

SECTION

2

RELATIONSHIP  
BETWEEN ARTWORK  
AND CULTURE



# THE CREATIVE JOURNEY (FROM CAVES TO THE 21ST CENTURY)

## Arts Across Time

### INTRODUCTION

---

In section one of this course, the activities and the content should have helped you to analyse and gain insight and appreciation of Ghanaian Art History from the Pre-Colonial era to the modern era. This section will further help you to explore the impact of both Ghanaian and African artworks on African cultures. Your ability to identify and analyse the significant impacts of the artworks on African cultures will largely depend on the enthusiasm and curiosity to attach to this section.

#### At the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Evaluate the impact of indigenous artworks on African cultures.
- Analyse and explain the contributions of Indigenous African art to Global art. Describe the art of major ancient cultures with timelines.
- Discuss the contribution of ancient art to emerging art traditions

#### Key Ideas

- Over the years, indigenous artwork has influenced the sustainability of various African cultures.
- The cultures of many African societies are promoted through indigenous art and design.
- Indigenous arts and designs have contributed to the development and shaping of the culture and identity of various African societies.
- The current emerging Ghanaian art traditions reflect the influence of indigenous African art.
- Artwork of indigenous African people is directly related to their everyday life practices.
- Arts of the ancient cultures span from a timeline that begins from pre-historic era to our modern days.
- The artworks made by current or contemporary global cultures are usually influenced by the works of ancient cultures.

# IMPACT OF INDIGENOUS GHANAIAN AND AFRICAN ART

In the previous lesson, we covered myths and legends in Africa and their associated artworks. It is hoped you were able to identify some artworks produced by indigenous societies in Africa based on myths and legends. In this lesson, you will examine the impact of indigenous artworks on African cultures. Interestingly, myths, legends and art discussed in the previous lesson have greatly helped in the development of not just the Ghanaian culture but that of Africa as a whole. Beliefs, traditions and social structures have been shaped through indigenous art. These structures fostered unity among diverse communities while inspiring the making of various artworks. Some areas in various African cultures that Indigenous artworks on had an impact on include:

## 1. Education and Cultural Preservation

Indigenous art plays a crucial role in education and cultural preservation across Africa. Traditional art forms, including sculptures, masks, textiles, and oral storytelling, serve as repositories of historical knowledge and cultural values. Educational practices often integrate these art forms to teach younger generations about their heritage. For instance, the Akan people's use of the Golden Stool not only symbolises the unity and power of the Asante Kingdom but also educates the youth about the significance of their cultural heritage. Similarly, the Chiwara headdress of the Bambara people of Mali, used in agricultural ceremonies, teaches the importance of farming and community cooperation. Artworks inspired by myths and legends, such as the story of Queen Abla Pokou of the Baule people, reinforce cultural narratives and preserve historical memory. These legends, depicted in various art forms, help sustain cultural identity and continuity. By embedding these stories in art, communities ensure that their traditions and values are transmitted across generations, thereby preserving their cultural essence.

## 2. Expression of Personal and Collective Experiences

Indigenous art in Africa serves as a powerful medium for expressing both personal and collective experiences. Artworks often reflect the social, political, and spiritual lives of the people. For example, the Gelede masks of the Yoruba people are used in festivals to celebrate and honour the role of women in society, highlighting communal values and personal achievements.

Personal experiences, such as rites of passage, are also depicted through art. The Maasai beadwork, for instance, marks significant life events like birth, circumcision, and marriage, each colour and pattern conveying specific meanings.

## 3. Means of Artistic Self-Expression

African indigenous art provides artists with a platform for self-expression, allowing them to explore their creativity and convey their perspectives. This form of artistic freedom is evident in the diverse styles and mediums used across the continent. Artists draw inspiration from their environment, spiritual beliefs, and daily life,

resulting in a rich tapestry of artistic expression. For instance, the intricate bronze sculptures of the Benin Kingdom reflect not only the artists' technical skill but also their interpretation of royal power and divine authority. Similarly, the vibrant murals of the Ndebele people showcase individual artistic expression while adhering to cultural aesthetics. These works of art embody the artists' personal visions and contribute to the broader cultural landscape.

#### 4. Highlighting History and Beliefs

Indigenous African art is deeply intertwined with history and beliefs, serving as a visual documentation of historical events and spiritual ideologies. Many artworks are created to honour ancestors, deities, and significant historical figures. The Okomfo Anokye's Golden Stool of the Asante people is not only a symbol of unity but also a historical artefact that represents the foundation of the Asante Kingdom. Myths and legends, such as the Bambara's creation myth involving the deity Faro, are often depicted in art to illustrate the origins of humanity and the universe. These artistic representations help to keep historical narratives and spiritual beliefs alive, ensuring that they remain integral to the community's identity.

#### 5. Sustaining Societal Norms

Indigenous art encompasses societal norms and values, reinforcing social structures and communal ethics through rituals, ceremonies, and daily practices. For instance, the Asafo flags of the Fante people illustrate historical events and moral lessons, serving as both artistic expressions and educational tools that foster social cohesion and collective identity. Additionally, the use of art in judicial and governance systems, such as the staffs and stools of various African chieftaincies, symbolises authority and justice, reinforcing societal norms and the rule of law. These symbols are crucial in maintaining social order and transmitting cultural values.

Indigenous African art profoundly influences various cultural aspects through education, cultural preservation, personal and collective expression, artistic self-expression, and the highlighting of history and beliefs. This rich heritage ensures cultural identity continuity and provides insights into the diverse experiences and values of African societies.

#### 6. Promotion of Cultural Heritage

Indigenous art is pivotal in promoting and sustaining cultural heritage. Through festivals, ceremonies, and everyday life, art forms such as the Maasai beadwork and the Zulu shields celebrate and promote the distinct identities of these cultures. These artistic traditions attract global attention, fostering cultural pride and encouraging the preservation of unique cultural practices.

#### 7. Fostering Creativity and Critical Thinking

Engagement with indigenous art fosters creativity and critical thinking. By learning to create traditional art forms, individuals develop skills in problem-solving, innovation, and critical analysis. For example, the intricate beadwork of the

Maasai requires meticulous planning and creativity. Furthermore, understanding the symbolic meanings and cultural contexts of these artworks encourages deeper intellectual engagement and appreciation of cultural complexities.

## 8. Economic Development

Indigenous art also contributes significantly to economic development. Artworks are often sold in local and international markets, providing income for artisans and their communities. Tourism centred around cultural heritage sites and traditional arts and crafts boosts local economies. The global market for African art continues to grow, highlighting the economic potential of preserving and promoting indigenous art forms.

Considering the impact of Indigenous art on the Ghanaian culture, our beliefs and social structures, developing a pictorial chart may help identify and deduce the relationships between arts and design works found in African cultures and the areas of significance these Indigenous artworks had on the African society (**See Activity 2.1**). Below is a simple pictorial chart of Adinkra symbols. Think of the relationship between some of the symbols in **Fig 2.1** below and the social structures, beliefs and cultures in Ghana.

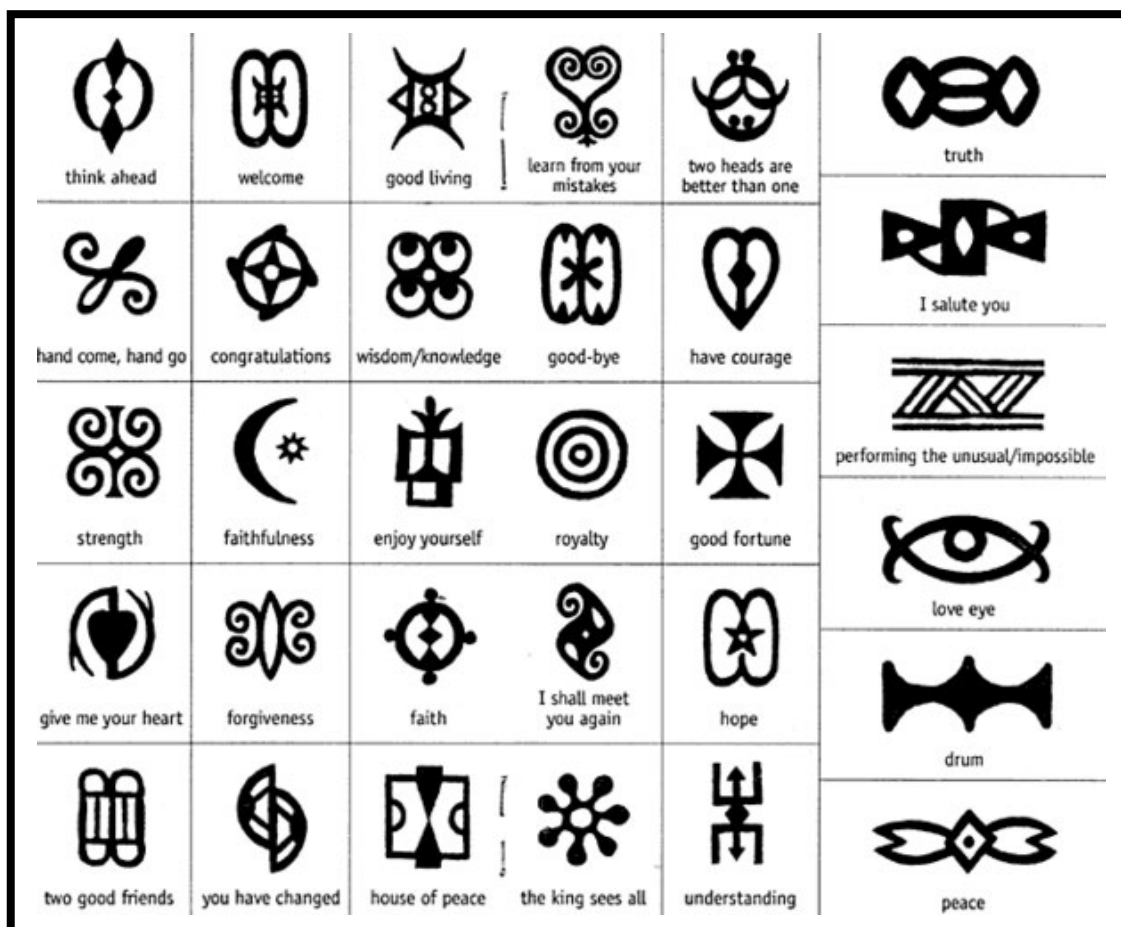


Fig. 2.1: Pictorial chart of Indigenous African Culture Artworks.

## Activity 2.1: Impact of Indigenous Art

### *Try this Research and Analysis (Individual)*

*As an African Art Student Historian, you have been given the task of making a presentation, at a seminar with a European audience, about the impact of art on indigenous African cultures. How can you complete this task successfully?*

*The following ideas should help guide you. Read the prompts below to help you gain facts, and information and give structure to your presentation task.*

1. Select a region in Africa (West, East, Southern and North) and culture (e.g., Bantu, Mende, Nok etc.). Identify three indigenous artworks (sculptures, textiles, pottery) commonly produced by this culture in your chosen region.
2. Find out through reading (on the internet, other documents or this book) the usefulness of the artworks identified to the culture.
3. For each chosen artwork, research and analyse its cultural significance by considering these aspects:
4. **Materials and Techniques:** What materials are used to create the artwork? What techniques are employed in its production?
5. **Symbolism and Meaning:** What symbols or messages do the artwork convey? How does it connect to the beliefs, values, and traditions of the culture?
6. **Social Function:** How is the artwork used in ceremonies, rituals, or everyday life?
7. **Historical Context:** Does the artwork tell a story about the history or mythology of the culture?
8. Write a personal note (***this can be handwritten or typed***) from your findings.
9. Present your note for general class discussion and review by your peers or teacher (***You may show it to your elderly family member if you are doing this at home***).

## Activity 2.2: Curating Artwork Exhibits

***This is a group activity.*** *Taking on the role of a group of expert curators:*

1. Form peer groups, (at home or in school) ensuring each group represents a different region in Africa.
2. Select suitable photographs (digital or printed) of a list of African artworks that reflect the region your group represents.
3. Create a detailed panel (*digital e.g. PowerPoint or manual e.g. Flipchart*) for your assigned region's exhibit (*Find the meaning of exhibit here; art-exhibit*). The panel should include:
4. **A map:** Highlighting the location of the region.

**Images and descriptions:** Showcase the three chosen Indigenous artworks with clear images and explanations of their materials, techniques, symbolism, and social function.

5. **Impact on Culture:** Explain how these artworks contribute to the understanding and continuation of the cultural heritage in the region using brief captions.
6. Review your panel exhibit together as a group, making needed changes and finalising the work.

### Activity 2.3: Cultural Identity and Preservation through Artwork

*Try this in the form of a group presentation and discussion in class or at home with your peers:*

1. Discuss to agree on a duration for each presentation and discussion.
2. Choose a timekeeper and a moderator to lead the presentations and discussions (*Your teacher or another person may lead if you are doing this in class*).
3. Choose leaders and ballot for turns.
4. Make your group presentation, highlighting the chosen artworks and their impact on the region's culture.
5. Discuss all presentations using the following guiding questions with the help of the moderator:
6. How do indigenous artworks reflect and preserve cultural identity of the chosen region?
7. What are the similarities or differences in the way artworks are used across different regions of Africa?
8. How might the impact of indigenous artworks change over time?
9. Take note of the feedback/comments from peers and use it to refine your presentation.
10. Keep the final version of the work in a portfolio (digital/ manual) for future reference.

*Consider this guideline on how to give feedback or comment on presentations made by your peers:*

- a. **Start Positively:** Begin by commenting on the good points you liked about the work/presentation. This could be a specific detail, a good idea, or a show of effort in a particular part. It sets a positive tone and shows interest in the work.
- b. **Focus on the Work, Not the Person:** Talk about the artwork itself, not how you think your peer feels about it. Use phrases like *'This part of the drawing...'* or *'The story could be even better if...'* instead of saying things like *'You are not good at drawing faces.'*

- c. **Be Specific:** Vague comments like *'It's good'* aren't very helpful. Point out a specific detail and explain how it could be improved. For example, *"The shading on the mountain is cool, but maybe adding some lines could show its texture better?"*
- d. **Offer Suggestions:** Remember, you're giving feedback. Use phrases like *"Have you considered..."* or *"You could try..."* This encourages your peers to think creatively and improve their work on their own terms.
- e. **Ask Questions:** Sometimes the best feedback comes from asking questions that get your peer thinking. *"What were you trying to show here?"* or *"How does this part connect to the overall idea?"* These questions can help them see their work in a new light and identify areas for improvement.

## Extended Reading

- Kruger, R., de Lange, R., & Stevens, I. (Eds.). (2018). *The arts and indigenous knowledge systems in a modernised Africa*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing. <https://www.cambridgescholars.com/resources/pdfs/978-1-5275-0767-8-sample.pdf>
- Tetteh, F. S. (2010). The Influence of Traditional African Art on African Architecture. *An unpublished Master Thesis in the Department of Architecture, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana*. <https://ir.knust.edu.gh/server/api/core/bitstreams/63970c39-f24d-4a37-88a5-49893c91289b/content>
- African Art History (pictures of indigenous African art forms and their respective cultures) <https://www.contemporary-african-art.com/african-art-history.html>



## THE INDIGENOUS AFRICAN ART AND GLOBAL ART

This lesson will explore the significant influence of indigenous African art on global art.

***Read the paragraph below carefully and reflect on it critically.***

African art has profoundly influenced global artistic movements, including cubism, fauvism, and expressionism. During the early 20th century, African art gained recognition within the art community, especially among modern artists like Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse. These artists were captivated by the simplicity and potency of African forms, particularly the abstract shapes and symbolism found in African masks and sculptures. This influence is evident in the bold lines and geometric shapes present in their paintings. The exploration of African art played a pivotal role in kick-starting the modern art movement and inspiring generations of artists who embraced abstraction and simplification.

Indigenous African art is deeply rooted in African societies, and contemporary artists such as Carl Einstein, Mical Sobeski, and Leo Frobenius use it for social commentary and political activism. It serves as a repository of traditional knowledge, contributes to economic empowerment, and seamlessly blends traditional and contemporary styles.

Even as indigenous African arts have influenced art globally, there is evidence that indigenous artworks of other cultures around the world also influenced African art. Here are a few examples of artworks of indigenous cultures around the world to consider.

### Indigenous Cultures Around the World

Similarities and differences exist in Indigenous African art and artworks of selected cultures in other parts of the world. Some of these other global Indigenous cultures are discussed below.

#### Indigenous Artworks made by some European cultures

These artworks reflect their artistic ingenuity and expressiveness.

#### The Sami culture of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and the Kola Peninsula in Russia

**Sámi art** refers to the artistic expressions and cultural heritage of the **Sámi people**, who are the Indigenous inhabitants of Northern Europe. Their traditional regions span Northern Sweden, Finland, the North-Western corner of Russia, the Northern half of Norway, and parts of the Southeast. Their art forms, such as Duodji (traditional handicrafts) and Gakti (traditional clothing), reflect their unique identity and connection to the land.

## Duodji-Sami craft (Duodji)



## Gakti Clothing



## The Basques: Spain and France

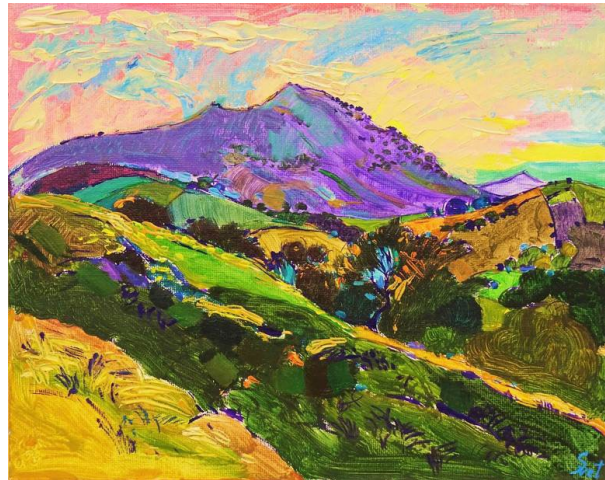
Basque art refers to the artistic traditions and expressions of the Basque people, who primarily inhabit the Basque country, a region spanning parts of Spain and France. It has a rich art history that includes various forms such as painting, sculpture, architecture, and crafts.

### Basque Artforms

#### *Paintings*

Basque paintings are characterised by the use of bold colours and geometric shapes, heavily influenced by Cubism and Fauvism. Common themes include landscapes, such as mountains, valleys, and coastlines, as well as folklore, mythology, and genre scenes depicting everyday life. These works often feature simplified forms and distorted images, reflecting the avant-garde artistic movements.

Examples of Basque paintings:



#### *Sculpture*

Basque sculpture prominently features wooden carvings and stone statues. Themes frequently explored in these works include mythological creatures such as dragons, griffins, and lions, as well as human figures like farmers, fishermen, and warriors. Additionally, abstract forms are a significant aspect of Basque sculpture, demonstrating a range of artistic expression.

Example of Basque sculpture piece:



### *Textiles*

Basque textiles are renowned for their colourful and intricate designs. Common techniques used include weaving with wool and linen, embroidery, and dyeing. The patterns often feature geometric shapes, stripes, and animal motifs, showcasing the rich cultural heritage and craftsmanship of the Basque region.

Examples of Basque textiles:



## Indigenous Artworks from Some Asian Cultures

### **Ainu Art**

The Ainu people are the indigenous people of Japan, primarily residing in the northern regions of Hokkaido, Sakhalin, and the Kuril Islands. Their art is deeply intertwined with their cultural beliefs, traditions, and way of life.

### **Ainu Artforms**

Here's an overview of Ainu Indigenous art:

#### ***Sculpture***

Ainu sculpture, primarily crafted from wood, features intricate carvings that often depict animals, deities, and mythological creatures significant in Ainu folklore. Notable examples include Nusa (sacred poles) and Inau (ritual wooden sticks), used in religious ceremonies and offerings.

### ***Textiles***

Ainu textiles are renowned for their intricate designs and craftsmanship, utilising natural fibres such as attus (woven from tree bark), cotton, and wool. Common techniques include weaving, embroidery, and appliqué, with patterns featuring geometric shapes, animal forms, and plant motifs. Traditional garments, like the attus robe, are richly decorated and worn during ceremonies.

### ***Paintings***

Ainu paintings, typically created on wood or fabric, depict nature scenes, animals, and deities, reflecting cultural stories and beliefs. The style is often simplistic yet symbolic, emphasising cultural and spiritual themes.

## **Dayak Art**

Dayak art refers to the artistic traditions of the Dayak people, an indigenous ethnic group inhabiting the island of Borneo, which is shared by Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei. Dayak art is diverse and encompasses various forms, each with its own cultural significance.

### **Dayak Artforms**

#### ***Woodcarving***

Dayak wood carving is highly intricate and symbolic. Carvings can be found on various objects such as longhouses, boats, and ritual implements. Common motifs include animals like hornbills, snakes, and dragons, as well as ancestral figures and geometric patterns. Woodcarving serves both decorative and spiritual purposes, often depicting mythological stories or serving as protection against malevolent spirits.

#### ***Tattooing***

Tattooing, or “tatau,” is an ancient Dayak tradition practised mainly by women. Tattoos are symbolic and often represent social status, spirituality, and protection. Designs vary between different Dayak subgroups and may include motifs inspired by nature, such as plants, animals, and geometric patterns.

#### ***Beadwork***

Dayak beadwork is intricate and colourful, with beads traditionally made from materials like glass, shells, and seeds. Beadwork is used to adorn clothing, accessories, and ceremonial objects. Patterns often reflect cultural beliefs, rituals, and social status within the community.

### ***Textiles***

Dayak textiles, such as woven fabrics and blankets, are rich in symbolism and often feature intricate patterns and designs. Traditional weaving techniques are passed down through generations, with patterns representing aspects of Dayak cosmology, mythology, and daily life.

### ***Metalwork***

Dayak metal work includes items such as brass ornaments, jewellery, and ceremonial weapons. These objects are often adorned with intricate engravings and designs inspired by nature and spiritual beliefs.

### ***Ceremonial Masks***

Dayak ceremonial masks are used in various rituals and ceremonies, including harvest festivals and rites of passage. These masks are often carved from wood and feature elaborate designs representing ancestral spirits, animals, and supernatural beings.

## **Indigenous Artworks from Arabia**

### **Bedouin**

Indigenous Bedouin art encompasses a variety of traditional artistic expressions that reflect the cultural heritage, beliefs, and nomadic lifestyle of the Bedouin people.

### **Bedouin Artforms**

While Bedouin art is diverse and varies across different regions and tribes, some common forms of indigenous Bedouin art include:

#### ***Textiles and Embroidery***

Bedouin women are known for their exquisite textile work and embroidery skills. They produce a wide range of textiles, including tents, rugs, cushions, and clothing, adorned with intricate geometric patterns, floral motifs, and symbolic designs. These textiles often serve both practical and decorative purposes, with each design carrying cultural significance and reflecting the artisan's creativity.

#### ***Tent Decoration***

Bedouin tents, also known as “black tents, due to their colour, are often adorned with decorative elements such as woven patterns, colourful textiles, and tassels. These decorations not only enhance the aesthetic appeal of the tents but also serve as markers of identity, distinguishing one tribe or family from another.

#### ***Jewellery and Adornments***

Bedouin jewellery is crafted using traditional techniques and materials such as silver, gold, and semi-precious stones. Jewellery pieces such as necklaces, bracelets, earrings, and amulets are intricately designed and often feature symbolic motifs inspired by nature, tribal symbols, and cultural beliefs. Bedouin women, in particular, wear jewellery as a form of personal adornment and as a means of displaying their social status and cultural identity.

#### ***Decorative Crafts***

Bedouin artisans also engage in various decorative crafts such as metalwork, ceramics, and woodworking. Metalwork includes the crafting of utensils, weapons,

and decorative objects using techniques like engraving, filigree, and casting. Bedouin ceramics feature pottery and tiles adorned with intricate patterns and designs inspired by nature, geometric shapes, and Islamic art.

## Handhrami Art

Hadhramaut, a region in Yemen, boasts a rich cultural heritage reflected in its indigenous architecture, woodcarving, textiles, and metalworks.

### Handhrami Artworks

#### *Architecture*

Hadhrami architecture is famous for its mud-brick buildings, particularly the towering structures of Shibam. Shibam's skyline, often referred to as the "Manhattan of the desert," showcases the region's unique style characterised by multi-story buildings adorned with intricate geometric patterns and decorative elements.

#### *Woodcarving*

Hadhrami woodcarving is renowned for its intricate designs adorning various elements of architecture and furnishings. Notable examples include the detailed carvings on doors, windows, and furniture found in historic buildings across Hadhramaut, such as the Al-Mahwit region. These carvings often feature geometric patterns, floral motifs, and calligraphic elements, reflecting the region's cultural and artistic heritage.

#### *Textiles*

Hadhrami textiles are celebrated for their vibrant colours, intricate patterns, and skilled craftsmanship. Traditional garments like the thobe and ma'waz are adorned with elaborate embroidery, showcasing the region's rich textile traditions. The city of Tarim is particularly famous for its textile production, with artisans weaving intricate patterns using techniques passed down through generations.

#### *Metalworks*

Hadhrami metalwork encompasses a wide range of decorative objects, utensils, and jewellery crafted from metals like silver and brass. Skilled artisans employ techniques such as filigree, engraving, and casting to create intricate designs inspired by Islamic art and cultural motifs. Notable examples include ornate silver jewellery worn by Hadhrami women and decorative metalwork found in historic buildings and artefacts across the region.

## Indigenous Artworks from Meso-American Art

Meso-American art refers to the artistic traditions of ancient civilizations in present-day Mexico and Central America such as Guatemala, Belize, Honduras and El Salvador.

1. Key features include monumental architecture, such as the pyramids of the Maya and Aztec, intricate stone carvings, and vibrant murals.

2. Symbolism, religious motifs, and natural elements often characterise Mesoamerican art, reflecting spiritual beliefs and cosmology.
3. Examples include the Maya ruins of Tikal, the Aztec Templo Mayor, and the Olmec colossal heads.

### Maya Art

- a. Maya art flourished in the ancient Maya civilization of Mesoamerica, known for its sophisticated architecture, sculpture, and pottery.
- b. Iconic Maya art forms include intricate stone carvings, hieroglyphic inscriptions, and elaborate murals depicting mythology and rituals.
- c. Notable examples include the stelae and hieroglyphic stairways at sites like Copán and Palenque, and the painted murals at Bonampak.

### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art

- a. Aboriginal art encompasses the diverse artistic traditions of Indigenous Australian cultures, including painting, sculpture, and ceremonial objects.
- b. Key features include dot painting, cross-hatching, and dreamtime storytelling motifs, reflecting spiritual connections to the land and ancestral knowledge.
- c. Torres Strait Islander art shares similarities with Aboriginal art but also incorporates maritime themes and motifs.
- d. Notable examples include rock art sites like Uluru and Kakadu, contemporary Indigenous paintings, and Torres Strait Islander masks and sculptures.

### Maori Art

- a. Maori art originates from the indigenous Maori people of New Zealand, characterised by intricate carving, weaving, and tattooing.
- b. Traditional Maori art forms include whakairo (wood carving), ta moko (tattooing), and kowhaiwhai (painted designs).
- c. Symbolism and storytelling are central to Maori art, with motifs representing genealogy, spirituality, and cultural identity.
- d. Notable examples include the intricate carvings of meeting houses (wharehau), traditional ta moko tattoos, and woven flax (harakeke) garments.

## Generating a Timeline of Art Making in the Major Ancient Cultures

Ancient art refers to the visual arts produced by the early civilizations that laid the foundations for subsequent artistic developments. These works, ranging from sculptures and paintings to architectural wonders, reflect the cultural, social, and religious values of their times. Studying ancient art provides us with a window into the past, allowing us to understand the evolution of human creativity and the enduring legacy of these early societies.



## Timelines

### Ancient Egypt (3100 BCE– 30 BCE)

Ancient Egyptian art is characterised by its highly symbolic and formalised representation. It played a crucial role in religion and daily life, often creating tombs and temples to honour the gods and ensure the deceased's safe passage to the afterlife.

#### Key Features

1. Use of hieroglyphics to accompany images.
2. Strict conventions govern proportions and poses.
3. Focus on life after death, as seen in tomb paintings and sculptures.

#### Materials and Techniques

- a. Limestone, sandstone, and granite for sculpture.
- b. Paints made from natural minerals for murals.
- c. Gold and precious stones for jewellery and burial artefacts.

#### Notable Artworks

- a. The Great Sphinx and the Pyramids of Giza.
- b. The bust of Nefertiti.
- c. Wall paintings in the tomb of Tutankhamun.

Click on this link to read more on [Egyptian Art](#)

### Ancient Mesopotamia (3500 BCE – 539 BCE)

Mesopotamian art includes works from various cultures, such as the Sumerians, Akkadians, Babylonians, and Assyrians. This art often depicted gods, kings, and mythical creatures, reflecting the hierarchical and theocratic nature of Mesopotamian society.

#### Key Features

1. Ziggurats, large temple complexes.
2. Bas-relief sculptures depicting mythological and historical scenes.
3. Cylinder seals are used for marking ownership and administrative purposes.

#### Materials and Techniques

- a. Clay for cuneiform tablets and pottery.
- b. Bronze and copper for sculptures and tools.
- c. Stone and mudbrick for architecture.

#### Notable Artworks

- a. The Ziggurat of Ur.
- b. The Stele of Hammurabi.
- c. Assyrian palace reliefs.

Check out these links to read more on [Mesopotamian Art I](#) [Mesopotamian Art II](#)

## Ancient Greece (1100 BCE – 31 BCE)

Greek art is celebrated for its introduction of naturalism and the development of the classical ideal of beauty. It encompasses various periods including the Geometric, Archaic, Classical, and Hellenistic.

### Key Features

1. Emphasis on proportion, balance, and idealised human forms.
2. Development of contrapposto in sculpture, showing dynamic poses.
3. Use of mythology and daily life as subjects.

### Materials and Techniques

- a. Marble and bronze for sculpture.
- b. Frescoes and pottery for everyday and ceremonial use.
- c. Architectural orders: Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian.

### Notable Artworks

- a. The Parthenon and its sculptural decorations.
- b. The statue of Zeus at Olympia.
- c. Pottery such as the black-figure and red-figure vases.

Check out these links to read more on [Ancient Greek and Roman Art](#)

## Ancient Rome (753 BCE – 476 BCE)

Greek precedents had a big influence on Roman art, but it also introduced innovations in engineering and portraiture. Roman art served both decorative and propagandistic purposes, reflecting the power and reach of the Roman Empire.

### Key Features

1. Realistic portraiture, emphasising individual features.
2. Use of art for political propaganda.
3. Grand architectural structures such as amphitheatres and aqueducts.

### Materials and Techniques

- a. Concrete for building, allowing for larger structures.
- b. Marble and bronze for statues.
- c. Mosaics and frescoes for decoration.

### Notable Artworks

- a. The Colosseum and the Pantheon.
- b. The Augustus of Prima Porta.
- c. Roman mosaics depict scenes from mythology and daily life.

## Ancient China (1600 BCE – 220 CE)

Focusing on harmony with nature and using art for both practical and ceremonial purposes are characteristics of Chinese art from the Shang, Zhou, Qin, and Han dynasties.

### Key Features

1. Use of calligraphy and painting as intertwined arts.
2. Emphasis on nature and the cosmos in artistic themes.
3. Bronze casting and jade carving are prominent art forms.

### Materials and Techniques

- a. Bronze for ritual vessels and sculptures.
- b. Silk and paper for painting and calligraphy.
- c. Jade for intricate carvings.

### Notable Artworks

- a. The Terracotta Army of the First Emperor of Qin.
- b. Bronze vessels from the Shang dynasty.
- c. Han dynasty tomb murals.

Check out this link to read more on [Ancient Chinese Art](#)

## Mesoamerica (1500 BCE – 1521 CE)

Mesoamerican art includes the works of the Olmec, Maya, Aztec, and other cultures. These artworks are notable for their complexity, symbolism, and integration with architecture.

### Key Features

1. Monumental stone sculptures and reliefs.
2. Richly decorated ceramics and textiles.
3. Use of symbolism related to religion and cosmology.

### Materials and Techniques

- a. Stone, including jade and obsidian, for carving.
- b. Clay for pottery.
- c. Feathers and textiles for clothing and ceremonial items.

### Notable Artworks

- a. Olmec colossal heads.
- b. Maya stelae and codices.
- c. Aztec sunstone and feather headdresses.

## Oceania (1500 BCE – Present)

Oceania includes the art of the Pacific Islands, Australia, and New Zealand. This art is characterised by its connection to community, ritual, and the natural world.

### Key Features

1. Carvings and sculptures made from wood.
2. Intricate tattooing and body art.
3. Use of art in rituals and ceremonies.

### Materials and Techniques

- a. Wood and stone for sculptures and tools.
- b. Natural pigments for painting and decoration.
- c. Fibres and shells for textiles and adornments.

### Notable Artworks

- a. Maori carvings and tattoos.
- b. Aboriginal rock paintings and bark art.
- c. Polynesian sculptures and tapa cloth.

## Activity 2.4: Influence of African Indigenous Art on Global Cultures

### *Do this activity as group*

*As a TV Host, you have the duty to lead a panel discussion focused on analysing how African indigenous arts have influenced global cultures and their arts. To do this, consider the following steps.*

1. Choose partners to work as a group.
2. Assign roles to each member of the group to identify and choose one of the indigenous cultures of the world (e.g. Greek, Maya, Sami, etc.)
3. Search (*from the internet or the content in this learning material*) to identify and read about indigenous artworks of cultures around the world.
4. Analyse the characteristics of the artworks proceed by these cultures in terms of;
  - a. type of artwork (sculpture, architecture, engraving, etc)
  - b. materials used (rock/stone, bronze, POP, tiles, blood, straw, etc.)
  - c. techniques (painting, carving, engraving, mosaic, assemblage)
5. Write down short notes on your findings.
6. Discuss your written/typed notes with your peers to refine the content and file in your portfolio for future reference.

## Activity 2.5: Trip down Memory-Lane

### *Try this analysis independently*

*In this activity, you will generate a timeline of art making in ancient cultures across the globe. To do this, consider the following steps.*

1. Select at least two of the ancient cultures and their artworks you learned about in **Activity 2.4**.
2. Critically examine the characteristics of their artforms to identify their forms, functions, similarities, differences, etc. and write them down.
3. Now analyse the artworks of the selected ancient cultures in terms of how they have impacted development in the following areas:
  - a. Education and cultural preservation
  - b. Expression of personal and collective experiences
  - c. artistic expression etc.
4. Use your findings to develop essays that can be published in a suitable local or international newspaper.

### *Tip: Check out these Steps to Write a Short Essay*

- **Choose a Topic:** Pick an interesting and relevant topic that will capture the readers' attention.
- **Research:** Gather information from reliable sources to support your points.
- **Create an Outline:** Plan the structure of your essay to organise your thoughts.
- **Write a Draft:** Start writing based on your outline. Focus on getting your ideas down.
- **Edit and Revise:** Review your draft for clarity, coherence, and correctness. Make necessary changes.
- **Proofread:** Check for grammar, punctuation, and spelling errors.
- **Submit:** Follow the newspaper's submission guidelines and submit your essay.

### *Take inspiration from this Sample Outline*

**Title:** The Importance of Environmental Conservation

#### **Introduction**

- **Hook:** A startling fact or a question to grab attention (e.g., "Did you know that we lose 18 million acres of forest each year?")
- **Brief explanation of the topic:** What is environmental conservation?
- **Thesis statement:** Why is environmental conservation crucial for our future?
- **Body Paragraph 1:** Reasons for Conservation
- **Point:** Conservation helps protect biodiversity.

- Evidence: Examples of species at risk and their importance to ecosystems.
- Explanation: How preserving biodiversity benefits the environment and humanity.

### **Body Paragraph 2: Human Impact**

- Point: Human activities contribute to environmental degradation.
- Evidence: Examples such as deforestation, pollution, and climate change.
- Explanation: The long-term effects of these activities on the planet.

### **Body Paragraph 3: Solutions and Actions**

- Point: Steps individuals and communities can take to conserve the environment.
- Evidence: Practices like recycling, sustainable living, and supporting conservation efforts.
- Explanation: How these actions make a difference.

### **Conclusion**

- Restate the importance of environmental conservation.
- Summarise the key points discussed.
- Call your readers to action by encouraging readers to participate in conservation efforts (e.g., “*Let’s work together to protect our planet for future generations*”).

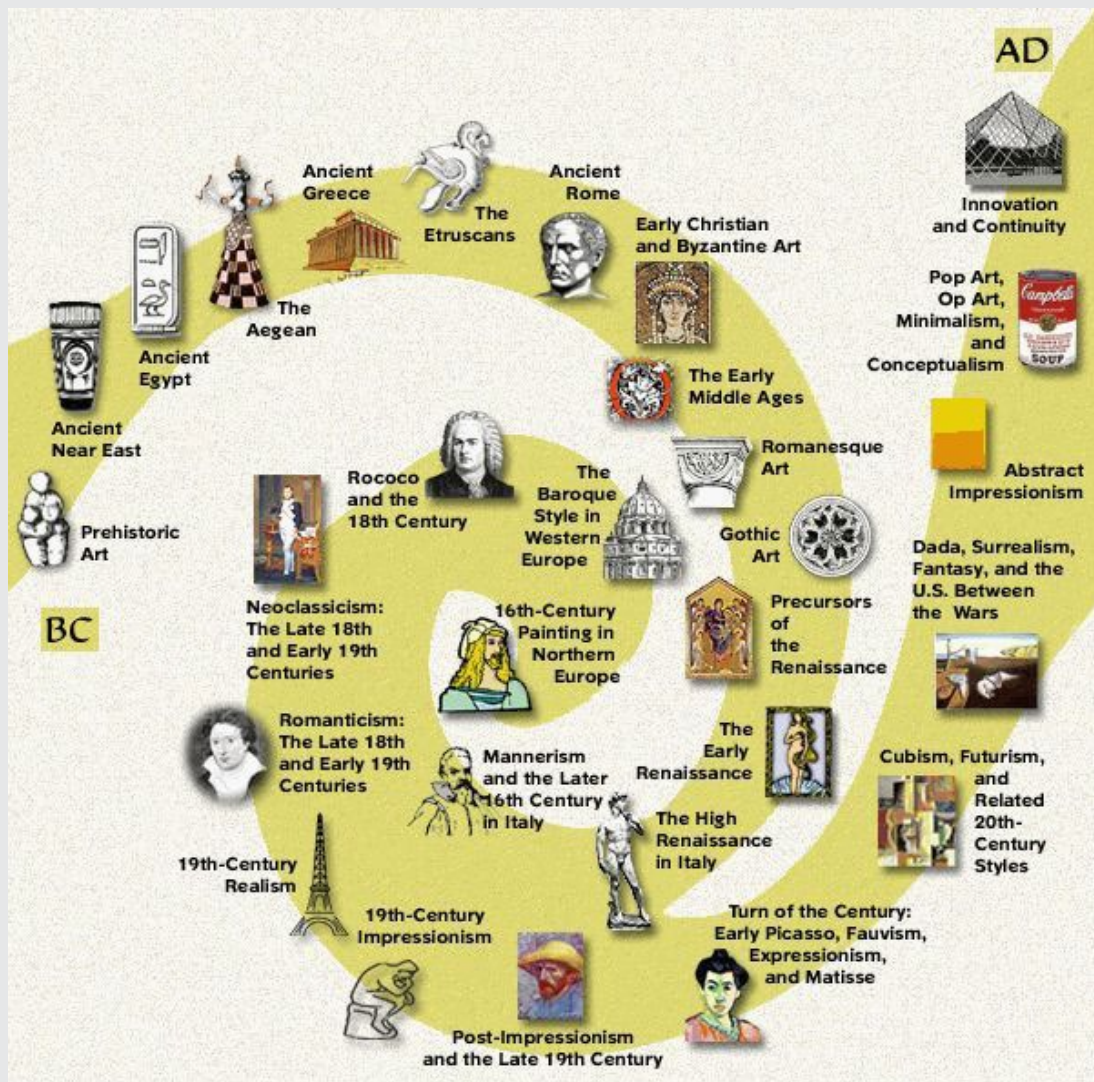
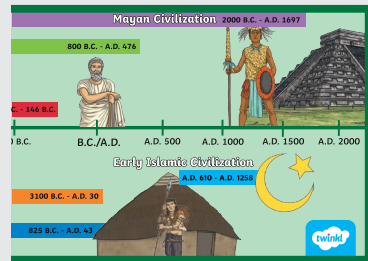
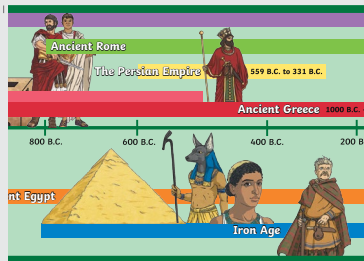
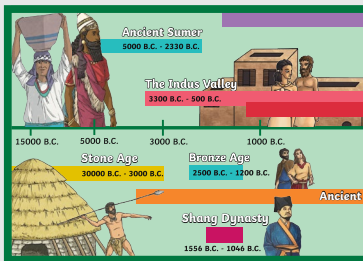
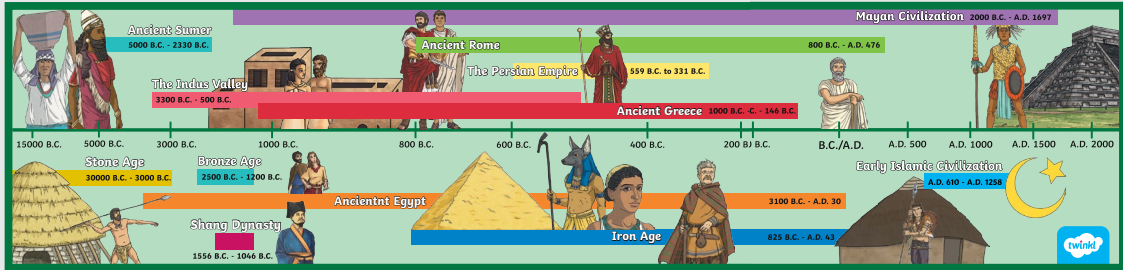
## **Activity 2.6: Art Production in Ancient Cultures**

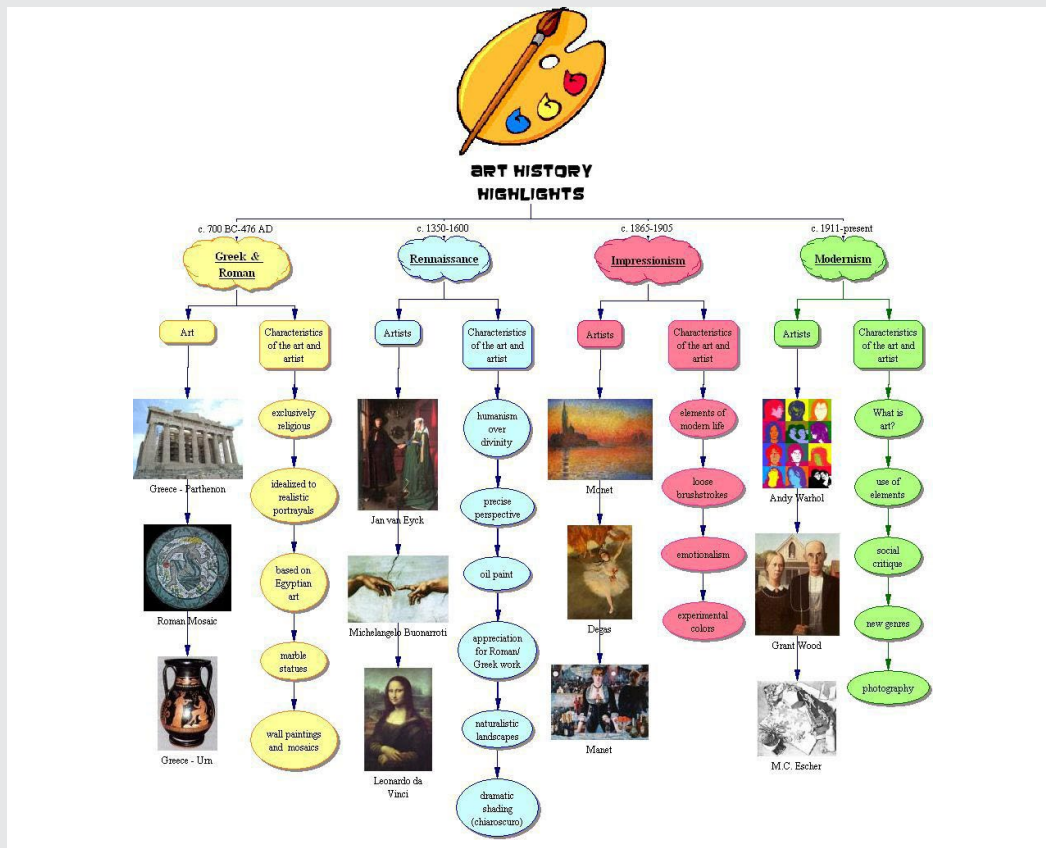
***Try this activity alone or with a group of friends in class or at home***

*In this activity, you will generate a timeline of art production in ancient cultures across the globe. To do this, consider the following steps.*

1. Choose group partners to work with.
2. Search to identify and list ancient cultures around the world known for their various artworks.
3. Search (*using this material or any other material from the library or internet*) for the timelines (periods and dates) of the selected ancient cultures with examples of their popular artworks and write them down.
4. Verify the facts from different sources (*e.g. checking from different internet sources and other books*) to ensure your information is accurate.
5. Use the accurate information you have documented (written/ typed) to generate or develop a pictorial timeline chart showing the arts of the ancient cultures and their respective timelines (**See Figure 2.2**).

6. Present your pictorial timeline chart in class or with friends for discussion and review.
7. Use the review comments to improve your chart.
8. File your improved pictorial chart in your portfolio for future use.





**Figure 2.2:** Examples of sample timeline charts of artworks of ancient cultures to present

## Extended Activity

*Try this personal challenge if possible*

1. Create a social media account on a platform such as *Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.* (**DO NOT USE THIS ACCOUNT FOR IRRELEVANT POSTS**)
2. Create another pictorial timeline chart on your own
3. Post the pictorial timeline chart on your selected social media account and share it with friends or followers.
4. Take note of the positive comments and use them to improve your next professional posts.

## Extended Reading

- Check out these links to read more about the [Oceanic Art](#)
- [Art in Context, Oceanic Art](#)
- Check out these links to read more on [Mesoamerican Arts](#)



## THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF ANCIENT ART TO EMERGING ART TRADITIONS

In this lesson, you analyse the contributions or impact of ancient art on emerging art traditions in our modern world. You will explore how the artistic innovations and cultural expressions of ancient civilisations have shaped our current art traditions and inventions.

**Modern global art:** This refers to contemporary artistic practices that have emerged and developed globally in recent decades. It covers a diverse range of artistic styles, mediums, and approaches that reflect how the world is connected in terms of concepts, materials, methods, and use of art. It also allows for cultural exchange facilitated by globalisation.

Global art encompasses various art forms, including paintings, sculptures, photography, cinema, video, and the internet.

The following paragraphs discuss some of the contributions made by ancient art starting with ancient Africa and moving on to other ancient cultures in the world.

### The Enduring Influence of Ancient African Art on Global Development

Indigenous African art, known for its deep symbolic meaning and intricate craftsmanship, has profoundly influenced global art. The use of natural materials like wood, ivory, and metal, along with techniques such as carving, casting, and weaving, demonstrates a sophisticated grasp of form and function. These ancient methods are evident in contemporary artists' works, who often incorporate traditional African motifs and techniques with modern materials and themes. For instance, the abstract forms and expressive features of traditional African masks have influenced modernist movements in Europe, particularly Cubism. Artists like Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse were deeply inspired by the simplicity and emotional depth of African art. This cross-cultural exchange highlights how ancient art forms have inspired modern artists to explore new aesthetic possibilities and cultural narratives. Ancient art from early civilisations has significantly shaped emerging art traditions. By studying the artistic practices, materials, and techniques of ancient cultures, one can trace a continuous influence extending into modern global art. This exploration underscores the enduring impact of ancient art on contemporary expressions and the evolving nature of artistic traditions.

Have you recently seen or heard of any artistic work like a dance, car, mobile app, smart device, painting, or building design that reminds you of ancient African designs? *You can pause for a moment and tell your friends about it.*

## Influence of Ancient Art on Modern Global Art

Ancient art has provided a foundational framework for the development of various art movements and styles. The contributions of ancient civilisations, such as those of Egypt, Greece, Rome, and indigenous African cultures, have significantly influenced the artistic practices and aesthetics of subsequent periods.

1. **Techniques and Materials:** Ancient artists pioneered techniques and materials that continue to inspire modern artists. For instance, the frescoes of ancient Rome and the intricate goldwork of the Asante people demonstrate advanced methods in painting and metalwork. These techniques have been adapted and evolved in contemporary art practices, showcasing a blend of traditional craftsmanship and modern innovation.
2. **Symbolism and Themes:** The themes and symbols prevalent in ancient art have persisted in modern art, often reinterpreted to reflect contemporary contexts. The use of mythological motifs from Greek and Roman art, the spiritual symbolism in Egyptian art, and the cultural narratives in African art have provided a rich source of inspiration for modern artists. These ancient symbols and themes are frequently integrated into modern artworks, allowing for a dialogue between the past and the present.
3. **Cultural Exchange:** The interconnection of ancient civilizations facilitated a cultural exchange that enriched artistic traditions. The exchange of ideas, materials, and techniques between different cultures has been instrumental in shaping diverse art forms. This cross-cultural interaction is mirrored in the global art scene today, where artists draw inspiration from a wide array of cultural traditions, creating a vibrant and inclusive artistic landscape.

### Examples of Influence

- **Egyptian Art:** Egyptian art is known for its attention to detail and symbolic meaning. Modern artists often use Egyptian symbols like the ankh and the Eye of Horus to explore themes of identity and cultural heritage.
- **Greek and Roman Art:** Greek and Roman art focused on beauty, proportion, and harmony. These classical ideas greatly influenced Western art, especially during the Renaissance. Contemporary artists like Jeff Koons and Damien Hirst use classical styles in their work, mixing traditional and modern elements.
- **Indigenous African Art:** Indigenous African art, with its dynamic forms and vibrant colours, has inspired modern art movements like Cubism and Expressionism. Artists like Pablo-Picasso and Henri-Matisse were influenced by African masks and sculptures, which helped them find new ways to represent the human form and explore abstract art.

## Techniques and Materials: A Continuum of Innovation

The techniques developed by ancient African artists have greatly influenced modern art around the world. For example, the bronze casting in ancient Benin, the use of gold in Akan art, and the beadwork and textiles from various African cultures inspire today's artists.

In sculpture, the lost-wax casting method, perfected by ancient African artisans, is still important in modern metalworking. Contemporary artists like El Anatsui use these ancient techniques to create artworks from discarded materials, addressing both historical traditions and current issues like waste and recycling.

## Conceptual and Contextual Evolution

The conceptual frameworks established by ancient art traditions have also found resonance in modern artistic practices. Ancient art often served as a means of documenting history, expressing religious beliefs, and communicating social and political messages. These functions are mirrored in the works of contemporary artists who use art as a medium to explore identity, social issues, and cultural heritage.

For instance, the narrative quality of Egyptian hieroglyphs, which combine text and images to convey complex stories, can be seen in modern visual storytelling techniques across various media. Artists today frequently engage with themes of memory, identity, and place, drawing parallels with how ancient art documented and preserved cultural narratives.

## The Role of Globalisation and Technological Advances

Globalisation has fostered a renewed appreciation and reinterpretation of ancient art forms. Contemporary artists now have unprecedented access to historical resources, allowing them to incorporate diverse cultural influences into their work. This global idea exchange has led to new artistic traditions that honour and expand upon ancient practices.

Technological advances have further expanded the possibilities for integrating ancient techniques with modern innovations. Augmented reality (AR) and digital media allow artists to create immersive experiences that blend historical and contemporary elements. Non-Fungible Tokens (NFTs) offer new ways to authenticate and distribute digital artworks, echoing the ancient need to attribute value and provenance to art objects.

Ancient art's contributions to emerging art traditions are evident in the continued relevance of traditional techniques, materials, and conceptual frameworks. Examining the similarities and differences between ancient and modern artworks deepens our understanding of ancient art's enduring impact on contemporary practices. This dialogue enriches our appreciation of art history and fosters a more inclusive and dynamic artistic landscape. As global art evolves, the lessons and legacies of ancient art remain a vital source of inspiration and innovation.

## EMERGING ART TRENDS

In the context of modern global art, several emerging trends reflect the ongoing influence of ancient art:

### Installation Art

Installation art, which involves arranging artworks in a particular space to create an immersive experience, echoes the spatial awareness seen in ancient architectural and sculptural works. Artists like El Anatsui draw upon traditional African techniques to create large-scale installations that engage with contemporary issues.

### Performance Art

Performance art, combining elements of theatre, dance, and visual arts, resonates with the ritualistic and performative aspects of ancient cultural practices. Contemporary performance artists, such as Marina Abramović, explore themes of endurance, presence, and the human body, often referencing ancient traditions and ceremonies.

### Augmented Reality (AR) and Non-Fungible Tokens (NFTs)

The integration of digital elements into real-world environments and the creation of digital art certificates reflect the innovative spirit of ancient artists who experimented with new materials and techniques. AR and NFTs represent a modern continuation of this experimentation, expanding the boundaries of how art is created, experienced, and owned.

The contributions of ancient art to emerging art traditions are vast and multifaceted. By influencing various artistic movements, styles, and techniques, ancient art has enriched contemporary artistic practices and expanded creative possibilities. This continuity underscores the importance of understanding and preserving ancient art as a vital part of our cultural heritage. Through the lens of ancient art, modern artists can explore diverse cultural traditions, fostering a global dialogue that transcends time and geography.

Now that you know more about ancient art, the following activities will help you to preserve it in Africa and around the world.

#### Activity 2.7

##### **Do this independently or as a group**

You have been asked to deliver a 20-minute presentation on how ancient art around the globe has contributed to emerging art traditions currently in evidence during the school art week celebration. How would you handle this task to give an informative presentation?

***Following the steps below can help you:***

1. Search to find facts on art and design work of ancient culture across time from this learning material or other credible sources or available books in the library.
2. Identify at least 4 of the ancient cultures and the characteristics of their arts and note them down through writing or typing.
3. Search to identify sample current global artworks or art trends (e.g. installations, performance art, etc.) and note them down.
4. Critically observe, analyse and write the characteristics of the current global artworks or trends by comparing or finding the relationship between them and that of the ancient cultures you noted down in terms of the:
  - a. design concept
  - b. shape
  - c. form
  - d. colour
  - e. function or use
  - f. material
  - g. technique, etc.
5. Use your findings to generate a table that clearly shows the contribution of ancient art to emerging global art trends.

***Organise your presentation by considering the following:***

- Choose how you want to do the presentation (e.g. using PowerPoint slide)
  - Craft a suitable topic for your presentation
6. Develop the presentation by organising the content and images you have selected or created under the planned outline.
    - a. Read over the presentation making any necessary corrections.
    - b. Practise and/or rehearse your presentation to ensure you stay within the 20-minute time frame
    - c. Consider possible questions the audience will ask and prepare how to answer them.

***Write the outline for the presentation (for example):***

- Introduction
- Heading 1
- Heading 2
- Heading 3

Conclusion

***Tips for Delivering your Presentation***

- Engage with the Audience: Ask questions and encourage participation.
- Speak Clearly and Confidently: Practise to ensure smooth delivery.

- Use Visuals Effectively: Make sure slides are clear and not overcrowded with information.
  - Manage Your Time: Keep track of time to ensure you cover all points within 20 minutes.
7. Discuss the presentation you delivered, with your peers or teacher, to enable you to improve through getting helpful feedback on the content and your presentation skills.

## Extended Reading

- Read more on how African Art influenced the development of Cubism and other modern art trends here: [\*the-global-influence-of-african-art.html\*](#)

# REVIEW QUESTIONS

The following questions will test your knowledge and understanding of the content of this section. Try these review questions on your own. You can set a time for yourself and ask a friend or teacher to mark it for you. *REMEMBER to be honest to yourself.*

1. Describe two ways in which masks are used in traditional African ceremonies
2. Give an example of how indigenous textiles, like Kente cloth, represent cultural identity in Africa.
3. Explain how the creation and trade of indigenous artworks like sculptures or pottery contribute to the social and economic well-being of African communities.
4. Indigenous artworks often depict spiritual figures or gods. Choose a specific example of an African artwork and present a single-page article on how it reflects the religious beliefs of the culture that created it.
5. Give an example of ancient culture in the world and describe how their arts have contributed to global development in the past and today.

# ANSWERS REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Masks are used in traditional African ceremonies in two ways:
  - **Storytelling and Historical Representation:** Masks can depict important historical figures or ancestors, serving as a visual reminder of the past and helping to pass down stories and traditions through generations.
  - **Connection to the Spiritual Realm:** Masks are often used in religious ceremonies to represent spirits or deities. They can be worn by dancers to embody these powerful figures and connect with the spiritual world.
2. Kente cloth, a vibrant textile woven by the Ashanti people of Ghana, exemplifies how indigenous textiles represent cultural identity in Africa. Each Kente pattern has a specific meaning related to proverbs, historical events, or social status. Wearing Kente cloth becomes a way to celebrate Ghanaian heritage and visually express one's connection to the Ashanti culture. The colours, symbols, and weaving techniques all contribute to a unique visual language that represents Ghanaian identity.
3. The creation and trade of indigenous artworks contribute to the social and economic well-being of African communities in several ways:
  - **Social Cohesion:** The creation of art is often a communal activity, bringing people together and strengthening social bonds. Traditional artworks can also be used in ceremonies and rituals that reinforce cultural identity and shared values within a community.
  - **Economic Livelihoods:** Many skilled artisans in Africa rely on creating and selling traditional artworks for their income. This includes sculptors, weavers, potters, and bead workers. The sale of these artworks supports local economies and provides financial security for artist families.
  - **Cultural Tourism:** Indigenous artworks are a major draw for tourists interested in experiencing African cultures. The sale of artworks to tourists brings additional income to communities and artists. Furthermore, cultural tourism linked to artistic traditions encourages job creation in areas like accommodation, transportation, and guiding services.
4. One example of an African artwork that reflects religious beliefs is the Chiwara mask of the Bambara people in Mali. The Chiwara mask depicts an antelope, an animal associated with strength, fertility, and the spirit world in Bambara culture. The use of the Chiwara mask in rituals and dances is connected to agricultural practices and seeking blessings from the ancestors for a bountiful harvest. The mask serves as a physical representation of these spiritual beliefs and reinforces the connection between the Bambara people and their spiritual world.



5. Example: Ancient Greece (8th century BC - 1st century AD) as a cradle of artistic influence is a prime example of an ancient culture whose art forms have had a lasting impact on global development, both historically and in the present day.

*Here is how Greek art has contributed:*

- **Architectural Innovations:** The Greeks developed iconic architectural styles like Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian, with their emphasis on symmetry, proportion, and columns. These styles became the foundation for Western architecture, influencing buildings like the US Capitol and countless public structures worldwide.
- **Sculptural Realism:** Greek sculptures, often depicting gods and heroes in realistic poses, revolutionised the representation of the human form. This focus on anatomy and naturalism heavily influenced Western sculpture for centuries, impacting artists like Michelangelo and beyond.
- **Theatre and Drama:** The Greeks pioneered dramatic forms like tragedy and comedy, laying the groundwork for Western theatrical tradition. Their emphasis on storytelling, character development, and exploring human emotions continues to inspire playwrights and theatrical practices globally.
- **Philosophical Inquiry:** Greek philosophers like Plato and Aristotle explored ideas about logic, ethics, and the natural world. Their philosophical thought has profoundly influenced Western intellectual development and continues to inform fields like law, politics, and science.

### Relevance Today:

#### Greek artistic contributions remain relevant in various ways:

- **Art Education:** Greek art forms are still studied in art schools worldwide, providing a foundation for understanding anatomy, composition, and artistic principles.
- **Western Aesthetics:** Greek ideals of beauty and harmony continue to influence Western artistic movements, impacting everything from fashion design to product aesthetics.
- **Democratic Values:** The Greek emphasis on public discourse and civic engagement continues to inspire democratic societies around the globe.

The influence of Ancient Greek art goes far beyond aesthetics. It has shaped philosophical thought, architectural styles, and artistic practices, leaving an enduring mark on global development.

## Acknowledgements



Ghana Education  
Service (GES)



## List of Contributors

Name	Institution
Benjamin Quarshie	College of Education, Mampong
Prof. Eric Francis Eshun	Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology
Agatha Essel	New Juaben SHS
Yaw Boateng Ampadu	Prempeh College, Kumasi