

DRAWING AS PEDAGOGY AND CULTURAL EXPRESSION: RECONSIDERING FORMS AND PRACTICES IN NIGERIAN ART EDUCATION

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Abstract

Drawing is frequently positioned as a preliminary stage within visual arts training, yet its intellectual, cultural, and pedagogical significance extends far beyond this limited framing. This study reconsiders drawing within Nigerian art education as both a mode of inquiry and a site of cultural articulation. Adopting a qualitative approach that integrates formal, contextual, and comparative analysis, the research examines selected drawings across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones. Rather than treating drawing as a uniform practice, the study foregrounds its variability—tracing how linear expressiveness, academic structuring, and symbolic stylization emerge in response to differing cultural histories and educational environments. The analysis suggests that drawing operates as a hybrid visual language, negotiating between indigenous systems and institutional training models. At the same time, it remains central to the development of visual literacy and critical perception. The paper argues that the marginalization of drawing within contemporary curricula obscures its epistemic value. Repositioning drawing as both a pedagogical and cultural practice offers a more nuanced understanding of its role in shaping artistic knowledge in Nigeria. The drawings were categorized and selected based on geopolitical representation, cultural context, educational background, stylistic/formal characteristics, symbolic content, and relevance to pedagogical and hybrid visual practices in Nigerian art education.

Keywords: Drawing, Pedagogy, Visual Culture, Nigerian Art, Cultural Expression

INTRODUCTION

Within many art classrooms, drawing is often introduced as a foundational exercise, an essential starting point before students' progress to what are commonly perceived as more "complete" or "advanced" media such as painting, sculpture, or digital design. While this positioning acknowledges the importance of drawing, it also reveals a persistent limitation in how the practice is understood. Drawing is frequently treated as preparatory rather than

exploratory, technical rather than intellectual. As a result, its broader significance within art education remains insufficiently examined.

This tendency is not unique to Nigeria, but within the Nigerian context, it takes on particular complexity. Drawing exists at the intersection of multiple visual traditions, each with its own history, philosophy, and method of expression. Indigenous systems such as *Uli* and *Nsibidi* demonstrate that drawing has long functioned as a means of communication,

encoding social values, spiritual beliefs, and cultural identities through line and symbol. These traditions emphasize rhythm, abstraction, and symbolic meaning, offering an approach to drawing that differs markedly from Western academic conventions centered on realism and representation.

The introduction of formal art education during and after the colonial period brought these differing systems into contact. Rather than displacing indigenous practices entirely, academic training introduced new methods, such as observational drawing, anatomical study, and tonal modeling, which artists began to negotiate alongside existing visual languages. The result is a complex and evolving field in which drawing operates not as a fixed category, but as a site of interaction between tradition and modernity, local knowledge and institutional frameworks.

Despite this richness, drawing continues to occupy an uncertain position within contemporary art education. It is widely taught, yet often undervalued; widely practiced, yet rarely theorized in depth. This gap becomes even more pronounced in the face of rapid technological change, where digital tools are transforming artistic processes and expanding the boundaries of visual expression. In such a context, the question is no longer simply how drawing is taught, but how it is understood, as a skill, a language, or a form of knowledge.

This study addresses these concerns by re-examining drawing as both a pedagogical practice and a medium of cultural expression within Nigerian art education. By focusing on selected drawings across the country's six geopolitical zones, it seeks to uncover the diverse ways in which drawing is produced, interpreted, and taught. In doing so, the paper argues for a more expansive understanding of drawing—one that recognizes its role not only in skill acquisition but also in shaping perception,

preserving cultural memory, and fostering critical engagement with the visual world.

However, drawings can be identified or associated with a particular Nigerian region through a combination of formal, cultural, symbolic, material, and pedagogical characteristics. Within the context of the pasted introduction, regional identification is not based merely on geography, but on the visual languages, cultural philosophies, and artistic traditions embedded within the works. In Nigerian art practice, drawings often reflect the historical experiences, indigenous aesthetics, educational exposure, and symbolic systems of the communities from which the artists emerge. Consequently, regional association becomes visible through recurring motifs, line quality, compositional structure, thematic concerns, and stylistic tendencies rooted in specific cultural environments.

One major way of identifying regional affiliation in drawings is through the use of indigenous visual motifs and symbolic systems. For instance, drawings associated with the southeastern region of Nigeria often reveal the influence of *Uli* linear aesthetics and *Nsibidi* symbolic forms. *Uli* traditions, historically practiced among Igbo women, are characterized by flowing linearity, asymmetry, abstraction, negative space, and rhythmic movement. Scholars such as Uche Okeke argued that contemporary Nigerian drawing could derive authenticity through the reinterpretation of indigenous forms rather than complete dependence on Western realism. This philosophy significantly influenced artists connected to the Nsukka School, whose drawings frequently employ elongated lines, organic patterns, and symbolic abstraction associated with Igbo visual culture. Literature by Chika Okeke-Agulu and Obiora Udechukwu further explains how *Uli* aesthetics became a recognizable marker of southeastern contemporary drawing practices.

In the southwestern region, drawings may exhibit Yoruba-derived visual philosophies, including stylized figuration, spiritual symbolism, decorative patterning, and references to cosmology and mythology. Yoruba artistic traditions often emphasize balance, frontalism, and symbolic representation connected to oral narratives and religious systems. Artists trained within this cultural framework may incorporate motifs linked to masquerade traditions, textile patterns, or metaphysical concepts associated with the Yoruba worldview. Scholars such as Rowland Abiodun observed that Yoruba visuality extends beyond imitation of nature and instead privileges metaphoric meaning, spirituality, and performative symbolism. Consequently, drawings from this region may be recognized through expressive stylization and symbolic narrative structures.

Northern Nigerian drawings may reflect Islamic artistic influence, particularly through the use of geometric organization, ornamental linearity, calligraphic rhythm, and restraint in naturalistic representation. Hausa decorative traditions and Ajami calligraphic practices contribute to visual arrangements emphasizing pattern repetition and surface design. In some northern contemporary drawings, there is also strong engagement with socio-political narratives, architectural motifs, and durbar imagery reflective of regional identity. Scholars discussing northern Nigerian visual culture note the impact of Islamic aesthetics on compositional order and abstraction.

Regional identification may also emerge through materials and techniques. Artists from areas with strong indigenous craft traditions sometimes adapt local design principles into drawing methods. For example, the emphasis on incision, textile-inspired patterns, body motifs, or mural traditions can shape mark-making approaches. Such formal characteristics

become indicators of cultural origin when repeatedly observed across artists from similar regions.

Another important criterion is institutional and pedagogical influence. Nigerian art schools developed distinctive artistic tendencies linked to their locations and philosophies. The Nsukka School, for example, became associated with *Uli*-inspired experimentation, while other institutions emphasized academic realism, naturalism, or expressive modernism. Therefore, identifying a drawing's regional association may involve examining the artist's educational background, mentors, and artistic lineage. This aligns with the introduction's argument that drawing in Nigeria operates through negotiation between indigenous systems and institutional training models.

Thematically, drawings can also reflect regional experiences, histories, and socio-cultural realities. Artists often engage with issues directly connected to their environment, including migration, spirituality, conflict, urbanization, traditional rituals, gender roles, or ecological conditions. Such contextual concerns contribute to regional identity in visual expression.

From a methodological perspective, scholars commonly identify regional characteristics in drawings through:

- Formal analysis (line, texture, composition, stylization)
- Contextual analysis (culture, religion, history, environment)
- Comparative analysis (contrasting visual tendencies across regions)
- Iconographic interpretation (symbols and motifs)
- Pedagogical lineage and institutional affiliation

This approach is supported in African art scholarship, where visual forms are understood

as products of both cultural systems and historical interaction. Literature by Okwui Enwezor emphasizes that contemporary African art, including drawing, often emerges through hybridity, where indigenous aesthetics intersect with colonial and global artistic influences. Similarly, Sylvester Ogbechie explains that Nigerian contemporary art cannot be separated from the cultural and intellectual environments in which artists are trained and socially situated.

In summary, drawings can be associated with particular Nigerian regions through their symbolic vocabulary, formal structure, line quality, stylistic tendencies, thematic concerns, indigenous influences, and institutional background. Regional identity in Nigerian drawing is therefore not fixed or purely geographical; rather, it is culturally constructed through visual language, artistic training, and historical experience.

Statement of the Problem

Despite its foundational role in visual arts, drawing remains insufficiently theorized within Nigerian art education. It is often confined to introductory training, after which emphasis shifts toward other media. This has resulted in a limited understanding of drawing as a sustained intellectual and cultural practice.

Moreover, while indigenous visual systems have been studied, their integration into contemporary pedagogical frameworks remains uneven. The growing presence of digital technologies further complicates this landscape, raising questions about how drawing is evolving and how it should be taught. Without a critical reassessment, drawing risks continued marginalization within both scholarship and practice.

Aim and Objectives

This study aims to examine drawing as both a pedagogical practice and a medium of cultural

expression within Nigerian art education. In pursuing this aim, the study seeks to identify the dominant forms and stylistic tendencies of drawing across Nigeria, while also examining the role drawing plays within teaching and learning processes. It further analyzes the extent to which cultural contexts shape drawing practices and visual language, and compares regional variations to highlight both similarities and differences in approach. In addition, the study assesses the impact of contemporary developments, particularly digital technologies, on the evolution of drawing practices in Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. What forms of drawing are dominant across Nigeria's geopolitical zones?
2. How does drawing function within art education?
3. How do cultural contexts shape drawing practices?
4. What similarities and differences exist across regions?
5. How is drawing evolving in response to contemporary trends?

Scope of the Study

This study focuses on selected drawings from Nigeria's six geopolitical zones. It examines both academic and contemporary practices, emphasizing formal qualities, cultural contexts, and pedagogical implications. It does not attempt exhaustive coverage but instead uses representative examples for analytical depth.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study is grounded in three interrelated theoretical perspectives that together provide a comprehensive lens for understanding drawing as a cognitive, cultural, and pedagogical practice. Rather than treating drawing as a purely technical activity, these frameworks position it as a dynamic process through which

meaning is constructed, interpreted, and communicated.

The first perspective is visual literacy, which foregrounds the capacity to read, interpret, and produce meaning through visual forms. Within this framework, drawing is not simply an act of representation but a way of thinking visually. As James Elkins (2001) argues, drawing is inseparable from perception; it shapes how individuals observe, organize, and make sense of the world around them. This suggests that drawing operates as a cognitive tool, enabling individuals to translate visual experience into structured form. In educational contexts, this has significant implications, as drawing enhances attentiveness, critical observation, and interpretive skills. It encourages learners to move beyond passive viewing toward active engagement with visual information, thereby strengthening their capacity for analysis and meaning-making.

The second perspective is cultural identity theory, as articulated by Stuart Hall (1997), which situates visual practices within broader systems of representation. From this standpoint, drawing is understood as a culturally embedded activity that reflects and constructs identity. Visual forms are not neutral; they are shaped by historical experiences, social values, and symbolic systems. In the Nigerian context, this is particularly evident in the persistence of indigenous visual traditions such as *Uli* and *Nsibidi*, where line, motif, and abstraction function as carriers of cultural meaning. Drawing, therefore, becomes a site of negotiation, where artists engage with both inherited traditions and contemporary influences. Through this process, visual language serves not only as a means of expression but also as a mechanism for preserving, transforming, and reinterpreting cultural identity.

The third perspective is constructivist learning theory, associated with Lev Vygotsky (1978), which emphasizes that knowledge is actively constructed through interaction and experience. Within this framework, drawing is viewed as a participatory process through which learners explore ideas, test assumptions, and develop understanding. Rather than merely reproducing visual forms, students engage with drawing as a form of inquiry, experimenting with materials, interpreting their environment, and refining their visual thinking. This aligns closely with contemporary approaches to art education that prioritize creativity, problem-solving, and experiential learning. Drawing, in this sense, becomes both a method of learning and a means of knowledge production.

When considered together, these three frameworks offer a multidimensional understanding of drawing. Visual literacy highlights its cognitive and perceptual functions, cultural identity theory underscores its role in meaning-making and representation, and constructivist theory emphasizes its pedagogical significance as an active learning process. The convergence of these perspectives reinforces the central argument of this study: that drawing should not be confined to a preparatory role within art education, but recognized as a complex and evolving practice that integrates cognition, culture, and pedagogy.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a qualitative research design that combines both descriptive and analytical approaches. Data were derived from the visual examination of selected drawings, supported by relevant scholarly literature. The analytical process is structured around three interrelated methods. First, formal analysis is employed to examine visual elements such as line, composition, and structural organization within the drawings. This is complemented by

contextual analysis, which considers the cultural and educational factors that inform the production and interpretation of the works. In addition, a comparative approach is used to identify regional similarities and differences, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of variations in drawing practices across Nigeria.

In addition to visual and contextual analysis, oral interviews were conducted with selected artists, art educators, and drawing practitioners from Nigeria's six geopolitical zones. The interviews provided firsthand insights into the cultural influences, pedagogical experiences, stylistic approaches, and regional factors shaping drawing practices. A semi-structured interview format was adopted to allow participants flexibility in explaining their artistic processes, educational background, and understanding of indigenous and contemporary drawing traditions. The oral interviews served as supporting qualitative data that complemented the formal and comparative analysis of the drawings. Responses obtained from interviews were analyzed thematically and used to substantiate observations derived from the visual examination of the selected drawings.

Purposive sampling was used in selecting artists and art educators whose works and experiences were considered relevant to the objectives of the study. Participants were selected across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones to ensure regional representation and comparative depth.

The selection of drawings for the study was guided by several interrelated criteria to ensure cultural depth, stylistic variety, and regional balance. Priority was given to drawings that demonstrated clear cultural relevance through the incorporation of indigenous symbols, motifs, themes, and visual traditions associated with particular Nigerian communities. The study also considered stylistic diversity by selecting works that reflected varying

approaches to drawing, including linear expressiveness, symbolic abstraction, academic realism, tonal rendering, and experimental contemporary practices. In addition, the educational background of the artists was taken into account to examine how formal academic training, workshop experience, and indigenous artistic knowledge influence drawing practices and visual expression. Furthermore, the selected drawings were drawn from Nigeria's six geopolitical zones to ensure regional representation and to facilitate comparative analysis of similarities and differences in artistic practices across diverse cultural and educational environments.

Data for the study were obtained through the visual examination of selected drawings, relevant scholarly literature, questionnaires, and oral interviews conducted with selected artists and art educators across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones.

The study employs multiple methods of analysis to achieve a comprehensive understanding of drawing practices within Nigerian art education. Formal analysis is used to examine the visual characteristics of the selected drawings, with particular attention given to elements such as line, composition, texture, tonal variation, proportion, and structural organization. This is complemented by contextual analysis, which explores the cultural, historical, educational, and social factors that influence the production and interpretation of the drawings. In addition, comparative analysis is adopted to identify similarities and differences in drawing practices across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones, thereby revealing variations in stylistic approaches, symbolic representation, and pedagogical orientation. Furthermore, data obtained through oral interviews and questionnaires are analyzed through thematic interpretation, where recurring ideas and patterns relating to cultural identity, artistic training, visual expression, and

regional influence are identified and interpreted in relation to the visual analysis of the selected drawings.

Data obtained from questionnaires and oral interviews were analyzed qualitatively through thematic interpretation. Recurring themes relating to cultural identity, pedagogy, stylistic variation, and regional influence were identified and compared with observations from the visual analysis of the drawings.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Drawing has long occupied a central position within visual arts discourse, traditionally understood as a fundamental tool for perceptual training and artistic development. Early approaches to drawing pedagogy often emphasized its role in sharpening observation and improving technical skill. For instance, Betty Edwards (2012) underscores drawing as a means of retraining perception, arguing that it enables individuals to move beyond symbolic representation toward more accurate and attentive ways of seeing. In a related vein, Arthur Efland (2002) situates drawing within broader cognitive processes, suggesting that it contributes not only to artistic proficiency but also to intellectual development, imagination, and problem-solving.

While these foundational perspectives establish drawing as both perceptual and cognitive, more recent scholarship has begun to expand its significance beyond the confines of studio practice. This shift reflects a broader recognition of the arts as integral to knowledge production rather than peripheral to it. Riley (2024) further argues that drawing and visual interpretation function as foundational aspects of “visual literacy,” emphasizing the importance of visual literacy in developing perception, cognition, and communication.

Contemporary studies on visual literacy emphasize the role of images in shaping interpretation and meaning-making, positioning drawing as a critical component of how individuals engage with an increasingly image-saturated world. In this regard, drawing is no longer viewed solely as a technical skill, but as an interpretive practice that enhances analytical thinking and visual communication (Farrar *et al.*, 2024). This shift reflects a broader recognition of the arts as integral to knowledge production rather than peripheral to it.

In addition to its cognitive value, drawing has also been explored as an interdisciplinary tool capable of bridging diverse fields of study. Research by Ling *et al.* (2024), for example, demonstrates how visual art practices, including drawing, can support learning in areas such as literature by fostering interpretive depth and creative engagement. Such findings reinforce the idea that drawing operates across disciplinary boundaries, offering a flexible and accessible means of inquiry that extends beyond traditional art education.

Within the Nigerian context, the discourse on drawing is deeply intertwined with questions of cultural identity and artistic continuity. Uche Okeke (1997) draws attention to the enduring influence of indigenous visual systems such as *Uli*, particularly in their emphasis on line, rhythm, and symbolic abstraction. These systems challenge Western academic conventions by foregrounding alternative modes of representation that are rooted in cultural experience. Building on this perspective, Okeke-Agulu (2015) situates Nigerian artistic practices within a broader postcolonial framework, highlighting how artists negotiate the tensions between inherited traditions and the legacies of colonial art education. In this sense, drawing becomes a site of cultural negotiation, where local visual languages are continuously reinterpreted within contemporary contexts.

More recent developments further complicate this landscape. The integration of digital technologies into artistic practice has expanded the possibilities of drawing, introducing new tools, techniques, and modes of distribution. Studies by Ramli *et al.* (2025) suggest that digitalization is reshaping art pedagogy, enabling more interactive and experimental approaches to visual creation. This perspective underscores the adaptability of drawing, as it continues to evolve in response to technological change while retaining its foundational importance. Aziz (2024) further situates art education within contemporary visual culture, arguing that visual practices such as drawing remain essential for interpreting rapidly changing cultural, technological, and media environments.

Similarly, Schwarz (2025) introduces the concept of post-digital visual literacy, arguing that traditional and digital practices are increasingly intertwined rather than opposed. This perspective underscores the adaptability of drawing, as it continues to evolve in response to technological change while retaining its foundational importance. Such findings reinforce the idea that drawing operates across disciplinary boundaries, offering a flexible and accessible means of inquiry that extends beyond traditional art education. Similarly, Winstanley *et al.* (2024) emphasize that visual literacy and image-based learning encourage reflective thinking, interpretive depth, and transformative pedagogical engagement within contemporary art and design education.

Taken together, the literature reveals a significant shift in how drawing is understood. No longer confined to its traditional role as a preparatory exercise, drawing emerges as a multifaceted practice that engages perception, cognition, culture, and technology. However, despite these advances, there remains a noticeable gap in scholarship, particularly within African contexts, where drawing has yet

to receive sustained attention as an independent field of study. This study therefore builds on existing literature while addressing this gap, offering a more integrated and contextually grounded understanding of drawing in Nigerian art education.

The literature review provides several theoretical and contextual foundations that support the association of drawings with particular regions or geopolitical zones within Nigeria. Although the reviewed studies do not always explicitly categorize drawings according to geopolitical divisions, they establish strong evidence that Nigerian drawing practices are shaped by distinct cultural, historical, educational, and visual traditions tied to specific regions. These regional distinctions justify the use of geographical zones as analytical categories within the study.

A major evidence emerges from the discussion of indigenous visual systems such as *Uli* and *Nsibidi*. The literature identifies these forms as culturally rooted artistic traditions associated primarily with southeastern Nigeria, particularly among Igbo communities. Uche Okeke emphasizes the influence of *Uli* aesthetics through its characteristic use of line, rhythm, and symbolic abstraction. Because *Uli* is historically specific to the Igbo cultural region, its presence within contemporary drawings becomes a marker of southeastern artistic identity. This establishes a direct relationship between visual characteristics and regional origin. The literature therefore demonstrates that drawings can be regionally associated through identifiable indigenous stylistic systems.

Similarly, the review references postcolonial negotiation between local traditions and colonial art education. Chika Okeke-Agulu explains how Nigerian artists reinterpret inherited cultural forms within modern and institutional contexts. This argument implies

that artistic production differs according to regional cultural histories and educational experiences. Since Nigeria's geopolitical zones contain distinct ethnic traditions, philosophies, and artistic legacies, the drawings produced within these areas are likely to reflect varying approaches to symbolism, abstraction, representation, and visual communication. The literature therefore supports geographical categorization because artistic practices emerge from culturally situated environments.

The review also supports regional association through the concept of cultural identity in artistic practice. It repeatedly positions drawing as a medium through which social values, indigenous knowledge, and visual languages are expressed. Because Nigerian regions possess different cultural systems, artists from various zones often develop distinctive visual vocabularies linked to their communities. For example:

- Southeastern drawings may reflect *Uli* linearity and symbolic abstraction.
- Southwestern drawings may incorporate Yoruba cosmological symbolism and decorative stylization.
- Northern drawings may reveal Islamic-influenced geometry, calligraphic rhythm, and ornamental organization.
- Niger Delta or Middle Belt regions may emphasize environmental narratives, socio-political themes, or indigenous motifs specific to local experiences.

Although these examples are not fully elaborated within the literature review itself, the theoretical framework established by the cited scholars allows such regional distinctions to be analytically justified.

Another important evidence comes from the review's discussion of hybridity and negotiation between indigenous and Western academic traditions. The literature suggests that Nigerian drawing is not homogeneous, but

shaped by differing historical encounters with colonial education and institutional training. Since art schools and artistic movements developed differently across Nigeria's regions, stylistic tendencies may also vary geographically. For example, the Nsukka School in southeastern Nigeria became associated with *Uli*-inspired experimentation, while other institutions emphasized academic realism or expressive modernism. This institutional variation strengthens the rationale for organizing the study according to geopolitical zones because regional educational histories influence artistic production.

The literature further supports regional categorization through methodological implications. The review emphasizes:

- Formal analysis
- Contextual interpretation
- Cultural identity
- Symbolic meaning
- Visual literacy

These approaches require attention to the cultural and geographical context from which drawings emerge. In African art scholarship, visual forms are rarely treated as culturally neutral; instead, they are understood as products of specific social and historical environments. Consequently, categorizing drawings by geopolitical zones allows the researcher to examine how regional culture influences line quality, symbolism, composition, themes, and stylistic expression.

Importantly, the identified gap in scholarship also strengthens the study's regional framework. The review notes that drawing within African contexts has not received sustained independent scholarly attention. By organizing the study around Nigeria's six geopolitical zones, the research addresses this gap systematically, providing comparative insight into regional variations in drawing practices across the country.

FORMAL ANALYSIS

The formal analysis of the selected drawings provides a framework for examining the visual characteristics that define drawing practices across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones. Attention is given to key formal elements such as line, composition, spatial organization, texture, and tonal variation to understand how artists construct meaning and visual expression. Although the drawings emerge from diverse cultural and regional contexts, they reveal a range of artistic approaches that reflect both shared traditions and individual creative interpretations. Through this analysis, the study explores the formal qualities that contribute to the classification and understanding of the identified drawing typologies.

A dominant feature across several of the drawings is the expressive use of line. In works representing the southeastern region (see Figure 1), line functions not merely as a descriptive tool but as a primary vehicle of expression. The lines appear fluid, rhythmic, and often calligraphic, suggesting a strong affinity with indigenous linear traditions. Rather than constructing volume through shading, the artist relies on the dynamism of line to articulate form, creating a sense of movement and immediacy. This approach foregrounds gesture over precision, allowing the drawing to retain a sense of spontaneity.

In contrast, drawings from the southwestern and north-central regions (see Figures 2 and 3) tend to exhibit a more structured and deliberate handling of form. Here, line is often subordinated to tonal modeling, with careful gradations of light and shadow used to create the illusion of depth and three-dimensionality. The compositions are typically balanced and proportionally controlled, reflecting the influence of academic training. Attention to anatomical accuracy and spatial coherence

suggests a pedagogical emphasis on observation and technical discipline.

A different formal orientation emerges in works from the northern region (see Figure 4), where abstraction and geometric organization become more pronounced. In these drawings, form is often simplified into patterned arrangements, with repetition and symmetry playing a central role in composition. The emphasis shifts away from naturalistic representation toward visual order and decorative coherence. Lines are more restrained, often precise and calculated, contributing to an overall sense of stability and control within the pictorial space.

Drawings from the South-South and South-West regions (see Figures 5 and 6) frequently demonstrate hybrid characteristics, combining elements of expressive linearity, tonal modeling, and symbolic abstraction. In these works, textures are more varied, sometimes achieved through mixed media or layered mark-making techniques. The interplay between dense and open areas of the composition creates visual tension, guiding the viewer's eye across the surface. This hybridity reflects an experimental approach, where artists draw from multiple influences to produce visually complex outcomes. Across all regions, composition plays a critical role in organizing visual elements and directing perception. While some works adopt centralized compositions that emphasize a singular focal point, others employ more dispersed arrangements, allowing multiple elements to coexist within the pictorial space. This variation in compositional strategy contributes to the diversity of visual experiences, ranging from controlled and harmonious to dynamic and exploratory. Texture and tonal variation further enrich the formal qualities of the drawings. In some cases, subtle tonal shifts are used to model form and create depth, while in others, texture is emphasized through repetitive mark-making or contrast between light and dark areas. These

techniques not only enhance visual interest but also reveal the material sensitivity of the artists, highlighting the tactile dimension of drawing.

Taken together, the formal characteristics observed across the selected works point to three broad tendencies: linear expressiveness, structural/academic realism, and stylized or symbolic abstraction. However, these categories should not be understood as rigid classifications. Instead, they function as overlapping tendencies that frequently intersect within individual works, giving rise to hybrid visual languages. It is precisely this hybridity that defines contemporary drawing practices in Nigeria, reflecting both the diversity of cultural influences and the evolving nature of artistic expression.

Expressive Drawing from South-east



Plate 1: *Uko, the Warrior*, Artist: Uche Okeke, Size: 25cm x 35cm, Year: 1959, Medium: Pen and Ink. Picture credit: SMO Contemporary, 2024

Symbolic Drawing from South-west



Plate 2: *Empathy*; Artists: Tola Wewe and Nike Davies; Size: Standard; Year: 2010; Medium: Pen and Ink; Picture credit: ArtMajeur, 2024.

Hybrid drawing from North-central



Plate 3: *Transcendence*; Artist: Jacqueline Suowari; Standard Size; Year: 2021; Medium: Ballpoint Pen, Ink and Acrylic on Paper; Picture credit: arthouse-ng.com

Stylized Drawing from South-South



Plate 4: *The Boy is Now Man*; Artist: Nelson Edewor; Standard size; Year: 2003; Medium:

Charcoal pencil on Paper; Picture credit: *Provided directly by the artist (personal communication), 2024*

Stylized Drawing from North-east



Plate 5: Dozens Abducted as Boko Haram Attacks IDP Camp: Artist: Mustapha Bulama: Standard-Size: Year:2024; medium: Ink on Paper: Picture credit: Daily Trust Newspapers, 2025.

Linear Drawing from North-West

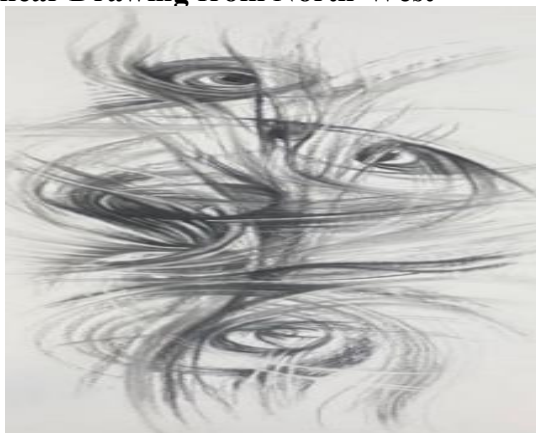


Plate 6: Maigida: Artist: Nadama Mustapha Garba: Size:100 x 30 cm: Year:2021: medium: Charcoal: Picture credit: *Conference/Journal Paper on Organic Vestiges & Social Commentary, 2024.*

Contextual Analysis

The contextual analysis of the selected drawings demonstrates that drawing practices in Nigerian art education are shaped by cultural

traditions, educational philosophies, and contemporary artistic developments. Although artists employ diverse visual approaches, the analysis indicates that regional artistic traditions continue to influence both the forms of drawing and their pedagogical applications. These regional variations reinforce the role of drawing not only as a means of visual expression but also as a repository of cultural knowledge and identity (Efland, 2002; Eisner, 2002; Okeke-Agulu, 2015; Ogbechie, 2008).

The analysis further reveals three dominant tendencies that characterise contemporary drawing practices in Nigerian art education. The first is linear expressiveness, which emphasises spontaneity, fluidity of line, and gestural movement as a means of communicating ideas and emotions. The second is the structural or academic approach, characterised by careful attention to proportion, tonal modelling, composition, and representational accuracy, reflecting the influence of formal art education. The third tendency is stylised and symbolic expression, in which artists simplify or abstract forms to communicate indigenous philosophies, cultural meanings, and visual symbolism. While these approaches can be distinguished analytically, they frequently intersect within individual artworks, resulting in hybrid forms that combine technical proficiency with cultural expression.

To provide a clearer overview of the findings, Table 1 summarizes the contextual relationship between regional drawing practices, cultural influences, and pedagogical roles, demonstrating how drawing functions as both a medium of cultural expression and a pedagogical tool in Nigerian art education.

Table 1: Comparative Analysis of Drawing Practices, Cultural Influences and Pedagogical Roles in Nigerian Art Education

Geopolitical Zone	Predominant Drawing Practice	Cultural Influence	Pedagogical Role
North-East/North-West	Geometric and decorative drawing	Islamic artistic traditions	Develops discipline, observation, and compositional skills
North-Central	Symbolic and narrative drawing	Indigenous cultural traditions	Promotes visual storytelling and cultural awareness
South-West	Stylised and motif-based drawing	Yoruba traditions and Ona aesthetics	Encourages cultural learning and creative interpretation
South-East	Linear and symbolic drawing	Uli visual tradition	Develops expressive line quality, creativity, and cultural identity
South-South	Experimental and mixed-media drawing	Environmental and socio-cultural experiences	Promotes innovation, material exploration, and contextual learning

Source: Researcher's Analysis of Drawing Forms and Practices in Nigerian Art Education (2026).

The information presented in Table 1 shows that although drawing practices differ across Nigeria's geopolitical zones, they collectively demonstrate the integration of pedagogy and cultural expression within art education. Each region exhibits distinctive stylistic characteristics influenced by its cultural environment, yet all contribute to the development of artistic competence, creativity, visual literacy, and cultural awareness. The findings therefore indicate that drawing functions simultaneously as a teaching strategy, a means of creative exploration, and a medium for preserving and communicating Nigeria's rich cultural heritage.

FINDINGS/RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The study established that drawing occupies a significant position in Nigerian art education as both a pedagogical tool and a medium of cultural expression. The analysis revealed that drawing extends beyond the acquisition of technical skills to facilitate visual communication, creativity, critical thinking,

and the transmission of indigenous knowledge. Consequently, drawing remains fundamental to teaching and learning across the various studio disciplines in Nigerian art institutions.

The study further revealed that contemporary drawing practices in Nigeria encompass a broad range of forms, including observational, expressive, structural, symbolic, tonal, experimental, and digitally mediated approaches. Despite their stylistic differences, these practices consistently employ formal elements such as line, composition, texture, spatial organisation, and tonal variation to communicate artistic concepts and cultural meanings.

The findings also indicate that indigenous artistic traditions, particularly *Uli*, *Ona*, and other regional visual systems, continue to influence contemporary drawing practices. These traditions are often integrated with academic drawing methods and contemporary media, resulting in innovative forms of artistic expression. In addition, the study found that digital technologies and mixed-media approaches have expanded the possibilities of drawing without diminishing the importance of conventional drawing techniques.

Furthermore, the analysis established that cultural background, educational philosophy, and regional artistic traditions significantly influence drawing practices in Nigerian art education. Although the forms and practices

vary across regions, drawing consistently functions as a means of developing artistic competence, preserving cultural identity, and encouraging creative exploration.

The formal analysis of the selected drawings reveals a diverse yet interconnected range of visual approaches that underscore the complexity of drawing practices across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones. While each work reflects its specific cultural and regional context, a close examination of formal elements, particularly line, composition, spatial organization, texture, and tonal variation, demonstrates both continuity and divergence in artistic strategies.

DISCUSSION

The findings demonstrate that drawing should be understood as more than a preliminary studio exercise. Rather, it functions as a comprehensive educational practice that supports technical development, creative inquiry, and cultural expression. This reinforces the argument that drawing remains the foundation of visual art education while also serving as an independent artistic discipline capable of communicating complex cultural and social ideas.

The study also confirms that Nigerian drawing practices are characterized by the interaction of indigenous artistic traditions and formal academic training. Rather than replacing traditional visual knowledge, contemporary art education enables artists to reinterpret indigenous forms such as Uli and Ona within modern artistic contexts. This interaction illustrates the dynamic relationship between cultural continuity and creative innovation in Nigerian art education (Filani, 1998; Oloidi, 2015; Okeke, 2012; Ogbechie, 2008).

Another important outcome of the study is the recognition that regional cultural environments

contribute significantly to the diversity of drawing practices. While artists across the six geopolitical zones exhibit distinctive stylistic characteristics, they share a common commitment to visual communication, creativity, and cultural identity. These similarities demonstrate that drawing continues to function as a unifying educational practice despite regional differences.

The findings further indicate that the integration of digital technologies and mixed-media practices has broadened the scope of drawing education. Rather than replacing traditional methods, digital tools complement conventional drawing techniques and create new opportunities for experimentation, collaboration, and visual problem-solving. This suggests that contemporary drawing pedagogy should embrace both traditional and emerging technologies to remain relevant in the evolving landscape of art education.

Overall, the study demonstrates that drawing occupies a unique position within Nigerian art education by integrating technical competence, cultural preservation, visual literacy, and creative expression. These findings contribute to a broader understanding of drawing as an essential component of artistic education and cultural development.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that drawing should not be understood merely as a preliminary exercise within visual arts education, but as an essential pedagogical and cultural practice that shapes artistic knowledge and visual understanding. Beyond its technical function, drawing operates as a means of inquiry through which artists develop observation, critical thinking, imagination, and creative interpretation. As both process and expression, it remains central to the formation

of visual literacy and the cultivation of artistic consciousness within Nigerian art education.

The study further reveals that drawing serves as an important medium for the transmission and reinterpretation of cultural values, indigenous aesthetics, and contemporary experiences. Through line, symbolism, abstraction, and compositional experimentation, drawing becomes a visual language capable of communicating social realities, cultural memory, and individual identity. The interaction between indigenous artistic traditions, formal academic training, and emerging digital practices highlights the evolving nature of drawing as a flexible and adaptive mode of expression.

Reconsidering drawing within Nigerian art education therefore requires moving beyond the narrow perception of it as a preparatory activity for other studio disciplines. Instead, it should be recognized as an independent intellectual, pedagogical, and cultural activity that contributes significantly to creative development and artistic scholarship. Such recognition will not only strengthen studio practice and critical engagement but also encourage a more inclusive understanding of how artistic knowledge is produced, preserved, and transformed within contemporary Nigerian visual culture.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, there is a need to reposition drawing within Nigerian art education beyond its conventional treatment as a preparatory studio exercise. Educational institutions should recognize drawing as an independent intellectual and pedagogical practice that contributes significantly to visual literacy, critical thinking, and creative development. Art curricula at secondary and tertiary levels should therefore be revised to emphasize the conceptual, cultural, and analytical dimensions of drawing alongside technical skill acquisition.

The study also recommends greater integration of indigenous visual traditions such as *Uli*, *Nsibidi*, Yoruba symbolic motifs, and other local artistic systems into drawing pedagogy. Incorporating these culturally grounded visual languages into teaching practices would encourage students to engage more deeply with Nigerian artistic heritage while developing contemporary forms of expression rooted in local identity and experience.

Furthermore, art educators should adopt more interdisciplinary and experimental approaches to drawing instruction by encouraging the combination of traditional and digital methods. The growing influence of digital technologies within contemporary art practice makes it necessary for drawing education to evolve in ways that accommodate new media while preserving the foundational principles of observation, imagination, and visual communication.

There is also a need for increased scholarly attention to drawing as a distinct field of study within African and Nigerian art discourse. Researchers should further investigate the cultural, pedagogical, and theoretical dimensions of drawing in order to expand existing literature and strengthen its academic relevance. Comparative studies involving different artistic traditions, institutions, and contemporary practices would further deepen understanding of drawing as a dynamic and evolving visual language.

Finally, workshops, exhibitions, seminars, and studio-based engagements focusing specifically on drawing should be encouraged within art institutions and professional organizations. Such initiatives would help elevate the status of drawing, promote critical dialogue, and create greater appreciation for its role in artistic practice, cultural preservation, and creative inquiry within contemporary Nigerian society.

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