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The Alan Vaughan-Richards Archive: *recovering tropical modernism in Lagos.*

1.0 **Introduction**

In 2011, with a small project grant from the British Academy, and further assistance from the University of Edinburgh and the Goethe Institute in Lagos plans were made to digitize a number of drawings belonging to the late Alan Vaughan Richards, a British-Nigerian architect who had practiced in Lagos, Nigeria, from the 1950s until his death in the 1980s. Vaughan Richards had been an influential character on the Lagos architectural scene. He married the Lagos socialite Ayo Vaughan and had worked first for the Architects Co-Partnership in Nigeria before setting up his own practice and then latterly working with the Nigerian architect Alex Ibru his works include a number of university campus plans, individual houses and industrial buildings he was also one of the first Nigerian architects to discuss architectural heritage and conservation, contributing to the writing of and producing the drawings for 1977 publication *Building Lagos*. (Akinsemoyin and Vaughan, Richards, 1977)

The funding received enabled not only the digitization of the drawings but also development of an exhibition which attempted to capture Alan Vaughan Richards and his family's life in 1960s Lagos. This chapter discusses the challenges of architectural drawing conservation and digitization in Africa; the context and development of Alan Vaughan Richard Archive exhibition in Edinburgh, which had focused not only on digitization outcomes but on aiming to showcase 1960s African modernism, architecture and culture in West Africa to a 21st century Western audience, and finally a consideration as to whether this project and others are the best vehicles by which to engage 'other' cultures in archival projects which necessarily engage with wider non-western cultural contextual and pragmatic concerns.

It concludes by evaluating the successes and failures of the current adopted model of heritage conservation, and suggest what changes might take place in order for the model to work more effectively in an emerging world context.

2.0 Context And Setting

The departing Britis colonial government left an interesting legacy to future historians of Ghana and Nigeria in West Africa. This was because the British administrations in each country had recently built new regional archives across Nigeria and Ghana and also invested in creating and establishing national archive services from the late 1950s. (WABA, 1963) The motivation for this would seem to have been the desire to leave a documented record of the century of colonial administration in these countries for use of the emerging local administrators. Duplicated copies of the most significant material were however lodged at the British National Archives Archives at Kew. The future maintenance and curation of these West African archives became limited or non-existent after their initial set-up period. This was because from the mid-1960s both Nigeria and Ghana were engulfed in a states of political and civil crises, including military coups d'etat and civil war, which continued well into the 1970s.

Fortunately, beginning in the late 1990s, and particularly over the last decade, there has been a re-ignited interest in architectural history as the body of architecture and social infrastructure projects, produced by early post-independence architects, from mainly Western and Eastern European countries, is now being re-evaluated and assessed. Despite this, there remain many smaller unknown and essentially hidden archives which are yet to be viewed and made public due both to the limited post-independence investment into archival resources and the cost of developing and maintaining these resources. The British Library-funded 'Hidden Archives' programme (British Library, 2004) and the work of universities such as Yale in collaboration with the University of Ghana, (See Yale,2018) have been successful in initiating **the creation and restoration of African cultural archives. These institutions and others have successfully helped kickstart and fund post-1960s archival projects such as these across Africa.**

This was the context within with the Alan Vaughan Richards Archive Project was initiated. It started as a chance meeting amongst a friend and distant relative, Remi Vaughan Richards' whose father, Alan (Richards) had spent most of his architectural life as an architect in Lagos. He had been married to Ayo Vaughan, from a renowned Lagos family who had a pioneering career in nursing, and raised Remi and her three siblings in Lagos during the heady early Nigerian independence era from the mid 1950s to the 1970s. It was during this period that Alan Vaughan Richards was most architecturally active. (Uduku et. al. 2012a) (**Image 1a Ola Oluwakitan House + 1b Architect's House**)

Alan Vaughan-Richards was trained in England and initially worked in Northern Iraq with the Iraqi development board. He then went on to gain a diploma in Tropical Architecture from the AA in 1955. He was then employed by the Architects Co-partnership in Lagos in 1956 but worked in the London office on St Anne's college Oxford, which won a RIBA Bronze Medal. He then moved back to Lagos and involved in the design of the had first come to Lagos to work with the firm Architects Co-Partnership, (ACP) in 1957. (Grove online) He was involved in a number of projects including Bristol Hotel, and Investment House in .Lagos
On the departure of ACP from Nigeria just after the nation's independence in 1960, Vaughan Richards bought out the firm's business interests in Nigeria and set up in practice.

Aside from private commissions and his own house design, he is most known for his work on the masterplan and design of the University of Lagos from the late 1960s to the early 1970s. He continued to live and work in Nigeria until his untimely death in 1989.

His architectural drawings papers and other materials which now make up part of the archive were left, very much as they had been twenty years after his death, in his home office in Ikoyi, Lagos. The Alan Vaughan Richards (AVR) archive project's objective was threefold: first to identify the drawings and other material that remained in Alan Vaughan Richard's office; secondly to digitise the most important drawings from the physical archive, and thirdly to work to develop a plan by which to conserve the architect designed house and the remaining archival drawings and artefacts. (Uduku 2012a, 2012b) This chapter seeks to review the project's objectives and its ultimate impact to different audiences.

Funding the Alan Vaughan Richards Archive
An initial British Academy Small Projects grant was received for the project in late 2010. This was for the sum of £7,450, a small beginning but enough to enable travel to Lagos by the author and Hannah Le Roux, from the University of the Witwatersrand who had been instrumental in identifying and making connections with Vaughan Richard's daughter Remi who is the guardian of the estate. Further small grants, to the sum of £5000, were received from the University of Edinburgh personal research fund and the Faculty Research and knowledge exchange fund. This enabled the project take place, and also the remaining funds made available for the staging and setting up of the well-regarded ***AVR-Archive Exhibition* in 2011,** (Uduku et al 2011) which displayed the digitized artefacts. Through the use of earlier research and material acquired at the Architect's House in Ikoyi and from his daughter, the background to Alan Vaughan Richards' life and work in West Africa in the 1960s and 1970s was also integrated with a timeline thread into the exhibition. **(IMAGE 2 AVR Exhibition)**

The Process
The initial visit was able to establish what drawings were extant and what condition they were in. Further funding from the University of Edinburgh small projects and RKE funds enabled the funding of two further visits by the author and two postgraduate students to document and record the drawings and artefacts and the architect-built house in which they remain.

It became clear early on that while some drawings were in a poor and rapidly deteriorating state, due to the cross ventilated and elevated location of the office most drawings had survived in good condition for more than forty years in some cases. The task turned to consider what might be possible in terms of drawing conservation and also the conservation and repair of "Alan Vaughan-Richard House"(AVR House), in which the drawings and studio were located. (**IMAGE 3: AVR House with Remi Vaughan Richards in foreground**)

There were not the funds available to work on the upgrading and restoration of AVR house and we were unable to come up with viable schemes to undertake the refurbishment via fundraising.. We approached cultural institutes in Lagos including the British Council and Alliance Francais, for help with funding the upgrade proposals. The Goethe Institute in Lagos, via its Director, were able to provide help in working through possible funding

proposals. A key issue had to do with the land ownership of the property, through the Director of the Goethe institute, Remi Vaughan Richards was introduced to and able to work with a lawyer to help resolve these issues. This process however took longer than the duration of the project. The nd delay in the resolution of land ownership issues and lack of further funding a meant that the proposed upgrading of the house could not take place, so this objective has remained unfulfilled.

Digitisation
The popularity of digital systems made the option of the digitization of key drawings and artefacts a possibility. The problem however was the cost of digitization in Nigeria using local printing and scanning firms was very high, even with the positive currency exchange rate between GB Pounds and Nigerian Naira. The option chosen then was to explore taking drawings out of Nigeria and having them digitized in the UK, at the University of Edinburgh.

The **logistics** in doing this were considerable; we had to find out whether taking out drawings which could be considered precious artefacts from Nigeria would be allowed, the mode of transportation of the larger drawings was also cause for concern, also the fragility of some of the drawings made us wonder whether the climate difference would further destroy the existing state of the drawings.

Furthermore , there were the ethics to consider. In the 2000s the idea of taking historical artefacts to Europe, albeit for preservation is a particularly colonial concept. There was also the added issue that the proposed preservation and digitisation would mean that the copyright related to the material would be held outside of the country of origin (Nigeria) and effectively held in trust by an institution (the University of Edinburgh). The entire project also depended significantly on a working trust relationshiop between the project lead and Ms Remi Vaughan Richards.

The practical considerations to be considred where whether the customs officials at Murtala Mohammed International Airport would allow the documents through. This proved easy as the archive of of drawings had been packed in a mix between hand and hold luggage. These were waved through by customs on the trip back to Edinburgh.

The **ethical** issues of digitization were resolved in a number of ways. We modelled the copyright issues involved via a trust status, where the digitization and initial storage of digital images of the AVR archive were undertaken by the technical lab at the University of Edinburgh's School of Architecture on behalf of Remi Vaughan Richards, the copyright holder and legal administrator of the Alan Vaughan Richards estate. The digitized images which can be found on the archive page are watermarked and low quality. This means that should authors and publishers want to use the images they are able to email the curator (the author). She in turn puts would-be users in touch with Ms. Vaughan Richards who decides whether to grant them permission to use the high-resolution, (hi-res), images with due acknowledgement to the AVR estate. Once permission is given the curator then sends the hi-res images as digital files to the users. This might be seen as a convoluted process, but it has now been in place for more than five years and works very well in practice. It is envisaged that ultimately the digital archive will be transferred to a Lagos-Nigeria location and run by Ms. Vaughan Richards and the AVR estate.

The Product

Once the material for documentation had arrived in Edinburgh the process of digitization took two weeks to complete and at its end the remaining funding was used to stage the AVR-Archive exhibition. The final logistical challenge was taking the drawings and a number of large, A1 sized acid free cardboard plan boxes with acid free tissue paper sheets of the same size back out to Lagos. The plan boxes and paper sheets had been advised to be the best way to help keep extant drawings in the AVR office in Lagos as best protected from the elements as possible in the tropical maritime environment in the absence of mechanical cooling and temperature control systems. The solution to this was the purchase of a large hard-shell cycle case which could take both the drawings and the flat packed cardboard plan boxes and acid free sheets. Travelling with a well-known inter-continental airline proved to be unproblematic with no charges at all for the unusual sized load. Thus, the entire process was possible on the small budget and close planning completed ahead of the task.

Unfortunately, we were able to make no real headway in redeveloping the AVR House as an accessible or 'visitable' site for West African modern architecture enthusiasts. As project organisers we had thought that this would have been the best way to increase public awareness about Alan Vaughan Richards role in developing West African modernism. **Instead** the University of Edinburgh's Architecture School Exhibition AVR-Archive was the most successful publicity Research Knowledge Exchange (RKE) output of the project, this was paradoxical as its outreach or impact was more felt by an audience in northern Europe (Edinburgh, where the exhibition was held) than in Lagos, Nigeria where Alan Vaughan Richards house is located . The digitisation of the archives was of course particularly successful and will hopefully ensure that some key buildings and works of the late Alan Vaughan Richards are new secured for digital posterity (current formatting permitting).

Thus despite the aforementioned successes the objective to make the work of AVR more accessible to local Lagosians was not achieved. Digitisation has made the drawings accessible to a global audience, including technically able and educationally able Nigerians and other Africans but not to the average African in Lagos or West Africa for whom the impact and publicity was initially targeted at . The exhibition that had been successfully received in Edinburgh had been carefully taken down and packed up to be displayed elsewhere. However, despite attempts to organize future venues for the exhibition, particularly in Nigeria-West Africa, there was neither the interest nor the exhibition space in Europe or Africa to do this when the project funding came to an end.

The Challenges

Undertaking the AVR project generated a number of key questions and challenges:

- for whom is the current archival project process focused?
- Is the current digital archive process really innovative in its curation of material? and
- How can we engage non 'Western' publics in appreciating heritage through digital processes which will have cultural relevance and significance to different local contexts?

For all its successes, the digitization of archives can be argued to be a continuation of the traditional archival curation process; albeit within digital domain. Whilst a significant proportion of the world might have access to computers, tablets and smartphones that can link with the internet, for some communities access to digital archives is more difficult, if not in some circumstances impossible to negotiate. This is a particular obstacle to would be users in emerging economies where formal educational structures are yet to catch up with digital investigative research methods. This is due both to less ubiquitous free access to Wi-Fi/internet on campus and in public settings, and the current relative cost of tablets, smartphones and laptops for average African students. Whilst the price of these hardware requirements for access to digital material are rapidly reducing, they are yet to become affordable for the majority of African students.

The model of curation and display also remains situated within a framework which works well in the Western educational – cultural mode where the exhibition usually takes place in an institution or place of note. To encourage wider participation from African audiences there is the need to begin to break down the notion of the exhibition as being an item of 'high culture' to which one has to go to the academy to view. Instead there is the need to take the exhibition to 'the people', which is arguably a more difficult feat to achieve.

There are now a few examples of this approach, the Market Theatre in Johannesburg is located in a particularly down town locally accessible location in the city centre, making it open to a mix of clientele from all social classes and racial groups. Also the District Six Museum Project in Cape Town is located in the old area that was part of District Six, making it accessible to Capetonians who still live and have links to the neighbourhood. In Ghana the ArchiAfrika project is also located in Jamestown in downtown Accra, and regularly has art and other cultural exhibitions that are accessible to a wide mix of Accra dwellers of different social classes.

Currently the author is engaged in developing this more 'grassroots' approach to community – local engagement with heritage, both the physical and the digital through collaborative projects with local communities and publics who are more amenable to, or already focused on exploring and engaging with their local heritage and traditions. This also responds to the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) which encourages the recognition of more ephemeral aspects of culture and also a wider engagement and appreciation of culture locally across the world. Digital archives within this framework therefore are somewhat secondary to the deeper discourse on heritage and culture in emerging world contexts. (Uduku and Wolff, 2018) The ability to create and develop access to these archival sources however is crucial to the re-establishment of a sustainable heritage culture in often challenging circumstances. In

Nigeria's case the issues are related to poverty and access to education, but in post-war nations such as Sierra Leone, Rwanda and Liberia, **there is the politics of the archive and remembrance which in itself can hinder the creation of 'neutral' archival material for posterity. The authors Basu, (2007), DeJong and Rowland, (2009) and Ntunda, (2014) have explored these issues in their texts examining Sierra Leone and Rwanda.**

The AVR Archive, does give a key insight into early Nigerian architecture at the cusp of and just after self-rule or independence. It does however focus on this view from the somewhat rose-tinted gaze of the middle-class bourgeoisie populace. This still makes it an important snapshot view of cultural and social history of the time from this specific frame of reference. There is a challenge in being able to interpret historical records such as archives in this case from more than one perspective, this often leads to an erasure or disinterest in the views of the less prominent actors involved in the architectural 'scene' in Nigeria in the 1960s and 1970s.

The other challenge is that the archive due to its curation and focus means that for the time being it remains mainly the preserve of academe and those associated closely with this. It is hoped that eventually it would contribute to a more accessible digital archive of social history. This would mean that the archive would be of interest not only to academics and postgraduate students but also to the local Lagosian public. This is very much the case of the archival material to be found at the British Library or Smithsonian Institute records and archives today. In both institutions there are programmes which are targeted at getting the public to view archival material that has particular interest to different groups. An example of this would be last year's British Library West Africa Exhibition (British Library, 2015) The Smithsonian Report, Exhibitions and Their Audiences, Actual and Potential (2002) examines this from an American perspective.

For this reason, it is important to help expand and create the conditions for the digital archive to become more accessible ad and also better developed to wider audiences in Africa. As the ubiquity of internet connections begins to penetrate further to more remote parts of Africa and to less affluent audiences,   and there is a continued drop in price of the hardware required for access more Africans will be able to gain digital access to archive sites. Also the development of more pop up sites, such as the ArchiAFrika project site in Ghana will also bring an involvement with the physical archive, through locally focused exhibitions and related events, closer to the public. The archive thus is a good example of how one can develop a decentralized access system to material in the challenging educational conditions to be found in much of Africa.

Conclusions
The AVR project successfully demonstrated the possibility of developing an archive with a relatively small amount of funding, in an emerging country context where the funds, will and ability to produce this result on a more formal traditional basis would have been difficult. The exhibition which took place at the University of Edinburgh was particularly successful and did create a greater awareness of West African Modernism amongst architects and other audiences in Edinburgh . The model of ensuring copyright and ownership of the material remained with the architect's estate via his daughter Ms. Remi Vaughan Richards, also demonstrated how the reframing of past precedents could be successfully used to ensure that work remains 'in country' and therefore hopefully accessible to a wider local audience than might have been the case decades ago.

This success has however to be weighed against the less successful aim of the project in engaging with local citizens in West Africa, and Lagos in particular where the buildings on display and Alan Vaughn Richard worked as an architect.

Despite this overall success, it is acknowledged that a key objective of the project, the upgrading and development of Alan Vaughan Richards House as a cultural centre and digital archive in its own right remains unrealised. It is however hoped that as the internet increases in ubiquity and the 'cost' of the hardware; smartphones, tablets and laptops follows Moore's law in cost reduction, there will be a significant increase in internet access by the public in emerging country contexts such as Nigeria. Similarly, it is expected that the higher education system and public awareness activities are beginning to engage with outreach heritage projects which incorporate the recognition and use of digital archives, to which the AVR project would belong. This, as discussed, ties in with the international moves by heritage organisations such as UNESCO to make heritage more accessible and relevant to a wider global public; in all its forms, tangible and intangible.

The future then looks potentially good for digital archives and its associated local and institutional economy in emerging countries in Africa and farther afield. The successful development of the AVR Archive and the continued support for and funding of projects such as the British Library-Endangered Archives funded Accra Metropolitan Archives project, British Library (2004) proves this.

There is thus a growing interest in the creation and production of digital archives from not only an academic perspective but also within community groups who recognize the potential value of these resources to a wider audience. Furthermore, there are adaptations and innovations afoot which should ensure that new digital archives and resources are better integrated with local audiences through targeted outreach activities. This should accordingly help to make explicit the direct connections communities can have with archives and also support ways in which access to the archive can complement and support local and community research-knowledge, engagement with, and their championing of heritage issues in all contexts. It also enables the sharing of this information via the visual international interactive platforms on which today's digital archives are built-on.

As the African villagers knew in the past:

"*When one hears the talking drum, its message spreads to all parts of the village, only the foolish do not heed or respond to its call.*"

(adapted West African proverb)

End

IMAGES

Image One Alan Vaughan Richards House/ or practice /Oluwakitan House (can they be merged ie 1a and 1b – this is how they are labelled in the separate file.

Image Two
The AVR – Exhibition

Image Three
AVR House with Remi Vaughan Richards in foreground

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