

CERAMICS AS A CONTEMPORARY ART IN BAYELSA STATE: THE BENEFITS,  
CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

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**Abstract**

In Nigeria, receiving a formal education in ceramics is increasingly necessary to pursue a career in the medium. Despite the consequences caused by internationalization and cross-cultural infiltration, there is a bright future for the art given the abundance of resources accessible for ceramic techniques in the nation with a seething population of over 140 million. Porcelain resources still need to be used despite their promise as raw materials, and the ceramic art program still needs to turn forth graduates who can work effectively in the fiercely competitive ceramics market economy. The advantages, difficulties, and future potential of the ceramics sector in Bayelsa State were the main subjects of this investigation. It discussed the study's conclusions using the analytical approach and secondary data gathering procedures. It turned out that Bayelsa State's ceramics sector may offer a lot of chances for youth to become involved and seek careers in this profitable industry. Furthermore, the availability of mineral resources provides excellent opportunities for the state's industry to grow and flourish.

**Introduction**

Between 1970 and 1980, Nigeria's ceramic industry flourished due to the country's abundance of raw materials, large human capital, and modern technology. All of the early ceramic enterprises have vanished, and the nation is constantly importing vast amounts of inferior pottery output (Moisembe, 2023). The ceramic industry was regarded as one of the small- and medium-sized sectors that made a substantial contribution to Nigeria's building industry, export revenue, and economic empowerment prior to 1980.

There are now just 10 active ceramic companies in Nigeria due to a number of issues, including trade impediments, a shortage of workers with the necessary general and technological skills, and haphazard raw material mining practice (Moisembe, 2023). About thirteen ceramic industries namely Okigwe pottery, Richware Ceramic, Modern Ceramics, Quality Ceramics, Nigerian/Italian Ceramics, Arewa Ceramics, Jacaranda Pottery, Ceramics manufacturer, Eleganza Ceramics, Maraba Pottery, Plateau Pottery, Ladi Kwali Pottery and Jos Museum Pottery have all gone moribund (Moisembe, 2023). As a result, the once-vibrant and crucial sectors that produced ceramics are no longer able to contribute legitimately to Nigeria's

economic growth and development. The general public, business owners, experts, and the private sector as a whole have all expressed serious concerns about this scenario. Comparing this position against what other industrialized and developing countries have accomplished with their ceramics industry makes it even more unsettling and concerning. While having abundant solid material resources, Nigeria is the only nation in the world without a sizable ceramics export industry, while holding eight of the top 18 developing economies rankings in this regard.

The current status of ceramic manufacturing companies in Nigeria is limited to wall and floor tiles, with almost no significant attempts being made to produce a wide range of products such as insulators, refractory, structural clay bricks, porcelain, electrical porcelain, table wares, and china goods. The development of intelligent ceramics, which uses ceramic applications in a variety of industries, including housing, healthcare, autos, etc., may be essential to boosting the nation's economy at this time. Thus, it could hold the key to unlocking the potential of next-generation energy storage and permitting the utilization of green energy sources by subsequent generations.

Nigeria and Bayelsa state is losing out on the vast global ceramic market estimated to be about \$240bn (Oparaocha and Peters, N.D). It is obvious then that Nigeria and its constituent units, Bayelsa state inclusive, is still decades behind in achieving the level of ceramic product-range development and production offer significant impact on the National Gross Domestic Product (GDP). However, with the current level of ceramic tile production of over 100 million sq meters in Nigeria there are prospects for the country to be at par with China and India if efforts towards revitalization of the moribund industries are diligently implemented. This research studies is thus set out to assess potential benefits, challenges and prospects of this important sector in Bayelsa state. It is important to note that the study adopts descriptive and analytical methods and thus made use of secondary data sources to analyze the issues raised in the study.

## **Literature Review**

### **Meaning and History of Ceramic Art**

The term ceramics is ancient and has been described variously. The term "ceramics" originates from the Greek word *keramikos* (κεραμικός), which means "pottery". *Keramos* (κέραμος) means "potter's clay" [3] Tableware and ornamental ceramics are often still created in the same way as the majority of historic ceramic goods were: from clay (or clay combined with other materials), they were molded, and then heated (Enhuber, (2015).

Basically, ceramics refers to the creation of objects of clay and other earthen materials that are fired to a temperature of glassy state, which is about 600 degrees centigrade and above. Rhodes (1975) asserts that "ceramics is the art of making permanent objects of usefulness and/or beauty by heat treatment of earthly raw materials". Objects created with clay and other ceramic materials and hardened by high-temperature fire in a kiln are referred to as ceramic art.

According to Onuzuike (2015) ceramic art is a visual art form that belongs to the plastic arts. The majority of ceramics are regarded as ornamental, industrial, or applied art pieces, while some, like sculpture and pottery, are classified as fine art. One individual or a group can make ceramic art, and it may be produced at a pottery or ceramic factory by a collective that designs and manufactures the art ware.

Ceramics is the art and science of creating items by applying heat from inorganic, non-metallic elements in modern ceramic architecture. Glass and mosaics created with glass tesserae are not included (Peters, 2019). Clay and other ceramic materials are used to create ceramic art. It can appear in a variety of ways, such as beautiful ceramics for use as dinnerware, tiles, sculptures, and other objects.

On a general note, three key terms are emphasized in the definition of ceramics, which are: clay, firing and glassification (Esege and Unimke, 2015). Clay is the constituent raw material and firing and glassification delineate the chemical processes that convert pliable earth en material into robust and rigid objects of aesthec quality and usefulness. This perhaps, presents ‘ceramics’ as a unique discipline that comprises material, method and process.

For thousands of years, ceramics have been produced for both useful and ornamental uses in almost every culture on the planet. The origins of ceramic art may be traced to the antiquated societies of Egypt, Greece, Rome, Mesopotamia, China, and Persia (Jurgens, 2007; Buszek, 2011; Brock, 1991; and Esege & Unimke, 2015). Earthenware pottery was the first kind of ceramics, and it was used for cooking and storing. As ceramics progressed over time, civilizations produced exquisite porcelain goods, tiles, figures, and other ornamental items. The earliest ceramic objects were straightforward ceramics made from earth but as technology advanced, potters were able to produce complex shapes, sophisticated glazes, and sophisticated clay bodies. These days, ceramic art includes a wide variety of designs and methods for both functional and ornamental objects.

The Arts and Crafts movement served as a major source of influence for contemporary ceramics art in both Britain and the United States in the early 20th century, resulting in the resurgence of pottery as a distinct modern craft (Whiteford, 2022). These crafts placed a strong emphasis on time-honored, non-industrial manufacturing methods, material fidelity, the maker's unique abilities, practicality, and a Victorian-era-specific lack of over-the-top adornment.

Almost all established societies have a long tradition of ceramic art, and in many instances, the only creative remnants of extinct cultures—like the Nok in Africa, which dates back more than 2,000 years—are ceramic artifacts (Onuzuike, 2015). Along with the contemporary Western cultures, some particularly well-known cultures for pottery are the Chinese, Cretan, Greek, Persian, Mayan, Japanese, and Korean cultures. The contours of the piece, its ornamentation through painting, carving, and other techniques, and the glazing that is present on the majority of ceramics are elements of ceramic art that have received a variety of attention over time.

## **Role of Ceramic Art in Society**

Ceramic art has played significant role from ancient time to this contemporary period. Using the clay media, artists may express their creativity in a multitude of techniques while creating ceramic art. Potters are appreciated for their haptic quality and immediateness; they can swiftly use their hands in order to shape, mold, and alter the clay (Ceramic Art: A Timeless Expression of Creativity, 2022). The form and framework of ceramic artwork may be created with a great deal of creative flexibility due to the clay's pliability. According to Whiteford (2022), to convey a variety of emotions, artists may use multidimensional, angular shapes or rounded smooth ones. Persuasive use can also be made of the artwork's dimensions, weight, and composition. Glazing in ceramics allows for creative expression through color, pattern, and texture, resulting in a wide range of colors, surfaces, and effects. High-fire glazes offer unpredictable discoveries, while texture and patterns enhance visual appeal (Esege and Unimke, 2015).

For thousands of years, ceramic items like bowls, plates, cups, vases, and various other receptacles have fulfilled crucial practical purposes. Ceramic utensils have been used for food storage, serving, and transportation for a very long time in various civilizations. Firing clay's strength and adaptability make it perfect for crafting items for daily use.

The creation of ceramics is essential to the preservation of historical cultures' cultural practices, rituals, and narratives (Renee & Nicky, 2022). Clay is a timeless media that crafts people use to retain cultural tales, values, and beliefs in concrete form, providing a physical link to the past. Specifically, pottery, with its methods, themes, and motifs handed down through the centuries as cultural history, effectively captures the creative soul of a society.

Because ceramic work is so pliable, it has spiritual and religious meaning. God is frequently portrayed in Christianity and Judaism as a potter who shapes people out of clay, signifying the link between the heavenly Potter and his creatures on earth (Kvarnstrom, 2015; Esege and Unimke, 2015; Renee & Nicky, 2022). Clay's spiritual metaphor has been influenced by its malleability and capacity to be shaped into artifacts and vessels of worship across cultural boundaries. Religious ceremonies and rites have historically included the use of ceramic arts, from Christian chalices to Native American ceramics to Hindu diyas.

Form, texture, color, and surface design are all used in ceramic art to express meaning and information. Incorporating cultural identity and meaning into their works, contemporary artists frequently use ceramic vessels as a vehicle for sharing narratives, morals, and viewpoints through a variety of tangible and visual components.

Ceramic art, a significant economic value, has been a significant industry for centuries due to low barriers to entry and affordable tools. Today, handmade ceramic art varies in value based on factors like artist reputation, size, complexity, and rarity. The global market for art pottery, valued in billions, supports ceramic artists and contributes to local economies (Esege & Unimke, 2015)

Ceramic art imparts knowledge about the ideas, values, and history of past civilizations. Ceramics along with other pottery frequently represent narratives, symbols, and occasions that were significant to the culture that produced them. Modern cultures can learn about the beliefs,

accomplishments, and daily lives of ancient peoples by examining these artworks. In addition to imparting cultural information, ceramic art training benefits the craftsman. Learning from mistakes, putting in a lot of practice, and studying under knowledgeable instructors are all necessary to become proficient in the intricate processes of working with clay. The act of creating itself teaches important life lessons like persistence, patience, and problem-solving.

### **The Development of Ceramic Art Culture in Nigeria**

Nigerian culture has a long and rich history of using pottery and sculpture. They've been employed for a number of things, including as social and political power expression, historical remembrance, and religious rites. The Nok civilization, which thrived between 500 BC and 200 AD, is the source of the oldest sculptures known to exist in Nigeria (Esege and Unimke, 2015; Oparaocha & Peters, N.D; Hamer & Hamer, 2005). Terracotta sculptures like this were employed in religious and ceremonial contexts. Intricate sculptures and pottery reflecting distinct cultural identities were also made by later cultures, such as the kingdoms of Ife and Benin. Ceramics and sculpture continue to be significant in fostering social cohesiveness and defining national identity in modern-day Nigerian society. Ceramics and sculptures are used to celebrate cultural festivals, honor national heroes, and remember historical occurrences. Additionally, they serve as a vehicle for social and political themes including advancement, peace, and national cohesion.

### **Ceramic Art Education in Nigeria: The Role of Universities**

The promotion of ceramics and sculpture as significant elements of Nigerian art and culture has been greatly aided by universities in the country (Esege and Unimke, 2015). Many institutions have set up art departments with courses in ceramics and sculpture, giving aspiring artists a place to show off their creations and hone their craft. Universities have also arranged art classes and exhibitions, which have assisted in broadening awareness of ceramics and sculpture.

### **Ceramic Art and Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria**

Ceramic materials and artwork have the power to greatly advance Nigeria's economic and social development. Nigeria's economy is witnessing growth in the art business, which has great promise for generating income and jobs. Higher education institutions may assist the expansion of the art sector and advance the economic and social growth of Nigeria by highlighting sculpture and ceramics as significant elements of the nation's art and culture (Esege and Unimke, 2015).

Even though Nigeria may not yet have the chance to combine skill sets with educational backgrounds and credentials for employment, the ceramics sector is flourishing since ceramic products are a necessary component of every contemporary structure. As a result, this is the largest job field. In the fine and applied arts, engineering ceramics is a key phrase. This provides more work prospects and entails melting metals to fabricate airplanes. It goes without saying that students who majored in engineering ceramics would become successful business owners or lucrative employees in the government sector. This is due to the special chance Nigerian airspace has to provide value. Ceramics operations have increased recently around the world, including in Europe, Italy, China, and other nations (Esege and Unimke, 2015).

### **Certainty-Related Issues in Ceramic Arts**

Ceramic wares are enhanced by adding color to their interior and exterior surfaces, enhancing their functional and aesthetic value. Ornamental techniques like stenciling, dipping in glaze, spraying, and incising enhance the appearance of ceramic items. Ceramic goods serve a functional purpose and are enhanced by painting and decorating techniques. Art and design principles are applied, with form, line, and color evoking emotions. Ceramics can tell stories and preserve cultural legacy for future generations.

Peterson (2019), emphasizes the use of narrative and symbolism in artists, who frequently project ideas for the audience. Handmade clay items blend practical use with visual appeal to maintain interest and high value among consumers. Because surface ornamentation frequently improves eye perception, these goods are valuable and should be preserved.

### **Gap in the Literature**

This investigation would undoubtedly add to previous research on ceramic arts in Nigeria generally, but particularly ceramic literature in Bayelsa state, because there is a dearth of ceramics literature relevant to the study region.

### **Ceramic as a Contemporary Art in Bayelsa State**

In the present tense, contemporary art is art that embodies the spirit and vocabulary of the modern era. We realize that contemporary art represents not only "modernity," but also "contemporaneity," which is derived from the social experiences of today and may mirror the temporal features of the present (Buszek, 2011). But before we discuss "contemporary art," it's important to understand the background: "classical art," "modern art," and "contemporary art" all developed in the West. Modern art sought to produce "meaningful" shape and was characterized by "Artistic beauty"; "Classical Art" was intended to be realistic and had a "natural beauty" aesthetic (Buszek, 2011);

But unlike the first two, modern art cannot be summed up in a single term; instead, we can only refer to it as "the third field beauty." But what exactly is "the third field beauty"? It is a beautiful thing that is beneficial to our bodies and minds and has a strong connection to human life and pleasure. The distinctive oriental traditional character of Chinese ceramics is created by the combination of ceramic art based on deft technological integration, solid idea support, exceptional temperament penetration, rich cultural legacy, and profound human philosophizing. People sought to "match" East pottery with modern art because of this amazing chance.

In general, ceramic arts wares refer to the creation of functional and aesthetically pleasing domestic items for human use, such as glassware, teacups, jugs, tiles, breakable plates, etc. Certain regions of Nigeria have the capacity to make ceramic art pieces, particularly those with a substantial clay deposit in the soil formation. Based on past experiences, Bayelsa State in Nigeria is home to the greatest clay. The item found in Bayelsa State historically suggested that our state was not well-known for producing pottery. We are renowned for our sculpting, carving, and weaving, with the exception of pottery utensils, which are imported. The lack of knowledge about ceramic works in Bayelsa State has been filled up thanks to ICT and teacher

education. Essentially in the culture of the Ijaw people, which includes the Brass people of South-South Nigeria, Ogbia, Nembe, Yenagoa, Kolokuma/Opokuma, Sagbama, Ekeremor, and South Ijaw. Experience has proven that the finest clay, or plastic clay, is found in the state's riverine zones, which is why Bayelsa State is a metropolis surrounded by water.

Ceramic products are the life jackets we wear every day; as tiles are made, pottery is being used to adorn our homes. As a result, we have a responsibility to guarantee that these natural resources are used in Nigeria, the Niger Delta, and the global community. Because of the high quality plastic clay found there, Bayelsa State is a location where the ceramic industry is expected to flourish. One of the most significant discoveries made in Bayelsa is the abundance of high-quality clay found across the state, particularly in regions such as Yenagoa, Ogbia local government area, southern Ijaw, Ekeremo local government, Nembe, and Sagbama Area.

### **Potential Benefits of Ceramic as Contemporary Arts in Bayelsa State**

1. Based on research findings, sensors build into ceramic flooring can detect human presence and activate traffic signals, while the advanced products hold enormous developmental potentials for global resource efficient solution.
2. It is a key sector that can unlock the next generation energy storages to help future generations to harness renewable technology in the state and Nigeria at large.
3. The industry if adequately established and funded, could be a critical focus for the state government to employ large number of its youths directly or indirectly.
4. Ceramic skilled acquisition centers can provide the needed skills in the industry here in Bayelsa State and outside the state to solve the problem of lack of skill manpower.
5. It is a potential sector for wealth creation. Wealth can be generated from the exploitation of ceramic solid materials such as kaolin, ball clays, feldspar, quartz or silica sand, calcium carbonate, taic, bentonite, and so on. These materials, if processed are capable of contributing to the internally generated revenue of the state.
6. The ceramic arts bridge communication gaps that students with special needs or English Language Learners (ELL) experience outside of art class. Students are able to express themselves freely through the medium due to its easily malleable characteristics and need for little vocational instruction, due to its learning through watching and doing versus listening and executing. Students of any background can feel successful when working with clay because of its forgivable, plastic-like features (Kvarnstrom, 2015).
7. The medical community, in recent decades, has recognized the transformative potential of art (Kvarnstrom, 2015). Because clay is such a flexible substance, a wide range of people may learn and work with it with confidence. Students participate in creative and emotional engagement when teachers design a ceramic arts lesson plan that centers around the fundamental sense of touch.
8. Music can also be easily implemented into a ceramic arts lesson as music has been found to stimulate ideas in creative environments (Brock, 1991, p. 14). Music can reach a multitude of students, especially if they are auditory learners as it improves the learning process and environment.

### **The Difficulties of Ceramics in Bayelsa State as a Modern Art Form**

1. Even though sculpture and ceramics are significant parts of Nigerian art and culture, they nonetheless confront a number of difficulties. The absence of official funding for the arts is one of the primary obstacles in the state. Due to this, artists and art organizations are underfunded, and there are little prospects for sales and exhibitions.
2. The absence of studios and workshops for artists is a barrier as well, since it might impede their ability to practice their craft and produce their work.
3. Lack of Appropriate Policy Framework in Bayelsa state: The Bayelsa state government has not yet put in place policies in the ceramic industry sector to provide guidelines for formation of ceramic industrial clusters, provide financial instruments for solid mineral characterization and ceramic capacity building and skills development, technology development for sustainable inclusive ceramic growth in the state.
4. International trade barriers such as lack of access to international market remain a serious challenge to the ceramic industry in Nigeria and Bayelsa state in particular.

### **The Prospects of Ceramic Art in Nigeria**

Nigerian sculpture and ceramics have a bright future since more new artists are receiving training and assistance from academic institutions. The expanding Nigerian art market, propelled by the growing local and global market demand for Nigerian artwork, offers sculptors and ceramicists a platform to exhibit their creations and make a livelihood from their craft. To fully realize the potential of sculpture and ceramics in Nigeria's socio-economic development, nevertheless, the government and other stakeholders must overcome the issues facing the industry.

In general, the contribution of pottery and sculpture to nation-building is a rich and complicated subject that may be approached from a variety of perspectives, with a particular emphasis on Nigerian institutions of higher learning. This study offers insights on the role of the arts in nation-building by analyzing the historical and present relevance of sculpture and ceramics in Nigerian culture, as well as their potential to support the nation's socioeconomic growth

### **Recommendations**

1. The Federal Ministry of Education and the National Institutions Commission should mandate all Nigerian institutions to offer stand-alone degree programs in ceramic science, engineering, ceramic technology, and mineral engineering.
2. The Bayelsa state government should establish policies for intelligent, sustainable, and inclusive ceramic growth, including financial instruments for solid mineral characterization, capacity building, and skill development.
3. In order to maintain ceramic manufacturing's competitiveness and assist Bayelsa state's inclusive and sustainable development, policymakers should provide a favorable regulatory environment.
4. The nation and Bayelsa state should establish ceramic skills acquisition centers or academies to foster the local ceramic industry, bridge the education gap, and provide a skilled labour pool for the future.

## Conclusion

Through investments in ceramics firing, Nigeria's natural gas reserves and plenty of ceramic minerals can stimulate the country's economy and implication Bayelsa state's economy. Employment in production, distribution, manufacturing, and exploration will all be generated by this industry. By addressing gas flaring, oil waste may be turned into money by raising GDP and lowering health hazards in Bayelsa state. Nigeria's economy may be diversified away from petroleum by utilizing the mining, processing, and manufacturing opportunities offered by the ceramic minerals industry. Thorough investigation and evaluations are required to draw in international capital and advance ceramic technology employing natural gas as a sustainable energy source.

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