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PUBLIC LECTURE

(Arts Definition and Promotion in Namibia)

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UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA

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NAMIBIA**

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ARTS DEFINITION AND PROMOTION IN NAMIBIA

Before I emphasize on arts, I would like to enlighten on three famous words by defining them one by one as they have interconnection and related to arts. Their utilization becomes sometime incorrect when they link them to arts, and these are:

- Tradition
- Custom
- Culture

Tradition

It's the transmission from generation to generation of legends, cultures, moral and religious doctrines by means which should be explained according to the targeted people. For Africans e.g (riddles, story telling, oral literature etc.) but the word "*tradition*" can also bear other meanings that are not this paper concern.

Customs

It's a traditional and generally accepted way of behaviour or doing things (Oxford advanced learner's dictionary). Customs is acquired by birth or ancestry through your ways of living and inherited by someone's tradition from his or her forefathers and by them he or she abides.

Culture

It's acquired and developed through education whatever system (Formal – informal) It is a lineage of knowledge through practice, training, and self access ways. By exploiting the Cultural Heritage the living environment offers, the following are identified:

Performing Arts

that includes music in whatever form, dance, drama, poetry.

Visual Arts

in this we find drawing, painting, carving, molding etc.

Writing

the writing includes literature, languages, novel etc. The later will not be part of this paper. Culture includes others aspects that are going to be mentioned ahead.

Thus the word "art" can be defined as follows: It's an expression of human creative talent in performing and visual arts. It can also be regarded as any skill or ability that can be developed by practice contrasted with scientific techniques. Art can also be related subject of study such as languages, literature and history.

Looking at all these individual definitions, one observes a diversity of interferences and subtle to know in what context one of these words should be used especially in relation with arts.

ARTS PROMOTION IN NAMIBIA

The Government perspective

Arts are not dealt separately as an entity, but within the global context of culture because a nation's identity is rooted in its people and their culture, as recognized in the constitution of the Republic of Namibia. Positive work was done and achieved in certain spheres of cultures. Thus the cultural values of the majority communities which were previously excluded are now being promoted, a platform for cultural revival and promotion to enhance unity among communities is still going on, it makes sense because, so many Namibians still believe that western culture is superior to all other cultures in the World. In Namibia western culture still crawls underground and calls have been made by the government to the nation that a nation without its own culture is like a dead nation without identity. The government is confronted by the need to have respect for the more traditional ways on the one hand and a desire to succeed in a modern technologically advanced society on the other. The need to be able to put together the best of the old ways with the best of the new. All the government decisions concerning culture in Namibia cannot be done unilaterally but it must go hand in hand with sincere consultations and negotiations. From the Historical things, the government should bring forth the new which should go with the development of our time, the development of the Namibian society, the demands, needs, requirements, expectations and aspirations of the people in Namibia. People should be encouraged to be objective and fair in dealing with cultural issues. All the essential western cultures should not be negated for the sake of glorifying our African cultures or we must not give up all of our African cultures for trying to become westerners. Dr. Diaz (1998. p4)

Culture is not only dancing and clapping hands and stamping of feet, but it includes many other elements such as morals, ethics, dance, drama, place names, names of peoples, names of domestic animals, traditional oral History, traditional ritual ceremonies at birth, marriage, funeral and harvest, technology, education, architecture, medicine, laws, traditional religion etc. The government should also investigate and research all the mentioned cultural elements which are relevant to the national shared vision of one Namibia one nation. Cultural festivals have been organised and should continue to be organised in order to continuing discover aspects that are relevant to our existence for the reconstruction of the Namibian cultural identity.

THE NAMIBIAN ARTS PROMOTION IN THE MEDIA AND OTHERS ORGANIZATIONS

I should say vehemently that the media in general does not promote arts in their multiform aspects in this country. All private radios that have been given license of broadcasting in Namibia, including NBC radio and television do not promote the local product, the little that comes in, is sporadically during some special programs. These are the only means of promotion we have in the country and they are diverted from the role they supposed to play by promoting the National Heritage in diversity. Ten years after independence, these radio and television stations are still promoting the so called big staffs from America and England, alienating our young people who became the consumers or victims of this rotten culture promoting sex, insults, drugs and violence etc.

Namibia is now a dumping areas of the dangerous cultures that are destroying our autochthonous pride, cultural creations considered to be inferior (what vulgar language).

Most of people who are visiting Namibia, consider our radios and television being exactly like those in Europe and America. I suggest that something should be done. (See statistic figures on music attached since 1992 up to now)

FESTIVALS AND COMPETITIONS

(Traditional Visual and Performing Arts)

The government today has taken an initiative to revalue the Namibian cultural heritage, thus a national cultural festival is organized every year at the regional level first, where the best groups or individuals artists are selected to compete during the national cultural festival which takes places at different venue decided by the committee. Some groups have benefited from this programme by being exposed outside Namibia by means of cultural exchanges with other countries.

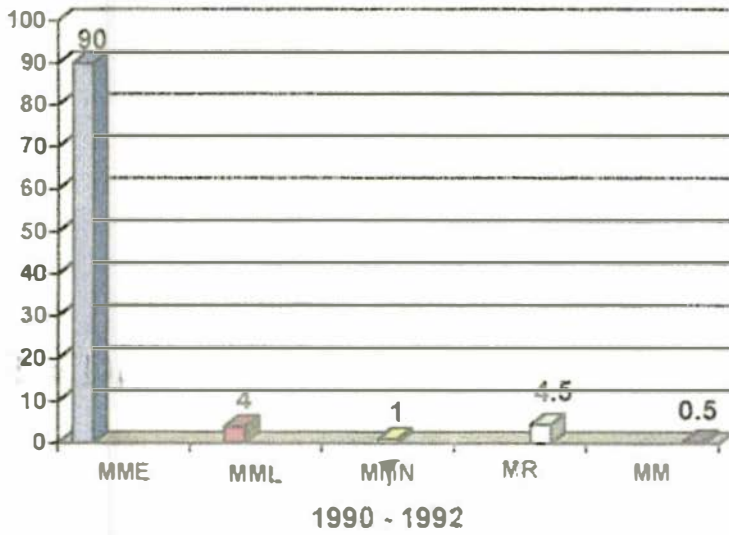
There is another festival in Namibia called "Music Makers Competition". It started with limited categories but since 1996 the competition has grown up with addition of new categories. It's organized by the Namibian broadcasting corporation's music section (NBC) and prizes won are sponsored by the NBC itself, the government, private sector and Embassies accredited in Namibia. In this programme again groups have traveled abroad. It's a good programme as it exposes young talented Namibians.

Kalanami Programme

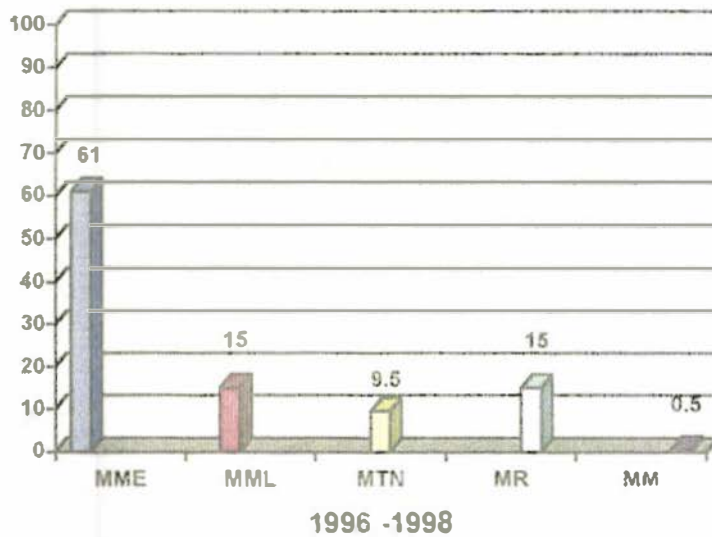
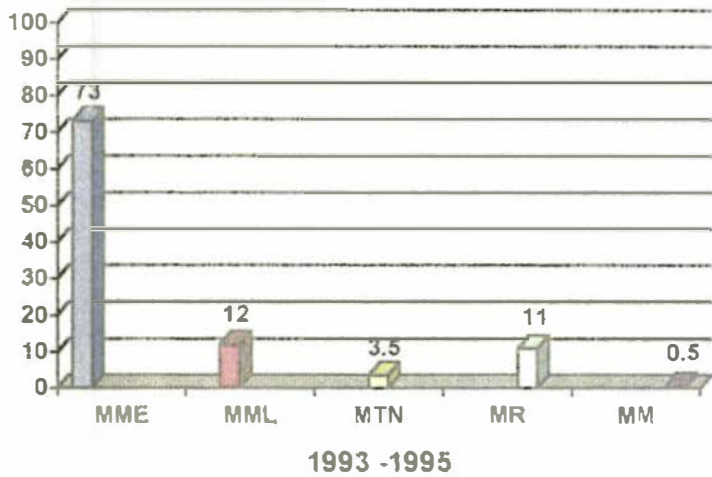
Is another production of the NBC that is specialized in cultural activities including Traditional performing and visual arts.

"Roots" on national radio, "Penduka" and "Tutaleni" on NBC television are programmes that use sporadically the Namibian arts. There are also some

Pourcentage d'utilisation de musique à la radio et télévision



- Musique moderne étrangère (Foreign Modern music)
- Musique moderne locale (Local modern music)
- Musique traditionnelle namibienne (Namibian traditional music)
- Musique religieuse (Religious music)
- Musique militaire (Military music)



festivals rarely staged, grouping modern bands and the motivation here is simply lucrative.

ORUUANO OF NAMIBIA

This is an artists trade union as an umbrella, created in 1998 after a research on the crisis facing the artists in our society. It's a registered trade union for arts industry development, representing all disciplines of arts in Namibia.

The union's main objectives is to protect and further the economics, social and artistic interests of all the artists in all disciplines of arts.

NAMIU

The Namibian Music Industry Union (NAMIU) is a specialised trade union for music artists created in 1996 registered in July 2000. Like oruano of Namibia MAMIU's main objective is to protect and promote exclusively artists in music industry. The union is a sole representative of music artists in Nascam. The union is currently campaigning to get funds to assists to better their life, by having their work recorded and published in a form of CD or audio cassettes etc. mechanisms will be established as how musicians sponsored will refund the granted loans.

NASCAM

The Namibian society of composers and authors of music (NASCAM) was created in 1994 on the initiative of the Ministry of Information, under the Directorate of copyrights. The main preoccupation of the society, is to collect money for the music used by other peoples and dispatch it to the right owners and these users are: radios, television, clubs, bars and shebeens.

WHO IS A MEMBER OF NASCAM?

Someone becomes a member of NASCAM when his or her work has been published in a form of CD, cassettes, video etc, and this particular person should apply to become a member in order to benefit from other schemes that the society offers to the members. The other possibility is just to register your work and give the right to the society to collect your copyright money without being a member, in this case you do not qualify for other benefits of the society.

ARTS INDUSTRY

Every single art work created deserves protection and can generate money, by means of selling or winning a price as an intellectual property. It should be registered against piracy , even after the death of the owner his or her descendants will still continue benefiting from this work for a period of about 30 years or more, before it becomes a property of the government.

How to have your work published?

Art Gallery (Visual Arts)

The National Art Gallery of Namibia is at the disposal of the Namibian artists looking forwards to have their works exposed in order to sell these products in a form of exhibition as a group of people or as individual.

These work is displayed at a certain fixed venue or mobile People look at the exhibition on a free entrance or with a payable fee. The exhibition's period is indicated to people who should visit the venue, and its during this period that articles are bought.

The National art gallery of Namibia also organises competitions during which prizes are won by the best work. It has embarked recently on a new programme

Called "**Namibia today**", during which, selected works are exhibited and sold to the public, prizes are also won in this programme.

The government's and embassies' collections are selected and bought by the National art gallery on their behalf. The same institution organizes workshops for artists improvement, it gives support to learners of "*John Mwafangejo*" and the Rehoboth schools of arts in conjunction with the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture. (Interview with the director of Art Gallery, Sept 2001)

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NAMIBIA

The museum is a non-profit making institution, where valuable objects of all nature are kept, for the purposes of history, education and research etc. ICOM (1996 – p5). Here again art items in general can be sold or donated to the museum on the deal reached between the two parties (The Head of Department and the owner of the object). The object bought with the museum will never be sold again for the reason above mentioned.

EDITIONS (Performing art – Music)

The editions are specialized institutions, dealing with music that are also identified as publishers.

In most cases the musicians, after having composed songs, he or she should look for a company that can publish the intellectual work. After audition, if the company is willing to publish the music, an agreement should be settled between the publisher and the artists or the band, on the percentage the artist or the band will get on a very single cassette or CD sold. It's only then the band is produced, first the studio for the recording and at the later stage the impression of C.D or cassette etc.

In Namibia these types of companies almost do not exist, this reality makes the situation very difficult. The only "Joubert Paul Music" company cannot accommodate everybody, that why the number of musicians who have published their work in Namibia is insignificant. There is a need to develop the music industry in the country. It's only when the music has been published and used by radios, television, bars, clubs, shebeens that the author can claim money as copyright through NASCAM above mentioned.

PUBLISHERS (Performing art – Drama – Poetry)

Here the principles are the same like those in the music industry. After a play or a poem has been written, it should be given to the publisher, if interested, an agreement is reached on the percentage given to the author, he can also claim copyright when the book is reprinted by a new company or the play is staged by a certain Troupe asking entrance fee.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, arts are linked to a specific world of ideas and believes. Through them we should understand our own existence, our environment and life, as they represent the immediate reference to human being to moral being, to spirit and to conscience. No understanding of human aspect of life will be fully captured without the proper understanding of arts.

All arts are linked to the core of a specific world of ideas and beliefs, they reveal a certain outlook over the world and life for a certain human structure, the understanding of which brings it closer and make it easier to us.

We should not have a narrow-minded judgement towards arts because artists themselves cannot disassociate from arts which is in fact part of themselves. Art live within them and it's part of their identity, in uniformity with the way of life.

Therefore my advice is that, every single creation in arts industry becomes its own entity and unique, the need to suggest to innovate it will have no sense to the creator, because his or her concern is to save his product and not replace it. We should learn in order to reach a better scientific understanding of human culture through arts, and react to those who still consider African arts to be rudimentary, primitive, archaic and childish because through cultural values we identify ourselves as tribe, region and nation. In this regard, arts will remain incomprehensible without the knowledge of the social reality.

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