

# **Socially Engaged Protest Arts: Metaphors of Subtlety and Aggressiveness in Select Arts of Ganiyu Jimoh and EB Mike Asukwo**

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**Abstract:** The efficacy, messages and aesthetic value in a socially-engaged art depend on a number of variables such as the artist's creative vision, skill, inclination, worldview, emotional disposition, and agenda. Similarly, the audience/beholders' meaning-making and contextualization trajectories are in many ways attributable to their interpretive competence which are enabled by the variables listed for the artist. In this study, our focus is to provide a clear description of what 'socially-engaged art' and a 'protest art' denote, and how the designated arts of EB Mike Asukwo and Ganiyu Jimoh fall within each interpretation. In addition, this study seeks to deepen understanding of the dimensions of creative application of 'subtlety' and 'aggressiveness' as artistic metaphors in select protest cartoons by Asukwo and Jimoh. This study utilizes interpretive analysis to provide plausible insight into the embedding of metaphors in a cartoon in conjunction with applicable communication theories of art, to elucidate the kind of information the beholders can draw. In the end, this paper provides logical collocation behind the classification of the designated cartoons by Asukwo and Jimoh as 'socially-engaged cartoons' and 'protest cartoons', and how some variables influence the shades of meaning and message both artists infuse in the selected works.

**Keywords:** cartoon, creative vision, protest art, socially engaged art

## **INTRODUCTION**

This paper examines the metaphors of subtlety and aggressiveness in protest messages embedded in select socially engaged arts of EB Mike Asukwo and Ganiyu Jimoh as ironies of human actions subsuming archetypes of appalling behaviours. The expression 'socially engaged

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arts' is an umbrella term encompassing all forms of arts (fine and applied arts, literary arts, and performance) that present variously, different forms of public-orientated advocacy, criticism, or protestation, on topical concerns that are unambiguously acknowledged widely as socially relevant. While all arts are communication channels, not all are socially engaged, because only some are metaphorical mirrors, reflecting complexities of societal concerns, manifestations, and realities (Anikpe et al. 2021; Onuora et al. 2021; Okpara et al. 2020; Adajian 2018). For example, the famous portrait 'Mona Lisa' by Leonardo da Vinci is not a socially engaged art because it does not project a social concern, however, it communicates a sublime creative vision exuding feminine beauty, brilliance, calmness, and elegance. Furthermore, all arts are essentially creative communication channels "through which artists encode ideas, emotions, information, worldviews and knowledge for viewers' interpretation, reflection, appreciation, fulfilment, and enrichment" (Onuora et al. 2021, 2). On utility, arts are multi-functional, efficacious, purpose-driven products of varied inspirations, channels of education, communication, entertainment, healing, provocation, and postulation. On efficacy, arts in different ways display similar and dissimilar efficacy and propensity to influence human psychology, emotions, critical thinking, sensory mechanisms, and cognitive abilities (Arnheim 1969; Habermas 1993; Okpara et al. 2020; Onuora et al. 2021).

### PROTEST ARTS AS SOCIALLY ENGAGED ARTS

Regardless of their diverse typologies, myriad forms, presentation processes, and immense variability, all kinds of protest share common functionality. Variously, they present vigorous opinions and agenda-driven communication, which portray discontent, contestation, disagreement, and suggestion of inclination at varying proportions. The view here is that the expression of protest comes through diverse ways and channels. Protest can be by one or any number of individuals. It can take place in public or in private; it can be silent, anonymous, violent, or peaceful, and through creative arts channels. For instance, Judith Adler (1976) and Holly Eva Ryan (2020), in their studies, variously point at intellectual creative aesthetics as a distinct channel of artistic portrayals that illumine shades of dissatisfaction, injustice, and anomaly of diverse kinds that exist in societies. Thus, scholars are of the view that protests, regardless of their typology,

medium, and process; commonly function as communication channels for the projection of disenchantment to foster aggregation of consciousness, mobilization, and solidarity, to attain a specific goal.

On the quality of protest, Aidan McGarry et al. (2020, 16) note that protest through performance “is both an act and an enactment”. Therefore, in many ways “the enactment of protest signifies democracy in its most essential form, one that is founded on action and enactment” (ibid). Illuminating more on the idea of protest, Katy Hayward and Milena Komarova (2020, 63) observe, that a “protest is a performative act of public communication that aims to contest the existing power relations and ‘the rules of the game’ that may be dictated by those in positions of authority”. Protest through performative art may include songs, chants, and street processions conducted either peacefully or violently. On functions of protest, McGarry et al. (2020, 16) explain that a “protest is not only concerned with seeking recognition; protest seeks to disrupt the existing political order, transcend, or abandon its ideological trappings, and create new possibilities”.

Creative arts such as prose, poetry, drama, music, dance, and fine and applied arts are channels of protest. For example, Solomon Boateng et al. (2021, 1) in their study provided a detailed account of how some artists in Ghana “explore the use of conventional and non-conventional textile materials in a mixed-media technique in the production of artefacts aimed at raising awareness of corruption in Ghana”. Concerning the utilization of literary arts as protest channels, several critical essays explain how the literati utilize their writings to protest the appalling realities of bad governance and monumental despoilment of eco-heritage and natural environment. A few examples are Nwaozuzu et al. (2020), Eze et al. (2021), and Okeke et al. (2022), who copiously highlight the protestation enacted by Nigerian playwright Ahmed Yerima in the plays *Hard Ground*, *Little Drops*, and *Ipomu*, regarding the environmental degradation and loss of livelihood by farmers and fishermen in Niger Delta due to non-environment friendly oil exploitation.

In their work *Music and Social Movements*, Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison (1998, 1-2) note that, “in social movements, musical and other kinds of cultural traditions are made and remade, and after movements fade away as political forces, the music remains as memory and as a potential way to inspire new waves of mobilization”. Espousing on the alluded efficacy of music as a force for change and

re-aggregation of mindset, David Román (2005, 1) observes that performance (including music and drama) allows for a “process of exchange – between artists and audiences, between the past and the present – where new societal formations emerge”. Elaborating on the utilization of arts for protest, Jonathan C. Friedman (2013, xv) posits that “performance is clearly a potent medium for spreading and making accessible what otherwise might be problematic and unpopular”. In addition, he observes that, “protest music continues to be a relevant mode of artistic expression and, when music is overtly political, controversy usually lurks close behind” (Ibid, xvi). He contends that, “poetry and music can change reality, maybe not by immediately resulting in changes in law, but by having a deeper impact on the society that makes laws” (Ibid, xv). In Nigeria, the music of artists such as Burna Boy (twice as tall), Sunny Okosun (which way Nigeria), and Reckado Banks (Ozumba Mbadiwe), are protest songs lamenting appalling behaviours by political elites, resulting in grief and retrogression. Other artists in Nigeria who have made protest music are Fela, Asa, African China and Idris Abdulkareem, among very many others.

Assessing the utilization of painting and drawing in the portrayal of protestation, the contribution of Okpara et al. entitled ‘Metaphor and Melancholy Consciousness: Enduring Efficacy and Universal Common in Obiora Udechukwu’s Eight Paintings’ though focusing on the paintings’ abiding grief portrayal, poignantly highlights the monumental despoilment and long-lasting misery as the aftermaths of Nigerian civil war. Another example of a robust application of painting as a protest art is Picasso’s oil painting named *Guernica* (1937), which remains a globally acclaimed anti-war protest painting in history, remarkable for its projection of the pain and anguish of the Spanish Civil war. In addition, graffiti and murals are examples of paintings and drawings utilized as protest art. For instance, the ‘endsars’ (a youth-led protest against police brutality in Nigeria) instigated a lot of murals and graffiti in streets of Lagos, Anambra, and Enugu states and others. Similarly, the ‘black-life-matter’ movement instigated by perceived police brutality and the agonizing death of an unarmed black man pinned down by a policeman led to the creation of many graffiti and murals in several cities in the US beyond protest processions.

Essentially, when art is utilized as a channel of portraying nuances of disenchantment emanating from perceived incompetence, retrogression, aberration, double standards, and injustice in human

realities such as politics, international relations, and religion, it is an example of political art, protest art and a socially engaged art. Political cartoons as a trajectory of political art include all forms of cartoons, which appear in newspapers and magazines as pictorial rhetoric and commentary on any topical social matter. Although political cartoons are often than not perceived as a form of amusement because they are comical, they are nevertheless a powerful medium of political discourse (see Bivins 1984; Bostdorff 1987; Edwards 1993; Medhurst & DeSousa 1981; Press 1981; Riffe, Sneed, & Van Ommeren 1985). Essentially, all political cartoons represent an effective platform through which topical social matters even in humorous depictions are intensely projected. Protest art is a sub-form or genre of political art. All protest arts (drama, music, paintings or cartoons) are socially engaged art, and in one way or the other, they are politically inclined. However, not all political arts are protest art (see Skocpol 1996; Medhurst & DeSousa 1981; Koetzle & Brunell 1996).

#### CARTOONS AS PROTEST ARTS

In a critical assessment of the functionality and efficacy of cartoons as a meaningful channel of protest, Colin Seymour-Ure (1986, 170) observes that “the comments and insults conveyed by the graphic imagery of a cartoon have a crudity and offensiveness that might well be unacceptable if printed in an editorial”. This is because cartoon depictions do not usually carry the same level of exactness as either written words in political drama or spoken words in films and stage enactments. Hence, cartoons provide creative latitude for cartoonists to be significantly exact and at the same time inexact. The description of a cartoon as an inexact depiction literally, highlights the deliberate creative distortion of the images in the cartoon to allow for plausible pictorial resemblances of the target subjects. This creative outcome allows the beholder to achieve sufficient recognition and attribution, even though the photo-alike and exact features of the represented subjects are artistically diminished deliberately. Therefore, through this type of creative manipulation, a cartoon is not regarded as a true or a replica of a subject; rather it is conventionally taken as a deliberately altered mimicry of a subject, an object, or a thing, which in essence ensures deniability. This means that the images in a cartoon are not legally true copies of what they mimic, even though the images appear distinctively telling. A critical commonality of cartoons is the creative utilization of satire and hyperbole to present compositions that enhance

amusement, which draws and holds the attention of beholders, even though the thematic preoccupation essentially may be a serious matter. In a study highlighting this supposition, Salisu O. Usman and Tahiru N. Momoh (2016, 124) observe that the “use of satire as a form of imagery to depict some political issues in cartoons as featured in the Nigerian national dailies” helps in drawing and holding the attention of beholders, who attempt to enjoy and understand the composition. Thus, the propensity of cartoons to draw and hold beholders’ attention relates to the kind of efficacy and functionality they possess, which will assist in the re-aggregation of inclinations, creation of awareness, projecting of grievances, presentation of protestations, and affective propagation of opinions.

### GANIYU JIMOH’S CARTOONS AS SOCIALLY ENGAGED PROTEST CARTOONS

In figures 1 and 2, entitled *I have a Dream, that one day* and *Double Standard* respectively, Nigerian cartoonist Ganiyu Jimoh presents images typically depicting ancient Benin iconic sculptures, looted by British soldiers after defeating the Benin Kingdom under Oba Ovanramwen Nogbaisi in 1897 in a brutal retaliatory military mission. After the conquest, numerous royal bronze, brass, and ivory arts, adorning the palace were confiscated and moved to Europe and other destinations, where for 114 years and still counting, they are in museums and private galleries (see Barkan & Bush 2002; Kiwara-Wilson 2013). For Jimoh, the arts are part of the Bini cultural heritage and not that of the Europeans who looted them. Thus, he reckons that his protest cartoons will sensitize the global community, shame the countries and individuals having the arts in their possession, and provoke consultations leading to their return to Nigeria.



Figures 1 & 2: cartoons by Ganiyu 'Jimga' Jimoh (2010)

In the first figure, each of the three sculptural pieces holds a placard with different but metaphorically interconnected letterings. One of the

letterings reads, ‘... the only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing,’<sup>1</sup> which the cartoonist attributes to Edmund Burke, a widely acclaimed philosopher, globally revered as the father of modern conservatism. Our interpretation of the above quote is that there exists a double standard in the West including America, where the looted classical arts of the Benin kingdom and other African countries are displayed in various museums and private collections. It is evident, that the stolen arts embody the cultural heritage and history of Africa. However, in the countries where they are indifferently held and displayed in museums and private collections, they are just priceless exotic spoils of war. In line with the above view, Krydz Ikwuemesi in an article published in the catalogue of the 2006 edition of the Dakar Biennale, argues that Nigerian artefacts scattered in museums and galleries across Europe and America represent huge resources that should be part of the cultural and economic capital of the continent.

In the second placard held by one of the sculptural pieces, the cartoonist writes – ‘114 years in exile! Enough is enough’. This expression is apparently, a projection of the cartoonist’s mindset through which he supposedly wonders why some countries that vociferously moralize Africans, Asians and Latin Americans about fair play, human rights, accountability, and integrity are commercially exploiting looted cultural heritage from Africa. Unambiguously, the expression ‘enough is enough’ projects shades of emotion such as anger, disenchantment, protestation, and victimhood. The third placard that reads – ‘no to illegal captivity’ is a subtle but robust indictment of the countries in possession of the looted arts. Metaphorically, the cartoonist links these projections in fig. 1, to the personified images in fig. 2, as prisoners of conscience. This expression communicates the mood of protest against perceived mistreatment by the countries that are still holding and profiting from the looted priceless artefacts.

In fig. 2, Jimoh animates the inanimate sculptural pieces in a bid to drive deeper the denotation of the emotional torment and victimhood. In this composition, one of the sculptural pieces depicts a female with her pretty face drooping, forlorn and disconsolate. The tears cascading down from her downcast eyes depict her as deeply depressed and in

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<sup>1</sup>However, scholars such as David Bromwich (2014, 175), an esteemed scholar of literature, in his book *The Intellectual Life of Edmund Burke: From the Sublime and Beautiful to American Independence*, which focuses on the complexity of Burke’s thought appearing in both major writings and private correspondence, observes that the above-stated quote is wrongly attributed to Burke.

anguish. In connection with the downcast mood of the female sculptural piece, the male sculptural piece, equally depressed, hopelessly mopes in melancholic submission to his captivity and degradation in apparent despondent resignation to a brutal fate. Through this composition, the cartoonist suggests the nuance of imprisonment and captivity through the firmly shackled arms and legs, which correspond with the lettering (in captivity since 1897, British Museum) on the side of the seat where the weeping female is sitting. In this dense portrayal, Jimoh poignantly directs aggressive and scathing lampoon towards Africa's colonialists, whom he ironically portrays as self-serving at best through the following lettering on a signpost in the frame's background – 'Africans illegally in Europe must leave. African objects illegally in Europe must stay'. In figures 1 and 2, Jimoh uses his art (cartoon) as a channel for the exteriorization of ideas, feelings, and inclinations, which no doubt "possess the propensity to rouse or dowse emotions; to recalibrate, twist or re-aggregate people's worldviews, ideologies, and inclinations; to reinvent myths and legends; and to heal, revive, infuriate, or emotionalize people" (Onuora et al. 2021, 2). In both cartoons, the artist utilizes subtlety and aggressiveness in different measures. Jimoh's direct reference in the lettering where he mentions the British Museum and the satire lampooning the British position in keeping the looted arts and profit from millions of museum tourists, whereas they apply prompt deportation to illegal African migrants is not a veiled attack.

The two cartoons from Jimoh are socially engaged works because the subject they are emphasizing and projecting is a widely acknowledged socially relevant matter. Even though the two cartoons are not propelled by partisan or societal biases or aimed at countering competing ideologies, they are political arts because they reflect the contexts, realities and nuances of colonialism, which continues to influence international relations and diplomacy.

#### MIKE ASUKWO'S CARTOONS AS SOCIALLY ENGAGED PROTEST-POLITICAL CARTOONS

In fig. 3, the cartoonist Asukwo presents a caricature including five goats and a man. Four of the goats are vigorously bleating behind the man, while the goat in front of him appears happy as it eats off the lush leaves he extends to it. The goats are bleating because they are calling for attention from the man who is concentrating all his time, interest



and energy on feeding the lone goat in front of him with an inscription, ‘tenure elongation’. Among the four goats behind the man, three have the following inscription boldly on their bodies – security, corruption, and power, which are metaphorical depictions and personifications of human realities, which require the attention of the man.

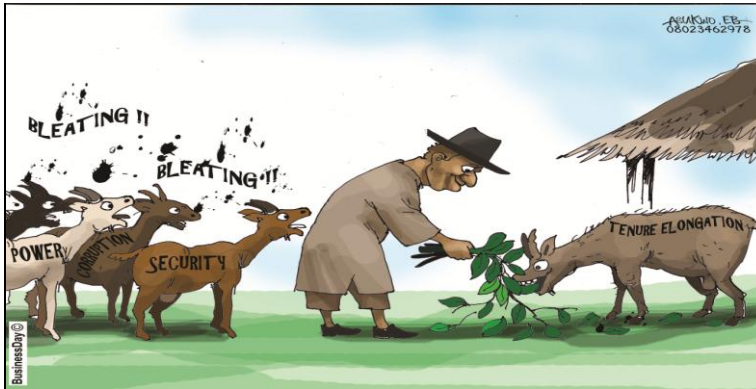


Fig. 3: *Bleating in Vain* by EB Mike Asukwo (4<sup>th</sup> August 2011, *BusinessDay*)

One of the four goats bleating behind the man in the receding background has no inscription on it. This is significant because the fact that it is bleating vigorously like the three other goats beside it suggests that it requires attention as well. However, one of the ways of reading the significance of no inscription on one of the goats is to say that Asukwo is metaphorically suggesting that there are other serious matters requiring attention beyond those listed. The man in the composition could be anybody; however, our attribution is that he most likely mimics President Goodluck Jonathan, the former president of Nigeria. We are basing this conclusion on two premises. First, the man in the composition has an uncanny resemblance with President Jonathan in a number of ways. The tailored style of attire and hat he is wearing is typical of President Jonathan’s consistent outfit as the president of Nigeria. In addition, the outfit combination is typical of President Jonathan’s ethnic nationality Ijaw. Secondly, the man’s facial features bear close resemblance with President Jonathan’s facial features such as his thick lips, broad nose, and consistently clean-shaven jaw. In addition, the lettering ‘tenure elongation’ on the body of the goat enjoying special attention, repeats the claim of several opposition politicians that President Jonathan was scheming tirelessly to elongate his tenure as the president of Nigeria. The metaphors of the letterings on the other three goats – power, corruption, and security –

represent critical socio-political issues that required President Jonathan's dedicated and sincere attention. At the time Jonathan was in office as president of Nigeria, insecurity concerns grew exponentially due to the activities of Boko Haram terrorists. Asukwo cloaks this composition in subtlety by presenting the man as a shepherd in a rural setting with his flock. However, the man is portrayed as a badly behaving shepherd (leader) because he deliberately abandons his statutory responsibility of providing all-embracing care and leadership to pursue personal interests. Therefore, this cartoon is a veiled aggressive protest and indictment of the man for his deplorable behaviour.



Fig. 4: *We Are Haemorrhaging* by EB Mike Asukwo (3<sup>rd</sup> April 2018, *BusinessDay*)

In fig. 4, Asukwo's composition includes three persons, a man, a woman and a child. The man is carrying a hoe; the child is carrying what appears like a bundle of yam tubers, and the woman has a basket filled with varieties of farm produce on her head. In the composition also is a thatched house, apparently their home. The simplicity of their dressing, the typical attributions of the things they are carrying, and the thatched house in their view, situate them as a peasant subsistent farmer family. The three individuals and their house are depicted as legless and the house walls are missing but suggestively replaced with ongoing haemorrhaging. This composition embodies the realities of insecurity that have engulfed Nigerian-farming communities in parts of Nigeria. In this composition, we can feel a sense of dense aggressive protestation with uncommon metaphors. The lettering 'we are haemorrhaging' is aimed at deepening the appreciation of the imagery, which nudges the beholder to reflect on the attributions of 'haemorrhaging'. Haemorrhaging suggests losing blood at a significant

level which if not stopped will lead to loss of life, hence, metaphorically haemorrhaging refers to any subsisting condition, which is steadily reducing vitality and gains, and gradually leads to death. Therefore, some beholders may read the composition from a financial point-of-view and conclude that the imagery suggests that even though the farming family is returning with yields, they are enveloped in subsisting socio-economic realities pushing them steadily towards a painful outcome. Since the haemorrhaging is restricted to their legs and they are alive and appear to be moving, it could mean that they are steadily losing their sustainability. Thus, the composition may be viewed as a metaphor lamenting the dire subsisting conditions of farmers as an industry in a subtle empathy-inspiring approach. The application of haemorrhaging is a universal common, which provokes emotion of life and death; hence, Asukwo creatively protests the apparent lack of sufficient attention and remedy, which has left farmers in excruciating misery and threat to their existence.

Their facial expressions, which suggest anger, grief and fear, project protestation. In the cartoon, no item is added by Asukwo, which pointedly identifies the geographical region he is projecting. Therefore, the cartoon points to the common reality of peasant farmers across four regions in Nigeria. Our conclusion is based on the premise that since the cartoon did not make clear emphasis suggesting a presentation history, we are placing its coverage on contemporary using the period of its publication April 2018. Thus, in 2018 and a few years back, the reports of violent conflicts between nomadic Fulani cattle herders and farmers were continual. The conflicts revolve around the herders' pursuit of their ancient method of cattle transhumance, which involves moving the cattle from arid zones towards lush pastures in parts of the middle-belt, southwest, southeast and south-south regions. Their cattle trample and feed on crops as they continue their transhumance. To this, the farmers usually object and attempt to chase them out which leads to violent conflicts resulting in loss of lives and properties. The herders usually regroup to raid the farming communities. More so, the activities of the Boko Haram insurgency in parts of the northeast region of Nigeria have led to rampant raids of farming communities leading to loss of lives and properties as well (see Abada et al. 2022).

## CREATIVE VISION IN THE WORKS OF ASUKWO AND JIMOH

Looking at art as a purpose-driven and consciously propelled narrative, Aleksander Potebnya (1990, 163) opines that “art is creative thinking, in other words, it is thinking through images”. Therefore, “the way and manner the relevant symbolic items are brought together in the process of making an art define an artist’s creative vision, which can be accessed by analyzing the quality and quantity of subsumed artistic depth, concept(s) and context(s)” (Anikpe et al. 2021, 3). The creative vision “represents an ingenious deployment of functional sublime imagination and skills for the purpose of creating art that is effectively aesthetic and exceptional” (Ibid). The creative vision deployed by Jimoh and Asukwo in their displayed cartoons, variously emanates from complex articulation, involving subject selection, idea recollection, envisioning, and lastly the painstaking step-by-step replication of envisioned formulations on or with a medium. Thus, the effectiveness of a protest art/cartoon depends on how the beholders appreciate the creative vision deployed by the concerned artist to subsume sublime essence containing aesthetics, utility, communication, worldview, and advocacy at varying proportion, intensity and density. The place of creative vision in the four cartoons revolves around their propensity to push the beholder to venture into the sphere of art meaning-making through a stream of consciousness, which excites as well as engages. The four cartoons present a substantial ability to draw and hold the attention of beholders because as socially engaged arts each unambiguously “articulates a vision of the world that is insightful and consequential” (Danchev 2009, 4). In addition, the cartoons’ power of appeal revolves around creativity. The four cartoons project:

Conscious exteriorization of feelings, ideas, and inclinations, probably with the prime aim to share, communicate, or release emotions propelled by one or a combination of the following human emotions: rage, anger, pain, joy, delirium, and the likes, in a bid to satiate yearnings such as to declare ideological and philosophical inclination(s), portray realities, exude feelings, exhibit skill(s), obtain a financial reward, play politics, or even to engage in mind games. (Okpara et al. 2020, 2).

The view here is that because meaning-making usually depends on the depth and density of an individual’s knowledge and awareness, it is plausible to say that the result of various individual interpretations will

not be the same. In this regard, art represents “an instance of and repository for symbolic meaning” which “embodies and conveys important cultural truths to people of that culture” (Dissanayake 2013, 124). The beauty of cartoons as exemplified in four cartoons by Jimoh and Asukwo is that there are always inexact significations leading to varied interpretations, which indicate that a cartoon cannot be completely appreciated at a glance. This is because “the shade of meaning(s) the viewer decodes thereof in many ways depends majorly on the viewer’s related and relevant knowledge depth and density” (Okpara et al. 2020, 5). Therefore, “a viewer’s related and relevant knowledge depth and interpretive density, depend on the aggregate propensity of subsisting innate cognitive prowess, the quality and quantity of related and relevant knowledge assimilated and stored, which are retrievable from the memory, and lastly, the rate of information retrieval elasticity, otherwise, the cognition profundity makes the difference” (Ibid). An individual’s degree of ability to decode the embedded metaphor in a cartoon is a factor in the overall state of mind and cognitive density. Thus, cartoons covertly, subtly or aggressively project compelling narratives subsumed in innuendo to provide a comical atmosphere in their interrogation of pertinent socio-political realities.

The four cartoons by Asukwo and Jimoh are socially-engaged protest/political cartoons representing typical socio-political realities concerning Nigeria. Creatively, both artists applied emblematic and unique features to compose plausible pictorial narratives encapsulating trajectories of rhetoric and messages highlighting their authorial inclinations. In line with W. L. Benoit et al. (2001), protest/political cartoons help the beholders to appreciate both historical and subsisting socio-political realities and incidences through the artist’s point-of-view, inclination and ambivalence. This is achievable through meticulous utilization of the knowledge that “art is universal, aesthetic, symbolic, representational, and a web of communication mediums that can be evocative, efficacious, emotional, therapeutic, inspirational, metaphorical, ritualistic, and transformational” (Okpara et al. 2020, 2). Although some scholars suggest that the goal of protest/political cartoons is to raise public consciousness in a bid to address crucial issues and criticize political leaders and their contemptible practices, it is possible to debate that cartoons can be applied as a hatchet job because it is about defining political realities (McNair 2011, 67-68). Thus, interpretation of the density, depth, and extension of the

articulation in a cartoon in many ways defines the ideological, political and philosophical leaning of the cartoonists. What we are suggesting is that the four cartoons by Jimoh and Asukwo can be viewed as deft attempts at political interest propagation. Since their contents are mostly expressed through visual illustrations, political cartoons are best understood through investigation of incorporated visual rhetoric, dominant satire and the attendant humour aimed at lampooning the target.

On the functionality and usefulness of humour in expressions and arts, Joyce Hertzler (1965, 58-59) observes that humour can serve as means of understanding a people's socio-cultural sensitivities and norms, hence what people laugh at or laugh about "reveal what they are interested in, concerned about, aroused by, disgusted and preoccupied with". Similarly, Murray Davis (1993, 2) indicates that "humour has a tendency to expose the truth about a society" because it "provides an inconspicuous back entrance to a person's, group's, or society's innermost chamber, which continually knocking on their front door may never disclose". The importance and efficacy of humour in cartoons are to help in drawing and holding the attention of beholders. Cartoons propel critical thinking through captivating pictorial parodies or farcical portrayals, which greatly assist in exciting readers' interest and attributions. Indeed, what cartoonists portray, "may be an imaginary situation in allegory or a figure greatly distorted by caricature, but to the artists, this is the essence of what is actually happening" (Press 1981, 63). Hence, it is through informed analysis and interpretation that credible illumination of attributions and meaning-making can be reasonably attained. In this way, plausible deductions can be established which would help to explain the authorial agenda and inclination as regards the ideas the artist wants the beholders to see and reflect on. The emphasis here is that the four cartoons metaphorically hold up mirrors to reflect the past, present, and speculations about what the future holds.

Relying on humour and symbolism, Jimoh and Asukwo draw the attention of the beholders to the realities portrayed, who then are propelled to decode and interpret the embedded messages. Thus, a cartoon attracts and holds the attention of the beholder because of the embedded humour even though it presents topical social matters and concerns. On the utilization of satire by both cartoonists, we can say that Asukwo's works accommodated satire more and his works show good propriety in applying witty lampooning to criticise powerful

political figures and delicate socio-political matters. His cartoons exhibit a deliberate injection of humour to create aesthetic allure and ambience while projecting contestations and strong opinions. Deep and dense application of symbolism in cartoons heightens a beholder's curiosity, who then probes further to decode the embedded message(s) and meaning(s) accordingly.

## CONCLUSION

The study looked at the variables that define the efficacy, message and aesthetic value in the selected works of EB Mike Asukwo and Ganiyu Jimoh to deepen their classification as socially engaged protest/political arts. In addition, the study examined the application of subtlety and/or aggressiveness in projecting shades of protestation. The study notes that the application of art by artists as an efficacious medium of criticising human socio-political realities instigates scholarly inquiries leading to suppositions from diverse disciplinary perspectives. The study interprets the appreciable creative vision subsumed in the four cartoons, particularly the shades of allure, the metaphors and the nuances of communication, and how they can instigate public interests and debates. The study examines the creative approaches deployed by the artists and these approaches situate the works as either subtle or aggressive protest art. The study observes that the quality of a socially engaged cartoon an artist creates depends largely on his/her creative vision. Scholarly attempts at defining the expression 'protest' have resulted in the production of definitions presenting an understanding of protest from several trajectories with none widely or unanimously adopted as all-encompassing. Attempts at defining protest based on the description of the reality and nature of the presentation, medium or form will fail to produce an encompassing description. This is because there exist forms and kinds of protest which are apparently unrelated in terms of their 'presentation processes', 'the medium each uses' and 'typology'. However, it is the 'functionality' that provides a common ground for a plausible definition.

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