tradition, the **Ekine** society (the masquerade club) is vested with the responsibility of production of certain masks, storage and display. **Ekine** was a powerful association of most adult male members of the community; they guide, protect and administer and display masquerades to honour the gods. In the past, they are politically powerful group, responsible for public administration, appointment of kings and protection of the **Kalabari** culture, whilst, today such powers, especially political is extricated, left with the display of masquerades. Depending on the community, **Ekine** associations tend to as many as about thirty or fifty water people in masquerade. For the performances of these masquerades, each is tended

to by **Ekine** in festival period; until in circles all the masquerades (representing the water people who revealed themselves) are completed. On completion of the whole circle, and at the grand finale, the entire masquerades are called upon, which is known and referred to as **Owu-arun**, the procession of the water people, **Erekojima**, Kio-Lawson and Macjaja (1991).

Despite the religious notations of the masquerades, as overtly taken by onlookers or as ascribed by modern Christians or zealots, neither does this explanation absolve the religious rites and incantations or rituals, but there are again performances that bring to fore a great deal of entertainment such as mythical performances and dramatization by maskers, dancers and spectators, which can be equated with western ballads. For this **Nzekwu** (1981) illustrates that, in theory, there are a myth behind each masquerade performance, usually, a short and very simple which is often times dramatized. Nevertheless, occasionally, there comes a long and elaborate story. He also pointed out that, those long and elaborate stories are not performed, but upon these, other art forms take effects, such as music, dancing and dressing. It is therefore cautioned that, if adopted, would spoil the masquerade display and the opera or ballet.

In the attendant value for today's recipe for living in the modern society like the kalabari, there are many non-religious, aesthetic and cultural entertainment strips that are non exclusive and worth the while. From that perspective, today's masquerades' performances are adopted into carnivals, entertainment for government functionaries, arts and culture festivals in and out of the country. In clear terms, **Nzekwu** (1981) illustrates that, "these non-religious, purely aesthetic values which keep the art going nowadays were extremely important even before traditional religion went into decline". Amongst the few whose understanding of traditional masquerade art in the modern concept, **Nzekwu** (1981) is eloquent in its propagation, he further highlights that, "Before the great changes of outlook brought about during the colonial period, people like the **Kalabari** recognized that masquerading, as ballet and drama, had an intrinsic value quite apart from its worth as a means of coercing the gods".

Art as an instrument (functionality) depends on the producer's intent or the clients. **Kalabari** art forms are value inherent of the past and present, of religious service and as well aesthetic and entertainment. Its viability in modern usage as aesthetic, entertainment, and educational suggest the need for its preservation and conversation in modern museum setting.

Related literature on Kalabari masquerade headpiece sculptures

In the process of gathering data for analyses on the subject matter, the libraries and the internet were consulted to provide the needed information, after some time and labourous tasks the following literature was reviewed.

Land and people of Nigeria: Rivers State By E. J. Alagoa and TekenaTamuno (1989).

This book was one of the pathfinders for research compilation on Rivers people, by the people by indigenous professionals, incidentally, the two editors, E. J. **Alagoa** and T. N. **Tamuno** and the numerous contributing authors are illustrious sons and daughters, others, for their long stay in the state earns them citizenship. They are academics, scholars, and patriotic Rivers people; nonetheless, some are also of the Ijo extraction and are verse with oral literature and material culture, a viable aspect of history. The book as the editors put it forward is a simple but authoritative interdisciplinary, introductory history written by specialists, but directed to readership, especially at the school level and to those who are students with kin interest on culture and the arts. They noted the challenges and overwhelming successes recorded in the

foreword, but explained that, the objective has been to provide a truthful account of the land and people of Rivers State, as a contribution to national cohesion, understanding, tolerance and solidarity. Despite the facts that, **Kalabari** was not a subject matter, as a sub unit, its discussion form one of the major sources of the history of Rivers State, from the point of view of its history, arts, customs, traditions and origin history.

Hundred Years of Buguma History in Kalabari Culture by Tonye V. Erekosima, W. H. Kio lawson and Obeleye Macjaja 1984, published in Lagos by Sibò Book Limited

This is one of the indigenous productions of **Kalabari** history of the past and the present, using oral accounts, written data and that of the material cultures. The introduction of the book was written by T. V. **Erekosima**, with objectives clearly stated; to commemorate the first hundred years (centenary) of the founding of **Buguma** in 1884. It further highlights the vision of the founding fathers concerning the occasion and the responsibilities of the group and the **Buguma** town in general, to continue to play the major role it undertakes before and after that occasion. The committee eloquently expresses the desired cooperation of the **Kalabari** thirty-three towns and villages, as a unified, but broad family, each playing significant role in the unification project. The book is divided into two major parts, one and two. Part one is of the history which include: **Kalabari** at the middle Ages; an era of glory, strife and reconciliation amongst these are issues on **Buguma**, from foundation to economy, geography, growth, and politics. **Buguma** is a unique city with functional traditional institutions. Part two, ‘culture’ is totally dedicated to the general **Kalabari** culture, without any particular reference to **Buguma**. Understandably, it is particularly assumed, that, **Buguma** as a people and community epitomizes the bigger concept of **Kalabari**. This possibly explains the narrative adapted by the editorial subcommittee, to situate **Buguma** as leading arrow head, to provide able leadership into prosperity and security, as it was at the time of the old hipping, where **Amachree I** provided able and successful leadership. The above ascertainment could be noted in the discussion of part one: - History I. **Kalabari** Middle Ages; an Era of glory, strife and reconciliation where **Amachree I**. deeds were elaborately narrated. Other notable literatures are 7 **Kalabari** traditional education, 8 the **Kalabari Ekine** society, 9. **Kalabari** shrines, **Kalabari**, 10 womanhood and marriage, **Kalabari**, 11 funeral rites and the significance of canoe Regatta and lastly 12 and The **Kalabari**; heritage and its future. The 178 page book is ideally, though superficially designed to illustrate **Buguma**, its one hundred years existence, but its content was overbearingly **Kalabari** history, culture, and traditions of old. Unfortunately, the arts and its uses in **Kalabari** society are silent in the book, the ‘Shrines’ where they are supposed to feature are devoid of any narration of such. Nevertheless, conclusively, “Hundred years of **Buguma** History in **Kalabari** culture” is a landmark achievement in the recording of **Kalabari** history.

Kalabari Sculpture by Robin Horton 1965 was published by the Department of Antiquities, Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Robin Horton is a well-known **Kalabari** man in white skin; he speaks deep **Kalabari**, though with English accent. But very endowed in the culture, especially the intrigues of **Ekine Sekiapu** (the ancient **kalabari** masquerade association), the venerable, ultimate and revered masquerade organization resident in **Buguma**, of which he is a registered and active member until he passed on. Nevertheless he was anthropologist with religion inclination. Horton has contributed immensely to the accumulation of literature on the **Kalabari** culture, its history, traditions, religion and the arts and culture. His publications encompass those listed above, both

in published books, journals and periodicals, some notable works of interest from fishing village to city. Another, “**Kalabari sculpture**” is a compact and critically researched work on the tactile arts of the **Kalabari** people, functions as headpieces for the masquerade clubs, carved object as paraphernalia for the masquerades. Others are shrine figurines and representative sculptures of the spirits in life size. The book has forty nine (49) text pages, while the rest are illustrations of **Kalabari** wood sculpture, **Kalabari** cult-objects in other materials such as ivory, mud and bronze; nevertheless, the last pieces are selection of sculptures from other Ijo areas.

The book is well crafted for readership, paragraphed in content sequence, enabling readers to follow up and understand various presentations. The unique part of Horton’s work was his design that includes the **Kalabari** language texts and their interpretations. This style was also adapted in **Alagoa**’s treatise, “A History of the Niger Delta”. This results from the methods they both adopted in carrying out their researches, especially, participant observation technique; where the researcher immerse himself or herself in the community under study to gather facts or data. From the forty nine page text, an outline of **Kalabari** cultures gives a background, upon which the basis and need for sculptures are setup. The following takes the reader to the sculptures and their uses, the role of the carver and criticism. Although, Horton was not an Art Historian, neither a sculptor, which of course he acknowledged in his presentation, but the meaning and form is precise and concise especially on the classification of forms, motifs and tools, **Kalabari** neighbourhood styles and **Kalabari** sculpture and modern social changes are treated respectively. As a sculptor, and a researcher, this is the most related work presented by Horton’s numerous literature on **Kalabari** masquerade and sculptures; despites its limitations, it is a classic piece. Unfortunately, hardly is there any known art book on **kalabari** sculptures except the Four Heads of the Gods and **Kalabari** sculptures by the same author.

Conclusion

Philosophers have carefully examined and explained Art theories to illustrate ideals of art that distinguishes it from other kinds of objects and events. Art theory therefore is viewed as principles, assumptions and presumption of concepts or ideas that is intended to explain something. In this study, different art theories propounded by theorists and philosophers are analysed with respect to the research **Studio production of endangered Otobo masquerade headpieces in bronze technology for preservation and conservation in Rivers State**. Among these, Imitation theory by Plato is one of the earliest and most popular, though controversial but has attracted many criticisms. Imitation theory postulates that art is the imitation of the reality. Hence, he expresses the fear that it could harm the society because it possesses some toxic elements that can destabilize society. The paper therefore discusses the various theories adopted in the study, analysed their relatedness, as well as the literature and conceptual framework. It determined the research outcome of the thesis: **Studio production of endangered kalabari obo masquerade headpieces in bronze technology for preservation and conservation in Rivers State. The analyses were** qualitatively undertaken, giving rise to the interpretation that, there are different types of art theories, each of these theories have their theoretical and philosophical assumptions and perception and interpretation of the arts which clearly fit into the study. Despite the facts that, these theories have attracted lots of criticism and reservations, their usages are apt and espouse the essence of the research.

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