

Mimesizing and Adapting: A Study of Dinning Table in Product Sculpture Practice.

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ABSTRACT:- The concept of Art as an imitation that could be seen in the various epochs in art history dates back to ancient Greece. In ancient Greece mimesis was an idea that governed the creation of works of art, a conscious effort to acquire skills and mastery, through careful replication of valued samples or models. Furniture refers to movable objects intended to support various human activities such as seating, eating, sleeping and so forth. Furniture can be a product of design and is considered as form of decorative art. This research explores the use of mimeses to replicate or better still re-present a chosen model of home furniture: Dining Table. In Nigeria today there is a continuous rise in the cost of acquiring land as well as increase in population. These have put pressure on the limited land .Houses are now built with the understandable need to conserve space. Due to the current economic situation in Nigeria, most individuals and families cannot afford to rent very spacious apartments and so settle for smaller apartments that have been space economized by land owners. Space economy by landlords make them more often, join dining rooms with the parlours or leave them out entirely. In today's day and age when almost a quarter of the world is living in congested metropolises, space is a scarce recourse. Here collapsible furniture plays a huge role and allows the tenet to maximally utilize the limited space.

Key words: Furniture, Mimesis, imitation, table, adapting, practice, folding bracket. Space Management and Product.

I. INTRODUCTION

A work of art is not an object like a pencil, knife, or an apple. The components of which it is made of can be derived from many and diverse things, from ideas, emotions, colours, people, situations, sounds and the form of the work of art can express an endless variety and range of subjects compounded in them.

Mimesis, the art of imitation to speak simply, was a beginning of a way in which man found he could create the first humble efforts of art. According to Plato art is imitation of life and nature that could be found in his dialogue Ion, ideas are the ultimate reality, art imitates ideas, and therefore it is an imitation of reality. Imitation is synonymous to the word "copying". Imitation according to the Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary means "to be like or to make a likeness of something" (Lexico, 2020). Imitation is a necessary part of human nature. Nothing is more natural than for children to pretend and for humans to create, using their imagination. Thus any human society which is healthy will be a society where there is imitative art.

The concept of mimesis which is imitation is also used in the sense of copying (copying of reality or nature).China a world giant in today's economy came to limelight by the act of copying . Thus copying and imitation are used in this research as synonyms. Imitation can be seen as copying something, dance, films, sculpture, architecture, painting, and copy something, literally all forms of art imitate or copy something. The word table is derived from the Latin word "tabula", which is a kind of furniture with a flat top and one or more legs. A Dinning table is a common type of table that is designed specifically for seated persons to eat meals.

Up until the sixteenth century, when decorative and stylistically distinctive furniture became very important, tables were far less frequently found in homes. However there were tables in the ancient world, different cultures made them from different materials. Egyptian tables were of wood or stone and resembled pedestals, Assyrians made theirs from metal, Pompeii and Herculaneum populaces had tables made with supporting members of marble.

Back in the middle ages, families were not only larger, but extended family practically lived together in one community, as a result the table acted as a gathering point and center piece of the dining hall, with mealtimes just as much about socializing as they were about eating and drinking. In Africa, furniture tradition has not been well documented, due to the tradition of oral passage of history through generations, nonetheless it is known that the African concept of furniture before the westerners came were of stools, chairs, and headrest.

Today dining tables in Modern African society are part of the results of the imitation of western culture by Africans.

Foldable Table Creations

Perusing the internet for ideas on copying and adapting for this studio based study one came across many models such as ergonomic foldable laptop Desk (Muller, 2017)

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Imitation according to Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary means “to be like or to make a likeness of something”. The Greek word “mimes” is a basic theoretical principle in the creation of art (Beare, 2016) and it means “imitation” which implies “re-representation”, it is in this sense that we employ the term imitation in relation to art. According to the mimetic theory of Plato in his dialogue, “Ion”, art is an imitation or representation of nature or reality. Art being imitation, means that like philosophy it reflects reality in its relation to man and depicts man, his spiritual world and relations between individuals in their interaction with the world. It is on this theoretical frame this study is hinged.

According to Plato one of the greatest exponents of this theory, states that because particular things which we perceive in the physical universe are copies of their perfect forms or ideas, we cannot see them with the naked eyes but only with the intellect (Leszl, 2006). For him beauty is one of such forms or ideas that manifest in particular beautiful things. Hence, anything we think is beautiful must be an imitation of the original beauty. For instance, if a beautiful girl is a copy of beauty, then an artist who draws the girl will be getting a copy of the copy.

It is on the basis of the above that, that same Plato on the contrary dismisses art and artists as useless. For him, art adds nothing to our knowledge of the world nor to society. Art for Plato is aimed at deception, and this aim is achieved when the spectator mistook an imitation for reality. Hence, he concludes that art is potentially dangerous as it is psychologically de-stabilizing, leading to immorality, unconcerned with truth and therefore a threat to the common good. He therefore recommends that artists should be driven from the city. Plato understanding of art as imitation is not very correct. It is problematic. It is not correct to say that art is unconcerned with truth and that it is deceptive.

Like philosophical inquire which is after truth and prediction, art is after artistic truth, and not accuracy of reproduction, in the sense of a copy of what exists, but a lifelike portrayal of typically possible phenomena in either their developed or potential form. If art produced only truths similar to scientific truths, there would be no masterpieces of world art. The immortality of great masterpieces lies in the power of their artistic generalization of the most complex phenomenon in the world, man and his relations with his fellow man.

In the same vein, while agreeing that art is essentially as imitation of nature, Aristotle maintained that art was not useless neither dangerous nor deceptive. For him art is conceptual and intellectual. As imitation, it is the imaginative use of concepts. As is imitative by nature and is a necessary part of human nature. Nothing is more natural than for children to pretend and for human beings to create, using their imagination. Thus, any human society which is healthy will be a society where there is imitative art.

The concept of art as imitation is also used in the sense of representation (representation of reality or nature). Thus, representation and imitation are used in this essay as synonyms to portray the role, function and nature of art. Art is representation, imitation, or reflection of reality. Representation can be seen as “standing for” something. Dance, films, sculpture, architecture stand for something. Literary art always stands for something, so also does other forms of art imitate or stand for something.

Again, representation and imitation in relation to art is about something. For instance, music and paintings are about something. Thus, representation as “aboutness” implies interpretation. If a work of art can be interpreted, it is about something. The interpretation says what it is about. According to Roger Scruton, (1981) “representation, as I understand it, is characterized by a prepositional content... it involves the telling of a story”.

It is important to note that most forms of art which are said to express emotion are also representational. They describe, refer to, or depict the world. Moreover, it is difficult to see how emotions can be expressed in the absence of representation. Every emotion requires an object: Fear is fear of something, anger is anger about something. We can distinguish emotions and classify them only because we can distinguish and classify their intentional objects, and we can do this only because we can identify the thoughts through which those objects are defined. It is to be emphasized at this point that, art is both representational and imitational of nature, reality and man’s experiences in relation to his environment.

For instance, in painting, “it is the representational nature of painting which liberates our sympathies, by presenting us with imagined objects to which we need have no practical concern” (Roger, 1992). Similarly, Drama accurately portrays psychological reality, by making characters believable and their actions

understandable. A convincing and powerful drama is convincing and powerful because it reveals some truth of human nature and teaches the truth.

According to Aristotle, drama is an excellent way of teaching morality. Drama imitates both events and actions. For instance, in a tragedy, the main character always comes to a bad end because of a character flaw. Mazi Okonkwo in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Odewale in Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not To Blame* and Macbeth in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* are examples of such tragic heroes. Drama achieves its peculiar effects of instilling feelings in the spectators. In doing so, drama reinforces morality and the ultimately rational structure of the universe rather than challenging it.

When Achebe's work "*Things Fall Apart*" and Elechi Amadi's "*The Concubine*" is properly digested; one would discover the exposition, imitation and representation of pure African culture and conception of reality in the words and actions of the characters involved. As such, they imitate intentions, psychological forces and the unseen inner life of persons.

Similarly, the art of dramatic poetry, though, an imitation of human actions, is not a mere "chronicle" of events. Poetry depicts things in their universal character. "Poetry is more philosophical and more elevated than history, because while the latter records what did happen, the former reveals what should happen and what must happen according to the laws of the universe and psychology" (Shields, 2000).

Art does not teach us history because it is imitation, but because art imitates human actions, good art has to represent or depict character, character traits and personality. These latter things are real, so it teaches us moral and psychological lessons. What art is imitating or representing is real and applicable to our lives. Art also displays and transmits knowledge in a unique way. The audience are made to understand the universals at work in the drama or poetry and in that sense they internalize the knowledge of human nature and morality utilized by the playwright, poet or the novelist.

While Aristotle believed that art did stir up negative emotions, he however, believed that these negative emotions were then purged in a harmless, healthy psychologically destabilizing nor politically destructive, but actually a therapeutic part of the healthy life of not only an individual but of the society at large.

In what seems to be an agreement with the view that art is essentially representation or imitation of reality in relation to man, Rollo May (1981) discusses in details the representative nature of architecture. According to her the skyscrapers in New York City are the epitome of beautiful works of art. Her office which was on the 25th floor of 103rd street on Hudson River had seven windows which opened out on the skyline of New York and it always struck her as one of the most beautiful things in the world. In her words,

...what those skyscrapers stand for, what they symbolize, is the competitive struggle of contemporary man in New York. They represent (symbolize) to some extent the dog-eat-dog society, a society essentially of money.

The point to be noted in May Rollo's remark, is that art, and in this case architecture, represents or imitates the nature of the society in which it is found. Art is not a mere copying or mimicking of nature or reality. Art is reality. It is nature itself. In other words, art is nature of reality and reality or nature is art. They are examples of how art focuses attention and changes one's experience of certain aspects of the world which then blossom out into something far richer and more resonant than the things or scenes in themselves would warrant.

Representation, according to Goodman "is apt or subtle to the extent that the artist or writer grasps fresh and significant relationships and devises means for making them manifest" (Giovannelli, 2005). Schelling (Bowie, 2001) for instance, compares philosophy with art and agrees that art is representative of reality. According to him, art is at once the only true and eternal organ of philosophy which ever and again continues to speak to us of what philosophy cannot depict in external form, namely the unconscious element in acting and producing, and its original identity with the conscious".

It must be borne in mind that, there are various theories of art and none of them enjoys general acceptance. The Mimetic theory of art which appears to be the oldest of the theories originated from Plato's conception of reality. In this review, we have tried to expose the porosity of Plato's idea of imitation. Art is not imitation of imitation or copy of copy. It is neither useless nor dangerous and it does not lead to immorality because it is imitational. On the other hand, while we agree with Aristotle's view of art as imitation, we however do not accept that art is restricted to only literature. Drama (Tragedy/comedy) and poetry. Other forms of art such as music, dance, sculpture, architecture, paintings, are genuine arts and are all imitative of different aspects of reality or nature in relation to man's experience.

Studio Practices in Mimesis in the Study

This is the main area of this study after the backing theories one goes to the studio to apply and experience the real act of copying as regards to space compromised dining table in an urban compromised architectural space.

Tools and Materials Used:

Tools: Cordless drill, Circular saw, Hole saw, Mini drill, Hammer. Materials: Sandpaper ,Edge band/tape Wenge HDF plywood, (High Density Fibreboard) Half an inch plywood ,Gum ,Angle bracket, Hinges, Handles, Rolling tires ,Foam, Cloth material ,Staple gun, Stud ,Screws and Nails.

Work Process

A specified dining table model was selected for the mimetic process for this project work.

1. Sketches are generated using the image gotten from the internet as reference.
2. Research is carried out on mimesis and furniture design processes.
3. Field work is undertaken to gather information concerning space economy in Nigerian homes.
4. Final sketches of the dining table are made, bearing in mind the need to organize and economize the scarce space in current Nigerian homes.
5. Estimated callouts and measurements are made to determine the amount of material needed e.g. wood.
6. Purchase of materials, tools and equipment required for the design process.
7. Cutting and sizing of wood, with manual and electronic equipment.
8. Assembly and joining of cut wood.
10. Finishing, which includes smoothening the surface and spraying of wood.

Presentation and Description

Large spaces have become a thing of the past as more and more people opt for the city-dwelling lifestyle. With the rise of small-space living, compact furnishings are sitting on the forefront of home decor. The current economic recession in Nigeria has caused consumers to increasingly look for products that offer more for less. Designers of space-saving furniture have found success within this environment, as these innovations appeal to homeowners and apartment-dwellers alike.

Studio Practice Experience

At this juncture the researcher describes the design and the steps undertaken in the production process of the desired Dining table, with the aid of photographs.

Description

This Furniture piece is a four-sitter convertible dining table, designed to aid space economy. The rectangular dining set has two foldable wings which can be raised up whenever three or more persons want to dine. There are four chairs, the two main chairs are of equal sizes, while the other two chairs that are to be set at the foldable arm of the dinning are smaller in size. The smaller chairs are designed to fit into the bigger ones, as all the chairs can be stored inside the belly of the dinning set itself after usage. Finally the dinning set has rolling tires that are installed to aid easy movement; however the tires also have breakers that could prevent the table from moving when set up at a desired spot in a home.

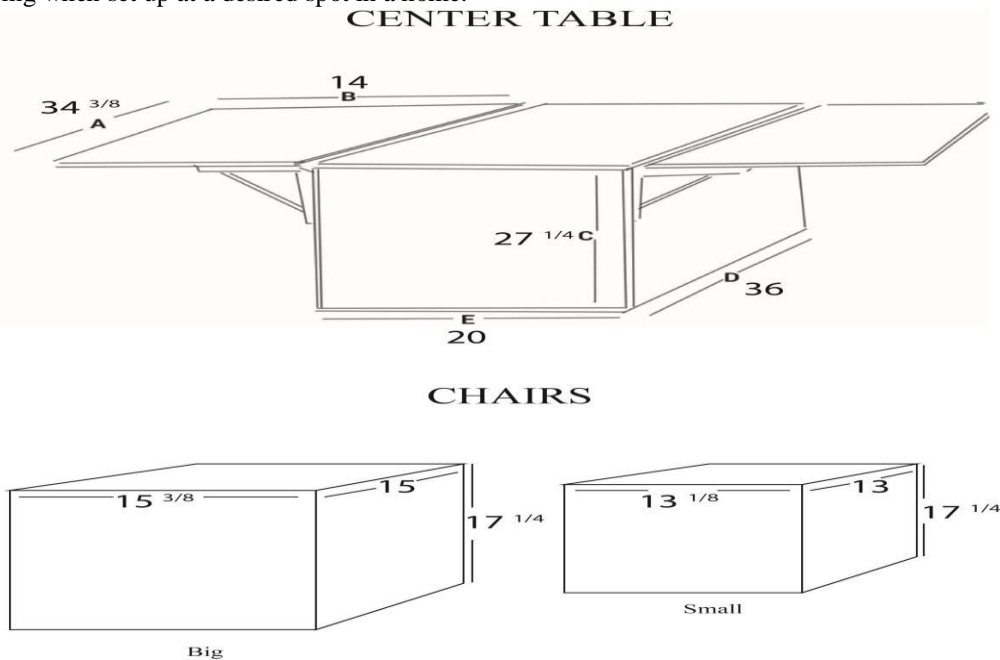


Figure 1. Technical working Drawings and measurements in cm.



Figure 2. Compact Chairs for the Dining table.



Figure 3. Dining table with the storage compartment for the chairs.

Steps/Procedures of Furniture Design Step 1:

This was the first step that entailed the generation of the sketch of the dining table and the determination of its dimensions and measurements.

Step 2:

A trip was taken to the Sawmill to make purchase of H.D.F(High Density Fibreboard) plywood to begin the construction of the dining set.

Step 3:

Cutting of plywood to the desired dimensions for all the various parts of the dinning set.

Step 4: Adding edge tape to plywood.

After cutting to dimensions, the addition of edge tapping began, edge tape is also known as edge band, and it is used to cover and give a smooth and aesthetic finishing to the edges of wood.

Step 5:

The next process was the coupling and construction of the centre frame/box of the dining set. The centre box has two openings at both sides and doors for shutting them. The opening serves as storage compartments for the dining chairs.

Step 6: Construction of the centre box of the dining set.

This step involves the addition of plywood braces which give stability to the dining set, after which comes the installation of both doors and their handles.

Step 7:

This steps involves the addition of the open/close wings of the dining set. These wings are installed with a mechanism referred to as folding bracket.



Figure 4. Addition of foldable wings for the dining set.

Step 8: Designing and production of the dining seats.

The next process is the formation of the four removable and compact seats of the dinning set. The chairs are also made of plywood and the seats are finished with foam and cloth material with the aid of gum and a staple gun.

Step 9: Attaching tires for mobility

Finally due to the weight of the Dining set, rolling tires are added to help move the furniture from one place to another easily. Also the four rolling tires are installed with breakers to avoid unwanted movement

III. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Mimesis as a concept essentially refers to the basic principle that art, and therefore the artist, copies nature. In other words, the mimetic theory of art is particularly based upon the assumption that any form of representative arts is a copy of nature. Mimesis, as a critical term as it is in use today, originally emerged from the theoretical writings and discussions of two prominent classical Greek sources. It was, according to the acknowledgement of the Western canonical literary theory, Plato and Aristotle, who methodically established and expanded the connotations of the term to their students and followers.

In today's day and age when almost a quarter of the world is living in congested metropolises, space is a scarce recourse. This forces people to live in homogenous concrete jungles; with little differentiating their private space from other people. Here furniture plays a huge role and allows one an opportunity to let out his/her creative side and personalize ones private space according to one's own needs and comfort. Space is a growing challenge of the modern world. As we get urbanized, we need technological solutions and vastly innovative minds that could transform the regular home furniture into a built-in-one unit where we can accommodate a lot of elements. Having executed and completed this project work, it is recommended that since there is a continuous rise in population in Nigeria, and no increase in landmass, the government and property owners should look into investing in space efficient furniture.

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