

# **DESIRE AND TASTE: DISILLUSION IN MIGRATION**

By

**RACHEAL BAABA BROWN**

B.F.A (Hons.) Sculpture

KNUST

A Project submitted to the school of Graduate,  
Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF FINE ART (MFA) SCULPTURE**

Faculty of Art, College of Art and Social Sciences

©, Department of Painting and Sculpture

August, 2014

## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work towards the award of MFA degree in Sculpture and that to the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published by another person or material which had been accepted for the award of any other degree of the University, except where due acknowledgement had been made in the text.

# KNUST

Racheal Baaba Brown .....

(Candidate)

Signature

Date

Certified by:

Dr. Mrs. Dorothy Akpene Amenuke .....

(Supervisor)

Signature

Date

Certified by:

Mr. Felix Annor Anim .....

(Head of Department)

Signature

Date

## ABSTRACT

Individual taste and desires are informed and regulated by laid down structures of capitalism and consumerism, and most times we just fill in these structures. The cloths we wear, the food we eat, institutions we attend and jobs we offer or desire to offer, may all be some forms of lacks and wants introduced in our lives for us to also invest our in. These may constitute Disillusion. This thesis explores ideas on Desire and Taste, and engages the diverse heterotopias related to them and how they manifest as disillusions in migration. Some literature on advertisement and public relation, commodification, and consumer behaviours inspired by taste and certain actions have been reviewed. Some artists who have worked on desire and taste as well as confectionary art and techniques were also examined to give the work grounding. Sculptures rendered in sugar depicting some barter objects of the transatlantic slave trade and everyday use objects were created. A final exhibition in the form of installation was done to investigate the responses to taste and desire and was captioned “Unveiling the Veiled” which stirred a lot of reactions and comments amongst viewers.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page	No.
<b>TITLE PAGE</b> .....	<b>i</b>
<b>DECLARATION</b> .....	<b>ii</b>
<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	<b>iii</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b> .....	<b>iv</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b> .....	<b>vi</b>
<b>LIST OF ABBREVIATION</b> .....	<b>ix</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</b> .....	<b>x</b>
<b>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE</b> .....	<b>4</b>
2.1 An insight into Desire and Taste:.....	4
2.2 Consumer Behaviours Inspired by Taste .....	7
2.3 Advertisement and Public relation.....	11
2.4 “Exploitation” The Inevitable Option” .....	16
2.5 “Desire” Commodified .....	18
2.6 Food Art, Desire and Taste .....	20
<b>CHAPTER THREE: MATERIALS, TECHNIQUES AND METHODS</b> .....	<b>34</b>
3.1 Tools and Materials.....	35
3.2 Preliminary Studies on pieces created .....	37
3.3 Exploration of concept with sugar .....	41
3.4 Working and finishing of exhibition pieces.....	68
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: DISCUSSION OF RESULT</b> .....	<b>81</b>

<b>CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....</b>	<b>100</b>
5.1 Conclusion .....	101
5.2 Recommendation .....	101
<b>REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>103</b>

KNUST



## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1 “ <i>Stained</i> ” .....	25
Figure 2.2: <i>Helen’s Tower</i> .....	26
Figure 2.3: <i>The Cake Man</i> .....	27
Figure 2.4 “ <i>A subtlety or The Marvellous sugar baby</i> ” .....	28
Figure 2.5 “ <i>A subtlety or The Marvellous sugar baby</i> ” .....	28
Figure 2.6 <i>Untitled</i> .....	31
Figure 2.7 Blue bird blown sugar figurine r .....	31
Figure 2.8 <i>Cast sugar and polyurethane blocks</i> .....	32
Figure 2.9 Beach chair wedding cake topper.....	32
Figure 2.10 <i>Rock sugar</i> .....	33
Figure 2.11 <i>untitled,Spun sugar</i> .....	33
Figure 3.1 Gum tragacanth,Pipping bags, cream of tartar, measuring spoons, and essence. ....	36
Figure 3.2 Imprint mats, silicon moulds, plangers cutters, hand mixer,smoothers, wax papers,pallets,and cling film. ....	36
Figure 3.3 Eddible colours, pipping tips, meringue powder stencils, edging scissors and sugar paste modelling tools.....	37
Figure 3.4. Preliminary studies of some tea sets, with felt tips. ....	38
Figure 3.5. Studies of grinding materials with felt tips.....	39
Figure 3.6 Early studies of various bags, trunk and eceolac,with colored pencils before settling on “potomapos” vessel.....	40
Figure 3.7 Early studies of patched cloth known as “asaasawa” in coloured pencils. .....	40
Figure 3.8 Preparing pulled sugar. ....	45

Figure 3.9 Putty stage of pulled sugar .....	46
Figure 3.10 Pulling putty sugar.....	47
Figure 3.11 Undercooked spoilt pulled sugar process.....	48
Figure 3.12 Finished piece of pulled sugar coiled into tea sets. ....	49
Figure 3.13 “Urban Landscape” .....	49
Figure 3.14 Finished piece of grinding stone, earthenware bowl and a blender made with pulled sugar.....	50
Figure 3.15 Crumpcoating of the cake trunk with royal icing. ....	55
Figure 3.16 Covering of the cake trunk with fondant.....	56
Figure 3.17 Cutting and sticking of crescent shapes of fondant onto covered cake trunk.....	57
Figure 3.18 Royal icing, coloured and ready to be used for coating of cubes for my exhibition pieces. ....	58
Figure 3.19 Sifting, making and rolling fondant to flat sheets. ....	59
Figure 3.20 “Bed of dreams” asasaawa cloth made with fondant. ....	62
Figure 3.21 <i>Scramble for Africa</i> .....	63
Figure 3.22. “The maze” cubes made with joined pieces of cast candies. ....	65
Figure 3.23 “Chance city” Lottery cards.....	66
Figure 3.24. “Caged” cubes made with bread, royal icing and coloured granulated sugar.....	67
Figure 3.25 Royal icing coated and stencilled trunk and ecolac.....	73
Figure 3.26 Cubes coated with Coloured Royal icing, which will be worked on later. .....	74
Figure 3.27 Stencilled motifs of different designs onto coated cubes with royal icing. .....	75

Figure 3.28 “Till death do us part” cube coated and with royal icing. ....	76
Figure 3.29 “Technology”,cube coated and stencilled with royal icing. ....	77
Figure 3.31 OanaMatei (2013) <i>Aladdin and the magic lamp</i> 300x290. ....	79
Figure 3.32 William (2012) <i>Tinkerbelle and friends</i> 1200x760. ....	79
Figure 3.33 “Bed of dreams” made with fondant .....	80
Figure 4.1 A full view of all the exhibits .....	83
Figure 4.2 Angled view of exhibits before the opening of the exhibition. ....	84
Figure 4.3 Perspective view of exhibits before the opening of the exhibition. ....	85
Figure 4.4 “Tea time”,Tea sets and frosted cake made with pulled sugar,cake, and royal icing. ....	86
Figure 4.5 Melting Tea set, Tea sets and frosted cake made with pulled sugar,cake, and royal icing.....	87
Figure 4.6 Opening of the exhibition.....	91
Figure 4.7 Audience giving suggestions to my work. ....	92
Figure 4.8 Answering questions posed by audience.....	93
Figure 4.9 Audience taking a better look at “Bed of Dreams” .....	94
Figure 4.10 Audience gathered around “Bed of Dreams” .....	95
Figure 4.11 Curious audiences touch the “potomanto” bag to see if it was what it claimed to be, and tasting to be sure if it was indeed edible.....	96
Figure 4.12 a closer look from a curious audience, I wonder what was going through his mind then? .....	97
Figure 4.13 Audience about to move through for closer viewings.....	98
Figure 4.14 Audience engaging with the exhibits .....	99

## LIST OF ABBREVIATION

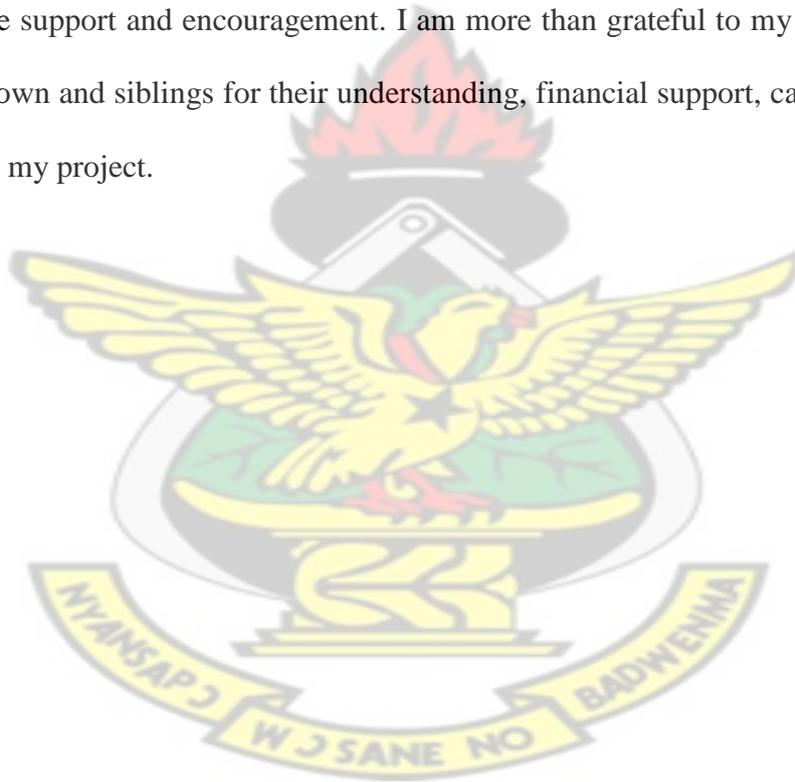
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
KNUST	Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology

# KNUST



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am very grateful to Dr. Mrs. Dorothy Akpene Amenuke, of the Department of Painting and Sculpture KNUST, who supervised this thesis for her positive inspiration and contribution from the beginning through to the end. I am also grateful for all the lecturers at the sculpture section KNUST especially Mr. Opoku- Bonsu for their criticisms and direction during my working process. I also acknowledge with gratitude to my colleagues, Mr. Albert Nii Sackey, Mr. Gabriel Bekoe, Mr. Rex Ifelaja Akinruntan, Mr. Fredrick Bamfo and all those I might have forgotten for their immense support and encouragement. I am more than grateful to my parents Mr. and Mrs. Brown and siblings for their understanding, financial support, care and believing in me in my project.



# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

The promise of a better job opportunity when migrating from illiteracy to literacy becomes an illusion when one graduates into joblessness, just like sugar and its taste, so inviting yet not allowing you into it. The reality where the ruling class imposes a kind of living onto the working class, enticing them with “consumables” to make them believe they are free and yet pre-determining their every action. The reality where the working class is no more locked in chains and kept in dungeons as of old to work against their will yet so disillusioned to believe that they are free in their own space but with bigger invisible chains attached to it.

The issue of slave trade has been a phenomenal subject that has been on the rise even after its abolishment. Barter trading which had been an integral part of the transatlantic slave trade in the aboriginal epoch of the slave trade system is a practical concern in its discussion.

In a world where migration presents itself with a lot of promises and yet gives little or nothing lays illusion. The assumption of migration, a process whereby people move from one place to another place or country may be to seek greener pastures. To many, migration, relocation from a less developed to a better developed arena seems to be an illusion. Migrants are sometimes faced with issues of racism. Some migrants moving to seek greener pastures sometimes end up working long hours and taking so little or earning next to nothing; living in constant fear of rejection and deportation, coming to grips with the reality of their illusory situation, they carry their papers and passports everywhere in readiness of proof of identity and immigrant permit. When reality hits, they constantly live with apprehension, looking at ones back in search for

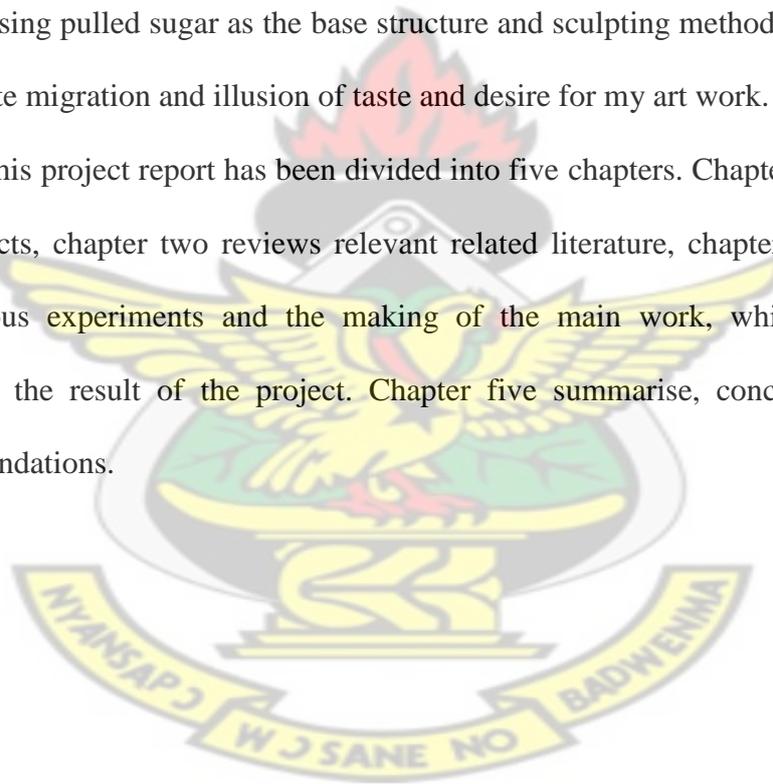
safety, the very opposite of what inspired them to migrate in search of greener pastures. This is disillusion in migration. Disillusion of a desire for a better life so near yet so farfetched. A perception of an attainable desire in migrating eludes that desire when faced with naked reality of harshness in contrast to the goal that tantalised the migration. The illusion of desire that prompts migration and change is found almost everywhere in society. This illusion many a times leads to diverse dreams or expectations, lifestyles, and a craving for particular items of life as pacifiers. Some individuals fall for illusions that presents themselves as opportunities which sometimes leads to many failed dreams constructed on the materiality of the Africans initial trade relations. The craving for sugar, teacups, jugs, saucers, plates, cutleries, rum, ammunitions, trinkets, linens and other fancy domestic items thus become points of interest and concern relating to taste, desire, and advertisement, to name a few. Linking this with Ghanaian colonial trade ideas and systems, are what were bartered for in exchange for men and gold during the transatlantic slave trade, despite it abolishment, the quest for equality, power, wealth and so on still render some people willing slaves in one way or the other just like freedom with strings attached.

The interrogating of this quest and the barter trade items in relation to taste and desire is what interests this project and sugar being one of the trade items, is worth interrogating. Sugar production and trade had a great impact on human history in many ways. It greatly influenced the development of colonies, the perpetuation of slavery, the transition to indentured labour, the migration of peoples, wars between sugar trade-controlling nations in the 19th century, and the ethnic composition and political structure of the new world. Sugar, with all its history, informs the process and content of this study. The work explores through sugar, various concepts and

ideas of taste and the desire and the tendencies of illusion that go with them. Considering Michel Foucault's sixth principle of "of other spaces", the heterotopias which functions as all the space that remains, the heterotopias seeming to have pure and simple openings yet hides serious exclusions that create a space of illusion and exposes every real space. My thesis aims at exploring ideas on taste and desire through psychoanalysis and engages the diverse heterotopias related to taste and desire, and how they manifest as disillusion in migration, using sugar as a medium to investigate the various illusions deriving from the migration.

Using pulled sugar as the base structure and sculpting method and technique, I investigate migration and illusion of taste and desire for my art work.

This project report has been divided into five chapters. Chapter one introduces the projects, chapter two reviews relevant related literature, chapter three describes the various experiments and the making of the main work, whilst chapter four discusses the result of the project. Chapter five summarise, concludes and gives recommendations.



## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter reviews some ideas on Desire and Taste. It examines certain heterotopias related to taste and desires such as advertisement and public relation, commodification, consumer behaviours inspired by taste as well as certain attitudes which becomes inevitable options. It also takes a look at some artist who have worked on desire and taste as well as confectionary art and techniques they employed since sugar is the major medium of expression in this project.

#### 2.1 An insight into Desire and Taste:

Taste and Desires are social situations that inform ones decision making, status in life and what or how one is thought of. "Taste is the source of all that one has, people and things, and all that one is for others, whereby one classifies oneself and is classified by others"( Bourdieu 1984). Hoyer and Stokburger-Sauer (2012) also notes that Taste is an identity marker that facilitates interactions and helps in constructing social relations and understanding group memberships.

According to Darwall (2003) citing Dancy explains that "Desire, is the state of being motivated, where being motivated includes taking something as a reason and being inclined to act on account of it"(p.436). Schroeder (2006) also defines desire as that which moves as to action, gives us urges, incline us to joy at it satisfaction, and incline us to sorrow at its frustration. The issue of taste and desire continues to be a social theory, Jacques Lacan confirms it by reconceptualising Frued using post-structuralism to reject attempts to link psychoanalysis with social theory, saying 'the unconscious is the discourse of the Other, that human passion is structured by the

desire of others and that we express deep feelings through the 'relay' of others.  
(Changingminds.org articles)

Relating the construct of social formations to the Ghanaian society, a successful person would be one who attains formal education, finds work, marries, procreates and attains property. To do otherwise would become a subject in the discourse of the formation and Smith (2007) Posits this by saying that, “desire” is nothing other than the state of impulses and “Drives,” which are simply desiring-machines themselves”.

Drives never exist in a free and unbound State, nor are they ever merely individual; they are always arranged and assembled by the social formation in which we find ourselves. Lacan asserts that the unconscious is inserted into the symbolic order from the ‘outside’ and is structured like a language, operating according to differential relationships in language which does not belong to the individual but is an effect of signification on the subject. The unconscious is the discourse of the ‘other’, that human passion is structured by the desire of others. Desire appears through a combination of language, culture and spaces between people, which Lacan explains through Saussure’s signifier and the signified that one’s desires are psychic representations created by their interplay, culture and history.

I hail from Cape Coast, the central region of Ghana which is well known for its influence of the colonial masters and the cradle of education. My father is a lecturer and the peak in life for me is also to become a lecturer. My friend Mavis is also from the Northern part of Ghana who learned a trade under her master in hairdressing and also looks forward to becoming a master of her own.

Smith (2007) postulates that, Theorists Marx and Freud observe that many people are by themselves unconscious of their desires and our conscious thought is determined by forces and drives that go far beyond consciousness. An individual's 'peculiar' behaviour, desire or thoughts are influenced by the external factors or social settings. And Marx claims that a person's drives and impulses – including even the unconscious ones which usually seem to be considered very personal about the individual - are themselves determined and constructed by society or “infrastructure”. For instance, someone may have an interest in becoming a lawyer. Thus the person goes through formal education, applies to the university, takes courses, attends the law school and then gets attached to a chamber: all with hopes of being called to the Bar. Whilst one may indeed have an interest in law, to which one applies oneself in a highly rational manner that interest exists as a possibility only within the context of a particular social formation: our capitalist formation. If one is capable of pursuing that interest in a determined and rational manner, it is first of all that desire, drives and impulses are themselves invested in the social formation that makes that interest possible. Whilst Marx argues that our thoughts are determined by our class and thus “class consciousness,” to Freud, man is determined by his unconscious desires which usually stem from familiar conflicts.

Many Ghanaian women perceive a “white wedding” to be the best of all weddings, the white wedding which we copied from our colonial masters: wearing a white gown to church for blessing and the cutting of cakes and throwing of flowers are all marital rites that lots of Ghanaian couples pass through without sometimes even knowing its real significance. It is a routine unconsciously embraced by the society and so to do any other type becomes a discourse of the formation. Thus the theories of Marx and Freud seem to point to the fact that unknowing to us, the forces

and drives have much hold on us in the interest of our class, our culture and social background, to the extent that they eventually come to determine our consciousness or better still our “false” consciousness. Such forces that drive our individual tastes and desires perhaps are what influence peoples’ behaviour and which thus probably drive my current study.

Once someone is interested in something, there is a possibility that the person sees himself to be lacking something (of interest). These concepts of lack usually do not come from that individual but rather externally influenced by the society. Hence lack appears to the individual through a public spectacle and already formulated standard or “infrastructure”. Lack appears only at the level of interest, because the social formation: ‘the infrastructure’, in which we have already invested our desire, has in turn produced that deficiency. Drives and influences are not within the individual’s control but are part of the capitalist infrastructure; they are not simply owned by an individual’s mental or psychic reality.

The difference between interest and desire is related to the difference between rational and irrational. “Once interests have been defined within the confines of a society, the rational is the way in which people pursue those interest and attempt to realize them”. For instance the interest for Art, becoming a lecturer or a sculptor and the channels one goes through to attain that is rational and any other becomes a discourse.

## **2.2 Consumer Behaviours Inspired by Taste**

It appears from personal observation that women who wear ‘Brazilian hair’ in Ghana especially are accorded a special status as being emancipated by society. Such a prestigious status is usually accorded the high class in Ghanaian society, as against

the wearing of other artificial yet similar brands. This prestige has fuelled the desire of the middle class, especially and occasionally the lower class, in seeking out and using such products whether the products are the original brand or fake. This is because of nostalgia or a certain belief that use of “Brazilian hair” pushes one into or gets associated with the high class nobility merely through use of the product and brand. Thus, taste becomes understood as manifested preferences and becomes objectified in consumption objects. Taste, as manifested preferences, can be viewed as an expression of social competence that seems to be socially constructed and culturally determined. In consumer activities, according to Hoyer and Stokburger-Sauer (2012) it has been extensively acknowledged that individuals use consumption objects to express their individual and social identity to their environment. It is assumed that by using certain products and services, consumers can signify their social class, occupation, lifestyle, and status (Solomon, 1983). Bourdieu (1984) additionally argues that social class and cultural capital (i.e., family upbringing, formal education, and occupational culture) are the drivers of taste expressed in consumption choices. The concept of “taste” is also epitomized in a stereotypic description of some ethnic groups in Ghana. For instance, the Krobo’s of Ghana are believed to have good taste for good beads. Individuals very often follow taste conventions that are, to a certain extent, driven by inherited cultural values, such as ethnic and religious aspects, or social class. Bourdieu (1984, p. 56), for example, notes that “taste is the source of all that one has—people and things— and all that one is for others, whereby one classifies oneself and is classified by others.” This indicates the effect of social class (as one expression of cultural influences) on social class (as one expression of cultural influences) on taste. Similarly, Gronow (1997) proposes that taste is an ideal measure for distinguishing between those who belong to “good”

society and those who do not. These, undoubtedly, have been the fundamental drive as to why and how consumers come to choose a particular product or service. On the contrary, people switch to different brands or products in order to feel unique or stand out. People select different tastes to distinguish themselves from others and they abandon tastes when others adopt them (Berger et al; 2005). Perhaps this might be one of the reasons why Nikki Minage, a hip pop musician always wears colourful wigs to distinguish herself from others, abandoning the branded usual that many woman might go for.

People diverge to maintain clear signals of identity. This emphasizes the meaning that signals are set at a social rather than individual level. Tastes attain signal value through association with groups or types of individuals, but become adulterated when members of more than one type cling to them. Thus different types of people will move away in the tastes they select, and they will abandon tastes they previously liked when they are adopted by members of other social types (Berger, et al, 2005). This could explain why someone would like a tailor-made or customised product, bringing to mind the quest of individuals to be unique, separate and apart from others so as to stand out.

Comparatively, for example, children want to show they are different from their parents; intellectuals want to show they are more thoughtful than the masses; and the original members of any cultural scene in music, style, philosophy all want to be different. The social process that lies beneath all these examples is one of deviation. People opt for tastes that distinguish them from others, and they do not hesitate abandoning those tastes which they consider have become 'corrupted' or 'cheapened'

when they feel the wrong person(s) have adopted them. And deviation is pervasive in social life.

For such exceptionality, psychology has raised the important observation that people experience drives to distinguish them as well as to belong. To Berger et al, individuals feel bad in situations where they are overly similar to others, and they fix the negative feelings by emphasizing aspects that make them different from others. Liebenstein (1950) had also argued that people search for sophistication through the procurement of unique clothing, foods, automobiles, houses, or anything else that individuals may believe will in some way set them off from the masses (p.184). Moreover, that individual demand for some items may keep decreasing because others are consuming the contrary could possibly be true as people believe that the more people switch to a certain brand or product is an indication and endorsement of its potency.

Despite the focus on individuals, it is equally important to note that individuals cannot express meanings that are not socially understood. Adolescent boys, for example, can purchase a product associated with men to reinforce their masculine self-concept, but they cannot define the meaning of that symbol. In fact, that symbol may lose meaning over time when society redefines it to mean a product for kids. This reminds me of a song by Gyedu Blay Ambulley which talks about life in the 1960s and 70s. It was clear that a man - called “guy” then - was associated with a certain lifestyle which included consuming alcohol and smoking cigarettes to be seen as or hence referenced to be living the European way of life. In recent times however, where such lifestyle does not necessarily connote a European but questionable life style, especially when health matters arise, a new cultural meaning

has been given to downgrade it as uncivilized, backward, colonial and connoting “villager”. For better understanding of this, it is very critical to look at how advertisement works to effect or make new meanings.

### **2.3 Advertisement and Public relation.**

Manipulation of desire by Advertisement is what I call “Sweet masquerade” in the sense that these acts, in a way, mask its real goals or intentions. It goes without saying that man is influenced by advertisement. Nothing makes this more obvious than the effects of marketing which are directed entirely at the manipulation of the drives with the object to influence. One is always a victim of advertisement. For instance, as I shop in supermarkets because of my desire to get quality and healthy goods, perceived by society to be so, so am I possibly, in addition to being influenced, perceived by society as wealthy. Perhaps indigenes of the coastal areas thought using the same materials equalled them to the colonial masters and thus the barter trade. Besides, the arrangement of the products, its catchy colours, packaging and brand play a crucial role in what I desire to buy. In a Gino tomato paste advert I watched, which informed and influenced my choice out of other similar products, was the promise of a healthy and delicious meal besides bringing loved ones together. This brings to mind an adage in my local Fante vernacular that “The way into a man’s heart is through his stomach,” enhancing my perception of Gino tomato paste as a recipe for good marriage. In reality, though the nicest of foods could be prepared for a man using the paste, affection from a man does not necessarily depend on that. Most people especially women buy kitchen wares, cloths, shoes and jewelleryes and etcetera that they hardly use or never use till death because they thought they might need them at a point in time or it was hard to come or even trying to avoid buying them later at an increased price. Others also buy a lot of junk if I can call it so because there was a

promotion and may think money have been saved when they have actually helped manufacturers to clear off their extra goods that they have probably already made sales for. A Jehovah Witnesses monthly subscription confirms this in their Awake, (June, 2013), captioned “Why People Buy Things They Don’t Need.” In it is stipulated that: “In planning a new purchase, a consumer often develops elaborate fantasies surrounding search for an item, finding it, and making it their own. ”Fantasy is the illusion created by the advert. Some experts suspect that buyers get so excited while shopping that they may actually experience a rush of adrenaline. Marketing expert Jim Pooler explains: “If the retailer can sense this emotional state he can tap into it and take advantage of the consumer’s elevated arousal level and weakened defences.” (Awake June, 2013 edition, pg 8).

In other words, advertisement may be used as a tool of exploitation; to excite and destabilise the constitution from thinking straight and in so doing weaken our lines of defence and make us prey to manipulation. Just like me going to buy silicone for a mould for a high heel and seeing a high heel mould on sale which I know is hard to come by as well as taking the pain of making a mould from scratch and buying it at any cost because I need it.

The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) broadcasts a documentary titled “The century of the self.” In the series, Edward Bernays, uses psychoanalysis to manipulate human behaviour. He postulates that civilization is discontent and that it was created to control the ‘inhuman’ nature in human beings; that it is too dangerous to give man his total freedom and thus must be controlled. To Bernays, people cannot be trusted to know what they wanted. This form of manipulation has been the characteristic of advertisement. Once people are situated in a society where a person

is determined by what he or she consumes the role of advertisement and for that matter the categorization of products and brands cannot be overlooked.

People may say they are changing with time anytime they follow a new trend in fashion, technology, etcetera because we do not want to be branded archaic when indeed we are just being obedient to advertisement and consumerism unconsciously because of its grip on us. Stavrakakis (2006) cited Garry Cross that: “consumerism, despite all the opposition, succeeded where other ideologies and discourses failed. Because in the late capitalist societies, consumption and consumerism, advertisement, public relations and branding, offered perhaps the best example of how new interpolations and commands can re-shape social structure by imposing their hegemonic grip on individual and group identifications and behaviour.” In other words peoples’ desires and tastes are whipped up through advertisement in order to have a sole grip on their behaviour.

The budding power of consumerism is not without desire and enjoyment. So far as individuals are still strung by identifying the marked as anybody in suit and tie being a bank manager, anybody wearing a white coat being a doctor and anybody holding a cane being a teacher and the unmarked as wearing a tee shirt and a pair of jeans makes you wretched or wearing torn cloths automatically makes you poor, then our tastes and desires are disillusioned by paradigmatic structures. And Stavrakakis (2006) points out that psychoanalytic theory along its Freudian- Lacanian collaboration paradigmatically reveals how the symbolically conditioned desire for consumption acts is stimulated by advertising fantasies and supported by the (partial) enjoyment entailed in desiring and consuming products as well as advertisements. Directing desire in specific directions means consumer culture has made a significant

shift in the way the social bond is structured in relation to satisfaction and reveals its essential role in sustaining the current. Perhaps consumerism is partially what sustained or fuelled the barter trade during the trans-Atlantic slave trade because unknown wares were advertised by means of usage which enticed parties of that era to think that using those wares equals them to the foreigners, thus hooking them to such materials and keeping them as marked till date.

Enjoyment is presented as a signifier, as an image or as a subtext, with the promise entailed in advertisements. Such promises stimulate consumer desire and the cyclical consumer culture. Vodafone, a telecommunication network in Ghana is a typical example. It promises its consumers a hundred minutes of airtime with one Ghana cedi worth of calling credit they sell in their advert an assumed promotion which is enjoyed only when calling a number with the same network. If this promotion offers more enjoyment than other networks people either ports to Vodafone or buy an extra sim card of Vodafone to benefit from the enjoyment it promised. The purchase is centred on a new brand of services with the promise of “added satisfaction” in quality connection and longer call time for minimum fee as against the supposedly normal ‘enjoyment’ offered by competitors. Such satisfaction is what paradoxically characterises Lacan’s jouissance.

Critics have often perceived advertising as a brainwashing activity which, through stimulating false desires, deepens our dependence on consumerism and capitalist exploitation. Like the promise by some advertisement that buying a particular brand of car would make women flock after you or that formal education is what defines someone as successful, people will always go to institutions irrespective

of the fees and buy cars even when they have a car already for which otherwise all becomes a discourse.

Our individual taste and desires about the good things of life informs our decision making and where they lead us. Some things seem inviting and promising from a distance when we do not yet have them. But the only way we get to know their true taste is when we get them. The question we normally ask ourselves is what is next; as the end becomes the beginning to another episode.

According to Hoyer and Stokburger-Sauer (2012) Cohen's philosophy of taste makes it clear that individuals have a natural capacity to take pleasure in certain artistic and natural objects by means of their own sensory experience. However, our taste and the things we desire affect the choices we make, the way we live and sometimes draw a boundary between the haves and the have not's. Interestingly, our perception of the things we desire to have so badly sometimes turns out to be a mirage. We go through so much to get things that are ephemeral. This is the underlying concept of my art work. The works involve numerous time-staking and tiresome processes, yet the end result is something not permanent, depicting fantasy, the subject of many other sculptors in art. Hoyer and Stokburger-Sauer (2012) , postulate that hedonic facets in consumer behaviour relate to the "multisensory fantasy and emotive aspects" of an individual's consumption experience. In light of the increasing interest in pleasure seeking aspects of consumer behaviour, it is clear that consumer taste plays a critical role in judgement and decision making, particularly for hedonic products and services. Most at times individuals or consumers invest in emotional desires rather than on cognitive deliberations. We buy electricity and water for everyday use more or less for survival and we buy a hand phone or

computer for pleasure or relaxation. But individual taste and desires have been invested strongly in hedonics such that to deny a person for a day is like putting the person's life on hold for a day. This Hoyer and Stokburger-Sauer (2012) affirms that, to Hirschman and Holbrook (1982, p. 92), hedonic facets in consumer behaviour relate to the "multi-sensory, fantasy and emotive aspects" of an individual's consumption experience. They continue to note that our personal tastes guide our decisions in choosing our neighbourhoods, decorating our homes, selecting our clothing, picking our appliances, and buying our cars. Considering aesthetics in its psychological framework, taste is viewed as being related to an individual's sense of aesthetics. And that Bourdieu (1984) argues that taste is solely determined by cultural and social status, but that cultural capital becomes objectified in consumption objects.

As consumers, we are subjected to a relentless barrage of marketing, with the aim of markets turning wants into needs. Marketers know that consumer behaviour is driven largely by emotion, so advertisements and the shopping experience itself are designed for maximum emotional appeal (Hoyer & Stokburger-Sauer, 2012). Taste thus really indeed then becomes part of a people's cultural knowledge, experiences, tastes, and world views and becomes part of the individual's cultural capital. Our tastes and desire however, are unconsciously woven around investments which become inevitable options, leaving us as prey for exploitation.

#### **2.4 "Exploitation" The Inevitable Option"**

People are no longer locked up in chains, thrown in dungeons and forced to do what they do not wish to do but rather willingly doing the same things we claim to be free of unconsciously. I wish to touch on the issue of exploitation due to its relevance to production and 'commodification'. Nobody sees a chain on the graduate who after

four year or more after completing school without a job and eventually getting an agency who recruits him to work for another institution on contract. He Works full time on contract, earning less and pays the agency being the middleman that recruited him as well. So far as it affords him of wearing a suit which society respects and get some money to feed, it covers his been exploited to be better than not working at all. To Marx once there is the need for profit, the capitalist is always guilty of exploitation. In such system operated by the bourgeoisie labour is often hired at a cost to produce a commodity to be sold at a cost that will help generated profit.

As Marx and Engels (1906) remarked in the ‘communist manifesto’ the demand for more raw materials saw the materialization and the need to explore new and other parts of the world. One of the raw materials that later came to drive the economy of most countries was “sugar” which I will use to represent different desirable situations. The realization that sugar cane flourished in the west indies gave rise to the exploration by farmers from elsewhere in Europe including Britain, France and Holland to sailed to the New World to cultivate sugarcane plantations in Brazil, Cuba, Mexico and the West Indies. Despite the benefits derived from sugar, the other side of this innocent product leaves much to be desired. Among its references includes the trans-Atlantic trade and the barter trade, exploitation, and in some way promoted racism and class divisional structure in society. as mentioned by Marx and Engels (1906) in the communist manifesto. This is evident in the entire sugar industry from field cultivation of sugarcane through the processing to the marketing of the product. This I wish to be using synonymously and metaphorically through my project. The way Sugar presents itself to me is more satiric when one considers its ‘dark’ and ‘political’ underpinnings. Prior to the growing of sugarcane on commercial scale for export, the local population was employed to work on the sugar-cane farm. As the

industry grew, large numbers of workers were needed; this possible was the beginning of the 'dark' history slavery which paved way for their search of people to work on these large farms. Slaves were therefore brought from Africa to farm the plantations. Sugar farming became so profitable that people soon referred to sugar as 'white gold', because owning a sugar plantation was said to be like owning a gold mine. For the people to have dominion over the slave trade in their specific territory, they found the need to colonize that country for easy transaction and manipulations. Man is in a continuous transition. In our quest to get a better life, we are always battling against the wind of life and at the end sit down to ask ourselves what the relevance of all that we have laboured for is. As Kehinde (2004) reiterates in Jomo Kenyatta's (1968) *Suffering without Bitterness*, the aspirations and yearnings of the Kenyan people from the Mau Mau war during the colonial era is reflected upon. "Our march to freedom has been long and difficult. There have been times of despair, when only the burning conviction of the rightness of our cause has sustained us. Today, the tragedies and misunderstandings of the past are behind us. The hard-gotten independence has turned a curse. Now, Africans go back and enslave themselves to the very people they fought so hard to get freedom from. Can humans ever be satisfied with the things they so much yearn for? As I also question how free is the freedom we claim we have?"

## **2.5 "Desire" Commodified**

Davis (2003) In his pen postulated that, self-understanding is mediated by the consumption of goods and images and, self-definition depends on the appropriation of the traits of commodities. We know who we are and we judge the quality of our inner experience through identification with the things we buy. Self-commodification involves the reorganization of our personal lives and relationships on the model of market relations. This adaptation is well illustrated by the recent practice of "personal

branding,” a strategy of cultivating a name and image of ourselves that we manipulate for economic gain. I must agree with Hayward (2007) too in her lecture As she posits that, it is an industrial machine that makes desire take form, objectifies it, through the images and representations of ideal bodies which we as individuals can then pay to consume. Desire or rather the creation of desire is, then, an essential role of capitalism. It appeals to the consumer as an individual to paying to watch someone he or she cannot be but can fantasize as being for a couple of hours. Since our desires are mere “images”, “fantasies” or “representations”. To (Colebrook, 2002: 99) therefore one lacks what he or she does not have and can only obtain his or her identity, be a subject in his or her own right, through this essential lack of desire. One’s subjectivity therefore depends on repressed desire. Psychoanalysis argues that, paradoxically however, that we spend the rest of our lives in pursuit of that earlier sense of plenitude, even though attaining it means a loss of self, or death (Colebrook: 98). Davis (2003) Also argues that, Social identities remain but as one is turned into a consumer, they are increasingly shaped and conditioned by patterns of consumption. Personal branding follows the logic of product branding step for step. A successful brand, as the advertisers say, “knows itself.” Marketers must know the characteristics of their product or service and what it promises to deliver and use this knowledge to focus and position the product. To self-brand, therefore, individuals must get in touch with their skills, the “selling parts” of their personality, and any and every accomplishment they can take credit for. Then they must consciously craft these traits into a relentlessly focused image and distinctive persona.

Commodity fetishism according to Marx is an industrialized culture which is theoretically central to the Frankfurt School philosophy, especially in the work of the sociologist Theodor W. Adorno, which describes how the forms of commerce invade

the human psyche; how commerce casts a person into a role not of his or her making; and how commercial forces affect the development of the psyche. And that to the consumer, the cultural goods and services sold in the market appear to offer the promise of a richly developed and creative individuality, yet the inherent commodification severely restricts and stunts the human psyche, so that the man and the woman consumer has little "time for myself", because of the continual personification of cultural roles over which he and she exercise little control. In personifying such cultural identities, the person is a passive consumer, not the active creator, of his or her life; the promised life of individualistic creativity is incompatible with the communalist, commercial norms of bourgeois culture.

## **2.6 Food Art, Desire and Taste**

Many artists have used different kinds of food to express their ideas on various issues and sugar has been one of them. While some used it to discuss racial and political issues others also use it to raise issues of everyday life. Shelley Miller is one of such artists who work with sugar and other food ingredients like meringue icing. She ties herself with her use of sugar to notions of excess, consumption, and a bitter intimate historical relationship to colonialism. I was greatly influenced with her technique, working style and concept of using sugar in that whilst her work was related to parallels between the history of the sugar industry and its remnants, I was looking at sugar metaphorically and conceptually as delusional agents in decision making or migration. Her installations are edible and ephemeral, and rely on their ultimate decay to convey meaning. Her work, "stained" which was inspired by a trip to Brazil, (largest sugar producers), whose time of colonization, saw the country's industry and economic production relying mainly on imported African slaves. Miller

appropriated the use of naval imagery for her sugar-based tile installations to represent the industry's foundation of slavery and exploitation. Open Space 2011 states that the ephemeral nature of Millers installation was "like history itself, eroding and dissolving over time, subject to the distortions of told and retold stories" and suggests that everything fades with time—including the guilt of excess or consumptive processes that create wealth for some through the exploitation of others. Her work Stained was not as sweet as it smelled. It was a reminder that sugarcoating can make a bitter pill more palatable for a varied art-viewing public, but we need to make sure it doesn't go down too easily. Although the work's decadent facade crumbled, mirroring the collapse of the colonial apparatus, what should not dissolve is the memory of the stain left behind. (Open space 2011)

In the same vein Brendan Jamison, a sugar cubist works in a variety of organic materials including wood, wool, wax and sugar. Each material represents a different strand to his work which is developed concurrently, as he changes his focus from one material to another. Each time he revisits a material his knowledge and understanding of its properties deepens, thereby taking his practice to another level. His use of sugar cubes is what interests me because of its relation to my work in terms of medium. Brendan Jamison's sculptures are a set of contradictions: masculine-feminine, fragile-solid, organic-architectural. I was really influenced by Jamison works and materials since it was the main medium for my project as well as the way he exhibits his works which I borrowed in my earlier presentations of my sugar works. His latest work as seen in figure 2.2, 'Helen's Tower' (2009) is a replica of a Scottish Baronial styled tower built in 1850 in Bangor, Northern Ireland. This sculpture alludes to a magical world of fairy tales, fantasy and childhood, other recurring themes which run through Jamison's practice. These issues I also address in my work as part of the agents of

disillusion in decision making. The structure of these latest works appears solid and indestructible; they do not hover precariously like the earlier pieces. The attention to detail and the craftsmanship of the roof, turrets and staircase of ‘Helen’s Tower’ is phenomenal, demonstrating the artist’s growing confidence with his materials. (Sanna Moore, 2009)

Yinka Shonibare MBE, known for using colourful fabrics(Dutch wax-printed cotton) in dioramas that explore race and colonialism, post-colonialism and cultural identity within the contemporary context of globalization is another artist who though not a sugar artist really inspired my works with his colours, concepts and execution. He uses painting, sculpture, photography and film for his works which challenges the notions of cultural identities. Figure 2.3 and figure 4. displays two of his works that fascinates me most to borrow for the purpose of my work is “The Cake man and the Scramble for Africa” Figure 2.3, Cake man is a life-sized sculpture of an aristocrat dressed in elaborate Victorian dress made out of Shonibare’s trademark Dutch wax African batik fabric, which through its Indonesian design references Asia and the continents’ colonial practices. The material references European colonial practices in Africa and, in the context of Dreaming Rich, draws a comparison between the perspectives of colonial wealth and power in Africa and China. Cake man subverts an act of heavy labour into an image of decadence by depicting a man bent double carrying a precariously balanced tower of colourful cakes on his back. I similarly used colourful cakes not with his medium but covered edible cakes as masqueraded situations that promise bliss but giving little or nothing at all. In this figure Shonibare re-imagines a reconstruction of the trappings of power, bringing into sharp focus the contradiction faced by all societies which aspire to do well and “get rich”; where the

process of creating vast amounts of wealth relies on the hardships of a labour class.  
(Pearl Lam Galleries)

Kara Walker is another artist who explores race, gender, sexuality, violence and identity in her work. Kara Walker has courted controversy with her provocative exploration of slavery in America and its connection to present-day issues involving race and gender. Her recent installations which interest me enough to reference her, the “subtlety” is a commission she undertook in collaboration with Creative time as seen in figure 2.4 and 2.5. According to Kara Rooney from the Brooklyn Rail (critical perspectives of Arts, politics and Culture), At the behest of Creative Time Kara E. Walker has confected: A Subtlety, or the Marvellous Sugar Baby, an Homage to the unpaid and overworked Artisans who have refined our Sweet tastes from the cane fields to the Kitchens of the New World on the Occasion of the demolition of the Domino Sugar Refining Plant. The storage shed of the Domino sugar factory, on the East River in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, was built in 1927 to hold mountains of raw sugar due for whitening. The plant was shuttered a decade ago, yet its crumbling walls still drip with molasses. The whole reason for refining sugar is to make it white. Even the idea of becoming “refined” seems to dovetail with the Western way of dealing with the world. While the word artisan is a bit vague, the subject of sugar is certainly in keeping with the artist's career-long investigation of the historical wages of slavery and racism. Sugar was a key leg of the so-called triangle trade that traversed the Atlantic between the 16th and 19th centuries, as European slavers brought their human cargo to the Caribbean in exchange for molasses, which was then transported back to the Continent to be made into rum. Meanwhile, the subtlety of the title refers to sugar sculptures that once adorned the tables of the rich and powerful in Medieval Europe—which, given the rarity and expense of the

substance at the time, were meant as displays of wealth.(Paul Laster 2014)from Time out New York. Ms. Walker has written: “Sugar crystallizes something in our American Soul. It is emblematic of all Industrial Processes and of the idea of becoming white. White Being equated with pure and ‘true’ it takes a lot of energy to turn brown things into white things; A lot of pressure.”(Blake GOPNIK 2014) I share Kara’s work in terms of material and context.

# KNUST





Figure 2.1 Shelley Miller (2011) "*Stained*" 300 x 425, Royal icing  
Source: <http://www.shelleymlillerstudio.com/stained.php>



Figure 2.2: Brendon Jamison (2011), *Helen's Tower*, 468x600, Sugar cubes

Source: <http://webecoist.momtastic.com/2011/04/18/sweet-structures-art-architecture>



Figure 2.3: Yinka Shonibare (2013), *The Cake Man*, 315 x 88 x 120 cm (124 x 34 5/8 x 47 1/4 in.), Dutch wax African batik fabric  
Source: <http://www.yinkashonibaremb.com>



Figure 2.4 Kara Walker (2014) “*A subtlety or The Marvellous sugar baby*” 554 x 370, Molasses and unrefined sugar  
Source: <http://www.timeout.com/newyork/art/kara-walker-a-subtlety-or-the-marvelous-sugar-baby>



Figure 2.5 Kara Walker (2014) “*A subtlety or The Marvellous sugar baby*” 554 x 370, Molasses and unrefined sugar  
Source: <http://www.timeout.com/newyork/art/kara-walker-a-subtlety-or-the-marvelous-sugar-baby>

I also employed a lot of sugar art technique without which my work might not have come to fruition and some of these techniques include:

**Pulled Sugar:** As seen in figure 2.6, is a technique which involves heating or boiling granulated sugar sufficiently to become liquid or syrupy. Then carefully pouring the sugar syrup or liquid onto a silicone mat, marbled surface or a clean cemented floor. You then add edible food colour at this stage if necessary. Using the mat or fork to fold the sugar onto itself over and over again until the sugar is cool enough for you to touch with your hands. You then stretch out (or "pull") the sugar and begin to fold the sugar again, allowing it to absorb air and become shiny. Once this is done, you can begin sculpting the sugar by hand into the shapes you desire. This technique is what I used to model my earlier works of tea cups, earthen ware, teapots, plates and saucers.

**Blown Sugar:** To make blown sugar, as seen in figure 2.7, it has to be boiled or melted and pulled first. The pulled sugar is placed on a special rubber pump so that while you pump or "blow" the sugar, you can mould it by hand into a desired shape. You then use a fan to cool the sculpture, making sure that you rotate either the fan or the sculpture, so that your creation does not lose its shape.

**Cast Sugar:** Cast sugar as seen in figure 2.8 is also obtained by pouring liquid sugar or syrup into moulds and leaving it to cool. This produces very strong pieces of sugar, which are great structural supports for large sugar sculptures.

**Pastillage:** as seen in figure 2.9 is obtained by mixing gelatine, water and confectioners' sugar to create a paste. The paste is then shaped by hand as one wants and left to dry. The end product will be hard but breakable. Once the sugar has hardened, it can be shaped using tools like grinders, cutters, sandpaper and files.

Rock sugar: As seen in figure 2.10 is also made by heating or boiling sugar until it becomes liquid and then mixing it with a small amount of royal icing. The heat from the liquid sugar forces the air in the icing to expand very quickly. You then pour the now much larger volume of liquid into a lined dish and put it in a flash freezer to cool. The end result is a porous, pumice-like sugar, which is often used by professional sugar sculptors to create underwater scenes.

Spun sugar: Is made by dipping a fork or a special tool into heated, liquid sugar and flicking it back and forth two saucepan handles that you have positioned jutting out over the edge of a kitchen surface. The flicking action will throw the liquid sugar off your fork in long, thin strings. The strings will come to rest stretched across the saucepan handles. You keep going until you have as many strings as you need, then you mould the strings into your desired shape. Long, thin strings of spun sugar can be used to create birds' nests, cages, baskets, spirals and more as seen in figure 2.11.

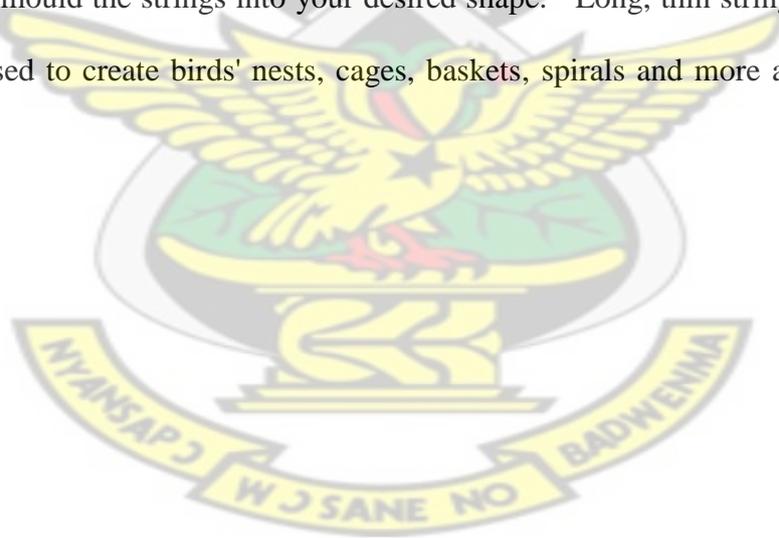




Figure 2.6 chockyfoodie (2010), *untitled* 500x375, pulled sugar  
Source: Farm4.static.flickr.com



Figure 2.7 Michele Guerra (2011) Blue bird blown sugar figurine 1024 × 952, Blown sugar  
Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/expresssugardesigns/5934031111/>



Figure 2.8 Rebecca Holland (2010) *Cast sugar and polyurethane blocks* 500x333, Sugar  
Source: <http://www.imrevolting.net/?p=8305>



Figure 2.9 Bittle (2009) *Beach chair wedding cake topper*, 900 x 675 Pastillage  
Source: <http://cakecentral.com/g/i/1460087/the-chairs-are-made-of-pastillage-and-royal-icing-this-was-my-first-attempt-to-make-figures-with-pastillage-the-beach-towel-and-flip-flops-are-fondant/>



## CHAPTER THREE

### MATERIALS, TECHNIQUES AND METHODS

This chapter discusses the making of the practical works of this project from exploration to the final exhibition pieces, describing how they were achieved, the materials and techniques used as well as the various methods used to achieve the final work. A lot of observational studies were made of everyday things we use, specifically domestic things. The subject of migration and disillusion pertaining to my project made me comb a lot through the Cape Coast Castle museum which seemingly houses most of the historic artefact of Ghana. My interests were mostly on objects and trinkets that were used for barter during the transatlantic slave trade which still has hold on us to still barter for as if they are inevitable. Unfortunately the museum security prevented me taking shots of such artefacts. Constant visits, however, finally enabled me take a few shots on their blind side to be used as reference materials for the making of my artefacts. During daily activities too I find myself looking at and taking shot of other “consumables” like bags, fabrics, shoes, gadgets, and continental dishes which are perceived to supposedly determine a person’s social status. I also looked a lot at various types of candies, customed and themed cakes, types of sugars and inspirations from artist like Brendon Jamison for his sugar cube architectures; Ivan Dey for his confectionary works; Shirley Miller for her use of royal icing and others which I will be mentioning.

My work commenced with me collecting and buying tools and materials as seen in figure 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 for my work (Hand mixer, roller, silicon spatulas, impression mats, gum tragacant, food paste, spray gun, gelatine, white fat, and cutters to mention but a few.) and since most of them were difficult to come by, I started

looking online to buy some. I ended up buying every tool or material I meet in the market with the thought that they could be used for sugar art though not necessarily that I will actually use it. I coveted tools and materials ranging from downloaded pictures, videogames and videos for references to coveting every tool that can aid my work irrespective of whether I can use them or would use them or not. Wilton industries, a popular brand which deals with everything about cakes, candies, tools and materials to mention but a few, promises its consumers perfection in confetti world with the use of their products

### **3.1 Tools and Materials**

Images in figure 3.1,3.2 and 3.3 are tools and materials used for the execution of the works,most of these tools and materials I bought were as a result of they being scarce and chancing upon them to buy and not because I would use all but because I might need them. The tools and materials I purchased were mostly branded and whilst one brand, for example, would come with a promise of perfection, another would promise longevity of use. With the tools I acquired, I started exploring with sugar, modelling some of the objects that were bartered for during the Trans-Atlantic slave trade like tea mugs, saucers, spoons and jugs. The modelling and production process involve boiling, pulling and modelling. These I metaphorically associate with movement, migration and change, all in pursuit of taste and desire, the end-product being an object or state achieved and/or acquired, yet never satisfied - an illusion - all depicted through the sugar making process.



Figure 3.1 Gum tragacanth,Piping bags, cream of tartar, measuring spoons, and essence.



Figure 3.2 Imprint mats, silicon moulds, plangers cutters, hand mixer,smoothers, wax papers,pallets,and cling film.



Figure 3.3 Eddible colours, pipping tips, meringue powder stencils, edging scissors and sugar paste modelling tools

### 3.2 Preliminary Studies on pieces created

Inspiration for the sculpture pieces I made were drawn from various sources, including disillusion, as far as human behaviour is concerned, and influenced by taste and desire, to the point of decision making. I question the real essence of human struggle, how we carve social status with luxuries of life, only to acquire them and yet never feel satisfied or better still to want more. In pursuit of such a goal, to portray the illusion of human taste and desire, I gathered a lot of materials to illustrate the idea and concept in drawings as preliminary studies of everyday use object as seen in figure 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, and 3.7 that served as reference materials for the pieces i created. The illustrations are preliminary studies of some of the everyday use objects that I created and which I will be referring to during my exploration and final execution stage when necessary.

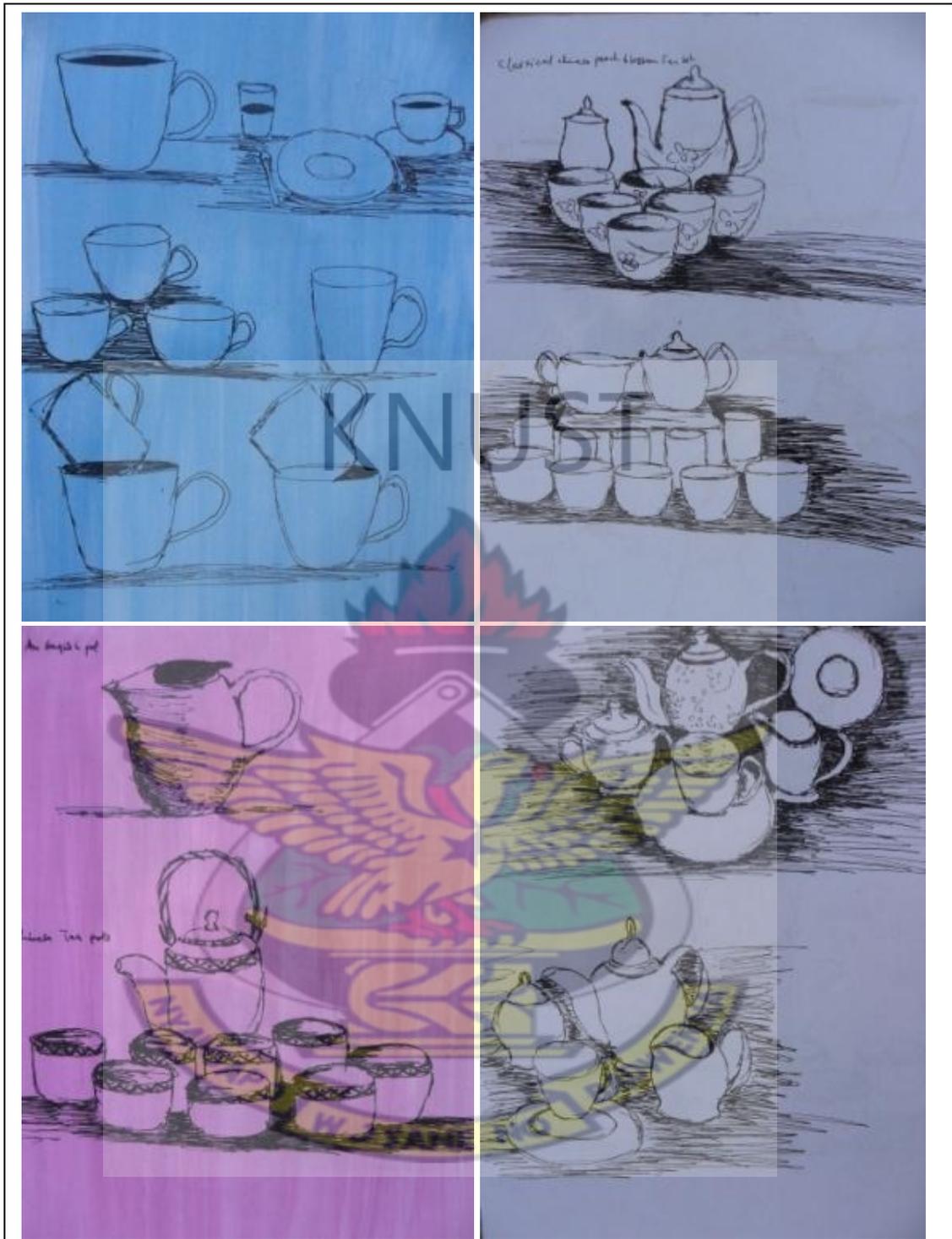


Figure 3.4. Preliminary studies of some tea sets, with felt tips.

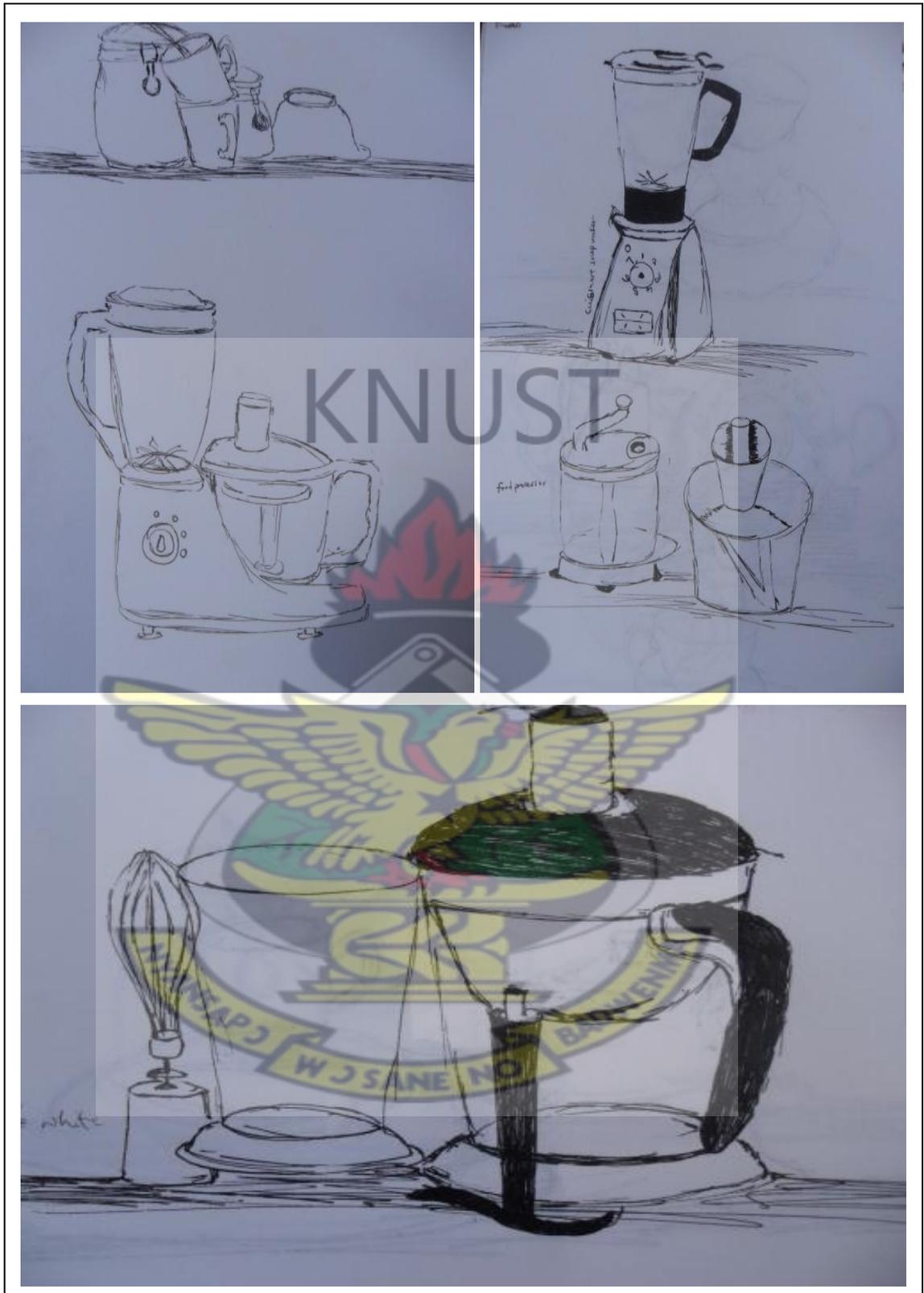


Figure 3.5. Studies of grinding materials with felt tips.



Figure 3.6 Early studies of various bags, trunk and eceolac, with colored pencils before settling on “potomapos” vessel



Figure 3.7 Early studies of patched cloth known as “asaasawa” in coloured pencils.

### 3.3 Exploration of concept with sugar

My exploration started with the initial studies of tea sets (figure 3.4), most of which were inspired by the barter trade objects I saw at the Cape Coast Castle museum. The conception of these tea sets is from some Ghanaian attitudes, in terms of acculturation and the 'wanna be' life style which was quite an interesting issue to be explored. It is common to see the youth, who, influenced by foreign music, for example, mimic hip pop dancing, and even try speaking like the 'white man' or the Westerner and yet ending up unlike any. To whit is what is termed 'lafa' (locally acquire foreign accent). Another interesting subject were the type of tea sets which inspired what some Ghanaians consider as breakfast and for that matter some Ghanaians' attitude toward breakfast. Whilst the average Ghanaian's breakfast is maybe leftover food from the previous supper, to some people this is unheard of. Such practice the consumption of western style breakfast, a menu suited to the Westerners' weather conditions and survival. Hot breakfast with Liptons and the likes are taken by our seeming 'high' class society to the point of mimicking the foreign Westerner's lifestyle, sometimes even to wearing suits so as to be considered formally dressed for table. High class society consume such lifestyle which has become a status symbol or structure that people just fill because it has already been laid. Indeed this could be considered part of the indoctrination or residue of colonialism or the end result of acculturation through contact with the 'white man'. Such a lifestyle is acquired not necessarily because of convenience but due to a perception of status, of being affiliated to the 'high' class and the 'colonial master' - a lifestyle perceived as good and worthy to acquire in Ghanaian society. Nevertheless, considering our weather conditions, the type of work we do and other cultural and nutritional factors, sticking to our local Ghanaian foods might probably be best. And the attitude of consuming so

called 'international' dishes is relegating most of Ghanaian traditional or staple food to the background as people are now being mostly inconsiderate in what they feed on, apart from even the foreign breakfast culture of "Lipton and tea."

With regard to figure 3.4, thus, the breakfast set here makes a metaphorical link to the chain that still lingers from the colonies to the colonial masters in terms of behaviour and aspiration. The types of tea set design also bring to the fore the cultural iconic designs of the Western culture.

After conceiving and drawing out the idea, I began with the experimentation having at the back of my mind some of the processes sugar cane passes through to becoming sugar, the working procedure in sugar factories and the activities of slave and sugar trade. My process was to investigate the mentioned influences. I started preparing pulled sugar as described in chapter two by boiling sugar and water into a syrup on a coal pot which will further be processed onto be used for modelling. This stage I relate to initial urge, boiling or struggle in a desire for change and preparations one goes through as seen in figure 3.8. I then poured the sugar syrup evenly on a clean cemented surface and added edible food colour to it at this stage. And using a fork I folded the putty sugar onto itself over and over again until the sugar was cool enough for me to touch with my hands for further processing as seen in figure 3.9. Which I relate to the decision taken to consume a particular object of one's desire; ready to be pulled into consuming an object of desire. I then hanged the putty sugar on a nail as seen in figure 3.10 and started stretching out (or "pulling") the putty sugar to fold the sugar over and over again, allowing it to absorb air and become shiny. This I used to illustrate the process of change, movement, striving towards achievement of the desired. Once this was done, the pulled sugar was ready for modelling or

manipulation. Unfortunately the pulled sugar rocked up and later flaked as seen in figure 3.11, because it was undercooked thereby spoiling the end process and whole procedure. Over cooking also burns and melts the end products for modelling, so I had to start the whole process over again to evenly cook the sugar syrup so as to get the desired consistency and texture. And this I related to the pain of a disillusion; attained yet disappointed; the real state of the illusion realised; the awakening and the awareness to disillusion. After getting a pliable evenly cooked pulled sugar, I modelled with the coiling technique into tea set ready for presentation as seen in figure 3.12. And this I relate to the moulded consumer and the urge for the foreign taste; symbol of the acculturation.

This whole process of making the tea sets, I relate to taste and desire which deludes our decision making, in the sense that, I boil and melt sugar which change from one state to another. But its end product is delusional because the candy tea sets are not real; the candy or toffee spoon is not even a spoon at all. Before I pull the sugar, it is in a certain state or condition: fine like sand then I take the sugar on a journey, a movement from that fine sandy state to a liquid state and subjected it to heat till it reconditions into a putty pliable state ready for modeling. From sandy to liquid or syrup state, to pliable putty state, there has been a movement or relocation. The disenchantment comes in here where if the putty sugar is not pulled, the whole putty sugar will turn into crystal sugar, unappetizing and might either melt or get powdery. So it begins another illusory journey of it being pulled into a different state where it can be moulded into cups and plates and spoons etcetera; the illusion of change. The pulled sugar is illusory and manifests in man-made cups and saucers and plate and kettles. No single state or condition but a mirage of ideas – cups, baskets, bags, plates, crowns, all of different colours for which one cannot say this is it but is

illusory. The disillusion here is reflected in the condition of the objects being like the objects and yet not like the real objects in their state. Tea sets but not tea sets per se but an idea of it; spoon but not real spoon but an idea a reflection of it, just like it but unlike it. This relates to Lacan's means in his object petit a as if you are in but not. This is the disenchantment; this is the disappointment. Put the candy spoon in your mouth and you will see it is not a spoon at all but toffee; just sugar moved, taken on a journey, migrated from its original state to a new condition, the disillusion of it. The same way the very things that we invest our desires in are like structures that we just fill because lacks are introduced into our lives and nothing of our own. *Urban Landscape* (Figure 3.13), shows an installation of stainless steel cooking wares that has the appearance of Beijing's Landscape. This landscape though not made out of sugar but utensils are of interest to this project since though they are metals are part of the desirable things for the barter trade. As John Stomberg states: "His materials are both objects of desire and physical manifestations of the systems (social, political, cultural, and economic) in which they operate: it is precisely the trade in commodities such as cooking tools that is fueling the booming Chinese economy, which is in turn driving the modernization of China's cities. The implications of *Urban Landscape*: Beijing makes the viewer think about this rapid economical modernization that China is under.



Figure 3.8 Preparing pulled sugar.



Figure 3.9 Putty stage of pulled sugar



Figure 3.10 Pulling putty sugar.



Figure 3.11 Undercooked spoilt pulled sugar process.



Figure 3.12 Finished piece of pulled sugar coiled into tea sets.



Figure 3.13 Zhang Wang (2006) *“Urban Landscape”* - Beijing photograph 640 x 426, Kitchen utensils  
Source: [www.artnet.com](http://www.artnet.com)



Figure 3.14 Finished piece of grinding stone, earthenware bowl and a blender made with pulled sugar.

Using the pulled sugar technique again (refer to pulled sugar in chapter two) ,I modelled by the coiling method a grinding stone,earthenware bowl and it crusher and an electric blender as seen in figure 3.5, and 3.14.. This relates to a movement from simple, basic wants to complex desires and tastes. Besides indoctrination, residues of colonialism and acculturation from the contact with the ‘white man’ my next subject of interest was citizenship, reflected in the various types of citizen using domestic items found in the kitchen: the grinding stone, earthenware bowl and its crusher and a modern electric blender. The grinding stone, a traditional mechanical tool which aids in grinding food is mostly often kept outside the kitchen for easy access and use by every young female. Such an artefact has been in use from time immemorial, so many years back in my village, and its use formed part of home training. Later the earthenware bowl came to be used. It served a good purpose for easier grinding and also doubled up as a bowl for eating. Owing to its double task, earthenware bowls were purchased and used by many and are found in the kitchen in different styles and size. Then, with acculturation, appeared the electric blender - a multi tasker - that could grind more amounts of edibles easily and far more quickly than either the grinding stone or earthenware pots. This single object, in the course of time, has become the centre of attraction in the modern kitchen. It comes in different styles, with different brand names and has different countries of production, all converging like foreigners in Ghanaian kitchens, yet accepted and approved as naturalised immigrants and permanent residents - now having acquired citizenship status, a constant reminder of our tastes and desires which never seem to be satisfied.

In the process of my exploration of my journey through sugar, I started exploring with fondant and other edible icings for expression. I took a look at artist such as Brendon Jamison, Ivan Dey and Shelley Miller and was quite impressed by

their works by their use of material and concept. I continued exploring into consumables with domestic items found in the home to the extent that I resorted to experimental exploration with cake and fondant which led to the production of my exhibits. My early studies into various bags of different shapes and colours as seen in figure 3.6 made me think of migration in the sense that people travel or migrate to various places with their belongings, It is a common phenomenon for one to think migrating into the unknown might be the missing object of desire but one wonders if one's desires can ever be satisfied. People do not normally travel without their belongings but when they do, those belongings are kept in bags or containers of different kinds. In the same way does individual taste and desires are been invested into something before decisions are made thus weaving my concept around the trunk and "ecolac or potomantos" which I call "vault of dreams".

My "vault of dreams" (trunk and ecolac) is a satirical metaphor that points ironically to the higher desires by people to get married but probably divorcing later. This pushes me to question the desires by many singles to migrate into such institution. Migration or Exodus, a seemingly movement from one place to another basically for greener pastures to satisfy ones wants also inspires my "potomanto" bag. During long vacations on campus, one sees fellow students running here and there in a quest to acquire visas to travel abroad so they can come back to campus with new gadgets, cars, clothes and bags plus earn the name "Borga" by friends and fellow course mates. Though these utopian countries, perceived as Shangri-La or ideal dreamlands preach equality and equal rights, the very students who manage to get there come face-to-face with racial discrimination at its best and yet have to endure them, the reason being that they supposedly receive higher remuneration as compared to that in their homeland despite the demeaning treatments.

As shown in figure 3.15, I prepared royal icing by mixing egg white and powdered sugar to crump coat (first coat of the mixture to hold crumbs together) a squared cake to be covered with fondant to be used as the trunk. The conception of my exhibition theme came to mind now: as taste, disguise, veiling and unveiling came to mind. The idea that one has to cut into a covered or frosted cake to actually know the type of cake it is, and feels its taste before deciding whether to eat more or drop it forever presented itself for my investigation. It connected to that which relates to what informs one's tastes and desires in leading to decision making and what happens after; just like advertised products and their promises have to be engaged to experience the promised. If it is advertised that "close up" toothpaste gives a healthy strong white teeth, you might have to actually use it first to confirm it will give you a strong white teeth which by then would be true or false.

Next I made fondant (a mixture of glucose syrup and powdered sugar). As seen in figure 3.19, the process goes through sifting the powdered sugar, making the fondant and rolling them to flat sheets to be used. I coloured fondant to a black colour, rolled it into flat sheets and used it to cover my squared crump coated cake as seen in figure 3.16, to be further worked on to become a trunk. Interpreting the cake into a trunk drew my attention to the very issue that I was dealing with that, (By merely following instructions on how to prepare and use fondant to cover cakes, sticking fondant unto fondant, is the concept of the status quo: of what is in society; the idea of following laid down structures and of that which is inherited and thus not of my making).

Next I rolled a red coloured fondant, and used a pastry cutter to cut crescent moons out of them. These I stuck onto the black fondant covered cake which I had

painted with black edible colour as seen in figure 3.17. The trunk is a reference to issues concerning social influence: class structures, and to some extent marriage. It is a norm to have a trunk and “chop box” in secondary school whose earlier use was associated with students from rich and affluent homes. Now the “potomanto” or “ecolac” has come to substitute as a status symbol: the symbolic trunk in the marriage rites whereby the trunk is filled by the groom with African wax print or “Holland” to the bride’s family to seek for her hand in marriage. The issue of marriage too has been the desire or aspiration of many bachelors and spinsters who now flood prayer camps, churches and other places to fulfil the lack of securing a lifetime partner.





Figure 3.15 Crumpcoating of the cake trunk with royal icing.



Figure 3.16 Covering of the cake trunk with fondant.



Figure 3.17 Cutting and sticking of crescent shapes of fondant onto covered cake trunk



Figure 3.18 Royal icing, coloured and ready to be used for coating of cubes for my exhibition pieces.

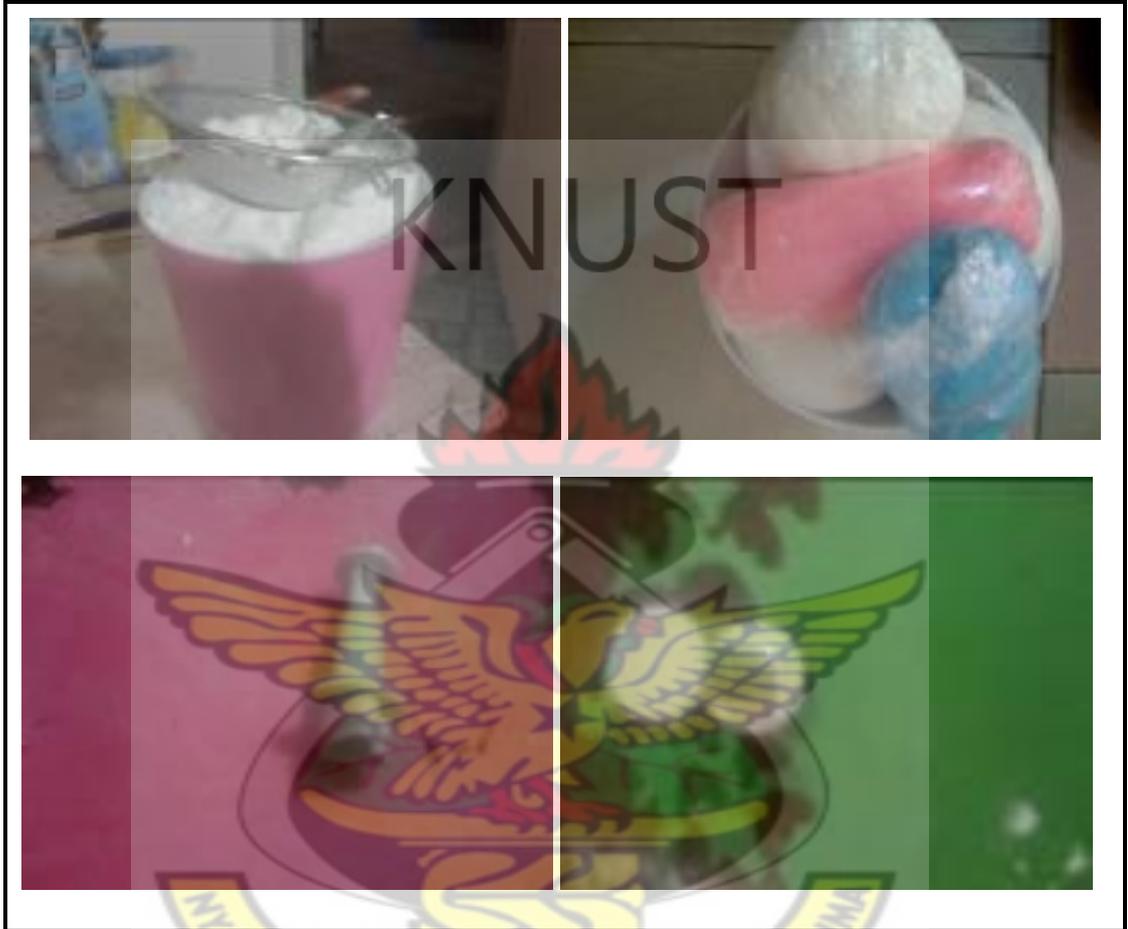


Figure 3.19 Sifting, making and rolling fondant to flat sheets.

Figure 3.7 shows the preliminary studies of the patched cloth, also known as the “asasaawa cloth” I continued exploring on in my journey through sugar. And still with the process of making fondant as seen in figure 3.19, I rolled it into flat sheets and cut it for my edible sugar bed which I also call the “bed of dreams”. I achieved this by laying the rolled fondant side by side and joining them with food colour in a striped motion in the manner of a patched work as seen in figure 3.20.

I got the idea for my “bed of dreams” from the “asasaawa cloth” which is known in Ghana for its different offcuts of colourful pieces of African prints sewn together to form the cloth. Perhaps the initial owners of these pieces took them to different occasions and functions to look their best. The brand, name of cloth, colour as well as price perhaps move most consumers or patronisers to buy fabrics for which ever occasion. This could be because of the prestige accorded to using such cloths. Lots of these pieces of African prints are left with tailors and seamstresses who sometimes join them into one piece to sell. Any time I wear my dress made of “asasaawa cloth” my interest is heightened by the various pieces of African prints joined together, the number of peoples - original owners who took the fabric to the tailor or seamstress- and who owned the ‘better’ part of each piece in the ‘asasaawa’ that am wearing and if I can confidently boast that the piece that I am wearing is mine, when I know that I am wearing the ‘leftover’ of peoples taste and desires in that cloth which looks so not because I made it so but that, they were the only available pieces to be joined. Auntie Kakra an indigene of Cape Coast that I usually buy the ‘asasaawa’ from says that some years back, she used her clothes for barter trading (to exchange her “asasawa for foodstuff in the market). Perhaps again the colourful nature of the cloth is what makes the market women want to own a piece. I used colourful fondants to depict my “bed of dreams” because of the effect colour has on

individuals and because it symbolically re-echoes Foucault's concept of the heterotopias in 'of other spaces' where iconic representation of 'spaces' or 'units' congregate to form a whole. The use of different colours of fondants for the bed therefore makes a metaphorical reference to slavery, sugar factory or industry where individual drawn from different sources and walks of life and converge as workers. One issue that became key within such industrial space is the issue of exploitation. The issue of exploitation was also a critical subject in Yinka Shonibare's 'Scramble for Africa' as seen in figure 3.21. I was not only inspired by his use of the "African" prints but also the colossal issue of exploitation and colonialism. My use of the 'asaasawa' concept was symbolic of Shonibare's work. Scramble for Africa discusses the exploration of late Victorian England and its territorial expansion into Africa during the 1880s. The "scramble" for Africa by leading European and world powers resulted in the 'mapping-up' of the continent, Africa. This act was formalized at the Berlin Conference of 1884-85. Unlike my work "Bed of dreams" figure 3.20 and 3.33 which uses colours to represent different countries and for that matter territories or colonies in Africa; Shonibare's work depicts the historic gathering, showing various statesmen huddled around a table with a large map of Africa, eagerly staking their claims. For me the entire 'bed' with the drapery-like 'landscape' is a representation of the topology of Africa. In Shonibare's interpretation of Scramble for Africa, the heads of state are unusually headless--and equally mindless in their hunger for what Belgian King Leopold called 'a slice of this magnificent cake'. Scramble for Africa was presented upon a raised platform that is lit from underneath, giving it a heightened sense of visual drama. Like actors upon a stage, the headless leaders gesticulate to one another as they scramble for the riches of the continent which I believe is similar to the current behaviour of most of our African leader. It is now common among

African countries or their leaders looking up to the ‘worlds powerful economies’ or ‘developed countries’. Ghana’s budgets seem incomplete without foreign aids or donor partners. This has in a way turned the table of slavery or the ‘scramble’.

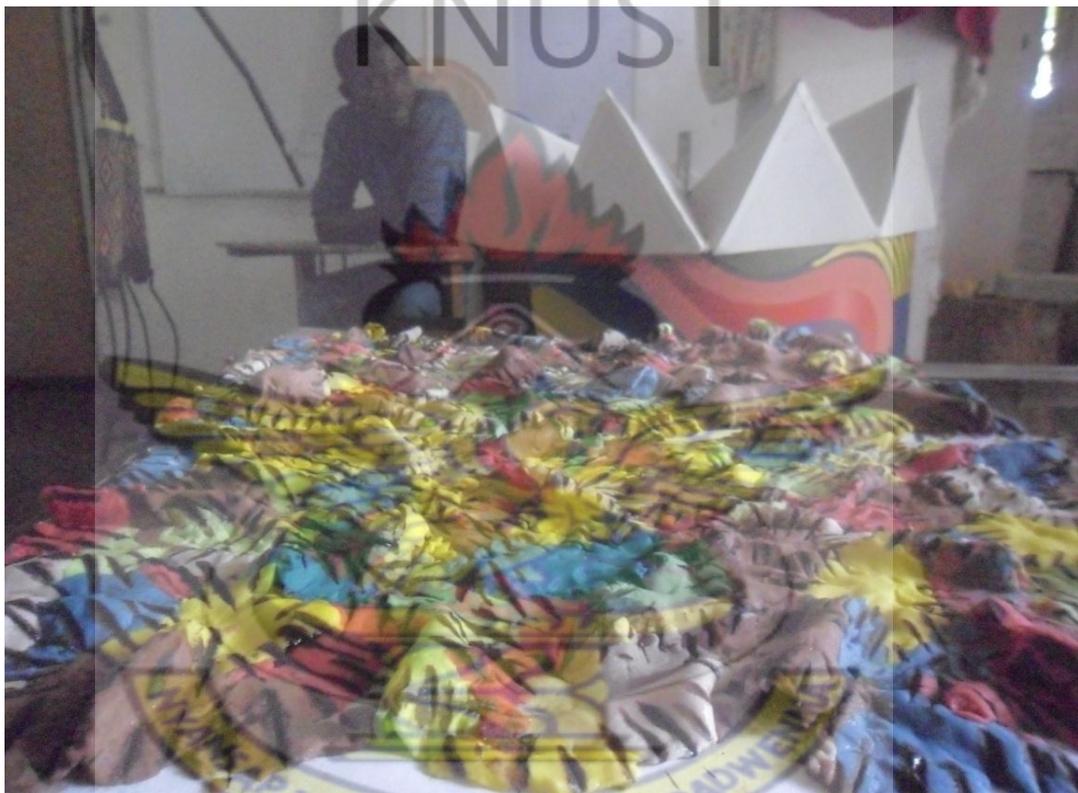


Figure 3.20 “Bed of dreams” asasaawa cloth made with fondant.



Figure 3 .21 Yinka Shonibare (2003), *Scramble for Africa*, 700 x 525, 14 life-size fibreglass mannequins, 14 chairs, table, and Dutch wax printed cotton  
Source: <http://africa.si.edu/exhibits/shonibare/scramble.html>



Using the cast sugar technique as described in chapter two figures 2.8, I cast Colourful circular candies which I joined together by applying heat from a hairdryer and sticking them together to form a maze. The maze as seen in figure 3.22 is in relation to the dead ends of our various desires, reinvestments in other desires and repetition of the whole process. The maze is contrasted with Jean Shin's "chance city" which comprises of thousands of discarded lottery tickets balanced on top of the other to create a sprawling city of cards without any supplementary support. I brought this to reflect that utopia desire of getting rich and its associated lifestyle. 'Chance city' to me has the material and conceptual desire of both individuals and society. With an individual, it has to do with the participation in lottery which is evident in the boxes (material) with the desire to be rich (as someone may put it over-night). And that of society can be seen in this sky rise build characteristic of developed countries which most developing or third world countries try to attain. It could together represent that utopia conception of both the individual and his or her psycho-social worlds. I link my exploration of space with "the maze" to depict the relevance and hold of material things to us as individuals in society: an apt concept to my theme.



Figure 3. 22. “The maze” cubes made with joined pieces of cast candies.



Figure 3.23 Jean Shin (2001) "Chance city" 560 x 360, Lottery cards  
Source jeanshin.com/chance\_city.htm: <http://www.>

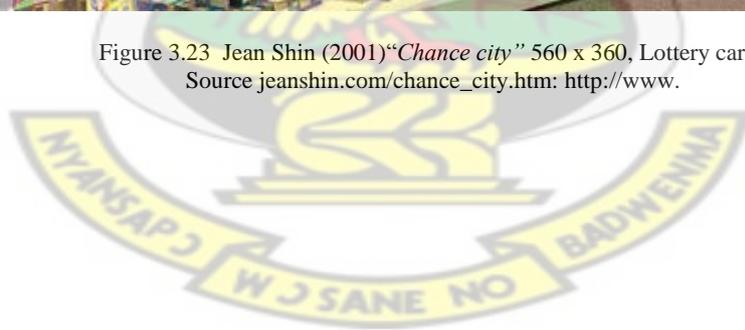




Figure 3.24. “Caged” cubes made with bread, royal icing and coloured granulated sugar.

“Caged” as seen in figure 3.24 , is a work I executed whilst still exploring, to mimic all transparent spaces –the things that we comes to desire but cannot easily get unless we go through laid down procedures only to get it or get disappointed. The colourful cubes represent various missing objects of desire whilst the glass showcase is a window which presents or introduce various desires into our lives as individuals.

### **3.4 Working and finishing of exhibition pieces.**

My journey through exploring with sugar equipped me with indebt knowledge of the characteristics of sugar and the right technique to use for each piece I worked on for the exhibition. And with a fair idea of how each piece in my exploration object looked, I increased the sizes of each object in my exhibition pieces from that of the experimental. I used royal icing most at this stage and different sugar techniques when necessary to execute the bigger objects for my exhibition. Making bigger versions of the trunk and “potomantos” as seen in figure 3.25, coated my squared shapes with coloured royal icing, allowed them to dry and with the use of stencil which had the shape of crescent moon. Next I forced royal icing through the stencil with a pallet knife onto the trunk, gently removed the stencil and allowed it to dry the same process was used to achieve the potomanto but the stencil differed.

The execution of the trunk and “potomanto” or “vault of dreams” as seen in figure 3.26, is in resonance with the common practice usually in second cycle schools boarding houses where are found such multiple suitcases or valises used as a hold all, its utility of which has found place into most Ghanaian homes and rooms. It is a very common practice to see students posting images of products, personalities (celebrities like football stars, politicians, religious figures, scholars and etcetera) on and inside such multi-purpose valises. These were not considered mere decorations but that

which was of value and important to its holder and owner. It was an expression of that which one lacked; an emphasis of that which one was aspiring towards: to own such products or gadget, and to be with or like the personalities depicted in the pasted photographs, It was quite clear that the personalities depicted were held as role models whom those students, of which I was one, valued, aspired to as effects of one's desire. My intuitive understanding of friends, who used personalities' photos as objects of art in their portmanteau, was an appreciation and a yearning to be like the very personalities in future: that being a taste for the desired. I witnessed, as a girl in company of other adolescents the pasting, not only of Pop and Rhythm and Blues stars, but of wedding dresses, shoes, bags, and other feminine stuff. This, in a way, is the notion confirmed that having an image or something you really desire could practically bring you closer to that which you desire if not substituted for the actual thing. I remember filling my trunk with various kinds of stickers of what I wish I had: celebrities and artists whose works I wanted to look at. Though it felt funny, I guarded such well among my valuable clothes and all that I owned. The trunk that I sent to secondary school was the first ever property that my parents gave to me and which I did not have to share with anybody; how I cherished it so much like my freedom! I started mimicking the grownups at home who used to store their kente clothes, gold chains and necklaces, and other important valuables in trunks and brought out one or two when need arose for them to use; and at other times some of the things were kept for important occasions which never came or maybe did but passed by without them noticing. I remember them saying every woman always has to get something new should there be an impromptu or special occasion. When it was time for tertiary education too, I still bought branded clothes, bags and high heels because of the perception I had about life in the university. What still fascinates me is that, back in

secondary school days, I got my friends because of those fantasy stickers and the way they brightened my trunk; and in the tertiary institution too, I got the “wows” and the “umm nice” from friends because of the brands of bag or clothes I used.

I continued coating different cubes with coloured icing sugar which were left to dry to be stencilled on with issues of interest to taste and desire as seen figure 3.26, and 3.27, they remind me of Donald Judd’s works or minimalist cubes. The execution of “ Till death do us part” as seen in figure 3.28 is a cubic wedding cake with outlined stencilled images of ‘dancing couples’, wedding rings and the ‘love’ sign, is synonymous to the trunk’s interrogation of the desire to marry. Using stencil templates as designs emphasizes the already set-up standards and systems pertaining to such institutions. Supporting the argument that, no matter how an individual feels his or her desires are exclusive; they are indeed rather determined and manufactured by the society. Interestingly, this could mean that desires are developed as a result of the lack that society points to us. For instance, the red ‘crescent’ sign on the trunk could represent an incomplete circle striving for perfection; similar to our quest to achieve our ‘incomplete’ aspirations or desires). Like templates our desires may be casts from the same or similar moulds.

Next I stencilled onto one of the coated cubes a motif of a person in front of a computer which i titled “Technology” as seen in figure 3.29. Desire in technology is what inspired the execution of this very piece. With higher versions of phones, iPods, laptops and other gadgets coming into the system every now and then it becomes very difficult not to desire them. The youth of today are anxious to acquire an android phone or tablets, they may say for instance, if I get a Samsung Galaxy Pocket only to see an advertisement for the latest Galaxy Note 3 with all its exciting apps and the

promise that comes with them, which youth of nowadays would let pass her desire of acquiring that. And here comes A Galaxy Note 5. Bewildering! That is a Shangri-La – a dream phone to acquire. Merely to hold one cuts one a portion of status! I wonder what would happen to me if I had one. Exhilarating isn't it? And so society creates in us the hunger to crave for the commodities associated with status; with fulfilling a perceived desire and yet never get satisfied after having it. At this stage I doubt not (Stavrakakis, 2006) in noting that as far as the final satisfaction of our desires is concerned, the postponement from discourse to discourse, fantasy to fantasy, product to product remains the same as long as new products are produced and new fantasies are advertised and that false promise does not exterminate desire but rather sets off a repeated hunt. My own hunt for the brand new Galaxy Note 5 reminds me of Willie Wonka played by Johnny Depp in Tim Burton's film "Charlie and the chocolate factory (2005)." Based on Roald Dahls's story, that even though Willie Wonka owned the chocolate factory and everything in it which others even dreamt of having, he still desired the love of a family which he lacked. "Give a man everything he desires and yet at this very moment he will feel that this everything is not everything" (Stavrakakis quoted in Hirschman, page 11). American lotteries, Electronic Diversity visa lotteries, scholarships and some offers by some institutions who offers visas and works at the same time reminds me of modern day slavery whereby nobody now chain people up in dungeons and force them to work against their will anymore but people willingly desiring their servitude and slavery as if it were their salvation.

I also used a stencilled on to a royal iced hexagonal shape a motif of a fairy holding a wand out of which butterflies are coming out from as seen in figure 3.30 and titled "Happily ever after". DreamWorks or Walt Disney movies and animations persuade its consumers by deluding them with fantasies, magical and mythological

things. These are found in Disneyland in their movie which promises of happily ever after kind of life and for which consumers are fed with either the opposite or both. We are made to believe through movies and animations that there are fairies that take care of our every need, like Tinker Bell and friends are as seen in figure 3.31; fairies which take care of rain, rainbows, teeth, dreams and everything wished for, making kids think of only the blissful side of life; Such are kids. Cinderella, Aladdin and the magic lamp as seen in figure 3.32.; in which a genie inside the lamp grants wishes to its beholder, mythical creatures and all their accomplices are indoctrinating activities which, by stimulating false desires, deepens our enslavement to consumerism and capitalist exploitation since it distorts real or natural human needs on creation and proliferates “false desires” which are stirred and dispersed through advertising discourse to sustain our false consciousness required for their acceptance. (Stavrakakis, 2006). This reminds me of my experience with such animated cartoons and fairy-tale stories which are sometimes presented as ‘historical facts’ with captions like mythology or legendries. It is worth noting that such propagandist approach is not only peculiar to Disneyland for the African continent is replete with such and are embedded in our African folklores and folktales. An example is the “Kodzi wonngye ndzi o” series.



Figure 3.25 Royal icing coated and stencilled trunk and ecolac.



Figure 3.26 Cubes coated with Coloured Royal icing, which will be worked on later.



Figure 3.27 Stenciled motifs of different designs onto coated cubes with royal icing.



Figure 3.28 "Till death do us part" cube coated and with royal icing.

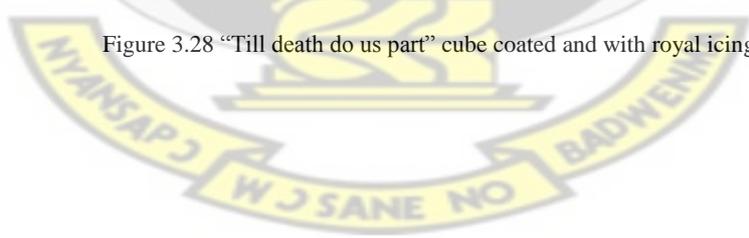




Figure 3.29 “Technology”, cube coated and stencilled with royal icing.



Figure 3.30 “Happily ever after”, octagon shape, coated and stencilled with royal icing.

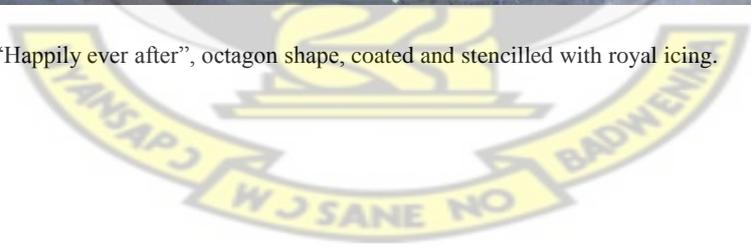




Figure 3.31 OanaMatei (2013) *Aladdin and the magic lamp* 300x290.  
Source: <http://www.allfantasyworlds.com/2013/03/project-fairy-tale-5-disneys-aladdin.html>



Figure 3.32 William (2012) *Tinkerbell and friends* 1200x760.  
Source: [http://cartoonswalls.com/tinkerbell\\_and\\_friends\\_disney\\_fairies\\_wallpaper\\_blue-wallpapers.html](http://cartoonswalls.com/tinkerbell_and_friends_disney_fairies_wallpaper_blue-wallpapers.html)



Figure 3.33 "Bed of dreams" made with fondant

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DISCUSSION OF RESULT

This chapter discusses the exhibition and its outcome as well as the response of the audience. After all my works were done I mounted an exhibition titled “Unveiling the Veiled”.

Many a times, decorated cakes are cut to know their type and taste, just as mysteries are solved to find truth. So is desire and decision making. The exhibition, “unveiling the veiled” was held at the commercial area of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology on the 10<sup>th</sup> of May 2013 from 9am to 5pm. I chose to exhibit at the commercial area because it is the heart of Knust where most if not all commercial activities are transacted. The commercial area has a mall, post office, bookshop, a couple of banks, A.T.M boots, drugs store, photo lab, supermarkets or provision stores, a cold store- not to mention but a few. It is rumoured that since the things sold there are expensive, only lecturers- the supposedly wealthy –can purchase things from there. It is a general belief, therefore, anybody who buy from there is also well to do. that It is an open secret that all of us students sometimes say to colleagues who visit there for one transaction or the other that we want our own share of the money even though we did not see or know what they went there for. Nevertheless, student perception of the place makes people think that only players of the higher class and the affluent are those who play games there. Since I needed a permit for the exhibition space, I wrote a letter through my Head of Department to the Dean of Student and then the Estate Agency of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology for the space. Though approval of the space was given, the Estate Agency gave me no written document. Thus, on the

day of my exhibition, others were found using the space so we eventually had to share the lot. Regardless, however, since I had learned to always seek permission; my entire exhibitions took place at the same venue.

I adopted a variety of display formats or strategies for my exhibition. The prominent idea was to present my work as a commodity and to mimic the display strategies of some vendors or retailers within the Kumasi metropolis. It is quiet easy to come by different arrangement ‘installation’ format by these vendors. The commercial area of KNUST with its ‘myth’ surrounding it was purposively picked for the ‘magic’ it held in peoples’ minds and for reinforcing the concept of commodification strongly in the pursuit of our desires. The very site was adopted so as to facilitate and enable the audience interrogate how desires are born out of the smallest commodity. This also, to a greater extent, portrayed how society ‘creates’ the need for ‘desire’ through certain conscious and unconscious practices. Figure 4.1 and 4.2 are pictures taken before the opening of the exhibition; Figure 4.3 is a perspective shot of the exhibits also taken before the opening. People wondered if it was cake and if they could eat it, whilst others wanted to touch it to believe if it was actually trunk, ecolac or cake. My artist statement was shared out to passers-by who were curios and primed with questions.

The sun had already started reacting with the colours of the exhibits. In figure 4.4 as seen is “Tea time”, an assumed breakfast table set in wait for my audience. Just as I finished with the installation of the work, some passers-by started asking if they were for sale. Some actually came down from their cars to see if they were actually what their eyes were seeing.



Figuer 4.1 A full view of all the exhibits before arrival of invited quest and passersby.

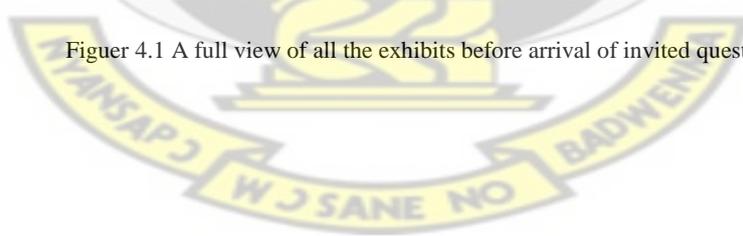




Figure 4.2 Angled view of exhibits before the opening of the exhibition.





Figure 4.3 Perspective view of exhibits before the opening of the exhibition.



Figure 4.4 “Tea time”, Tea sets and frosted cake made with pulled sugar, cake, and royal icing.





Figure 4.5 Melting Tea set, Tea sets and frosted cake made with pulled sugar, cake, and royal icing.



Figure 4.5 shows tea sets at the mercy of the sun, though not planned that way to react to the heat from the sun, the occurrence had a bearing to my theme of migration and the illusion of greener pastures when faced with the bitter reality of the situation: when faced with the scorching sun. The melting of the tea sets thus indicates the frustration of the seekers for change and the resulting disappointment of the illusion. Another passerby who came back to view “Tea time” says she came back because she wanted to buy one of the tea cups but was not happy because the sun had scorched it to make it to lose its form and shape. I found that fascinating as to how she could be disturbed about that which was not hers and for which she would probably not possess. The situation also aptly described for me the illusion of desire in action. A closer look again at figure 4.5 at the cake on the table also shows a finger mark of someone who felt the material to be sure whether it was not painted wood in the guise of a cake.

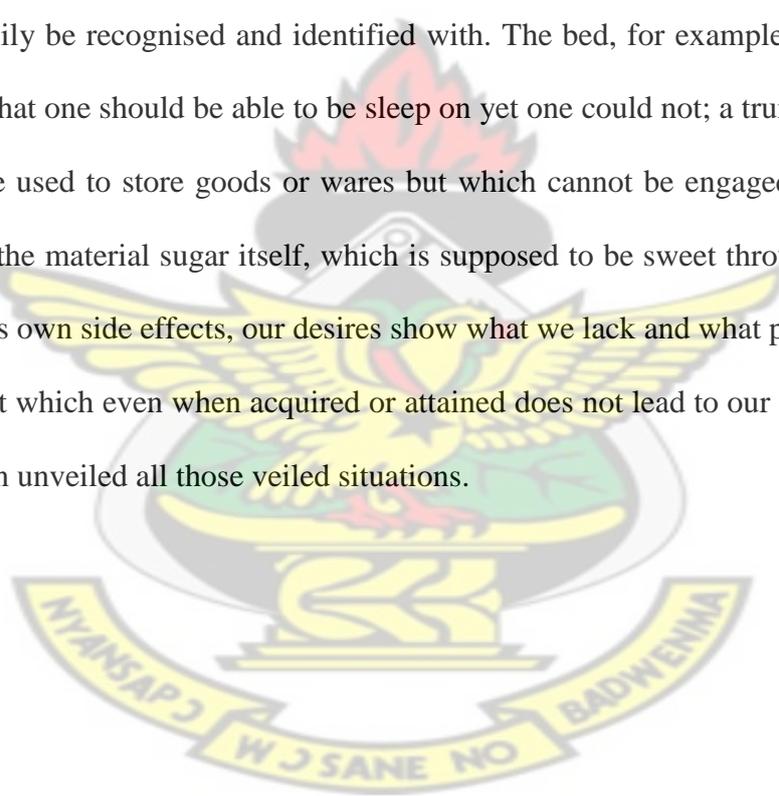
There was a time I resolved to exhibit my experimental work “caged” ( figure 3.24) in a transparent glass. I brought in the glass to emphasise the unconscious philosophy or perception about desire; it seems welcoming and accessible yet there are numerous limitations, challenges or boundaries to its use. Without proper and careful handling, the glass could break and shatter. This is also typical of the white cube space which, in my exhibition, I metaphorically link to some practices adopted by some advertisers. As mentioned earlier, the works (artefacts) are presented in an enticing manner. I must point out that even some insects or flies were attracted, ‘enticed’ as it were, and as I watched ants and other insects struggling to get into the ‘glassed’ (caged) work and finding it not easy. This I pointed out to the audience, in such manner are we attracted or enslaved by our desires, and actually most admitted

having numerous varying desires. Some even admitted that after getting what they were craving for they kept asking themselves: “Is that all I was struggling for?”

One of my audiences told me about her experience about the university. According to her when she was in the senior high school she had numerous illusionary perceptions about the university. She admitted fighting tooth and nail to gain admission into the university of which she learnt was a place for higher learning and yet full of ‘chilling’. To her amazement, however, that was a far cry when she gained admission. Reality had hit her. She went on to state how shocked she was with some of the structures belonging especially to the College of Art because as compared to her alma mater, the latter seemed to have far better classroom facilities than those of the so-called higher institution of learning. Just like most hyped products, some of my works were presented or exhibited on a pedestal. This indisputably brings into contest the philosophical concept of the pedestal. The pedestal, in the art world, represented a primary supporting structure in physical as well as in ideological terms, with regard to arts claim to autonomy. For me the pedestal does not only embody that but conceptual ‘hypes’ and ‘over rate’ of certain concepts or products. This re-introduces my discussion of advertisement in chapter two and reasons for which people use a particular commodity. Figure 4.6 to 4.7 as seen also shows the arrival of guests most of which were passers-by and invited guest as well. I also introduced them to the concept underlying my exhibits after which they asked questions and gave out suggestions. Figure 4.9 and 4.10 also seen shows some reactions of some audience who were amazed at my “bed of dreams” as to how it could be possible that sugar could look that way. They were much surprised that at a point in time the whole fondant bed looked as if it would melt down yet in the next few minutes would become hard again as if nothing had happened to it. In a sense this is much like how

our desires react: never staying the same. As seen in figure 4.11, shows a curious audience who was not sure of what was before her and had to touch the “potomanto” and taste it before actually believing. Another person stood behind “Technology” as seen in figure 4.12 for a while thinking, which made me wonder what could be going on through his mind at that time. And figure 4.13 and 4.14 also seen audiences looking closer at exhibits and asking questions and expressing their feelings about the reactions of the exhibits before them.

I would say the exhibition was a success. The exhibits used were objects that could easily be recognised and identified with. The bed, for example, is an object of comfort that one should be able to be sleep on yet one could not; a trunk or ecolac that should be used to store goods or wares but which cannot be engaged with that way. Just like the material sugar itself, which is supposed to be sweet through and through but has its own side effects, our desires show what we lack and what pushes us to seek fulfilment which even when acquired or attained does not lead to our satisfaction. The exhibition unveiled all those veiled situations.



# KNUST



Figure 4.6 Opening of the exhibition.

# KNUST



Figure 4.7 Audience giving suggestions to my work.



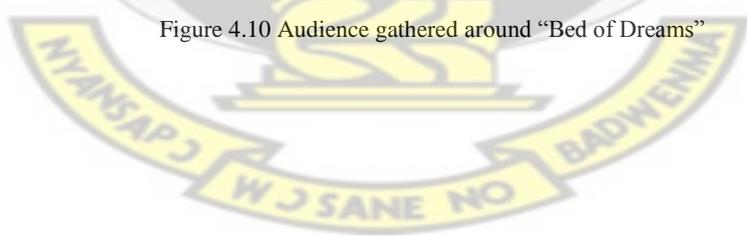
Figure 4.8 Answering questions posed by audience.



Figure 4.9 Audience taking a better look at “Bed of Dreams”



Figure 4.10 Audience gathered around “Bed of Dreams”



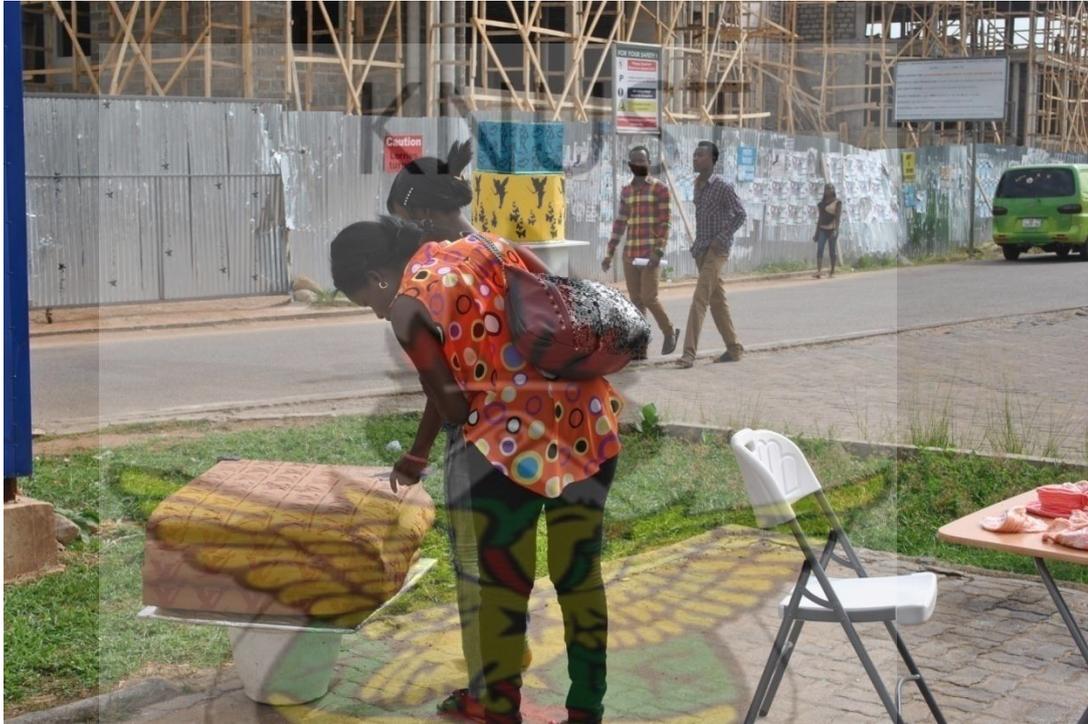


Figure 4.11 Curious audiences touch the “potomanto” bag to see if it was what it claimed to be, and tasting to be sure if it was indeed edible.



Figure 4.12 a closer look from a curious audience, I wonder what was going through his mind then?



Figure 4.13 Audience about to move through for closer viewings



Figure 4.14 Audience engaging with the exhibits

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter gives the summary, conclusion and recommendations for further study of the project.

My thesis was centred on three main objectives: i) exploring the concept of taste and desire through psychoanalytic approach, ii) Exploring the diverse heterotopias related to taste and desire, and how these manifest as disillusion in migration, and iii) using sugar as a medium to create various disillusions in migration.

The objectives were achieved with in-depth relevant literature review and the creation of exhibits which connote taste and desire using sugar, mint and colours and various sugar art techniques. I used my work to portray illusion and change brought about by taste and desire, and by focusing on different scenarios: slavery, attitude, impact of role-models, and advertisement effect as elements of the study.

In this regard the material explored was sugar because of the histories surrounding it and its linkage to the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Sugar, which almost always comes as white sugar is that which has been refined to look so. It comes already disguised in nature and property and was thus used to reflect the concept of taste and desire as disillusion in migration and in decision making: a never-satisfying search for a dream never fulfilled. Sugar, in itself thus perceived as a lie, an illusion of purity since bleached to become so, was the best material available to help portray my ideas.

The studio process of my work, beginning with the gathering of tools and materials for making sugar craft following specific procedures using one technique or the other to execute a product – especially in the making of tea sets - were all conceptualised as gaps that needed to be filled, and as portraying processes our desires go through in seeking fulfilment. The exhibition “Unveiling the Veiled” was meant to engage the audience to perceive my idea of taste and desire as unfulfilled reflected in societal needs and wants using the various exhibits.

## **5.1 Conclusion**

This project confirms the possibilities and engagements with ephemeral art. It emphasises the use of sugar and other food items as an apt medium to convey and portray the idea of disillusion in migration, as well as a means for portraying unsatiated tastes and desires. It is quite conspicuous that the critical issues of taste and desire are not exclusive or subjective to an individual’s appeal but rather as a result or influence of diverse external factors. These factors may include societal, environmental, economical and hegemonic influence. Demands for such taste and desire are usually constructed through the media, public relation, advertisement, packaging, celebrity culture, economical prestige for most individuals. Hence, an individual’s desire necessarily does not originate from him or her but rather a sign of succumb to external or societal influence. Sugar therefore is a metaphor for the expression of such critical issues

## **5.2 Recommendation**

This thesis recommends that a deeper look must be taken into the use of more ephemeral art and for that matter sugar in portraying our past, reflecting on attitudes and influences of our tastes and desires, and shaping our thoughts and decision

making. Again sugar should be explored more by artists since the material allows itself to be manipulated in diverse ways. The thesis project is also available to serve as reference material for further future research. It is envisaged that sugar will not only be explored as a material in itself but also as a useful art medium for portraying and raising issues pertaining to history, politics, race and gender, and all that applies to human tastes and desires.

# KNUST



## REFERENCES

- Awake. (2013). Are you buying too much? Why people buy things they don't. Pp8-9
- Bittle. (2009). Beach chair wedding cake topper. In Pastillage (Ed.), (Vol. 900x675).  
cakecentral.com: bittle.
- Cakengineer. (2010). untitled. In s. sugar (Ed.), (Vol. 1600x1200).
- chockyfoodie. (2010). pulled sugar. In p. sugar (Ed.), (Vol. 500x375).
- Darwall, S. (2003). Desires, reasons, and causes. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 67(2), 436-443.
- Davis, J. E. (2003). The commodification of self. *Hedgehog Review*, 5(2), 41-49.
- Guerra, M. (2011). Blue bird blown sugar figurine (Vol. 1024x952, pp. A blown sugar bird nestling in a spun sugar nest can come in any color and be added to any special occasion cake. ). Express Sugar Designs: Express Sugar Designs.
- Gronow, J. (1997). *The Sociology of Taste*, London and New York: Routledge
- Hayward, S. (2007). Stardom: Beyond Desire? *History of Stardom Reconsidered*.  
*Turku: International Institute for Popular Culture*.
- Holland, R. (2010). Cast sugar and polyurethane blocks In c. sugar (Ed.), (Vol. 500x333). Barry Whistler Gallery.
- Hoyer, W. D., & Stokburger-Sauer, N. E. (2012). The role of aesthetic taste in consumer behavior. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 40(1), 167-180.
- J.D. (2009). Rock Sugar Rock (Vol. 300x260). 10250 Santa Monica Blvd.  
Los Angeles: 10250 Santa Monica Blvd. Los Angeles.
- Jamison, B. (2011). Hellen's Tower (Vol. 468x600, pp. Sweet Structures: Art & Architecture Made of Sugar): Steph.

- Marx, K. & Engels, F. (1906). *Manifesto of the communist party*: CH Kerr & Company.
- Matei, O. (2013). Aladdin and the magic lamp. In P. F. T.-D. s. A. a. t. O. Story (Ed.), (Vol. 300x290, pp. All Fantasy Worlds: Project: Fairy Tale ). All Fantasy Worlds: Oana I.
- Foucault, M. (1967). Of other spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias. Pp8
- Miller, S. (2011). Stained (Vol. 300x425). Waddington Alley (Victoria, B.C., Canada): Shelley Miller.
- Shin, J. (2001). Chance City (Vol. 560x360, pp. Chance City, 2001-2009). Cristin Tierney Gallery 546 West 29th Street, New York, NY 10001.
- Shonibare, Y. (2003). Scramble for Africa (Vol. 700x525, pp. ... 14 chairs, table, Dutch wax printed cotton. The Pinnell Collection, Dallas Scroll down for more artworks. Scramble for Africa). NMAFA Exhibits.
- Shonibare, Y. (2013). The cake man (Vol. 315 x 88 x 120 cm (124 x 34 5/8 x ... pp. . Unique life-size mannequin, Dutch wax African printed cotton textile, leather, gold, polyester and plaster). Pearl Lam Galleries Hong Kong
- Smith, D. W. (2007). Deleuze and the question of desire: Toward an immanent theory of ethics. *Parrhesia*, 2, 66-78.
- Stavrakakis, Y. (2006). Objects of consumption, causes of desire: consumerism and advertising in societies of commanded enjoyment. *Gramma: Journal of Theory and Criticism*, 83.
- Walker, K. (2014). "A Subtlety or The Marvelous Sugar Baby" (Vol. 554x370, pp. "A Subtlety or The Marvelous Sugar Baby"). Williamsburg: Kara Walker.

Wang, Z. (2006). *Urban Landscape - Beijing, 2006* (5 ed., Vol. 160 x 225 cm. (63 x 88.6 in.), pp. Urban Landscape - BeijingUrban Landscape - Beijing). artnet Galleries.

William. (2012). Tinkerbell and Friends. In T. a. f. d. f. wal (Ed.), *Catoonswalls.com* (Vol. 1200x760, pp. Tinkerbell and friends disney fairies wal).

KNUST

