

Noisy, performative and unapologetically non-European: Nigeria welcomes a museum like no other

Level 1: Elementary / Pre-Intermediate

1 Warmer

a. What makes a good museum? Make a list of the top three things that make a museum great. Compare with your classmates. Give reasons to support your opinion.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

2 Key words

a. Write the correct words from the wordpool to complete the definitions below. Then find and highlight them in the article to read them in context.

basement

colonial

drowning

opposite

pop

1. on the other side, across from _____
2. a room or rooms in a building that is partly or completely below the level of the ground

3. (of a colour) be very bright and easy to see _____
4. dying because of being underwater and unable to breathe for too long _____
5. connected to a country that controls another country _____

generation

heritage

refuse

stunning

traditional

6. say that you will not do or agree to something _____
7. all the people who were born at about the same time _____
8. part of the beliefs, customs or way of life of people that have not changed for a long time

9. very attractive or beautiful _____
10. the history, traditions, buildings, and objects that are an important part of a culture, people and their country _____

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b. Complete the sentences with words from the previous activity. You might have to change the form of the word.

1. In this painting, the artist used lots of bright colours and they really _____.
2. Houses in Florida do not have _____.
3. The bakery is _____ the library on the High Street, not next to it.
4. The rose garden at the palace is absolutely _____.
5. The older _____ often has different opinions from the younger one.
6. We _____ to sign the contract because it was unfair.

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Saeed Kamali Dehghan

30 April, 2024

- 1 In central Lagos, opposite the Nigerian National Museum, there was a swimming pool and a hall. This year, a new pool is opening next to a museum about Yoruba culture.
- 2 The John Randle Centre for Yoruba Culture and History is in Lagos. Unlike the National Museum, which was built in the 1950s, the centre is dedicated to Yoruba culture.
- 3 “If you go to a Western museum, the African section is often in the basement, it’s dark. But this museum pops with colour and sound,” says Sean Oduwole, the lead architect.
- 4 Former Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari announced the centre in January 2023, but it will open its doors to the public this autumn.
- 5 John Randle, a doctor born in Sierra Leone, built the original swimming pool. He saw how young Lagosians were drowning nearby and built a swimming pool when the colonial rulers refused to do so.
- 6 The Randle pool was built in the 1920s. It became popular because Lagosians could not go to the club run by the British. A hall was added in the 1950s, but both closed in the late 1970s.
- 7 Oduwole says that many Lagosians of his parents’ generation learned to swim in the original Randle pool and went to the theatre in the hall. He says, “With this museum, we wanted to ask why Western museums don’t work within the African context. We want to know how to create a space that isn’t a museum in the traditional sense.”
- 8 Rea, from the University of Leeds, says: “Yoruba culture is undoubtedly one of the great artistic, musical and oral-literature cultures. It is stunning in its creativity and art history.
- 9 “Even today, we find that Yoruba culture is influencing the world in various ways,” says Rea. He gives two examples. One is Nigerian musician Fela Kuti, who is taking oriki singing and mixing it with American jazz. Another is salsa, which uses Yoruba dance and is found in Brazil. You can taste Yoruba cuisine in London and New York.
- 10 Interest in Yoruba heritage has increased among young Nigerians over the past ten years, so they will enjoy visiting the Randle Centre, says Rea.
- 11 “The key thing about the centre is a refusal to talk about the idea of the traditional. When you talk about traditional African art, it’s a very Eurocentric view. Rather, we’re looking at the traditions of Yoruba culture.”

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First published in The Guardian, 30/04/2024

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3 Comprehension check

a. Answer the questions using information from the article.

1. What was opposite the Nigerian National Museum?
2. Where is the new museum?
3. What does Oduwole say about the African section in Western museums?
4. How is this new museum different from a European one?
5. When will the museum be open to the public?
6. Who built the original pool?
7. Why did he build the pool?
8. When did the original pool and memorial hall close down?
9. What is one example of Yoruba culture's effect on the world?
10. Who has become more interested in Yoruba heritage over the past ten years?

4 Key language

a. Rearrange the words to make sentences in passive voice.

1. by John Randle / was built / The original swimming pool

2. from the club / by the British / Lagosians / were excluded

3. was announced / The centre / in January 2023 / by Muhammadu Buhari

b. Rewrite the sentences in the active voice.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

5 Discussion

a. Discuss these statements.

- "Museums should show all parts of art, life and culture."
- "It is important to protect art and history."

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6 In your own words

a. Do some research about a new museum or cultural centre.

- What kind of art, history or culture does it have?
- Who will visit it, e.g., tourists, locals, young people, and families?
- How is it different from other museums and cultural centres in the area?
- How does the new museum or cultural centre help its community?

b. Report your findings to the class and share your opinions. Here are some phrases to help you when you discuss facts.

- *The research said ...*
- *One example is ...*
- *The museum helps its community by ...*
- *The article said that ...*
- *One / Another reason is ...*

Here are some phrases to use when stating your opinion.

- *I think (that) ...*
- *From what I have seen/read, ...*
- *I'm (not sure) about ...*
- *In my opinion, ...*
- *I (dis)agree with ...*