



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
ART TEACHERS
ASSOCIATION OF GHANA



Art and Design Foundation

for Senior High Schools

Year 2



Agatha Essel
Benjamin Quarshie
Prof. Osuanyi Quaicoo Essel
Yaw Boateng Ampadui

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Ghana Education
Service (GES)





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Contents

FOREWORD	6
SECTION 1 MODERN GHANAIAAN ART	7
THE CREATIVE JOURNEY (FROM CAVES TO 21ST CENTURY)	8
Art Across Time	8
MODERN GHANAIAAN ART	8
OVERVIEW OF THE ART HISTORY OF GHANA	19
CONTRIBUTIONS OF MODERN GHANAIAAN ARTISTS TO THE HISTORY OF GHANA	22
SECTION 2 MODERN AFRICAN ART	26
THE CREATIVE JOURNEY (FROM CAVES TO 21ST CENTURY)	27
Art Across Time	27
MODERN AFRICAN ART	27
IMPACT OF MODERN AFRICAN ART ON DESIGN AND SOCIETY	46
SECTION 3 WESTERN MODERN ART	51
THE CREATIVE JOURNEY (FROM CAVES TO 21ST CENTURY)	52
Art Across Time	52
WESTERN MODERN ART	52
IMPACT OF WESTERN MODERN ART ON AFRICAN ART	61
DISCUSSION ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WESTERN MODERN ART FROM 1850 TO 1950 AND MODERN AFRICAN ART WITH REFERENCE TO MATERIALS, IMAGERY, AND MEANING	64
SECTION 4 DESIGN THEORIES, SCHOOLS, AND CULTURAL OBJECTS	68
THE CREATIVE JOURNEY (FROM CAVES TO 21ST CENTURY)	69
Design History	69
MODERN DESIGN SCHOOLS, CONCEPTS AND THEORIES	70
SOCIAL AND MATERIAL CONDITIONS OF MODERN DESIGN AND PRODUCTS	81
SECTION 5 CULTURAL OBJECTS AND THEIR REPRESENTATIONS	88
AESTHETICS AND CRITICISM	89
The World Around Us	89
PRODUCTION OF CULTURAL OBJECTS	89
MATERIALS AND MODES OF PRODUCTION OF CULTURAL OBJECTS	99
SOCIAL CONDITIONS OF ART OBJECTS	105
CULTURAL MEMORY AND IDENTITY	111
REGIONAL MATERIALS AND PRIVILEGED MATERIALS	115
ART MEDIUM AND SCALE	129

SECTION 6 AESTHETIC THEORIES AND THEIR APPLICATION.....	146
AESTHETICS AND CRITICISM	147
Making Judgements	147
AESTHETIC THEORIES AND ARTISTIC EXPRESSION.....	147
AESTHETIC THEORIES AND THEIR CONTEXTS OF APPLICATION	151
APPRECIATION OF CULTURAL OBJECTS.....	159
SECTION 7 ART AND DESIGN PROCESSES AND THEIR APPLICATION.....	163
DESIGN FOR LIFE	164
Design Thinking and Composition	164
UNDERSTANDING ART AND DESIGN PROCESSES AND THEIR APPLICATION.	164
DESIGN STRATEGIES.....	168
PROTOTYPING	171
SECTION 8 COLOUR SYMBOLISM AND APPLICATION	175
DESIGN FOR LIFE	176
Colour Theory and Application	176
COLOUR SYMBOLISM.....	176
ADVANCED COLOUR THEORY	179
SECTION 9 FORMS AND IMAGE REPRESENTATION	183
DESIGN FOR LIFE	184
Relation of Forms	184
IMAGE REPRESENTATIONS: FIGURATIVE AND NON-FIGURATIVE REPRE-	
SENTATIONS	184
GENERATING FORMS IN ART AND DESIGN	188
ART MAKING WITH MODERN INDUSTRIAL MATERIALS AND PROCESSES.....	190
REFERENCES	194
GLOSSARY	196
Acknowledgements	202

FOREWORD

Ghana's new Senior High School Curriculum aims to ensure that all learners achieve their potential by equipping them with 21st Century skills, knowledge, character qualities and shared Ghanaian values. This will prepare learners to live a responsible adult life, progress to further studies and enter the world of work. This is the first time that Ghana has developed a Senior High School Curriculum which focuses on national values, attempting to educate a generation of Ghanaian youth who are proud of our country and can contribute effectively to its development.

The Ministry of Education is proud to have overseen the production of these Learner Materials which can be used in class and for self-study and revision. These materials have been developed through a partnership between the Ghana Education Service, teacher unions (Ghana National Association of Teachers- GNAT, National Association of Graduate Teacher -NAGRAT and the Coalition of Concerned Teachers- CCT) and National Subject Associations. These materials are informative and of high quality because they have been written by teachers for teachers with the expert backing of each subject association.

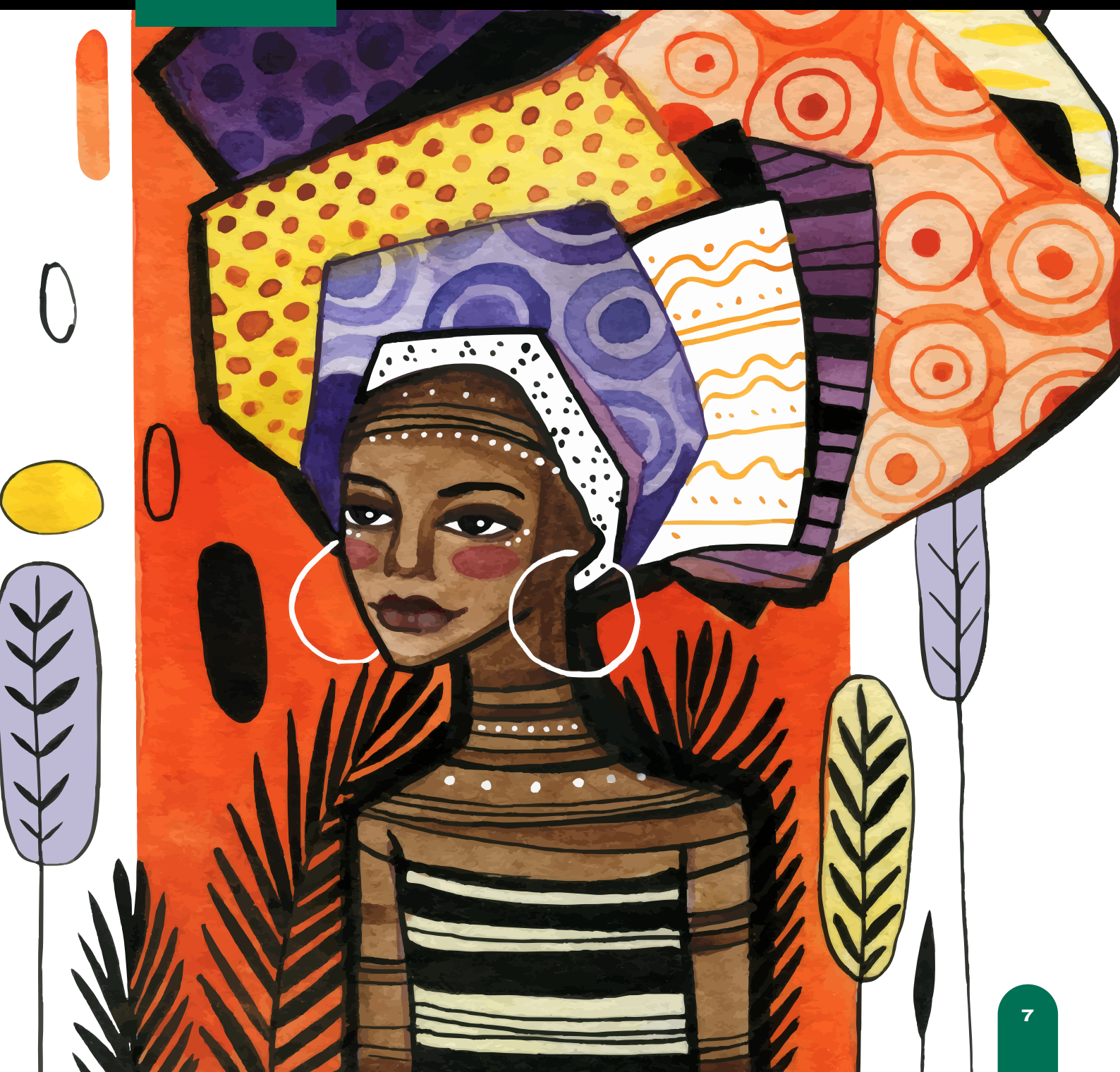
I believe that, if used appropriately, these materials will go a long way to transforming our Senior High Schools and developing Ghana so that we become a proud, prosperous and values-driven nation where our people are our greatest national asset.

Haruna Iddrisu MP
Minister for Education

SECTION

1

MODERN GHANAIAAN ART



THE CREATIVE JOURNEY (FROM CAVES TO 21ST CENTURY)

Art Across Time

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Year Two! In your first year, you learnt about the concept of design and explored design works from indigenous societies in Ghana and other ancient cultures. The artworks of our ancestors may have inspired you. Learning about ancient art is important because it leads us to an understanding of the works of modern artists and the materials, they used to create their art. In this session, you will discover key modern Ghanaian artists and how their artworks contributed to preserving Ghanaian culture and developing art in Ghana from the 1920s to 1985. You will also examine their works of art; equipment, tools and materials they utilised; the techniques and styles they employed, and the subject matter of their artwork. This knowledge will inspire you to create your own original artworks that can help bring change and preserve our culture.

KEY IDEAS

- Artworks of modern Ghanaian artists are valuable because they contribute to the preservation of Ghana's cultural identity and shape the country's artistic heritage.
- Learning about modern Ghanaian artists will help to deepen our appreciation of how their artworks reflect and influence Ghanaian society and history.
- Modern Ghanaian artists explored a variety of methods or techniques such as painting, carving, assemblage, weaving, and pottery to make their art.
- Modern Ghanaian artists from 1920 to 1985 used varied materials, both familiar and unfamiliar to their culture to create their artworks.
- The artworks had various uses, including cultural, ceremonial, decorative, and political purposes.

MODERN GHANAIAN ART

The time period from the 1920s to 1985 held great importance in the history of Ghana. Ghana, formerly named Gold Coast, was ruled by the British until it achieved independence in 1957. This period was characterised by societal and political changes that impacted various aspects of life, including art.

Modern Ghanaian Artists and Their Artworks (1920s to 1985)

To a large extent, the famous modern Ghanaian artists were those with a background of Western education. The time span from the 1920s to 1985 was a significant period in the history of Ghanaian art. In these years, artists started combining traditional Ghanaian elements with contemporary methods, resulting in distinctive Ghanaian art that highlighted their cultural roots while exploring new artistic opportunities. Within the same period, Achimota School contributed to training Ghanaian artists through formal education. The Art education training was moved from Achimota School to Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in the 1950s. The training of teacher-artists was later moved to the University of Education, Winneba. The art education in these institutions contributed in training academic artists. However, some of the artists were self-trained. Three categories of artists emerged from the artists who received Western academic education both in the diaspora and Ghana. The three categories were:

1. artists who work with fresh unsophisticated and unbiased source;
2. copyist artists who tap their ideas from European source;
3. artists who adopt or adapt ideas from other sources and fuse them with their Ghanaian artistic culture

Many of the artists who distinguished themselves through their artworks fall within the third category. These artists used different visual metaphors and their cultural nuances in their artworks. Through this artistic exploration some of them created artworks for the Ghana nation.

Table 1.1: Some Modern Ghanaian Artists from 1920 - 1985

No.	Name of Artist	Year	Selected works
1	Emmanuel Addo Osafo	1926-2007	Market (1959), Untitled (1958)
2	Ferdinand Ayisi Gyampo	1919-2012	Waterfall, Ferry
3	John Derby Okae	1916-1988	The fish market (1954), The guitar band
4	Kwame Wiafe Debra	1918-	Impertinence (acquired 1957)
5	Emmanuel Ludwig Asa Anakwa	1922-2008	Breaking the forest (1966), Tema beach (1954)
6	Saka Acquaye	1915-2007	Braiding in the shade (1987), Swearing the oath, Ephraim Amu, The Royal couple, Kwame Nkrumah, The linguist
7	Emmanuel Owusu Dartey	1927-	Puberty, Patriensa (1962)
8	John Christopher Osei Okyere	1912-1983	Arbor vitae (1956), The dam Tamale (1956)

No.	Name of Artist	Year	Selected works
9	Kofi Antubam	1922-1964	Presidential Seat, Parliamentary mace, State sword, Mural from the old ambassador hotel, Oware game (1959), How much (1954),
10	Theodosia Okoh		Ghana flag
11	Fred Matey		Ghana postage stamps
12	Amon Kotei	1915-2011	Story telling time (1972), Woman and her shadow (1983),
13	Grace Salome Kwami	1923-2006	Mallam
14	Ernest Victor Asihene	1918-2001	Pot of beans (1949), Initiation dance (1977), Mother and child (1981), Village shanty (1948)
15	Philip Amonoo	1922-2011	Naming a child (acquired in 1962), The dancer (acquired in 1962)
16	Albert Osabu Bartimeus	1927-1988	Beach scene (1975), Durbar (1987), Democracy in destruction (1964), market scene (1986), Riverside (1972)
17	Oku Ampofo	1908-1998	Bust of a woman from northern Ghana (1966), Dansinkran (1943), Daughter of the earth (1947), Puberty (1955), Struggle with tragedy, Prophet of the sky god (1955), Highlife (1964), Three market women (1958)
18	Vincent Akwete Kofi	1927-1974	Sankofa, crucifix, determination, giraffe, horn blower, giving up the ghost, let us pray, linguist
19	Kobina Bucknor	1925-1975	Northern horse men (1971), libation (1968), the royal sword bearer (1971), homowo (1970), naming the newborn, the last supper in blue (1967), Puberty (1966)
20	Ablade Glover	1934-	Roof tops (1983), The market (1976)
21	Ato Delaquis	1945-	Raving witches (1967)
22	El Anatsui	1944-	The ancestor converged again (1995), Ancient cloth series VIII (1993), Erosion (1992)
23	Bucknor Komla Dogbe	1944-	Female figure, Drummer and dancers (1987)

Now, let us learn more about a few of the modern Ghanaian artists.

Kofi Antubam

Kofi Antubam (1922-1964) was a well-known artist during this period. Antubam employed oil paints on canvas, enabling the creation of intricate textures and vivid hues. He was

adept at integrating Ghanaian motifs and symbols, specifically Adinkra symbols, that are traditional visual symbols conveying ideas or sayings. Antubam's technique combines realism with stylised shapes, creating artworks that were easily understood yet carried profound symbolic meaning. One of his remarkable pieces is "Chief with Umbrella," a painting showing a traditional Ghanaian leader.



Figure 1.1: Chief with Umbrella (Watercolours painting, 1948)



Figure 1.2: Polyptych wooden mural – 1951 at Children's Library, Accra.

This artwork represents power and cultural legacy, reflecting the honour and importance of customary rule. Antubam's artwork at the entrance to the Children's Library in Accra is designed to advocate for the education of girls and emphasise the significance of formal education for the progress of the nation. The mural shows six human figures, composed of two men and four women, encircled by cooking tools, fireplaces, and containers. In the mural, a young woman is seen with a "*mate masie*" adinkra symbol, representing wisdom, as she gives a book to a girl. The images contain intricate facial characteristics and muscle structure, utilising a cubist approach that highlights intense movements. The piece displays a bustling everyday scene with an emphasis on storytelling, motion, and cultural aspects such as attire and cooking tools.

Antubam used his artwork to encourage a sense of national pride and identity, particularly in the period after Ghana gained independence. His work not only honoured Ghanaian culture but also fostered a feeling of harmony, education for girls, and a sense of national awareness among the population.

Theodocia Okoh

Her role in art and establishing the national identity has earned her praise as a notable figure in Ghana's past. Theodocia Okoh was born on June 13, 1922, in Ghana. She was raised in

a household that placed importance on education and creativity. Her early years influenced her passion for art, leading her to become a prominent female artist in Ghana. Okoh is most famous for creating the national flag of Ghana, which serves as a symbol for the country in modern times.

Theodocia Okoh employed different materials and techniques in her artistic creations. Frequently, she utilised paints, brushes, and canvases in her work. She had a straightforward artistic approach that was still rich in depth. Her work stood out due to her skill in combining various colours and shapes. For instance, when she created the flag of Ghana, she selected particular colours to represent the nation's past and character. Red represents the fight for freedom, yellow symbolises the nation's mineral riches, and green signifies the abundant forests and natural assets. The African people's freedom is symbolised by the central black star.

The national flag of Ghana is the most well-known artwork created by Theodocia Okoh. The flag is commonly seen in various places across the country, including government buildings, schools, and sporting events. It represents a sense of patriotism for the country. In addition to the flag, Okoh was famous for her artwork, which frequently honoured Ghanaian culture. Her impact on art and national identity has established her as a revered individual in Ghana's history.

Nii Amon Kotei (1915–2011)

Amon Kotei, a gifted artist who gained recognition for his involvement in creating the national symbols of the country. He utilised basic supplies such as pencil, ink, and watercolour to produce intricate drawings with profound symbolism. He excelled in graphic design and illustration, concentrating on creating artwork that was visually attractive and had significance.

In 1957, Kotei's significant achievement was creating the Coat of Arms for Ghana. This emblem, designed when Ghana achieved independence, is filled with symbols representing the nation. It includes objects such as a black star that symbolises freedom, and a golden eagle that represents strength and power. Kotei's design played a role in bringing people together by providing symbols for unification and encouraging a feeling of national identity and solidarity.



Figure 1.3: Ghana's Coat of Arms in 1957 by Amon Kotei

Although he used basic materials readily available in the environment, his artistic style was consistently intricate and contemplative, frequently featuring symbols of Ghana's past and traditions. The impact of Kotei is still evident in Ghana today. His work serves as a prompt of the significant role art can have in influencing national identity and bringing people together. Kotei's designs were a significant contribution to Ghana's history and culture.

Prof. Ablade Glover

Ablade Glover, who was born in 1934, is a famous artist in Ghana. He is renowned for his vibrant and powerful paintings, created using oil paints on canvas. One of his main methods is referred to as the impasto technique. This includes adding heavy coats of paint to the canvas, providing texture and depth to his paintings. Glover's work is distinctive due to his use of thick paint and the palette knife, which infuses his scenes with energy and movement.

His art pieces frequently centre on day-to-day experiences in Ghana, specifically in bustling locations such as markets and urban areas. One of his well-known painting series is titled the "*Market Scene*" series.



Figure 1.4: Example of Market Scene series by Ablade Glover

Glover's paintings depict the lively hustle and bustle of people engaging in transactions of buying and selling goods. The scenes come alive thanks to his vibrant colour choices and energetic brushwork. Glover uses his art to honour the lively culture and everyday happenings in his country. Ablade Glover's art is not only well-liked in Ghana. His art is showcased in galleries and museums worldwide. His artwork provides a distinct perspective on African culture, showcasing the allure and energy of daily experiences. As a way of highlighting everyday occurrences, Glover's artwork allows individuals to acknowledge the diversity of life in Ghana, regardless of their origin.

El Anatsui

Born in 1944, El Anatsui is a well-known artist who is recognised for incorporating recycled materials into his art. Frequently, he creates sculptures using discarded items like bottle caps and metal pieces, turning them into impressive works of art. His decision to utilise abandoned items emphasises significant concepts involving trash, reusing, and the concept of change.

“Earth’s Skin” is considered to be one of his most renowned pieces. This huge art piece was created using metal bottle caps and copper wire. The piece looks like a huge tapestry, except it is created solely from discarded materials. In this artwork, El Anatsui addresses the consequences of human consumption and how we frequently ignore the garbage we generate.



Figure 1.5: An Installation by El Anatsui, “Earth’s Skin” (2007)

Another noteworthy piece is “Waste Paper Bags,” which utilises the same discarded materials to offer a visual reflection on worldwide consumption trends. Creating a work of art by putting together discarded materials.



Figure 1.6: Waste Paper Bags, 2004 – 2010 by El Anatsui

Anatsui encourages individuals to consider the effects of their daily behaviours on the environment. His creations are not only aesthetically pleasing but also convey impactful messages regarding worldwide concerns such as environmental accountability. El Anatsui has had his artwork showcased in numerous significant museums and galleries globally, establishing him as a highly influential contemporary African artist. His artwork prompts viewers to ponder their own connection to waste and the environment.

Dr. Oku Ampofo (1908 – 1998)

Dr. Oku Ampofo is known for his skill in working with wood and crafting sculptures that combine tradition and modern elements. Frequently, he sculpted figures based on Akan art and folklore, which have strong ties to Ghanaian culture. Akan art often includes symbols and narratives that depict aspects of human life, ancestors, and the supernatural realm. Oku had a specific interest in these themes and manifested them in his creative projects.

He used wood to make sculptures showing human figures and ancestral spirits. His unique style resulted from blending traditional methods with contemporary viewpoints, enabling his art to resonate with both historical and current times. Dr. Ampofo's goal was to safeguard his people's cultural heritage through his sculptures. His focus was not just on producing art, but also on preserving the ancestral techniques that had been handed down for generations.

His sculptures play a crucial role in preserving the history and beliefs of the Akan people. People are able to understand the cultural values, customs, and stories through the examination of his pieces. His commitment to protecting this cultural legacy through his art has elevated his work's importance in Ghana as well as internationally. His sculptures go beyond being mere art objects. They serve as a connection between traditional African art and the modern world, safeguarding significant cultural values for future generations.

Elements of Modern Ghanaian Art

There are some key elements that define modern Ghanaian Art. Some of such key elements include the following:

Indigenous Materials

Art from Ghana between the 1920s and the 1980s focused on using local materials, creating a strong bond with indigenous culture and traditions. In this era, artists utilised a range of indigenous resources such as clay for creating pottery and sculptures, wood for detailed carvings, and traditional fabrics like kente cloth. Clay's versatility allowed artists to make both practical objects and artistic sculptures, featuring symbols with cultural importance. Wood carvings, a traditional aspect of Ghanaian art, remained popular and successful as artists sculpted figures depicting cultural symbols, gods, and significant members of the community. Incorporating kente cloth into artwork showcased Ghana's weaving tradition. The vibrant hues and detailed designs of Kente represented various elements of Ghanaian culture, including social status, historical significance, and spiritual practices. Using these native resources enabled the artists to produce pieces that truly reflected Ghanaian culture and addressed modern topics. The use of these materials was not only for artistic expression, but also for upholding Ghanaian culture in the midst of contemporary influences.

Indigenous Techniques with Modern Twist

Contemporary Ghanaian artists skilfully combined indigenous methods with modern techniques, developing a distinct style that paid homage to their roots while also embracing present-day influences. A significant element of this blending involved incorporating Adinkra symbols into artwork and prints. Originally utilised in indigenous Ghanaian textiles, Adinkra symbols, which hold significant cultural significance, were commonly

imprinted onto fabric specifically for special events. Artists started incorporating these symbols in different forms of art, such as paintings, prints, and mixed media pieces, to convey intricate concepts related to community, spirituality, and social values. Indigenous weaving patterns used for kente cloth were experimented with, adapting them to modern art forms such as tapestries and abstract compositions. These weaving methods were reinvented to produce artwork that preserved the cultural importance of kente fabric while exploring new possibilities in textile art. In pottery, artists blended indigenous techniques with modern glazing methods, incorporating bright colours and innovative textures into their ceramics. These contemporary glazes expanded the range of possibilities, increasing the visual charm of classic pottery shapes. Ghanaian artists were able to demonstrate their cultural identity by combining indigenous methods with contemporary techniques, creating a unique fusion of old and new.

Thematic Richness

In the period between the 1920s and 1980s, every modern Ghanaian piece of art explored a social and cultural issue or even the historical context of the country. Several Ghanaian artistic works featured images of the struggle for independence while emphasising the nation's need for self-identity. Other pieces chronicled the timeline where people had to fight for independence and the works depicted the country's patriotism and love for their country. It is also at this time that images and portrayals of the 'struggle' to free Ghana gained prominence with people like Kwame Nkrumah, who led the country to independence in 1957 being featured prominently. Besides celebrating the important historical milestones, some Ghanaian artists employed their works of art to protest against colonialism and indicated there are still social and economic inequalities in Ghana after independence. Colonisation also brought prominent themes like urbanisation in an attempt to define the reality of a changing society. Furthermore, artists also paid tribute to traditional Ghanaian customs and rituals through their artwork, acknowledging the cultural traditions that were integral to community cohesion. Another significant focus in modern Ghanaian art was Pan-Africanism, which sought to unite African nations and foster solidarity. Artists crafted artworks representing solidarity and common ancestry, frequently incorporating symbols that were meaningful in various African societies. Modern Ghanaian art possesses a variety of themes that enable it to reflect the past, engage with the present, and be hopeful for the future.

Socio-Political Context

The sociopolitical environment in Ghana from the 1920s to the 1980s significantly influenced the development of the country's contemporary art. Artists directly addressed Ghana's colonial past and its path to independence through their work.

During colonial times, creative expression was frequently suppressed, and the original art forms of Ghana were sidelined in favour of European influences. Nevertheless, with the increasing strength of the independence movement, art started being used as a form of resistance and a way to restore cultural identity. The shift to autonomy in 1957 marked a crucial moment, with artists starting to depict their newly discovered national pride and hopeful outlook on what lies ahead. During this time, many pieces of art were created to honour Ghana's cultural roots and show the potential of a free country.

Moreover, the sociopolitical environment of contemporary Ghanaian art was shaped by the international experiences artists acquired from schooling and journeys. Numerous artists from Ghana received their education overseas, mainly in Europe and the United States, where they were introduced to different styles, techniques, and concepts. This opportunity allowed them to combine Western modernist methods with indigenous Ghanaian components, creating a unique mixed art style. This period in Ghanaian art also revolved around the issues of political turbulence and the problems of leadership after independence. Artists used their art to revolt against leaders, highlight the ills in society and eschew them through reforms. Ghanaian art was able to forge an independent style by amalgamating local cultural elements with the practice of the global artistic movements gaining a distinct voice which was deeply influenced by the political setting and yet consistent with the currents of Modernism.

Note

*Discuss this Sample Spidergram with your peers and use it as guide to develop your own spider diagram in **Activity 1.1**.*

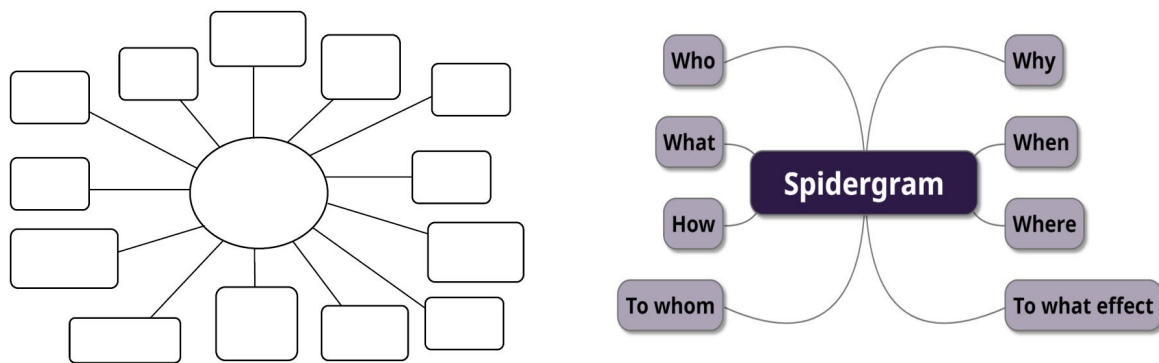


Figure 1.7: An example of Spidergram

Activity 1.1

Exploring Elements of Modern Ghanaian Art and Artists

For this activity, team up with a friend or a couple of friends and do the following

- 1.** Make a search from the internet or any other available learning materials and sources that will help you gain some understanding of the concept of Modern Ghanaian Art.
- 2.** In your search, try to identify names and pictures of some Modern Ghanaian artists who worked between 1920 to 1985. Your inquiry may be guided by questions such as:
 - a.** Who are the modern Ghanaian artists who worked between 1920 and 1985?
 - b.** What are the examples or titles of some of the artworks they produced?
 - c.** What materials and methods did they use for their artistic creations?
 - d.** What is the purpose or use of this artwork?

3. Make a list of the artists and their works found through your search and write them down in your notebooks.
4. Now, try to identify the major elements of Modern Ghanaian Art from your search and write them down.
5. Use your information to complete **Table 1.2** (you can modify the table by adding other vital headings/ information)
6. Develop a spidergram to describe your understanding of Modern Ghanaian art and its major elements, the artists involved, their style of work and materials they used. (*See the sample spidergram in Figure 1.7*).
7. Present your findings in class for discussion and review.
8. Use the feedback from your peers to improve your presentation
9. File your refined work in your digital or manual portfolio for future reference.

Table 1.2: Works of some modern Ghanaian Artists of the 1920s to 1985

Name of Artist with Picture	Years of Practise	Media/ Techniques/ Style	Sample/Title of works and their dimensions	Current Location of works

Try this challenge alone

1. Organise a virtual or physical “art gallery” to display the images of artworks by Modern Ghanaian artists (*see the Hint below this activity for guidance on how to create a Virtual Gallery*). NB: You have to print and mount the artworks identified in a room when creating a physical gallery. However, the virtual gallery can also be done on your professional social media page as you did in year one.
2. Invite peers, friends, or other people to your physical or virtual gallery to view and comment on your collection of artworks. (*For a physical gallery, you can host it in your classroom or any other approved space by the school authorities. For a virtual gallery, share the link with peers to invite them*).
3. Write a report on your experiences for this activity and present it in class for discussion and feedback.
4. Use the feedback comments from your peers and teachers to improve your report and file it in your digital or manual portfolio.

Hint

Here are simple steps to create a virtual gallery

1. Select digital pictures of selected artworks of an artist (*You can take to photographs yourself if the works are available*)
2. Upload the photographs to any suitable application such as PowerPoint, MS Word, social media, etc.
3. Label each of the photographs using the following:
 - a. Name of artist

- b.** Title and dimension or size of the work
- c.** Year the work was produced
- d.** Brief description of the artwork including its relevance (Keep it simple in a single sentence)
- e.** Current location of the work
- f.** Other vital information.

Click here to learn more on how to create virtual gallery: [create-a-virtual-gallery](#)

OVERVIEW OF THE ART HISTORY OF GHANA

Art history of Ghana is very elaborate and complex. The nuance of the culture, society and political events that have over the centuries affected the country depict the historical architecture of the nation. From the earlier forms of art during the pre-colonial period, to the present day works of Ghanaians, there is enough evidence of an active society whose work has been progressive. The place of art in Ghanaian society at all times has been central as it was used for oral narratives, decorating shrines, and during festivals. This journey begins with the colonial period, where external forces started to interfere with indigenous forms of art and takes us through the post-independence era where the artists sought to promote their culture. It is now the 21st century; art from Ghana has the traditional aspects blended with contemporary ones, hence the expression of local and international cultures.

Colonisation Period (Fifteenth century – Mid - Twentieth century)

The Colonisation of Ghana commenced with the influx of European merchants, including the Portuguese, along the Gulf of Guinea in the 15th Century tagging along with them new ideas as they settled along the western coastal region of Africa. The era also featured reduction of the rigidity of the traditional art forms as the Ghanaian Art incorporated European stylistic elements. During this time, ‘colonisers’ brought with them objects like textiles, metal types, among many other forms as an expansion of their imperialist practices. Colonisation was a threat to Africans in many ways and manner as it pushed aside all local art trade branding it ‘barbaric’ and using European art works alongside it.

Artists from Ghana during the early 20th century were able to construct their own identity by employing the European styles within their own work. Faced with this situation, Ghanaians, like other nations previously colonised, did not falter their creativity of art carved a niche in the midst of broader implications of colonialism.

Post Independence Period - starting from 1957

In 1957 Ghana became the first African country to gain freedom from British colonialism. This event marked the beginning of artistic transformation of the nation as artists began to depict national pride, unity and identity. After independence, art became an instrument to

channel the aspirations and dreams of a new nation the people were founding. There were many artists who responded to the call like Kofi Antubam who was in charge of decorating the nation with his artistic Ghanaian sculptural works. His works show images of ordinary Ghanaians and traditional symbols, showing the sense of togetherness and progress. The establishment of bodies such as the Arts Council of Ghana was seen as a great support to the arts as they aimed at fostering local art and crafts development. Artists also employed the fusion of the traditional Ghanaian arts and modern styles thereby creating a new form that was both traditional and contemporary style. Art in this era was not only aesthetic, but also a powerful means of creating a national identity.

Towards Ghanaian Development in the 21st Century

The Lion of Africa, also referred to as Ghanaian art in the 21st century is characterised with boldness that seeks to represent the deepest aspect of culture blended with finesse that is internationally acceptable. The artistic vision of contemporary Ghanaian is not developed in isolation; they draw context from social issues and trends in contemporary Ghanaian art and art across the world. The art world has changed with the advent of new technologies and developments in media art which enabled the exploration of new forms like contemporaneous art, film creating and new installations. The advancement of Ghanaian art also received a boost from artists like El Anatsui who became popular on the world art scene and is regarded as the father of modern Ghanaian art across the globe. It is indisputable that his iconic installations signify a constructive concern about the environment with the captivating creative force of African art. With the opening of art centres and diverse creative spaces, one can note that local emerging artists have more opportunities to display their works as was the case with reinforcement of Nubuke Foundation in Accra. Today the Ghanaian art signifies accomplishments of power, creativity and patriotism in the international arena.



Figure 1.8: An Example of Storyboard

Activity 1.2

Summarising Ghanaian Art History

Try this activity alone:

Your school is celebrating ART WEEK next month and you have been selected to give a five-minute speech on Ghanaian Art history because you have studied Art and Design Foundation for a year now. What will you do to deliver this speech effectively and within the time frame?

Here are a few steps to help you:

1. First, make a quick search on Ghanaian Art history by reading from this section of the learner material and revising the content on Ghanaian Indigenous Art in year one (*You may as well read from other credible internet sources or books available*).
2. Identify the major timelines of Ghanaian Art History from the pre-colonial to modern times.
3. In your readings, highlight the major artworks produced in each of the timelines and note down their characteristics such as their purpose, form, function, materials, techniques, artists, socio-cultural relevance, etc.
4. Try to write a brief description on each of the timelines with their corresponding artworks, forms, and styles.
5. Now, develop a presentation outline by writing down how you want to deliver your speech (*e.g. introduction, main points to speak on, conclusion, or next steps*).
6. Decide on the type of presentation to do (*e.g. with or without projecting PowerPoint slides, or using manual flipcharts, etc.*)
7. Select suitable images if you will use manual or digital pictorial presentation.
8. Design your manual or digital presentation by organising the content pictures appropriately (***This could also be in a form of storyboard. See Figure. 1.8 for example of a storyboard***)
9. As part of your preparation rehearse your presentation by presenting to your peers for feedback.
10. Use the feedback from peers to improve your content and flow.
11. Time yourself and rehearse a few more times.
12. Record a final version of your rehearsal for your personal portfolio.
13. Now, confidently go out there and deliver a mock speech to your class for feedback.
14. Use the feedback from your peers and teacher in class to improve your speech.

At this point, I am confident that you can confidently deliver this speech excellently, having followed the steps.

Note

You can always explore doing other things in addition to help you master this task!

CONTRIBUTIONS OF MODERN GHANAIAN ARTISTS TO THE HISTORY OF GHANA

Modern Ghanaian artists in their unique ways have contributed to the development of Ghanaian art and culture. Some of the major contributions of these artists include;

Promoting Cultural Identity and Nationalism

Theodocia Okoh, Kofi Antubam, and Amon Kotei were key figures in advancing Ghanaian cultural identity and nationalism through their artistry. Their work had a strong link to Ghana's independence and the country's feeling of pride. The national flag of Ghana, designed by Theodocia Okoh, serves as a representation of unity and freedom for the country. Kofi Antubam and Amon Kotei incorporated national symbols in their artworks, aiding in cultural connection and promoting pride and a sense of belonging. This became particularly crucial following Ghana's independence in 1957. These artists preserved Ghana's heritage and celebrated its future by connecting the past and present. Their efforts serve as a constant reflection of Ghana's abundant history and cultural heritage.

1. Education and Mentorship

Education and guidance have played a crucial role in maintaining and enhancing Ghanaian art. Ablade Glover, a well-known artist from Ghana, had a major impact by creating the Artist Alliance Gallery, a platform where young artists can exhibit their art and gain knowledge from experienced professionals. Glover also instructed and guided numerous up-and-coming artists, guaranteeing that the vibrant legacy of Ghanaian art would persist. Likewise, Kofi Antubam was instrumental in fostering artistic abilities. The mural painted on the Children's Library wall in Accra showcases his integration of everyday life and cultural symbols in his artwork. The mural emphasised the significance of education, women, and culture through its portrayal of women, traditional cooking tools, and adinkra symbols. The female figures in the mural carry books as a symbol of knowledge's power and highlight education's importance in shaping Ghana's future. Both Glover and Antubam influenced and motivated the upcoming generation of artists through their contributions.

2. International Recognition

The global spotlight was placed on Ghanaian art due to the efforts of artists such as El Anatsui. His creative utilisation of materials, such as reclaimed bottle caps and other discovered items, questioned conventional perceptions of African art aesthetics. Anatsui's creations were not only visually impressive but also conveyed significant cultural and social messages, attracting global attention to the cultural wealth of Ghanaian art. Together with other artists, he exhibited Ghana's culture on global stages, promoting cultural exchange and acknowledgment. His achievements overseas not only brought him fame, but also highlighted Ghana as a hub of artistic talent. Anatsui's artwork motivated other artists to explore and showcase their culture worldwide, demonstrating that African art could be contemporary, inventive, and universally significant.

3. Preserving Traditions

Ghanaian artists have been essential in upholding Ghana's traditions through their artwork. Their cultural heritage, which includes symbols, stories, and everyday life, serves as their inspiration. These artists mix old and new approaches to keep their work both current and reflective of Ghanaian culture. In this way, they contribute to preserving the traditions for upcoming generations. Their work frequently incorporates elements from folklore, history, and everyday life, acting as a connection between past traditions and contemporary ideals. These artists' commitment preserves Ghana's cultural identity amidst a rapidly evolving world.

4. Reflecting Social Issues

Artists in Ghana have always utilised their art to comment on and tackle social problems impacting the nation. Urbanisation, cultural shifts, and societal issues are key focuses of numerous Ghanaian artists' works. Through their artistic creations, they prompt the community to contemplate these changes and adjust to new circumstances. Their art frequently shows how modernisation affects traditional culture, prompting discussions and fostering conversations. These artists assist society in comprehending and navigating the obstacles associated with progress by tackling issues like poverty, inequality, and cultural erosion. Their artwork serves as an effective instrument for contemplation and transformation, enabling the community to thoughtfully and significantly address current issues.

These artists made important contributions to Ghana's cultural scene from the 1920s to 1985. Through their creativity and commitment, they maintained Ghanaian customs, boosted patriotism, and tackled societal problems, creating a lasting impact on contemporary artists. Their works not only honour Ghana's history but also connect with its current and future, making them crucial to the nation's artistic legacy.

Table 1.3: Contributions of some modern Ghanaian artists.

Artist	Years of Existence	Category	Themes of Artworks	Key Contributions
Dr. Oku Ampofo	1908–1998	Early Pioneer	Akan art and folklore	Sculptor blending traditional and modern styles

Activity 1.3

Analysing contributions of Modern Ghanaian Artists

Try the following alone or with some peers at home or school

1. Write down a few questions to ask the museum **curator** or the **gallerist** (*Your questions should focus on getting information about Modern Ghanaian artists from 1920 to 1985*)
2. Visit a gallery or museum (virtual or physical)

3. Find out from the curator or gallerist about Ghanaian modern artists and their works between 1920 and 1985. (*Find answers to critical questions such as “what are the contributions of these artists to society and Ghanaian Culture?”*)
4. Identify the contributions of the artists to the development of art in Ghana and globally.
5. Analyse the information you obtained and write down your ideas on how to document your inquiry using **Table 1.3** as a guide. (*You can choose other modes such as concept maps to enhance the visual appeal of your work*)
6. Organise the findings of your search into a pictorial digital presentation using any suitable apps such as PowerPoint, Google Slides, etc.
7. Present your work in class for feedback from peers and teachers.
8. Improve your presentations using the feedback from peers and teachers.
9. Keep a copy of your refined work in your portfolio for future reference.

Try this personal challenge: *Timeline of Modern Ghanaian Artists*

- a. Make a timeline of the key modern Ghanaian artists and their notable artworks.
- b. Use pictures and brief descriptions for each artist and artwork.
- c. Write a short essay about one artwork by a modern Ghanaian artist.
- d. Describe the artwork, the materials and methods used, and its significance.
- e. Present your work in class for discussion and feedback.

EXTENDED READING

Go online and watch videos on some of the modern Ghanaian artists and their artworks from 1920 to 1985. Here is an example in the video linked:

- <https://youtu.be/23fp8dnfV8w>
- [Artists | Berj Art Gallery](#)
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Ghanaian_artists
- [Street of Osu for Chalewote Art Festival 2024](#)
- [THE KUMASI SCHOOL OF “ART AND CRAFTS” IN A ...sdiarticle4.comhttps://www.sdiarticle4.com > prh > doc > Revised...](#)

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Identify the artist known for designing Ghana's Coat of Arms.
2. Name two modern Ghanaian artists active between the 1920s and 1985.
3. Describe the materials used by El Anatsui in his artworks.
4. List common themes found in the artworks of modern Ghanaian artists during this period.
5. What is the significance of Amon Kotei's contribution to Ghana's national symbols?
6. Compare and contrast the methods used by Kofi Antubam and Ablade Glover in their artworks.
7. Discuss how Dr. Oku Ampofo's sculptures preserve traditional Ghanaian culture and how this contribution can be sustained.
8. Explain how Kofi Antubam's artworks promoted national identity in Ghana.
9. Analyse the impact of Ablade Glover's teaching on the development of modern Ghanaian art.
10. Evaluate the role of modern Ghanaian art in reflecting social issues of the time.

SECTION

2

MODERN AFRICAN ART



THE CREATIVE JOURNEY (FROM CAVES TO 21ST CENTURY)

Art Across Time

INTRODUCTION

The focus of section one was on modern Ghanaian artists and their contributions to the development of art and society. You may have been inspired by these renowned modern Ghanaian artists and might already have a favourite amongst them. In this second section, we shall explore further beyond Ghana and learn about some Modern African art, exploring its evolution from the 1900s to the 21st century. The section will enable you to identify the relations between the materials, methods, and the sociocultural context of its creation. The section also explores the broader impact of African art and design on society and how it continues to influence cultural pride, social justice, and global perceptions of Africa. Learning about diverse media used by some modern African artists, will broaden your artistic experience and deepen your appreciation of the role played by art in African history and development.

KEY IDEAS

- Art and design serve as powerful tools for expressing societal issues, including independence, social justice, and cultural heritage.
- Art-making in Africa has evolved over time due to exposure to new ideas, materials, and global influences.
- Modern African art from 1900 to the 21st century can be classified based on styles, materials, and techniques.
- Modern African art has had a significant impact on society, shaping cultural identity and societal development.
- Modern African art reflects the sociocultural and political changes within African societies during different time periods.
- Various materials like wood, paint, and metal, along with methods such as painting, carving, and weaving, define modern African art.

MODERN AFRICAN ART

What is Modern African Art?

Modern African art refers to creative works made by African artists from the late 19th century to today. It blends traditional African styles with new ideas and techniques. These artworks include paintings, sculptures, textiles, and digital art, often reflecting African

history, culture, and daily life. Modern African artists use bright colours, bold patterns, and unique designs to express their thoughts and emotions. Some famous modern African artists include El Anatsui from Ghana, who creates artworks using recycled materials, and Ben Enwonwu from Nigeria, known for his paintings and sculptures. Modern African art movement is influenced by colonial history, independence movements, and global trends, making it a powerful way to tell African stories in new and exciting ways.

Characteristics of Modern African Art

Modern African art spans a wide spectrum of themes, materials, techniques, and artistic expressions since the late 19th century. This diverse and evolving movement reflects Africa's response to historical changes, including colonialism, independence movements, and globalisation. Modern African art is a dynamic blend of traditional and contemporary influences, offering insights into the cultural, social, and political transformations across the continent.

Mid-19th-Century Indigenous Artworks

Some mid-19th-century indigenous artworks are often considered modern due to their subject matter, themes, and the circumstances of their creation. Figurative bronze sculptures, for example, were sometimes created under European commissions, and their depiction of modern objects, such as bicycles and guns, gave them a unique character. These sculptures embodied a merging of African craftsmanship with European subject matter, resulting in pieces that carried elements of both cultures. The fusion of indigenous materials, like bronze, with the representation of modern imagery is a defining feature of early modern African art, showcasing the adaptability of African artists in responding to new influences while maintaining traditional craftsmanship.

Fusion of Traditional and Modern Techniques

Modern African art is defined by its combination of traditional African techniques, designs, and materials with modern styles like painting, sculpture, installation art, photography, and digital media. Artists often use traditional materials, such as wood, clay, and textiles, while incorporating new media and techniques. Sculptors like Ben Enwonwu, for example, used bronze to create figures that drew on traditional African forms but also adopted modernist aesthetics. Painters such as Gerard Sekoto used vibrant colours and dynamic compositions to reflect both the beauty and hardships of African society. The combination of traditional symbols and contemporary techniques allows artists to create works that are deeply rooted in their cultural heritage while addressing modern themes and concerns.

One prominent example of this fusion is the work of El Anatsui, who uses discarded materials like bottle caps to create massive, intricate installations. His work merges traditional African artistic values of resourcefulness and craftsmanship with contemporary commentary on consumerism and waste. In transforming everyday materials into elaborate artworks, El Anatsui highlights both the resilience of African communities and the complexities of modern life. This blend of old and new elements makes modern African art a powerful medium for expressing the continent's evolving identity.

Exploration of Identity

Modern African art frequently explores questions of identity, reflecting the influences of colonial history and the realities of African societies. Colonialism had a profound impact on the cultural landscape of Africa, and modern artists have used their work to explore how this history has shaped individual and collective identities. Themes of belonging, displacement, and the blending of local and global influences are common in modern African art. Artists like Yinka Shonibare address the complexities of identity by using materials like Dutch wax fabric—an imported material that has come to symbolise African identity. In his installations, Shonibare uses this fabric to create figures and scenarios that challenge stereotypes and provoke discussions about the legacy of colonialism and the hybrid nature of African identities.

This exploration of identity is also seen in the works of William Kentridge, a South African artist known for his animated films and drawings that address the apartheid era and its aftermath. Kentridge's art reflects the tensions between different cultural and historical narratives, offering a powerful commentary on the fragmented nature of identity in post-colonial Africa. Through addressing themes of memory, loss, and resilience, modern African artists contribute to an ongoing dialogue about what it means to be African in a rapidly changing world.

Critical Examination of Colonial Legacies

Modern African art often critically examines colonial legacies, and the challenges faced in the post-colonial period. Artists use their work to question and critique the impact of colonial rule, including issues related to social justice, human rights, and the redistribution of power. Colonialism left a lasting imprint on African societies, and artists have responded by creating works that address the inequalities and injustices that continue to exist. For example, the works of Malangatana Ngwenya from Mozambique vividly depict the struggles of African communities during the colonial era, using intense colours and dramatic compositions to evoke the emotions of fear, resistance, and hope.

Many artists also engage with contemporary social issues, advocating for human rights and environmental sustainability. Art becomes a tool for activism, providing a platform to raise awareness about issues such as political corruption, economic disparity, and environmental degradation. The use of recycled materials in art, as seen in the works of El Anatsui, speaks to the importance of sustainability and the need to address environmental challenges. As a result of repurposing waste into something beautiful, modern African artists do not only create visually striking pieces but also deliver powerful messages about the importance of preserving the environment for future generations.

Celebration of Cultural Diversity

One of the most defining characteristics of modern African art is its celebration of Africa's cultural diversity. Artists draw inspiration from a wide range of sources, including indigenous folklore, mythology, and everyday life. Folklore and traditional narratives are often depicted in paintings, sculptures, and mixed media works, providing a glimpse into the rich cultural heritage of different African communities. Artists like Ablade Glover from

Ghana have used their work to celebrate the vibrancy of African markets and the dynamic nature of urban life, capturing the colours, movement, and energy of daily activities.

Mythology and spiritual beliefs also play a significant role in modern African art. Artists make use of symbols and imagery drawn from traditional African religions and customs to explore spiritual themes. This is seen in the work of artists like Uche Okeke, who was a member of the Zaria Art Society in Nigeria. Okeke's work often incorporated Igbo symbols and mythology, reflecting a deep connection to his cultural roots and a desire to celebrate indigenous knowledge. Through drawing on these traditional stories and beliefs, modern African artists create works that resonate with viewers on both a cultural and emotional level, emphasising the importance of heritage in shaping identity.

Spiritual Themes and Ancestral Connection

Modern African art also delves into spiritual themes, often reflecting the artist's connection to African beliefs and customs. Many artists explore ideas like honouring ancestors, invoking spiritual forces, and using metaphysical symbols to convey messages about the unseen world. This connection to the spiritual realm is an important aspect of African culture, where art has traditionally been used as a medium to communicate with the ancestors and the divine. Sculptures, masks, and paintings are often imbued with symbolic meaning, representing the presence of spiritual forces in everyday life.

An example of this is the work of Lamidi Fakeye, a Nigerian sculptor known for his wood carvings that blend traditional Yoruba religious symbols with contemporary forms. Fakeye's sculptures often depict figures associated with Yoruba deities, using intricate carvings to convey spiritual messages. Through his art, Fakeye emphasises the importance of maintaining a connection to one's cultural and spiritual heritage, even in a rapidly modernising world. This focus on spirituality highlights the role of art in bridging the gap between the physical and metaphysical, offering viewers a deeper understanding of the cultural significance of African beliefs.

Global Impact and Influence

The global impact of modern African art is evident in its influence on contemporary art movements and the international recognition of artists like El Anatsui, William Kentridge, and Yinka Shonibare. These artists have not only brought African perspectives to the global stage but have also influenced how contemporary art is perceived and created worldwide. Their works are exhibited in major galleries and museums, highlighting the importance of African voices in the global art scene. The recognition of African artists on the international stage has helped to challenge stereotypes and redefine what modern art can be, incorporating diverse cultural narratives and experiences.

Beyond the realm of fine arts, modern African art and design have had a substantial influence across other fields, including fashion, architecture, and social activism. African fashion designers often draw inspiration from traditional textiles and patterns, blending them with modern styles to create garments that celebrate cultural heritage. The vibrant colours and intricate designs of kente cloth, for example, have been reimaged in contemporary fashion,

gaining popularity both within Africa and internationally. In architecture, traditional African forms have been incorporated into modern structures, creating buildings that reflect both cultural heritage and contemporary innovation.

Modern African art also plays a significant role in social activism, using visual storytelling to address critical issues facing African societies. Artists create works that reflect pivotal moments in African history, from independence movements to contemporary social challenges, using their art to inspire change and promote a sense of unity. By addressing themes of social justice, cultural pride, and resilience, modern African art continues to shape global culture, offering a unique perspective on the complexities of life in Africa and the broader human experience.

The characteristics of modern African art are as diverse as the continent itself, encompassing a wide range of themes, materials, and techniques. From the blending of traditional and modern influences to the exploration of identity and the critical examination of colonial legacies, modern African art is a powerful expression of the continent's history, culture, and aspirations. It celebrates the richness of African heritage while engaging with contemporary issues, offering a unique and dynamic contribution to the global art scene. Through their work, modern African artists continue to inspire, challenge, and captivate audiences around the world, ensuring that Africa's voice is heard and appreciated in the ever-evolving world of art.

Some Early Modern African Artists

The early modern period in African art history marked a significant transition, blending traditional practices with new influences. One of such pioneering figures is Aina Onabolu.

Aina Onabolu (1882–1963)

Aina Onabolu was a trailblazing Nigerian artist and educator who is often called the father of modern Nigerian art. Born in 1882, he developed a passion for drawing at a young age. During his time, art in Nigeria was dominated by traditional crafts and there was little exposure to Western-style fine arts. Onabolu sought to change this by introducing formal art education and techniques to his country.

Largely self-taught, he was determined to master the European styles of realism and portraiture. Recognising the limitations of learning on his own, Onabolu travelled to England and France to study art formally. He attended the Académie Julian in Paris, where he honed his skills and learnt about Western artistic traditions.

Upon returning to Nigeria, Onabolu faced the challenge of integrating these new techniques into a society that was unfamiliar with them. He became an advocate for art education and worked tirelessly to introduce art into the Nigerian school curriculum. His efforts led to the inclusion of art as a subject in schools, paving the way for future generations of Nigerian artists.



Figure 2.1 Aina Onabolu

Onabolu's artworks are notable for their realistic depictions of Nigerian people and landscapes. He often painted portraits of prominent figures, capturing not only their likeness but also their personality and status. His style combined European techniques with African subjects, creating a unique fusion that was both modern and culturally relevant.

As an educator, Onabolu inspired many young artists and helped establish a foundation for modern art in Nigeria. His commitment to art education and his pioneering work opened doors for others to explore and express their creativity. Onabolu advocated for art education in schools, believing it essential for cultural identity and national development. His efforts led to the inclusion of art in the Nigerian curriculum and the arrival of formal art instructors like Kenneth C. Murray. Onabolu's dedication laid the foundation for contemporary art in Nigeria, bridging traditional African themes with Western artistic methods. Aina Onabolu's legacy lives on in the vibrant art scene of Nigeria today, reminding us of the power of art to bridge cultures and inspire change.

Both Amo and Onabolu were instrumental in challenging colonial narratives and promoting African contributions to global culture. They exemplified how education and the arts could empower individuals and societies. When indigenous knowledge is merged with new ideas, they forge paths for future generations of African artists and intellectuals. Their legacies remind us of the enduring impact that dedication and cultural pride can have on shaping a nation's artistic and intellectual landscape.

Modern African Art Movements and their philosophies

African art has been profoundly shaped by movements that reflect the continent's diverse cultures and histories. Key among these are the Zaria Rebels, Negritude and Pan-Africanism, the Khartoum School, the Uli and Nsukka School, Afrocentrism, and Tropical Modernism.

Zaria Rebels (c. Late 1950s)



Figure 2.2: The Zaria Art Society founding members

In the late 1950s, a group of visionary Nigerian art students formed what became known as the Zaria Rebels. Studying at the Nigerian College of Arts, Science, and Technology in Zaria, these students felt that the art curriculum was too focused on European styles and did not reflect their own cultural heritage. Determined to create an authentic Nigerian art form, they sought to blend traditional African aesthetics with contemporary techniques.

Led by artists like Uche Okeke, Demas Nwoko, and Bruce Onobrakpeya, the Zaria Rebels established the Art Society in 1958. They championed the concept of “Natural Synthesis,” which aimed to harmoniously combine indigenous art forms with modern art practices. This approach encouraged artists to draw inspiration from local traditions, myths, and symbols, infusing their work with cultural significance.

The Zaria Rebels challenged the status quo by rejecting the strict adherence to Western art conventions. Instead, they embraced motifs from Nigerian folklore, textiles, and sculpture, integrating them into paintings, prints, and sculptures. Their work often addressed social and political themes, reflecting the country’s journey towards independence and the complexities of post-colonial identity.

The impact of the Zaria Rebels on Nigerian art was profound. They paved the way for future generations of artists to explore and celebrate their heritage within a modern framework. Their innovative approach broadened the scope of artistic expression in Nigeria, fostering a sense of pride and ownership of their cultural narratives.

The legacy of the Zaria Rebels endures in the vibrant and diverse art scene of Nigeria today. Their commitment to authenticity and cultural relevance continues to inspire artists who seek to balance tradition and modernity in their creative endeavours.

Negritude and Pan-Africanism in Modern African Art

Negritude and Pan-Africanism have significantly influenced modern African art. Arising in the first half of the 20th century, these movements sought to redefine African identity and highlight the significance of African cultures in reaction to colonialism and racism.

Negritude was founded by African and Caribbean writers who spoke French, such as Léopold Sédar Senghor and Aimé Césaire. It celebrated African heritage by showcasing pride in black identity and cultural origins. Negritude in art encouraged exploration of African aesthetics, rhythms, and symbolism, while rejecting the embrace of European styles.

Pan-Africanism promoted the worldwide unification and support of African people. Notable individuals like W.E.B. Du Bois and Marcus Garvey advocated for the progress of Africans and the African diaspora across political, economic, and cultural realms. This artistic movement inspired artists to investigate concepts of liberty, unity, and resistance against tyranny. Contemporary African artists utilised these tendencies to create artworks that were authentically cultural and socially impactful. They merged traditional patterns, oral stories, and indigenous techniques with contemporary artistic strategies. This mixture resulted in a diverse and detailed assortment of artwork portraying the complexities of African life.

Artists used their art to challenge colonial stories and to take back their own pasts. Negritude and Pan-Africanism were used as frameworks to explore themes of identity, lineage, and the struggle for liberation. Artists employed different types of expression, like painting, sculpture, literature, and music, to convey messages of empowerment and hope. Negritude and Pan-Africanism continue to be significant in present-day African art. These behaviours have encouraged a greater appreciation for African cultures and motivated artists to use their talents for societal and cultural change.

The Khartoum School

The Khartoum School was an innovative art movement that emerged in Sudan during the 1960s. It was formed by a group of artists who sought to create a unique artistic language that reflected Sudan's diverse cultural heritage, blending African, Arab, and Islamic influences.

Key figures like Ibrahim El-Salahi and Ahmed Shibrain were central to the development of the Khartoum School. They experimented with abstract forms, calligraphy, and symbols derived from local traditions. The artists incorporated Arabic script and geometric patterns into their work, not just for their literal meanings but also for their aesthetic qualities.

The movement was characterised by a departure from purely representational art toward abstraction and symbolism. This approach allowed the artists to express complex ideas about identity, spirituality, and the human experience. Their work often explored themes of unity and diversity, mirroring the multicultural fabric of Sudanese society.

The Khartoum School played a significant role in placing Sudanese art on the global map. It contributed to broader discussions about modernism in non-Western contexts and challenged preconceived notions about African art. The movement demonstrated that modern art could be deeply rooted in local cultures while engaging with international artistic trends.

The legacy of the Khartoum School endures in the continued innovation and creativity of Sudanese artists. It serves as a testament to the power of art to bridge cultures and to express the unique perspectives of a society navigating tradition and modernity.

The Uli and Nsukka School

The Uli and Nsukka School refers to a group of Nigerian artists associated with the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, who revitalised traditional Igbo art forms in contemporary art. Starting in the 1970s, artists like Uche Okeke, Chike Aniakor, and Obiora Udechukwu drew inspiration from Uli, an indigenous art tradition characterised by fluid lines and intricate patterns used in body painting and wall decorations.

These artists sought to preserve and reinterpret Uli motifs within modern artistic practices. By incorporating Uli designs into paintings, drawings, and prints, they created a distinctive style that was both modern and deeply rooted in Igbo culture. This approach challenged the dominance of Western art techniques and emphasised the value of indigenous knowledge and aesthetics.

The Nsukka School expanded the possibilities of Nigerian art by blending traditional symbolism with contemporary themes. Their work often addressed social issues, political

events, and personal narratives, using the visual language of Uli to communicate complex ideas. This fusion of old and new resonated with audiences and critics alike.

The movement had a significant impact on art education in Nigeria. It encouraged artists and students to explore their cultural heritage and to develop unique artistic voices. The emphasis on local traditions provided a sense of identity and continuity in a rapidly changing society.

The Uli and Nsukka School remains influential today, inspiring artists to delve into their cultural roots and to innovate within their artistic practices. It highlights the importance of preserving traditional art forms while adapting them to contemporary contexts.

Afrocentrism

Afrocentrism is an intellectual and cultural movement that centres on African perspectives, history, and values. It emerged as a response to the Eurocentric narratives that often marginalised or distorted African contributions to global civilisation. Afrocentrism seeks to reframe history and culture by placing Africa at the forefront of discussions.

In the arts, Afrocentrism encourages creators to draw inspiration from African traditions, philosophies, and experiences. Artists explore themes of identity, heritage, and empowerment, using their work to celebrate African cultures and to challenge stereotypes. This movement emphasises the richness and diversity of African art forms, from ancient sculptures and textiles to contemporary music and literature.

Afrocentrism also promotes education and scholarship that accurately represent African histories and achievements. It advocates for the inclusion of African perspectives in curricula and cultural institutions. By doing so, it aims to foster a sense of pride and self-determination among people of African descent.

The impact of Afrocentrism is evident in various artistic expressions, from visual arts and literature to theatre and film. Artists like Romare Bearden, Faith Ringgold, and Chinua Achebe have incorporated Afrocentric themes into their work, contributing to a broader understanding of African and African-American experiences.

Afrocentrism continues to influence modern art and culture. It serves as a reminder of the importance of representation and the power of art to reshape narratives. Focusing on African perspectives through Afrocentrism enriches global culture and encourages dialogue and art appreciation across diverse communities.

Tropical Modernism

Tropical Modernism is an architectural and artistic movement that adapted modernist principles to suit tropical climates and cultures. Emerging in the mid-20th century, it sought to create functional, sustainable, and aesthetically pleasing designs that responded to the environmental conditions of tropical regions.

Architects like Geoffrey Bawa in Sri Lanka and Oscar Niemeyer in Brazil were pioneers of Tropical Modernism. They incorporated features like open floor plans, natural ventilation,

shaded outdoor spaces, and the use of local materials. These designs addressed the challenges of heat and humidity while blending seamlessly with the natural landscape.

In the visual arts, Tropical Modernism reflected a synthesis of international modernist styles with local traditions and themes. Artists embraced abstraction and experimentation, drawing inspiration from their surroundings and cultural heritage. This approach allowed for the expression of modern ideas within a context that was relevant to their societies.

Tropical Modernism represented a departure from colonial architectural styles that often ignored local climates and needs. It emphasised the importance of context in design, considering factors like environment, culture, and social dynamics. This movement contributed to the development of a unique architectural identity in tropical countries.

The principles of Tropical Modernism remain influential today, particularly in discussions about sustainable design and cultural sensitivity. Focusing on functionality and harmony with the environment offers valuable insights into creating spaces that are both beautiful and practical.

Art Institutions

Art institutions have played a crucial role in nurturing talent and preserving cultural heritage in Africa, especially in Ghana. From the 1920s to the 1950s, art education in Ghana was significantly shaped by a mix of colonial influence and a growing desire to preserve and modernise African cultural heritage. One notable example is the Achimota School, founded in 1927 in Accra. This school was established to provide a well-rounded education that blended intellectual development with practical skills, including a strong focus on the arts.

At a time when colonial education often overlooked African art forms, Achimota included art education in its curriculum. This was ground-breaking and helped students explore both indigenous African art and modern practices. They learnt about painting, sculpture, music, and drama, fostering a deep appreciation for the arts. The emphasis on art at Achimota contributed significantly to the cultural revival in Ghana and West Africa. It produced many influential figures, including Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana's first president, who recognised the importance of art in building a nation. The school's creative environment encouraged critical thinking and instilled pride in Ghanaian culture.

Achimota played a vital role in preserving Ghanaian cultural practices by valuing indigenous art. It provided a platform for artists to gain recognition and contribute to the wider artistic community, showing how educational institutions can shape cultural development and empower future leaders.

Following Achimota, the establishment of the Kumasi College of Technology in 1952, now Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), marked another significant step in art education. KNUST introduced a dedicated College of Art, focusing on fine arts and industrial design. This institution merged practical skills with theoretical knowledge, promoting innovation while honouring African heritage. KNUST is also known for training many of the renowned modern Ghanaian academic artists who gained various global recognitions.

Another key player is the University of Education, Winneba (UEW). In 1958, the Teacher Training section of the Art and Crafts Specialist Course (ACSC) at KNUST was transferred to Winneba. UEW emphasised the importance of art in education, promoting the use of creative expression as a teaching tool and a way to foster cultural pride and awareness among students which has been vital in training art teachers. Originally one of the teacher training colleges, UEW became essential for developing educators who can integrate art into their teaching across all educational levels in West Africa.

Together, these institutions have established a thriving art education system in Ghana. Through promoting both indigenous African art and Western techniques, they have fostered a unique Ghanaian artistic identity and empowered many artists and educators. Their services are greatly visible as influencing the art scene throughout Ghana, West Africa and beyond.

Some Leading Artists in Modern African Art from the Period of 1900 to Present

Ibrahim El-Salahi (Sudan, 1930-present)

Ibrahim El-Salahi, born in 1930 in Omdurman, Sudan, is a pioneering figure in African and Arab modernism. Educated at the prestigious Slade School of Fine Art in London during the 1950s, El-Salahi was among the first African artists to blend Western art techniques with African and Islamic traditions. His style is characterised by the integration of Arabic calligraphy, African motifs, and abstract forms, creating a unique visual language that bridges cultural divides.

El-Salahi's work often delves into themes of spirituality, personal experience, and the human condition. He employs materials such as ink, pen, and oil paints on paper or canvas, producing intricate black-and-white drawings alongside vibrant, large-scale paintings. His compositions are known for their rhythmic lines and symbolic imagery, reflecting both his Sudanese heritage and global artistic influences.

Throughout his career, El-Salahi has held significant positions, including serving as Sudan's Undersecretary of Culture in the 1970s. However, political turmoil led to his imprisonment without trial, prompting his eventual relocation to the United Kingdom. Despite these challenges, he continued to create and exhibit his work internationally.

In 2013, the Tate Modern in London honoured El-Salahi with a retrospective exhibition, making him the first African artist to receive such recognition at the institution. His contributions have had a lasting impact on contemporary African art, inspiring generations of artists across the continent. El-Salahi continues to live and work in the UK, where he remains an influential figure in the global art community.

Ernest Mancoba (South Africa/Denmark, 1904-2002)

Ernest Mancoba was born in 1904 in Turffontein, Johannesburg, South Africa, and is regarded as a seminal figure in modern African art and abstraction. Initially trained as a teacher at the Diocesan Training College in Pietersburg, Mancoba's artistic journey led

him to Paris in 1938, where he studied at the École des Arts Décoratifs. His exposure to European avant-garde movements significantly shaped his artistic development.

Mancoba's style is marked by abstract forms that harmoniously blend African cultural motifs with European modernism. Utilising materials such as oil paints on canvas or paper, his work often explores themes of spirituality, humanism, and universal interconnectedness. His compositions are characterised by fluid lines and dynamic shapes, reflecting a deep philosophical engagement with the essence of being.

During World War II, Mancoba was interned as an enemy alien due to his marriage to Danish artist Sonja Ferlov. After the war, he settled in Denmark and became associated with the CoBrA group—a collective known for their spontaneous and experimental approach to art. Despite facing racial and cultural barriers, Mancoba remained dedicated to his artistic vision.

Although his work received limited recognition during his lifetime, posthumous exhibitions have celebrated Mancoba's contributions to modern art. His legacy endures as a bridge between African and European artistic traditions, highlighting the universality of abstract expression. Mancoba's life and work continue to inspire discussions on cultural identity and the global art narrative.

Ben Enwonwu (Nigeria, 1917-1994)

Ben Enwonwu, born in 1917 in Onitsha, Nigeria, is often hailed as the father of Nigerian modernism and one of Africa's most distinguished artists. He began his formal education at Government College, Ibadan, and later attended the prestigious Goldsmiths College and Slade School of Fine Art in London. Enwonwu was among the first African artists to receive formal training in Western art institutions.

His artistic style is a synthesis of traditional African aesthetics and Western techniques. Enwonwu worked across various media, including painting and sculpture, with materials like oil paints, bronze, and wood. His themes frequently centred on Nigerian culture, identity, and post-colonial nationalism. Notably, his sculptures often depicted elegant figures inspired by Nigerian folklore and dance.

Enwonwu gained international acclaim with works like his bronze sculpture of Queen Elizabeth II in 1956, making him the first African artist to create an official portrait of a reigning monarch. His commitment to portraying the dignity and beauty of African subjects challenged prevailing Western narratives and contributed to a redefinition of African art on the global stage.

Throughout his career, Enwonwu held influential positions, such as Nigeria's first art advisor and professor of fine arts at the University of Ife. His contributions extended beyond his artwork, as he actively promoted art education and cultural development in Nigeria. Enwonwu's legacy is preserved through his impactful oeuvre, which continues to inspire artists and affirm the rich artistic heritage of Africa.

Nicholas Mukomberanwa (Zimbabwe, 1940-2002)

Nicholas Mukomberanwa, born in 1940 in Buhera, Zimbabwe, was a master sculptor and a leading figure in the Shona art movement. Initially working as a policeman, Mukomberanwa pursued his passion for art under the mentorship of Frank McEwen at the National Gallery of Zimbabwe. His dedication led him to become a full-time artist, significantly influencing Zimbabwean stone sculpture.

Mukomberanwa's style is noted for its abstract yet expressive forms carved from indigenous stones like serpentine and springstone. His sculptures often feature stylised human figures and faces, exploring themes of Shona mythology, spirituality, and social commentary. He skillfully balanced traditional African artistic elements with modernist abstraction, creating works that are both culturally resonant and universally accessible.

Using techniques that emphasised the natural qualities of the stone, Mukomberanwa's pieces exhibit a polished finish that enhances their tactile and visual appeal. His art reflects a deep connection to his heritage, while also engaging with contemporary issues and personal experiences.

Throughout his career, Mukomberanwa exhibited internationally, contributing to the global recognition of Zimbabwean sculpture. He was also a mentor to many emerging artists, including his own children, who have become respected sculptors in their own right. Mukomberanwa's legacy is marked by his artistic excellence and his role in nurturing the next generation of African artists.

Skunder Boghossian (Ethiopia, 1937-2003)

Alexander "Skunder" Boghossian was born in 1937 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and is celebrated as a key figure in modern African art. Of Ethiopian and Armenian descent, Boghossian's multicultural background enriched his artistic perspective. He studied at the School of Fine Arts in Addis Ababa before advancing his education in London and Paris, where he was influenced by Surrealism and Abstract Expressionism.

Boghossian's style is an intricate blend of Ethiopian iconography, mythology, and mystical themes with Western modernist techniques. His works often feature complex compositions filled with symbolic imagery, utilising materials like oil paints and mixed media on canvas. He explored themes such as spirituality, cosmic order, and the intersection of tradition and modernity.

In the late 1960s, Boghossian moved to the United States and became a professor at Howard University in Washington, D.C., where he taught for over two decades. His influence extended beyond his art as he mentored numerous African and African-American artists. Boghossian's commitment to cultural expression and artistic innovation left an indelible mark on contemporary art.

His works have been exhibited globally, and he is represented in major collections, including the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Skunder Boghossian's legacy lies in his ability to bridge cultural divides and his contribution to the global appreciation of African art.

Ablade Glover (Ghana, 1934-present)

Ablade Glover, born in 1934 in Accra, Ghana, is a distinguished painter and educator renowned for his vibrant and expressive artworks. He received his art education from esteemed institutions, including the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Kumasi, the Central School of Art and Design in London, and Kent State University in the United States, where he earned his doctorate in art education.

Glover's style is characterised by impasto techniques and the use of vivid colours, creating dynamic scenes that capture the energy of urban life in Ghana. His paintings often depict crowded marketplaces, bustling cityscapes, and landscapes, reflecting themes of community and daily life. Utilising oil paints on canvas, Glover employs thick layers and bold brushstrokes that convey movement and vitality.

As an educator, Glover served as the head of the Art Education Department and later as the Dean of the College of Art at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology. He founded the Artists Alliance Gallery in Accra, providing a platform for both established and emerging African artists.

Glover's contributions to art have been recognised with numerous awards, including the Order of the Volta from the Ghanaian government. His work has been exhibited internationally, solidifying his reputation as a key figure in contemporary African art. Glover continues to inspire through his dedication to artistic excellence and education.

Chéri Samba (Democratic Republic of Congo, 1956-present)

Chéri Samba, born David Samba in 1956 in Kinto M'Vuila, Democratic Republic of Congo, is a leading contemporary artist known for his colourful and narrative paintings. Self-taught and starting his career as a sign painter and comic strip artist in Kinshasa, Samba developed a unique style that combines visual imagery with textual commentary.

His work is characterised by the use of acrylic paints on canvas, vibrant colours, and the incorporation of text in French or Lingala. Samba's paintings address social issues, politics, everyday life, and personal experiences, often infused with satire and humour. By blending comic-strip aesthetics with fine art, he creates accessible works that engage viewers in critical reflections on society. Samba's themes include commentary on corruption, social inequality, health crises like HIV/AIDS, and the complexities of life in the Congo. His art has gained international recognition, featuring in exhibitions worldwide, including the Centre Pompidou and the Museum of Modern Art.

Chéri Samba's contributions have been instrumental in bringing contemporary African art to a global audience. His work continues to challenge perceptions and provoke thought on pressing social issues.

Malangatana Ngwenya (Mozambique, 1936-2011)

Malangatana Valente Ngwenya, born in 1936 in Matalana, Mozambique, is one of the country's most celebrated artists. Despite limited formal education, Malangatana's talent was nurtured by Portuguese artists who recognised his potential. His expressive style and vibrant use of colour became hallmarks of his work.

Malangatana's art often depicted the struggles and aspirations of the Mozambican people, incorporating elements of mythology, folklore, and social realism. He utilised materials such as oil paints for his canvases and created large-scale murals, ceramics, and sculptures. His themes addressed colonial oppression, the fight for independence, and cultural identity.

Beyond his artistic achievements, Malangatana was active in Mozambique's liberation movement and served in various cultural and political roles after independence. His work has been exhibited internationally, earning him numerous accolades, including the Nachingwea Medal and recognition as a UNESCO Artist for Peace.

Malangatana's legacy endures through his impactful art and his dedication to cultural expression, making him a central figure in African art history.

Gerard Sekoto (South Africa, 1913-1993)

Gerard Sekoto, born in 1913 in Botshabelo, South Africa, is regarded as a pioneer of modern South African art and a leading figure in social realism. With limited formal training, he attended art classes while studying at the Diocesan Teachers Training College in Pietersburg.

Sekoto's work is characterised by vivid portrayals of urban life and the experiences of black South Africans during apartheid. Using oil paints and watercolours, he depicted scenes from townships like Sophiatown, capturing the vibrancy and hardships of daily life. His style combined expressive brushwork with a rich colour palette.

In 1947, Sekoto went into exile in Paris to escape apartheid's racial discrimination. There, he continued to create art, although he faced challenges in gaining recognition. His work began to reflect European influences while maintaining his South African roots.

Sekoto also explored music, composing songs and playing piano. His contributions were posthumously recognised, with retrospectives celebrating his influence on art and culture. Gerard Sekoto's art offers a profound commentary on social issues and remains significant in understanding South Africa's history.

Ifeanyi Menkiti (Nigeria, 1940-2020)

Ifeanyi Menkiti was a Nigerian-born philosopher and poet known for his contributions to African philosophy and literature. Born in 1940, Menkiti pursued higher education in the United States, earning his Ph.D. in philosophy from Harvard University. He served as a professor at Wellesley College for over four decades, specialising in ethics, social philosophy, and African philosophy.

While Menkiti was not primarily recognised as a visual artist, his work deeply explored themes of community, personhood, and cultural identity. His poetry collections, such as *Before a Common Soil*, reflect his philosophical insights and engagement with human experiences. Menkiti emphasised the communal nature of African societies, contrasting Western individualism with African communal values.

In addition to his academic pursuits, Menkiti owned the Grolier Poetry Book Shop in Cambridge, Massachusetts, fostering literary culture and supporting poets. His legacy lies

in his profound impact on philosophy and literature, enriching the discourse on African thought and ethics.

Kofi Antubam (Ghana, 1922-1966)

Kofi Antubam, born in 1922 in Ghana, was a pioneering artist who significantly influenced the development of modern art in his country. Educated at Achimota School and later trained in art education in London, Antubam was dedicated to integrating Ghanaian cultural motifs into contemporary art forms.

His style incorporated traditional symbols and themes, merging them with modernist aesthetics. Antubam worked in various media, including painting and sculpture, and was involved in designing state regalia and furniture. His art often focused on national identity, cultural heritage, and the celebration of Ghanaian traditions.

Antubam's commitment to cultural expression played a vital role during Ghana's journey to independence. His works served as a visual representation of national pride and contributed to shaping a distinct Ghanaian modernism. Kofi Antubam's legacy is preserved through his influential art and his role in promoting Ghanaian culture.

Bruce Onobrakpeya (Nigeria, 1932-present)

Bruce Onobrakpeya, born in 1932 in Agbarha-Otor, Nigeria, is a master printmaker and a leading figure in contemporary African art. He studied at the Nigerian College of Arts, Science and Technology and was a member of the Zaria Art Society, advocating for "Natural Synthesis"—the blending of indigenous art forms with modern techniques.

Onobrakpeya is renowned for his innovative printmaking methods, including bronzed lino relief and plastography. His work incorporates traditional Urhobo symbols and explores themes of folklore, mythology, and social issues. Using materials like metal foil, lino blocks, and mixed media, he creates richly textured and visually engaging pieces.

Throughout his career, Onobrakpeya has exhibited internationally and received numerous accolades, such as the UNESCO Living Human Treasure Award. He founded the Bruce Onobrakpeya Foundation, promoting art education and nurturing emerging artists through workshops. His contributions have profoundly impacted contemporary African art, inspiring generations.

Ousmane Sow (Senegal, 1935-2016)

Ousmane Sow, born in 1935 in Dakar, Senegal, was an acclaimed sculptor known for his monumental human figures. Initially working as a physiotherapist, Sow transitioned to art full-time, bringing a deep understanding of anatomy to his sculptures.

His style involves creating large-scale sculptures depicting African peoples like the Nuba, Maasai, and Zulu, capturing their strength and cultural essence. Sow used mixed media materials, including clay, rubber, and bronze, to create textured and lifelike representations.

Themes in his work focus on the human experience, resilience, and cultural identity. Sow gained international recognition with exhibitions worldwide, including a prominent display

on the Pont des Arts in Paris. His legacy lies in elevating African sculpture on the global stage and celebrating humanity through art.

El Anatsui (Ghana, 1944-present)

El Anatsui, born in 1944 in Anyako, Ghana, is a globally celebrated artist known for his transformative sculptures. Educated at the College of Art, University of Science and Technology in Kumasi, he has become one of Africa's most influential contemporary artists.

Anatsui's style involves creating large-scale installations from discarded materials like liquor bottle caps and aluminium scraps. He weaves these into shimmering metallic tapestries, blurring the lines between sculpture and textile art. His work addresses themes of consumption, waste, colonialism, and globalisation.

Utilising recycled metals, wood, and clay, Anatsui's art challenges perceptions of material and form. His installations are adaptable, allowing reconfiguration in different spaces, symbolising the fluidity of culture and history. Anatsui's contributions have been recognised with prestigious awards, and his work continues to inspire globally.

Yinka Shonibare (Nigeria/United Kingdom, 1962-present)

Yinka Shonibare CBE, born in 1962 in London and raised in Lagos, Nigeria, is a prominent artist exploring themes of colonialism, identity, and race. Educated at Byam Shaw School of Art and Goldsmiths College, his work is known for its use of Dutch wax print fabrics—symbolic of African identity yet originating from global trade histories.

Shonibare's multidisciplinary approach includes sculpture, photography, film, and installations. He often creates headless mannequins dressed in Victorian-era costumes made from African textiles, juxtaposing European histories with African aesthetics. This fusion critiques notions of authenticity and cultural hybridity.

Using materials like textiles and mixed media, his work invites dialogue on globalisation and post-colonial narratives. Shonibare has exhibited internationally and received numerous honours, including being appointed a Commander of the Order of the British Empire. His art continues to influence contemporary discussions on identity.

William Kentridge (South Africa, 1955-present)

William Kentridge, born in 1955 in Johannesburg, is a globally renowned artist known for his unique animated films made from charcoal drawings. Educated at the University of the Witwatersrand and the Johannesburg Art Foundation, Kentridge also studied theatre in Paris, which influences his performative art style.

His work addresses themes of apartheid, memory, and the human condition. Using materials like charcoal, paper, and film, Kentridge creates stop-motion animations by drawing, erasing, and redrawing on the same sheet, capturing the traces of change. His art reflects on South Africa's socio-political landscape and universal human experiences.

Kentridge's multidisciplinary approach extends to opera and theatre, integrating visual art with performance. His contributions have been recognised with exhibitions at major

institutions and numerous awards. Kentridge continues to impact contemporary art through his innovative techniques and profound narratives.

John Owusu Addo (Ghana, 1928-present)

John Owusu Addo, born in 1928, is a distinguished Ghanaian architect and academic known for his significant contributions to architecture in Ghana. Educated at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Addo has been instrumental in shaping modern architectural practices in the country. His work integrates modern design with traditional Ghanaian elements, focusing on functionality and cultural relevance. Addo's buildings often reflect themes of national identity and environmental sustainability. While primarily an architect rather than a visual artist, his designs contribute to Ghana's visual landscape, blending art and architecture.

As an educator, Addo has influenced generations of architects through his teachings and practice. His legacy lies in his dedication to advancing architecture that resonates with Ghanaian heritage and contemporary needs.

Note

Take a critical look at this pictorial timeline diagram below and reflect on how you can create a similar one with your learning tasks in **Activity 2.2**.

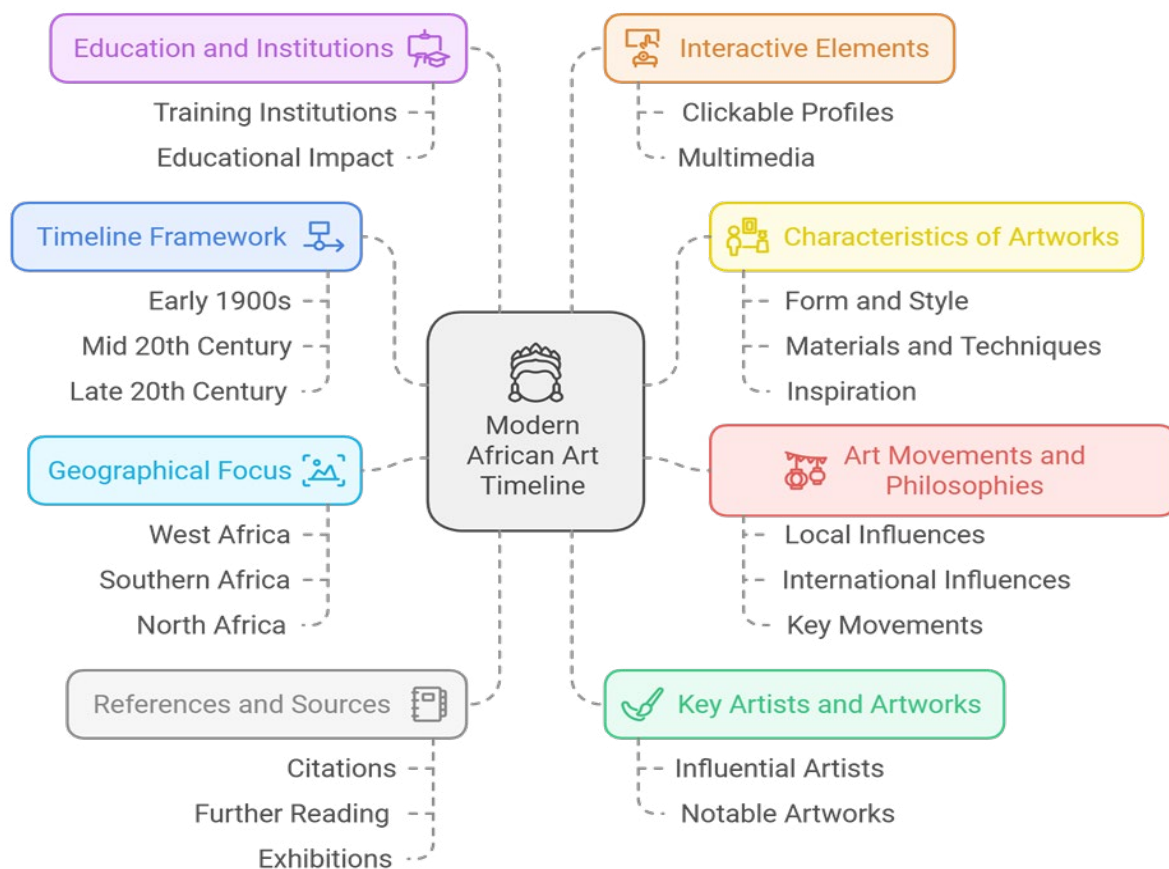


Figure 2.3: A Sample Timeline Diagram on African Art, Artists and Institution of the 1900s to 20th Century

Activity 2.1

Exploring Modern African Artists

1. Search through the internet to identify the various modern African artists listed in this learner material.
2. In your search, identify the photographs of the various artists
3. Using any available computer or mobile application such as MS Word, PowerPoint, Photogrid, etc., create a timeline chart with the photographs of the artists indicating their period of practice or work under their photographs.
4. Present your work in class for peer review
5. File a copy of the work in your portfolio for future reference.

Activity 2.2

Exploring Philosophies and characteristics modern African Art

As a young art historian, you have the responsibility to make a presentation to the European Union about the concepts and characteristics of modern African Arts at the grand opening of the AU general summit. How would you accomplish this task successfully?

Well, let me help you with the following steps:

1. First, make a search to identify the concept of modern African Art from this learner material or from the internet or other trusted sources (*You may also interview art scholars*).
2. Reflect on the findings from your search and write down your understanding of the concept of Modern African Art in a jotter or notebook.
3. Do another search to identify various types of modern African Art forms and the artists who created them from the 1900s to 20th century (*You can also create a timeline chart with this information by highlighting the changes that occur in this period. See Fig. 2.3 as an example*)
4. Critically observe the artworks identified and analyse their characteristics in terms of their forms, style, materials, texture, function etc.
5. In your critical observation, try to identify some of the early institutions from which the major modern African artists received their training and note them down.
6. Next, try to identify and analyse some of the philosophies that guided the creation of modern African Art from the 1900s to the 20th century (e.g. the type of work and the philosophy guiding it)
7. Now, Reorganise your findings into a pictorial timeline diagram.
8. At this point, compile all your findings and write-ups into a single document.
9. Reorganise the document into a comprehensive report.

10. Present your report in class for discussion and review.
11. Use feedback from peers and teachers to refine your report and file in your digital or manual portfolios for future reference.

Try this challenge

1. Search from the internet to identify any modern artists (with their photographs) of the 1900s to 20th the century from Ghana or other African countries who are still alive.
2. Try to establish contacts with the artist through their social media account or emails
3. Schedule a meeting to interview the artist about their work and inspirations using the following guiding questions;
 - a. Could you kindly tell me about your background? (e.g. place of birth, education, early life, etc.)
 - b. What are your inspirations for creating artworks?
 - c. How do you obtain the materials and tools for your works?
 - d. Do you have any philosophies that guide the making of your works, why?
 - e. What techniques are you best known for?
 - f. What are some of your biggest challenges as an artist and how do you deal with them?
 - g. Given your experience in art over the years, how do you see the future of African Art?
4. Compile your findings from the interview into a report.
5. Present the report in class for discussion and review.
6. Improve the report using comments from your peers and file a copy in your portfolio for future assessment and references.

IMPACT OF MODERN AFRICAN ART ON DESIGN AND SOCIETY

Impact on Society

Modern African Art has had a major influence on African society, acting as a strong instrument for upholding traditional customs while also generating fresh cultural forms. Artists played vital roles in political activism by utilising their art to tackle issues like human rights, governance, and gender equality. By creating artwork, they brought attention to social injustices and acted as advocates for those without a voice during times of turmoil. Malangatana Ngwenya, a significant figure from Mozambique, is known for his vibrant and powerful paintings that symbolise the resistance to colonialism and the hardships endured by his community. His pieces, like *Untitled* (1967), were brimming with tangled figures, representing the united fight of African societies against oppression. Malangatana's art,

characterised by bright colours and striking shapes, expressed strong feelings of fear, anger, and perseverance, turning it into a representation of defiance and optimism.

Likewise, South African artist Gerard Sekoto employed his art to depict life under apartheid. His artworks, like *Song of the Pick* (1947), portrayed the difficult truths experienced by black South Africans during oppressive rule. Sekoto focused on depicting ordinary scenes of daily life, such as miners at work and families in divided communities, showcasing the challenges faced by people but also their resilience and determination. The warm colours and dynamic layouts he used evoked emotions in viewers, encouraging them to relate to those impacted by apartheid. Through documenting these instances, Sekoto created a visual representation of the socio-political environment during his era, solidifying his art as a crucial component of South Africa's historical story.

Another influential artist from Ghana is El Anatsui, who has utilised recycled materials such as bottle caps and tin lids to produce sizable installations that address issues related to consumerism, waste, and environmental sustainability. His piece, *Earth's Skin* (2007), showcases how Modern African Art can tackle global problems while also honouring African artistry. Anatsui transforms waste materials into detailed, shining tapestries, showcasing African artistic traditions and prompting discussions on the effects of globalisation and consumer culture on the environment. His art prompts viewers to ponder on the interrelation among culture, economics, and ecology, delivering a strong message about the importance of art in tackling present-day issues.

Modern African Art has also had a major impact on education by questioning colonial art systems that disregarded African traditions. Ben Enwonwu and Ibrahim El-Salahi played a key role in advancing African cultural heritage in the field of art education. Ben Enwonwu's sculpture, *Anyanwu* (1954), served as a source of inspiration for young artists to delve into their cultural heritage and challenge colonial perspectives, showcasing the resilience and power of Nigerian culture. The Achimota School in Ghana blended traditional art styles with Western methods, instructing students such as Kofi Antubam to value and enhance their cultural legacy. This method of teaching art became a means of decolonisation, giving students the power to delve into their identities and communicate through their artwork.

Modern African Art's impact reaches further than just the visual arts and extends into various aspects of culture, such as fashion, architecture, and social movements. Designers have been inspired by traditional African patterns like kente cloth from Ghana, incorporating these colourful textiles into contemporary fashion to honour cultural heritage worldwide. In architecture, modern materials have been used to reinterpret classic forms, resulting in buildings that merge historical and current elements. Moreover, Contemporary African Art has motivated the youth to participate in activism. Through the fusion of conventional topics and contemporary methods, artists have inspired the youth to rediscover their cultural background and utilise art to advocate for societal transformation. Themes such as social justice, empowerment, and cultural pride deeply connect with young people, promoting a feeling of togetherness and recognition of the importance of art in influencing society.

Modern African Art has also impacted education by questioning colonial artistic structures that disregarded African customs. Artists such as Ben Enwonwu and Ibrahim El-Salahi encouraged African cultural heritage in their art teachings. The Achimota School in Ghana blended traditional art with Western methods to educate artists such as Kofi Antubam.

Art education was utilised as a means for decolonisation, enabling students to investigate cultural identity.

Younger generations also reflect the influence of Modern African Art. Artists motivated youth to rediscover their roots by blending contemporary methods with customary subjects. Young audiences were inspired by themes of social justice and empowerment, motivating them to utilise art for activism and gaining a deeper respect for the importance of art in society.



Figure 2.4 An example of 20th century artistic monument that contributes to tourism development, Algeria

Activity 2.3

Discovering the Impact of modern African Art

Your cousin who was born in Europe arrived in Africa a few months ago. After visiting some tourist sites and interesting places in Ghana and other African countries engages you in an intellectual debate saying the Modern African Art did not influence artistic and socio-cultural development in any way in Africa and Europe. As a student of the Art and Design Foundation, how can you explain to make your cousin appreciate the impact of modern African art on the socio-cultural development of Africa and the rest of the world?

Here is a guide to assist you:

1. Select a few of the modern African artists with their works from the 1900s to 20th century as you did in the previous activity.
2. Analyse the characteristics of the artworks produced between the 1900s and the 20th century.

3. Critically analyse the socio-cultural contexts of the contributions of the selected artist and their artworks to the development of African societies. Write down your points in a jotter or notebook.
4. Use the information to create a pictorial poster that clearly highlights how modern art and artists have influenced change in various African societies such as political change, violence against females and children, or how artistic monuments have been used to decorate various cities across Africa, etc.
5. Ensure to include brief texts or captions that align to the illustrations.
6. Reorganise your ideas into digital or manual posters
7. Present your content in class for discussion.
8. Use the feedback from your colleagues to improve the write-up
9. Use the refined work to explain to your cousin the impact of modern African Art on various African societies.

EXTENDED READING

- Exploring visual cultures (Video): <https://explore-vc.org/en/>
- Contemporary Art: <https://youtu.be/TmzA5Im2aTo>
- Negritude Movement: https://youtu.be/_pZeSri0V-g
- Francophone Negritude Revolution: <https://youtu.be/kH9vJCeyX-E>
- Works of Gerald Sekot: <https://youtu.be/WMwcevUbOmU>

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Define Modern African Art.
2. List three artists who contributed to Modern African Art.
3. Describe the impact of colonial experiences on Modern African Art.
4. Explain how the Zaria Art Society influenced Nigerian modern art.
5. Analyse the role of social and cultural influences in shaping Modern African Art.
6. Compare the approaches of Ibrahim El-Salahi and Yinka Shonibare.
7. Analyse how artists used their work to challenge colonial narratives.
8. Evaluate the contributions of Modern African Art to global culture.



SECTION

3

WESTERN MODERN ART



THE CREATIVE JOURNEY (FROM CAVES TO 21ST CENTURY)

Art Across Time

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to this section on Western Modern Art Movements and their influence on African art! In this section, you will explore key Western modern art movements that emerged in the 19th and 20th centuries, such as Impressionism, Cubism, and Surrealism. Each movement introduced new ideas, styles, and techniques that changed the way art was created, developed and viewed worldwide. The section will also help you to understand how these Western movements influenced African artists. As African art began engaging with these new ideas, artists infused Western techniques with traditional African themes, creating fresh and unique styles. At the end of this section, you will understand how African artists adapted, reshaped, and enriched modern art in ways that continue to impact art globally.

KEY IDEAS

Here are some key ideas to learn from this section;

- African artists blended modern art techniques with traditional African themes, creating unique and influential styles.
- Each movement emphasised unique techniques, such as abstract forms, vibrant colours, and expressive lines.
- The fusion of Western and African styles helped express African identity, history, and cultural pride.
- Western modern art movements like Impressionism, Cubism, and Surrealism introduced new ways of seeing and creating in art and design.

WESTERN MODERN ART

Concept of Western Modern Art

Western Modern Art emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as a reaction against traditional academic art and societal norms, driven by a quest for new ways to represent the changing world. Key philosophies include *individual expression, experimentation, and the rejection of realism in favour of abstraction and subjective interpretation*. Movements like Impressionism, Cubism, and Surrealism sought to capture not just external appearances but also internal realities, such as emotions, dreams, and the subconscious. Influenced by the rapid industrialisation, war, and technological advancement of the time, artists embraced

themes of alienation, freedom, and innovation. This period marked a break with tradition, emphasising that art need not mimic reality but instead explore and critique deeper truths about human existence and society's evolving values.

The Industrial Revolution of the 1700s transformed economies and societies, creating a wealthy middle class that became influential patrons of the arts. Urbanisation drew artists to cultural centres like Paris, fostering collaboration and the exchange of progressive ideas. New materials and techniques, such as photography and industrial materials and processes, encouraged artistic exploration. Ultimately, Western Modern Art laid the groundwork for all contemporary art by expanding the definition of what art can be, emphasising personal expression and exploring complex themes in society.

Precursors of Western Modern Art

The major precursors of Western Modern Art, including Baroque, Rococo, Neoclassicism, and Romanticism, each contributed unique aesthetics and philosophies that shaped later artistic movements. Baroque art, which emerged in the early 17th century, was known for its dramatic use of light, intense emotion, and dynamic compositions, often used to convey religious or political themes and to evoke a strong emotional response in viewers. Rococo followed in the early 18th century, favouring lighter, more decorative themes with playful, ornate designs and pastel colours, reflecting the opulence of the French aristocracy before the Revolution. Neoclassicism arose in the late 18th century as a reaction to Rococo's frivolity, drawing on the ideals of ancient Greek and Roman art to emphasise order, rationality, and moral virtue. This movement sought to reflect Enlightenment values of reason and civic duty and became popular in the art and architecture of revolutionary France. Finally, Romanticism developed as a reaction against the rationalism of Neoclassicism, prioritising individualism, imagination, and emotional intensity, with a focus on nature, the sublime, and themes of rebellion. Each of these movements influenced the early experimentation, subjective expression, and social critique that would define Modern Art in the 19th and 20th centuries.



Figure. 3.1 An example of Romanticism Painting

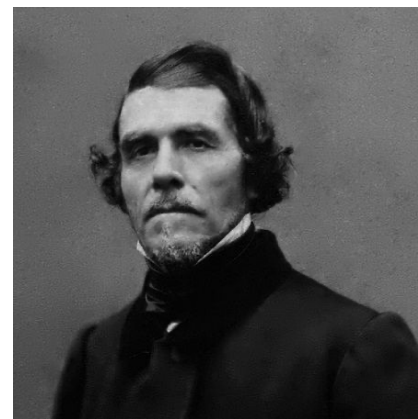


Figure 3.2 Eugène Delacroix - A leading artist of Romanticism

For example, Romanticism emerged in Europe in the late 18th century as a reaction against the Enlightenment's emphasis on reason, science, and order. Instead, Romantic artists, writers, and thinkers valued emotion, individualism, and the sublime aspects of nature.

This movement expressed a fascination with the mysterious, supernatural, and exotic, as well as a passion for freedom and rebellion. Romantic artists like Eugène Delacroix and Francisco Goya used intense colour, dramatic lighting, and dynamic compositions to evoke strong emotions, often addressing themes of heroism, nature's overwhelming power, and political turmoil.

Examples of Western Modern Art Movements with their Characteristics and Leading Artists

Realism

Background: Realism as a form of figurative art was practised greatly by renaissance artists ([click here to learn more about the renaissance art *Renaissance-art*](#)). However, realism as a modern art movement was developed in the mid-19th century France as a counter to Romanticism's dramatic, often idealised representations ([read more about why modern art realism movement rejected romanticism from here *realism-art*](#)). The realism movement sought to portray life as it was, focusing on everyday subjects and the working class rather than historical or mythical scenes. Led by artists such as Gustave Courbet and Jean-François Millet, Realism emphasised the social realities of ordinary people and rural life, often highlighting the hardships they faced. Realist artists believed art should reflect the true conditions of society and provoke awareness of social issues, setting the stage for later movements focused on authenticity and socio-political themes.

Key Characteristics include

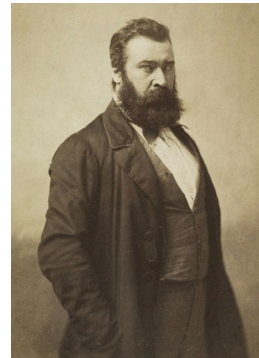
- Realism portrayed life as it was, without idealisation.
- It focused on everyday subjects and the working class.
- The movement emphasised social realities and the hardships of ordinary people.
- Realist artists aimed to raise awareness of social issues through their work.



Figure 3.3: An example of Realism Artwork



Gustave Courbet



Jean-François Millet

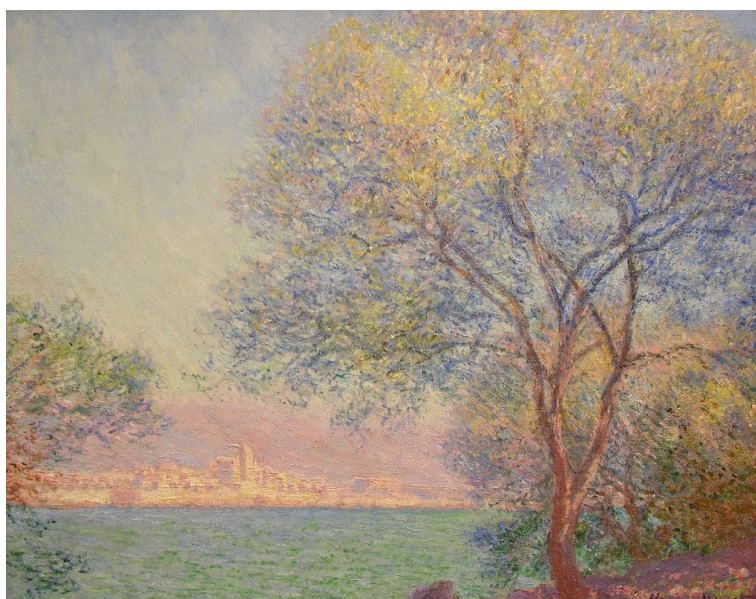
Figure 3.4 Pictures of some leading artists of Realism movement

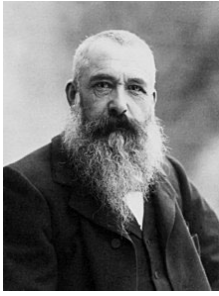
Impressionism (1870s-1880s)

Background: Emerging in the 1870s and 1880s in France, Impressionism broke away from the precise, detailed approach of academic painting. Influenced by advances in photography and the study of light and optics, artists like Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, and Edgar Degas sought to capture moments as they appeared in natural light. Using loose brushstrokes and vibrant colours, Impressionists painted outdoor scenes and everyday life, focusing on fleeting impressions rather than detailed realism. This movement challenged traditional techniques, inspiring artists to embrace spontaneity, colour, and personal perception, laying the groundwork for abstraction in Modern Art.

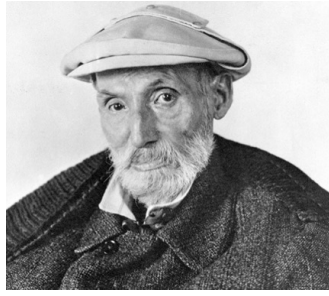
Key characteristics include

- Emphasis on light and colour
- Visible brushstrokes
- Depiction of ordinary subjects and scenes
- Often painted outdoors (plein air)

**Figure. 3.5** An example of Impressionism Art



Claude Monet



Pierre-Auguste Renoir



Edgar Degas

Figure 3.6 Pictures of some leading artist of Impressionism

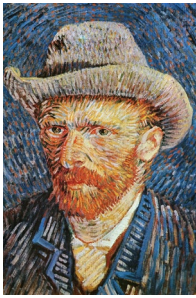
Post-Impressionism (1880s - 1900s)

Background: Post-Impressionism arose in the 1880s as a response to Impressionism's limitations, with artists like Vincent van Gogh, Paul Cézanne, and Paul Gauguin seeking greater emotional depth and formal structure. While retaining Impressionism's interest in colour and light, Post-Impressionists moved toward symbolic use of colour, abstract shapes, and experimental compositions. Cézanne's structured approach to form influenced Cubism, while van Gogh's expressive colour and brushwork prefigured Expressionism. Post-Impressionism played a vital role in the transition to Modern Art, encouraging subjective interpretation and a focus on emotional expression over naturalistic representation.

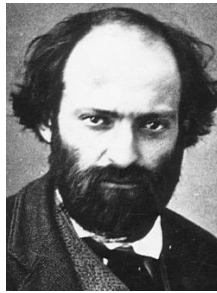
Key Characteristics

- Extended Impressionism while rejecting its limitations
- Emphasis on geometric forms, distorted forms for expressive effect, and unnatural or arbitrary colour
- Lasted until the emergence of Fauvism.

**Figure 3.7:** An example of Post-Impressionism Art



Vincent van Gogh



Paul Cézanne



Paul Gauguin

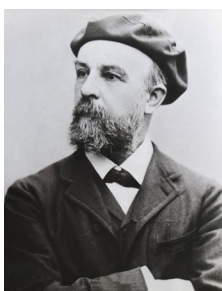
Figure 3.8: Pictures of some leading artist of Post-Impressionism

Symbolism (1886-1918)

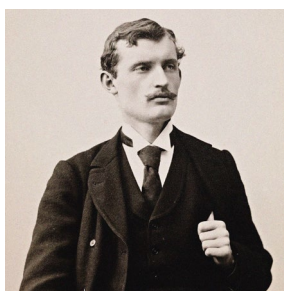
Background: Symbolism began in the late 19th century as a response to the materialism of the industrial age and the focus on everyday life as portrayed through Realism. Instead of showing ordinary scenes, Symbolist artists like Gustav Klimt, Odilon Redon, and Edvard Munch drew inspiration from literature and mystical ideas to create art that explored dreams, myths, and the subconscious mind. They used abstract symbols and bold colours to express deep psychological and spiritual themes, often focusing on the mysterious or darker sides of human experiences. Symbolist artists did not use familiar, traditional symbols but instead preferred personal and sometimes confusing or unclear imagery. Symbolism was more of a philosophy than a specific art style, and it greatly influenced later art movements, such as Art Nouveau and the group known as Les Nabis. It also paved the way for Modern Art movements like Surrealism and Expressionism, which continued exploring the mind and emotions.

Key Characteristics include

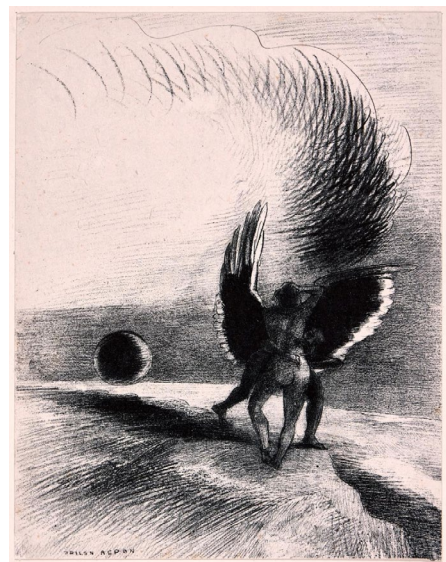
- Symbolism explored themes of dreams, myths, and the subconscious.
- Artists used vivid colours, abstraction, and symbolic imagery.
- The movement often expressed mystical, spiritual, or dark psychological themes.
- Symbolist art reacted against materialism and sought to explore deeper inner meanings.



Odilon Redon



Edvard Munch

Figure 3.10: Pictures of some leading artists of Symbolism**Figure 3.9:** An example of Symbolism Art

Cubism

Background: Cubism is a revolutionary modern art movement that emerged in the early 20th century, developed primarily by Pablo-Picasso and Georges-Braque. It was heavily influenced by the works of Post-Impressionist artist Paul Cézanne, who emphasised the simplification of natural forms into geometric shapes. Another major influence was African art, particularly masks and sculptures, which presented a new approach to representing the human figure. Cubism challenged traditional perspectives by breaking down objects into fragmented shapes and representing them from multiple angles simultaneously. The movement developed in two main phases: *Analytical Cubism* (1908–1912), which involved deconstructing objects into geometric components, and *Synthetic Cubism* (1912–1919), which introduced collage and mixed media elements into artworks.

Key Characteristics include

- Use of geometric shapes to depict subjects
- Fragmented and overlapping planes
- Depiction of objects from multiple viewpoints
- Limited colour palettes, especially in Analytical Cubism
- Introduction of collage elements in Synthetic Cubism

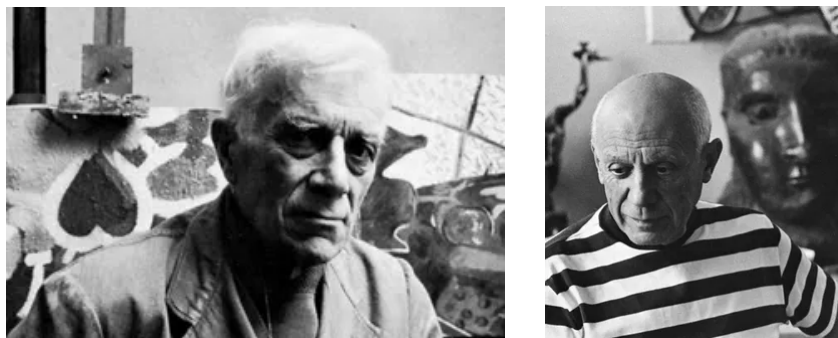


Figure 3.11: Georges-Braque (Left) and Pablo-Picasso (Right)



Figure 3.12: An example of Cubism art by Pablo Picasso

Surrealism

Background: Surrealism emerged in the early 1920s as an art movement that sought to attempt to unlock the subconscious mind and explore dreams, imagination, and the illogical. The movement was influenced by the ideas of Sigmund Freud, who studied the subconscious mind and the role of dreams in our lives. The earlier art movement, Dada, which rejected traditional norms and embraced absurdity, was also an influence on Surrealism. Surrealist artists aimed to bridge the gap between reality and the world of fantasy, creating a dream-like, often bizarre atmosphere in their works. Leading surrealist artists like Salvador-Dali, and Rene-Magritte used various techniques and methods to explore the subconscious. These included automatic drawing (art created without conscious thought), dream imagery, and unexpected juxtapositions of imagery. The movement was diverse, including visual arts, literature, and film.

Key Characteristics of Surrealism

- Dream-like and fantastical imagery
- Juxtaposition of unexpected elements
- Exploration of the subconscious mind
- Use of automatism and chance in creating art
- Depiction of strange and irrational scenes

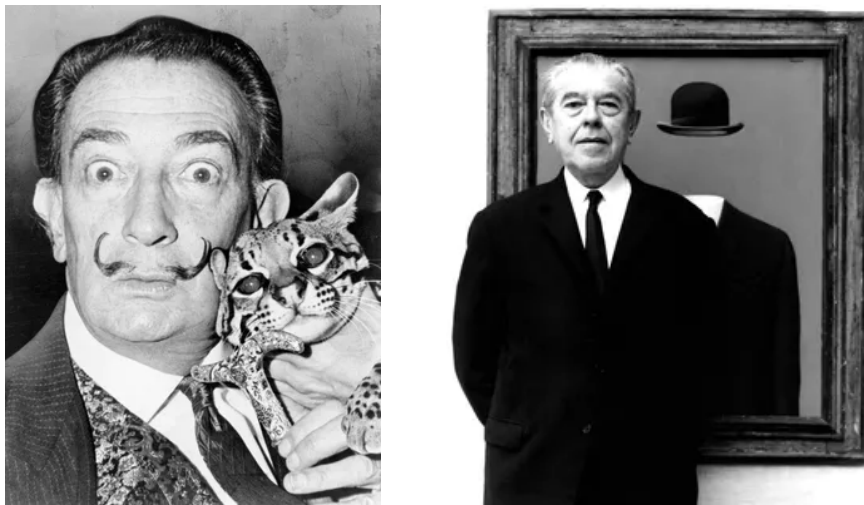


Figure 3.13: Some leading surrealists Salvador-Dali (left) and Rene-Magritte (right)



Figure 3.14: An example of Surrealism art by Salvador-Dali

Do you know of any other examples of the Western modern art movements and their exponents? There are several examples of the Western Modern Art Movements. You will find more when you explore through search, reading and by completing the next activity.

Now, carefully observe this table and discuss it with your peers

Table 3.1: Sample Table on Characteristics of Western Modern Art Movement

Major Western Modern Art Movements	Year/Period	Name and of Some Leading Artist(s)	Major Characteristics of Works by the Movement

Activity 3.1

Research and Note Key Western Movements

Do the following alone or with a group of friends;

1. Using textbooks, library resources, or the internet, search to uncover the concepts of Western Modern Art Movement
2. In your search, Identify and list the major Western modern art movements, such as Impressionism, Cubism, Surrealism, etc.
3. For each movement, note down the main features, techniques, and any influential artists.
4. Create a timeline showing each art movement and key characteristics. Add any images or symbols that represent each style to make it more visually engaging.
5. Select some of the artworks produced by the various Western modern art movements and critically analyse their characteristics (*This can be done in a tabular form. See Table 3.1 as an example*).
6. Organise your findings into an article for publication on your school noticeboard (You can do this digitally or manually)
7. Present your draft article in class for discussion and feedback.
8. Use the feedback from peers to finalise your draft for publication on your school noticeboard (You may also publish the article on your professional noticeboard for comments from your followers).

Note

Remember to keep a copy of your report in your digital or manual portfolio for future reference.

IMPACT OF WESTERN MODERN ART ON AFRICAN ART

Western Modern Art had a profound influence on African art, especially throughout the 20th century, as colonialism, global trade, and cultural exchange opened African artists to Western styles, methods, and philosophies. This cross-cultural impact contributed to a unique synthesis of African traditions and Western influences, producing a vibrant art movement across Africa that both embraced and resisted aspects of Western art. Some of the impact Western art had on African art include:

Colonial Art Education and Institutions

Colonial powers established art schools and institutions across Africa to promote Western education and art standards. Art academies modelled on European curricula introduced African artists to Western techniques, such as realistic drawing and oil painting, as well as European art history. While this system often downplayed or disregarded indigenous artistic traditions, it also laid the foundation for the first generations of modern African artists who used these skills to redefine African identity and challenge colonial stereotypes.

Artistic Methods and Concepts

Western Modern Art encouraged academic African artists to experiment with new concepts and forms, moving away from purely functional or symbolic art toward expressiveness. Many academic African artists, inspired by Modernism, began to convey their message through exploration of Western styles such as Cubism and Surrealism with African themes and narratives.

Techniques and Materials

Traditional African art often focused on varied art forms and techniques such as sculpture, textiles, and functional crafts, while Western Modern Art introduced some new media and techniques in the areas of painting, printmaking, and mixed media. African artists began to experiment with a variety of materials, including repurposed items, which mirrored the Western avant-garde's interest in found objects. This expanded the creative possibilities for African artists, who blended these methods with traditional materials to express local narratives with global relevance.

Aesthetic Concepts

Western art movements like Cubism, Fauvism, and Surrealism had aesthetic similarities with African art forms, such as simplified shapes and symbolic forms. This convergence led African artists to reconsider their own cultural aesthetics, leading to new interpretations that combined local motifs with modern abstraction. However, due to the influence of Western education, some colonialist inspired teachers imposed western aesthetic concepts of art on

some African academic artists. Today, African academic artists have fully embraced and are able to enforce African aesthetic principles in their works for global recognition.

Collaborations and Exchanges with Western Artists

Collaboration between African and Western artists grew through exhibitions, residencies, and global art initiatives, providing African artists with platforms to present their work and engage with new artistic communities. These exchanges enabled African artists to gain visibility and contributed to a mutual influence between African and Western artists.

Cultural Identity and Representation

Western Modern Art inspired African artists to explore cultural identity and representation, prompting them to critique and redefine the portrayal of African societies. They addressed themes of post-colonial identity by reconnecting with indigenous history and symbols while embracing new forms to express their experiences in a globalised world. This fusion created art that honoured African heritage while challenging contemporary norms. Influenced by Western art's focus on social and political issues, African artists used their work as a platform for protest and commentary on colonialism, independence, and post-colonial struggles. Artists like Fela Kuti and Yinka Shonibare employed satire and symbolism to highlight societal injustices, making art a powerful tool for resistance and social change.

Art Institutions and Exhibitions

With growing Western influence, new art institutions and exhibitions dedicated to African art emerged across the continent. These spaces provided platforms for African artists to showcase their work and engage with global audiences. International exhibitions in Europe and America also began to include African artists, increasing global visibility and acceptance of African art as part of the modern art world. African art institutions fostered a sense of pride and self-representation, supporting the growth of African art independently from Western narratives.

Global Art Market and Recognition

In the latter half of the 20th century, the global art market began to recognise and value African art, with galleries, museums, and collectors around the world investing in contemporary African artists. However, African artists also faced challenges, such as navigating Western expectations and avoiding cultural misrepresentation in a market that sometimes still viewed African art in a stereotypical and superficially exotic manner.

In conclusion, whereas Western Modern Art at some point was influenced by traditional African art leading to some movements like cubism, Western modern art on the other hand had a transformative impact specially on academic African art. From the educational frameworks established during colonialism to the modern techniques, materials, and themes from the west have been embraced by African artists. While Western influence introduced African artists to new tools and opportunities, it also fuelled a revival of African identity,

leading artists to creatively reinterpret and reclaim their heritage. Today, African art stands as a dynamic force in the global art market, celebrated for its unique blend of tradition, innovation, and political relevance.

Activity 3.2

Analysing Western and African Art influences

Try the following alone or with some peers at home or school:

1. Search different Western art movements (like Impressionism, Cubism, and Surrealism) from any trusted sources in books, internet or from this learner material and write findings in your notebook.
2. In your search, identify and compare images of Western modern artworks and African artworks from the same period, focusing on similarities and differences.
3. Create a visual map showing how Western art techniques influenced specific African artists or artworks.
4. In your visual map, include a timeline showing key Western art movements from 1850–1950 alongside important events in African art.
5. Put the information together to produce a poster. In the poster, include a Western and an African artist who influenced each other, describing how their styles or themes are interrelated or connected.
6. Present your draft poster on your findings in class to participate in a debate about whether Western artists' use of African art was appreciation or appropriation.
7. Use the comments from the class debate to improve your work and file in your portfolio for assessment.

Try these challenges:

1. You have been invited as a guest speaker at the SRC Week celebration in a nearby school to speak on Western and African modern art. Do the following to get you ready for the event:
 - a. Search to identify the various periods or timelines of Western and African Modern arts movements or styles
 - b. Identify the various artists and their style of work within the period
 - c. Identify the various characteristics of their artworks in terms of differences and similarities in media, techniques, meanings, etc.
 - d. Critically observe the artworks and analyse how both Western and African Modern Art movements influenced the creation of art within the period of 1850s and 1950s and write down your points.
 - e. Develop an outline for your speech e.g. introduction, main points, conclusions, etc.
 - f. Write a short essay about the impact of Western Modern Art on African Art, using examples from class discussions.

- g.** Present your essay in class for discussion and review.
- 2.** Do this fun art on your own.
 - a. Create an artwork combining African traditional motifs and Western modernist techniques and explain your choices.
 - b. Present your creative work in class and talk about it to your friends for review
 - c. Use the comments from your peers to improve the work and keep a copy in your portfolio.

DISCUSSION ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WESTERN MODERN ART FROM 1850 TO 1950 AND MODERN AFRICAN ART WITH REFERENCE TO MATERIALS, IMAGERY, AND MEANING

The Relationship Between Western Modern Art (1850-1950) and Modern African Art

The relationship between Western Modern Art (1850–1950) and Modern African Art is a complex interplay of influence, adaptation, and resistance, rooted in a period marked by colonialism, cultural exchange, and shifting global identities. During this time, Western artists such as Picasso, Matisse, and Braque were inspired by African masks, sculpture, and aesthetics, integrating these elements into movements like Cubism, Fauvism, and Surrealism. Meanwhile, African artists encountering Western techniques and philosophies through colonial art education and exhibitions began to reinterpret these elements within their own cultural frameworks. This dynamic led to an artistic cross-pollination that redefined how African and Western art engaged with materials, imagery, and meaning, producing work that spoke both to local contexts and global artistic conversations.

Materials

The materials used by African artists shifted significantly under Western influence, as they were introduced to new media and techniques. Traditionally, African art emphasised materials like wood, clay, metal, and natural pigments for masks, sculptures, and textiles. However, exposure to Western art introduced African artists to oil paints, canvas, and other mediums such as printmaking and mixed media, expanding the possibilities for expression. This exchange led African artists to blend traditional materials with modern techniques, often incorporating found objects and industrial materials to create works that spoke to both local heritage and contemporary urban realities. For example, El Anatsui's use of bottle caps and scrap metal redefined the sculptural form in African art, combining indigenous techniques with Western-influenced mixed media to comment on consumerism and African identity.

Imagery

Imagery in African art evolved as artists encountered Western modernist ideas, leading to a fusion of symbolic African motifs with the abstract forms and expressive styles of Western Modern Art. While Western artists initially explored and integrated African imagery into their work, treating it as “primitive” and exotic, African artists later reclaimed and recontextualised these motifs in their own work. When modern Western artists adopted geometric forms and abstraction in their artworks as used by indigenous African artists, this empowered modern African artists to continue to use these forms to reflect their own cultural narratives. They integrated traditional symbols with modern visual language to depict themes such as independence, identity, and post-colonial resilience. Artists like Ibrahim El-Salahi and Gerard Sekoto reimaged African imagery by blending traditional symbols with Western compositional methods, resulting in a new iconography that balanced African heritage with modern expressions.

Meaning

The meaning embedded in both modern Western and African art is often linked with political, social, and cultural significance. While early Western Modern Art focused on individual expression and aesthetic innovation, African artists infused their work with themes of decolonisation, identity, and social change, using art as a form of cultural resistance and self-representation. Western exposure inspired African artists to use art for social and political commentary, addressing themes like colonial oppression, economic disparity, and the post-colonial African experience. Artists like Ben Enwonwu and Skunder Boghossian tackled these issues, creating works that spoke to African liberation, cultural pride, and the complexities of modern African identity in a globalised world. Through merging Western techniques with African themes, these artists created a distinctive visual language that celebrated African history, resisted Western stereotyping, and asserted a unique African modernity.

Activity 3.3

Comparing Western and African Art Styles

Try the following alone or with some peers at home or school:

1. Find examples of Western modern art and modern African art (between 1850 and 1950) such as those identified in **Activity 3.1**. This could include paintings, sculptures, or installations by artists like Pablo Picasso and African artists like Ibrahim El-Salahi.
2. Compare these works by critically observing the techniques, colours, themes, and subject matter.
3. Critically analysed the works to identify the relationship between Western Modern Art (1850-1950) and modern African art in terms of materials, imagery, and meanings using specific photographs and videos

4. Write a short paragraph explaining how African artists adapted or responded to Western art styles. Include examples of African artworks that show these influences.
5. Use the information gathered to develop a 10 minutes presentation (digital or manual) for discussion in class.
6. Use the feedback to improve the content and flow of your presentation.

Note

Remember to keep a copy of your writeup in your digital or manual portfolios.

Try this challenge alone: Western and African Modern Art Relationships

1. Select any two Western and African Modern Artists each
2. Critically read about their backgrounds.
3. Select and analyse two of their works each and to identify the materials, techniques, imagery and meanings of their works.
4. Compare the works of the two artists to establish the relationship between their works.
5. Present your findings in a tabular format in class for discussion and review.
6. Use comments from peers to improve the presentation and keep in your portfolio for future reference.

EXTENDED READING

Videos on Global Art Market and Exhibitions

- <https://youtu.be/3wWf21DFsUQ>
- https://youtu.be/fjGTC3R__II

Art Movements and styles (videos)

- <https://youtu.be/V6ZT1705Slw>
- https://youtu.be/cP_VrZMG0yY?list=PLtyXCacnfrHb2mkDanQ3JRcqInbK8ik1e

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Identify two modern art movements from Western art that influenced African artists.
2. Define the term “Cubism” and give an example of a well-known Cubist artist.
3. List three characteristics common to Western modern art movements like Impressionism, Cubism, and Surrealism.
4. Describe how Impressionism differs from Surrealism in terms of style and technique.
5. Classify the following artworks as either traditional African art or modern African art, based on their features and materials.
6. Analyse how a Ghanaian artist might use both traditional African themes and elements from Western art movements like symbolism, realism, fauvism, etc. in a single artwork.
7. Compare the art styles of Pablo Picasso and Ibrahim El-Salahi, focusing on how they each incorporate abstract forms and themes of cultural identity.
8. Scenario: Imagine you are curating an art exhibit on African responses to Western art movements. You have selected artworks from different African artists. Explain how you would present each piece to show the unique blend of African themes and Western influences.
9. Evaluate the role of African artists in challenging Western stereotypes through their adaptation of modern art techniques. Use specific examples to support your answer.
10. Design a brief project proposal where you, as an artist, create a new artwork that uses elements of Surrealism to address a current social issue in Ghana. In the proposal, describe how you would blend Western surrealist techniques with Ghanaian cultural symbols to convey your message.

SECTION

4

DESIGN THEORIES, SCHOOLS, AND CULTURAL OBJECTS



THE CREATIVE JOURNEY (FROM CAVES TO 21ST CENTURY)

Design History

INTRODUCTION

In this lesson, you will explore the key ideas, movements, and influences that shaped modern design. You will learn about important schools such as Bauhaus and De Stijl, and examine how historical, social, cultural, and economic conditions influenced the development of design during the late 1800s to mid-1900s. The lesson will help you understand the core principles of modern design, how it differs from contemporary design, and how it continues to impact current visual art and design practices. This understanding will deepen your appreciation of how design reflects and responds to its time.

KEY IDEAS

Here are some key ideas to learn from this section:

- Analysing modern design requires understanding the interplay between theory, style, and context, enabling categorisation of movements and articulation of why designs look the way they do.
- Core theoretical concepts guided modern design, including “Form Follows Function,” “Truth to Materials,” Rationalism, Standardisation, and Abstraction.
- Distinct schools and movements (e.g., Arts & Crafts, Bauhaus, De Stijl, International Style) translated these theories into specific philosophies, aesthetic styles, educational approaches, and iconic objects.
- Modern design emerged as a deliberate break from historical styles, driven by new ideas about function, materials, and the role of design in society, largely in response to industrialisation (late 19th - mid 20th C).
- Social, technological, economic, and political contexts were crucial drivers; factors like industrial production, new materials (steel, concrete, glass), world wars, and changing ideologies profoundly shaped modern design’s evolution and forms.

MODERN DESIGN SCHOOLS, CONCEPTS AND THEORIES

Exploring the meaning of modern design.

In earlier sections, you learnt that *design* is a creative and purposeful activity aimed at solving problems in both the natural and built environment. Design helps improve how we live, work, and interact with our surroundings.

The term *modern design* refers to a style and philosophy of design that emerged in the late 19th century and became prominent throughout the early to mid-20th century. While it is sometimes confused with *contemporary design* (which refers to current styles and practices in this 21st Century), modern design is rooted in a specific historical period that responded to the changing needs of society during industrialisation, urban growth, and advances in technology.

Modern design rejected the overly decorative and elaborate styles of earlier periods such as the Baroque and Victorian styles. These earlier movements were known for their complex ornamentation, fancy detailing, and dramatic visual effects

Modern Design focuses on keeping designs simple and easy to use by avoiding unnecessary details. It also prioritises the function or the purpose before considering the form the design should take. For example, a table should be comfortable to use rather than making it look beautiful. **Figures 4.1** and **4.2** show examples of Baroque style and Modern design style tables. Furthermore, modern design style uses new materials, and simple geometric shapes. It produces designs for everyday use such as functional and decorative needs used for home furnishing. The modern design period was greatly influenced by modern design movements such as the Bauhaus school in Germany that combined art and craft; and the minimalism movement that emphasises the phrase, 'less is more'. This idea is aimed at keeping designs simple. The idea of *Modern Design* helps you to understand that simplicity is the key in designing.



Figure 4.1: Vintage French Baroque table featuring green slate top with reverse bevelled edge, with green and gold gilt finish. Circa Late 20th Century. Measurements: 33.5" H x 40" W x 21.5"



Figure 4.2: Modern design table. Italy. 1920-1949. Louis XVII Movement. H. 29.14 in; Diam. 43.31 in.

Modern Design Concepts

The modern design concepts introduced in the late 19th and 20th centuries have lots of impacts on development of contemporary design. The concepts have shaped how contemporary spaces, products, home furnishings, buildings, and other functional and decorative needs are designed in present times. Modern style design practices inform certain concepts useful for artists and designers. Some of the concepts are:

1. *Form follows function:* With this concept, the intended use or purpose of the design, that is the function, is considered as the main thing. It suggests that a design should be able to fulfil the primary purpose for which it was done. Having considered the purpose, the form follows. The form in this context has to do with how the design should look, its structure and visual appeal. Following this concept ensures that designs are made efficient, practical and purposeful.
1. *Minimalism:* This concept focuses on removing all details considered unnecessary in order to keep a design simple and clear. It is often associated with the phrase, 'less is more'. Excessive ornamentations and other elaborate details that glamorise design are viewed as clumsy and impede simplicity. Minimalism avoids over-elaboration of design and keeps simple details without sacrificing the main function of a design.
2. *Use of New Materials and Technology:* It fuses available and new art and design materials and technology. The modern style design movement happened around the time of the Industrial Revolution where materials such as glass, concrete, plastics and steel contributed to making glossy and innovative structures. Incorporating new and available materials influenced the creativity and innovativeness of artists and designers. As such automatic technology including, lighting and security systems were fused in designs to meet the needs of society.
3. *Clean lines and geometric shapes:* It emphasise the use of simple geometric shapes and clean lines. For example, shapes such as circles, rectangles, squares are used to give designs simple visual appeal. Creative use of positive and negative spaces is highly considered.
4. *Use neutral and monochromatic colours:* Modern style design uses colours in an eccentric way such that neutral colours, for example, white, gray, black and colours that give bold appearance are manipulated to suggest simplicity and cohesion. Monochromatic colours are also used to suggest mood, create emphasis and increase the beauty of spaces and objects.
5. *Sustainability and eco-friendly design:* Modern style designs focus on using eco-materials in a way that does not destroy the natural and man-made environment. Designs are fused into both natural and man-made spaces ensuring that they do not cause havoc to the environment. For example, solar panels, recycled building materials, and energy-efficient material are used in modern architecture to promote responsible use of resources. In buildings, they are designed such that skylight enhances the spaces through the use of glasses, large windows, amongst others.

These identified modern design concepts are used with the primary aim of keeping designs simple, functional, and innovative. Learning these concepts are very useful influencing your approach to design. Taking cues from them will increase the design skills and level of creativity.

Modern Design Theories

The practice of modern design concepts has shaped how artists and designers approach designs in an impactful way. In a way, the use of the concepts has culminated into theories in the field of art and design. It covers various creative arts disciplines including graphic design, architecture, interior design, painting, sculpture, and product design. Applying the theories have proved useful for both amateur and professional artists and designers. The theories contributed to technological developments, social changes and cultural advancements of the 20th century and continues to inform inventions in the 21st century. These theories include:

1. *Modernism*: It emerged in the 19th and early 20th centuries in reaction to rapid industrialisation and societal changes. It stands for an important shift from conventional design principles that utilise innovative concepts, materials, and technology to produce modernised, and practical shapes. Modernism emphasises clarity, simplicity, and the inherent beauty of materials above elaborate decoration and historical references. It is based on the belief that art and design should reflect the realities of modern society.

It coincided with the industrial revolution where there was an advent of increased mass-produced objects and designs and new ways of making products with machines at the time. Modernism brought about the principles of form following function, simplicity and clarity, truth to materials, removal of elaborate decorations, and embraced the use of technologies and industrial material that were used in the making of innovative designs for societal use.

Influential people known to promote modernism include Walter Gropius and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. Walter Gropius was the founder of the Bauhaus School which became the pioneer for training and educating modernist artists and designers while Ludwig Mies van der Rohe is associated with the popular phrase ‘less is more’. Other influential people in modernism are Le Corbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright. Le Corbusier was a prominent architect who championed functionalism and use of modern materials. Frank Lloyd Wright on the other hand promoted architecture that fuses with the natural environment.

2. *Postmodernism*: This theory breaks away from the rules, ideas and values of modernism in a way to advance knowledge and practice. In other words, it questions the principles and ideals of modernism, which emphasise on reason, science, and the notion of continuous development. As a result, postmodern theory holds that there is more than one truth or viewpoint on the universe. Postmodernists contend that reality may vary based on one’s background and identity. Therefore, postmodernists consider reality to be subjective.

Key ideas of postmodernism are that of relativity of truth, embracing cultural diversity and multiple perspectives, questioning grand narratives and blurring artistic styles and boundaries. Relativity of truth means that there is no universal truth that applies to everyone. Truth according to postmodernists can vary based on culture, history and personal experience. In this sense, postmodernism theory accepts different myths and stories that explain how the world began. Postmodernists embrace cultural diversity and multiple perspectives, acknowledging that all voices, viewpoints and experiences are important. Postmodernism promotes inclusivity, encourages critical thinking and explores the complexities of the world around us.

3. **Deconstructivism:** This theory goes against conventional design principles, making pieces that look broken, jumbled, or twisted but were carefully put together to make people think and feel. It emerged around the 1980s, and began to take shape. It uses the philosophical concept of “deconstruction” to design. Deconstructivist works dismantle structures and shapes and reorganise them in unusual ways, defying the accepted notions of conventional symmetry and harmony. The end effect is designs that break down structures and forms, and rearrange in unconventional manner. It results in designs that might appear irregular or unstable but well thought out to challenge our assumptions. Deconstructivism thrives on breaking down structures into separate parts and rearranging them in unusual ways (fragmentation), non-linear design, distortions and dislocation, and challenging traditional concepts. Influential people in deconstructivism include Frank Gehry, Zaha Hadid, and Daniel Libeskind.
4. **Human centred design theory (HCD):** It has to do with understanding the needs of the people in order to create a design that satisfies that need. Humanist-centred designers therefore put people at the heart of the design creation process and focus on making things that truly meet the needs and desires of the people who use them. The theory concerns problem-solving that considers the demands of people in order to create a product that gives real and satisfying user-experience. In applying this theory to art and design, there is need for empathy, collaboration with end-users and continuous refining of the design-related product based on feedback. HCD aims at creating artistic products and or render services that are functional, user-friendly and meaningful. They also use the design process in identifying and solving societal problems. Applying this theory gives better user-experience, increased innovation, and usability and inclusivity of art and design products.
5. **Systems Thinking:** It operates with the notion that different parts of a system work together to create the whole. Therefore, it involves seeking understanding of how systems work in order to create designs that take into account these connections and interactions. Systems Thinking helps artists and designers to create solutions that are more effective, efficient, sustainable, and responsive to the intricacies of real life. System thinkers consider the holistic view of a design problem, define the system, map relationships, collect and analyse feedback and develop workable solutions to design problems. By taking the broader picture into account, systems thinking enables designers, artists, and problem-solvers to produce more sustainable and effective solutions. By understanding the intricate network of relationships that make up a system, you can foresee obstacles, take advantage of opportunities, and positively influence the world.

Design Schools and Movements

Design schools and movements have historically influenced certain artistic styles and seemingly define an artistic era and or place. They have shaped the design and production of everyday objects around us throughout history. These schools and movements usually consist of groups of artists and designers who share similar ideas, working together to create new styles or philosophies. Let us identify and discuss some of the design schools and movements, and how they have contributed to the field of art:

1. Arts and Crafts Movement (1860-1910)

It emerged in the late 19th century in Britain during the late Victorian era with the aim of bringing beauty, craftsmanship, and expressive design back into everyday life. It later spread to other parts of Europe and North America. The Arts and Crafts Movement placed emphasis on craftsmanship (quality handmade over machine-made), functionality and simplicity of products, drawing inspiration from the natural environment, and advancing social and moral purposes that improve people's lives.

Influential people known for this movement are William Morris (1834–1896) (**Figure 4.3**), John Ruskin (1819–1900), Charles Rennie Mackintosh (1868–1928), and Gustav Stickley (1858–1942). Their effort impacted on design and society in general and brought about the revival of traditional crafts, better working conditions of artists and designers, and informed educational reforms that emphasised hands-on learning and the incorporation of art into everyday life. It also advocated for the use of natural materials. The principles espoused by the movement continue to inspire us as designers and artists to appreciate the beauty in functionality and the benefit of craftsmanship in our lives.



Figure 4.3: William Morris. Peacock and Dragon. c.1878. Wool, jacquard, double weave. 273.7 x 270.7 cm. Height: 74 cm Width: 50 cm Depth: 44 cm

2. Art Nouveau (1890-1910)

The Art Nouveau movement flourished and focused on transforming everyday objects into works of art, with flowing lines, intricate patterns, and nature-inspired designs. This captivating art and design movement began in European countries namely France, Belgium, and Austria, and speedily spread across the continent and to the United States of America. It was characteristic works inspired by organic forms (nature) and embraced irregular shapes and compositions. It also encouraged incorporation of styles and techniques in almost all fields of art such as architecture, interior design, and fine art in creating artforms, new materials and techniques, and embraced artistic influences of different cultures. Proponents of this movement include Alphonse Mucha (1860–1939) (Fig. 4.4), Antoni Gaudí (1852–1926), Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (1864–1901), Victor Horta (1861–1947), and Louis Comfort Tiffany (1848–1933). The Art Nouveau movement was inspired by natural forms and structures, emphasising curved lines and ornamental arts.



Figure. 4.4: Alphonse Mucha. Studie für 'Fruit'. 1897. Pastel on paper. 69.4 x 44 cm

3. De Stijl (1917-1931)

The **De Stijl** (pronounced “duh style”), which means the *style* in Dutch, focuses on simplifying art and design to the basic elements namely shapes, primary colour, lines, texture, and space. Emerging from the Netherlands in the 20th century, it is centred on abstraction and simplification, use of primary and neutral colours, straight lines and right angles, geometric shapes, asymmetry and balance, and focused on universal and timeless design. It advocated pure abstraction, reducing designs to form and colour essentials with the aim of achieving harmony and orderliness and avoiding unnecessary details thereby embracing clarity. It has influenced architecture, furniture, graphic design amongst others with its minimalist aesthetic. The exponents of De Stijl movement include Piet Mondrian (**Fig. 4.5**), Theo van Doesburg and Gerrit Rietveld. Understanding De Stijl helps you to appreciate how simplicity, abstraction, and the use of primary colours can be used to create powerful and timeless designs.

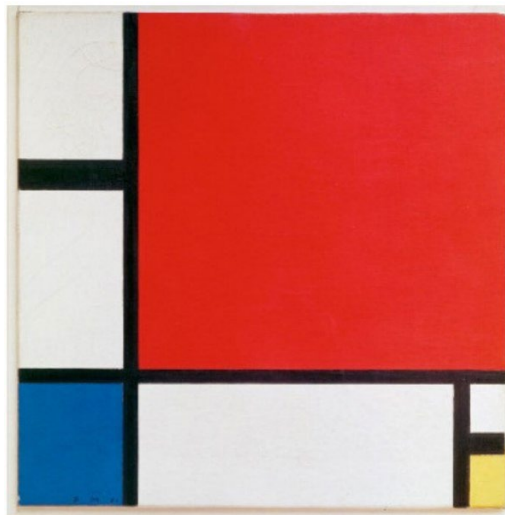


Figure 4.5: Piet Mondrian. “Composition with Red Blue and Yellow”. 1930

4. Bauhaus (1919-1933)

One of the 20th century’s most significant art and design schools was the Bauhaus. The word *Bauhaus* is a German language which means “*House of Building*”. Bauhaus highlighted the notion that design ought to be straightforward, practical, and available to anyone. It placed a strong emphasis on both practicality and beauty, holding that furniture, structures, and commonplace items should be both beautiful and functional. Its emphasis on utility, simplicity, and the fusion of technology, art, and craft altered people’s perceptions of design. Key characteristics of Bauhaus design include: form follows function, simplicity and minimalism, use of modern materials, emphasis of geometry, integration of art and craft, and mass production.

The Bauhaus was founded in 1919 by architect Walter Gropius in Weimar, Germany. In Weimar (1919–1925), the emphasis was on fusing fine arts and crafts. In Dessau (1925–1932), the school relocated to a new structure that Gropius himself constructed, where the Bauhaus aesthetic grew more functional and industrial. Berlin (1932–1933) was the last stop before the school had to close because of pressure from the Nazi government, which viewed its progressive ideologies as a danger. Numerous Bauhaus instructors and students

escaped to other nations despite the school's closure in 1933, spreading Bauhaus concepts across the globe.

Other important Bauhaus personalities apart from Walter Gropius (**Fig 4.6**), were Paul Klee, Wassily Kandinsky, Marcel Breuer, László Moholy-Nagy, and Josef Albers. In the field of design today, the Bauhaus movement continues to have a significant impact. Whether it's a piece of furniture, a structure, or a basic household item, it changed the way we think about how things should feel, look, and work.



Figure 4.6: Walter Gropius, Adolf Meyer. Door Handles. c. 1922

5. Art Deco (1920s-1940s)

One of the 20th century's most well-known art trends was Art Deco. This new design movement was exhibited at the *Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes*, a major international exposition that took place in Paris in 1925 and is where the word “Art Deco” originates. Art Deco swiftly expanded around the world after making its debut in France following World War I. It affected fashion, jewellery, furniture, graphic arts, architecture, and interior design, among other things. Due to World War II, it began to decline in the early 1940s after flourishing in the 1920s and 1930s, peaking in the latter decade. It was renowned for its opulent, glitzy, and daring look, which combined contemporary concepts with age-old workmanship.

It is distinguished by striking geometric patterns and symmetry, luxurious materials (such as chrome, glass, marble, polished wood, lacquer, and exotic), striking contrasts in colour, and sleek, stylised designs. It also included influences from industry and technology, as well as the impact of ancient cultures, such as the Egyptian, Aztec, Greek, and Roman. A design style known as Art Deco embraced the glamour, luxury, and technical innovations of the early 1900s. Architecture, interior design, fashion, and graphics were all impacted by its enduring legacy, and contemporary designers are still motivated by its classic appeal. Key personalities known for this style include Émile-Jacques Ruhlmann (**Fig. 4.7**), René Lalique, and Tamara de Lempicka.



Figure 4.7: Émile-Jacques Ruhlmann. Chair. 1931. Height: 74 cm Width: 50 cm Depth: 44 cm

6. Constructivism

Constructivism, one of the early 20th century art and design movements, focused on creating artworks that were visually interesting, practical, socially useful, and closely linked to modern technology and industry. It originated in Russia around 1913 and gained momentum after the Russian Revolution in 1917 with the aim of moving away from traditional art forms like painting and sculpture to creating art and design for a modern, and industrial society. **Figure 4.8** is an example of constructivist work. Constructivist artists and designers believed that art should have a purpose and be integrated into everyday life. At its early beginning in Russia, they used art to serve the needs of the new Soviet society, making it functional, accessible, and reflective of industrial progress. As a result, they often used industrial materials like metal, glass, and plastic to create their works. Constructivism began to decline in the 1930s as the Soviet government moved its attention to Socialist Realism, a more conventional and realistic form of art that promotes positive images of Soviet society.



Figure 4.8: Monument to the Third International. 1920. This was a massive design for a monument intended to symbolise the new Soviet government. It is also known as 'Tatlin's Tower'.

Constructivist art and design works were characterised by geometric forms and abstractions, use of industrial materials for mass production, functional and practical designs. Important constructivist artists and designers include Vladimir Tatlin (1885-1953), El Lissitzky (1890-1941), Alexander Rodchenko (1891-1956) and Lyubov Popova (1889-1924). Emphasising abstract, geometric forms and the use of industrial materials, constructivism was seen as a practice for social purposes. It influenced the field of graphic design, typography, and architecture, and contributed to the development of modernist and avant-garde art.

7. International Style (1920s-1970s)

Architects Philip Johnson and Henry-Russell Hitchcock organised a renowned exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York in 1932 that popularised the term “International Style.” The exhibition featured buildings and designs that had a common modernist approach, regardless of their country of origin. The International Style is a major modern architectural and design movement that emerged in the 1920s and 1930s and is characterised by its emphasis on simplicity, functionality, and the use of modern materials, setting the stage for how buildings and designs look today. Modern materials used at the time include steel, glass, and concrete. It avoids decoration and ornamentation, focusing instead on clean lines, open spaces, and practical design. The International Style was also characterised by functionality (form follow function) principle, open and flexible floor plans, lack of ornamentation, glass and steel Façades, and asymmetry and balance. Key personalities include Le Corbusier (**Figure 4.9**), Walter Gropius, and Philip Johnson.

In terms of concepts, the international style focused on volume over mass, lightweight materials, and rejected unnecessary ornamentation. They dominated mid-20th-century architecture with clean lines and functional design.



Figure 4.9: Le Corbusier. Villa Savoye. 1929.

8. Streamline Moderne (1930s-1950s)

Streamlining, also known as *Streamline Moderne*, was a design movement that first appeared in the 1930s. It shares many similarities with the Art Deco style, but it places more emphasis on contemporary technology’s impact, sleekness, and simplicity. The coming of Streamline Moderne was a response to the Great Depression’s economic challenges. It changed from the more decorative and luxurious Art Deco design of the past to a more simple, affordable, and useful look.

The concepts of speed, efficiency, and advancement served as its inspiration, portraying a society enthralled with cutting-edge technology and future architecture. It prioritised a sensation of motion, fluid curves, and aerodynamic designs. Its futuristic and streamlined appearance was largely influenced by technological and transportation advancements. Among the most influential painters and designers are Norman Bel Geddes and Raymond Loewy.

Streamline Moderne celebrates modern era innovations, influences contemporary design, makes design accessible and inexpensive, and has enduring qualities that motivates today's designers. The design movement known as "Streamline Moderne" brilliantly encapsulated the spirit of optimism, technology, and modernism in the early 20th century (**Figure 4.10**). From ordinary household objects to transportation and architecture, its impact continues to affect our understanding of design, making it a crucial component of the history of contemporary art and design.



Figure 4.10: The Butler House. Built 1934-1936. It serves as one of the prime examples of the Streamline Modern style

9. Mid-Century Modern (1945-1965)

Mid-Century Modern is a design movement that began roughly from the 1940s to the 1960s. It was a response to the economic, social, and technological changes that followed World War II, focusing on simplicity, functionality, and the integration of indoor and outdoor living. It is a style of art, architecture, furniture, and design that emphasises clean lines, simplicity, and functionality. It incorporates new materials and technologies while aiming to create designs that are accessible, practical, and aesthetically pleasing.

In order to capture the optimism of the post-war age, Mid-Century Modern design sought to produce designs that were affordable, fashionable, and effective. It centred on creating functional, comfortable, and environmentally friendly houses.

Architects and designers of the mid-century modern movement include George Nelson, Eero Saarinen, and Charles and Ray Eames. Known for their inventive furniture made of plastic, fibreglass, and moulded plywood, Charles and Ray Eames were a husband-wife duo that helped pioneer Mid-Century Modern design. Comfort, design, and functionality are all combined in the renowned *Eames Lounge Chair* (**Figure. 4.11**), one of the most well-known pieces of mid-century modern furniture. Luxurious leather cushions and a bent wooden frame are its defining features. The style influenced furniture design, architecture, and urban planning, focusing on functionality.



Figure 4.11 Charles & Ray Eames original 1956 Lounge Chair and Ottoman refurbished.

Activity 4.1

Investigating 20th Century Design Movements

1. Search and select **any Two** of the Modern Design movements/schools such as; Arts and Crafts Movement, Art Nouveau, De Stijl, Bauhaus, Art Deco, Constructionism, International style, Streamline Moderne, Mid-Century Modern, etc.
2. For each of the selected movement or schools, find out about their:
 - a. *historical background* (when and where the design movements originated; cultural, social, or economic factors influenced it),
 - b. *key characteristics* (main features of the movement),
 - c. *important major designers, architects, or artists* associated with the movement and their significant works, and
 - d. *influence of the movements on modern design* and how it continues to shape contemporary trends.
3. Analyse the relationship between the movements or schools selected by critically observing their artworks.
4. Present your findings in infographic design (*See Figure. 4.12 for a sample infographic template*).

Note

Use diverse resources, including books, articles, and online sources (where available), to gather information. Find visual examples (photos of famous works, sketches, and graphics) to illustrate the presentation.



Figure 4.12: A sample infographic template

Try this Challenge alone: Creative Project reflecting Modern Design Style

You are to create a product that reflects the characteristics of **any two** chosen modern design movements. Your design may include any of the following:

1. Furniture or Product Sketch such drawing of a piece of furniture or a product (e.g., a chair, lamp, or phone case) that embodies the principles of the styles.
2. Poster, poster, logo, or advertisement inspired by the colours, shapes, and themes of the styles.
3. Fashion Item or Accessory: Sketch a piece of clothing or an accessory (like a handbag or pair of shoes) that uses elements of the style.
4. Mini Architectural Model: Design a small model of a building or room layout that reflects the style's architectural principles.
5. Sculpted figures in any form of material work like carving,

Note

You may use digital tools for sketching, or simple materials like cardboard, paper, paint, natural materials from your immediate environment for your project.

SOCIAL AND MATERIAL CONDITIONS OF MODERN DESIGN AND PRODUCTS

Social and material conditions of modern design and products

Certain conditions influenced the rise of modern design. Though the conditions are broad ranging from economic, social, political, aesthetical, cultural, material amongst others, we will limit our discussion to social and material conditions.

1. Meaning of *Social Conditions* in the Context of Modern Design

In modern design, “social conditions” refer to how big events, cultural shifts, and changes in the economy affected how people made and used everyday things like buildings, furniture, and home items. Designers had to rethink how things should look, feel, and work because of things such as wars, economic downturns, new technologies, and cultural movements.

2. Social conditions that impacted modern design

Let us examine the social conditions that impacted modern design and products. They include:

a. The Industrial Revolution and urbanisation

In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the Industrial Revolution changed society from farming to making things, which eventually affected fashion. Focusing on efficiency and standardisation, designers made designs that were easier, faster, and cheaper as companies and mass production grew. People in cities wanted smaller, more efficient homes and furniture as cities got busy. It was this need for smaller living areas that led to the Bauhaus movement, which emphasised simple, and useful design.

b. The Arts and Crafts movement and reaction to industrialisation

Designers were against industrialisation in art and design in the late 1800s because they thought mass-produced goods were not well made or of good quality. This started the Arts and Crafts Movement, which was led by William Morris and pushed for hand-made goods and skill. People in the movement wanted simple, useful designs made from natural materials, and they put more value on quality than speed. This movement had an effect on modernist groups such as Bauhaus, which tried to find a balance between old and new ways of making things and pushed the idea that design should make people’s lives better.

c. World War I and desire for functionalism

People looked for designs that were helpful, simple, and right for them after World War I. The German Bauhaus School, which began in 1919, thought that design should be simple, helpful, and have a social purpose. They thought that “form follows function,” which means that the useful parts of an item should determine how it looks, not its cosmetic parts. This made people put utility over style, which led to the start of modern furniture and building design.

d. The Great depression and the rise of streamlined designs

This happened because of the Great Depression (1929–1939), which changed the focus of design from making expensive things to making things that were helpful and cheap. Streamline Moderne is a style that came about in the 1930s. It is known for its straight lines, smooth curves, and focus on functionality. It was inspired by aerodynamics and speed, and it appealed to people who wanted stylish but cheap things when money was tight. This style affected many areas of design, such as houses, cars, and home goods.

e. World War II and the emphasis on efficiency and innovation

With few means, artists came up with new ideas during World War II, focusing on making things that were useful and would last. They came up with light materials like fibreglass, plastic, and plywood, which were used in consumer goods and had an effect on the Mid-Century Modern style. After World War II, design focused on making things simple and useful.

f. Social movements and counter-culture in the 1960s and 1970s

Postmodernism grew out of social movements in the 1960s and 1970s that questioned traditional ideas. This style liked bright colours, strange shapes, nods to history, and fun, sometimes ironic, patterns. Ettore Sottsass and the Memphis Group were designers who questioned what was considered “good” design and praised individuality and variety.

g. The environmental movement and sustainable design

People who cared about the environment started the environmental movement in the 1960s. This movement focused on long-term solutions and products that were better for the environment. “Green design” and “biophilic design,” which use natural elements in buildings and rooms, became popular because of this. Through big windows and green areas, these designs tried to lessen their effect on the environment and bring people back into contact with nature.

h. Globalisation, cross-cultural influences, technological advancements

As transportation and communication technologies have improved, people from all over the world can share their ideas with each other. This has created a style that is diverse and draws from many cultures. Western and non-Western styles, like Japanese minimalism, African patterns, and Scandinavian simplicity, have all been used by designers. Many different styles of design can be traced back to well-known design schools and groups, such as the Bauhaus and Mid-Century Modern. The digital change in the late 20th century gave designers new tools and ways to work in fields like web design, graphic design, and digital art.

3. Explanation of *Material Conditions* in the Context of Modern Design

Material conditions in modern design mean how easy it is to get, how they change over time, and how they are used. Making new materials easier to get or creating new ones opened up new design options, letting artists play with shape, function, and price. Innovations in production, lack of resources, and the finding of new materials are some of the most important things that shape modern design. Over the last two hundred years, the way materials are used and the materials that are available have changed modern style. Designers have changed with the times, adopting new styles, methods, beliefs, and materials as they are created, made available, or needed.

4. Material conditions that impacted modern design

Let us examine of the material conditions that impacted different periods and styles of modern design:

a. The Industrial Revolution and the Rise of New Materials

From the late 18th century to the early 19th century, the Industrial Revolution changed the way goods were made by making it possible to make things like iron, steel, and glass quickly. They became easier to get and cheaper, which let builders build skyscrapers and other tall, light buildings with lots of open room. Also, the production of glass got better, which let architects use big windows and glass facades to make rooms feel open and bright with natural light. Britain's Crystal Palace, which opened in 1851, was one of the first big buildings made of only glass and iron.

b. Standardisation and Mass Production

Making things more efficiently through standardisation of materials (creating parts and materials in uniform shapes and sizes) and mass production made high-quality design easier for regular people to access. Incentives for practical and minimalist design came from modular designs that made goods cheaper and easier to fix. Design movements such as Bauhaus and Constructivism were influenced by industrial designers who worked on making designs that were simple and useful. Focussing on standardisation and simplicity, Bauhaus furniture was easy to make in large quantities and cheap for most people.

c. Rise of synthetic materials and development of plywood and laminated Wood

At the beginning of the 20th century, new materials like Bakelite, acrylic, and fibreglass were created. These materials let makers make goods that were colourful, light, and cheap. Because they were cheap and easy to work with, these materials were great for Streamline Moderne and Mid-Century Modern styles. Charles and Ray Eames made the famous Eames Moulded Plastic Chair, which was a smooth, soft seat made of plastic. In the early 1900s, plywood, which is made by glueing together several sheets of wood, became popular because it could be shaped in more ways. The Mid-Century Modern style was built around these materials because they were cheap, long-lasting, and easy to make. Charles and Ray Eames made the famous Eames Lounge Chair, which was a symbol of Mid-Century Modern furniture. It was comfy, stylish, and up-to-date.

d. World War I and World War II and Material Scarcity

Due to a lack of materials during World War I, designers focused on making things that were simple and worked well. This led to the Bauhaus movement, which pushed for simplicity and usefulness. Designers looked into cheaper materials like plywood and synthetic woods, which led to furniture with a simple look. During World War II, steel, rubber, and wood were in short supply because they were only used by the troops. Designers made light, long-lasting furniture out of plywood, fibreglass, and other materials. Mid-Century Modern style grew out of this need for simplicity and usefulness. The Eames Splint, which is made of moulded plywood, was made for the military as an alternative to metal splints. It shows how strong and flexible plywood can be.

e. Post-War Economic Boom and Consumer Demand for New Materials

As economies grew and more people moved to the suburbs after World War II, there was a need for stylish furniture that was not too expensive. Using materials like plastic and aluminium, designers made the Mid-Century Modern Style, which has straight lines and

basic shapes. More and more people in the middle class could afford these mass-produced items. This style is shown by the Arne Jacobsen Egg Chair, which is both durable and beautiful to look at.

f. Environmental Awareness and Sustainable Materials

People became more aware of the environment in the 1960s and 1970s, which led to a desire for products and design methods that were good for the environment. To lessen their effect on the earth, designers started using bamboo and recycled wood as examples of renewable materials. Modern sustainable design puts an emphasis on long-lasting materials that break down naturally and reduce trash. For example, furniture makers often use recycled plastics and wood that comes from forests that are managed responsibly.

g. Digital Age and High-Tech Materials

As technology improved in the late 20th century, new high-tech materials and ways to make things, like 3D printing, were created. These materials and methods include carbon fibre, Kevlar, and composites. Modern furniture and buildings use these materials to make forms that are strong, light, and flexible. Designers can quickly make samples and special shapes with 3D printing, which lets them try out different shapes and materials. Because it is strong and light, carbon fibre is perfect for high-performance building.

Activity 4.3

Exploring conditions of Modern Designs

Do the following on your own, or in pairs:

1. Identify and select some of the modern designs of the 20th century from this learner material or other trusted sources.
2. Critically observe the designs of the selected works to identify the material and social conditions that influenced their creation
3. Analyse how the available materials and the social conditions were both explored by the 20th century artists to create their beautiful designs.
4. Write down your findings
5. Use the information from your findings to create a manual or digital diary of examples of designs by 20th Century Design Schools.
6. Present your diary in class for discussion and review.
7. Improve your diary with comments from peers and file in your portfolio.

Try this challenge on you own: Generating annotated photobook of Design concepts

1. Explore your immediate environment to identify various design concepts
2. Take photographs of the design concepts identified and note their conditions or schools that influenced their creations (*you can use any computer aided application to help you organise and label the photographs*)

3. Reorganise the work into a digital photobook and present in class for discussion and review
4. File your photobook in your portfolio for future reference.

Note

If you do not have access to computer applications, you can collect real simple design concepts found in your environments (e.g., package labels, newspapers, wrappers, etc.), paste them in a book to create a photobook manually.



Figure 4.13: An Example of photobook

EXTENDED READING

- *Schools that define architecture:* [6-schools-that-defined-their-own-architectural-styles](#)
- *Behaviour by design:* [behaviour-by-design-two-schools-of-thought](#)
- *Famous Modern Design Artists:* [modern-designers](#)

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Define “modern design” in your own words.
2. Describe the main focus of modern design.
3. Why is minimalism important in modern style design?
4. How did the Bauhaus movement influence modern style design?
5. How does sustainable design fit within modern style design concepts?
6. How have new technologies changed the way designers think about form, function, or materials?
7. How did the Industrial Revolution influence modern design?
8. How did the movement of people to cities and the development of smaller living spaces affect design needs?
9. In what ways did the Great Depression impact modern design?
10. How did the rise of consumer culture after World War II impact modern style design?
11. Explain how the rise of technology and new production methods in the 20th century affected social expectations of design.
12. Reflect on how social needs shape the objects and spaces around us. How do you think current social conditions are influencing design trends today?
13. How did the availability of affordable, mass-produced materials support the goal of making well-designed products accessible to more people?
14. Describe the role of synthetic materials, like fibreglass and acrylic, in mid-20th century design.
15. How did the rise of mass production affect the materials used in design?



SECTION

5

**CULTURAL OBJECTS
AND THEIR
REPRESENTATIONS**

AESTHETICS AND CRITICISM

The World Around Us

INTRODUCTION

This session explores the origins, materials, and inspirations behind cultural objects and artistic creations in Ghana. The session will help you uncover the historical roots of cultural objects, examine the materials and production processes used to create them, and analyse how social conditions shape artistic expression. The session will also provide information on the role of materials as conveyers of cultural memory, along with the potential of regional materials as sustainable alternatives for art-making. Finally, you will also gain insights on how the choice of medium and scale impacts the creation and meaning of art. In all, we hope that the session will support you to gain knowledge and skills on how to appreciate the deep connection between culture, materials, and art in Ghana's creative heritage.

KEY IDEAS

Here are some key ideas to learn from this section.

- Art mediums and scale influence the impact of artworks.
- Cultural objects in Ghana have unique origins tied to history and tradition.
- Materials carry and preserve cultural memories.
- Regional materials can replace costly materials in art production.
- Researching materials reveals how cultural objects are made.
- Social conditions often inspire cultural art and design creations.

PRODUCTION OF CULTURAL OBJECTS

What are Cultural Objects?

Cultural objects are tangible objects and intangible customs that have great significance within a community or society. Such objects can be anything from large monuments like sculptures and memorials to everyday items with symbolic or historical value like fabrics, tools, and utensils. They are frequently made with traditional techniques and local materials, reflecting the practical demands and cultural importance of the community. Cultural objects serve as bridges connecting the past to the present, facilitating the transmission of legacy from one generation to another by reflecting the oral history, values, and traditions of their creators. These objects possess a unique power to convey the history, values, and customs of their creators, which is what truly sets them apart. Take, for instance, the intricate designs

of a pottery piece or the woven patterns of a fabric; these elements can reveal insights into an individual's spirituality, heritage, or societal duties.

These items are essential to a culture's identity and survival and go beyond simple creative displays. They are essential to preserving cultural heritage because they give future generations a concrete link to their past and sense of self.

Furthermore, cultural items include intangible elements like the abilities, know-how, and customs that went into producing them. The creation of these items is frequently just as important as the final product. For instance, weaving kente and kete in Ghana is as much an act of symbolism and narrative as well as creating a lovely fabric. The meanings of each hue and pattern are passed down through the generations of artists, and they each stand for certain ideals, sayings, or historical occurrences.

It is necessary to view cultural objects as dynamic manifestations of legacy and culture in order to comprehend them. They serve as testaments to the cultural traditions and knowledge that have been maintained across time, embodying the creativity, skills, and innovative thinking of its founders. These items frequently serve as focal points of ceremonies, rituals, and everyday life, strengthening links to the community and a sense of shared identity. They enhance the global fabric of human experience by being essential for diversity promotion, education, and cultural preservation.

In the globalised world of today, cultural artefacts also act as platforms for intercultural communication and understanding. People from all backgrounds may learn about and appreciate the cultural history of others through museums, exhibits, and cultural exchanges. This emphasises the global value of conserving cultural artefacts and promotes respect and understanding amongst people. Communities respect their forebears and add to the common human legacy that shapes our global civilisation by preserving these treasures.

Examples of Cultural Heritage in Ghana

Ghana has a lot of cultural heritage. Many landmarks and artefacts show Ghana's rich cultural heritage. They show the country's past from the time of the indigenous people to the time of colonisation and the time after. There are three types of these monuments: indigenous monuments, colonially influenced monuments, and post-colonial monuments.

Indigenous Monuments

Cultural heritage is the collection of visible and spiritual objects that people from different generations have left behind, are kept safe today, and will pass on to future generations. Heritage can be seen and touched, like monuments, artworks, and historic buildings. It can also be felt, like customs or traditions, languages, folklore, and practices. Cultural heritage is made up of a community's principles, beliefs, and knowledge. It connects the past and present and is very important to the identity and continuity of a community.

1. *The Larabanga Mosque*, which dates back to 1421 and is often called the "Mecca of West Africa," is one of the oldest mosques in West Africa. It was built with mud and reeds in the style of architecture from Sudan. It represents the spread of Islam in Ghana and shows how creative native architects can be.



Figure 5.1: The Larabanga Mosque

2. *Nzulezo Stilt town:* This town is awash with stilts and platforms and is set on Lake Tadane. This one-of-a-kind town shows how the local people can adapt to and live in peace with their aquatic surroundings, which is typical of how indigenous people lived.



Figure 5.2: Nzulezo Stilt town

3. *The Gbele Resource Centre in Sacred Groves,* are areas protected because they are thought to be where ancient souls live. They are very important to the community's spiritual life and to protecting biodiversity. This shows how traditional values and environmental responsibility can work together.



Figure 5.3: Gbele Resource Centre

4. *Bremang Mausoleum (Baamu), Kumasi*: This is where the Asante kings were buried. The Asante people have deep-rooted practices that make this place very important to their culture. It is a holy place where rituals are held to honour ancestors.



Figure 5.4: Baamu at Brehman

Colonially Influenced Monuments

In Ghana, colonially influenced monuments are historical buildings that were made or changed while Europe ruled as a colony, which was mostly between the 15th century and the middle of the 20th century. European forces like the Portuguese, Dutch, British, Danes, and Swedes ruled the Gold Coast (now Ghana). These monuments show the architectural styles, cultural impacts, and historical events that happened during their time there. Forts, castles, and trading posts that were built for trade, resource exploitation, and territory control make up most of these structures. A lot of them were important stops on the global slave trade route, where Africans were held as slaves before being brought to the Americas. A lot of the time, the design mixes European styles with materials and building methods from the area.

1. *Cape Coast Castle*: It was built by Swedish traders to deal in gold and wood, but during the transatlantic slave trade, it became an important place to hold Africans who were being sold as slaves. The house is a sad memory of how horrible slavery and colonial abuse were.



Figure 5.5: Cape Coast Castle

2. *Elmina Castle* is the oldest building in Europe south of the Sahara. It was built by the Portuguese in 1482. It was first a trade village and then a slave base, showing how European colonisation had a huge effect on the area.



Figure 5.6: Elmina Castle

3. *Fort Christiansborg*, also known as Osu Castle, was built by the Danes in the 1600s and has been used for different government reasons during and after colonial rule. Ghana's past is full of changes in who holds government power, and the castle shows these changes.



Figure 5.7: Fort Christiansborg

Post-Colonial Monuments

Post-colonial structures are buildings and monuments that were built after a country gained freedom from colonial rule. They are signs of national pride, identity, and the hopes for a new age. In Ghana, these statues reflect the nation's journey since gaining independence in 1957. They pay tribute to significant individuals, milestones, and accomplishments that have contributed to the formation of Ghana's identity after colonial rule. The purpose of these landmarks is to:

1. *Honour Leaders and Heroes:* Acknowledge those who played a crucial role in the fight for independence and the development of our nation. The Kwame Nkrumah Mausoleum stands as a tribute to Ghana's inaugural president, a pivotal figure in the nation's struggle for independence.
2. *Celebrate National Achievements:* Highlight significant milestones in the nation's development, including infrastructure projects and the establishment of cultural

institutions. The Akosombo Dam is a sign of Ghana's progress in making its economy more industrialised and generating more energy.

3. *Promote Ghana's cultural heritage:* create places where Ghanaian arts, culture, and history can be expressed and kept alive. The National Theatre of Ghana serves as a prime example, offering a platform for the vibrant performing arts to flourish.
4. *Encourage a sense of unity and patriotism:* Places such as the Independence Arch and Black Star Square, which host significant national events, act as gathering places for festivals and foster a spirit of unity.
5. *Educate and Inspire:* Teach and inspire current and future generations to help to national growth by sharing the country's history and goals.

These monuments are more than just beautiful buildings; they are also full of meaning and symbols. They show how strong Ghana is, how rich its culture is, and how it is still working to grow and become one country after being colonised. Here are some examples of Post-Colonial Monuments:

1. *Kwame Nkrumah Mausoleum:* This building honours Ghana's first president, Kwame Nkrumah, who led the country to freedom in 1957. His vision and contribution to Pan-Africanism are honoured by creating this mausoleum.



Figure 5.8: Kwame Nkrumah Mausoleum

2. *Independence Arch and Black Star Square* are two buildings in Accra that honour Ghana's freedom. The Black Star stands for freedom for Africans, and the square is where national holidays are held.



Figure 5.9: Black Star Square



Figure 5.10: Independence Arch

3. *National Theatre of Ghana:* This theatre, which opened in 1992, is a hub for the performing arts and shows off Ghana's musical, dancing, and acting skills. It shows that the country wants to support its culture and businesses.



Figure 5.11: The National Theatre

Moveable Artefacts

Moveable artefacts are portable items that have great cultural, historical, and artistic significance. In Ghana, these items are essential to the nation's cultural heritage, showcasing the diversity and ingenuity of its populace. They comprise musical instruments, ceremonial artefacts, textiles, ceramics, and many other items. These objects are both functional and imbued with profound symbolic significance, frequently employed in religious rites, festivals, and everyday life.

For example, ceremonial stools possess significant cultural relevance in Ghana, particularly among the Ashanti people. The Golden Stool, known as Sika 'dwa, serves as the regal and sacred throne of the Ashanti people. It is thought that the stool represents the unity and energy of the Ashanti Kingdom. Stools are also used by various Akan people as cultural objects to remember their ancestors, receiving guests, and for other customary functions. They are typically regarded as revered items, frequently adorned with elaborate carvings and inherited through generations.

Musical instruments such as talking drums are vital for communication and cultural expression. In Ghana, the various ethnic groups have their own musical instruments which are used for various occasions and ceremonies. Examples of these instruments include;

1. **Akan Ethnic Group:** Atumpan, Fontomfrom, Seperewa, Dawuro.
2. **Ewe Ethnic Group:** Agbadza drums, Gankogui, Axatse, Sogo.
3. **Dagomba Ethnic Group:** Gungon, Lunna, Tamalin, Simpa.
4. **Ga-Dangme Ethnic Group:** Kpanlogo drums, Oge, Gome, Obonu.

Aside from the musical instruments which are sometimes carved, there other cultural objects such as carved figures are also significant portable objects. The Akuaba doll is a fertility effigy utilised by Akan women. It is borne on the backs of women yearning to procreate, representing beauty and sought-after qualities in offspring. These dolls have attained iconic status, symbolising Ghanaian artistic expression and cultural ideas.

Beadwork is a notable element, with beads utilised in necklaces, bracelets, and anklets. Krobo beads are meticulously created from recycled glass and are utilised in rites of passage, celebrations, and as indicators of social rank. Each hue and kind of bead can communicate information on the wearer's life stage, affluence, and societal status.

The Asafo flags are vibrant appliqué banners utilised by the Fante militia companies along the coastline. Every flag narrates a tale, frequently illustrating historical occurrences, proverbs, or societal reflections. They contribute to communal identity and are exhibited during festivals and processions.



Figure 5.12: An example of Asafo Flag

Currencies as Cultural Objects and Their Significance

Have you ever really examined the coins and banknotes that pass through your hands daily? They represent more than mere metal and paper that we trade for goods and services. Indeed, currencies resemble miniature art galleries and history books that we can carry with us wherever we go. These narratives reflect the essence of our country's past, its rich culture, and the principles we hold dear. In Ghana, our currency, the cedi, boasts a wealth of symbols and images that embody our identity as a nation. Let's delve into the fascinating role currencies play as cultural artefacts and uncover their importance to our lives.

Currencies as Cultural Objects

Symbols of National Identity

Banknotes frequently showcase portraits of significant national personalities, iconic landmarks, and meaningful symbols. In Ghana, our banknotes feature the likenesses of "The Big Six," the pivotal figures who were instrumental in our nation's quest for independence. By featuring them on our currency, we preserve their legacy and reflect on the challenges and victories that have defined our nation.

Reflection of Cultural Heritage

The designs featured on our coins and banknotes showcase traditional motifs and patterns that embody our vibrant cultural heritage. For instance, you may observe the incorporation of Adinkra symbols or Kente and Kete motifs within the background designs. These symbols hold profound significance, conveying ideas such as togetherness, insight, and liberation. Incorporating them into our currency honours our heritage and allows everyone who handles money in Ghana to engage with our rich traditions.

Educational Value

Currencies reveal the stories of our past and the essence of our societies. Each time we engage with currency, we encounter a chance to gain fresh insights. The visuals and icons ignite our curiosity, prompting us to delve deeper into the stories and individuals they represent. For the youth, currency serves as an excellent gateway to explore national heroes, significant historical moments, and cultural icons.

The Importance of Currencies as Cultural objects

1. Promoting National Unity

Employing a single currency across the nation fosters a feeling of togetherness. The images and symbols we see on our currency serve as a reminder that we are united as one nation, despite our diverse backgrounds and regions. This shared identity plays a crucial role in fostering a robust and unified community.

2. Preservation of History

Currencies serve as a testament to the path our country has taken. By showcasing notable individuals and significant occurrences, we ensure their legacy endures for those who come after us.

3. Cultural Expression

Creating currency requires a blend of artistic vision and creativity. Creators weave traditional art forms, symbols, and motifs into their designs, fostering cultural expression through a medium accessible to all. This preserves our creative heritage, ensuring it remains significant in today's world.

4. International Representation

Our currency showcases Ghana's presence in the international arena. When visitors and enthusiasts from abroad encounter our coins and banknotes, they catch a glimpse of our rich culture and history. This can foster global appreciation and admiration, highlighting the beauty and depth of Ghanaian culture for all to see.

Currencies are much more than tools for buying and selling. They are cultural objects that carry our nation's identity, history, and values. Paying attention to the designs on our coins and banknotes, we can learn more about who we are and what we value as Ghanaians. The next time you hold a cedi or a pesewa, take a moment to look at the images and symbols. Remember that you are holding a piece of our culture and heritage in your hand. Appreciating these everyday objects helps us stay connected to our roots and inspires pride in our rich cultural tapestry.

Note

For a comprehensive view and the evolution of the Ghanaian currency as Cultural Objects, please visit <https://www.bog.gov.gh/bank-notes-coins/bank-notes-of-ghana/>

Besides their cultural significance, movable objects promote Ghana's economy through tourism and the international admiration of African art. Indigenous artists persist in crafting these objects, integrating ancient techniques with modern designs, therefore ensuring the cultural legacy stays vibrant and pertinent.

These artefacts are essential for the preservation and transmission of information, values, and traditions. They facilitate the dissemination of narratives and histories, cultivating a sense of affiliation and continuity among communities. Engaging with these things allows both Ghanaians and those globally to get insights into the nation's diverse cultural environment.

Portable relics also contribute to education. They serve as educational instruments to convey ethical principles, historical events, and societal norms. Storytelling sessions using items such as masks and drums may effectively educate younger generations about their ancestry in an interesting way.

Portable cultural objects in Ghana are not only items; they represent the essence of the nation's spirit. They embody the creativity, spirituality, and fortitude of its populace. The ongoing utilisation and conservation of these objects guarantee that Ghana's cultural legacy stays dynamic and impactful for future generations.

Activity 5.1

Documenting Cultural Objects in Ghana

Do the following as a group or alone;

1. Investigate and list examples of cultural objects in your community and other parts of Ghana.
2. In your search, *try to identify local monuments, traditional crafts, musical instruments, textiles, and other artefacts that are significant to your community.*
3. Identify and document the purpose or meaning behind these objects. Example, *explore the stories, symbols, and traditions associated with each object, understanding their roles in ceremonies, rituals, or daily life.*
4. Reflect on how these cultural objects contribute to community identity by *considering how these objects foster a sense of belonging, preserve history, and influence contemporary cultural expressions.*
5. Interview elders or community leaders to learn more about the history and significance of these objects *to gain deeper insights and record oral histories that might not be documented elsewhere.*
6. Document your findings in writing
7. Next, create sketches of the cultural objects you identified and write short descriptions beside each of them.
8. Now, use the entire information to create a storyboard that documents a collection of Ghanaian cultural objects.
9. Present your work in class for review
10. Use the feedback from peers to improve your work and file in your portfolio.

MATERIALS AND MODES OF PRODUCTION OF CULTURAL OBJECTS



Materials and Modes of Production of Cultural Objects



The arts and crafts of the people in a particular geographical area are not just aesthetically pleasing; they carry profound significance as well. They narrate the culture of the people, represent their beliefs, and preserve the heritage of the diverse cultural groups in Ghana. Understanding the materials and techniques employed in crafting these items provides an insight into the essence of Ghanaian culture.

The materials found in cultural artefacts reflect the rich diversity of the cultures they represent. These elements frequently originate from the surrounding environment, showcasing a deep connection between the community and their territory.

1. **Wood:** This material is perhaps the most widely utilised, skilfully crafted into wooden dolls, masks, sculptures, stools, and drums. Various kinds of timber are chosen for their resilience and the significance they carry.
2. **Clay** is shaped into pots, figurines, and decorative pieces. Pottery holds a vital place as a craft, particularly among women in specific communities.
3. **Metals:** Gold, bronze, and iron are fashioned into jewellery, ceremonial swords, and ornaments. Gold carries significant weight, representing affluence and authority.
4. **Fibres:** Jute, raffia, Cotton, are woven into elaborate fabrics like fugu, kete or kente and other cloths. These textiles are renowned across the globe for their elaborate designs and vivid hues.
5. **Beads:** Crafted from materials like glass, seeds, or stones, these decorative elements are elegantly strung into necklaces, bracelets, and various other adornments. They frequently represent social standing or are employed in ceremonial practices.
6. **Calabash** (Gourd): Once hollowed and dried, calabashes serve as versatile containers, musical instruments, or beautifully decorated pieces.
7. **Leather and Skins or Hides:** Used to make bags, footwear, and drum coverings, these materials are processed through traditional tanning methods.

Table 5.1: Pictures showing examples of materials for making Ghanaian cultural objects

	
Wood	Beads
	
Clay	Fibre
	
Metals	Calabash

	
Leather and Skins or Hides	Canes

Methods of Production

The techniques used in creating Ghanaian cultural artefacts are deeply rooted in tradition. Many of these methods have been handed down over the years, safeguarding the expertise and wisdom of those who came before us.

1. Weaving

- a. *Hand Woven Cloth:* Crafted on a traditional loom, Kente, Kete and Fugu cloth are produced by the Asante, Ewe and Northern Ghana communities. Fabric strips are meticulously woven with elaborate patterns and subsequently stitched together. Every hue and design carry its own significance, embodying concepts like tranquillity, affection, or courage.
- b. *Other Hand-woven Objects:* There are varieties of other hand-woven cultural objects spread across the regions in Ghana. These objects include baskets, hats, finishing nets or traps, mats, bags, etc. made with straw, cane, date palm, jute, etc.

2. Carving

- a. *Wood Carving:* Talented craftsmen intricately shape wood into dolls, stools, canoe, walking sticks, linguist staffs, drums, and other household objects such as mortar and pestle for pounding grains and nuts.
- b. *Decorative patterns:* The designs on the carved objects are usually made by hand tools which often depict ancestors, deities, or animals, serving economic, domestic, religious or ceremonial purposes. The intricate patterns may also include proverbial symbols or images.
- c. *Shaping Drum Bodies:* The drum's body is meticulously shaped from a single block of wood. Animal skins are meticulously stretched over the drum's opening and firmly secured, forming the drumhead.

3. Pottery

- a. *Hand-Building Techniques:* Artisans manipulate coils and slabs of clay to craft pots and vessels. The items are subsequently placed in open kilns or pits for firing.
- b. *Decorative Patterns:* Pots are frequently adorned with intricate patterns prior to firing, using various tools or incorporating additional clay designs.

4. Metalwork



- a. *Lost-Wax Casting*: This old method is used to produce intricate metal pieces. A wax model is enveloped in clay and subjected to heat, causing the wax to melt away and creating a mould for pouring molten metal.
- b. *Forging*: Metals undergo a transformative process through heating and hammering, allowing indigenous artists to craft tools, jewellery, and ceremonial pieces with precision and artistry.

5. Bead Making

- a. *Recycling Glass*: Old bottles are crushed, the glass is melted down and then moulded into beautiful beads. The Krobo people have gained a reputation for this particular craft.
- b. *Designing Patterns*: Paints or layer beads are used to craft vibrant designs on beads. These beads also serve decorative purposes for body adornment or to show social status of individuals.

Table 5.2: Pictures showing examples of modes of producing some Ghanaian cultural objects

	
Wood Carving	Bead making
	
Clay modelling	Weaving objects
	
Metal Forging	Calabash and gourd making

	
<p>Making leather and Skins or Hides objects</p>	<p>Making art with Canes or Sticks</p>

The Importance of Materials and Methods

Every material and method carry its own cultural weight.

Symbolism

The colours, designs, and textures found in cultural objects carry profound symbolism, communicating messages and meanings that echo within the community. Each colour and design element is selected with an intention. Gold surpasses being merely a precious metal; it embodies notions of royalty, affluence, and spiritual purity. It is frequently used in jewellery and decorations donned by leaders and during important ceremonies to convey significance and respect. In textiles like Kete and Kente or Fugu, each colour carries a specific meaning: black symbolises maturation and intensified spiritual energy, blue represents harmony and love, green signifies growth and renewal, and red stands for passion and strength. Designs woven into the fabric can represent ideas such as togetherness, knowledge, or moral values. Through the integration of these symbols into common items, indigenous artists convey cultural narratives and principles silently. This vibrant application of symbolism elevates everyday objects into artistic expressions that embody the values and customs of the community.

Spiritual Connection

A wide range of cultural objects from Ghana act as a connection between the physical and the spiritual realm. They serve a purpose beyond mere decoration, holding significant importance in religious ceremonies and rituals. For example, wooden masks are used in dances and ceremonies to symbolise ancestors or deities. When an artist dons such a mask, it is thought that they channel the essence it signifies, facilitating a connection with the realm beyond. Drums crafted from particular woods and animal hides serve to invoke spirits, honour festivals, or convey messages over long distances. The materials are revered; specific woods or minerals are selected for their spiritual significance. These items play key roles in important ceremonies such as marriage rites, funerals, and harvest festivals. They strengthen the community's spiritual beliefs and traditions. They assist people and the community in linking with their roots, seeking blessings, and paying tribute to their ancestors, thereby preserving a harmonious balance between the physical and spiritual realms.

Preservation of History

The age-old techniques of creating cultural artefacts play a crucial role in safeguarding Ghana's vibrant heritage and ancestral wisdom. These methods have been handed down over the years, frequently shared through spoken word or learnt through hands-on experience within families or local groups. Sticking to these traditional techniques such as hand-weaving, wood carving, or lost-wax casting, craftsmen preserve time-honoured skills. Each crafted object becomes a tangible piece of history, embodying stories, customs, and experiences of the past. For example, the intricate patterns in Kente and kete not only display artistic skill but also tell stories of historical events or convey proverbs and moral lessons. Upholding these practices, communities forge a connection to their forebears, protecting the knowledge and customs of the past from the impact of modernisation. This connection strengthens cultural identity and offers younger generations a sense of belonging and pride in their roots.

Community Identity

Indigenous artists frequently embody the essence of community identity, showcasing the distinctive customs and talents of particular cultural groups or locales. Every community in Ghana showcases unique styles, techniques, and materials that distinguish its crafts from one another. Take, for example, the Ashanti, celebrated for their exquisite gold jewellery and kete/Kente cloth, whereas the Krobo are well-known for their striking beadwork. These crafts cultivate a deep sense of pride and togetherness among the community. Engaging in the making and utilisation of these items unites individuals, strengthening social connections and shared identity. During festivals and ceremonies, the display of these unique crafts showcases the community's heritage to others, strengthening their cultural presence. By upholding and showcasing their distinct artistic traditions, communities guarantee that their unique identities are acknowledged and valued both in Ghana and beyond. This collective cultural manifestation fosters unity and honours the rich tapestry of diversity that exists within the country.

The techniques and materials employed in creating cultural objects are essential to the identity of a group of people in a particular geographical area. There is a profound connection with nature, an appreciation for heritage, and a vibrant weave of symbolism. It is important to recognise and value these artefacts and pay tribute to the artists who sustain these traditions, while also deepening our understanding of Ghana's rich values and history.

Activity 5.2

Exploring materials and modes of cultural objects

Try the following alone or with some peers at home or school:

1. Search through the internet, books, or any other learning materials to identify cultural objects in Ghana, such as traditional symbols, pottery, or traditional jewellery.

2. Investigate the materials used in creating these objects (e.g., cotton, gold, clay, wood, beads) and how they are sourced or produced.
3. Now, research the specific methods or techniques used to produce these cultural objects, such as weaving, carving, dyeing, or casting.
4. Write a report or create a digital document that includes the cultural objects, their materials, and the modes of production.
5. Sketch or create digital illustrations of the cultural objects, showing the materials used and the production processes. Write short descriptions explaining each material and technique.
6. Compile all the information into a presentation that highlights the materials, production techniques, and their cultural relevance.

SOCIAL CONDITIONS OF ART OBJECTS

Art Reflects Social Conditions

Art is often seen as a reflection of the social, political, and economic conditions of the time and place in which it is created. It serves as a mirror to society, capturing the values, struggles, and beliefs of different cultures and historical periods. The following are ways in which art reflects the social conditions of its era:

Cultural Identity and Traditions

Art represents the cultural identity of a society, preserving and expressing the beliefs and customs of its people. Traditional forms, symbols, and techniques passed down through generations offer a deep connection to a community's history, spiritual life, and social structure. These art objects carry the values, stories, and experiences that shape a society's sense of identity. For example, African masks and sculptures are often tied to religious rituals and cultural celebrations. In many African societies, these artworks are not simply decorative; they play an active role in connecting the living with the spiritual world. Masks, for instance, are worn during ceremonies to honour ancestors, invoke deities, or bring about healing. These objects are more than artistic representations. They are cultural tools that reinforce social order and spiritual beliefs.



Figure. 5.13: An example of Ghanaian Cultural Object (The Stool)

In Ghana, stools are significant symbols of authority, unity, and continuity. Among the Akan people, stools serve as sacred symbols of leadership and identity. The Black Stool, for example, is revered as a spiritual seat of power, connecting chiefs to their ancestors. Stools

also play a role in rites of passage, family inheritance, and the preservation of lineage, acting as tangible links between the past, present, and future. Through these cultural traditions, stools become enduring symbols of societal structure and collective memory. The stool thus becomes a cultural object that gives identity to the people it represents.

Political Statements

Art has long been a powerful tool for expressing political views and social struggles. It can serve as a form of protest or a way to communicate the aspirations of a people. Artists often use their work to comment on societal issues, such as inequality, oppression, or revolution. For instance, Ghanaian indigenous cultural objects such as the linguist staff heads hold strong political statements. They are mostly coded proverbial sayings rendered in symbolic objects and figures that speak to persons in authority. Similarly, some current Ghanaian artist, Bright Ackwerh uses his paintings to explore themes of social justice, poverty, and the struggles of marginalised communities, drawing attention to the need for equity and change. Another example is Dorothy Akpene Amenuke who employs textiles and installations to address issues of identity, tradition, and societal transformation, encouraging reflection on Ghana's cultural and social dynamics.

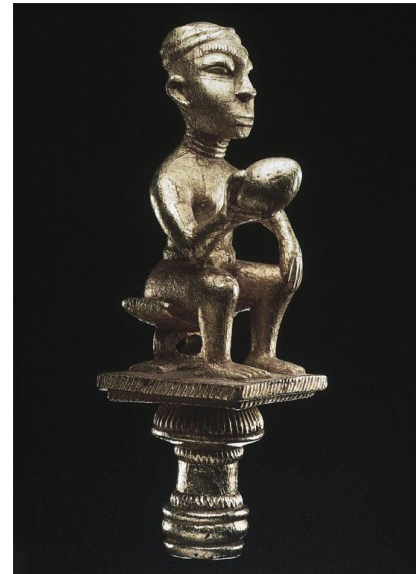


Figure. 5.14: A linguist staff head. An example of cultural object that speaks to those in authority

Economic Influence

Art often mirrors the economic realities of the society in which it is created. Wealthy societies tend to produce elaborate and luxurious works because they have access to rare and expensive materials. In contrast, communities with limited resources rely on more accessible materials, creating simpler yet equally meaningful art. This contrast between wealth and scarcity is clearly reflected in Ghanaian art traditions.

One striking example is the hand-woven cloth (kente, kete and fugu), a vibrant and symbolic textile originally woven by the Asante, Ewe and Northern communities. In the past, the cloth was crafted using silk threads obtained through trade. Its luxurious nature made it a symbol of wealth and power, reserved for royalty and the elite. However, with economic changes over time, synthetic fibres have replaced silk, making the cloth more affordable and accessible to people from different social classes. This evolution demonstrates how economic conditions influence both the production and accessibility of art.

Goldweights is also an example artefact made of small brass objects used in trade to measure gold dust. These items were not only functional but also artistic, featuring intricate designs such as animals, human figures, and geometric patterns. The detailed craftsmanship of these goldweights highlighted the economic sophistication and creativity of the Akan people during the pre-colonial period, showing how wealth supported both practicality and artistic expression.

Social Hierarchies and Class

Art is often used to depict social hierarchies and class distinctions, reflecting the power and status of certain groups within a society. For example, in European portraiture, paintings of royalty and nobility emphasised wealth, power, and social rank. These artworks often glorified the luxurious lifestyles of the upper class, highlighting their wealth, elegance, and sophistication, while downplaying or ignoring the struggles of lower classes. Art, in this case, helped solidify the social divisions and power structures of these societies.

In Ghana, art also serves to depict social status, but in ways that reflect the distinct traditions of different ethnic groups. Among the Ewe people, masks and sculptures are central to social rituals and are often created for specific ceremonial purposes. These artworks can represent the spiritual power and leadership roles within the community. For example, the Ewe ceremonial mask worn during important festivals and rituals often signifies the wearer's rank or role in society, with different masks assigned to different levels of social importance. Masks used by chiefs or elders are often more elaborate, indicating their higher status and spiritual authority.

In the Northern regions of Ghana, the Dagombas use drums and dance masks during royal ceremonies to reinforce social hierarchy. The gome drum, for instance, is reserved for kings and elders, while other drums are used by commoners. The size, design, and even the materials used in making these objects can indicate the social status of their owners, with royal drums often made from high-quality wood and decorated with intricate patterns.

In the Akan traditional setting, items such as kente cloth, the king's umbrella (kyinɛ), and the palanquin (nkyɛnɛ) are powerful symbols of authority, social hierarchy, and cultural heritage.

Kente cloth is one of the most expensive and widely used fabrics during occasions such as weddings, festivals, functions, and other important social gatherings. It is a highly revered art form, with specific patterns exclusively reserved for royalty. For instance, designs woven for the Asantehene, Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, paired with his royal adornments, signify his power and unparalleled status. These golden adornments not only display wealth but also reflect the ruler's spiritual and political strength.

Other kente types, such as *Nyankonton* ("God's rainbow"), *Adwinasa* ("all motifs are used"), *Obaakofo Mmu Man* ("one person does not rule a nation"), and *Sika Futoro* ("gold dust"), are worn by important dignitaries to symbolise social hierarchies and class within society.

The king's umbrella (kyiniɛ) is another significant emblem of authority, carried during public ceremonies to emphasise the ruler's importance. Its size and intricate designs, often featuring symbolic motifs, highlight the king's achievements, lineage, and sacred position.

Similarly, the *apakan* (palanquin), richly decorated with carvings and textiles, is used to carry the king during festivals and processions. The act of being elevated above the crowd reinforces his position as a leader above all others, commanding respect and reverence from his people.



Figure 5.15 A Queen dressed elegantly and carried in a palanquin. An example of how art objects reflect social hierarchy and class.

Religious and Spiritual Beliefs

Art frequently reflects the religious and spiritual beliefs of a society. Religious iconography, temple architecture, and sacred texts are often central to the artistic landscape. In many cultures, art was created to honour deities, represent religious stories, or enhance sacred spaces. The detailed carvings found in some indigenous architectural shrine arts of the Fante people commonly called the “pusuban” are prime examples of how beliefs and practices influenced the creation of art.



Figure 5.16: Examples of Fante Pusuban. A shrine art showing how beliefs influence making of cultural objects

Technological Advancements

Technological advancements have significantly shaped the creation and perception of art objects, providing artists with new materials and tools to express their creativity. Innovations

like the discovery of pigments, steel, and concrete have expanded artistic possibilities throughout history, influencing forms like painting, sculpture, and architecture. Tools such as the printing press, photography, and digital software revolutionised how art is created and shared, making it more accessible to a global audience and spreading ideas across cultures.

In modern times, technologies like 3D printing, robotics, and artificial intelligence have pushed the boundaries of art, enabling dynamic, interactive, and self-evolving creations. Digital platforms and social media have also transformed how audiences engage with art, allowing for remote exploration and broader appreciation. Art objects continue to reflect the technological advancements of their time, from industrial-era designs to today's digital innovations, showing how closely art evolves with societal progress.

Global Interactions

Through global interactions such as trade, colonisation, and cultural exchanges, ideas, techniques, and materials were shared across regions, often leading to the replication or adaptation of artistic elements. One of the most celebrated art forms to gain international recognition is African art, especially African masks, which have profoundly influenced artists worldwide.

European artists like Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse were inspired by the abstraction, forms, and symbolic meanings of African masks. These elements influenced their works, marking a shift in Western art toward abstraction and modernism. African masks also inspired American artists, such as Malvin Gray Johnson, who celebrated African heritage in his works.

In contemporary art and design, African masks continue to serve as a major source of inspiration across various mediums, including painting, sculpture, fashion, textiles, and interior design. Their motifs, patterns, and shapes are often fused with modern aesthetics, showcasing a blend of traditional and contemporary styles.

This growing appreciation has led to greater awareness and understanding of African cultures and their artistic traditions. Museums and galleries around the world now showcase African masks in exhibitions and curated displays, offering platforms for cultural exchange and education. These opportunities allow people to engage with African art, fostering a deeper understanding of its cultural and artistic significance.

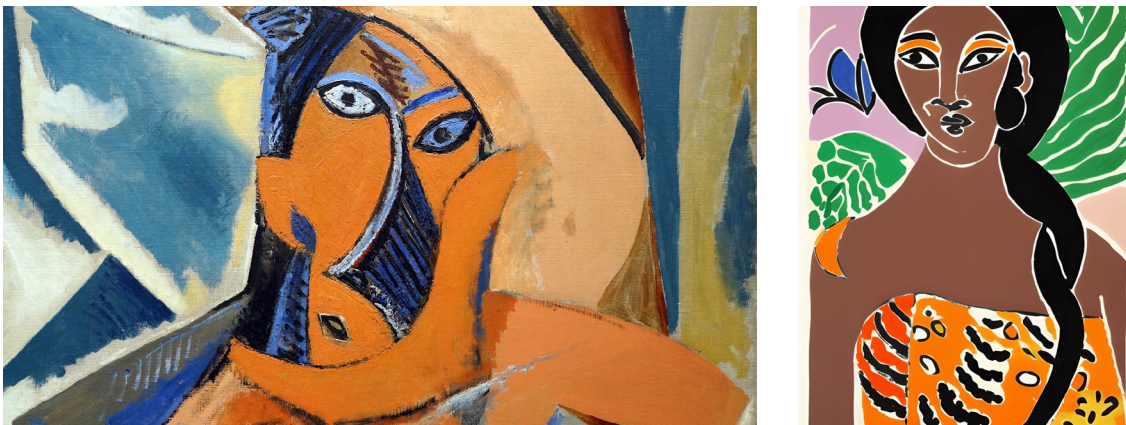


Figure 5.17: A famous work by Picasso and Matisse, showing the influence of African masks on Modern Art.

Activity 5.3

Discovering social conditions of cultural objects

Do the following alone;

1. Search through books, online resources, or museums to find examples of artworks or designs in Ghana influenced by social conditions (e.g., political posters, freedom murals, or traditional motifs).
2. Investigate the social conditions that inspired the selected works, such as historical events, cultural practices, or societal challenges like colonisation, independence movements, or modernisation.
3. Examine how the social conditions influenced the themes, symbols, or materials used in the artworks.
4. Write a detailed explanation of the connection between the social conditions and the artworks or designs, emphasising how art reflects society.
5. Sketch or collect images of the selected artworks and annotate them with notes explaining the social conditions that inspired them.
6. Create a timeline showing how different social conditions have influenced art and design in Ghana over time.
7. Share your findings and visual materials with the class in a presentation or gallery-style display.
8. Receive feedback from peers to refine your analysis and presentation.
9. Save the documented analysis, sketches, and any visual materials in your portfolio for future reference.

Try this challenge alone

- a. Search to identify any cultural object in the community where you live
- b. Interview elders or people in your community to identify the significance of the cultural objects you identified.
- c. Make a sketch or take a photograph of the cultural object identified.
- d. Use the information to develop a one-page newspaper article to tell the world about the cultural object in your community.
- e. Present the article to your friends for review and to improve it.
- f. Post the article on your social media handle and monitor the comments for engagement.
- g. Take note of the vital comments to improve your next project

Note

You can screenshot the post and keep a copy in your portfolio.

CULTURAL MEMORY AND IDENTITY

Cultural Memory and Identity

Have you ever thought about why certain folktales, songs, artworks, customs and traditions are passed down from generations? being shared from one generation to the next? These components contribute to our shared cultural heritage, a unified method of recalling and safeguarding the experiences, values, and beliefs of our community. The way we remember our culture plays a crucial role in defining who we are, affecting our self-perception and our connections with those around us. For those engaged in Art and Design studies in Ghana, grasping the concepts of cultural memory and identity is crucial. It enhances your imaginative abilities while also linking you to your roots and the people around you.

What is Cultural Memory?

The concept of cultural memory encompasses the collective knowledge, traditions, and experiences that are transmitted through generations within a culture. This acts as a cornerstone for a community's essence, safeguarding values, beliefs, and traditions for those who will come after us. Collective recollection includes a range of components:

1. *Stories and Myths*: These are tales transmitted through spoken word or documented accounts. They frequently share the stories of their ancestors, heroes, and important events. In Ghana, tales of Ananse convey important moral lessons and emphasise the significance of wit and wisdom.
2. *Artistic Expressions*: Visual arts, music, dance, and literature serve as mirrors of cultural values and traditions. The art of Kente and kete or fugu weaving, the significance of Adinkra symbols, and the rhythm of drumming represent avenues of creative expression in Ghana, highlighting both creativity and tradition.
3. *Rituals and Ceremonies*: Important stages in life such as births, marriages, and funerals are celebrated through unique traditions and observances that strengthens community connections and honour cultural heritage.
4. *Symbols and Icons*: Items such as the Golden Stool or Adinkra symbols hold profound significance, embodying concepts of unity, leadership, or spiritual convictions.

Cultural memory acts like a tapestry woven from these threads, ensuring that a community's identity and values remain intact across generations.

The Role of Cultural Memory in Shaping Identity

1. *Personal Identity*

The culture in which one is raised deeply shapes personal identity. Cultural memory offers a lens through which one can understand his/her identity and our roles in the community. Your identity is reflected in the words you use, the attire you choose, the food you eat, and the customs you uphold.

- a. *Providing a Sense of Belonging*: Understanding your cultural heritage fosters a deep connection to your community and its history. Engaging in traditional celebrations

or rituals can create a sense of belonging to a larger community. This feeling of connection enhances your sense of self and fosters pride in your identity.

- b. *Shaping Values and Beliefs:* Cultural narratives and lessons significantly contribute to the development of your ethical framework. They educate you on morality, honour, and accountability. Traditional stories and sayings, like those found in Ghanaian proverbs, provide insights that shape your choices and interactions with others.
- c. *Influencing Creative Expression:* Collective identity fuels individual creativity. Artists frequently use traditional symbols, motifs, and stories to convey their artistic visions. For instance, creating a work of art with Kente, kete or fugu patterns or Adinkra symbols embody not just individual creativity but also the richness of cultural heritage.

2. Collective Identity

A shared sense of belonging among a group of people is what defines collective identity. The preservation of cultural memory fortifies this shared connection, ensuring that traditions and values are passed down across generations.

- a. *Maintaining Continuity:* Traditions and customs play a key role in keeping cultural practices alive. During the celebration of festivals or the performance of rituals, communities impart knowledge, values, and lifestyles to the younger generations. This continuity aids in maintaining the distinct character of the group.
- b. *Promoting Togetherness:* Shared experiences, such as community ceremonies and rituals, dances, or storytelling, unite the people. These practices foster a spirit of unity and understanding, bridging gaps between different groups within the community. Collaboration is enhanced through unity, which also fortifies social connections.
- c. *Representing Cultural Heritage:* Creative works and cultural manifestations represent the distinctiveness of a community. Aspects such as folk music, dance, and artisanal crafts embody the shared identity of a community and highlight their vibrant cultural legacy. For instance, the traditional symbols of Ghana, such as “Gye Nyame” and the intricate patterns of Kente, kete or fugu, stand as significant representations of Ghanaian culture on a global scale.

Art and Cultural Memory in Ghana

The vibrant cultural legacy of Ghana serves as an invaluable source of inspiration for creators and innovators. Let’s delve into the ways in which cultural memory shapes artistic expression in Ghana.

Traditional Symbols and Motifs

Adinkra Symbols: These are intricate visual representations crafted by the Akan community, embodying profound concepts such as wisdom, strength, and unity. For instance, the “Gye Nyame” symbol signifies “Except for God,” highlighting the ultimate authority of the divine.

Vibrant Designs: The fabric showcases a variety of striking designs, each carrying a unique name and significance. The designs narrate tales or express meanings, like “Emaa Da,” which signifies “It has not happened before,” representing distinctiveness.

Storytelling Through Art: Oral traditions - Narratives conveyed through spoken word frequently find expression in artistic forms. Artworks, including paintings, sculptures, and textiles, have the power to convey folktales or historical narratives.

Masks and Carvings: The masks used in festivals and rituals frequently embody ancestors or spirits, forging a link between the present and the past.

Contemporary Art

Integrating traditions and modernity: Numerous artists from Ghana weave traditional aspects into contemporary art, producing pieces that resonate with both cultural legacy and present-day narratives.

Social and Political Commentary: Artistic expression serves as a medium to reflect on societal issues used as cultural memory to confront modern challenges.

The Importance of Preserving Cultural Memory

Diversity in Culture

Protecting cultural memory ensures that the depth and diversity of human experiences are upheld for future generations. Every culture possesses a distinctive way of conveying its ideas, beliefs, and values through various traditions, artistic expressions, and practices. Through the preservation of these cultural memories, we ensure the richness of perspectives that contribute to how vibrant and interesting the world is. This variety encourages appreciation and understanding among various cultures, contributing to the development of a more inclusive and harmonious worldwide community. The disappearance of cultures results in a loss that extends beyond mere history; it robs the world of invaluable wisdom and the lessons they impart.

Education

Serving as a significant educational resource, the cultural memory of a group of people imparts knowledge of history, values, and traditions to the younger generations. Through storytelling, art and music, the youth discover the struggles and triumphs of their ancestors, which gives a sense of pride and belonging. This understanding cultivates a stronger bond with their origins, allowing them to value their heritage and recognise the influences that have formed their sense of self. Learning through cultural memory also fosters essential moral teachings and societal values that influence actions and choices.

Identity Formation

The significance of cultural memory is paramount in guiding individuals' comprehension of their identity and their place within the world. Through engaging with the customs, emblems, and ceremonies of their community, individuals can cultivate a profound sense of

both personal and shared identity. This bond fosters a sense of self-assurance and dignity, empowering people to manage the intricacies of contemporary existence while remaining grounded in their cultural roots. Preserving cultural memory allows future generations to connect with their roots and develop their own identities through shared cultural values.

In what ways can art and design help?

Documentation

Arts and design play an important role in recording and keeping oral histories, ceremonies, and other forms of cultural heritage. Artists capture and preserve cultural heritage for future generations through paintings, sculptures, textiles, and photography. These are just a few of the many ways cultural memory can be preserved. In an era when oral traditions are dwindling or at risk of being ignored, this visual and artistic record is vital in maintaining cultural practices.

Through the preservation of cultural memory, creators play a vital role in establishing a lasting repository of human experiences that has the potential to enlighten and motivate generations to come.

Innovation

Art and design offer an avenue for reimagining and advancing cultural elements, ensuring their significance in contemporary society. Through the fusion of traditional designs, symbols, and techniques with modern style, artists ensure that cultural heritage remains alive and evolving. This innovation guarantees that cultural legacy stays meaningful and flexible in an ever-evolving environment. For instance, incorporating traditional symbols into contemporary fashion or digital artworks influenced by classic themes enables younger generations to engage with their heritage in innovative and thrilling manners.

Awareness

Through their artworks, artists can highlight the significance of preserving cultural heritage. Art possesses the ability to convey messages that touch individuals, motivating them to cherish and protect their cultural heritage. Public murals, exhibitions, and community projects serve to showcase the beauty and importance of cultural practices, inspiring others to engage in their preservation. Through the vibrant expression of cultural memory, creators significantly contribute to the collective awareness of its value and the essential task of preserving it for those who will come after us.

Activity 5.4

Materials as repositories of Cultural memory

Do the following as group or individually at home or in school;

1. Search through books, museums, or online resources to identify materials commonly used in Ghanaian cultural objects (e.g., gold, beads, clay, wood, or fabric).

1. Investigate the historical and cultural significance of these materials. Find out how they are linked to traditions, rituals, or historical events in Ghanaian society.
2. Examine how these materials store and convey cultural memory, such as through symbols, patterns, or historical uses.
3. Write a short essay or create a self-recorded video explaining how one of these materials preserves cultural memory.
4. Share your findings with the class through a presentation or storytelling session.
5. Save your work in a portfolio for future reference.

REGIONAL MATERIALS AND PRIVILEGED MATERIALS

Regional and Privileged Materials in Art and Design

Artists and designers over the ages have been relying on a distinct range of materials in order to implement their ideas. Some of these materials which are referred to as privileged materials are referred to due to their rareness, quality or historical values. Others, known as regional materials, are locally sourced and often reflect the environment and traditions of the community. Both materials have unique characteristics and cultural relevance; understanding them helps us appreciate their roles in artistic expression.

1. Regional Materials and Privileged Materials

Regional Materials

Regional materials are those that are naturally available in a specific area. Often, these are connected to the environment and local traditions and practices. It is worth mentioning that in Ghana, clay, calabash, bamboo and raffia are largely used in art and craft. These materials are treated not merely as useful features but as instruments of expressing the culture of the people in a particular geographical area. Regional artists using local materials appreciate nature and traditional customs.

Characteristics of Regional Materials

- a. Accessibility: Easily available in the local environment.
- b. Sustainability: Often renewable and eco-friendly.
- c. Cultural Significance: Linked to local traditions and heritage.
- d. Affordability: Cost-effective compared to imported materials.

Examples of regional materials include

- a. Clay for pottery and sculpture.
- b. Bamboo and raffia for weaving and furniture.
- c. Local wood varieties for carving.

Privileged Materials

The word “privilege” is often used to represent “special” or “something which is not readily available” or “restricted” to only a particular group. Similarly, in context, the term **“Privileged Material”** is used to stand for all art materials that cannot be easily obtained by all artists for their works. For example, precious stones, pearls or gemstones. Though stones are readily available everywhere which artists can use for carving or making artworks, precious stones are difficult to find making them fall under the category of *privileged materials*. Privileged materials are considered superior due to their rarity, historical prestige, or exceptional quality. Materials like these have always been linked to wealth, power and status. Marble, gold, silk and porcelain for instance are considered materials for the elite due to their aesthetic strength and generally association with luxury.

Characteristics of Privileged Materials

- a. Exclusivity: Rare or difficult to obtain.
- b. Durability: Long-lasting and resistant to wear.
- c. Symbolism: Represent wealth, power, or refinement.
- d. Global Appeal: Valued across cultures and regions.

Examples of privileged materials include

- a. Gold for jewellery and decoration.
- b. Marble for classical sculptures.
- c. Silk for luxury textiles.

Both regional and privileged materials contribute to art and design, but their usage depends on availability, cultural context, and the artist’s intentions.

Examples of Privileged Art and Design Materials

Painting Materials

In the world of painting, **oil paints** and **linen canvas** have long been regarded as the gold standard for artists. Oil paints, which have been in use since the 15th century, revolutionised the art world with their versatility and rich pigmentation. One of their defining characteristics is their **slow drying time**, which allows artists to blend colours seamlessly and create intricate details. This feature enabled masters like **Rembrandt** and **Van Gogh** to produce iconic works such as *The Night Watch* and *Starry Night*, showcasing the depth and luminosity achievable with oils. Oil paints also have a durability that helps preserve the vibrancy of artwork for centuries.

Equally significant is the **linen canvas**, a preferred surface for many renowned painters, including **Leonardo da Vinci**, who was known for painting on the linen canvas. For example, historians pointed out that the earlier version of Leonardo da Vinci’s *Monalisa* was painted on a linen canvas (<https://monalisa.org/2012/09/08/leonardos-materials-the-canvas-the-paint/>)

Linen is known for its **durability**, **smooth texture**, and **resistance to warping**, making it ideal for detailed and precise work. Its hard and even surface allows painters to achieve

sharp lines and subtle gradients, elevating their art to a level of refinement. Using linen canvas is often seen as a hallmark of professional craftsmanship, signifying an artist's commitment to excellence. Together, oil paints and linen canvas remain timeless materials that continue to inspire and support artistic creativity.



Figure 5.18: Rembrandt: *Night Watch, Militia Company of District II Under the Command of Captain Frans Banninck Cocq*, better known as the *Night Watch*, oil on canvas by Rembrandt, 1642; in the collection of the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam(less)



Figure 5.19 Vincent van Gogh's *The Starry Night*. Interactive *The Starry Night*, oil on canvas by Vincent van Gogh, 1889; in the Museum of Modern Art, New York City

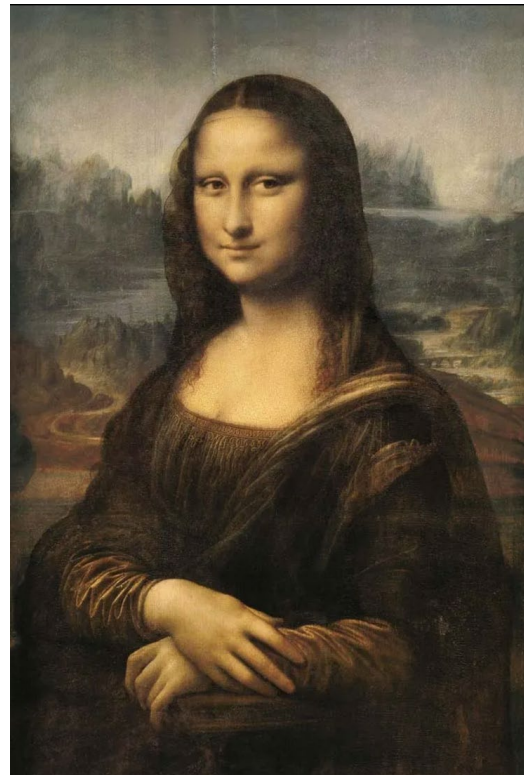


Figure 5.20: Leonardo da Vinci: *Mona Lisa, Mona Lisa*, oil on wood panel by Leonardo da Vinci, c. 1503–19; in the Louvre, Paris.

Sculpture Materials

Beautiful sculptures have been made for thousands of years using the highest-quality materials like marble and bronze. In addition to being materials for artistic expression, they stand for elegance, toughness, and unmatched craftsmanship.

Due to its strength and capacity to capture fine details, sculptors have long used bronze, an alloy of copper and tin for its adaptability; enabling the production of dynamic poses or gestures and lifelike figures. Bronze, which is frequently selected for its endurance in outdoor environments, has been utilised in both classical and public art. The *Ife* Bronzes of West Africa are outstanding examples, with their representations of human figures displaying fine detail and cultural meaning. The *Thinker* by *Auguste Rodin* further emphasises the classic attraction of bronze due to its deep patina and potent representation of the human mind.

In contrast to bronze, marble is praised for its fine grain, smooth surface, and capacity to retain light. Master sculptors like *Michelangelo* have employed this material, which exudes traditional grandeur. *David*, his famous sculpture, is a perfect example of marble's attention to detail and the beauty of the human form. Marble is prized by sculptors for its workability, which enables them to produce accurate and emotive pieces. Both materials have provided timeless representations of artistry and originality.

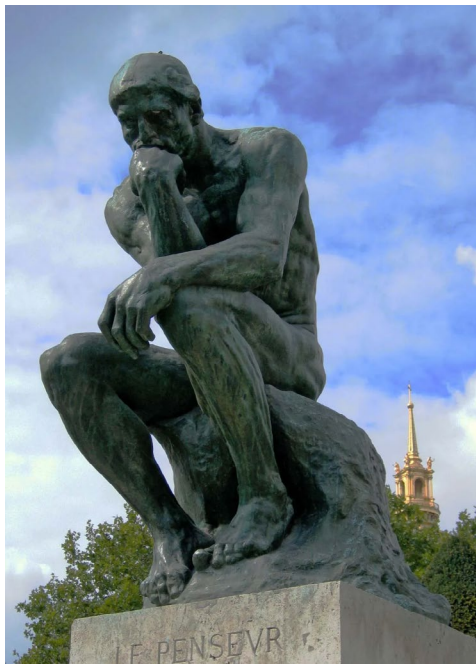


Figure 5.21: Rodin, Auguste: *The Thinker*. *The Thinker*, bronze sculpture by Auguste Rodin, cast in 1904; in the Rodin Museum, Paris.



Figure 5.22: Ife Bronze Head Sculpture



Figure 5.23: David, marble sculpture by Michelangelo, 1501–04; in the Accademia, Florence. 5.5 metres high.



Figure 5.24: Jeff Koons' work: Puppy, topiary sculpture by Jeff Koons; in Bilbao, Spain.

Textiles

For many centuries textiles have been so important in human life. Some fibres such as wool, silk, and linen, are exceptional in some aspects and history. They have been used for a long time because of their practicability, aesthetics, and even in some cases its cultural value.

Linen comes from the flax plant, and it is known to have been one of the most significant fabrics in ancient Egypt. Linen was popular for its properties including coolness, breathability, and strength as it could withstand tough climatic conditions. It was employed in manufacturing clothes, beds, and bands for covering mummified figures. It had a light feel which was also appealing to some.

Another fabric that has its roots in China about 2700 BCE is silk. This ancient China fabric is known to be smooth and soft to the touch and personal appearance. The amazing fact about this fabric is that it is light in weight but could also provide insulation. The rarity of silk worked hand in hand with the development of trade along the ancient silk route which connected East Asia with Europe while enabling civilisations to share cultures.

Wool which comes in the fleece of sheep and other animals has been utilized since ancient times. Due to its warmth, remarkable elasticity, as well as its ability to wick and absorb moisture, wool has a wide range of applications when it comes to clothes and textiles. Its natural insulation is best suited for cold climate regions, and its strength means it provides lasting usage. The two of these fabrics showcase man's creativity, as well as the dynamic nature of culture and materials.



Figure 5.25: Hokusai: The Breaking Wave off Kanagawa, woodblock colour print by Hokusai, from the series Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji, 1826–33.



Figure 5.26: ANDY WARHOL Muhammad Ali, 2000

Jewellery

For ages, jewellery has been a marker of status and beauty while also embedding culture. Throughout history, certain materials have been preferred over others, especially gold, diamonds, and gemstones, which even today stand as symbols with great meaning. Such materials stand for wealth, beauty, and history, all of which are essential in the world of art and design.

Gold, also known as the ‘king of the metals’, has been the metal of preference for creating jewellery even in ancient times. Naturally, gold has a lustre and malleability that allows for refined and intricate designs. Even in the ancient civilization times, gold and the items made from gold were considered a symbol for royalty, power, and divinity. The gold items were worn by the Egyptian pharaohs, the kings of Ashanti, and many leaders around the world which depicts that the metal was valued beyond borders.

Much like other gemstones, diamonds are used as centrepieces of much jewellery due to their visual impact and brilliance. Rings, necklaces and many other luxury items containing diamonds are used to not only showcase opulence but also love.

Gemstones such as sapphires emeralds and rubies are also used in jewellery, with much ruby jewellery and ruby earrings becoming more popular in recent times. Each gemstone holds significance; sapphires are for wisdom; emeralds are for renewal and rubies represent passion and power. The pieces not only demonstrate skill and imagination but also the cultures and the evolution of the society through art and decoration.

Ceramics

Porcelain

Porcelain is a type of clay that is fired at high temperatures. Due to its beauty and delicate appearance, it has been celebrated for thousands of years. Porcelain that was first discovered in China during the Tang dynasty quickly became a sign of status. It is produced by mixing mineral oxides such as kaolin clay and firing it to a range of 1,200 to 1,400 degrees Celsius which results in a strong impermeable and translucent material. It's perfect surface,

compounded materials and rich details are ideal for miniature statues, stylish fancy vases and cutleries. It's also been used effectively for both functional and decorative purposes given its attractive features. Porcelain today is recognised as a notable achievement in art around the world due to its complexity, precision and gracefulness.

Stoneware

Together with being lower firing porcelain production, stoneware has more diverse art forms. Its commercial side is much more popular, although it appears coarse and unpolished. Stoneware consists of non-porous materials that are easily found in such useful items as cooking ware and dining sets, as well as storage jars and canisters. It is possible as well to make fine art pieces with it since the material is quite diverse in textures and finishes possible. This is beside traditional arts, including those of the great British potter Bernard Leach aka the 'Father of British Studio Pottery', who made artistic stoneware pots suitable for functional use. Stoneware is where the functionality needed, and one's creative side meets.



Figure 5.27: Greek psykter depicting revelling, Attic red-figure psykter (wine cooler) signed by Douris, c. 480 BCE; in the British Museum, London.

Regional Materials as Alternatives to Privileged Materials

Regional Materials refer to natural or man-made materials that are commonly found, produced, or sourced within a specific geographical area or region. These materials reflect the local environment, culture, and resources, and are often used in art, craft, architecture, and design practices. Due to their readily availability, artists and designers often explore regional materials as sustainable sources of materials for artistic creations and cultural expressions.

Painting

In painting, regional materials such as natural dyes, pigments, and locally sourced surfaces are effective substitutes for privileged materials like oil paints and linen. For example:

- a. *Clay-Based Pigments:* Earth pigments made from local soils can replace imported oil paints. These pigments are eco-friendly and affordable.
- b. *Wooden Panels:* Locally sourced wood can be used as a painting surface, offering durability and cultural significance.

Sculpture

Regional materials like clay, wood, and recycled metals can replace privileged sculpture materials such as bronze and marble. For instance:

- a. *Clay:* Widely available and versatile, clay is used for pottery and sculpture, offering a cost-effective and expressive medium.
- b. *Wood:* Local hardwoods provide a warm, natural aesthetic and are used in carvings, masks, and figurines.
- c. *Recycled Metals:* Artists can repurpose scrap metal to create innovative sculptures, reflecting environmental consciousness.

Weaving

Regional materials like raffia, calabash fibres, and cotton offer sustainable options for textiles. For example:

- a. *Raffia and Calabash:* These materials are used for weaving and creating decorative items, preserving local craft traditions.
- b. *Hand-Spun Cotton:* Locally produced cotton can replace imported textiles, supporting local economies and cultural identity.

Jewellery

In jewellery, regional materials such as beads, shells, and recycled metals can replace privileged materials like gold and diamonds. For instance:

- a. *Beads:* Made from recycled glass, beads are a traditional and eco-friendly material used in Ghanaian jewellery.
- b. *Cowrie Shells:* Once a form of currency, cowrie shells are now used in jewellery to symbolize tradition and beauty.
- c. *Recycled Metals:* Local artisans often repurpose metals to create innovative and affordable jewellery designs.

Pottery

Regional clays can replace expensive porcelain or imported stoneware.

- a. *Earthenware:* Ideal for functional pottery, earthenware is low-cost and easy to produce. It is widely used in Ghana for creating cooking pots and decorative items.
- b. *Burnished Clay:* Achieving a smooth finish with local clay adds elegance to ceramic pieces without requiring high-tech equipment.

Why Use Regional Materials?

1. *Sustainability*: Regional materials reduce reliance on imported resources and minimize environmental impact.
2. *Cultural Identity*: They celebrate local traditions and connect art to its cultural roots.
3. *Affordability*: Accessible and cost-effective, regional materials make art more inclusive and community-driven.

Art and design are enriched by both regional and privileged materials. Regional materials provide sustainable, reasonably priced, and culturally significant substitutes for privileged materials, which stand for luxury and fine craftsmanship. Artists may address contemporary issues like sustainability, develop creatively, and conserve traditions by comprehending and using these materials.

As learners, exploring regional materials allows you to connect deeply with your heritage and contribute to the future of art and design.

Artists and Their Use of Regional and Privileged Materials

El Anatsui: Transforming Waste into Cultural Masterpieces

El Anatsui is a well-known artist from Ghana who illustrates the use of regional waste materials as substitutes for those of more value. Anatsui's art displays his passion to make a sensitive approach to the environment by recycling and turning waste materials into African art pieces of high significance.

The bottle caps, a commonplace waste, are all turned into what can be viewed as a metaphor of the various forms of global waste and consumption, for example in *Earth's Skin*. He stitches together thousands of these bottle caps creating large glittering installations patterned after the ever-popular Kente and Kete. Originally made of silk or cotton, Kente and Kete has always served a bigger purpose than just being woven material as it is considered a representation of native pride and identity in Ghana. With the cultural ramifications in mind, the choice to use the less valued materials to bottle caps rather than silk or gold threads draws attention to the concerns regarding the environment.

The elastic nature of his installations enables sculptural and spatial reconfiguration to take place whenever an exhibition is in place contradicting the idea of temporality in art which is assumed to be stagnate. This sheer diversity reflects the diversity of culture which spans between classic and modern concepts. Anatsui, by replacing the once treasured kilts and gold threads with resourceful items destroys the meaning of luxury and beauty. Among the various lessons, important cultural identity is accentuated.



Figure 5.28: Earth Skin by El Anatsui

Yinka Shonibare: Exploring Colonialism with Dutch Wax Fabrics

Yinka Shonibare is a Nigerian-British sculptor and installation artist who uses Dutch wax cloth in his work, considering issues of colonialism, self, and globalisation. Dutch wax prints, which today are closely associated with Africa, were woven into the fabric of colonial trade. Shonibare's work, on the other hand, seeks to use this geographical material in order to narrate stories.

For instance, in *Nelson's Ship in a Bottle*, Shonibare dresses the sails of the model ship in bright coloured wax print fabric. These fabrics embody Africa's relations with Europe during colonial times and are a mixture of local and international fabrics. Shonibare's use of wax prints instead of 'silk canvas' which is a classic material of the upper class destabilises the Western fetishisation of African culture.

His art demonstrates the ambiguous texture of the boundaries between the local fabrics and upper-class fabrics and vice versa in terms of culture and history. In this sense, Shonibare employing wax prints which carry colonial baggage questions the discourse of authenticity, identity and authorship of artworks.



Figure 5.29: Shonibare, Yinka: Nelson's Ship in a Bottle

Wangechi Mutu: Combining Natural and Synthetic Materials

Kenyan artist Wangechi Mutu uses a blend of natural and synthetic materials to explore themes of identity, gender, and postcolonialism. Her works often combine soil, roots, and plant fibres with synthetic elements, reflecting the coexistence of tradition and modernity.

In *The New Ones Will Free Us*, Mutu uses bronze, steel, and natural fibres to challenge traditional representations of the African body. While bronze, a privileged material, is associated with permanence and classical sculpture, Mutu juxtaposes it with natural fibres to emphasise the transient and organic aspects of life. This combination critiques the Western idealisation of African artifacts while celebrating regional materials.

Mutu's use of local materials such as soil and plant fibres connects her art to the land and traditions of Africa. Incorporating these elements makes her reclaim narratives about African identity and representation, making her work deeply personal and culturally significant.



Figure 5.30: *The New Ones Will Free Us* by Wangechi Mutu

Ibrahim Mahama: Reimagining Trade with Jute Sacks

Ibrahim Mahama, a Ghanaian artist, uses discarded jute sacks to create large-scale installations that comment on trade, migration, and socio-economic conditions. Jute sacks, used for transporting goods, symbolise the movement of resources and labour across borders. Mahama's work transforms these regional materials into powerful critiques of global capitalism.

In *Out of Bounds*, Mahama stitches together thousands of jute sacks to cover buildings and structures. The sacks, worn and stained from use, carry the marks of trade and labour, representing the stories of those involved in these processes. By using jute instead of privileged materials like marble or canvas, Mahama highlights the disparity between those who produce goods and those who profit from them.

The use of jute sacks connects Mahama's art to Ghana's agricultural history, where these materials are integral to cocoa and other exports. His work elevates this humble material, showing its potential as a medium for artistic and cultural expression.



Figure 5.31: Ibrahim Mahama: Out of Bounds.

Theresah Ankomah: Weaving Tradition with Innovation

Theresah Ankomah, a Ghanaian artist, uses natural fibres like kenaf, palm leaves, and rattan in her immersive installations. These regional materials, sourced from Ghana's marketplaces, become the foundation for her exploration of cultural identity and sustainability.

Ankomah's works involve dyeing, cutting, and weaving materials into intricate sculptural forms. By using kenaf baskets and onion baskets, she reinterprets traditional crafts, connecting her art to Ghanaian weaving practices. These materials serve as alternatives to privileged ones like silk or fine threads, emphasising the beauty and versatility of local resources.

Her work highlights the communicative potential of textiles, exploring how they interact with the body and environment. Ankomah's use of regional materials fosters a dialogue about sustainability and the value of traditional crafts in contemporary art.



Figure 5.32: Theresah Ankomah: Weaving Tradition with Innovation.

Yaw Owusu: Transforming Worthless Coins into Art

Yaw Owusu, another Ghanaian artist, uses devalued pesewa coins to create intricate sculptures that critique economic systems and colonial histories. By repurposing these coins, Owusu transforms a symbol of worthlessness into a powerful medium for artistic expression.

In his sculptures, Owusu arranges pesewa coins into detailed surfaces that resemble colonial maps or alternative landscapes. The use of coins instead of privileged materials like gold or silver critiques the legacy of exploitation and economic inequality in Africa. His work emphasizes the potential of regional materials to carry deep conceptual weight.

Owusu's art challenges traditional notions of value, showing how regional materials can be as impactful and meaningful as privileged ones. By reclaiming these coins, he addresses issues of identity, history, and resourcefulness.

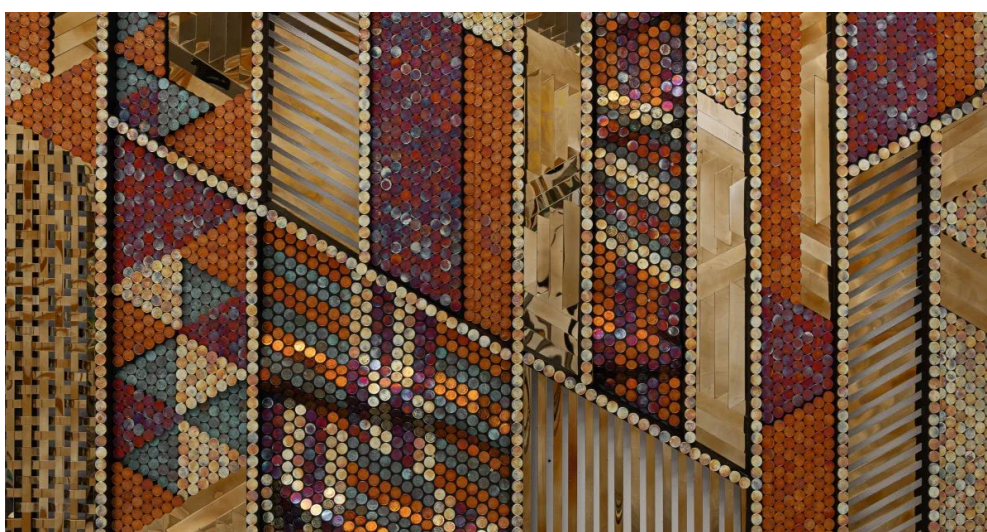


Figure 5.33: Yaw Owusu, 'The Glories of Our Past', 2023, 168cm x 158cm x 9cm, Ghana pesewas, steel, linen, wood.

Yayoi Kusama: Expanding Perceptions with Everyday Materials

Yayoi Kusama, a renowned Japanese artist, challenges the boundaries of traditional materials by incorporating mirrors, LED lights, and soft sculptures into her immersive installations. Her work, including the famous Infinity Mirror Rooms, reflects her lifelong fascination with themes of infinity, repetition, and self-obliteration.

Kusama uses mirrors and lights, which, while not privileged materials in the traditional sense, carry a modern, industrial aesthetic. These materials amplify the viewer's experience, creating a seemingly infinite space that questions the nature of existence and perception. In works like Infinity Nets and her pumpkin sculptures, she incorporates soft materials and everyday items, transforming them into powerful symbols of her unique perspective.

Her choice of materials contrasts with traditional privileged ones like marble or bronze, yet their impact is equally profound. The use of mirrors and LED lights aligns her art with contemporary themes of technology and modernity, while also highlighting accessibility and adaptability. Kusama's work demonstrates how non-traditional materials can evoke profound emotional and intellectual responses, bridging the personal and universal in art.

Yong Ho Ji: Environmental Consciousness in Sculptural Form

Yong Ho Ji, a South Korean artist, showcases the potential of recycled materials through his intricate animal sculptures made from discarded tires. His series *Mutant Mythos* explores themes of environmental degradation, genetic modification, and the evolving relationship between humanity and nature.

Tires, a regional material widely available in industrialised societies, serve as an alternative to privileged sculptural materials like marble, bronze, or resin. Ji's use of tires highlights their durability and flexibility, qualities that allow him to craft lifelike yet surreal sculptures. His creatures, often hybrids of animals and machines, critique humanity's exploitation of natural resources and the consequences of technological advancement.

By repurposing waste materials, Ji emphasizes sustainability and resourcefulness, challenging traditional notions of what constitutes "fine art." His work not only transforms discarded objects into powerful artistic statements but also engages viewers in conversations about environmental responsibility. Ji's innovative approach demonstrates the transformative power of regional materials, creating art that is both visually striking and socially relevant.



Figure 5.34: Yong Ho Ji: Bull's Head, 2007, rubber tire, steel, wood and synthetic resin, 90 x 112 x 99 cm. (35.4 x 44.1 x 39 in.)

These artists demonstrate how regional materials can be used as powerful alternatives to privileged and expensive ones, enriching art with cultural, environmental, and socio-political significance. Through their innovative approaches, they challenge conventions and highlight the importance of connecting art to its context. These artists also push the boundaries of material use in art, offering compelling alternatives to traditional privileged materials. Their work reflects a deep engagement with contemporary issues, from self-perception and mental health to environmental sustainability. By embracing non-traditional materials, they redefine the possibilities of art, proving that creativity and cultural relevance transcend the constraints of the medium.

Activity 5.5

Exploring regional materials for making art

Do this as a group or individually;

1. Research materials available in your community and different regions of Ghana (e.g., bamboo, calabash, clay, raffia, or recycled materials, etc.).
2. Investigate how these regional materials can replace more expensive or imported materials (e.g., using clay instead of ceramics or bamboo instead of metal).
3. Critically analyse how the materials are used in art and design, focusing on their functionality, availability, and cultural relevance in a particular community or region.
4. Document your findings by writing a report or create a visual chart comparing regional materials to privileged ones, highlighting their benefits and artistic potential.
5. Design a concept for an artwork using only materials available in your community and explaining why the chosen materials are suitable for the artwork.
6. Share your findings and artwork concept with the class, using sketches or prototypes to demonstrate the creative potential of regional materials.
7. Participate in a group discussion with your peers about the environmental, economic, and cultural importance of using regional materials in art.
8. Use feedback from peers and the teacher to refine your analysis and artwork concept.
9. Save your research, artwork plan, and feedback notes in your portfolio for future projects.

ART MEDIUM AND SCALE

Art Medium (Materials)

The development and understanding of creative works are fundamentally influenced by the medium and size used. These components are essential to how an artwork conveys meaning and elicits reactions from viewers; they are not just technical choices.

The term “medium” describes the supplies and equipment used by artists to realise their ideas. Each medium has unique potentials and constraints, whether it’s the brightness of oil paints, the speed of charcoal, the texture of clay, or the adaptability of digital media. Oil paintings, for instance, provide depth and rich colour mixing that may evoke deep emotional responses. On the other hand, the translucent nature of watercolour may portray the passing effects of atmosphere and light. Sculptors may use found objects to subvert conventional ideas of art or bronze for its longevity and timeless meanings.

The artwork's size in relation to the observer or surroundings, or scale, has a significant influence on how the piece is seen. David by Michelangelo is a magnificent sculpture that evokes wonder and highlights the subject's magnificence. However, viewers are drawn in by little paintings or close-up photos, which allow them to examine intricate details or textures that could be missed at a bigger scale. In order to physically engage the audience and transform them from spectators into participants, contemporary installations frequently experiment with scale.

Another intentional tactic to strengthen an artwork's thematic themes is the interaction between medium and scale. In order to bridge the gap between the colossal and the personal, an artist may use industrial materials on a human size or a delicate media, such as paper, on a vast scale to comment on environmental fragility.

Medium and size are carefully chosen to complement the artist's aim rather than being random decisions in creative output. They engage viewers on several levels of perception, impact interpretation, and mould the aesthetic experience. We have a deeper understanding of the intricacies of creative expression and the variety of ways artists convey their thoughts when we comprehend the importance of medium and scale.

Types of Art Mediums and their Unique Characteristics

Art mediums can be described as materials and tools employed by an artist to create their work. Each medium offers distinct possibilities and limitations, profoundly influencing the texture, colour, and form of the artwork. Understanding these mediums enriches our appreciation of art and the diverse expressions artists achieve through them. Common art mediums include:

1. Painting

Oil paints are made by mixing powdered pigment and oil, usually linseed oil. Oil paint is known for its rich colours and smooth blending capabilities. Oil paints have a slow drying rate. This allows artists to have ample time to control the paint on the canvas. The slow drying nature of oil paint ensures the creation of detailed textures and subtle colour transition. This adds depth and luminosity to the artwork. However, they require solvents like turpentine for thinning and cleaning.



Figure 5.35: Oil paint.

Watercolour refers to pigments mixed in a water-soluble medium-like gum arabic. When used on paper they formulate a number of thin layers through which light can reflect off the paper toned surface to give out luminosity. Watercolours are best for subtle details in the reflection of the light and the quality of air. They are relatively small and easy to transport and instal but not very forgiving – it is hard to alter what has been painted.



Figure 5.36: Watercolour set.

Acrylic paint is a formulation of pigments in a vehicle of an acrylic polymer emulsion and a resin that acts as binder. After it dries, it is set and not water soluble anymore. With this medium it is possible to create the effect and look of oils or watercolours. One can apply acrylics in thin wash for diluting with water or apply them by adding some materials for textures. When applied in bulk, acrylics give the kind of appearance provided by oil paints, or when diluted, it will give the appearance of watercolours. They are affordable and less hazardous than oil paints but difficult to mix because of their fast-drying process.



Figure 5.37: Acrylic paint.

Gouache is an open-worked paint which uses water-soluble pigments, and binding medium of gum Arabic and opaque white, such as chalk dries to a matte and yields opaque coverage in a single brushstroke. Gouache when mixed with water can be corrected because it has its unique feature that sets once it dries up. It is preferable for having flat coloration and is often utilised in illustration and graphic situations.



Figure 5.38: Gouache.

Enamel paints are solvent based and noted for their solid, durable and usually glossy and water resistance finish when dry. They are normally applied on metal, glass or ceramics where painting is necessary. Enamel enables the creation of products with a smooth, strongly-coloured outer layer that is not easily worn down by weather or other external conditions that may be present if the products are ventilation grilles or sculptures which are usually placed outside. There is also a need to be very careful when applying the paint because it has special techniques and should also not be applied immediately to come into contact with a hard surface since it requires some time to dry.

2. Drawing

Drawing media enables artists to work with speed and direct interpretation by the artist's hand.

Charcoal comes from various woods or vines that have been burned. In charcoal drawing, wood or sticks of charcoal which are burnt to charcoal are used. This medium produces intense blacks and variations in tone. The most common reason artists love charcoal is because it is soft so they can make expressive lines with it or easily smudge it to create shadows and depth. To allow for less smearing of the drawings, fixatives are applied on the charcoal drawings.

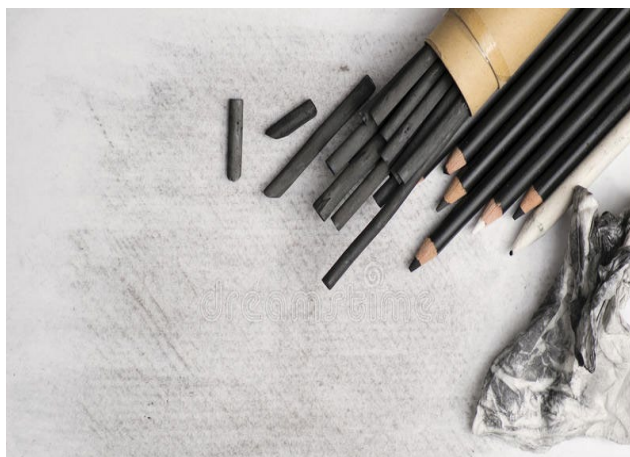


Figure 5.39: Charcoal.

Graphite pencils are produced by mixing powdered graphite with clay and encasing them in wood – a pencil. The degrees of hardness range from soft – dark marks (B grades) – to hard – light marks (H grades) which enables detailing and shading of the work. Because of its accuracy and controllability, graphite is also able to carry out sketching, technical drawing or fine arts. Pencils are common and functional, but they do need a fixative otherwise they will smear.



Figure 5.40: Graphite Pencils.

Ink is quite a versatile medium. It can be applied with a brush, pen, or even a nib. If the artist chooses, there are both waterproof and soluble options available to work with. Ink is highly regarded for the bold stroke effect, high contrast rendering, as well as fine details and brush strokes. Since ink is permanent, it also requires great precision as errors are not easily redressed. It is ideal for illustrations as well as calligraphy as it is known to have great contrast.

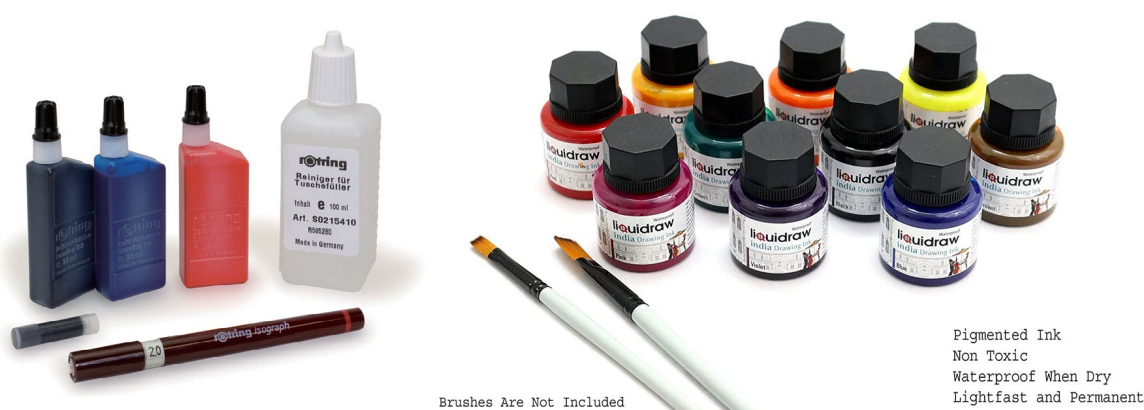


Figure 5.41: Drawing Inks.

Pastels are pigments mixed with a binder in a powdered form. Pastels are available in soft, hard and oil pastels. Soft pastels are excellent for blending colours meant to produce an artistic image whereas hard pastels allow for great precision offering realistic textures. Pastels need different fixatives since the application is vulnerable to smudging overall.

Pretty much like gouache, pastels are capable of producing bright hues and these can be intermixed on the paper itself to produce more textures and shades. They do produce the desired effect effortlessly, but the pastel artwork is very sensitive, and specialised framing is a must to safeguard the pieces.



Figure 5.42: Set of Poster Colours.

3. Sculpture

Bronze sculpture comes from pouring molten bronze (an alloy with copper and tin) into Moulds. Such a sculpture is typically formed using lost-wax technique which provides fine details and more dramatic poses or forms to the sculpture. Bronze is a material which is quite resistant and overtime, gets a patina which enhances the piece.

Marble, which is partly a metamorphic rock, is fashioned into the desired shape by tearing out pieces with chisels, drills and other implements. It is appreciated for its translucency and fine grain that allow for smooth finishes and detailing work. Marbles of any sculptural style have been around throughout the ages and are admired for their aesthetic appeal and certainty of form.

Wood sculpture employs different kinds of wood, which have different appearances and different grains. Sculptors make use of wood at the various formal levels, abstract or representational and in more than one aspect. These include whittling, carving, woodworking joints, among others.

Concrete sculpture is cement mixed with aggregates and water. It is cast in moulds or shaped over a skeleton (armature). Because of its strength and resistance to weather, concrete gives scope for large works outdoors.

Metal can be made of steel, iron, aluminium, etc. These include welding, casting and forging. It is strong and allows to create sleek shape forms or intricate patterns in one piece.

Fibreglass consists of several smooth strands of glass bonded together by resin. Because it is also strong, it can be used for massive sculptures and large objects. Generally, fibreglass is pressed into various forms and then painted or coated.

Resin is also referred to as casting resin, which is a type of synthetic polymer that can be poured into moulds as well as used to coat objects. It's thin and has the ability to create the illusion of other materials. Incorporating resin into modern sculpture enables the artist to create precise details, however, they must take precautions due to its chemical content.

4. Printmaking

Etching employs the technique of intaglio whereby design is made on a metal plate, a ground that resists acids is added on top of this design, and then the plate is immersed in acid to produce the final product. Once the ink has been added to the etching plate, it is pressed against clean paper to create an impression. This method is useful for designing images with the requirement of great detail and tonal variance. It consists of four major steps; design tracings on a plate, immersing a plate in acid, applying ink, and pressing a paper against the plate. At all times more attention should be paid to the basic principle in etching which allows for great details and sophisticated shading.

Lithography is a printing technique that uses the immiscibility of oil and water. An image is drawn with a greasy substance on a flat stone or metal plate, treated with chemicals, then inked. The ink adheres only to the greasy image and is transferred onto paper through a press.

Linocut is a relief printing method where an image is carved into a sheet of linoleum. The raised (uncarved) areas receive ink and are pressed onto paper or fabric to create the print. It is known for its bold lines and graphic quality.

Engraving involves cutting or incising a design into a hard surface, usually a metal plate, using a sharp tool called a burin. The incised lines hold ink, which is then transferred to paper through a printing press to produce detailed and precise images.

Screen printing, also known as silkscreen printing, is a stencil-based method where ink is pushed through a mesh screen onto a surface (such as paper, fabric, or wood) using a squeegee. For multiple colours, each colour is applied using a separate screen, allowing for vibrant and layered designs.

Woodcut print is known to be among the most ancient and primitive printmaking techniques. The artist creates an image on the wooden block by carving parts that shall remain white or un-inked and cutting others as well. The second step has ink applied on the block and placed with paper which takes the image. In this technique bold graphics are made with wood texture and contrast pattern.

5. Photography

Film-Based Techniques: The conventional method of film photography is that it captures pictures on a base of light-sensitive material. Film used in the process of creating and enhancing pictures has to be exposed to chemicals in a darkroom: it also means that one has to work manually. Film still has its admirers because it has a set of special features: grain and tuning, which some give preference to. It is a longer and a more expensive way of doing it but it gives a real feeling of the process of photographing.

Digital Techniques: Digital photography takes pictures by the use of electronic sensors, which are recorded digitally. They can be reviewed and edited instantly, and images can be easily copied or changed using the software. Digital cameras are more flexible and portable than film ones but it is not the same to touch a picture with your fingers.

6. New Media

Multimedia art integrates various forms of content like text, audio, images, animation, and video, often interactively. It's common in digital installations and performance art, engaging multiple senses and often requiring audience participation.

- a. Assemblage involves creating three-dimensional works by combining found objects. Construction refers to building sculptures from raw materials. Both emphasize the physical act of creation and often convey messages about society or the environment.
- b. Performance art is a live presentation by the artist, sometimes involving the audience. It encompasses actions, gestures, and expressions to convey concepts or critiques, existing temporarily and often documented through video or photography.
- c. Installation art transforms spaces to immerse viewers in a sensory experience. Installation art integrates various media such as sculpture, video, sound, and lighting, challenging perceptions of space and encouraging interaction.
- d. Time-based (Film and Video) art involves works that unfold over time, such as films and videos. Artists use moving images and sound to tell stories, present abstract concepts, or document reality, engaging viewers through duration and progression.
- e. Digital art (Computer and Internet-based) uses technology as a primary creative tool. This includes computer-generated imagery, interactive installations, virtual reality, and internet art. Digital mediums allow for new forms of expression and audience engagement.

Each of these mediums can be better known and understood as the composition and characteristics of the art form are appreciated. That every medium has its distinctive approaches to presenting ideas, feelings, and visions to the general public and smart audiences. That is to say that the available medium determines not only the technical result of the artwork but also either the aesthetic and the conception. Thus, studying these mediums one understands the work of art as well as the language behind it developing with innovations as well as with traditions. The artists have their grounds for choosing their mediums, based on the physical properties that they possess and more of what they represent.

Art Medium (Additives)

The term media in art does not concern itself solely with the basic materials used in art but also with these materials, modifiers, and enhancement materials. Such modifiers are linseed oil in oil painting which lengthens the drying and softening of the paint resulting in better blending of colours and better glazes. On the other hand, overlapping paintings rendered in the impasto technique often entails applying thick paint using palette knives to create texture. In Assemblage and Construction, weld art, which is melting techniques to join metal pieces and extend their world of creativity into three dimensions. New Media art considers software and electronic devices as additives, thus giving a changing ability to images, sounds, and even narrative that other media cannot allow. These modifiers and techniques serve as enhancers of the artistic process and provide more means of expressing and creating something new.

Scale In Art

Scale in art is the relationship of size of an artwork with its environment or any other surrounding objects and it does greatly affect the understanding and interaction of the viewer. It includes not only the actual dimensions but also the relative sizes that carry meaning and emotion. Scale has to be adjusted by the artists so as to control focus or the emphasis or the response in the viewer. For instance, a huge sculpture can be very emotionally powerful and can command respect. Conversely, a very small and detailed painting may be contemplative. Scale determines an artwork's spatial properties and its relationship with the environment and the audience, making it one of the important aspects in artistic expression.

Size

Artwork size denotes the physical dimensions—height, width, depth, or volume—that define the space an artwork occupies. Size plays a pivotal role in how an artwork is displayed, perceived, and experienced.

Small Scale

Small-scale artworks are often smaller than life-size, encouraging close inspection and personal interaction. They typically feature intricate details that draw viewers in, creating an intimate experience. Miniature paintings, such as the “Mama Africa Child Art of Tanzania,” showcase delicate brushwork and fine details that celebrate cultural themes on a compact canvas. Similarly, “Hope for Ghana” by Paul Agbee uses small-scale sculpture to convey powerful narratives, inviting observers to connect personally with the subject matter. These works often evoke a sense of wonder and appreciation for craftsmanship, highlighting the artist's skill in rendering complex ideas within limited dimensions.

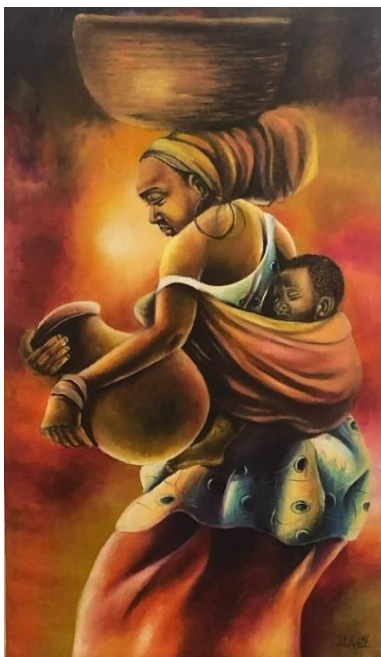


Figure 5.43: Mama Africa Child Art of Tanzania



Figure 5.44: Hope for Ghana by Paul Agbee

Medium Scale or Life-size

Medium-scale or life-size artworks are comparable to human dimensions, making them relatable and easy to interact with. They are commonly displayed in galleries and homes, fitting comfortably within standard spaces. Life-size paintings and sculptures allow viewers to engage with the artwork on a one-to-one basis, enhancing the connection between the observer and the subject. For example, works by C-Kle Art capture everyday scenes and figures at life-size, providing immediacy and familiarity. The “Antique Rider Horseman Yoruba” sculpture embodies cultural heritage at a relatable scale, allowing viewers to appreciate the nuances of expression and form. These pieces bridge the gap between art and audience, fostering a direct and impactful experience.



Figure 5.45: Examples of medium-sized artwork

1. https://trueafricanart.com/cdn/shop/products/bob-marley_300x300.jpg?v=1662655207
2. <https://i.ebayimg.com/images/g/sOQAAOSwEzxYZtPw/s-l1200.jpg>

Large Works or Monumental Scale: Monumental artworks are often larger than life-size and evoke awe or grandeur. They dominate their surroundings, creating immersive experiences that can be both physically and emotionally impactful. There are two types of monumental works in sculpture:

- a. **Heroic Scale:** Slightly larger than life-size, heroic-scale sculptures emphasise the nobility or significance of the subject. The statue of Kwame Nkrumah at the Kwame Nkrumah Memorial Park in Accra, Ghana, exemplifies this scale. Standing prominently, the sculpture honours Ghana’s first president, symbolising leadership and independence. Its size commands attention, inspiring admiration and respect.
- b. **Colossal Scale:** Exceedingly large, colossal sculptures are designed to overwhelm and astonish. The Amazon Statue in Cotonou, Benin, is a colossal representation of the Dahomey Amazons, an all-female military regiment. Towering over the landscape, it serves as a powerful tribute to courage and heritage. The immense

scale not only memorialises history but also creates a landmark that influences the identity of the place.

Large-scale artworks like these require careful consideration of proportion, structural integrity, and viewer engagement. They often become iconic symbols, contributing to cultural narratives and public discourse.



Kwame Nkrumah's monument, Accra



Amazon Statue in Cotonou, Benin

Figure 5.46: Examples of large-sized works.

Variable Scale

Artists often use a variety of scales to adapt their works to their intended context or message. Incorporating unusual proportions within a single piece can create specific effects or convey complex messages. For instance, some African artworks use disproportionate scaling to emphasise certain figures or themes, such as depicting leaders larger than accompanying figures to signify importance. In sculptures and paintings, mixing scales can create visual interest and challenge perceptions. This deliberate manipulation encourages viewers to question assumptions and explore deeper meanings, making scale a dynamic element in artistic expression.



Figure 5.47: African Artworks using a variety of scales in the work-painting.

Figure 5.48: African Artworks using a variety of scales in the work-sculpture.

Artists choose the size of their work deliberately to align with their creative intentions, considering factors like the desired impact, the environment in which the piece will be displayed, and the logistical aspects of creation and installation.

Examples of Scale in Art

El Anatsui's 'Behind the Red Moon' 2023 is a large-scale sculpture installation at Tate Modern, featuring three large-scale sculptures made from bottle caps from Ghana and Nigeria measuring 24 metres by 24 metres and 19 metres by 30 metres in height. The artwork explores the histories of encounters and migration during the transatlantic slave trade, using liquor bottle tops from Nigeria as part of a present-day industry built on colonial trade routes. The hangings, staged in three acts, invite visitors to engage in movement and interaction, revealing symbols such as the moon, sail, wave, earth, and wall.

Ghanaian artist Ibrahim Mahama's Purple Hibiscus project in 2024 showcases 130 traditional Ghanaian robes, called batakaris, stitched within 21,528 square feet of pink woven fabric on the Barbican building in London. The project, aimed at highlighting human labour and trade inequities, involved 1,000 seamstresses weaving the fabric from northern Ghana and Batakaris, opening up new formal aesthetics.

1. Michelangelo's David, standing 17 feet tall, is a powerful and awe-inspiring sculpture
2. Claus Oldenburg's public sculptures, such as the Clothespin in Philadelphia, transform everyday objects into monumental art.
3. Miniature paintings, a common form of Indian and Persian art, are intricately detailed and require close examination for a comprehensive understanding.
4. Yayoi Kusama's Infinity Mirror Rooms are immersive installations that employ scale and repetition to create a vast array of visual experiences.

Understanding size and scale helps appreciate how artists manipulate these elements to enhance meaning, evoke emotions, and shape the viewer's experience of their work.

Impact on Artistic Production

Medium Choice

The choice of medium significantly impacts the production process, techniques, and the final appearance of an artwork. Different mediums offer unique characteristics that influence how an artist conveys their vision. For example, oil paint's slow drying time allows for blending and layering, enabling the creation of rich textures and subtle colour transitions. This medium supports detailed work and complex compositions. In contrast, digital art offers unparalleled flexibility with unlimited manipulation and editing possibilities. Artists can experiment with colour, form, and composition without the constraints of physical materials. The medium dictates the tools and skills required, shaping the creative process from conception to completion.

Scale Considerations

Artwork scale profoundly affects production, necessitating various tools, spaces, and resources. Large-scale works may require specialised equipment, larger studios, and even teams of assistants. They pose logistical challenges such as transportation, installation, and structural stability. For instance, monumental sculptures must consider materials' weight and durability, often involving engineering expertise. Conversely, small-scale works demand precision and meticulous attention to detail, sometimes requiring magnification tools. Scale influences the time investment, cost, and feasibility of a project, impacting decisions from the initial planning stages through to the exhibition.

Proportions

Proportions in art are the relationships between different parts of an artwork. These parts are important for ensuring balance, harmony, and realism. They are principles that ensure how elements within a piece relate to each other and to the whole. They influence the viewer's interpretation and emotional response.

Human Proportions in Portraiture

In portrait drawing, accurate human proportions are important for creating lifelike representations. Artists study anatomy and the ratios between body parts to capture the essence of their subjects. Classical artists like Leonardo da Vinci emphasised ideal proportions to reflect beauty and harmony. Adhering to realistic proportions enables artists to convey personality, emotion, and physical presence, allowing viewers to connect deeply with the subject. Human proportions help the depiction of subtle expressions and gestures that bring portraits to life.

Exaggerated Proportions for Conveying Themes

Artists often exaggerated proportions to convey specific themes or emotions. By distorting certain elements, they highlight aspects of the subject or evoke a psychological response. For example, elongating limbs can suggest grace or otherworldliness, as seen in the works of El Greco. Exaggeration can also be used to critique societal issues or express inner turmoil. In Pablo Picasso's Cubist works, distorted proportions challenge traditional perspectives, encouraging viewers to see multiple viewpoints simultaneously. This manipulation serves as a powerful tool to communicate ideas beyond realistic representation.

Architectural Proportions in Murals, Sculptures, and Installations

In large-scale works like murals, sculptures, and installations, proportions must harmonise with architectural elements. Artists consider the size and scale of their work relative to buildings and public spaces to achieve aesthetic cohesion. Proportions are adjusted to ensure visibility from various distances and angles. For instance, a mural might use exaggerated proportions to remain impactful when viewed from afar. Sculptures and installations often interact with their surroundings, requiring careful calculation of proportions to enhance spatial dynamics and engage the public effectively.

Proportions for Still-life Compositions and Landscape Art

In still-life and landscape art, proportions establish spatial relationships and guide the viewer's eye through the composition. Accurate proportions create a sense of depth and realism, while deliberate adjustments can emphasise focal points or convey mood. In still-life paintings, the relative sizes of objects affect balance and harmony. In landscapes, manipulating the proportions of foreground and background elements can enhance perspective, making distant mountains seem majestic or nearby flowers prominent. Artists use these techniques to create visual interest and evoke emotional responses.

Abstract Proportions

Abstract art often abandons realistic proportions to explore form, colour, and composition unconstrained by representation. Artists manipulate proportions to create rhythm, tension, or harmony within the work. By altering the expected relationships between elements, they can evoke emotions, challenge perceptions, and invite viewers to interpret meaning on a personal level. Abstract proportions become a language of their own, communicating through visual dynamics rather than depicting recognisable subjects.

Proportions can be manipulated to achieve desired visual effects or convey artistic intentions, playing a key role in creating visually pleasing compositions. They help in achieving realism, emphasising specific parts, and creating illusions of distance and space in depth-oriented artworks.

Examples of Proportions in Art

Leonardo da Vinci's "Vitruvian Man"

Leonardo da Vinci's "Vitruvian Man" is a quintessential study of human proportions. The drawing illustrates the ideal human body's geometry, fitting perfectly within a circle and a square. This work reflects the Renaissance pursuit of harmonising art and science, showing how mathematical principles underpin natural beauty. Da Vinci's meticulous measurements and annotations demonstrate the importance of proportion in achieving balance and realism. The "Vitruvian Man" continues to influence artists and architects, symbolising the connection between the human form and the universe.

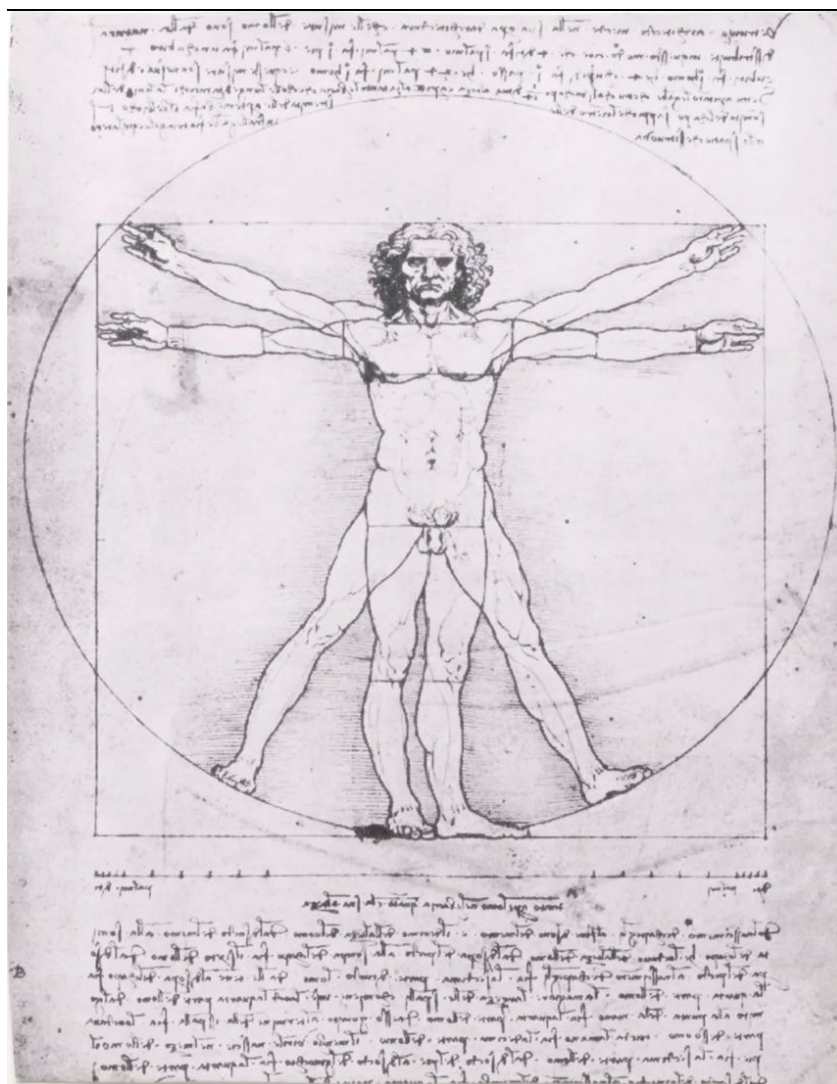


Figure 5.48: Leonardo da Vinci: *Vitruvian Man*, drawing by Leonardo da Vinci, c. 1490; in the Galleries of the Academy of Venice.

Egyptian Art Proportions

Ancient Egyptian art employed a strict canon of proportions to ensure consistency and convey religious and cultural values. Artists used a grid system to maintain uniformity, with specific ratios dictating the size of figures relative to one another. Pharaohs and deities were depicted larger than other figures to signify their importance and divine nature. This hierarchical proportion reinforced social order and religious beliefs. The stylised and symbolic representation prioritised meaning over realistic depiction, making proportions a tool for communication rather than mere replication of reality.

Artistic Expression

Medium and scale are crucial in an artist's expression, influencing the intended emotion, narrative, or concept. The medium can enhance thematic elements—for example, the texture of impasto oil paint might convey intensity or turmoil, while the clarity of digital media could emphasize modernity and precision. Scale affects how viewers experience the work; intimate, detailed drawings might evoke personal reflection, while large, immersive

installations can provoke collective engagement or a sense of awe. By thoughtfully selecting medium and scale, artists guide the viewer's journey, manipulate the atmosphere, and reinforce the artwork's message. These choices are integral to the artwork's impact, shaping both its aesthetic qualities and its ability to communicate effectively.

Understanding the interplay between medium and scale enriches our appreciation of art. Artists strategically choose materials and dimensions not only for practical reasons but to enhance the expressive power of their work. Whether through the subtlety of a small watercolour or the grandeur of a monumental sculpture, medium and scale are fundamental tools that shape the viewer's experience and the artwork's resonance within its context.

Activity 5.6

Analysing Medium and Scale in Art Production

Do the following as a group or individually;

1. Search through the internet or from this material to identify the concepts of "Art medium and Scale" as used in art production and write them down in your own words.
2. In your search, find out the different mediums used in art production, such as paint, clay, fabric, metal, or digital tools, and list examples of artworks created with these mediums.
3. Investigate examples of artworks of various scales, from small sculptures to large murals or installations, and note their impact and purpose.
4. Analyse how the choice of medium and scale affects the function, meaning, and visual impact of artworks. Consider factors like durability, audience interaction, and the intended environment.
5. Create a report or visual chart that explains the relationship between medium and scale in the examples you studied. Include images or sketches for clarity.
6. Develop an idea for an artwork where the choice of medium and scale enhances its meaning or purpose. Sketch the concept and write a brief explanation of your choices.
7. Present your findings and concept sketch to the class, explaining how medium and scale influence artistic decisions and outcomes for feedback from peers and the teacher.
8. Use the feedback to improve your analysis and refine your artwork concept.
9. Save your research, concept sketch, and feedback notes in your portfolio for future reference.

EXTENDED READING

- A video documentary on some of the privileged materials in Ghana: https://youtu.be/F_2BO4IvIkE
- https://youtu.be/b_jICR6idjg

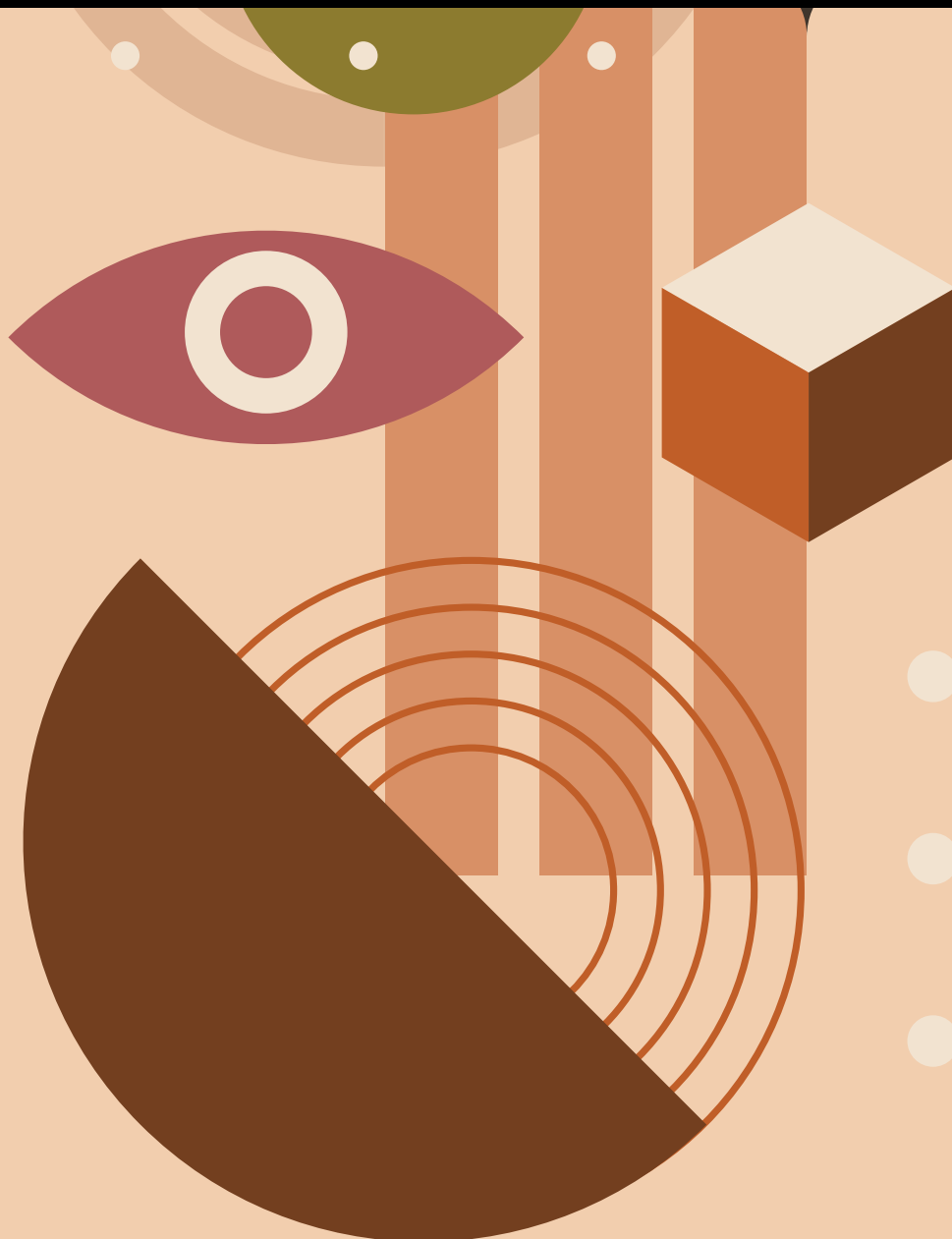
REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What materials are commonly used in the production of kete or kente?
2. What are cultural objects, and can you name three examples found in Ghana?
3. What is the significance of using regional materials instead of privileged ones in art and design?
4. How do social conditions in Ghana influence the design of cultural objects?
5. How do certain materials act as repositories of cultural memory? Provide examples from Ghanaian culture
6. Analyse the relationship between the scale of an artwork and its intended audience or environment.
7. Compare the materials used in creating traditional pottery to those used in modern ceramics. What are the key differences in their modes of production?
8. Evaluate the use of regional materials in Ghana as sustainable alternatives for large-scale public art. How do these choices affect cultural preservation and economic sustainability?
9. Develop a comprehensive analysis of how a specific cultural object (e.g., Adinkra cloth) reflects the social conditions and beliefs of the time it was created.
10. Propose a design concept for a modern art piece that incorporates traditional Ghanaian materials and symbolism, considering the social, cultural, and environmental context.

SECTION

6

AESTHETIC THEORIES AND THEIR APPLICATION



AESTHETICS AND CRITICISM

Making Judgements

INTRODUCTION

Section 6 explores ways you can follow and gain understanding of the nature of beauty, artistic value, and how you might respond to art and design works with your emotions and intellect. Learning how art and design works make you feel, and think will help you to understand why works of art and design are important, valuable, or pleasing to experience. The section also guides you in writing about art and design works through the use of aesthetic theories in art.

KEY IDEAS

Here are some key ideas to learn from this section.

- Aesthetic theories are concepts that help in intelligent discussion of art and design works.
- Talking or writing about art and design works demands combining two or more aesthetic theories in that pursuit.
- The African concept of aesthetics differs from western aesthetics.
- There are several ways of appreciating the beauty of art and design works.

AESTHETIC THEORIES AND ARTISTIC EXPRESSION

What are Aesthetic theories?

People respond to or perceive art, and design works in different ways. Scholars have developed concepts or ideas based on the various ways people perceive art and design works. Aesthetic theories are the concepts or ideas that people use to perceive or respond to art and design works. In other words, aesthetic theories are ideas, perspectives, or systems used to appreciate and evaluate art and design works.

Different Approaches to Aesthetics

Art and design works may illicit different reactions from disparate groups of people who view them. An individuals' reaction to art depends on their taste in art, their ability to perceive things, their culture, and where they live. As a result, and because cultural customs

play such a big influential role, there is no one particular way to respond to aesthetics. Aesthetics can be looked at in many different ways.

Let us examine two different approaches:

1. *Art for life's sake*
2. *Art for art's sake*

The idea of “*Art for life's sake*” is centred on the African concept of aesthetics. It is closely linked to the uses, symbolic meaning, and beliefs associated with artworks. For example, the symbolic meaning of African art lies in functions rather than form. This means that no matter how simple or common artworks may seem, once it is able to perform the function for which it was produced, the artwork is considered as good or beautiful. Beauty in this context is a combination of both the outward appearance and the inner or symbolic meanings. For example, a carved stool may not have a shiny look and glossy finish, yet, once it serves the purpose for which it was produced, it is considered beautiful or good.

There are different ways to look at art, and the idea of “*Art for art's sake*” is informed by Immanuel Kant's theory of aesthetics. Immanuel Kant said that when something is made just for the sake of being beautiful, it is art for art's sake. Kant says this idea gives art a unique attractiveness and keeps the mind's attention so that the only thing that matters is thinking about the art as an end in itself. Kant theory amongst others informed Western aesthetic theories.

Western Aesthetic Theories in Art and Design

Some of the Western aesthetic theories are formalism, imitationalism, emotionalism, instrumentalism, feminist aesthetics, and relational aesthetics. Let us discuss these theories:

1. Formalism

Formalism is a way of observing art based on how it looks instead of what it means, how it makes you feel, or what it tells you. Formalists focus on the elements and principles of art, which are the building blocks of art and design works. The elements are line, shape, colour, space, texture, and value. The principles include balance, rhythm, movement, contrast, variety, dominance, emphasis, repetition, and unity. Formalism considers the literal qualities of art and design work. It focuses on how the elements and principles of design have been organised in the entire work.

2. Imitationalism

Imitationalism, also known as representationalism, involves looking at and evaluating art based on how well it imitates or resembles real life or nature. This theory values realistic representation of art and design works and focuses on the artist's or designer's ability to make their artwork look life-like. It has to do with works that are a perfect reflection of nature or real life. Works that focus on this theory are representational, with the idea of imitating nature as closely as possible. The idea of representationalism is sometimes called *mimesis*. It tries to depict the natural world as it really is, catching the physical and mental essence

of people in a true to life way. Representational artists paint people, places, and things that look like they are real, hoping that viewers will recognise them and feel connected to them.

3. Emotionalism

Emotionalism theory is a way of understanding art that focuses on how it makes you feel. One's mood and feelings are the target. If you look at art through the lens of emotionalism, you focus on how it makes you feel. This theory says that artworks may make people feel strong emotions like happiness, sadness, anger, or fear. It is interested in how art and design works make people feel and what they do. It helps us enjoy art that makes us feel something, even if it is not realistic or traditional.

4. Instrumentalism

Instrumentalism theory in art is premised on the idea that art is a tool or instrument to achieve an intended purpose or goal. This goal could be to teach, motivate, persuade, or make people think about problems in culture, politics, or society. Art is important not only because of how it looks or how it makes you feel, but also because of what it does for the world. Not just how something looks or feels, but also what it says or does is what is important. Art that is simple or vague can still be strong if it sends a message.

5. Feminist Aesthetics

This theory focuses on how female experiences and perspectives affect art and its meaning. It questions normal ideas about what is beautiful and valuable in art that has often ignored or excluded women's opinions and voices.

6. Relational aesthetics

Relational Aesthetics prioritises human interactions and relationships as the central part of the art and design work. Artists and designers concerned with relational aesthetics create situations where people connect, communicate, and share experiences in their compositions. The focus is on interaction between people. Aestheticians tend to observe how artists or designers have created interactions of peoples in their artworks and bring out the essence of such treatments.

With relational aesthetics methodology, the focus moves from art items themselves to the relationships and experiences that art can help people to have with each other. Relational aesthetics focuses on social relationships and audience participation in art, often in response to specific social, cultural, or physical settings. It blurs the lines between artist and audience, making art easier for everyone to access and enjoy.

African Aesthetic Theory (Afrocentric Aesthetics)

African aesthetic theory, or Afrocentric aesthetics, refers to the principles and values rooted in African cultural traditions, philosophies, and visual practices. It emphasises functionality, symbolism, spirituality, and community over purely decorative purposes. Afrocentric aesthetics often seek to preserve cultural identity while addressing contemporary issues.

These principles are evident in both indigenous and modern African artworks, demonstrating continuity and innovation in expression.

Afrocentric aesthetics is a vital framework in African art. It helps in blending tradition and modernity to express the dynamic cultural identity and resilience of African people in both local and global contexts.

Characteristics of Afrocentric Aesthetics

1. **Symbolism:** Emphasis on symbolic motifs and patterns that convey cultural narratives, beliefs, and values.
2. **Functionality:** Art often serves a dual purpose, blending aesthetics with utility, such as ceremonial masks or textiles.
3. **Spirituality:** Many African artworks reflect deep connections to spiritual beliefs and rituals.
4. **Communal Identity:** Artworks often celebrate the collective identity of a community or people rather than individualism.
5. **Dynamic Forms:** Use of bold, rhythmic patterns, vibrant colours, and organic forms that reflect movement and life.

Indigenous Examples

1. **Kente and Kete (Ghana):** The intricate patterns and vibrant colours of *kente* and *Kete* reflect symbolism tied to proverbs, historical events, and moral values. Each design communicates a specific cultural narrative or societal role.
2. **Benin Bronzes (Nigeria):** Created by the Edo people, these metal plaques and sculptures depict royal and historical themes, showcasing craftsmanship and symbolism tied to power and heritage.
3. **Dogon Masks (Mali):** Used in rituals, these masks are deeply symbolic, representing the spirits of ancestors and cosmic order.

Contemporary Applications

1. **El Anatsui (Ghana/Nigeria):** Anatsui's monumental installations, made from recycled bottle caps and metal, blend traditional African weaving techniques with global environmental concerns. His works emphasise Afrocentric aesthetics by linking material, culture, and sustainability.
2. **Yinka Shonibare (Nigeria-UK):** Shonibare uses African-inspired fabrics to explore themes of identity, colonial history, and globalisation, maintaining a dialogue between African traditions and contemporary global contexts.
3. **Kwame Akoto-Bamfo's Memorial Sculptures (Ghana):** His sculptures, such as those at the Nkyinkyim Installation, honour the memory of enslaved Africans, drawing on Afrocentric principles of commemoration and storytelling.

Activity 6.1

Understanding Aesthetic Theories

Do this in small groups in class or at home;

1. Make a search to explore key aesthetic theories, such as ***Imitation (Mimesis)***, ***Expression***, ***Formalism***, and ***Instrumentalism***, using this learning material, books or other online resources.
2. Write a brief explanation of each theory you found, focusing on its main ideas and relevance to art and design.
3. Share your findings with peers, debating the strengths and limitations of each theory in understanding art and design.
4. Design a poster or digital presentation summarising the theories with examples and visuals for your school art notice board.
5. Share your visual aids with the class and engage in discussions about how the theories influence the interpretation of art.

AESTHETIC THEORIES AND THEIR CONTEXTS OF APPLICATION

Contexts for Applying the Aesthetic Theories

Great work for discussing the identified aesthetic theories namely formalism, emotionalism, imitationalism, instrumentalism, feminist aesthetics, and relational aesthetics! Let us now focus on applying these theories in our quest to talk about or write on art and design works.

As a student-artist, you may be called to talk about your artwork or design. It is important that you have a firm grip of what to say about your art and design work or that of others. What to say or write about on an artwork or design should be informed by the structure of the work. Applying the aesthetic theories helps you to talk or write about a work of art or design effectively.

Applying aesthetic theories helps in understanding art and design works in different ways due to the use of multi-perspectives offered by the theories. For example, combining formalism, emotionalism and imitationalism theories bring out how the elements and principles were applied in a work, what the artwork makes you feel, as well as what the work imitates in life.

Aesthetic theories and their application encourage critical thinking, reveal the role of art and design in society and inspire your level of creativity. It helps you to focus on using the right visual elements to increase the visual and conceptual appeal of your art and design work.

It helps in understanding and appreciating different shades of opinion about art and design works. In addition, it shows how art and design connect to other subjects. Aesthetic theories are important because they help us understand how to see, think, and feel about art and

design more deeply. They help us understand other cultures, enjoy art, and even speak our minds more clearly.

Applying the Aesthetic Theories

Artists and designers directly or indirectly show themselves through their work. Their works reveal their thoughts, feelings, and stories. Artists and designers reveal their thoughts, feelings, and narratives through medium, style, content (subject matter), setting, and ideas.

Let us focus on how to apply the identified theories. In applying the theories, you must critically observe, and document things associated with specific theories in relation to a given art and design work. Using **Figure 6.1** as an example, let us observe the formalism, emotionalism, imitationalism and instrumentalism theories associated with it. **Tables 6.1, 6.2, 6.3 and 6.4** respectively give examples of how formalism, emotionalism, imitationalism and instrumentalism theories could be applied in aesthetic commentary.



Figure 6.1. Asa Anakwa. 1966. *Breaking the forest*. Ghana National Museum.

Table 6.1: Applying formalism theory in discussing Asa Anakwa's painting.**Elements of Design****1. Line**

- a. There are different lines used by the artists to create a sense of natural flow and movement. For example, curved lines have been used to create impressions of the trees, the river and pathways.
- b. The treatment of the roofing of the three thatch buildings creates the impression of straight lines.

2. Shape

The shapes are mostly organic, with trees, leaves, and other plants in the composition showing rough, and natural curves. There are subtle geometric shapes in the thatched houses.

3. Colour

- a. Tints and shades of orange, yellow, green, red, black and white were used in evoking a natural and harmonious feel.
- b. Using subtle oranges and yellows for the trees in the background gives the painting more sense of depth.

4. Texture

- a. The visual texture is rich, with careful detailing of tree bark, leaves, and woven thatch roofs. This conveys a sense of touchable reality.
- b. The flowing water and smooth ground contrast with the rugged textures of the forest.

5. Space

The painting makes good use of both positive and negative spaces. There are three people cutting down trees in the centre. The middle ground has a river and a path, and the background has a village and trees.

6. Form

Perspective, especially in the trees, which have bulk and weight, give the picture the sense of depth.

Principles of Design**1. Balance**

Asymmetrical balance is used to create visual interest in the composition. The left side is dominated by two human figures while there are two human figures on the right side. However, one of the figures on the right appears farther in the composition.

2. Contrast

There is unrelated colour, shape and size of trees, and activity of human postures.

3. Emphasis

There is a large tree placed at almost the centre of the composition that draws viewers' attention. The two people cutting down the tree also catch the eye though they are in the foreground.

4. Movement

The curvy water pathway creates a sense of movement whereas the varying size and height of trees generate movement.

5. Rhythm

The repeated vertical elements such as tree trunks, and grass-like roof, creates rhythm, while differences in their size and spacing make them appear interesting.

6. Unity

The scene appears organised and unified due to the harmonious interplay of elements of design.

7. Proportion

For example, putting people in comparison with the hugeness of the forest, the size difference between the trees and the people emphasises the vastness of the environment.

Note

With the lens of formalism, the table shows how the elements and principles of design have been used.

Table 6.2: Applying emotionalism theory in discussing Asa Anakwa's painting**Overall Emotional Impact**

- a. The work of art shows different kinds of human activity and the natural environment, making you feel things about how weak the relationship is between people and the environment around them. The painting makes you feel pensive and at peace, and it shows that the artist was worried about how the environment was being utilised in Ghana at the time.
- b. Asa Anakwa's detailed arrangement makes you think of a peaceful and reflective place. But the cutting down of trees adds a disturbing feeling that makes you worry about nature.

Emotional Atmosphere

- a. The peaceful composition of the village in the background, with its simple huts and the feminine figure calmly getting water from the river, makes you feel connected to a natural way of life.
- b. The use of colour makes the scene feel even more peaceful and calming.
- c. The cutting down of trees in the background creates a slight emotional tension because it shows how people are destroying nature. Some people may feel disappointed, nervous, or worried about how the environment is being damaged by this.
- d. When you see peaceful living next to cutting down trees, it makes you feel two things: proud of how strong people are and worried about what it's doing to the natural environment.

Colour and Mood

- a. The warm, rich colours (greens, browns, and yellows) make you feel alive, at ease, and connected. These colours make you think of the past and make you feel connected to the land and its riches.
- b. The feminine figure squatting in what looks like a river, wearing a red dress, is the focal point of the picture. This treatment adds an emotional spark that could mean life, work, or the enduring spirit of humans in the natural environment.

Human Emotion and Activity

- a. The workers cutting down trees are focused and determined, which is a sign of life and need. Their faces and body language show that they are working hard and they appear strong
- b. The feminine figure by the river seems calm and thoughtful, giving off a different emotional tone, maybe of peace or routine in a changing environment.
- c. The small figure in the doorway of a hut gives off an air of loneliness or isolation, adding an emotional layer of interest or solitude.

Viewer's Perspective

- a. Viewers may feel sorry for the forest that is shown and understand why the people shown have to cut down trees to make a living
- b. The composition makes viewers think about the balance between helping people stay alive and protecting nature.

The artwork may make the viewer feel conflicted because it shows both the beauty of rural life and the damage it does to the environment.

Note

With emotionalism theory, it captures the overall emotional impact shown in the composition. It includes the emotional atmosphere, mood evinced by the colours or poses of the figures or objects, human emotions and activity, and the intended perspective of the viewer.

Table 6.3: Applying imitationalism theory in discussing Asa Anakwa's painting**1. Realistic Representation of Nature:**

- a. The composition shows a thick, natural setting that looks like a tropical rainforest. The trees, other plants, and surroundings are very realistic and full of detail. It is clear that the artist attempted to imitate natural textures like the bark on the trees, the leaves, and the flow of the river.
- b. Animals and a variety of trees, including some with broad leaves, add to the realistic feel of the forest.

2. Human Activities:

- a. The human figures in the composition are doing everyday things that show what life is really like in the country or in a traditional setting. For instance, one person looks like they are cutting down a tree, while others are seen working. The clothes, tools, and poses of the human figures are all drawn with great care, which makes the scene look even more real.
- b. It is also worth mentioning how the huts are built. Realistic and rural settings can be seen in the straw roofs and buildings.

3. Colour Palette: The use of earthy tones and greens, browns, and yellows gives the composition a natural appearance that makes it even more realistic. Shades, lighting, and shadows give the scene more depth and perspective, making it seem realistic.

4. Imitation of Everyday Life: The composition shows how simple and linked human life is to nature. The artist paints a realistic picture of a rural community by showing everyday tasks such as cutting down trees and fetching water.

Note

Imitationalism is an art idea that looks at how well a piece of art captures the spirit of a scene by showing it as it really is. The artist successfully depicts harmony between people and their surroundings through imitationalism, capturing the shapes, colours, and textures of nature and human activity, resulting in a lively depiction of traditional countryside life.

Table 6.4: Applying instrumentalism theory in discussing Asa Anakwa's painting

The painting tells a story visually about the connection between people and their natural surroundings by showing things like cutting down trees, farming, and doing housework. It might make you think about how people use natural resources and what happens when forests are cut down or the environment changes. The picture also shows a traditional way of life that values things like society, hard work, and staying alive. The difference between the peaceful village life and the active use of the forest could be seen as a metaphor for the careful balance between traditional practices and protecting the environment.

The big tree stumps that were cut down in the foreground of the picture could represent how humans are slowly taking over nature, making people think about how to properly handle resources. The absence of natural elements like birds and animals creates a sense that supports the idea that messing with nature has widespread effects on animal and plant life.

The artwork could be used to teach and advocate, drawing attention to environmental problems and cultural history. It could start a talk about how traditional ways of life have changed or adapted to their surroundings over time. It could also make people proud of their cultural customs while warning them not to do things that are not environmentally friendly.

Note

Using instrumentalism theory, the *purpose and message*, *cultural and social reflections*, *environmental and ethical themes*, *educational and advocacy function*, and *symbolic meanings*, if any, could be tackled in analysing the artwork.

Activity 6.3

Analysing contextual application of Aesthetic Theories

Try this as group or individually;

1. Research the theories and note their main ideas and principles as you did in the previous activity.
2. Investigate to find where and how these theories are applied in art and design works and note down your points.
3. Analyse how each theory approaches the understanding of beauty, meaning, or function in art, considering their similarities and differences.
4. Select artworks or designs that demonstrate each theory and analyse how the theory enhances understanding of the work.
5. Create spidergram, storyboard or write an essay summarising each theory, its core ideas, and examples of its application in selected art and design works.
6. Present your findings in class for review feedback and file a copy in your portfolio

APPRECIATION OF CULTURAL OBJECTS

What to Observe in Appreciating Cultural Objects

Cultural things, such as art, crafts, and building, show what a society believes, values, and does. They show what you've done and who you are. For instance, African masks are thought to show wisdom. To fully understand and respect these things, you need to know about the times, places, and people that shaped them. This makes people think of many creative ideas. You need to be aware, open, and interested in these things in order to fully enjoy them. You can get better at these things by thinking about your life and reflecting on it. People can learn more and get new art and design ideas from this. This can help share and protect past cultures.

In section five, we learnt about cultural objects and the need to preserve and protect them. Apart from that, reflecting on cultural objects enhances creativity and skills of artists and designers. Art appreciation under the realms of aesthetics plays a crucial role in critical and analytical thinking of artworks. It also helps in artistic problem-solving and improving one's fluency in intelligent discussion of art and design works.

Applying Aesthetic Theories in Appreciating Cultural Products

Critical awareness about the cultural background of an artist or designer as well as contextual awareness of the historical, and social context, are important clues in exploring and understanding cultural objects. To achieve this, there is the need for active engagement in observing cultural objects by paying attention to details, techniques, and elements like colour, texture, form, and composition, amongst others. Active engagement informs critical analysis and interpretation which in effect create a vibrant dialogue and discussion about cultural objects.

Applying *formalism*, *emotionalism*, *imitationalism* and *instrumentalism* theories we have previously discussed is important in dealing with creative aesthetic writing or commentary about art and design works as well as cultural objects.

There are basic steps in discussing artworks formally. They are ***describing***, ***analysing*** and ***interpreting***. These steps require your keen observation of the artwork and applying the *formalism*, *emotionalism*, *imitationalism* and *instrumentalism* theories. These steps are:

1. DESCRIBE

In describing, provide answers to the following questions and instructions (in simple sentences). Detailed description requires answers to the following questions and instructions:

- a. What do you see in the artwork? List all items found in the work.
- b. What are the general and unique characteristics of the work?
- c. What is the subject matter? Does it depict an event, person or place?
- d. What is the *credit line information* of the artworks? The credit line information contains:

- i. Who created the art/design work?
- ii. What is the title of the work?
- iii. What materials and techniques were used in making the artwork?
- iv. Where can the artwork be found? (e.g., a museum, gallery, public space, school library)
- v. What is the size of the work?
- vi. Where and when the work was made?

Note

In providing responses, do not number or bullet your points when you write out your answers to these questions. Do not worry about the order of the questions. Your ability to describe rests on how well you can observe the artwork.

2. ANALYSE

Understanding an artwork or cultural product, requires analysing its meaning, by telling its components and impacts. In addition to helping, you understand the art better, this process makes you think more critically about it:

- a. How is the work organised?
- b. How are the elements (line, shape, space, form, colour, texture, value) and principles (unity, movement, harmony, balance, etc) of art organised? Which of the elements and or principles are featured prominently?
- c. What is your view about the entire composition?
- d. How does the place where the work has been mounted affect its appearance, colour scheme, etc?

3. INTERPRET

To interpret a work of art, you need to do more than just describe what you see. It has to do with getting to the heart of the artwork and determining what it's really trying to say. Here is a guide:

- a. What message does the artwork communicate to you?
- b. What feelings, memories and events do the work remind you of? Does it make you feel sad, happy, frightened, horrified, aggressive, and indifferent? Tell your personal feelings about the work.

Activity 6.4

Applying Aesthetic Theories to Analyse Cultural Objects

Do the following alone;

1. Choose any of the Ghanaian cultural objects that interest you (e.g., carving, beadwork, metal craft, etc.).

2. Critically observe the artwork properly to identify the type of aesthetic theories that have been applied to creating the cultural objects.
3. Use the chosen theory (or theories) to interpret the cultural object using the following guiding questions:
 - a. Does it realistically represent something from nature or life?
 - b. Does it convey emotions or ideas?
 - c. How do the shapes, lines, and colours contribute to its beauty or structure?
 - d. Does it serve a practical purpose or solve a problem?
4. Document your analysis through a written short report or create a visual presentation detailing your analysis and linking it to the relevant aesthetic theories.
5. Present your analysis to your peers and teacher for review and feedback.
6. Use the feedback to improve your presentation and keep it in your portfolio.

Try this challenge on your own and share your experiences with your friends.

1. Select and critically observe any indigenous Ghanaian artwork e.g. beads, carvings, architecture etc.
2. Identify the various features in the work and list or write them down.
3. With your knowledge on various aesthetic theories, try to connect the features of the composition in the artwork identified to the aesthetic theories you know.
4. Write brief explanations to describe why you think the features of the artwork connect with the theories.
5. Present your work in class for discussion and review.
6. Improve on your writeup using the feedback from peers and file it in your portfolio for future reference.

EXTENDED READING

- *Aesthetic Theory: Understanding Beauty, Art, and Human Perception* | by Cherifa Bochra Soltani | Medium
- *Exploring Aesthetic Theories: Formalism, Emotionalism and Experientialism*
- <https://youtu.be/RzTLOcXwqZA>

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is the main idea behind the aesthetic theory of Formalism?
2. Define Imitationalism as an aesthetic theory and give a brief example of its application.
3. How does the Expression theory explain the purpose of art and design?
4. Compare the contexts in which the Imitation and Formalism theories are most commonly applied.
5. Analyse how the Expression theory can be applied to a painting that portrays intense human emotions.
6. Discuss the relevance of Feminist aesthetics theory in modern industrial design.
7. Evaluate the effectiveness of applying Formalism when analysing abstract sculptures in a gallery setting.
8. Develop a framework for selecting the most appropriate aesthetic theory to analyse a Ghanaian Cultural object or a contemporary installation art piece.
9. Critique the limitations of using Imitation theory to evaluate conceptual art and propose an alternative approach.
10. Design a concept or model for an art exhibition showcasing works analysed through different aesthetic theories, explaining how the arrangement highlights the theories' applications.

SECTION

7

ART AND DESIGN PROCESSES AND THEIR APPLICATION



DESIGN FOR LIFE

Design Thinking and Composition

INTRODUCTION

Art and design provide powerful tools for addressing challenges and communicating ideas. This session focuses on helping you to understand the processes involved in creating art and design works, identifying problems in the environment, and developing innovative solutions. You will explore how to develop design strategies for solving real-world issues and create prototypes to test their ideas. Additionally, you will learn how to use infographics to visually present the steps and concepts in art and design processes. Combining creativity and problem-solving competencies will enable you to gain practical skills to make meaningful contributions to your communities through art and design.

KEY IDEAS

Here are some key ideas to learn from this section;

- Art and design process follows a step-by-step process and understanding each stage, from brainstorming to execution, is key to creating effective works.
- Creating prototypes or models helps refine ideas and improve functionality or aesthetics.
- Design strategies bring ideas to life. Planning and visualising solutions is essential before creating final works.
- Infographics like charts or diagrams make processes clear and simplify complex art and design steps for better understanding.
- Problems inspire creative solutions. Issues in the environment can lead to innovative art and design ideas.

UNDERSTANDING ART AND DESIGN PROCESSES AND THEIR APPLICATION

Art and design processes are structured approaches that guide creators from the initial idea to the final product. These processes involve identification of the problem, research, ideation, experimentation, and refinement, ensuring that the resulting work is purposeful, functional, and visually appealing. Understanding these processes helps artists and designers develop their concepts effectively while addressing the needs of their audience or clients. Understanding and applying art and design processes enable creators to work systematically, fostering innovation while ensuring high-quality results tailored to their intended purpose.

The Art and Design Processes

1. Problem identification

- a. What is the problem you want to solve? Name or know the problem by name.
- b. Define the problem you are trying to solve by describing it in detail.

2. Research and Inspiration

- a. Begin with gathering information and studying relevant sources to understand the problem or theme.
- b. Look for inspiration in nature, culture, history, or current trends.
- c. Example: A painter researching traditional Ghanaian symbols for a modern mural.

3. Ideation and Concept Development

- a. Brainstorm and sketch multiple ideas, focusing on how to solve the design challenge or express the artistic vision.
- b. Select the best idea and refine it into a clear concept.
- c. Example: A graphic designer drafting logo ideas for a start-up business.

4. Planning and Material Selection

- a. Determine the materials, tools, and techniques required for execution.
- b. Develop a plan or blueprint that outlines the steps to be taken.
- c. Example: A sculptor deciding to use metal and wood to create a mixed-media artwork.

5. Creation and Experimentation

- a. Produce prototypes or preliminary versions to test the design or artistic concept.
- b. Experiment with different approaches to find the most effective solution.
- c. Example: A fashion designer creating sample garments to test fit and fabric combinations.

6. Execution

- a. Complete the final piece using the planned materials and methods.
- b. Focus on craftsmanship, attention to detail, and adherence to the concept.
- c. Example: A painter completing a commissioned portrait after several stages of refinement.

7. Evaluation and Feedback

- a. Analyse the finished work to determine if it meets the original goals.
- b. Seek feedback from peers, clients, or audiences for further improvement.
- c. Example: A product designer presenting a prototype to stakeholders for feedback.

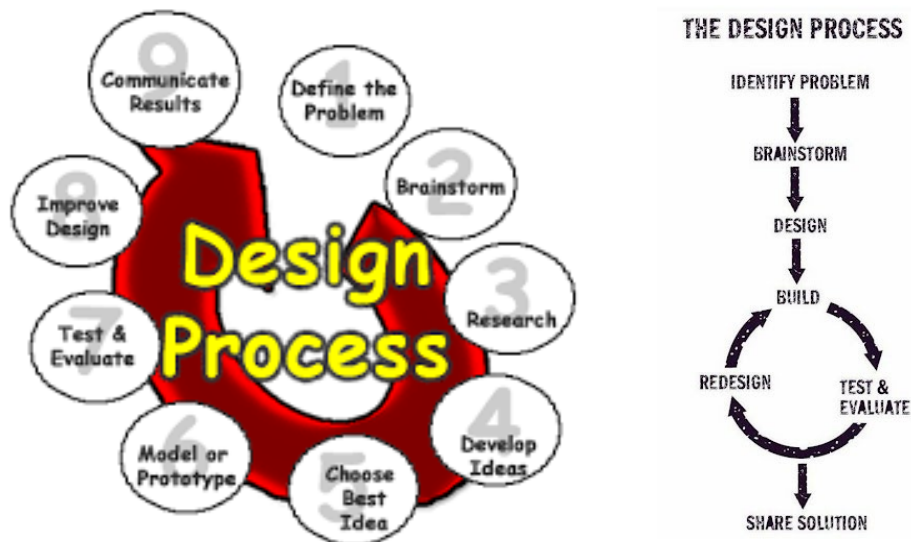
8. Presentation and Application

- a. Display the final work in the appropriate context, such as a gallery, marketplace, or digital platform.

- b. Apply the design to solve real-world problems or communicate a message.
- c. Example: An interior designer installing furniture and décor to transform a living space.

Application of Art and Design Processes

1. **Fine Arts:** Artists use these processes to create paintings, sculptures, and installations that convey emotions or tell stories.
2. **Communication Design:** Designers apply the steps to create logos, posters, and digital media that communicate visually.
3. **Industrial Design:** The processes help in developing functional products like furniture, tools, or appliances.
4. **Fashion Design:** Designers use the steps to produce wearable art that reflects cultural or personal identity.
5. **Architecture:** Architects follow structured processes to design buildings that balance aesthetics and functionality.



Design Thinking: a 5-Stage Process

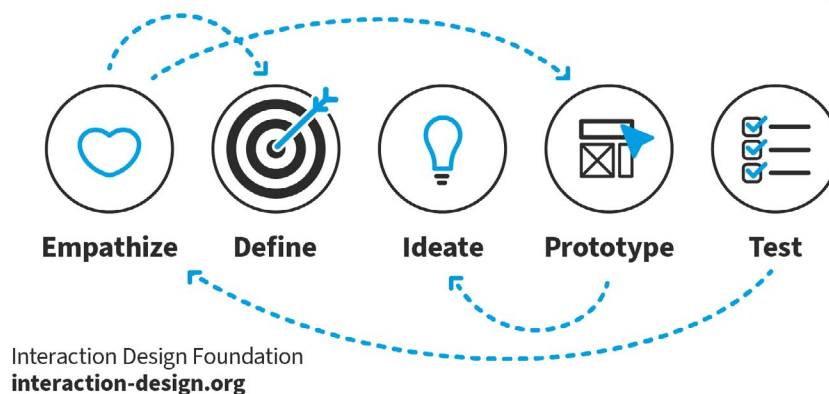


Figure 7.1: The art and design thinking process.

Think about these questions:

1. Do you think art and design making is a continuous process?
2. Do you believe the process of art and design ends as soon as the artwork is produced?
3. What do you think is the reason why companies keep producing the latest models of smartphones, cars, etc.?

Well, reflect on the images below and discuss what you think with your friends.



Figure 7.2: Examples of upgraded products through design process

Activity 7.1

Exploring the steps in creating designs

Do the following pairs;

1. Study the key steps involved in creating art and design, such as brainstorming, sketching, material selection, production, and presentation.
2. Break down the processes into clear, sequential steps. Use headings or categories to make them easy to understand.
3. Decide on a visual theme or style for your infographic, ensuring it reflects the creative nature of art and design.
4. Develop sketches or digital icons to represent each step in the process. Use shapes, symbols, and colours that make the information engaging and easy to follow.
5. Arrange the steps visually, such as in a flowchart, circular diagram, or timeline. Add concise text descriptions for each step.

6. Use drawing tools or design software (e.g., Canva, PowerPoint) to create a polished version of the infographic. Include a title and key visual cues to guide viewers.
7. Present your work for feedback from peers and the teacher on the clarity and design of your infographic.
8. Improve your infographic based on the feedback and file it in your portfolio for future use.

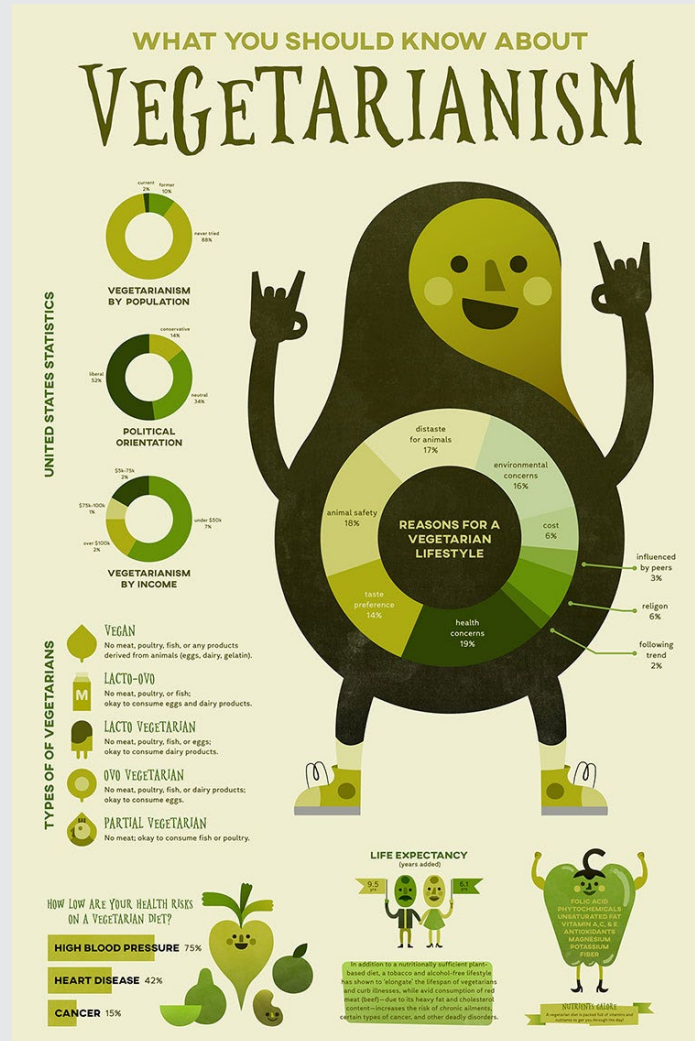


Figure 7.3: An example of infographic on Vegetarianism

DESIGN STRATEGIES

Design strategies are deliberate plans or methods used by designers to solve problems, create meaningful products, or communicate messages effectively. These strategies guide the creative process, ensuring that the final design is functional, aesthetically pleasing, and aligned with the intended purpose. They are applicable across various fields, including graphic communication design, industrial design, architecture, automobile design, fine art, and fashion.

Key Design Strategies

1. User-Centred Design

- a. Focuses on understanding the needs, preferences, and experiences of the end-user.
- b. Involves research methods such as interviews, surveys, and usability testing to create designs tailored to users.
- c. Example: Designing a mobile app interface that is easy for elderly users to navigate.

2. Sustainability

- a. Prioritises environmentally friendly practices in design, such as using recyclable materials or energy-efficient processes.
- b. Encourages longevity and minimal waste in product development.
- c. Example: Creating biodegradable packaging for consumer goods.

3. Minimalism

- a. Emphasises simplicity and clarity by using only essential elements in the design.
- b. Reduces visual clutter and enhances focus on key aspects.
- c. Example: A modern website design with clean layouts and ample white space.

4. Iterative Design

- a. Involves continuous refinement of a design through repeated cycles of prototyping, testing, and feedback.
- b. Ensures that the design evolves to meet changing requirements or solve unforeseen problems.
- c. Example: Developing a product prototype and improving it based on user input.

5. Storytelling

- a. Uses narrative techniques to convey a message or evoke emotions through design.
- b. Helps create a connection between the product and its audience.
- c. Example: A brand's packaging design that tells a story about its origins or sustainability practices.

6. Design Thinking

- a. A problem-solving approach that involves five stages: empathise, define, ideate, prototype, and test.
- b. Encourages innovation through collaboration and creative exploration.
- c. Example: A team designing a new service experience for a bank using design thinking workshops.

7. Adaptive Design

- a. Creates designs that are flexible and adaptable to different contexts, environments, or technologies.
- b. Ensures usability across platforms or devices.

- c. Example: Designing a responsive website that adjusts seamlessly to both mobile and desktop screens.

8. Contextual Design

- a. Takes into account the cultural, social, and physical context of the design.
- b. Ensures relevance and resonance with the target audience.
- c. Example: Incorporating local patterns and motifs into a public mural in Ghana to celebrate community heritage.

9. Visual Hierarchy

- a. Arranges elements in a design to guide the viewer's attention to the most important parts.
- b. Uses size, colour, contrast, and placement to establish prominence.
- c. Example: A magazine layout that highlights headlines with bold fonts and vibrant colours.

10. Collaboration

- a. Involves working with diverse teams to bring different perspectives and expertise into the design process.
- b. Enhances creativity and problem-solving.
- c. Example: Architects collaborating with engineers and interior designers to create a functional and beautiful building.

Importance of Design Strategies

Some of the importance of applying design strategies include;

1. **Problem Solving:** Provides structured methods for addressing design challenges.
2. **Efficiency:** Helps streamline the creative process and save time.
3. **Innovation:** Encourages creative exploration and the development of unique solutions.
4. **Satisfaction:** Ensures that designs meet the needs and expectations of users or clients.

In all, design strategies are essential for achieving success in any creative endeavour, fostering purposeful and impactful outcomes across industries.

Activity 7.2

Identifying strategies to solve environmental problems

Do this as a group or individually;

1. Explore your local environment to identify issues such as pollution, deforestation, improper waste disposal, or lack of public art spaces. Take notes and photographs for reference.

2. Search for the causes and impacts of the identified problems on the community and environment.
3. Generate creative ideas and strategies to address the problems. Consider using art and design techniques, such as murals, eco-friendly installations, or functional designs like recycling bins.
4. Create sketches of your solutions, showing how they address the identified problems. Add brief descriptions to explain your concepts.
5. Write an outline of the action plan (steps) needed to implement your solutions, including the materials, tools, and community involvement required.
6. Share your findings, sketches, and action plans with the class in a presentation or display with peers and teacher for feedback to improve.
7. Save your research, sketches, action plans, and feedback in your portfolio for future reference.

PROTOTYPING

Prototyping is the process of creating a preliminary model or sample of a product, system, or concept to test its functionality, design, and usability before final production. It is widely used in fields such as art, design, engineering, and software development to refine ideas and identify potential improvements. Prototyping allows creators to visualise and interact with their ideas, gather feedback, and make necessary changes efficiently.

Prototyping is an essential step in the creative and development process, ensuring that final outcomes are functional, user-friendly, and aligned with the original vision.

Types of Prototyping

1. Low-Fidelity Prototyping

- a. Uses simple materials like paper, cardboard, or sketches to quickly represent an idea.
- b. Useful for brainstorming and exploring concepts early in the design process.
- c. Example: A paper sketch of a website layout or a cardboard model of a chair.

2. High-Fidelity Prototyping

- a. More detailed and closely resembles the final product, often using advanced materials, software, or machinery.
- b. Useful for testing functionality and design accuracy.
- c. Example: A fully functional app prototype or a 3D-printed model of a machine part.

3. Interactive Prototyping

- a. Focuses on user interaction, often seen in digital and software projects.
- b. Allows testing of user experience and functionality.
- c. Example: A clickable digital prototype of a mobile app.

4. Functional Prototyping

- a. Demonstrates how the product will perform its intended purpose.
- b. Used in engineering and industrial design to test mechanics or electronics.
- c. Example: A working model of a robot or a prototype of a new kitchen appliance.

Steps in Prototyping

1. **Define Objectives:** Clearly outline what the prototype should achieve, such as testing usability or demonstrating functionality.
2. **Choose the Type of Prototype:** Select the most suitable prototyping method based on the project stage, resources, and goals.
3. **Develop the Prototype:** Use appropriate tools and materials to build the prototype. For physical models, materials like clay, foam, or wood may be used, while digital projects may require software tools.
4. **Test the Prototype:** Gather feedback from users, stakeholders, or team members. Identify strengths and weaknesses in the design or functionality.
5. **Refine and Iterate:** Make adjustments based on feedback, and repeat the process if necessary, until the prototype meets expectations.

Importance of Prototyping

1. **Visualises Ideas:** Helps to translate abstract concepts into tangible forms.
2. **Saves Time and Resources:** Identifies issues early, avoiding costly changes later.
3. **Encourages Collaboration:** Brings teams and stakeholders together to refine ideas.
4. **Enhances User Experience:** Allows testing with real users to ensure the product meets their needs.

Reflect on the image below and discuss your thoughts with peers.



Figure 7.4: The Prototyping Process

Activity 7.3

Designing prototypes to solve problems

Do the following as a group or alone;

1. Select one problem from previous activities or observations, such as waste management or lack of recreational spaces in your community.
2. Brainstorm creative solutions and choose one idea to prototype (e.g., a waste-separation bin, eco-friendly furniture, or a community art installation).
3. Create a detailed sketch or blueprint of your design, showing its structure, materials, and functionality.
4. Collect the necessary materials, prioritising locally available or recycled items, and assemble the tools needed for construction.
5. Execute the design by constructing the prototype. Work carefully, ensuring functionality and alignment with your initial plan.
6. Evaluate the prototype's effectiveness by testing it in the context of the identified problem. Gather feedback from users or peers.
7. Make adjustments to the prototype based on testing and feedback to enhance its functionality and appeal.
8. Record each step through notes, photographs, or videos to showcase your design and execution process.
9. Display your finished prototype to the class or community, explaining how it solves the problem and its potential impact.

EXTENDED READING

- <https://youtu.be/3RbpQSFdP6A>
- <https://youtu.be/nLxQAa5Sras>
- <https://youtu.be/WZpv4eBcHik>

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is an infographic, and why is it useful in presenting art and design processes?
2. What are the key stages of the art and design process?
3. How can visual elements like icons, colours, and text improve the clarity of an infographic?
4. Explain the importance of identifying environmental problems before designing solutions.
5. Analyse how collaboration can enhance the process of identifying and solving environmental problems through design.
6. How can feedback be used to refine prototypes during the design process?
7. Evaluate the effectiveness of an infographic in communicating a complex art or design process to a non-expert audience.
8. Develop a strategy for identifying a specific environmental problem in your community and propose steps to address it through design.
9. Critique a prototype solution for an environmental problem, identifying its strengths and areas for improvement.
10. Create a concept for an infographic that visually explains the steps involved in designing a sustainable solution to an environmental issue.

SECTION

8

COLOUR SYMBOLISM AND APPLICATION



DESIGN FOR LIFE

Colour Theory and Application

INTRODUCTION

In this section, we will explore the importance of colour in Ghanaian culture and its symbolic meanings. Colours are not just visual elements; they carry deep cultural significance and convey messages in creation of art and design and Ghanaian cultural objects. You will learn how to identify and understand the relationships between different colours in Ghanaian traditions, and how these colours are used to represent emotions, beliefs, and cultural values. At the end of this section, you will be able to create your own art and design works using both pigment and spectrum colours, reflecting the rich symbolism found in Ghanaian cultures.

KEY IDEAS

Here are some key ideas to learn from this section.

- Artworks can tell stories or convey emotions using culturally significant colours.
- Colours in Ghanaian cultures have unique meanings and symbols.
- Cultural symbols guide the use of colours in traditional and modern art.
- Pigment colours and spectrum colours can reflect cultural symbolism in art.
- Understanding colour relationships helps in creating balanced and meaningful designs.

COLOUR SYMBOLISM

Meaning of colour symbolism

Colour symbolism is the idea that different colours can stand for different thoughts, feelings, beliefs, values, or meanings. Colour is often used by artists, creators, and cultures to send messages without words. The meanings of these symbols vary based on the situation, society, or personal experiences. Colour meanings are important because colours help people communicate, connect with each other culturally, and understand things in society.

Not all colours have the same meanings. One culture may give a certain colour a certain meaning or symbolism, but another culture may see that colour in a completely different way. This implies that there are cultural differences in colour symbolism. For example, red stands for good luck and celebration in China, while in Ghana, it stands for bravery, mourning, and melancholy.

Colours in Ghanaian art and design are not just decorative; they have deep meanings and are used to send messages about identity, status, and tradition. Understanding these symbolic meanings makes it easier to make art that reflects cultural values and increases one’s enjoyment of Ghanaian cultural items.





Colour Symbolism and Relationships in Ghanaian Ethnic Cultures

Different ethnic groups in Ghana relate colour to things in nature. Words that have to do with colour talk about how something looks in nature or how it makes someone feel, think, or act. Different ethnic expressions for colour describe how something looks, what it is made of, or what its natural state is. In this case, the words used to describe colour are more general and are not limited to the colour of an item or event. Colour names are often given right after things that can be seen in the real world. So, the names that people of different ethnic groups give to colours tend to change how people see and understand them. For Ghana’s different ethnic groups, colour is very important to their culture.

Colour symbolism among ethnic groups in southern Ghana is widespread. For example, the Akans and Ewes feature colour symbolism in their Kente and Kete-woven patterns, respectively.

In contrast to the Akan of southern Ghana, the colours used in the production of smocks in the northern sector, for example, do not necessarily have any symbolic significance. As a result, the context does not influence the colour choice. You can wear any colour of garment for a funeral or merry-making festivity, regardless of its colour and expression in the northern part of Ghana. Weavers and smock tailors both select colours based on their aesthetic appeal.

Table 8.1: Colour association in the environment and symbolism in Ghana

Colour name	Local/natural examples	sample	Symbolism
Black	Charcoal, soot, dark smoke, black stone		Power, energy, liveliness, vitality, history, strength, old age
White	Cotton, kaolin, lightening, etc		Purity, spirituality, holiness, victory, glory, faithfulness
Red	Blood, ripe pepper, rose flower		Sacrifice, mourning, vitality, power, ancestral lineage, celebration of life, courage and strength,
Gold	Gold mineral, gold ornaments, etc		Divine authority, wealth, power, royalty, superiority, prosperity, preciousness.







Blue	Waters and skies		Peace, harmony, love, stability, unity, sense of community
Green	Colour of green vegetation		Fertility, growth, newness, energy, progress, freshness, renewal, vitality
Yellow	Colour some ripe fruits and flowers; fat of chicken		Divine authority, wealth, power, royalty, superiority, prosperity, preciousness.
Brown	Colour of dry cocoa seed, soil and rotten things		Decay, and rottenness, mother earth, things that have passed away,
Silver	Colour of silver metal, body ornaments, currency, ahenema, etc.		Queen's ornament, next in command, royal regalia of sub-chiefs
Grey	Ashes from burnt objects and coal/ firewood		Pity, shame, degradation, blame

Table 8.1 describes the indigenous Ghanaian sense of colour associated with elements in the natural environment. They are not based on modern colour theories but on indigenous knowledge systems. Because of this, people attribute symbolic meanings to the relationship between colours and objects in the environment. It could be philosophical, psychological, and spiritual.

Activity 8.1

Discovering colour symbolism in Ghanaian Culture

Do this in pairs, small groups or individually;

1. Make a search in your community, TV, internet or books available to identify common colours in Ghanaian indigenous art, textiles, and ceremonies (e.g., carvings, woven cloth, traditional symbols, festivals).
2. Critically observe how the colours are combined to create the works or events identified (e.g., complementary, analogous) in Ghanaian designs and what these combinations signify.
3. In your search, try to investigate the meanings behind specific colours in Ghanaian culture (e.g., black for mourning, gold for royalty, red for bravery or aggression, etc.).

4. Use the information to design a chart or visual representation showing colours, their relationships, and their symbolic meanings in Ghanaian traditions as shown in **Figure 8.1** (*NB: You can do this chart differently, creatively*).
5. Present your chart and explanations in class, highlighting the cultural significance of colours for feedback from peers and the teacher.
6. Improved your chart using the feedback received and file a copy in your portfolio for future reference.

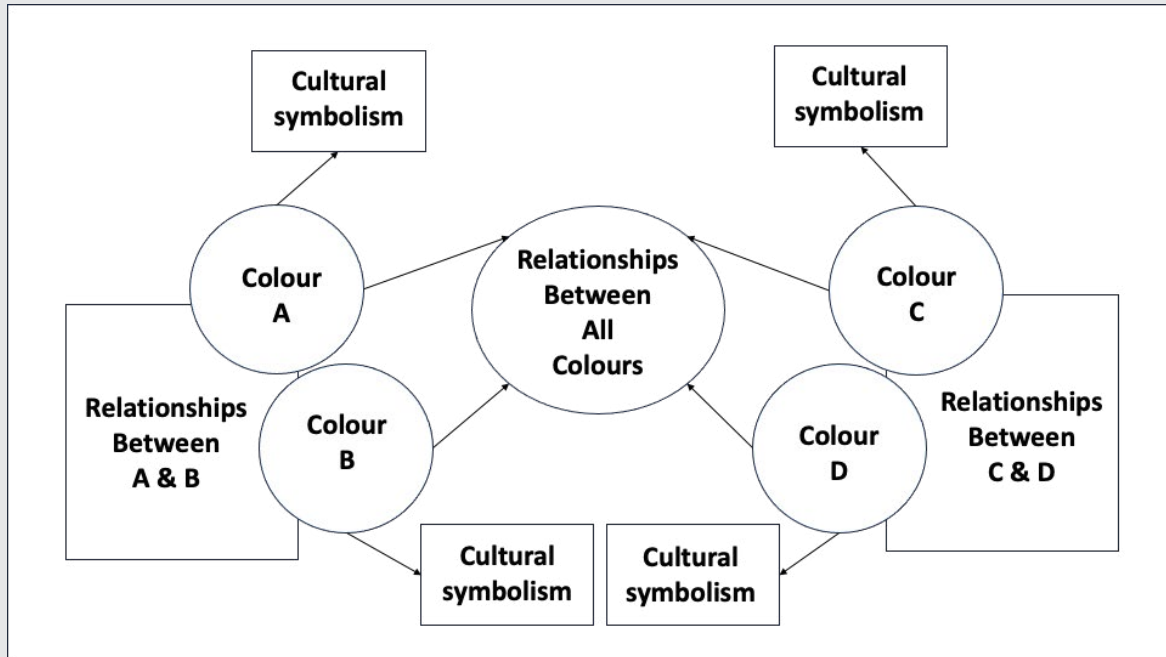


Figure 8.1: A sample chart showing colour relationships and symbolism in Ghanaian Culture

ADVANCED COLOUR THEORY

Colour Relationships

Colour relationships refer to how colours interact and work together within a composition, creating harmony, contrast, or mood. These relationships are based on the **colour wheel**, which organises colours into primary (red, blue, yellow), secondary (orange, green, purple), and tertiary hues. Understanding colour relationships helps artists and designers create visually appealing works and communicate emotions effectively.

Key Concepts of Colour Relationships

1. Complementary Colours:

- a. These are colours opposite each other on the colour wheel, such as red and green or blue and orange. Their combination creates strong contrast and visual excitement.

- b. **Global Example:** Vincent van Gogh's *The Night Café* uses red and green to create a vibrant yet unsettling mood.
- c. **Ghanaian Example:** The complementary colours of red and green are common in *kente* and *kete* cloth patterns, symbolising energy and life.

2. Analogous Colours:

- a. These are colours next to each other on the wheel, such as blue, green, and yellow. They create a sense of harmony and are often found in nature.
- b. **Global Example:** Claude Monet's *Water Lilies* series uses analogous blues, greens, and purples to evoke tranquillity.
- c. **Ghanaian Example:** Adinkra cloth designs frequently use analogous earth tones like brown, ochre, and mustard to signify tradition and continuity.

3. Triadic Colours:

- a. These are three colours evenly spaced around the wheel, such as red, yellow, and blue. They provide vibrant harmony when balanced carefully.
- b. **Global Example:** Piet Mondrian's works use triadic schemes with red, yellow, and blue to create balanced yet dynamic compositions.
- c. **Ghanaian Example:** Triadic colour schemes are visible in ceremonial *kente* cloth, combining bold reds, yellows, and blues to signify power and status.

4. Monochromatic Colours:

- a. These are variations of a single hue, using different tones, shades, and tints to create depth and unity.
- b. **Global Example:** Pablo Picasso's *Blue Period* artworks, such as *The Old Guitarist*, rely on monochromatic blue hues to convey melancholy.
- c. **Ghanaian Example:** Some *batik* designs feature monochromatic patterns, often in shades of blue or brown, to emphasise simplicity and elegance.

5. Split-Complementary Colours:

- a. These involve one base colour and the two colours adjacent to its complement. This scheme balances contrast and harmony.
- b. **Global Example:** Henri Matisse's *The Red Room* uses red as a base with green and blue accents for visual balance.
- c. **Ghanaian Example:** Split-complementary colour schemes appear in modern Ghanaian fashion, where a bold colour like yellow is paired with blue-green and violet accents.

6. Warm and Cool Colours:

- a. Warm colours (red, orange, yellow) evoke energy and passion, while cool colours (blue, green, purple) suggest calm and serenity.
- b. **Global Example:** In Mark Rothko's works, warm colours dominate to evoke intensity, while cool tones create introspection.

- c. **Ghanaian Example:** In *Kete*, *Kente* and *batik*, warm and cool colours are often juxtaposed to represent dualities such as life and peace or strength and humility.

Understanding colour relationships allows artists in Ghana and globally to convey meaning, emotions, and symbolism effectively, ensuring their works resonate with diverse audiences.

Activity 8.2

Creating designs that reflect Ghanaian colour symbolisms

Try this with your friends or alone;

1. Identify and review the symbolic meanings of selected colours in Ghanaian culture (e.g., gold for wealth, white for purity, black for ancestry).
2. Make a sketch of a design concept that incorporates pigment colours and colours of the spectrum to represent Ghanaian colour symbolism.
3. Gather materials such as paints, markers, or digital tools to create your artwork.
4. Execute your design, carefully blending colours to reflect their symbolic meanings in Ghanaian culture.
5. Write a brief description explaining the choice of colours and how they represent Ghanaian symbolism in your artwork.
6. Share your finished piece with the class, highlighting the cultural meanings behind your colour choices.

EXTENDED READING

- <https://youtu.be/1-SNRBSgXds>
- <https://youtu.be/w9CjQZ5DAto>
- <https://youtu.be/u4jc3KzqaOM>
- <https://youtu.be/YeI6Wqn4I78>

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What are some common colours used in Ghanaian culture and what do they symbolise?
2. What is the difference between pigment colours and spectrum colours?
3. How can understanding colour relationships help in creating more meaningful designs in Ghanaian art?
4. Explain how colours are used to convey emotions or beliefs in Ghanaian art and culture.
5. How would you apply the colour symbolism of Ghanaian culture to create a design that represents unity and peace?



SECTION

9

FORMS AND IMAGE REPRESENTATION

DESIGN FOR LIFE

Relation of Forms

INTRODUCTION

This section focuses on exploring the creative possibilities of drawing and designing using elements from the environment and modern materials. You will learn to create figurative drawings by critically observing and interpreting objects in your surroundings. Additionally, you will break objects into their basic parts to compose forms and abstract designs, developing innovative approaches to art. Finally, you will use modern industrial materials and processes to design and create unique works, enhancing your skills in practical art-making while addressing contemporary design needs.

KEY IDEAS

Here are some key ideas to learn from this section.

- Breaking down objects into parts helps in creating forms and abstract designs.
- Combining simple parts can result in unique and creative compositions.
- Figurative drawings capture the shapes and forms of objects in the environment.
- Modern industrial materials provide opportunities to explore innovative art techniques.
- Using the right processes ensures effective design and quality results in projects.

IMAGE REPRESENTATIONS: FIGURATIVE AND NON-FIGURATIVE REPRESENTATIONS

Figurative Representations

In artistic practice, figurative representation means the representation of the real world, especially its people, animals and things, in more easily comprehensible forms. What is referred to as abstract art, on the other hand, is based on forms and colours whose purpose is to evoke feelings or communicate ideas. On the contrary, figurative art can convey a more profound and more comprehensible concept, sometimes illustrating the dynamics or the feelings of the given objects. Renaissance works like Leonardo Da Vinci's Mona Lisa is a good example of great attention to the representation of human feeling. But figurative art can also tend to stylisation or even to exaggeration such as in early Pablo Picasso's works like The Old Guitarist in which the human figure is made to serve emotional needs. Representational or figurative art includes the active sculptures of Michelangelo's David as well, the active painting strokes of Vincent van Gogh's The Starry Night, and even

the modern ones like Lucian Freud's real and very harsh portrait art. All of such works prove the fact that representational art is a great medium through which one can investigate humanity as well as the outside world.

Key Characteristics and History

History

Ever since early cave paintings, as seen in Lascaux, France, humans have always had interests in depicting and hunting animals which has led to them using art as a figurative representation of their imagination. As it happens, ancient civilisations also made great use of art. If I may draw your attention to Egyptian wall paintings and prevalent Greek or Roman sculptures which are stylistic and are more appealing to the eye, great emphasis is paid to them. Middle-ages art focused primarily on religious art and symbols where humanity focused less on the realism of a character. When painting or making sculptures, emphasis was instead placed on essentially a deeper meaning even though there were still recognisable images.

Fast forward, the Renaissance art period's depiction of forms in their works raised standards for such art through enhanced perspectivism at a time where-def figures such as Michelangelo and Raphael were combining textures with three-dimensional art and focusing more on realistic techniques.

Early baroque, which shares stylistic features with the Renaissance, contributed to the interiors of buildings developed by the Roman Catholic Church from the late 16th century until the early 18th century. While the 19th and 20th centuries simply accurately reflect that period, they visually depict the Future. Then new waves came with Pablo Picasso and Francis Bacon who looked at figurative abstraction in a completely different way. Others attempted to abstract the essence image, to the point of its annihilation, thereby seeking an understanding of order in chaos. It did essentially expand the graphical range of possibilities posing new challenges to solvable ones. For example, hyperreality which is a modern branch of figurative art emerged as a movement seeking photorealistic paintings or sculptures that achieved accurate mechanics of rendering them as though they captured with a high-resolution camera.

Hyperrealism as form of figurative art aims at Lifelike renditions of subjects with a focus on socio-cultural or political issues. Although it is different from photorealism, hyperrealism is a narrative with emotion, of vast subjects taken in a very literal and precise manner. Either in miniature or colossal forms, the figurative and high-definition rendering is maintained by hyperrealist artists such as Denis Peterson who makes work that reflects on social issues and John De Andrea for his human figure's realistic sculpture.

Key Characteristics

Some of the key features of figurative representation include;

1. **Recognisable Subjects:** Figurative art focuses on realistic or stylised depictions of the human figure, animals, or objects, maintaining a connection to the observable world.

2. **Emotional Expression:** It often conveys emotions or narratives, using posture, facial expressions, or composition to evoke feelings.
3. **Attention to Detail:** Depending on the style, figurative representations can range from hyper-realistic to abstract but always prioritise an identifiable form.
4. **Use of Mediums:** Artists employ diverse mediums, including painting, sculpture, drawing, and digital art, to represent their subjects.
5. **Variety of Styles:** Figurative art encompasses a broad spectrum, from the realism of Caravaggio to the surreal, distorted forms of Salvador Dalí or Egon Schiele.

Through its long history and diverse expressions, figurative representation remains a vital artistic form, constantly evolving to reflect societal values, personal expression, and technological advancements.



Figure 9.1: An Example of Figurative Marble Carving (David) by Michelangelo.



Figure 9.2: An Example of Hyperrealism Figurative Art.

Non-Figurative Art

History

Non-figurative art or abstract art is a unique form of art that doesn't rely on representational forms, but rather on the conscious use of shapes, colours, lines and textures in communicating meaning, emotion, or an aesthetic appreciation. This can be traced to the end of the 19th, beginning of the 20th century when for the first-time artists started questioning edges and borders in their work. What inspired first was the spiritual and the expressive nature that flooded the world of Symbolism together with the strange shapes found in cubism. Kandinsky is in many circles regarded as the father of abstraction as his *Composition VII* (1913) could stand out as the first synthesis of creativity where only abstraction was applied. Later movements such as Kazimir Malevich's Suprematism and Piet Mondrian's *De Stijl* also preferred abstractionism; abstracting art to its core. Then after the Second World War, Abstract Expressionism in a sense relocated to the United States, with Pollock and soon Rothko who were investigating gestural and colour-field techniques intending to render emotions and surpass the real world.

Key Characteristics

1. **Absence of Recognisable Forms:** Non-figurative art does not depict objects, people, or scenes from the natural world, focusing instead on abstract elements.
2. **Focus on Elements of Design:** Emphasis is placed on the interplay of colour, line, shape, and texture as primary means of expression.
3. **Emotional and Conceptual Depth:** Often rooted in personal, spiritual, or philosophical ideas, it seeks to provoke thought or feeling without relying on literal interpretation.
4. **Freedom of Interpretation:** Viewers are encouraged to find their own meanings, as non-figurative works lack explicit narratives or recognisable imagery.
5. **Diverse Techniques and Mediums:** Artists use a variety of approaches, from Pollock's dripping techniques to Mondrian's precise geometric grids, embracing experimentation.

Non-figurative art has become a cornerstone of modern and contemporary art, challenging conventions and broadening the scope of creative expression. It invites audiences to engage with art on a purely sensory or emotional level, fostering a unique, personal dialogue with each work.



Figure 9.3: An Example of Non-Figurative Painting by Jackson Pollock

Activity 9.1

Figurative drawing to represent the environment

Do this alone or with a group of peers at home or school;

1. Identify figurative (real things) elements around you, such as people, animals, fruits or objects that symbolise cultural or social themes.
2. Critically observe the features of the chosen figurative theme, thing or event of interest (e.g., a market scene, a traditional dancer, or a local monument) as your focus.
3. Create a basic outline of the chosen figure, theme or event, capturing its form and posture (*Note: Remember to take videos or pictures of yourself while doing your work to keep as part of your portfolio*).
4. Refine your drawing by adding details such as texture, shading, and other details to bring the figure to life or reality.
5. Include elements of the environment, such as background details, to enhance the story or meaning of your drawing.
6. Share your completed drawing in class, explaining the figurative subject, techniques you used in creating the work and its relevance to the environment.

GENERATING FORMS IN ART AND DESIGN

Composition of Appropriate and Constituent Parts of Forms in Art and Design

In art and design, **composition** refers to how different parts of a work are arranged to create a complete and visually pleasing piece. The “constituent parts” are the individual elements, such as shapes, lines, colours, textures, and space, that come together to form the whole. A well-composed work balances these parts to make it interesting and easy to understand.

Here is a simple step-by-step guide to creating effective compositions:

1. *Understand Your Purpose*

- a. Think about what you want to create. Is it a drawing, painting, or design?
- b. Decide on the message or feeling you want to express.

2. *Choose a Focal Point*

- a. A focal point is the main part of your artwork that attracts attention.
- b. For example, in a portrait, the focal point could be the face or the eyes.

3. *Plan Your Layout*

- a. Use a rough sketch to arrange the main parts of your artwork.
- b. Decide where each part will go on the paper or canvas.
- c. Think about balance: make sure no side looks too “heavy” or “empty.”

4. *Use Elements of Design*

- a. **Line:** Lines can guide the viewer’s eye. Straight lines show order, while curved lines feel relaxed.

- b. **Shape:** Combine shapes to create objects, like circles for heads or triangles for trees.
- c. **Colour:** Choose colours that work well together. Bright colours attract attention; cool colours feel calm.
- d. **Texture:** Add details to make parts feel smooth, rough, or soft.
- e. **Space:** Leave some empty space to avoid overcrowding your work.

5. *Apply the Principles of Design*

- a. **Balance:** Distribute parts evenly. Symmetry creates order; asymmetry adds energy.
- b. **Contrast:** Use opposites, like light vs. dark, to make parts stand out.
- c. **Rhythm:** Repeat shapes or colours to create movement.
- d. **Emphasis:** Make the focal point stand out by using brighter colours or larger sizes.
- e. **Unity:** Ensure all parts feel like they belong together.

6. *Refine and Adjust*

- a. Step back and look at your work. Does it look complete?
- b. Move things around or change parts if necessary.

7. *Final Touches*

- a. Add details and finishing touches to make the composition feel polished.
- b. Use shading, highlights, or patterns to make your work more interesting.

Do you have any other ideas of how to make artistic compositions and the steps to follow to achieve that? Kindly share with your peers and discuss.

Study the images in Figure 9.4 and reflect on how can help you to complete Activity 9.2

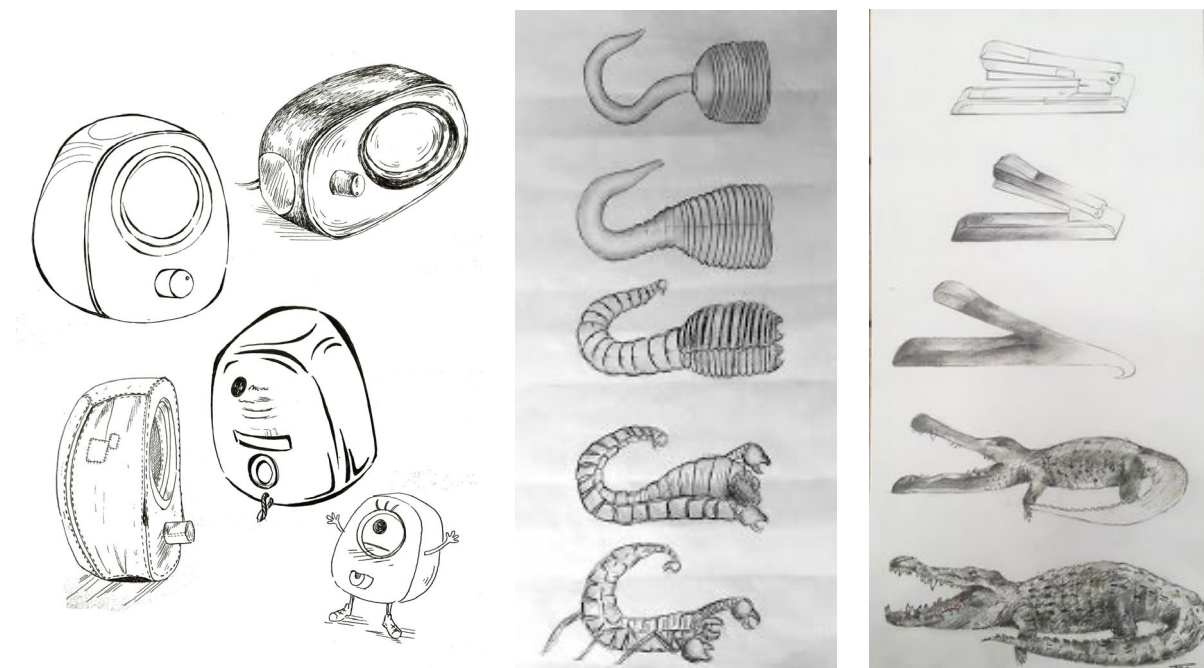


Figure 9.4: An example of abstraction

Activity 9.2

Exploring abstract compositions from real objects

Do this activity individually;

1. Select any subject or real objects in the environment near you (e.g., a plant, building, or animal)
2. Critically observe the features such as contour, shape, form, mass, etc. of the item selected and try to break its form into simple shapes or parts (e.g., circles, lines, curves).
3. Draw individual components of the subject, focusing on their basic forms and proportions.
4. Rearrange, distort, or simplify the parts to create an abstract composition that still reflects the features of the original subject (*see Figure 9.4 as an example*).
5. Assemble the components into a unified image that blends forms and abstraction.
6. Enhance your composition with textures, patterns, or colour to give it depth and visual appeal.
7. Share your abstract image with the class, explaining your process and how the parts contribute to the final composition.

ART MAKING WITH MODERN INDUSTRIAL MATERIALS AND PROCESSES

Art making has evolved to include modern industrial materials and processes, allowing artists to create works that are innovative, durable, and versatile. These materials and techniques, borrowed from industries such as construction, manufacturing, and technology, expand the boundaries of creativity and expression.

Some Materials Used in Modern Art

1. **Acrylic Paints:** Made from pigments suspended in an acrylic polymer, these paints are water-resistant and dry quickly, offering vibrant colours and versatility.
2. **Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC):** A plastic material often used in sculpture and installations for its flexibility and durability.
3. **Fiberglass Reinforced Plastic (FRP):** A composite material combining glass fibres with plastic, used for creating lightweight and strong sculptures.
4. **Light Emitting Diodes (LEDs):** Energy-efficient lighting elements used in installations and interactive artworks to create dynamic visual effects.
5. **3D Printing Materials:** Polymers, resins, and even metals utilised in 3D printers to create intricate forms and structures with precision.

Processes Involved in Modern Art Making

1. **Welding:** A technique that joins metal parts through heat or pressure, frequently employed in large-scale sculptures.
2. **Casting:** A process where liquid material, such as molten metal or resin, is poured into a mould and allowed to harden, producing complex shapes.
3. **Laser Cutting:** A precision method that uses lasers to cut or engrave materials like metal, wood, or acrylic for intricate designs.
4. **Digital Fabrication:** Computer-controlled methods such as Computer Numerical Control (CNC) machining and 3D printing used to create highly accurate forms.
5. **Electronics Integration:** Adding sensors, circuits, or interactive components to artworks, enabling them to respond to touch, sound, or motion.

Benefits of Using Modern Industrial Materials

Artists using modern industrial materials and processes redefine traditional art-making, pushing its boundaries to reflect the technological and industrial advancements of contemporary society. This approach fosters a blend of aesthetic beauty and functional design, bridging the gap between art and industry.

Some of the key benefits of using modern materials include;

1. **Durability:** Materials like PVC and FRP resist environmental wear, making artworks long-lasting.
2. **Precision:** Digital tools like laser cutters and 3D printers enable artists to create detailed and accurate designs.
3. **Innovation:** Modern materials open new possibilities for creativity, blending art with technology and engineering.
4. **Sustainability:** Recycling and upcycling industrial materials help reduce waste and create eco-friendly art.

Activity 9.3

Experimenting Creating artworks with modern materials

Try this activity on your own and share your experience with peers;

1. Identify a problem to solve or a theme to explore using modern industrial materials (e.g., creating functional items, decorative pieces, or art installations).
2. Study available industrial materials such as plastics, metals, glass, or composites, and their appropriate uses and processes.
3. Sketch a design for your project, incorporating the chosen materials and ensuring functionality or artistic expression.
4. Outline the steps and tools needed to work with the materials (e.g., cutting, moulding, assembling).

5. Execute your design using the planned processes, paying attention to craftsmanship and safety.
6. Review your finished work by critically observing it to ensure it aligns with your design and serves the intended purpose.
7. Share your work with the class or community, explaining how the materials and processes were used to achieve the final piece.

EXTENDED READING

- [Figurative-art](#)
- [Hyperrealism](#)
- [683-an-introduction-to-non-figurative-contemporary-african-art](#)

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is a figurative representation, and how does it differ from abstraction?
2. How can breaking objects into their constituent parts help in creating abstract designs?
3. Analyse how the choice of modern industrial materials can influence the functionality and aesthetics of a design project.
4. Propose a step-by-step process for designing a functional artwork using modern industrial materials and forms derived from environmental observation.
5. Evaluate the effectiveness of combining figurative and abstract elements in a single composition to communicate a specific theme or idea.

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GLOSSARY

- **Abstraction:** Art that simplifies or alters reality by focusing on shapes, forms, and colours instead of detailed representation.
- **Abstract:** Art that does not attempt to represent realistic forms but instead uses shapes, colours, and textures for expression.
- **Acrylics:** A fast-drying, water-based paint made from acrylic resin. Known for its versatility, acrylics can be applied in layers or used to create various textures and finishes. They are popular for their durability and vibrant colours.
- **Activism:** Efforts or actions taken to promote, impede, or direct social, political, or environmental change.
- **Aesthetics:** The study of beauty and art, focusing on the principles and nature of artistic expression and sensory experiences.
- **Ancestry:** The family lineage or history of a person, tracing their descent through generations, often related to cultural, ethnic, or biological heritage.
- **Analogous Colours:** Colours that are next to each other on the colour wheel, creating a harmonious and cohesive look in design.
- **Apartheid:** A system of institutionalised racial segregation and discrimination that was in place in South Africa from 1948 to the early 1990s.
- **Architecture:** The art and science of designing and constructing buildings and other structures, focusing on aesthetics, function, and stability.
- **Assemblage:** An art form that involves creating three-dimensional works by combining different objects and materials. Assemblages are often made from found or repurposed items, arranged to convey a particular theme or idea.
- **Asymmetry:** The lack of equality or balance between parts or sides of a design, creating an uneven, dynamic look.
- **Automobile Design:** The process of developing the visual appearance, technical features, and overall structure of vehicles.
- **Baroque style:** It is a style that started in Italy and quickly spread across Europe in the 1700s, known for its bright colours, intricate details, and lively designs.
- **Brainstorming:** A creative activity to come up with many ideas to solve a problem.
- **Calligraphy:** The art of beautiful, stylised, or elegant handwriting, often used in decorative or formal text.
- **Canvas:** A strong, woven fabric used as a surface for painting, typically stretched over a wooden frame. Canvas is favoured for its durability and ability to hold paint, making it ideal for oils, acrylics, and other mediums.
- **Clay-based Pigments:** Natural colours derived from clay, used in art and decoration.
- **Colour Harmony:** The balanced and aesthetically pleasing arrangement of colours in art or design.
- **Colour Symbolism:** The use of colours to represent specific meanings, emotions, or values in a cultural context.

- **Complementary Colours:** Colours that are opposite each other on the colour wheel, creating contrast and harmony when used together.
- **Composition:** The way elements like shapes, colours, and lines are arranged in an artwork to create a cohesive and visually appealing design. (Note: There were two entries for “Composition” with slightly different definitions; I’ve kept the one that better encompasses the concept in art).
- **Composites:** Materials made by combining two or more different substances to create a stronger, more durable material. For example, fiberglass is made by combining glass fibres and resin.
- **Conceptual Art:** An art movement where the main focus is on the idea or message behind the work, rather than the physical object or its appearance.
- **Constituent Parts:** The basic elements or components that make up a whole object or design.
- **Consumerism:** The promotion of the acquisition of goods and services, often associated with materialism and economic growth.
- **Contrast:** A design principle that uses opposing elements, such as light versus dark or smooth versus rough, to create visual interest or emphasise differences.
- **Conventional:** Based on established standards or traditional methods; usual and commonly accepted.
- **Cool Colours:** Colours like blue, green, and purple that evoke a sense of calmness, coolness, or tranquillity, often associated with water or the sky.
- **Craftsmanship:** The skill and quality of work displayed in creating something, particularly handmade objects.
- **Cubism:** An art movement that uses abstract, geometric forms to depict multiple perspectives in a single image.
- **Cubist:** Relating to Cubism, an art movement developed in the early 20th century by artists like Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque. Cubist artworks break down objects into geometric shapes and multiple perspectives, challenging traditional forms of representation.
- **Design:** A plan or blueprint for creating an object or artwork that considers functionality and aesthetics.
- **Design Process:** A series of steps to create something, from planning to finishing.
- **Efficiency:** The ability to achieve maximum productivity with minimum wasted effort or resources.
- **Emblem:** A symbolic image or design that represents a concept, belief, or organisation. Emblems are used in art to convey ideas, values, or identity, often carrying specific cultural or historical significance.
- **Emeralds:** Green gemstones prized for their vibrant colour and rarity, commonly used in jewellery.
- **Emotional Impact:** The ability of colours to evoke specific feelings or moods, such as calmness, energy, or passion.
- **Emphasis:** A technique in art used to highlight the most important part of an artwork, making it stand out to the viewer.

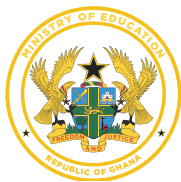
- **Encapsulated:** Enclosed or surrounded in a protective covering or layer.
- **Enthralled:** Captivated or fascinated, holding full attention.
- **Environmental Impact:** The effect something has on nature and surroundings.
- **Eurocentric:** Focused on European culture, history, or values, often ignoring other perspectives.
- **Expertise:** Specialised knowledge or skill in a particular area, acquired through experience or training.
- **Facades:** The exterior faces or fronts of buildings, often designed with decorative details.
- **Feedback:** Opinions or suggestions to improve a design or idea.
- **Fibreglass:** A strong, lightweight material made from thin glass fibres, used in construction and manufacturing.
- **Figurative Representation:** Artwork that portrays recognisable objects, people, or scenes from the real world.
- **Figurines:** Small statues or models, often made of clay, wood, or metal, typically representing humans or animals.
- **Folklore:** Traditional stories, customs, and beliefs passed down through generations within a culture. Folklore often includes myths, legends, and tales that reflect a community's values, history, and shared knowledge.
- **Form:** The shape and structure of an object in art, which can be three-dimensional (like a sculpture) or suggested in two dimensions (like in a painting).
- **Fusion:** The blending of different styles, cultures, or techniques to create something unique, often seen in modern African art.
- **Futuristic:** Having a modern or advanced design that resembles or predicts the future.
- **Gallerist:** An individual who owns or manages an art gallery. Gallerists work with artists to showcase and sell their works, often guiding collectors and promoting artists within the art market.
- **Genre:** A category of art, music, or literature that shares common features or styles. In art, genres can include portraits, landscapes, and still life.
- **Glamour:** An attractive or exciting quality, often associated with luxury and elegance.
- **Gouache:** A type of opaque, water-based paint with a matte finish. Gouache is similar to watercolour but has a thicker consistency, allowing for solid colour application and layering without transparency.
- **Gray:** A colour between black and white; often associated with neutrality or sophistication.
- **Identity:** The concept of how one's cultural, social, and personal background influences their art and self-expression.
- **Imagery:** Visual or descriptive elements in art or literature that create a strong mental picture.
- **Impasto:** A painting technique in which paint is applied thickly, creating a textured, raised surface. Impasto is often used to add dimension and emphasise brush strokes, particularly in oil or acrylic paintings.

- **Impressionism:** An art style capturing light, colour, and quick impressions of a scene using loose, expressive brushstrokes.
- **Influence:** The impact that one culture, style, or movement has on another, often seen in techniques or themes.
- **Infographic:** A visual chart or diagram used to explain information clearly and quickly.
- **Installation:** A large-scale artwork designed for a specific space, allowing viewers to interact with the environment or elements of the piece. (Note: “Installations” was a plural duplicate, so it’s merged here).
- **Interior Design:** The art and practice of designing the interiors of buildings to enhance functionality and aesthetics.
- **Juxtapose:** To place two or more elements side by side for the purpose of comparison, contrast, or highlighting their differences.
- **Lens:** A perspective or approach used to interpret and analyse an artwork, often influenced by cultural, theoretical, or personal viewpoints.
- **Malleability:** The ability of a material, especially metal, to be shaped or deformed without breaking.
- **Mimic:** To imitate or copy someone’s actions, speech, or behaviour, often in a playful or mocking way.
- **Mimesis:** The artistic practice of imitating or representing reality, often aiming to make the artwork resemble the real world.
- **Modern Industrial Materials:** Contemporary materials like metal, plastic, or synthetic fabrics used in art and design.
- **Motif:** A recurring element, symbol, or theme in an artwork. Motifs are often repeated to unify a piece, create rhythm, or convey deeper meaning within the work’s context.
- **Mould:** A hollow container or shape used to form materials such as clay, metal, or plastic into a specific shape. It is used in sculpture and manufacturing to create objects.
- **Mythology:** A collection of myths, or traditional stories, often explaining natural or cultural phenomena through gods, heroes, or supernatural events.
- **Negritude:** A cultural and intellectual movement that celebrated African heritage and identity, emerging among African and Caribbean writers in the 1930s.
- **Optimism:** A positive or hopeful attitude, expecting favourable outcomes.
- **Pastel:** A dry medium made from powdered pigment and a binder, available in stick or pencil form. Pastels produce soft, vibrant colours and are popular for their blendable, delicate textures in drawing and painting.
- **Perceive:** To see, recognise, or interpret something using the senses, often influenced by personal or cultural experiences.
- **Perspective:** A technique in art that represents three-dimensional objects on a two-dimensional surface, often creating depth.
- **Persuade:** To convince or influence someone’s opinion, often through argument, rhetoric, or visual communication in art.
- **Photorealism:** An art style in which artists create paintings or drawings that look as realistic as photographs, focusing on minute details and lifelike accuracy.

- **Physiotherapist:** A health professional who helps people recover movement and reduce pain through physical exercises.
- **Pigment Colours:** Colours created from materials like paint, ink, or dye, which reflect specific wavelengths of light.
- **Plastography:** A printing method that creates raised designs on a surface.
- **Polymers:** Materials made of long chains of repeating molecules, used in plastics and rubber.
- **Portraiture:** The art of creating portraits, focusing on depicting a person's likeness, personality, and expression.
- **Pragmatism:** A philosophy or approach that values practical solutions and real-world applications over abstract ideas or theories.
- **Preferences:** A greater liking or inclination for one option, item, or idea over others.
- **Premised:** Based on a specific idea or assumption that serves as the foundation for further argument or creation.
- **Problem Identification:** Finding an issue or challenge that needs a solution.
- **Processes:** The methods or techniques applied to create or assemble art and design works.
- **Project:** A focused task or assignment involving planning, designing, and creating an artwork or product.
- **Prototype:** A basic model or first version of an idea to test how it works.
- **Rareness:** The state of being uncommon or hard to find.
- **Realism:** An art movement and style focused on depicting subjects as they appear in everyday life, with accurate detail and minimal idealisation. Realist artists aim to portray truth and authenticity in their work.
- **Refracted Light:** The bending of light as it passes from one medium to another, such as from air to water or glass, often causing it to split into its component colours.
- **Refinement:** The process of improving something to make it more elegant, polished, or precise. (Note: There were two identical definitions for "Refinement"; one has been removed.)
- **Resins:** Sticky substances used to make plastics, adhesives, and coatings.
- **Revolution:** A major change in social, economic, or political conditions, often leading to the transformation of existing systems or structures.
- **Rubies:** Red gemstones known for their vibrant hue and association with passion and wealth.
- **Sapphires:** Blue gemstones valued for their beauty, hardness, and versatility in jewellery.
- **Sensors:** Devices that detect and respond to changes in the environment, like light or temperature.
- **Sleekness:** A smooth, streamlined quality that appears elegant and modern.
- **Space:** The area within, around, or between objects in an artwork, which can create a sense of depth, distance, or balance.

- **Spectrum Colours:** The colours seen in a rainbow, created when light is divided into its components, such as red, blue, and yellow.
- **Subconscious:** The part of the mind that influences feelings and actions without full awareness, working below the conscious level.
- **Surrealism:** An art movement focused on expressing the unconscious mind through dream-like, fantastical imagery.
- **Sustainability:** The practice of meeting current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs, often by conserving resources. (Note: One duplicate definition for “Sustainability” has been removed.)
- **Symbolism:** The use of symbols in art or literature to represent deeper meanings, ideas, or themes. (Note: One duplicate definition for “Symbolism” has been removed.)
- **Symmetrical:** Having balanced and equal parts on both sides, creating harmony in design.
- **Tactile:** Related to the sense of touch.
- **Tempera:** A fast-drying paint made from pigments mixed with a water-soluble binder, like egg yolk. Tempera was widely used before oil paints became popular and is known for its vibrant colours and matte finish.
- **Tertiary Hues:** Colours formed by mixing a primary colour (red, blue, yellow) with a secondary colour (orange, green, purple), such as red-orange or blue-green.
- **Textiles:** Fabrics or cloths, often crafted or decorated with artistic designs, used for clothing, art, and decoration. (Note: One duplicate definition for “Textiles” has been removed.)
- **Theories:** Ideas or systems of thought that explain and interpret art, guiding how it is created, viewed, or understood.
- **Traditional:** Refers to cultural or historical practices, themes, or techniques that are passed down through generations.
- **Urbanisation:** The process by which cities grow, and more people begin living in urban areas, often due to industrial and economic development.
- **Visual Elements:** Things like shapes, colours, and images used in a design to communicate ideas.
- **Visual Texture:** The way a surface looks as if it feels (e.g., rough, smooth, soft), created using artistic techniques to mimic actual textures.
- **Warm Colours:** Colours such as red, orange, and yellow, which are associated with warmth, energy, and emotion, often evoking feelings of heat or passion.
- **Watercolour:** A transparent, water-based paint that is applied in thin layers, allowing the underlying surface to show through. Watercolours are known for their fluidity and soft, luminous effects, often used for delicate and expressive works.
- **Wooden Panels:** Flat, thin boards made of wood, often used as surfaces for painting or construction.

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