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NATIVE-CENTRIC ART FAIR IN THE ERA OF BLOCK CHAIN MUSEUM: A RELIGIOUS AND BIOETHICAL ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

The rise of digital museums, especially those leveraging emerging technologies like blockchain, has transformed the way art is curated, accessed, and commercialized. However, this shift poses complex challenges for Native-centric art fairs. Native-centric artistic expression is deeply rooted in spiritual, communal, and cultural traditions and has provided platforms for showcasing authentic artworks. The problem lies in the potential erosion of Indigenous values in an ethical, digitized, or commodified environment. This study addresses the technological advancements in digital curation, but there exists a gap in understanding how digital museums affect Indigenous art, communities, particularly from a religious and bioethical standpoint. The objective of this research is to critically analyze the ethical and religious implications of integrating Native-centric art into digital museums, focusing on how these platforms align or conflict with Indigenous value systems. A philosophical method of analysis is adopted in this study to critically review digital museum infrastructures and their ethical protocols. The research findings reveal a significant dissonance between the individualistic, ownership-based logic of digital museums and the collective, sacred nature of many Native art forms. The contributions of this study lie in foregrounding Indigenous epistemologies in digital ethics discourse and introducing a framework that integrates religious values and bioethical considerations into digital curation practices. Recommendations include adopting community-driven consent mechanisms, ensuring digital sovereignty for Indigenous data, and establishing intercultural ethical guidelines for the digitization of sacred, cultural heritage and ethical collaboration between Indigenous communities, technologists to build inclusive and respectful digital futures.

Keywords: Blockchain, Digital museum, Eco-doxology, Cultural dilution, Native-centric Art Fair, Bioethics, Religion

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INTRODUCTION

Art has traditionally been a sacred medium for visual and symbolic expression, showcasing authentic art. However, it has led to cultural erosion. From the serene Buddha statues of Gandhāra and the cave murals of Ajanta to the mandalas of Tibet and minimalist Zen gardens of Japan, Buddhist art has served as a powerful spiritual vehicle (Somathilake, 2022: 71). In the contemporary era, the sacred integrity of artistic expression faces a profound crisis due to native-centric art fairs. Art, once an embodiment of meditative practice, compassion, and spiritual expression, faces substantial challenges of artwork commodification. The physical movement of art from one destination to another has reduced sacred images to mass-produced commodities, stripping them of their spiritual power. Kendall (2015:367) argues that "cities are nodes of commerce, sometimes global in scope, for a variety of sacred goods" (367). Furthermore, international and local art fairs reshape religious temples and artworks into aesthetic products for entertainment or export. This view goes against Christian religious teachings. In John 2:13–17 and Matthew 21:12–13, Jesus says, "Stop turning my Father's house into a market." This is perhaps the most direct critique of the native-centric art fair. In the ancient Jewish context, the temple was a place of worship, but it had become entwined with financial transactions such as buying animals for sacrifice and changing money. Jesus' zealous reaction shows that commerce in a sacred context, when it distorts or exploits the purpose of worship, is offensive. This passage critiques the commercialization and profaning of sacred space where the temple, meant to be a place of prayer and reverence, had become a marketplace driven by profit motives by the used of block chain-based digital museums and the native centric art fairs.

In Nigeria, there are difficulties in preserving native-centric art. Nigeria is a country endowed with a lot of cultural heritage sourced from its multicultural communities. The contemporary status of most Nigerian cultural heritages (both material and non-material) is best described as endangered (Onyima, 2016:273). The native-centric art, spanning sculpture, textiles, beadwork, pottery, wood carvings, and musical instruments including the talking drum (*dündún*), *udu*, *ekwe*, and *gangan*, are a living repository of cultural history. These arts not only reflect aesthetic skill but also embody oral traditions, spiritual beliefs, and social functions. However, cultural preservation faces significant challenges, many of which stem from social change, environmental conditions, and institutional gaps (Onyima, 2016:273).

Art is gradually produced for secular consumption. In the past, mass-produced Buddha heads and deities of the Tibetan can be viewed as a kind of portrait that evokes emotions (Zhang, n.d: 2). The implication here is that modern communities often prioritize ritual or institutional authority over. contemplative depth, and artistic production, once closely tied to monastic life and meditative insight, is now outsourced, rushed, or