



WHEN WE ARE SUCCESSFUL MEN & WOMEN...

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On the occasion of

The First Annual

Literary, Music & Dance Competition

Held In Commemoration of World Environment Day

At

The Galleries, Omega House

KM5 East / West Road

Rumuodara, Port Harcourt

Rivers State

June 12th, 2008

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We are gathered here today principally to highlight the problems with our environment. This has been done yearly for a week starting from the 5th of June by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) since 1972. It is referred to as the World Environment Day (WED). Our good host iCandy productions, ably led by Mr. E.O Mrakpor has chosen the medium of Art to commemorate this important event. They deserve all the commendation and encouragement for embarking on this worthy exercise.

A little bit about this year's WED theme which is; **"CO₂ KICK THE HABIT! Towards a Low Carbon Economy."** In a nutshell the concept of a low carbon economy strives to evolve ways of reducing the amount of green house gases we release into the biosphere with particular emphasis on the gas carbon dioxide (CO₂). The green house gases are those gases present in the atmosphere that help to regulate the temperature of the earth so it is habitable. The most important of them are; water vapour, carbon dioxide, methane and ozone.

However, carbon dioxide is the big worry because it has been scientifically proven that it has reached alarming proportions in the atmosphere. More worrisome is the fact that modern living and processes all produce carbon dioxide in large quantities. This excess CO₂ in the atmosphere is gradually reducing its capacity to block the dangerous ultra violet rays of the sun from getting to us and also its ability to regulate extreme temperature & weather is greatly impeded.

Gas flaring from oil fields is a major source of carbon emission and sadly, Nigeria is the foremost gas flaring nation in the world out of the ten that contribute about 75% of the total gas flaring on earth. However the refreshing news is that the Nigerian government is working hard to change this. It has given the oil companies up till December 31st 2008 to stop gas flaring.

However, taking care of this planet of ours is the responsibility of each and every one of us. So we each ask ourselves the question. What can I do?

I will list here ten simple things that each of us can do to reduce CO₂ emission.

1. Replace regular bulbs with energy saving bulbs. (60% less energy)
2. Don't leave your appliances like TVs on standby mode. Switch on or off. (40% energy is saved)
3. Defrost old fridges / freezers regularly



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4. Cover pots while cooking. *You save a lot of energy needed to prepare the dish.*
5. Move your fridge away from the cooker. *It uses much more energy than if standing alone.*
6. Use less hot water, a lot of energy is used to heat water.
7. Most products that we buy cause greenhouse gas emission in one way or the other e.g. *(during production at the factory and during distribution- the vehicles carrying them. We save energy when we reduce waste by using what we have prudently)*
8. Eat fresh food because the more processed food we eat, the more the factories will need to manufacture, thereby releasing more CO₂. Also, if we buy fresh food instead of frozen food, we save the energy that would have been used to keep it frozen.
9. Plant a tree because it will absorb tons of CO₂ during its lifetime.
10. When we want to buy new appliances we can choose those that are energy efficient and they usually have the Energy star label on them.

Now as regards you and the arts, I want to first state that when I look at you all, I see with certainty the future leaders of this country. I want to assure you that conservatively speaking in say 20 to 30 years time **at least** 50% of you in this room will be leaders in either your chosen profession, business, community or government. You shall all be successful men & women by the grace of God. So let me be the first person to say congratulations-in advance.

I would also like to congratulate you all for being involved in all these creative projects we have greatly enjoyed which are actually a celebration of the arts.

At this junction, I would like to tell you all a brief story.

Two men attend a classical music concert in a big new theatre. One has been reading about music for years and has **trained** his ear. He loves the works of great and good composers. The concert is a thoroughly enjoyable exercise to him. On the

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other hand, his friend is thoroughly bored. He has not trained his ear nor did he **study** the appreciation of music. He has deprived himself of the pleasure of classical music. He is anxious for the concert to end. At the end of the concert, he suggests to his music loving friend that they take a tour of the new theater.

While walking through it, the music lover gets bored. He is **visually illiterate**. His friend on the other hand has **trained** himself in the appreciation of buildings. He derives pleasure from the quality of the forms, spaces and volumes at play in the architecture. He is stirred to **maximum enjoyment**. To him architecture is **visual music**.

From this brief illustration you can see that maximum enjoyment is attainable from art appreciation. One of the simplest forms of art to appreciate is film and we all know how fulfilled and thoroughly entertained we feel after watching a truly enjoyable movie.

This same feeling is possible with every form of art. All you need to do is study it leisurely over time and you will surely get it sooner or later.

I want to put it to you that what we are all ultimately seeking in life is joy and fulfillment. If you buy a new car or new house or marry the woman or man after your heart, it all boils down to a quest for joy and fulfillment.

I'm sure we are all conversant with the saying - *the best things in life are free*.

Well, when you're successful you'll find out that money, useful as it is, can only buy so much for you. True fulfillment and enjoyment comes from our loved ones, playing the games we love and also doing the things we love to do.

If you are able to train yourself to truly appreciate the arts or say, play a good game of tennis or golf, you'll discover that simple things like these are what give the added bounce and fulfillment to your life.

So I'll advise that your interest in the arts should not be limited to getting a good grade in your GCE or NECO exams. You should plan it as a lifelong self development process.

Now, I would like to give a brief introduction to art and art appreciation in general. Broadly speaking, art can be broken into three major groups: **Visual arts, Auditory arts** and **Performance arts**.

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The Visual arts are those creations we can look at and they include the following:

1. Drawings
2. Paintings
3. Sculpture
4. Architecture
5. Photography
6. Film
7. Printmaking

The following though also visual arts, are classified as Decorative arts:

1. Ceramics
2. Furniture & Interior design
3. Jewelry Making
4. Metal Crafting
5. Woodworking

Auditory arts include music and spoken literature while plays and dance are examples of **Performance art** because they are performed.

Each and every one of these art forms listed above has both **form** and **content**. These are the two basic criteria for assessing any work of art.

The form

The form of an artistic creation describes three things:

How the *elements of art* in play in that particular work were utilized

How the *principles of design* were utilized and

The *choice and usage of materials*.

The elements of art are:- line, shape, space, form, texture, value and colour. A work of art could use only two or more of these elements. For example it could be said that the lines are bold or timid, while the colours used could be said to be bright and cheerful or grey and sad.

The principles of design used could be said to be balance, or repetition or sometimes asymmetry can be used to produce an interesting composition.

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When **the materials used** are examined, the work could be said to be - sculpture from wood or metal and spray painted or hand painted with polish or oil paint for example.

The content

The content of a work of art refers to but is not limited to the message its creator wanted to transmit, what he actually transmitted, how his intended message and what actually came across were received by people. Even the circumstances around the creation of the work including the state of mind or lifestyle of its creator are all part of content.

By the time you have observed many works through the years using these basic criteria you will become proficient in identifying works that bring out tremendous emotions in you and possibly works that have commercial value. Even the simple view of a landscape, if you know what to look for can brighten up an otherwise drab day.

I wish to advise you all that, as you are preparing to be successful men and women tomorrow, you should also be preparing how you will enjoy that success properly. The truth is that both processes take time and it is best they progress hand in hand.

The ability to appreciate any of the arts can generally influence your life positively and make you a more thoughtful and well-rounded human being. This is regardless of whether your chosen profession is art based or not.

It goes without saying that the country would be better off when the primary leisure activity of our leaders is not wanton buying and consumption but simply the appreciation of the arts.

Our environment will also be all the better for it because art appreciation emits zero carbon dioxide as opposed to wanton buying and consumption which keep the manufacturers ever producing and thus releasing a lot of carbon dioxide into the earth's biosphere.

Thank you for your time.