

All, Minus Censorship

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I received simultaneously a copy of the brochure of PACA's biennial exhibition and the maiden edition of *Letter From Africa*. It will be naive of anyone who has been following the current intellectual drought in these parts not to commend the resourcefulness behind these noteworthy accomplishments of the people at PACA. PACA is perhaps the most remarkable art phenomenon on this continent today.

But one hopes that Krydz's introduction to the brochure (erudite as it, undebatably, is) is not intended as an official declaration by PACA, Krydz after all is the head of the international secretariat of this great association.

What is disquieting in the piece is the whiff of censorship it contains. Between a redundant theory and even the best-meaning act of censorship, it is the arbitrariness that is more pernicious to the time-honoured effort to deal with the human condition.

In attacking postmodernism Krydz's action is in tune with the very essence of serious scholarship. The human mind has not yet evolved to a level where it is capable of producing a flawless theory. But in implying a forcible isolation of works of practitioners with a conviction that is different from his (for how else does one read such dicta of his as, 'No installation here?') I become reluctant to give him a 100-percent support.

My reading of postmodernism (à la Lyotard) is that it is merely a bold understanding of the ancient, salutary intellectual *laissez faire* that forms the spine of scholarship. I am, of course, unable to share the excitement of its more zealous supporters, for the preeminent reason that, below the surface, it really says nothing new. You don't claim a new birth by rechristening an old child. All the formulations that underpin postmodernism are the same single thread running through liberal scholarship from the earliest of times to the present. The insipidity of postmodernism may only be compared with the boredom that attend the products of the cybermania that now pervades all sphere of human activity.

Nor do I think it is worth the trouble to decree to Africans to accept or reject any of theory or the other. It seems inadvertently insulting to the intelligence of individual Africans, or for that matter member of any other human group, to think that they are not capable of recognizing

a helpful or worthless theory when they see one.

When Krydz goes on to say, apparently regarding PACA's creed, 'No installation here', one is made all the more apprehensive. Censorship is the very worst that can happen to any domain of art, or intellectual enterprise. In art, let time alone be allowed to treasure what it deems fit and burn what is loathes. **GR**



Onuzulike Ozioma,
Stoneware, 1997.
'Africa: Stories of Pain,
stories of Hope'.