

INNOVATIVE CONTRIBUTIONS OF ARTS IN COVID-19: A POST COVID-19 GLOBAL CHALLENGE

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Abstract

COVID-19 has stunned the global economy and threatened human life. Due to rapidly emerging fatalities and enormous cases appearing every day, researchers across the globe are producing significant contributions to mitigate this pandemic. Besides the race for discovering a vaccine and treatment for COVID-19, there is utmost focus on flattening the curve by undertaking appropriate measures. The remarkable role of artistic innovation and enthusiast's implementation of technology alike are considered. This is a scholarly response to a rapidly unfolding global health crisis which has and will continue to have lasting imprints on humanity.

Keyword: Art Movement, Art Education, Graphics Design, Textile Design, COVID-19, Innovation and Technology.

Introduction

COVID-19 has stunned the global economy and threatened human life. It was captioned by World Health Organization (WHO), on 31 December 2019, their China office received information about the cases of pneumonia of unknown aetiology detected in Wuhan City, Hubei Province of China. WHO was updated by the national authorities in China on 3 January 2020 about the 44 patients infected with the pneumonia of unknown aetiology? News about a frightening virus outbreak in China started to appear on various media platforms. On 30 January 2020, WHO declared the outbreak as a Public Health Emergency of international concern, and on 11 February 2020, the disease was named as Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) (WHO, 2020).

COVID-19 is rapidly spreading, and it has conquered the focus of government officials, researchers and scientists. At the time of documenting this research on 11 April 2020, the Johns Hopkins University Coronavirus Resource Centre stated 1,712,674 total confirmed cases and 103,796 deaths from COVID-19 worldwide. Besides being life-threatening, COVID-19 has destabilized businesses, disrupted daily life and created stress as well as anxiety in people. Scientists and researchers have created collaborative platforms to discover a vaccine and medication for COVID-19. However, the rapid creation of vaccination and treatment entails the utmost use of state-of-the-art technologies in the domains such as bioinformatics, epidemiology, genome sequencing and molecular modeling to execute algorithms that require powerful computational capability to address complex queries and discover solutions (WHO, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the whole world, plunging the global economy into recession. The current health crisis has enormous global ramifications for the creative sector. It has impacted the entire creative value chain – creation, production, distribution and access – and considerably weakened the professional, social and economic status of artists and cultural professionals. Entrepreneurs and small- and medium-sized enterprises, which often lack the necessary resources to respond to an emergency of this magnitude, are especially vulnerable (WHO, 2020).

Freelancers, part-timers and gig workers, who make up a large segment of the sector's labour force, are left with limited to no access to conventional social protection mechanisms. Lockdown measures around the world also directly impact the sector's capacity.

Development of Technological Innovation through Art Movement

Despite the negative impact COVID-19 has registered globally, artists are still resilient. Many have created their own works even within the lockdown. For instance, Ugandan artists have composed songs of awareness of COVID-19, composed poems, supported one another in networks and many continue to use their own creative resources to support their families, some are forward looking and seeking for sustainable solutions in a bid to avoid such similar livelihood threats and job losses. Resili Art is a global movement initiated by UNESCO that aims to strengthen the resilience of artists and cultural professionals in the face of the enormous challenges posed by the current health crisis.

The Resili Art movement will:

Raise awareness about the impact of COVID-19 on the culture sector and the livelihoods of culture professionals

Give visibility to artists worldwide – renowned or unknown – and ensure their voices are heard at the policy level to address existing gaps and needs

Contribute to decision-making processes of Member States during the development of policies and financial mechanisms aimed at empowering artists.

Understanding the spatial epidemiology of a disease offers helpful insights not only to its nature and ecological associations but also on how to prevent and control now and in the future. The COVID-19 virus is the newest member of coronavirus family. It is highly contagious in nature. Its symptoms include fever, cough, and shortness of breath (Africa Centre for Disease Control, 2020). What is more worrisome is the evidence of asymptomatic transmission. This means a person could be infected and spread the virus without presenting clinical signs. The COVID-19 pandemic could be appropriately described as the greatest global health emergency in contemporary times. From one city to the entire world, the viral infection diffused aggressively with blatant disregard for gender, age, race, social status, national boundaries and the level of development. On the 14th April, 2020, the number of morbidity and mortality cases have exponentially risen to 1,992,903 and 130,635 while recoveries have steadily risen to 478,594

In the absence of a cure or vaccine, these troubling statistics have required drastic measures such as regular handwashing, physical distancing, stay at home/work-from-home, restriction on population movement and concentration to be implemented, forcefully in some cases, in various parts of the world. It is obvious that the pandemic has left adverse imprints on all facets of society, and would certainly greatly change the course of humanity; redefine the way we live, work and co-exist. In the face of the pandemic, a global solidarity against COVID-19 in form of extraordinary volunteerism, philanthropy, creativity and innovation has rapidly and strongly formed to confront the spread by all means possible.

Numerous safety measures such as hand washing facilities, hand sanitisers at public places, fumigation, in line with WHO recommendations, have been implemented in other parts of the country so as to slow down the spatial diffusion of the disease. In spite of these and other interventions such as ban on social, professional and religious gatherings school and border closures, curfews, creation of makeshift neighbourhood markets, and palliatives for indigent and vulnerable populations, the prevalence is still on the rise. It is not sufficient to only estimate when the pandemic would accelerate or nosedive but it is also crucial to identify where and explain how this newly emerging disease is advancing within the country's borders.

It is pertinent to note here that Nigeria, for instance, before the widespread occurrence of the virus, had been identified to be one of the high risk countries to be affected by the outbreak and vulnerable but with moderate capacity to manage the outbreak (Gilbert et al 2020). In the light of the fact that COVID-19 is a highly transmissible disease, it is very likely that a significant proportion of the country's population will be susceptible to infection. Given its immediate public attention and the very strong sense of urgency the matter deserves, the paper makes an attempt to comprehend the spatial epidemiology of this newly emergent disease and the contribution of Art towards it.

The arts sector serves artistic and educational missions through myriad occupations filled by individuals who work in full-time, part-time, hourly, seasonal, and freelance capacities. In March 2020, the Bureau of Economic Analysis reported that the arts and culture workforce contributed \$877.8 billion, or 4.5 percent, to the nation's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2017. The arts sector is an economic engine that—prior to the pandemic—directly employed more than 5 million workers. The next COVID-19 federal relief efforts should support the arts workforce and arts sector continuity:

Expand and recapitalize the Pay check Protection Program resources, provide new opportunities for those that have exhausted initial PPP funds, remove restrictions and burdens for self-employed applicants, eliminate the 500-employee cap, and provide dedicated funding for non-profit organizations. Extend the duration of the program and the loan forgiveness period, expand eligibility and allowable costs, and swiftly issue clear loan forgiveness guidance.

Fully fund the Economic Injury Disaster Loan program and eliminate the \$1,000 per employee cap imposed by SBA, so businesses with one or very few employees can access funds.

Provide streamlined, low-interest forgivable loans to assist microbusinesses (self-employed, sole proprietors, partnerships, freelancers, and LLCs) with zero or few employees/low net business income that have documented fixed business expenses such as rent/mortgage interest, utilities, business insurance, and debt service and are not adequately served by current programs.

Provide loan forgiveness for non-profits through the Main Street Lending Program and the Economic Stabilization Fund to support payroll costs and fixed overhead costs and ensure eligibility for non-profit employers with more than 500 employees that have been left out of current relief provisions.

Expand the duration of pandemic unemployment benefits and improve guidelines for implementation so that artists and other gig economy workers with mixed income sources (such as W-2 and 1099) receive full support rather than unfairly being limited to partial benefits. Update Disaster Unemployment Assistance to ensure support for artists and other gig economy workers in the long term.

Increase charitable giving by removing the \$300 cap on the above-the-line tax incentive for no itemizers and allowing all taxpayers to claim the deduction on both 2019 and 2020 tax returns. Maintain the CARES Act removal of the Adjusted Gross Income limitation on deductibility of charitable gifts for 2021 and beyond.

Provide assistance for single- and multi-employer pension funds to protect artists' retirement security.

Expand access to health coverage and care by including a one-time special enrolment period in relief legislation and removing access and affordability barriers to health coverage for artists and arts workers that have atypical employment structures.

Support the U.S. creative economy, which is growing at twice the rate of most other sectors, by supporting proposals in the PLACE Act (S.3232) to amend the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, the Public Work and Economic Development Act, the Small Business Act, the New Markets Tax Credit, the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act, and the Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act to improve access to existing federal workforce development opportunities for creative businesses and creative workers.

The arts sector is innovating to provide online arts experiences and distance learning opportunities, preparing to serve audiences when quarantine orders are lifted, and will be an essential partner in jump-starting national, state, and local efforts during and after COVID-19. The federal government should support ongoing creative sector activity:

Support a complete education for all students through federal education funding and distance learning resources that will increase the capacity of state and local education agencies to ensure equitable access to arts education as part of a well-rounded education for all learners amidst the COVID-19 crisis and beyond.

Adopt an emergency broadband benefit to ensure that all people, no matter their income or location, have access to high speed broadband. Ensuring connectivity enables more equitable participation in artistic, educational, and cultural activity taking place online.

Approve substantial funding for the National Endowment for the Arts, National Endowment for the Humanities, and Institute of Museum and Library Services, as they administer dedicated COVID-19 relief to address the unique needs of cultural organizations.

Maximize the impact of new and continued funding for the National Endowment for the Arts beyond the \$75 million investment in the CARES Act by making COVID-19 relief grants available to all eligible organizations as defined in the NEA's authorization statute (20 U.S.C. §954); expanding waivers for public/private matching requirements to apply to all active FY19 and FY20 NEA grant awards; and, allowing current grantees to re-allocate funding for general operating support to address COVID-19 economic losses. Enable national non-profit organizations to sub grant federal arts funds to support community-based arts and culture organizations, agencies, and artists to assist in efficiently supporting the nation's cultural infrastructure and workforce.

Enact policies to ensure rapid processing of artist visas by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services and consulates to shield U.S.-based arts petitioners from the delays and costs of reprogramming international events.

The arts and the work of artists are integral to reimagining and reopening public gathering places and work spaces. Federal policy should support the arts in safety and infrastructure policies that guide the ways we bring people together:

Support the arts and work of artists as essential infrastructure investments. Building a strong cultural infrastructure, creating art that enriches our lives, and using arts-based approaches to public works and community development initiatives will leave a legacy that defines our society for generations to come.

Provide eligibility for arts facilities in infrastructure investments to renovate, refurbish, and adapt to post-COVID-19 public health protocols.

Include the arts sector in consideration of public health and workplace safety policies to protect the health of arts workers, support the needs of arts venues, and ensure public confidence in gathering again.

Ensure the arts are considered in business interruption insurance and liability policy discussions, as the policy outcomes of both areas will influence the near-term reopening plans and the long-term viability of American arts and cultural organizations.

According to an Americans for the Arts study on the economic losses to the arts as a result of COVID-19, non-profit arts organizations have, to date, registered an estimated \$5.5 billion in financial losses. In addition, non-profit arts organizations have lost 197 million event admissions, which has resulted in a loss of \$6.2 billion in event-related spending by audiences. Arts organizations, artists, and the broader arts workforce are vital contributors to the non-profit sector, are essential to the economy, vitality, and wellbeing of the communities they serve, and they must be supported by all forms of relief.

Art as a Tool in Promoting Innovative Preventive Measures for COVID '19

Jacob (2020), is of the opinion that visuals and words always create a narrative impact on the minds of the readers. Visual data or infographics enable readers to understand and comprehend complex information effortlessly. In an era of technological development, consumption of information is faster and quicker, and so the storytelling potential of data visualization narratives is productive. During a global endemic like coronavirus, the mounting fear motivates people to seek accurate and credible information swifter and also change health behaviour accordingly.

Art as a multi-faceted institution of creativity and innovation has the capacity to create awareness using different media. However, there are divers of medium of creating informative awareness that foster and sensitize the public of the preventive measures and how they can adapt this in their daily endeavours. The following medium will be explored as an infographics art tool in promoting innovative preventive measures;

Graphical as a Tool in the Designing and Production of Banner, Poster and Flyers: The role of the graphic designer in the communication process is that of encoder or interpreter of the message. They work on the interpretation, ordering and presentation of visual messages. The design work always starts from a client's demand, a demand that ends up being established linguistically, either orally or in writing, that is, that graphic design transforms a linguistic message into a graphic manifestation. Graphic design has, as a field of application, different areas of knowledge focused on any visual communication system (Wikipedia, 2021). For example, graphics as an applied art can be used in advertising strategies to curb the spread of the virus in this pandemic era, or it can also be applied in promotion of preventive measures for post covid-19 in the society at large. Below are examples of graphics designs that are informative in nature:



Fig 1: TASUED COVID-19 Prevention Protocol Flex Banner.
Designed by: Ipaye O. Johnson
Dated: March, 2021

Fig 2: FRSC COVID-19 Prevention Protocol Online Flyer.
Designed by: Ipaye O. Johnson
Dated: April, 2020

Textile as a Tool in the Production and Branding of Washables Face Mask: Textile geometry is the creative and technical process by which thread or yarn fibers are woven together or interlaced to form a flexible, functional, and decorative cloth or fabric which is subsequently printed upon or otherwise adorned (Wikipedia, 2021). Textile design is further broken down into three major disciplines, printed textile design, woven textile design, and mixed media textile design, each of which utilize different methods to produce a surface ornamented fabric for variable uses and markets. Textile Design as a practice has evolved to become an industry integral to other disciplines such as fashion, interior design, and fine arts (Russell, 2016). Printed textile designs are produced by the application of various printing processes to fabric or cloth and other media, namely: resist printing, relief printing, rotogravure, screen printing, transfer printing, and digital printing (Wikipedia, 2021). For example, textile as an applied art can be used in cultivating the use of face mask as a means to reduce cost of purchasing face mask almost all the time to curb the spread of the virus in this pandemic era. Furthermore, it can also be deployed in the promotion of preventive measures for post covid-19 in most academic setting such as; schools and tertiary institutions. Below are examples of textile production of face mask, for tertiary institution usage.



Fig 3: Textile Production and Branding of Tye and Dye Fabric Face Mask.
Photographed by: Ipaye, Oluwatobiloba Johnson.
Dated: April, 2020



Fig 4: Visual Presentation of Textile Production of Tye and Dye Fabric Face Mask.
Photographed by: Ipaye, Oluwatobiloba Johnson.
Dated: April, 2020

Conclusion and Recommendations

There is a rapid demand for scientific and technical research contributions to overcome the threats of COVID-19. Due to the impact and significance of the solutions, government authorities and leading private firms have form alliances to fund and promote COVID-19 research. The current goal of the researchers is to control the expansion curve of the COVID-19 and to eliminate it by exploring the precise vaccine. Besides threatening the global economy, this pandemic has killed many innocent lives and caused anxiety among the people, which may lead to severe health fatalities that may last even after the eradication of COVID-19. Future research also needs to focus on producing scientific solutions to monitor and ensure the well-being of the people who are living under strict movement control restrictions with social distancing and self-isolation. There is also a need for research in the areas of security and privacy issues related to technologies used for COVID-19 developments. Furthermore, innovative use of technology should be utilized to assist and motivate frontline healthcare practitioners and officials in the fight against COVID-19.

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