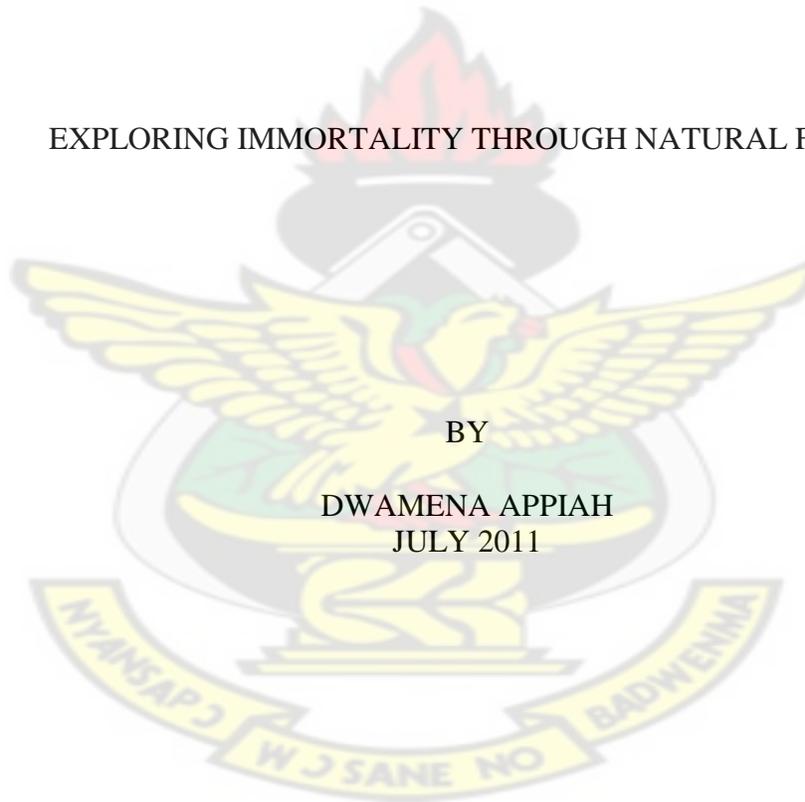


KWAME NKRUMAH UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, KUMASI

COLLEGE OF ART AND SOCIAL SCIENCES  
DEPARTMENT OF PAINTING AND SCULPTURE

KNUST

EXPLORING IMMORTALITY THROUGH NATURAL FIBRE



BY

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JULY 2011

Exploring Immortality Through Natural Fibre

By

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A thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies,  
Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology Kumasi,  
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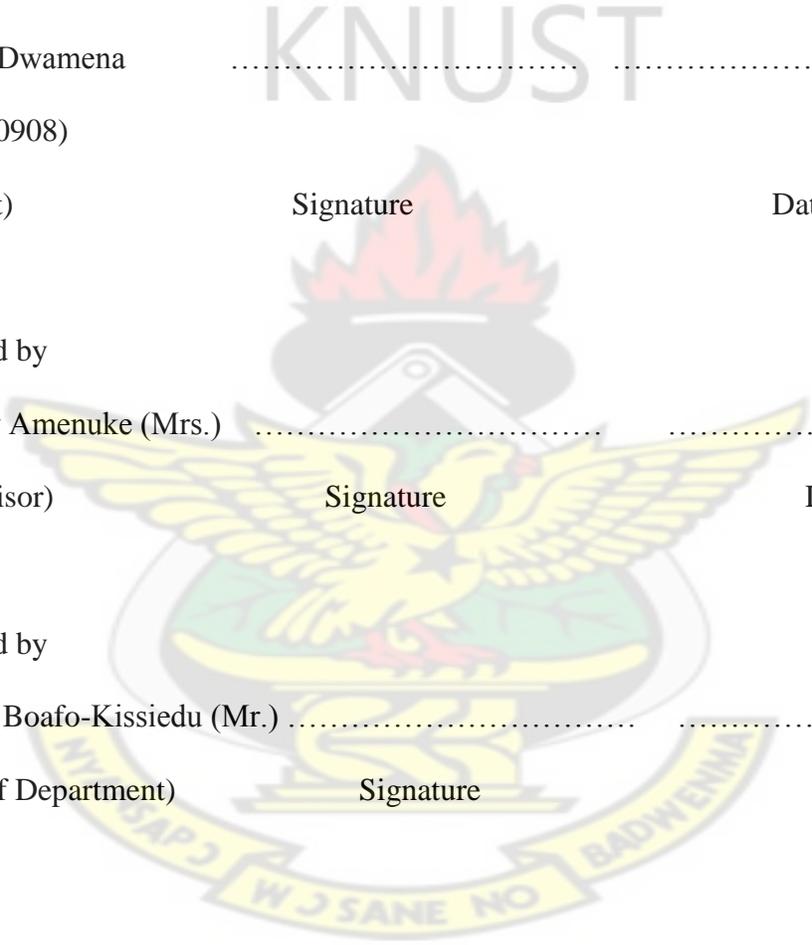
Faculty of Art, College of Art and Social Sciences

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## Declaration

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work towards the MFA and that, to the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published by another person nor material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree of the University, except where due acknowledgement has been made in the text.

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(Head of Department)

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## ABSTRACT

Art and man are totally inseparable. So far as there is a constant change in nature, man being part of it is destined to change. Art therefore cannot be static in relation to the style, material, techniques and all that makes a work of art. Sculptors, some years back were seriously dealing in materials for permanency like stone, wood, cement and metals. Impermanent materials for sculpture are not a thing of the present time. However, in recent times, artists have moved into impermanent materials to create ephemeral art such as ice sculpture, explosives, gun powder, fruits and insects as it has become more fashionable. In this project, I produced soft sculptures using natural fibre materials with simple tools. The natural fibre material although not very strong was used to execute works that are permanent. That is using mortal to create immortal. Using non-conventional sculpting methods natural fibres such as coconut fibre, palm tree fibre, jute fibre and raffia have been used to produce sculptures which are titled 'eternity', 'obaatanpa', 'still searching', 'anidaso wo ho', 'the living legend', the 'black stool' and 'osoree' in two and three dimensional form to investigate the concept of immortality.

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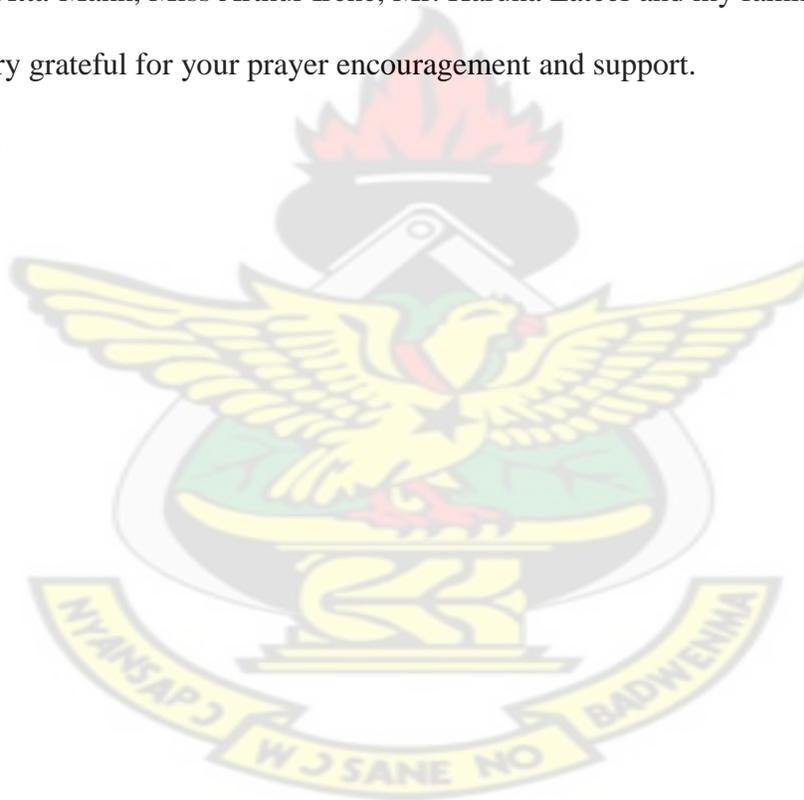
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D.A.



## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Background to the study**

The question that man keeps on asking is whether there is life after death. However, it is long over due to have the question not being answered. Man is born with life in him, grows up and after sometime due to aging, sickness, and other mishaps such as accident, life comes to an end. There are instances where few people encounter near death experiences, through which a feel of another world is experienced and so the whole issue of death stands as a mystery to mankind.

Another issue which has not yet gained clarity in answer is why people seek for immortality. The cessation of life is clearly manifested in aging. This, man has tried to reverse and scientists are still searching for an antidote. However, there is yet another question to answer that if a cure for aging is discovered, how many people can afford it. Some peoples hope that getting medication for aging will surely materialize. Immortality is still being sought for because people believe it will be possible.

If it is certain that death is inevitable, then where he will go from here? For the fear of death and the unknown, it is clear to man that no one knows tomorrow, yet, man is not content with what he has for the day. Therefore, can it be considered that it is a matter of selfishness that man seeks immortality?

Nature has its own settings and since there is a beginning for every thing, surely, there must be an end as well. The uncertainty about where man goes from here may have a close link with where the dead are. As it is factual that the body decays and returns to the dust, makes it a clear evidence for the fear people have for death. Due to the mind boggling issues concerning life, people generally immortalize themselves to enable them

be remembered. Despite the numerous trials, challenges and impossibilities in achieving immortality, I am of the view that man should not give up but should pursue it. For it is about how one sets his mind towards it.

The ability to conquer death is a great challenge to mankind both social and psychologically, due to the fact that some of human culture is pivoted on the assumption of the ultimate death of every individual.

There are a lot of mysteries that surround immortality. This has led to many questions being raised about the issue. Several philosophical questions need to be addressed on this complicated issue of immortality. In the way of appeasing our strong desire for immortality several definitions are made.

Lamont (1992) defines immortality as: 'The literal survival of the individual human personality, or consciousness for an indefinite period after (physical) death with its memory and awareness of self identity essentially intact' (p.242-246).

Spiritual or supernatural meanings have been associated to the word immortality by some people. The mention of the word death sends displeasure and shiver in so many people. Most people fear or hate the word death. Ironically, immortality is being expressed in a way 'to demean' or 'escape death'. In reality man being immortal is quite a strong word, because no living thing can live forever. However, there are many beliefs expressing how people can live, die and return in another form and live forever on this earth and continue in under world. Some people are of the view that when a person dies, that ends it. There is no way the dead can come back to life again, be it spiritual or any other form. Unfortunately, since death is once and does not offer the chance, people do fear to live their lives but resort to protect and prolong it through diverse ways.

Reaching ultimate immortality with traditional human senses or properties may not be attained through physical means. Immortality exists by perception. With all the above means, man chooses to survive or gain immortality through the individual's self-esteem. Life can be made long or short in this world. Notwithstanding the numerous challenges man encounters on this earth, with death serving as a result, one can immortalize himself through the sort of life lived.

Immortality cuts across a wide perspective from political, social, cultural and religious dimensions to overpowering death and living forever. Art works are done to communicate to people and to deal with issues which are past or present such as oppression, war, victory, sports, festivals and funerals. Through monuments, fountains, iconographies, paintings, photography, tombs and some others people who excel or are victims of the above issues may be immortalized.

### **Statement of the problem**

For many people there is an inclination to live forever. People eat all kinds of foods; take medications with the hope of prolonging their lives. People also try to keep things alive. Eponyms; naming people after streets, their relatives, their friends, places or sites, towns and building houses to commemorate them are done to foster immortality. People try to keep themselves alive through art: portraiture, photograph, and cinema, to mention a few. An artist will also not like to lose his work over time. Through his works he may live forever. Some artists have tried to use materials such as cement, stone, metal and wood to prolong the lives of their works. In achieving this, do they live forever?

Although I know natural fibre do not last, I have worked with them to ironically portray ideas that last. That is using mortal to immortalize. My project is mostly based on African philosophy through which immortality is being explored with natural fibre as a medium. The deathlessness of man is not about what he is, but what he does. That is if one will continue to 'live' after his death depends on the good things he did when he was alive that can enable him to be remembered. The natural fibre is not as strong as other artificial fibres but has been used to produce works that are immortal.

### **Objectives**

This project seeks to:

1. Explore the concept of immortality through art.
2. Articulate the concept of immortality through natural fibres by using non-conventional sculpture techniques such as stitching, weaving and knotting.
3. Produce relief and in-the-round sculpture works using natural fibres to articulate the concept.

### **Methodology**

It is a qualitative research in which experimental and descriptive methods have been used. The instrument for data collection was observation.

### **Delimitation**

The materials used for the research are natural fibre.

I produced works in two and three dimensional forms that are soft and hard sculptures.

## **Importance of the study**

The study will provide the opportunity for artists and the general public to appreciate the tangibility of immortality through natural fibres.

Simple tools and materials could be developed and expanded to broaden the scope of soft sculpture.

## **Definition of terms**

The following terms are explained according to their meaning in this thesis.

Concept, philosophical, literal,

‘Sibre aba’ – seed of a plant

Kente – Traditional cloth

‘Nyame nnwu na ma wu’ – Adinkra symbol meaning God never dies therefore I cannot die

Dua a esi wuram wo anidasoo se yetwa so a ebe fefe – The tree has hope that it leaves will sprout again after it is chopped down.

‘Owuo ye kontonkrowie, oda amansan kon mu’ – Death is like a ring that encircles everybody’s neck

Wo nnim owuo a hwe nna – Death is like sleep

Owuo atwedee – Death ladder

Sawe – Local sponge

Obaatanpa – Caring mother

Doso – Skirt woven from raffia, used by the traditional priest and priestess

Anidaso wo ho-There is hope

Nsuo ahwie agu ama aka ahena – Water has poured from the pot, but the pot did not break.

Nsamanfoo mpo pɛ do doo nte sɛ atasefoo –Even the dead wish they could get more people to join them let alone the living

Akpeteshi - Local alcoholic beverage

Akwasidae – A special Sunday on the Akan calendar set aside for performing rituals, festivities which occur every forty days

Awukudae – A special Wednesday on the Akan calendar set aside for specific activities.

It is also a taboo day for farmers, no burial for the dead.

Ɔsɔrɛɛ - Awake

### **Abbreviation**

MFA – Master of Fine Art

KNUST – Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology

### **Arrangement of the text**

This deals with the organization of the various chapters and what is contained in each.

Chapter one entails the background to the study and introduction of the thesis. Chapter two reviews related literature. The chapter discusses what other artists have written about the topic ‘Immortality’ and the materials used for their work.

The third chapter embodies the tools and materials and the various methods employed in executing the project. Chapter four gives an account of the results and discusses the

various works done. It further deals with the appreciation, analysis and interpretation of the works. The final chapter includes the summary, conclusion and recommendation.

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## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter discusses the general perception of people about death and ways to attain eternity, permanence, reincarnation, and resurrection, infinity through physical, spiritual, hypothetical and other forms of immortality. In addition, its negation which is impermanence and transient is also addressed through works made in diverse materials by some artists.

Immortality means many things to different people, but basically, it means everlasting life in some form. According to Hornby (2000), immortality is the concept of living or lasting forever, or being famous and likely to be remembered forever.

The word immortality is a huge mountain for people to climb. This has led some people to ask numerous questions such as: What are people's perceptions about immortality? After death what next?

Ferrater (1965) writes this in support of the questions people are asking concerning immortality

Man's longing for survival and immortality is not an insignificant whim that has all the appearance of an obsession. It is a reasonable attempt to understand life's nature and meaning. Most humans hope to completely live out their lives and then be able to reach a final stage called "immortality" or "eternity." (p.205)

To survive is to attain a temporal prolongation of infinite human life. To be immortal is to have one's soul or spirit continuing to exist beyond the normal period of human life, or enter eternal life.

This is what Faulkner (1949) writes on the above issue:

Since man is mortal, the only immortality possible for him is to leave  
Something behind him that is immortal... This is the artist's way  
of scribbling "Kilroy was here" on the wall of the final and  
irrevocable oblivion through which he must someday pass. (p.253)

I, being the researcher also agree that it is very important that one should make a positive mark in wherever one finds oneself. This will serve as an indelible finger print on wall.

I also accept the idea that immortality is about being remembered long after one has passed away or joined his ancestors by the people he had lived well with. The act of not being subject to death or not dying has been of great interest and very captivating to humanity for many centuries. This does not only relate to only human beings, but anything such as animals and trees. Although nothing created under the sun will live forever it has been a sort of concern and torment for man to face death.

Reviewing 'immortality' calls for the discussion of related concepts such as eternity, everlasting, permanence, rebirth, reincarnation and resurrection. Nonetheless, its negation which is mortality, impermanence and transient was also accorded attention.

People have many views about immortality. Some religion such as Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, Judaism and many others believe in immortality of the soul and life after death, while others say there is nothing after physical death. While some people believe in spiritual immortality others also believe in hypothetical immortality.

Hypothetical immortality can be grouped into three: fame, mystic and physical. Fame is described as a way to attain immortality. This is to enable name or works of a famous individual continue to live, after his or her death. This view of immortality places value on how one will be remembered by generations to come. Mystic approaches to immortality include those of the ancient Chinese and European medieval alchemists seeking prolonged life, whilst the physical is the continuation of life across time as a form of immortality, thus leaving surviving offspring or genetic materials as a means of overcoming death.

Considering the ways to overcome death, some socialists, futurists, and philosophers believe the idea of human immortality is attainable. Kurzweil (2009), who is a scientist as well as a futurist, support the idea that human immortality is attainable in the first few decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, while other advocates are of the view that life extension is a more achievable goal in the short term.

De Grey (2005), in his plan to enable man live longer seeks to identify all the components that cause human tissues to age, prepares remedy for each of them, forestalling disease and eventually pushing back death. He calls the approach 'Strategies for Engineered Negligible Senescence (SENS). Here de Grey tries to find solution or alternative to mortality knowing very well that a human being is mortal. De Grey proposes that if an antidote could be found for aging tissues in the human body, then life could be prolonged. He hopes that if aging could be stopped, man could attain five hundred years of life or even more which he thinks will soon come to pass.

With all the above factors, man in his quest to live forever, has tried all means to protect his life through some ways such as the physical fame and mystic immortality. Having gained no satisfaction, biological immortality is being sought for. Biological immortality

is the infinite continuation of human life based on bio-chemical processes in our bodies which enables us to live on. Here man could live for unlimited years if the process of aging and death could be stopped in the body. In acquiring biological immortality in terms of aging, people take in medicines that could help them transform and have a youthful look. In Egypt for instance, around 2680 BC, some people took potion that enable them have a change in their physical nature. In Ghana, it is said that some of our fore fathers swallowed seeds of certain plants called *sibere aba* in Akan to help prolong their lives. They believed that unless the person had vomited all the seeds, he will never give in to death. To achieve biological immortality, all the three causal agents of death (aging, disease and trauma) must be conquered.

In finding solutions through biological means, some people also strive to achieve immortality through scientific means. However, Bhaktivedanta (1982), comments that immortality has not gained much support from science and deals with likely extinction of personality at death. This goes further to discuss the difference between the survival of bodily death and mortality. That is the continual existence of the person after his physical death of the body. This raises the question, is there life after death? The pursuit of immortality by man in diverse ways has continued through scientific to engineered immortality which also happens to have quite a close link to biological immortality.

Figure 2.1, is a picture of a frozen body which expresses man's desire to come back to life after death. Striving for life extension cryonics (which is a way of getting back to life after death) is actually not certain but being hoped for. It is a conditional immortality or annihilation which deals with the belief that cut across some of the various religious groups about ones lived life on earth and the life after death. It is being

argued seriously that many of the visions of trans-humanism will not be manifested within our life time, but some years after more technological advancement. That is decades after the 21<sup>st</sup> century, says De Grey.



Figure 2.1 picture of a frozen body

(<http://jp.senescence.info/thoughts/cryonics.jpg>)

The craze for life extension which is geared towards slowing and halting aging and possible repair of age induced damage is man's wish to live forever. In relation to this, some people have signed to be frozen after they die with the aim that they can be brought back to life in the future. Immortality could be cherished by all human beings and so the goal of life extension is to increase the active healthy years and not add more time to the old. I believe it is worth living a healthier life in a period of time than having an infinity life spun faced with numerous challenges of sickness, sorrow, and all kinds of troubled life.

Most of the above issues of immortality with the exception of the conditional immortality have been the hope and aspiration of many people. Major achievements

have been made by man especially technological advancement like the computer, flying in air craft to places and underground movement through tunnels to mention a few.

I tend to agree with Kurzweil (2009) and de Grey (2005) in their idea of improved technology to enhance man's life in terms of aging, there has been a significant improvement in the physical body of man through plastic surgery, cosmetics, hairstyles, to enable him look fresh and younger than his age, however, the bid to prolong life for man to live for such unlimited years may not be possible because man is destined to die. Pankaj (2010) says from his philosophical point of view, there is no such thing as immortality since everything that has a beginning has an end. If there is no immortality, then how will the process of rebirth take place? The process of aging would be no more but provide 'biological immortality', and yet death will still be inevitable. He continues that it is only the human body that is mortal but the soul remains immortal and has a never ending life cycle. I agree with the last statement Pankaj made as the soul leaves the body immediately life ceases in a person and dwells in another to continue its existence while the later body gains new life.

Perrett (1987), shares a similar idea with Pankaj (2010) as he comments on the traditional Western view concerning immortality that:

We come into existence at a particular time (birth), live out our earthly lives, and then die. Death is followed by a "deathless" post-mortem existence. Thus we are born once, and die once (p.41-57).

In contrast to what Perrett has said above he also presents another view of immortality about the Indians 'That we have all pre-existed beginninglessly, and that we have lived many times before and must live many times again in this world'.

I realized that his view contradicts with what has been discussed in the preceding paragraphs in relation to the various forms of immortality except the idea shared by the Indians.

This project focuses on African philosophy and though their belief in immortality deals with the spiritual immortality, my work metaphorically dwells on the physical or material together with the concept. I used materials which do not last to make works for a lasting concept, hence using mortality to exemplify immortality. In much the same way as I used natural fibre materials as a means to express the concept of immortality, it was found out that some symbols have been associated to immortality by people from various places in the world. Some of these include the endless knot. The endless knot or shrivatsa in figure 2.2 is one of the signs symbolizing the eight fold paths of Buddhism according to Redtigerxyz. In expressing eternity endless knot is associated with the cycle of suffering of birth, death and rebirth within the Tibetan Buddhism. From ancient times, knots were commonly found in decorations on fabric on exterior of buildings, under the common belief that the endless looping of designs confused evil spirit and prevented them from entering homes to cause any harm which could lead to death and therefore end their life.

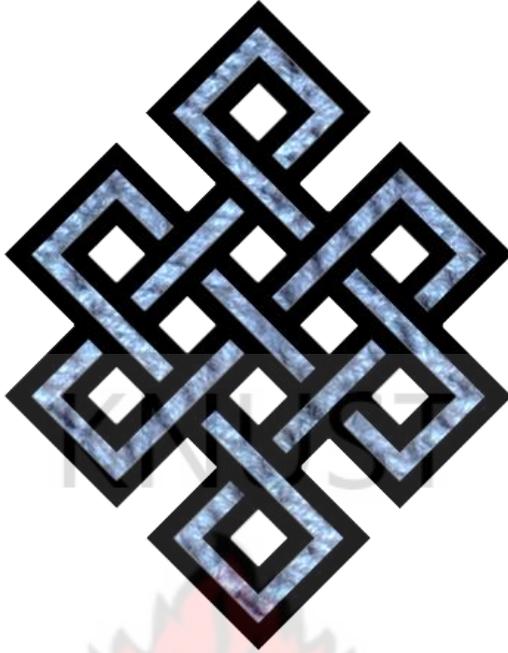


Figure 2.2 The Endless Knot

(<http://www.chineseknotting.org/mystic/what-is/EndlessKnot03d.png>)

A careful look at the design shows that it neither has a beginning nor an end.

In much the same way of having an endless movement is the Ouroboros symbol. This symbol is used to depict resurrection. In resurrection, the symbol Ouroboros, figure 2.3 may be used. It represents the cyclical nature of things, eternal return, and other things perceived as cycles that begin a new as soon as they end. Symbolically, the serpent or dragon biting its own tail also symbolizes the cyclic nature of the universe; creation out of destruction.

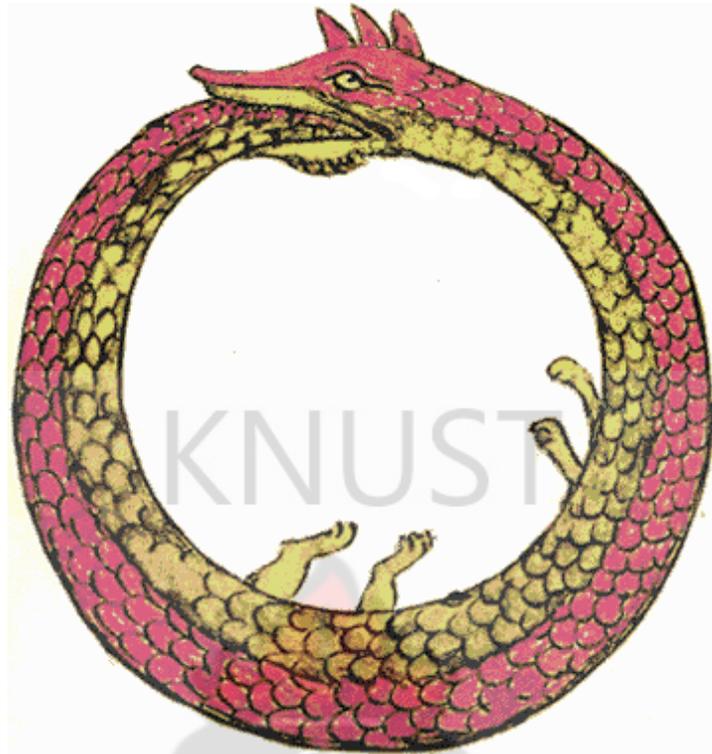


Figure 2.3 Ouroboros

(<http://www.wisegeek.com/what-is-ouroboros.htm>)

People who believe in bodily resurrection would probably accept that without the divine intervention or miracle from God the creator, it cannot materialize.

In Africa, the complexities of issues surrounding reincarnation are dependent on several philosophical questions: Is there life after death? After death what happens? Has anybody returned from the land of afterlife?

In addressing the issue of immortality, the basic condition required is set to the problem within its right context. Some Africans believe that before a person is born into this world, he lived with the parents in the spiritual world. After departing from them, the parents become worried and miss the child who has come to meet with his new parents hence they come to take the child back. This mostly takes place in the first week

after birth. This is the reason why the Akans in Ghana name their new born babies on the eighth day after birth. When the child repeats birth and death attitude for the third time, one the limbs or legs are broken or a mark is made on the body. If the child is born again with the broken limb, leg or the mark on the body, then this time, the baby will not die again but will continue to live on this earth.

According to Gyekye (1995), African philosophy is holistic and is influenced by one another. This does not necessarily mean that all African communities share the same level of quality, accepted as norm, though this level of quality is community based. Although some African philosophies are not supported in the analytic tradition of western metaphysics of reality, this does not actually mean that it is less precise. The spirit of precism is not absent in that every opinion is well examined and seen to rationally have a justification for cosmic problem or situation that is difficult or impossible to resolve.

The issue is not easily handled as in western philosophy where there is a history of text that permits the philosopher to make reference to a historically specific sort of ideas and issues that have been part of conversation over time. The Africans have far reaching thoughts about their environment, be it physical and supernatural experiences, some of which were beyond the material world. They continue to dig deep to uncover through mystical ways to the basic for which phenomenon in their reality scheme. This explains the awareness the African has about the results of superficial possible cause of action of their world. In most African societies, their daily activities and cultural traditions cannot be separated from their religion. Their various beliefs can be understood through the studying of their religious and cultural beliefs of different people analyzing their oral history, songs and proverbs, which have been handed from

generation to generation. Appiagyei-Atua (2005), discusses this issue in 'African Human Rights Law Journal' about how the Akans use proverbs to illustrate how these are part of an African philosophy of human rights.

Africans have their way of immortalizing their people, animals, objects and many others. Mbiti (1969) says that:

For the Africans; death is a separation and not annihilation; the dead person is suddenly cut off from the human society and yet the corporate group clings to him. This is shown through the elaborate funeral rites, as well as other methods of keeping in contact with the dead. (P, 24-26)

Again, Mbiti says that in many African societies, names and naming have a great importance. In some societies, it is believed that a person after his death can be called upon only if there is someone who knows his or her name. It is only through the names that the spirit world can be reached and parted ancestors can be commanded through the one who has the name. A person can be immortalized only through the remembrance of his name.

It is the general practice of almost every society that a person is called by his name, and he responds to it as such. Wherever one finds himself, in a crowd, among some colleagues, or even if he is alone, the person will definitely respond if his name is called.

In Ghana people are immortalized through being named after, streets, towns and stadia, tombstones, statues, objects to mention only a few. People name themselves after houses they build, the first or earlier settlers of a place, objects used such as stool and other items. The nation or the society can immortalize some people by naming streets and monuments after them for bravery, good leadership, in times of a disaster and many more. Immortalizing somebody does not mean an honour done after his death. Some

people have been immortalized while still alive. The idea of producing off- springs is very emphatic in the Ghanaian society. In some communities, a man's status is regarded and respected in relation to the number of children he has brought forth. The seriousness of this issue is manifested in the death of the person who fails to bring forth children, be he male or female adult. Some rituals need to be performed before the body is finally laid to rest, one of which is the insertion of ginger in the anus. This is quite clear and has bearing on the belief of the Akans in Ghana. I also side with Mbiti because having off- springs makes one's name to be mentioned during and after his death. Biblically we are all descendants of one great person, Adam. In most of our communities, children call parents by their children's name. Sometimes, it is easier to use children's name to search for their parents than the parents themselves. There are still a lot of practices through which the Akan concept of immortality can be identified. This has a common relationship with the Egyptian in times of death and funeral rites. Immortality cuts across a wide perspective from political, social and religious dimension.

The concepts of the immortal which millions of people long for is art that make the mortal become immortal. Knowing very well that life may be short, art works may be used as records of man. Concept of immortality may be used to make a reputation of objects, people and animals, everlasting. Immortality is used in a figurative way. It could be a description of an art work that has achieved a special value in the domain of history such as works of Michelangelo, plays of William Shakespeare, or songs of Bob Marley. The works of these people outlived them and are still considered as great works of art. Personally, this statement is laudably because most of these great artists are dead and gone but their books, songs and works are still being read, sang, and used in diverse ways. Joseph Addison, had this to say in relation to this that 'Books are

the legacies that a great genius leaves to mankind, which are delivered down from generation to generation as presents to the posterity of those who are yet unborn

Bob Marley, also says; 'My music will go on forever'. He continues to emphasize that his music will go on after he has passed away. My remark to this statement lies in this saying by the Akans that: '*Nipa wua, ne tekrema mpro*'. That is, the tongue does not rot after death. This means that people will continue to live after their death so far as their songs, stories and poems, never pass away.

The continuity of life after death was of great importance to the Egyptians. Eternity was a very significant concept for the Egyptians so they sought for a lasting place for their kings and queens to enable their souls have a resting place and continue their lives after death as it was their faith. Earlier on, the bodies were buried in the desert. Sometimes the body after burial was eaten by an animal in the desert. Having developed a better idea that could serve as a lasting solution to getting a permanent and safe place and also protect the body from wild animals in the desert, there was the need to construct these pyramids to house their late kings and queens without the fear of destruction in respect to time that could lead to wear and tear. The pyramids of Egypt, built at Giza during the 4<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (circa 2680 BC -2544 BC), according to Ashmawy (1995), are the oldest of the seven wonders of the ancient world and the only ones remaining intact today. The great pyramids of Giza still have a strong impact on humanity. The impact is best summed up in this ancient Arab proverb by Ashmawy (1995): 'Man fears Time, yet Time fears the pyramid' (p.51). The motive for constructing the pyramid was for permanency as the soul of the king and queen leaving in the preserved body was to continue life eternally.



Figure 2.4 Egyptian Pyramid

(<http://www.1uptravel.com/sevenwonders/pyramid/>)

Nevertheless the Egyptians believe that the soul rests in the body of the dead and does not extend to all places. In relation to one of my works, 'The Black Stool', figure 3.14 which source of inspiration was drawn from the Akan black stool, the Akans believe the soul of the dead king will dwell in the stool on which he sat to have his bath when he was alive. It is preserved in a special way and rituals are performed to enable his soul move into it. To Plato, death is defined as "the separation of the soul from the body";but is not the end of the soul. As the soul is believed to continue living in another being, it is said to be reincarnated in some people. Bhaktivedanta (1982) has it that: '.... and the soul transmigrates from one body to another at the time of death. The body may be different, but the "self" remains the same' (p.25). That is the continuation of life after death. Plato also believes in metempsychosis, the transmigration of souls from one

living thing to another, and in reincarnation, the rebirth of the soul in new bodies. The Phaedrus offers proof of the soul's immortality, proving the existence of gods from self-generating motion.

We are told, "All soul is immortal; for what is always in motion is immortal." A question is raised with this view: how do we know that the soul is "always in motion?" Plato says that it is the nature of the soul to initiate its own changes, to be self-moving, rather than merely moved.

On this view, something that is self-moving "can neither be destroyed nor come into being." Plato believes that only a soul of a philosophical lover of knowledge and virtue is worthy of traveling beyond the process of rebirth to ultimate fulfillment.

As mentioned earlier, the Egyptians believe in the soul continuing life after death, sought to find a resting place for the souls of their pharaohs and queens. They believed that the soul must rest in the body of the dead, hence the need to preserve the body from decay and thus mummifying it. Adams (1999), says as part of the preparation of the body known as mummification, the body of the deceased would be left to dry in the sun and then coated in a substance called natron which acts as a preservative. The body was buried in the sand for some days (60), which enables it to dehydrate. The heart, intestines and all organs inside the body are removed and also preserved. It is put into the stomach and sewn. The body is finally wrapped with linen and put in the first coffin before it is buried. During the preservation process, the priest reads some text from the Book of the Dead. This includes charms and spells to be used as protection against any forces in his journey to the after life. The books were also placed in the tomb during the burial ceremony, as shown in figure 2.7 (an example of an illustration in a book of the dead). These texts were written on papyrus.



Figure 2.5 Mary Morgan Smith (1994), *The Egyptian Book of The Dead*, 624 × 322 - 65k ([http://wn.com/book\\_of\\_the\\_dead?upload\\_time=all\\_time&orderby=viewCount](http://wn.com/book_of_the_dead?upload_time=all_time&orderby=viewCount))

In addition to the text on the papyrus, there was further development which was the coffin texts, an imperial expansion that broadened the base of their reach into the middle classes like the merchants, nobles, artisans and the pharaohs as well. A soul that lived well will live in a special place of peace. On the other hand if it did not exhibit good life, then it will not enjoy any better resting place which will eventually lead it to roam on earth (p.84-93).

Just as the Egyptians accord their kings, nobles and other dignitaries attention, so do the Akans in Ghana. All spirits are believed to have direct interaction with the physical earth. These account for the ancestral spirits being offered sacrifices and their coming home to eat and drink of the sacrifices as practiced by the Akans. I agree with Gyekye (1995) and the other writers view on the issue of immortality of the

soul in the sense that those who lived an exemplary life are forever or longer period remembered of their good deeds. Their stories, sayings, ideas et cetera are emulated by the people after decades and centuries to come (p.79-81).

In contrast to the traditional view on immortality of the soul, is the opinion of the Christian and some other religions. The Christian concept of eternity for instance is contradictory to the African perception. The African concept about immortality is that the soul moves into another being or something and continues its life there where as, the Christians and some other religions believe that the soul departs from the body and it is kept by God until the resurrection or judgment day. The soul will not move into any being until the period of resurrection, whiles the soul continues to operate or work in the other world in the African perspective. The theologian, Buechner (1973) writes on the Christian view: ‘....we go to our graves as dead as a doomail and are giving our lives back again by God in the first place’ (p.10).

In Africa most people do not doubt the immortality of soul. It is widely believed that the soul of man is immortal. Its existence does not cease even after the body has decayed. In Ghana this issue is not new in the cultural belief of most of the people. The Akans have many symbols through which they express themselves in proverbs, maxims, and historical records, events or concepts. This has gained modern commercial patronage from the public as it is being produced and bought by many Ghanaians and some people outside the country unlike some years back when it was solely designed for the royalty and the spiritual leaders. Its usage has been perpetuated in architecture and sculpture. The adinkra symbol is mostly exhibited in their art works.

The designs in the 'kente' cloth, pottery, the native sandals, the chief's umbrella top, drums, and many others usually portray these symbols.

In expressing the immortality of man by the Akans, the symbol '*Nyame Nnwu Na Ma Wu*', figure 2.4 for instance, stands as a symbol of God's omnipresence and the perpetual existence of man's spirit. This depicts the belief in the immortality of man's soul, which they believed to be part of God. It is said the soul cannot die because it rests with God after death. Figures 2.5 and 2.6 show the symbol '*Nyame Nnwu Na Ma Wu*' being used in art work.

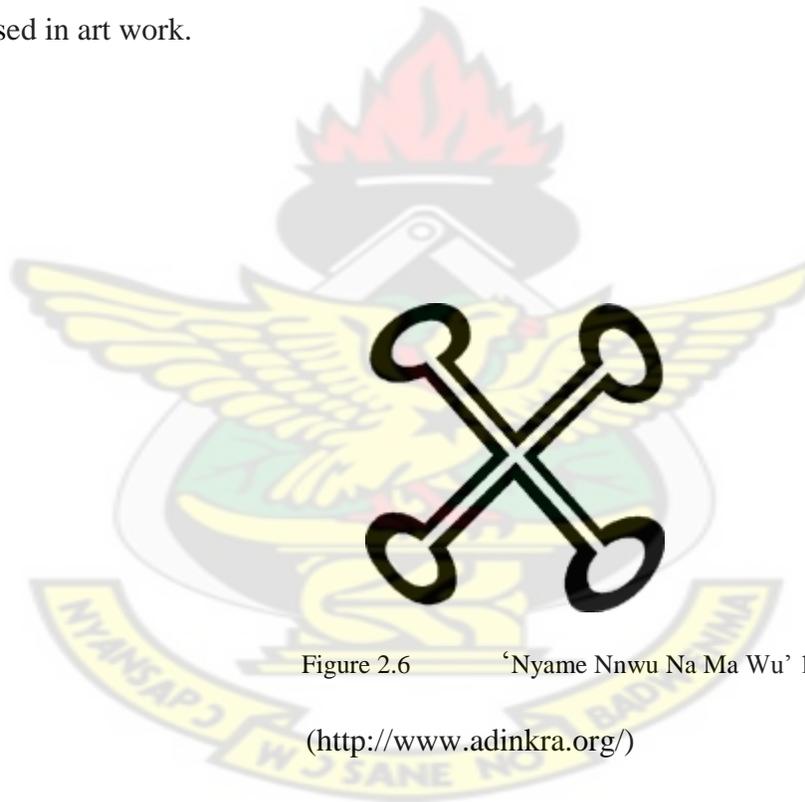


Figure 2.6 'Nyame Nnwu Na Ma Wu' 1

(<http://www.adinkra.org/>)



Figure 2.7 'Nyame Nnwu Na Ma Wu' 2  
Beaded work by Jo Ann Ely of Oregon,  
U.S.A



Figure 2.8 'Nyame Nnwu Na Ma Wu' 3  
"God never dies, therefore I cannot die"  
(<http://www.adinkra.org/>) Unknown artist

Figure 2.6 shows some other adinkra symbols used to design a pot, with the circles highlighting the symbol that stand for immortality of man's soul 'Nyame Nnwu Na Ma Wu'.

In Egypt, immortality of the soul in the African concept was also manifested in their art works. In Egyptian art, making one's artistic work most like the admired art works of the past was considered the best artist. The statues, paintings, pottery and jewelry followed the same pattern and it was as if they adhered to one law. The combination of geometric regularity, characteristics angle representation, the keen

observation of nature and many others, were all imbued in the construction of their pyramid. According to Smith and Simpson (1998), this was strictly followed and held for more than two thousand years. The mode of representing man in sculpture also existed significantly the same through thousand of years. This principle was known as the Egyptian canon of proportion. The above information was geared towards permanency (p.89).

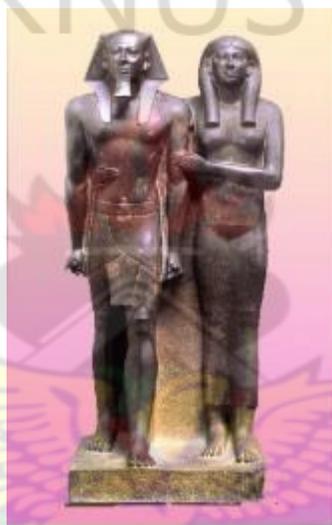


Figure 2.9 Block-Egyptian-permanence

The Art and Architecture of Ancient Egypt (page 296)

(William Stevenson Smith, William Kelly Simpson, Yale University Press, 1998)

The figure 2.8 shows two figures in a very rigid posture with each left leg drawn forward. Again, Smith and Simpson (1998) said this was the posture of most of their standing figures and was adhered to a long period as it was geared towards permanence.

After life had come to an end, the human body needed a resting place. For eternity to prevail just as the Egyptians had the pyramids there must be a resting place for the human body for people at different places. The cemetery which serves as a burial

ground and home for the dead is the everlasting place for our ancestors. Kolatch (1981) indicates the Jewish law requires that a tombstone be prepared, so that the deceased will not be forgotten and the grave will not be desecrated. It is customary in some communities to keep the tombstone veiled, or to delay in putting it up, until the end of the twelfth months of mourning period. The idea underlying this custom is that the dead will not be forgotten when he is being mourned every day.

Keeping dead relatives or people in memory has led to the reverence of ancestors by many people. Revering ancestors prevails in most part of Africa and serves as the basis of religions. Veneration offered to the dead is centered on the belief in an after life, the continued existence and their ability to influence the fortune of the living. In Ghana most of the cultural, religious, social and political practices show that the ancestors, though they rest in their peaceful abode are very close to the people irrespective of the time or place where they find themselves. People pour libation to them before or after taking the drink. The Asantes in Ghana for example believe that, the ancestors visit them in their homes during the night, so food was sometimes reserved for them to come and take. On some special days as 'Akwasidae' mashed yam is prepared for the late kings to eat. Though the food is not actually tempered with, they believe they have eaten it. To ensure that, the ancestors come home, the legs of the dead person always point to the home when they are buried. This will enable them to walk home and not into the bush when they wake up. The spirits are called upon during naming and marriage ceremonies, funeral rites and other functions.

Bardis (1981), states that the Egyptians believed that life after death continues almost unaltered. The Egyptians depiction of the dead was one of dependency. They believed that the dead depended upon the living for food and drink as replenishment

within the tomb, and if the dead were not cared for in such a way, the second death of the tomb was hideous, dreadful, and final. This was said by Bardis (p.338).

In the same way in some religions, people believed to have led good lives before passing away are immortalized as they are referred to as saints. The Catholics are notable for this issue. Statues, schools and churches are named after these noble personalities. On their calendar special days have been assigned to these saints and observed by the conduct of some activities.

Just as some religious groups accept immortality, some people have struggled, laboured, sacrificed in some ways for people to gain freedom, enjoyed improved standards of living and have attained immortality even as they continue to live, or after their death. Some of these personalities include Nelson Mandela (South Africa), Mother Theresa (India), Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana) and Yaa Asantewaa (Ghana). Similarly, Woody Allen according to Robert Green (2009), also expresses his view that, 'I don't want to achieve immortality through my work...I want to achieve it through not dying'. The statement made by Allen indicates that people need not to die before they can be immortalized but based on their good exemplary life they attain it whilst alive. So far as the continuous existence of man eternally on this earth cannot be possible man will like to continue living after his death as Woody Allen proposed or wished, it could be accomplished through resurrection.

Resurrection of dead human is purely the doctrine of Christianity, Islam, Judaism and some religions. Only Jesus resurrected as the Christians believe, which was a saving act of God. (John 20: 14-17). It is the religious concept of reuniting a deceased person's spirit with the body. That is raising them from the dead. The Moslems believe that every man has an immortal soul which will live on after death (Quran, 002.028).

They have a serious belief in life after death. All other beliefs may be meaningless with the slightest doubt in the belief in life after death. ‘Allah causes you to live; then causes you to die, and then he will assemble before the day of resurrection.’ (Quran 45:24-26).

The resurrection of man, animal or anything is being manifested in a memorial like a monument, buildings, streets, and others. ‘*Dua esi wuram mpo wo anidaso se yetwa soa ebefefe*’. (Job 14:7) This is a Biblical quotation which means when a tree is chopped down, there is always the hope that it will sprout again. This statement to some extent gives hope to mankind that eternity prevails after death. That is those who believe in resurrection.

Resurrection which has some similarity to reincarnation deals with the dead coming back to life, and taking the body that makes the person to be easily recognized, the latter does not deal with the old body. However, Goucher, Le Guin, et tal; (1998) states that ‘Buddha had escaped the endless cycle of birth-death-rebirth on the Wheel of Life since he had reached an enlightened states. (p.123)

Reincarnation is mostly associated with various kinds of religion. In some of the religions, it is the rebirth of the soul. It is perceived by some system of belief that it is the return of the soul to live in a new body in a cyclic form. In some other systems of belief it could be a person or animal in whose body another person’s soul is reborn after he has died. In most forms of Buddhism and Hinduism, reincarnation is a fundamental doctrine. Probably there may be more people around the world who believe in it than those who prefer the Judaism-Christian-Moslem view. Our lives begin at death and will continue in heaven or hell after death. Some people see in reincarnation the satisfaction of their hunger for immortality.

Some peoples believe in reincarnation has a very close link to the concept of immortality. To the African, spirits are reincarnated. Goucher, Leguin, et al; (1998) asserts that the carrying of “Akuaba” which is a wooden doll and literally means “Akua’s child” is to enable women in desperate need of children produce some believed to be the reincarnation of the ancestors (p.338).

In the infinity of life, monuments serve as immortals for our heroes, relatives and friends who have lived exemplary lives. When somebody dies, it is said that a vacuum has been created which is very difficult to fill or replace. In the bid to fill this vacuum, monuments are raised to occupy the gap between the real and the symbolic. It is a way of preserving a memory of the dead person. Monuments serve as recreating the loss or the erased. To serve as a memorial or to honour a person who has served the nation, the society or the family, structures are erected and put at strategic places. It can also be made for significant events for remembrance of past events. One of the most everlasting projections of human beings true identity is sculpture.

A typical example of a memorial work is ‘The Fountain of Eternal Life’, figure 2.10 also known as the War Memorial Fountain and Peace Arising from the Flames of War, this is a statue and fountain in Cleveland, Ohio designed by Cleveland Institute of Art graduate Marshall Fredericks and dedicated on May 30, 1964.



Figure 2.10 Fountain of Eternal Life, Marshall Fredericks (1964)

Bronze, height 1050cm

([http://catholicjournaling\\_files.wordpress.com/2009/05/fountain\\_of\\_eternal\\_life\\_crop.jpg](http://catholicjournaling_files.wordpress.com/2009/05/fountain_of_eternal_life_crop.jpg))

The sculpture, which serves as the city's major memorial to its citizens that served in World War II, is situated on Memorial Plaza, which is part of the Cleveland Mall.

As the fountain of eternal life was made in remembrance of the nation's heroes so also has Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah gained such recognition in Ghana? As the saying goes, the nation that does not honour her heroes is not worth dying for. Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah has been immortalized through many forms including sculpture for his good works by attaining independence for Ghana and also his vision to get African countries united. Sited at the exact place where he proclaimed Ghana's independence in Accra is his full statue in bronze, wearing a cloth. As part of the design are state swords turned upside down, and which symbolizes peace. The same concept

could be viewed as a truncated tree to signify the unfinished work of Dr Kwame Nkrumah to totally unite Africa according to the designer.

Building monuments to enable people remember their hero's led John Robinson (1982) to come out with this art work 'Passing on the Torch of Life'. He presents this statement about his work;

'.... I began to think of doing a sculpture that would capture the passing on of the precious flame of existence within a family, and I needed a symbol. ... How could I make the surface move through time and become infinite? ... I believe that Immortality is made up of one's memories of the past, as well as those one leaves behind. I see this Symbolic Sculpture not only as a continuous journey through generations, but also the scroll on which all of life's experience (DNA) is recorded.'



Figure 2.11 Immortality 'Passing on the Torch of Life'

Robert A. Hefner III Collection, (1982) Aspen, Australia (Height 182 cm)

(<http://www.bradshawfoundation.com/jr/immortality.php>)

I also share the same opinion with John Robinson that life is a journey. The message propagated by him is much inspiring as there is always hope for a planned journey. As a journey has an end, so also is life. It must be symbolic and give a good account of itself. Every journey must have a destination, and should equally be purposeful. It is not about the physical place, but the fulfillment of the mission. As much as I like the idea of Robinson, I was very much inspired by the message and the work as well. However, my work was executed in natural fibre, whilst he used metal for his work.

In much the same way as Robinson talk about immortality in his art work, so does Eva Hesse (1968), a fibre artist used man-made fibres to create a link between humanity's primordial hunger for immortality and the invincible materials they had invented. Jessica Lack wrote this about Hesse's works in figure 2.12.

The sculptures of Eva Hesse seem almost human – but not in a good way. Latex strips and fleshy protrusions hang limply like flayed skin or mangled limbs. A ragged rope suspended from the ceiling looks like strands of hair yanked from the teeth of a comb. Bent, buckled and scraped into sexually ambiguous forms, Hesse's sculptures are full fetishistic desire

Though Hesse uses man-made fibres to express her work on immortality, I used natural fibre for mine. The sculpture works that made Hesse to be elevated by the Jewish Museum was not due to its unconventional materials, methods and presentation, but most certainly because of the enigmatic message it carried. Although the sexual innuendos are sometimes remote, it is difficult not to read the sculptural work as sexually informed in spite Hesse's claim that "excellence has no sex,".



Figure 2.12 Eva Hesse (Immortal longings...an untitled piece) 1968  
(<http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2009/aug/05/artist-eva-hesse>)

‘Still searching, (figure 4.3) has a conical shape like the mushroom but has a rough surface like strands of brown hair. This is similar to Hesse’s work she used man-made fibre to create a connection between man’s desires for immortality, whilst I used coconut fibre to make a work that emphasizes on the need to take good care of ones life to enable him live long.

Unlike Eva Hesse’s work which she used man-made fibre to express immortality, Kathy Herbert (1994) also writes about ‘And Tir na nOg Dances On’ figure 2.13 which is an installation which combines sculptural and drawn elements at the Orchard Gallery. Dancing and moving across the gallery walls in a frenzy mood are the loosely drawn figures in blue and green which is part of the installation  
Herbert’s statement about the work is ‘loosely’ defined,

my work takes an optimistic view of life and relates it to the land, humanity and the spiritual connection between them ....Our understanding of ourselves and our culture can be enhanced by our acknowledgement of the past and part it has played in continuum of life, to which we ourselves contribute (p.60-61)

Herbert uses new and old materials such as concrete and dyed Hessian which he combines with nails glass or saw blades. Herbert refers to the role which Ireland has played in the development of the West in her artist statement. Her work requires the viewer to look to the past and reflect on connection between what has gone before and experiences one has as gained now.



Figure 2.13 Kathy Herbert (1994) ‘And Tir na nOg Dances On’

Fibre Art, Galway Arts Centre, Ireland

My work, *'Anidaso wo ho'* figure 3.31, which means there is hope, rendered in relief portraiture deals with personalities who have done remarkable things for their family, community or nation as a whole. Hence, they are remembered by the people after they have passed away. The materials used in executing the work; jute fibre and raffia, also mark a very significant contribution to the nation's economy.

In discussing issues about immortality, it will be unfair if its negation is not dealt with. Einstein expressed immortality with the assertion that: 'I do not believe in the immortality of the individual and I consider ethics to be an exclusively human concern without any super human authority behind it'

The capability of something not dying makes it immortal.

Sharma (2009) uses his art work in figure 2.14 as an autobiographical extension of himself where he intuitively uses different materials, processes and concepts to create art work that reveals his true nature, feelings and thoughts about an idea or experience he has had. Sharma continues his statement as:

This piece comes from my attempt to see optimism in death. It deals with the inevitability of death, the way death sustains and helps regenerate new life, and it also begins to tap into ideas of the afterlife. Although the thought of my own mortality can be depressing, I realize that my death will make room for new life and that my energy will be transformed into another form.

Arun uses the concept of seed and regeneration as a representation of the anxiety and conviction he needs to pursue with the knowledge that his life will end one day.



Figure 2.14 Arun Sharma, Untitled (coffin & ants) July 24, 2009

Size: Life size coffin (<http://www.arunsharma.webs.com/>)

I side with Arun's statement as he lays the cards bare to viewers about the inevitability of death and the need to recognize it as such.

Artists continue to express their ideas concerning mortality in various ways. Fiona Mcpeake (1994) writes about his latest work titled 'Anatomia' figure 2.15 on page 42 that it was created in response to recent personal experiences and world events, which made him aware of our 'illusion of immortality'. 'In spite of the hype of cosmetic surgery and anti-ageing paraphernalia, a number of unexpected bereavements gave me, although still relatively young, a growing sense of ageing and finality...'

Mcpeake uses leather which he deems befitting and challenging choice to reveal these experiences of loss and possible damage. This natural material, once alive and breathing, is given another life in different forms and shapes, to acquire its own qualities in terms of resistance and adaptability to change and colour variation.

Mcpeake uses 'Anatomia' to create the awareness of aging and mortality process which viewers should not lose sight of. I admit what Fiona McPeake says about aging and death as some people have tried various means to overcome them, yet it cannot be entirely achieved since nature continues to change.



Figure 2.15 Fiona Mcpeake, 'Anatomia' (1994) 15x35x15cm  
([http://www.fionamcpeake.com/images/gallery/8\\_large.jpg](http://www.fionamcpeake.com/images/gallery/8_large.jpg))

Some years ago, the Egyptian and Greek sculptors who were enthused with stone carving especially marble at a point thought it was the climax sculptors could attain. However, in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, this idea began to die gradually as artist's taste switched off to different media and direct carving was no longer of interest to them. Meanwhile, these materials were very durable. A good number of artists are

admired for the use of non-traditional materials. What made me interested about some of their work is not so much about the materials, but what they do with them.

Some artists use non-traditional materials such as chocolate or unique concoctions of paint to make their work, such works are able to win the hearts of many audiences and great satisfaction is attained at the end of the day.



Figure 2.16 NicoleW7 Dec. 2009 Chocolate lion at Concarneau  
<http://images.google.com.gh/imgres?imgurl>

This sculpture work of a lion, figure 2.16 was done by NicoleW7. He used a non-traditional material; chocolate to model a magnificent work which he called 'Chocolate lion'. Impermanence in sculpture deals with works that are perishable and get destroyed or may not last forever. Stone is more permanent than paper and paper much durable than aluminum. Impermanence can result from eons, centuries, decade or years passing. Impermanency can also be anticipated or unexpectedly due to some natural factors. No clear cut definition may be given to permanence and impermanence as they are dependent upon functions and expectations of what is been defined. The Egyptian

pyramids were purposed to last for ‘a million year’, but some parts have started wearing out gradually. In the same way, the moon suits after serving their intended purpose has started deteriorating though the museum curator expected that the suit provided visitors with material artifact for many more decades.

The question therefore is what makes a work of art impermanent? To me, a work of art may be impermanent because it has out lived its time, it is in deteriorating state or is no more in existence. The only traces may be its documentation on video tape or slides. On the other hand the work had served its intended purpose, and audiences have gained their satisfaction. In dealing with mortality in art, the term transient cannot be over ruled as it plays an important role for artist in this field. Transient art works is actually short in duration. My works are made to signify permanence. However, the materials I used for the work (natural fibre) are not strong and cannot withstand certain conditions such as rain. However, I used impermanent material to express mortality.

Figure 2.17 and 2.18 are two of some the great works of Cai entitled ‘Transcient Rainbow’ and ‘I Want To Believe’ respectively which he combines Chinese philosophy and alchemy principle in art work. His philosophy in making fire works is creative destruction. These works he used gunpowder, explosives and colour to amuse his audience. With this kind of works he does not intend to make them stay for a longer period.



Figure 2.17 .Cai Guo Qiang, Transient Rainbow East River,  
from Manhattan to Queens, New York, USA 2002  
(<http://www.thememagazine.com/stories/cai-guo-qiang/>)

“Every work I make is something that I’d be interested in viewing and therefore there must be a reason or concept behind it’.

The exploration of gunpowder as a material for his drawings, led Cai to his experimentation which resulted in artistically choreographed shows incorporating fireworks and other pyrotechnics. One of these is figure 2.18 “I want to believe”. His works are scholarly most politically charged. He uses explosive and gunpowder on a large scale.



Figure 2.18 Cai Guo Qiang, I Want To Believe, 2008 (Beijing Olympics)

(<http://www.fadwebsite.com/wp-content/uploads/cai-guo-qiang.jpg>)

Whereas Cai addresses social issues with his art works, Goucher, Guin and Walton (1998), writes about death, which is a social canker to man: 'It is the destiny of every man to descend the ladder of death'. They further mention that 'Death is perhaps the only truly universal experience in the world' (p.119). The idea is similar to the ladder which is called "owuo atwedee" by the Akans as seen in figure 2.19 meaning the ladder of death. It is a reminder of the transitory nature of existence in this world and of the imperative to live a good life to be a worthy soul in the afterlife. The ladder which is an equipment for climbing up or down serves as means through which mankind will get to the under world, and everybody is bound to climb, due to death inevitability.

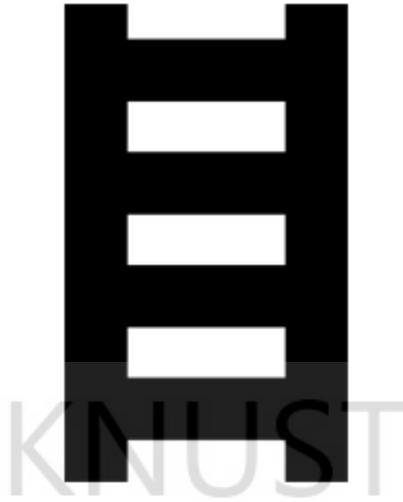


Figure 2.19 ‘*OWUO ATWEDEE*’, "The ladder of death"

(<http://www.adinkra.org/>)

The above issue which is about the ladder of death is similar to Tónico Lemos Auad (2004) art work figure 2.20 which he uses natural fibre materials to execute. Through the inspiration derived from daily incidental experiences and mundane objects, Tónico, a Brazilian native transforms common place materials into forms that suggest the passing of time. Tónico uses dried grape stems which he weaved into an intricate skull. The skull is a symbol of life's brevity and a reminder of human mortality and this date back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century Baroque still- life. The over ripe fruit serves as a ‘memento mori’. The theme of decay and progression is to enable the viewer see that as an integral and important part of the art work.

In much as I side with Tónico, life can be likened to flower in full bloom of a youthful stage, in a short while, it withers and all that made it pleasant and attractive will be no more. No matter how one will protect his life, it cannot be forever. Therefore, he concludes by saying; ‘Well...we’re here for a good time, not for a long time’.



Figure 2.20 Auad, Tónico Lemos

Skull Grapes (2004), Size: 20cm x 14cm x 18cm

(<http://www.crggallery.com/artists/tonico-lemos-auad/>)

As discussed earlier about John Robinson's work, figure 2.11 Immortality 'Passing on the Torch of Life' as life is a journey, every journey must have a destination, and should equally be purposeful. It is not about the physical place, but the fulfillment of the mission. Thus, there should be good tidings from what the person has left behind and it is in this vain that will pave way for ones future success as he enjoys life after reaching the destination. To attain infinity for oneself is to make the positive side of life much bigger and putting aside the fear of death.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

To carry out a successful project, there is the need to plan, make designs and seek suitable tools, materials, the methods and techniques that will be used. In this chapter I discuss the methods through which the various projects were completed.

Also places like the Centre for National Culture, Kumasi, Hwereso, where cane weaving, is predominant, Afreseni, where basket weaving, 'apketeshi' distilling and vegetable and cocoa farming are the main occupation of the people and other places of interest were visited. The main library and College of Art library, all of KNUST and the World Wide Web at the M.F.A studios were accessed to foster the success of the project.

Various tools used included knife, hacksaw, scissors, nails, needles, crochet tool, hammer, saw and plane, arc welding machine, pliers and gloves.

Materials for fibre works were selected for the project. They included materials that were close to my environment and most especially what I perceive to be "warm" and "alive" and have economic, social, and religious and some other uses. They include Coconut fibre, raffia, palm tree fibre and kenaf fibre. Dylon and potassium permanganate dyes of various colours were used to dye some of the fibres to enhance the brightness of the materials. The other materials which were no mean items but served as lifeless, hard and cold substances to render support for the main materials to be built on. These included iron rods, wood and nylon strings. The natural fibre was chosen as the materials for my project due to the love and passion for its works. The purpose was to disabuse some people's mind from the fact that not only strong and durable materials

could be used for works that stand for permanency. Various experiments were carried out which led to the main project works.

### **Experimental Survey**

Experiments were carried out as trials to enable me acquire the practical knowledge and skills in executing the works.

### **Experiment one**

The first material I worked with was clay though this was not a natural fibre. This was because the idea I was developing and the experiments to be carried out needed to be done from known to the unknown. As the topic had a broad spectrum, and considering procreation as an aspect of it, which I thought was to prolong life so far as reproducing off springs could help sustain mankind on this earth, I considered this experiment will help me to develop my ideas.



Figure 3.1 Modelled figure in clay



Figure 3.2

Picture of modelled work from clay

The works, figures 3.1 and 3.2 was about an incomplete pregnant woman. This was preceded by numerous sketches starting from realism to the final incomplete figure. In making the figures 3.1 and 3.2, clay was prepared and modeled in line with the sketch made using the hands and the modeling tools. The work was allowed to dry in a leather hard state and scooped carefully. It was left to dry on freely and remain in that state without firing.

## **Experiment 2**

The next step was the use of ‘sawe’ which is a local fibre from a climbing plant that is used as sponge for bathing and also as a chewing material to clean the teeth and palm fruit fibre. This was used in making a relief of the human face. The material ‘sawe’ was cut into pieces and with the aid of P. V. A. (white glue); the relief was modeled on a piece of plywood on which the sketch had been made. The palm fibre was used to model the eyebrow, nose and mouth. This also served as an experimental work and preparation towards the main project which were still being developed.



Figure 3.3  
Scissors, ‘sawe’ and white glue



Figure 3.4 Relief portrait modeled with 'sawe'  
Dwamena Appiah (2009), 28 x 35 cm

### **Experiment 3**

Through research and idea development, one of the natural fibre materials was selected after a careful thought. Life is something that we value and if given the necessary care and attention, it can be prolonged. Since life after death is discussed as another form of immortality which enables man to move into another world, the door mat which is placed at the door entrance is always ready to accept and welcome anybody going into the room and also bids him farewell as he leaves. This is made of different kinds of materials, ranging from artificial to natural fibres.

Coconut fibre is a strong fibre which was used to make some of the works in the project. To begin with this experiment, materials which included wood, nails, nylon string and pieces of cotton fabrics were purchased. The tools used were hammer, saw, measuring tape, knife and a scissors.



Figure 3.5 Nylon strings

The experiment continued by making a rectangular wooden frame. Two opposite sides of the rectangular frame were nailed with 5cm nails and the nylon string tied to them creating horizontal or vertical lines in respect to the angle it turned. The lines were well stretched and tightly tied to the nails to prevent the work from sagging during the process of weaving. Materials gathered from a tailoring shop as pieces of fabric (the artificial) were needed to start with. The pieces of fabric were cut to an even shape of almost equal size and length. The material is tied to the first two strings at the top and pulled down to the base of the frame, using the Turkish knotting technique. The second and third string are tied with another piece of fabric and also pulled down to the bottom. This process was repeated until the last string was tied, then back to the first string to the last until all strings are filled from bottom to the top. The edges of both

ends, top and down of the string was sewn to fasten the individual strings together. The work was removed from the frame by taken the nails from the frame.

Haven finished weaving with the cotton fabric; coconut fibre was prepared as the material for the next task. The fibre was prepared by beaten the fresh husk with a piece of wood on a stone. Water is squeezed out of the husk and the debris is shaken off. This was dried in the sun for the natural brown colour, while some were dyed in various colours as desired. The fibre was well dried to prevent it from molding and bad odour. The coconut fibre was also woven using the same process. The same procedure used for weaving the cotton fabric was employed for the coconut fibre.



Figure 3.6 Nylon string stretched on a wooden frame

The difference between the two materials was that weaving the cotton fabric was quite faster than the coconut fibre



Figure 3.7  
Door mat woven with coconut  
fibre



Figure 3.8  
Trimming the fibre with scissors

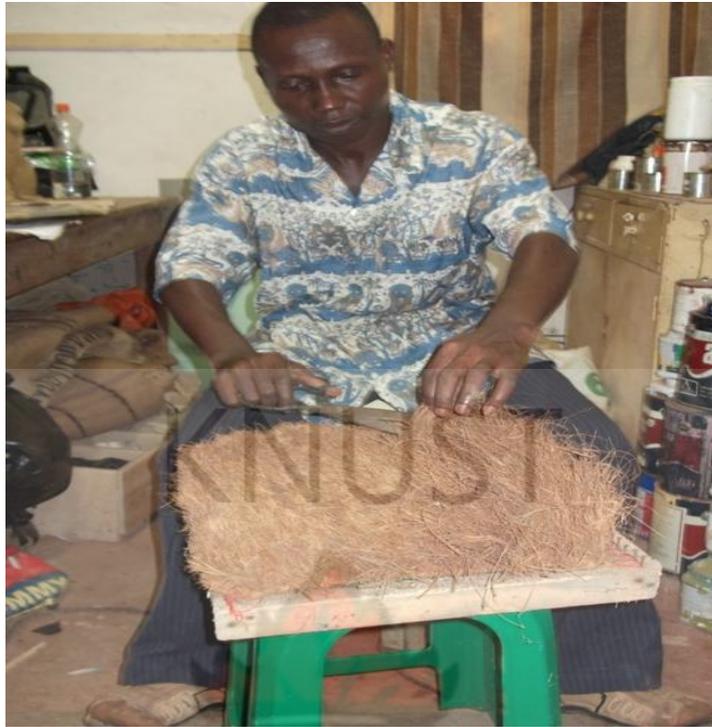
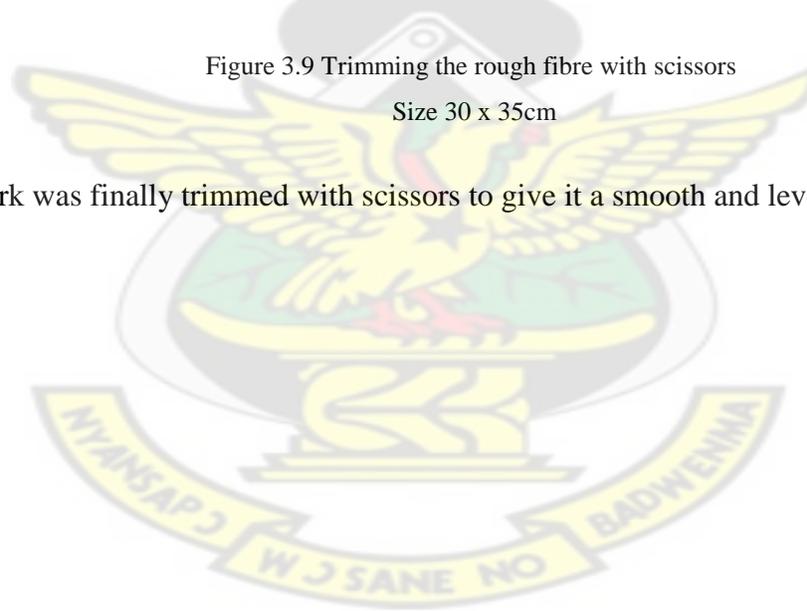


Figure 3.9 Trimming the rough fibre with scissors

Size 30 x 35cm

The work was finally trimmed with scissors to give it a smooth and level finish.



**Project one**

**'ETERNITY'**



Figure 3.10 Front view of 'Eternity'  
Dwamena Appiah (2009) coconut fibre 73 x 93 cm



Figure 3.11 Back view of 'Eternity' Dwamena Appiah  
(2009) coconut fibre 73 cm x 93 cm

Drawing inspiration from the works of Peter North and Alias North 'The Fountain of Life', May 2008 (this work had been reviewed in chapter two of the project). Eternity was created to give hope to mankind that death is the end of man's life in this physical world, it is a transitional period ushering into another place of eternity. A number of drawings were made and materials had to be ready for the work. The process of weaving a doormat was used. Coconut fibre was dyed pink, yellow and green with dylon and potassium permanganate. When this was being processed, a wooden frame measuring 75 x 100 cm was made and two of its opposite side (longer) were nailed and tied with nylon string. The drawing was placed behind the frame to help weave on the marked strings as shown in figure 3.13.



Figure 3.12  
Dyed coconut fibre



Figure 3.13  
Weaving process of 'Eternity'

The green colour was used to begin the work, and as usual the 'Turkish knotting' technique was used. Other colours of red, brown and yellow were also introduced in for the various designs in the picture. The impressive nature of the work resulting in boldness and optimism is due to the bright and energetic colours used. The project was rendered in realism to enable the viewers' imagination and experience to play a role in the meaning and interpretation of the piece. The final work measures 73 x 93 cm.

## Project two

### ‘OBAATANPA’



Figure 3.14 ‘Obaatanpa ’Dwamena Appiah (2009)  
coconut fibre, iron rod and nylon, 120 x 68 cm

Weaving has been embraced by some religions especially Christianity portraying some of the mythological scenes. Again, it is being done on a large scale for economic purposes. Woven products are used in the home and varied places. Weaving was chosen to help me express my self through the materials selected. Employing the various techniques and processes this made the works gratifying and enjoyable to me and the audience as well.

Having gained in-depth knowledge and skills, urged me to engage in intensive practical works. This was begun with sketch designs for the shape it will take. Iron rods

of 1.6cm and 0.8cm sizes were measured, cut into pieces and fashioned into shapes with a hammer on an anvil. The pieces of fashioned iron rods were weld to make the frame of the pot. Nylon string was tied around the frame in a vertical form making it ready for weaving.

After acquiring the techniques and skills used in weaving the doormat, the project started by weaving form the base to the top. Dried coconut fibre of black and pink colours was used to weave round the frame at the base respectively.



Figure 3.15

Project in an up right position



Figure 3.16

Project showing the base

The introduction of the colours gave a great impetus and varied effects to the work together with the natural brown colour. To give a smooth finish, the pink coloured fibre was used to complete the top part of the pot. The work was finally shaped with scissors to enhance the smoothness and roundness to flow.

KNUST



Figure 3.17 Weaving process –‘obaatanpa’



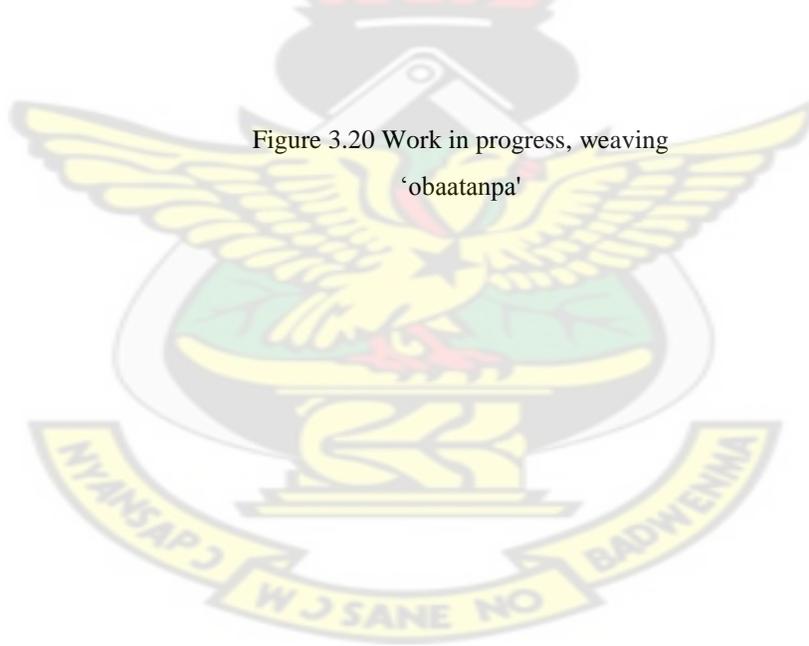
Figure 3.18  
Weaving process- 'obaatanpa'



Figure 3.19  
Shaping the rough fibre with scissors



Figure 3.20 Work in progress, weaving  
'obaatanpa'



### Project three

#### ‘STILL SEARCHING’



Figure 3.21 ‘Still Searching’ Dwamena Appiah  
(2009),

The second project ‘still searching’ also a three dimensional object was finally produced out of three major ideas. The work takes the shape of the mushroom, termite and ant-hill. After the frame was completed with 0.9cm iron rod, cut and weld in line with the drawing made. Nylon string was tied to it in a vertical standing position. This enabled it to attain a wig stand shape. The Turkish knot technique was employed having the same process like the ‘obaatanpa’. On this project however, only the natural coconut fibre in its brown colour was used. The work measures 38 x 53 cm in size.



Figure 3.22

Prepared fibre for weaving

The project still searching was created as a matter of inspiration drawn from the study of four different things; mush room, termite hill, the ant-hill, serving as an eye-opener to the perception of immortality, the spider symbolism and the infinity symbol.

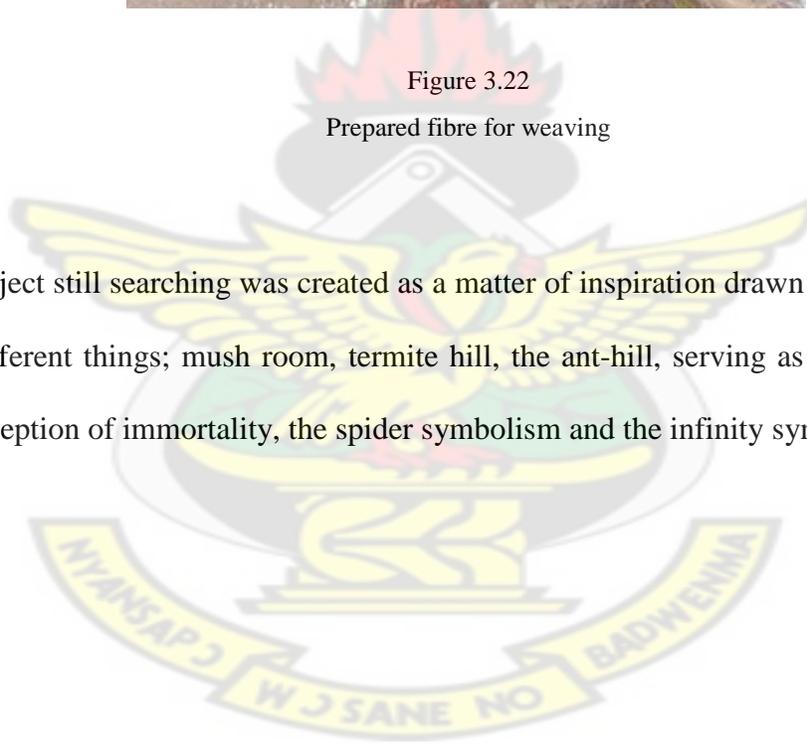




Figure 3.23  
Ant hill studied

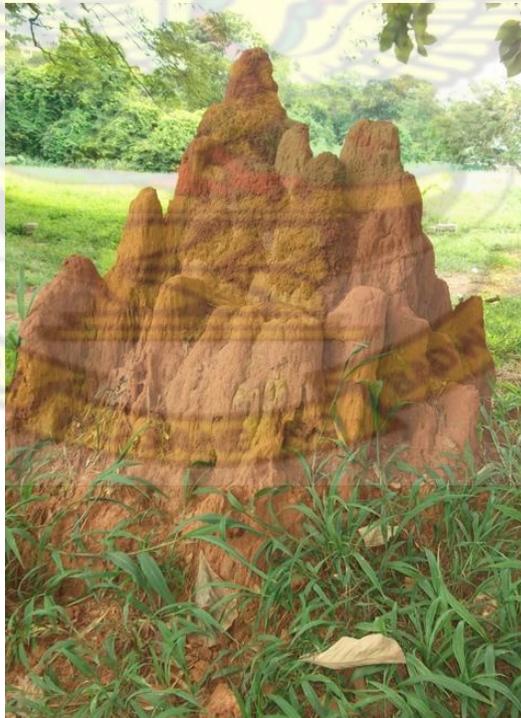


Figure 3.24  
Termite hill studied



Figure 3.25 Working process on 'Still Searching'

The concept metaphorically deals with the way to mimic the life span of a mushroom and its uses.

## Project four

### ‘ANIDASO WO HO’



Figure3.26 ‘Anidaso wo ho’ (portrait), Dwamena Appiah (2010)  
Jute fabric, raffia and dye 150 x 180cm

My interest in using fibre to make a portrait resulted in this work. Considering the wide range of natural fiber materials around, I did not want to limit myself to only coconut fiber; hence raffia and jute fabric for this project. Having worked with coconut fibre in some of the works, I decided to use cocoa sack which is produced from the jute as a fabric. The jute is much of economic importance to the nation as it is used to bag cocoa beans which is the highest foreign exchange earner for the nation. It is also used in bagging cereals, grains and onion from the northern to the southern part of the country. It is a material which has much economic value to the nation. In some villages children sleep on it as a mat. The raffia is used by the traditional priest and priestesses as a skirt called ‘dosso’ in Akan. It is also used to weave basket, tie items such as salt, chewing

stick and many others. It serves as a material for weaving mat and for sleeping and drying of grains and cereals. It is also used as a shroud to wrap the deceased for burial. Some of the qualities of good raffia include its ability to pick dye easily, soft in texture and durable as well. In coming out with this soft sculpture, there was the need to use raffia as a materials to complete the picture due to its softness which enable easy manipulation. The cocoa sack served as a support to the work.. The work from the raffia was enjoyed as it was dyed in several colours of black, brown and pink, using the cold dye method. The dying process had to be repeated on two or three occasions to enable the fibre pick the dye well. The dyed fibre had to dry well before the next turn. Some of the raffia was left in its natural state which looked creamy in colour.



Figure 3.27  
Raffia on jute sack



Figure 3.28  
Dye (Dylon) ready for use



Figure 3.29  
Dying of raffia



Figure 3.30

Repeating the dyeing process

Two cocoa sacks were opened at the seam and sewn together using a needle and a yarn prepared from jute fibre. Tacking type of stitches was used as it helped fasten the sack very firmly. With a free hand the picture was sketched on the sack. Actual work began after separating the sack again to enable me work on the smaller size of the sack and also facilitate free movement as the two put together was too broad. The various colours of raffia were cut into equal length and with the crochet tool, the raffia was woven to form the picture. The design had a similar look like the woven carpet. However, this was not too compact and had some spaces. The weaving process started from the black hair, the forehead, and the various features on the face and lastly to the suit.



Figure 3.31  
Weaving the hair of the portrait



Figure 3.32  
Work in progress on the hair of the portrait

The work was challenging, the other hand, a valuable experience. The details of the work made it slow and time consuming. Selection of the various colours to get the tone to come out with certain details was not an easy task.



Figure 3.33  
Selection of dyed raffia

The completed work was again sewn together using running stitches. The work was mounted by stretching it in-between a rectangular wooden frame measuring 150 x 180 cm.



Figure 3.34 Back view of the picture 'Anidaso wo ho'

Dwamena Appiah (2010) 150 x180 cm

## Project five

### 'THE LIVING LEGEND'



Figure 3.35 'The Living Legend' Dwamena Appiah (2002)

Jute fibre and yarn, 115 x 128 cm

This section of the project was undertaken to commemorate the musical legend

Bob Marley. The image was selected due to his saying that:

'My music will go on forever. Maybe it's a fool say that, but when me know facts me can say facts. My music will go on forever'.

This and some other statements made by this legend served as great stimulation that urged me into coming out with this work as his songs had already immortalized him even before he died.



Figure 3.36

Pasting picture of Bob Marley on the jute fabric

Two cocoa sacks were joined using thread and needle to sew. The enlarged picture on paper was pasted on it by stitching the edges with guide stitches. This was traced onto the fabric with a permanent marker. Yarns prepared from jute were dyed black using the dylon and potassium permanganate. Two shades of colours were obtained. The exterior

lines on the pictures were traced using running stitches making it look like borders around the work. The impression was to create a positive and negative outlook.



Figure 3.37

Stitching the picture on the fabric



Figure 3.38

Tracing exterior lines of picture



Figure 3.39 Working process on a part of the picture



Figure 3.40 Weaving picture using stitches



Figure 3.41  
Working process on Bob Marley



Figure 3.42  
Weaving picture using stitches

To enable easy manipulation of the tools, (the free passage of the needle from the front to the back of the work), it was hanged in the middle of the room like a curtain. The size of the work is 115 x 128 cm. The side chosen as positive was woven in vertical direction using the plane weave stitches, creating longer and horizontal lines on the picture.

### **Project six**

### **BLACK STOOL**



Figure 3.43 Black Stools Dwamena Appiah (2010),  
Palm tree fibre, wood, dye and adhesive 73 x 33 x 58 cm.

For work on this project which I named ‘black stool’ to begin, detailed information had to be sort for about how the Asante kings and chiefs prepare and preserve the black stool at Amanfrom, a suburb of Kumasi. Should there be any valuable

and treasured item among the Akans, then I will say it is the stool. This is what the kings or chiefs choose as stool name and sit on when they are being put on the throne. It is the greatest asset and is accorded much respect and protection among the royal family and their subjects. The history about the stool to the Akans cannot be over emphasized in this chapter. The king or chief after joining his ancestors is immortalized by preserving his stool and naming it after him. Haven completed the drawings, the materials needed to make the stool included wood, nails, fibre from the oil palm tree, black dye (dylon), and neoprene contact adhesive.

The tools used were hammer, saw, measuring tape, knife and scissors.

Work on the 'black stool' which measures 73 x 33 x 58 cm commenced by making the frame of the stool to enable me estimate the quantity of fibre needed for the project.



Figure 3.44  
Wooden frame of stool

The palm fibre was obtained at Afreseni where some of the people brew the local gin 'apketeshi', which is processed from the palm wine which is obtained from the palm tree. The palm fibre material was selected for the 'Black Stool' because it covers

part of the tree where the wine drains from. The palm wine which can be brewed or distilled into ‘apketeshi’ a very strong alcoholic beverage serve both the living and the dead. The palm fibre serves as a cover for the opening of the palm tree where the wine drains from into the pot or rubber gallon put beneath it as it lays on the ground. After all the wine has drained from the palm tree, it is left to decay.



Figure 3.45  
Cutting of palm tree fibre

With a knife, the fibre was cut from several palm trees. This fibre was dyed in black colour using dylon. The powdery substance on the fibre made it difficult to pick the dye. Scissors was used to cut the size of the fibre needed and neoprene glue applied to it.



Figure 3.46  
Palm tree fibre



Figure 3.47  
Potassium per magnate, gloves and dylon dyes for fibre



Figure 3.48  
Dying of fibre



Figure 3.49  
Dyed fibre being dried in the sun



Figure 3.50  
Working process on the 'Black Stool'



Figure 3.51  
Applying glue on the wood



Figure 3.52  
Using hammer in the gluing process



Figure 3.53  
Cutting and pasting fibre on the wood

## Project seven

### ‘OSOREE’



Figure 3.54 Dwamena Appiah (2009) ‘Osoree’

Coconut fibre, iron rod and nylon, 233x 82cm

We all go to sleep with the hope that the next morning we shall wake up and continue our daily activities. My inspiration was drawn from Kathy Herbert (1994) ‘And tir na nog dances on’ which is an installation which combine sculptural and drawn elements at the Orchard Gallery, picture in page 38.



Figure 3.55 assembling the armature

Due the height of the work, it was necessary to design it in four parts to make weaving and transportation easier. The short piece of work which is attached to the main work is the stump. As the work was to be woven like process used for 'Obaatampa', iron rods (3.5cm) were cut in to pieces and fashioned into shape with a hammer on an anvil.



Figure 3.56 arranging the armature

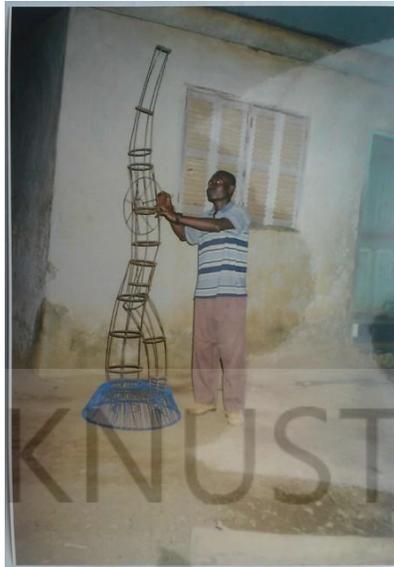


Figure 3.57 arranging the armature

The pieces of the fashioned iron rods were welded to make the frame in a cone and cylinder shapes. The same method employed to weave Obaatanpa after tying the nylon string around it was used. Using coconut fibre the same weaving process for making a door mat was employed.



Figure 3.58 weaving process

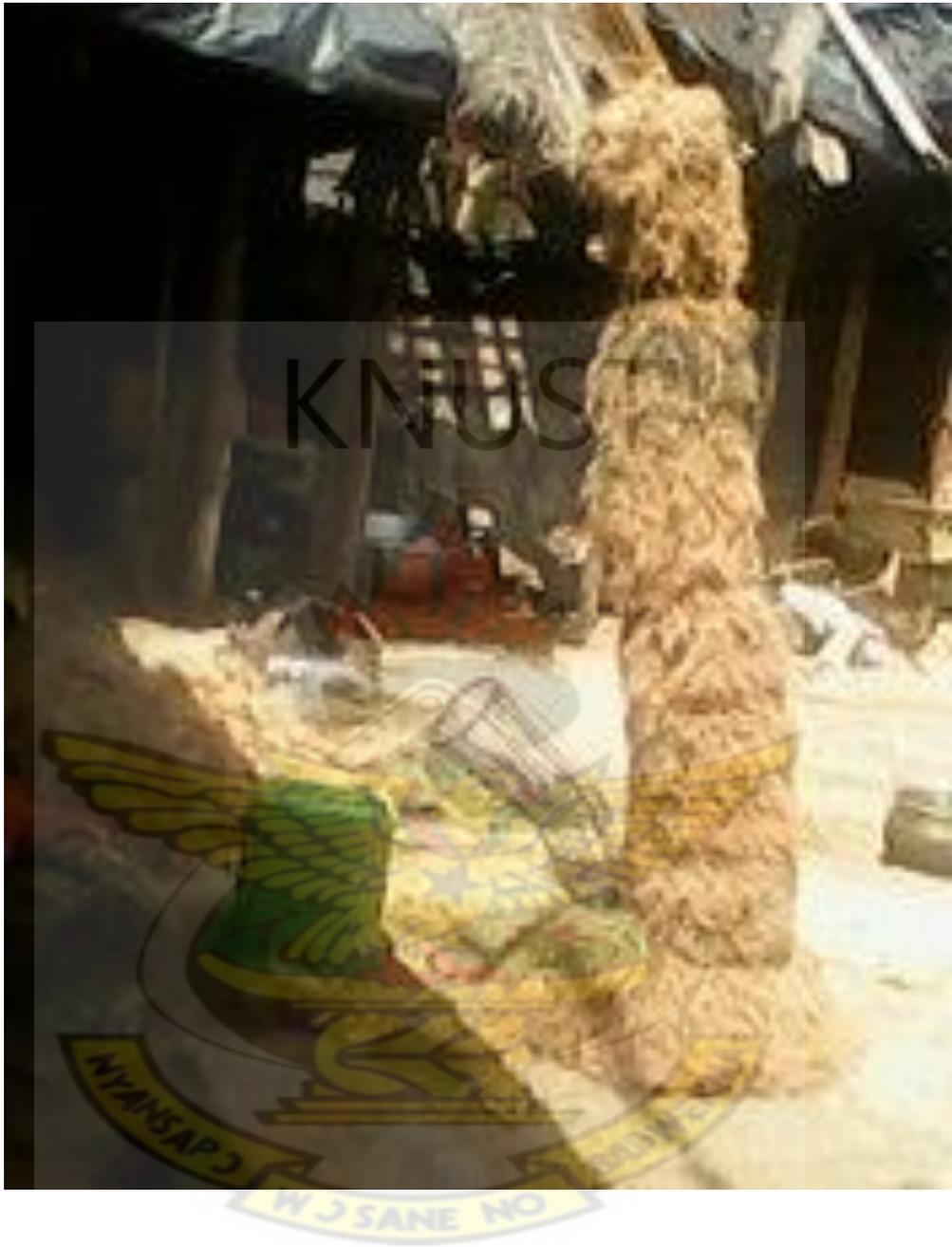


Figure 3.59 weaving process almost completed

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

#### Results and Discussion of the Project

This chapter discusses the practical results of this project by appreciating, analyzing and interpreting them. My personal experience and idea that could be manifested through manipulation of some natural fibre materials helped me achieve this results that creates the awareness of my view about the need for man's continuity of life after death. With death as a means of transitional period ushering man into another world, I was inspired by the works of Kathy Herbert (1994), Eva Hesse (1968) and some artists to move into using natural fibres to express my view about the works which included: 'eternity', 'obaatanpa', 'still searching', 'anidaso wo ho', the 'living legend', 'the black stool' and 'Osoree'.

#### 'Eternity'



Figure 4.1 Eternity, Dwamena Appiah, (2010), Coconut fibre and dye  
73 x 93 cm

To some people, death is sometimes the solution to many unanswered questions, problems and a lot of issues. As the land of the dead is believed to be a new world all together for our great ancestors, anybody who enters is given a warm reception. The doormat which is placed on the floor at the entrance of the door ushers anybody going into the room. It has its unique characteristics of sleeping on the floor, welcomes every foot and bids him farewell before living, it is tough like the concrete and most importantly rises after fallen. It is against this background that I developed the concept for the work 'eternity'. The work woven with the coconut fibre is a figurative representation and connotes an emotional exploration and had become my voice more than my comfort. As a visual vocabulary, this sculptural piece incorporates colours of green, red, yellow, and brown as fragments of memories. It depicts a human figure struggling out of an entanglement with the hands rising above the circle, which metaphorically stands for death that man has risen above, signifying immortality. The colour represents red for death; brown for man entering a new world, which is green. The yellow stands for the ups and downs of life such as illness, torments, tragedies etc, should not put man down but strengthen him to rise and put the pieces together to live a better life. The circle which lies in the rectangular piece shows 'mortal' and 'immortal' as man's challenges in life.

The placement of the work is a deviation from its usual placement as it was turned the other way round and this is a food for thought. The significance of the issue is that it portrays victory over death as the fear of not knowing what is behind the door is finally unveiled, that is 'eternity'.

## ‘Obaatanpa’



Figure 4.2 ‘Obaatanpa’, Dwamena Appiah, 2010, Coconut fibre and dye 120 x 68 cm

In the day to day activities of the Ghanaian, the pot is of much significance as it is used for fetching water from the stream, as a storage medium, for cooking food, it is broken to signify separation of the widow from the dead husband in the Akan culture.

The Akan proverb which gives hope to mankind, says; ‘nsuo ahwie agu ma aka ahena’. This literally means that all is not lost since the pot had survived the accident, though the water in it has poured, it can be used to fetch water again. It was upon this concept that the work was made, in remembrance of my mother’s pot I broke some years ago.

The inspiration that I had in producing this project ‘Obaatanpa’, does not lie in the gruesome scenario of the incident of the broken pot alone, but the internal dialogue that

transpired within, propelled me into coming out with this project. Irrespective of the fact that the project is not the exact pot lost sometime back, it serves as a replica and the immortality through its physical nature. The colours are distinct, and the coconut fibre woven in a circular form of black, red and brown from the bottom to top. The circular movement of the colours around signifies the continuity of life from birth, death and rebirth and anything that is inter connective to the eternal nature of life itself.

### **‘Still searching’**

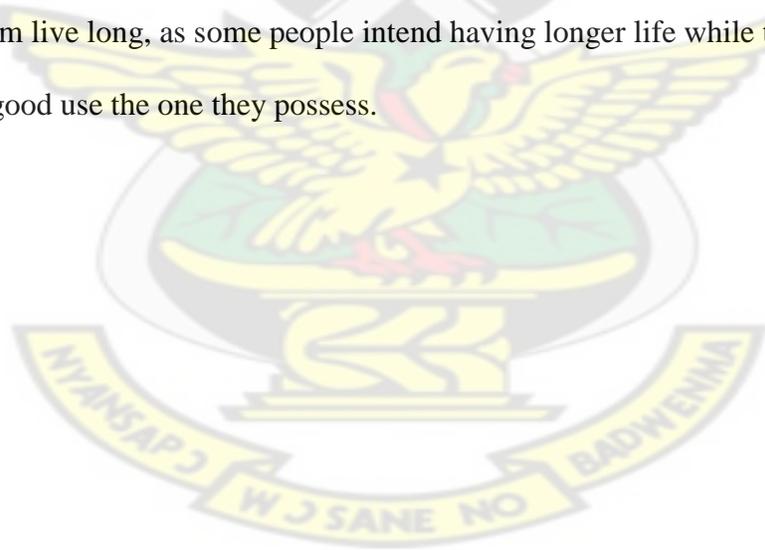


Figure 4.3 Still Searching, Dwamena Appiah, (2010),  
Coconut fibre, 38 x 53 cm

After reviewing some artists’ work the idea of man’s life being short on this planet, urged me into making a project which has a mushroom look and an ant and termite hill as well. The mushroom happens to be one of the plants with the shortest life span. Despite this set back, I still had the zeal to work on it because it could be preserved

and stored for a longer period. The mushroom has so many myths surrounding it. Again it is also torn between botanical species and related mythological representation. In consuming mushroom, it is medicinal and helps to prolong life and ironically can wipe man from this earth with a short time after consumption if it happens to be the poisonous type. A second look or thought gives the impression of an ant hill on the same work. The ant hill is used to combine the affairs of ant and man going about their daily activity and creating deft solution to their problems.

The ant and termite hills are beautiful in their conical shapes and forms just like the mushroom, and project permanence and eternity unlike the latter showing physical weakness and not being able to withstand any severe stress and strains of the passing moment. The resonance of this work is about the care and management of ones life to enable him live long, as some people intend having longer life while they do not value or put into good use the one they possess.



**‘Anidaso wo ho’**



Figure 4.4a ‘Anidaso wo ho’, Dwamena Appiah, (2010),  
Jute fabric, raffia and dye 150 x 180 cm



Figure 4.4b ‘Anidaso wo ho’, Dwamena Appiah, (2010),  
Jute fabric, raffia and dye 150 x 180 cm

To some artists, a significant portion of their collection of work is self-portrait of some personalities. Art works despite it being considered timeless in some phenomenon, is also definitive. Most portraits are made in honour of prominent people of a nation, society, family to mention only a few. On the other hand, every living person is of equal importance to his people in one way or the other.

The portrait is done by combining the spiritual characteristics and physical properties of the individual most especially when it is a life pose. Unlike photography, where one's portrait is captured life through the camera from a life pose within a short time, most people in this modern era may not have the time to have their portraits done in life sittings. Editing what he has taken or observed is an opportunity that he has at his disposal. All the same, an impressive portrait travels beyond merely gaining a likeness of the person.

The concept of portraiture will not be fairly treated if I do not talk about memories. Robinson (1982) has this to say about memories;

‘I believe that immortality is made up of one's memories of the past, as well as those one leaves behind. I see this symbolic sculpture not only as a continuous journey through generations, but also the scroll on which all of life's experience (DNA) is recorded’

I analyzed the above statement as a work that has been done by an artist, and has been left behind. Now I am also executing mine and also to leave it for someone to continue.

The hour glass, a device for measuring time can be likened to a portrait as it is reversed to start the same process as before. Similarly, it can be equated to reincarnation. Since after the death of a person, it is believed his soul enters another being and starts

life again. In this perception I will say the portrait of a person can be his reincarnation in art and hence his immortality as a whole. Therefore, why should man fear death?

Weaving is of great symbolism to man. It has a great cultural significance expressing concepts relating to every day life, ceremonies, nature or cosmology, ancient myths etc. Besides clothing, weaving served as a means of exchange, tribute, payment and gift. Weaving which has found itself in carving, statues, murals and temples, served as a motivation and enabled me to embrace it as my major technique to produce the work 'Anidaso wo ho', which means there is hope. The basic prerequisite for a portrait art is the existence or pictures of the individual. For this project, I chose jute sack as a material that have been of great importance and served man kind from time immemorial and still does depicting the continuity of life despite the difficulties it goes through in carrying goods, spread on the floor as mat and its other uses. The jute sack exhibits how it can accommodate the challenges it goes through by man and yet in return, yield positive results. The raffia fibre skirt is won by the traditional priests or priestess to invoke the spirit for power when they are in difficulty.

The work which was rendered in a relief form is hanged on a frame and has a rough appearance of a portrait in black suit, white shirt and black tie portraying life and death. From afar, the work looks smoother and clearer than from a closer distance and has the characteristic of a tactile finish. Behind the work is a pointillistic flip image which is much of a smooth texture depicting life after death since most portraits done by artists do not have a replica behind. To make the portrait visually engaging was the message I found most valuing.

Rendering people's portrait and giving them new life through this pictorial form affirms their immortality through art.

**'The living legend'**



Figure 4.5 The Living Legend, Dwamena Appiah, (2010),  
Jute fabric and dye 115x x128 cm

In the pursuit of life, immortalized personalities are those who through their life, such as works in terms of music, philosophical ideas, and artworks are timeless and contemporary. These conditions prevail due to the unchanging values, aspirations, truth, honesty, faithfulness and legacy for man kind

This work was made to refute the idea of a person 'staying dump after his death'. The site of it immediately brings to light the landmarks of his deeds, thoughts and philosophies. This gives an implicit acceptance of 'eternity'. Therefore this raises the questions;

Where lays the strength of death? Does death have dominion over man?

I would not like to give answers to the questions but lay the cards bare by quoting Bob Marley's own words 'emancipate yourself from mental slavery'. Why should man contemplate so much about death while he cannot stop it from taking its own course.

The jute sack on which the picture was woven has a smooth and soft touch and it symbolizes the way it relents itself to most kinds of items to be loaded into it even to the extent of serving as a sleeping material to some people. The woven yarn shows a good combination of rhythm, harmony of lines running through, creating the soft texture and form that compliments the tone of the two shades of colours. The work has a solemn and peaceful look as the dreadlocks all lay in silence, yet most dreadlocks have a rough appearance. Although the Rastafarian, like Bob Marley himself been known for shouting and jumping, now has that solemn look in this work. The irony is that his music still reigns. He needs not to shout to be seen again. Basically, it could be said though he is dead, he is alive. Through 'the living legend', it has enabled me to consider the transitory existence of nature having "immortal beings" dwelling in a mortal world. Thus, in a utopian world this could be possible. The work which is a picture of the late Bob Marley, the music legend, it is an effort to bring hope to my viewers and my new place of belonging.

## **'The Black Stool'**



Figure 4.6 The Black Stool, Dwamena Appiah (2010),

Wood, palm tree fibre and dye 73 x 33 x 58 cm

As a sculptor my interest does not solely lie in the surface appearance of things, however, emotional core, the mass and volume of the work, and attaining the feel, smell and probably the taste of it as one goes round it. This is not to say the conceptual aspect should be ignored. The immortality associated with the 'black stool' is evoked in the density of the form and its spiritual importance. Upon a careful thought about the concept of the golden stool and the black stool of the Asantes' I was moved into executing this project with this particular material, especially its source, the palm tree.

The stool is made of a wooden frame and covered with dyed palm tree fibre. The black stool is revealing that the soul is immortalized in the spiritual realm. The relationship between the title of the work and the actual colour rendered in is not a personal choice or taste, but account for the powerful colour traits associated with its spiritual and ritual contexts. Although an art piece, the intrinsic value needed to be

maintained, and as an honour to the sculpture of great antiquity. Though it appears to have a very simple outlook, it upholds an immense respect and it is revered by the people, most especially the royal family. The palm tree, from which the fibre was cut, has a lot of benefit to mankind. The palm wine and 'akpeteshi' brewed from the palm tree is used to connect man, the living and the dead when libation is poured. The stool is treasured as one of the valuable assets to the family in the sense that it serves as the abode of the soul of the departed king or chief. Originally, it is the stool which the king or chief sits on to have his bath that is used for this ritual. It is prepared by using sooth, schnapps, eggs and sheep blood to blacken it after the chief has 'travelled to the village' (dead). It is appeased with sacrifices any time a member from the family dies as it is considered as an ill omen to the family. On some special days, such as the 'Akwasidae', 'Awukudae' food (mashed yam) is prepared and served for the ancestors to eat. The stool which is originally shaped with straight edges had been given a new look. The overlapping fibres in horizontal and vertical directions features the role birth and death plays in man's life. With concealed lighting, and been almost enclosed with fibre serves as an abode for the soul which is supposed to be there permanently just as the Egyptian funerary believe the soul lives in the mummified body.

Much as it has been discussed in this project, the idea of attaining immortality does not rest in pleasurable life, resulting in the satisfaction of one's personal ego, which will be valueless after his death, therefore earning him no 'fame' and 'posterity'. This is possible because the wealth of an individual cannot open the gate to eternity, but rather a 'hard' earned treasure or substance which is of practical value to mankind will result as an everlasting benefit which is 'fame'. Hence, in striving for immortality, living a

selfless life and leaving legacies for others is much wealthier and enable one to attain the desired goal which is ‘fame’.



Figure 4.7 ‘Anidaso wo ho’, ‘Obaatanpa’ and Still Searching

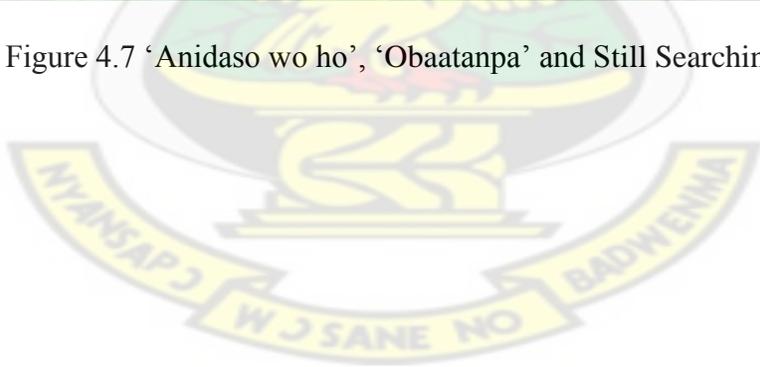




Figure 4.8 'Obaatanpa' and Still Searching



Figure 4.9 Black Stool, 'Obaatanpa' and the Living Legend



Figure 4.10 Black Stool, Eternity, 'Obaatanpa' and the Living Legend



Figure 4.11 Black Stools, Still Searching and 'Obaatanpa'



Figure 4.12 Eternity, Black Stool, the Living Legend,  
'Obaatampa' and Still Searching



Figure 4.13 Still searching and 'Anidaso wo ho'



Figure 4.14 'Osore'

The tree has a great significance in man's life. Aside the shade it provide for comfort, it gives us oxygen which we breathe in to enable us live. Although the tree cannot speak to us, there is a proverbial statement that if it is chopped, it has hope that it leaves will sprout. This work is based on the concept of life after death. It also likened to resurrection. This gives the hope that life still continues after death. There is the condition that life will certainly continue after death. Thought about chopping the tree could be very depression however, it provided the chance for a new life and the stump has transformed into another, regenerating a new life. After taking a closer look at the work, there was another message to its audience.

The work ‘Ɖsoree’ which is an installation looks like a phallus. The phallus has no bone. It is made up of only tissues which can be destroyed with a short time just like the coconut fibre. On the other hand, it is the main organ for reproduction. It is a form of immortality as the male genital organ is used for reproduction. The work symbolizes continuity of life as it metaphorically deals with procreation

### **Exhibition of the project**

The various works namely ‘Eternity’, ‘Obaatanpa’, ‘Still Searching’, ‘Anidaso wo ho’, ‘The Living Legend’ and ‘The Black Stool’ were conveyed to the front view of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology Department of Economics block for a mini exhibition titled *Dua a esi wuram wo anidasoo se yetwa so a ebe fefe*. This biblical proverb means a tree that has been chopped has hope that it will sprout again. The totality of the work is summed up under one umbrella ‘immortality’, hence there is the hope that there is eternity after death. This place was selected to enable the works have a natural look. The place is quite an open space and my intension was to make the work relate well with the environment. The grass in its green state gave a harmonious look which was quite peaceful. Fig 4.7 shows the opposite side of the block as an entire open space. There was a need for a site that entailed two opposite side being an open space and an enclosed one due to the nearness of the works to the wall. The greenish turf with some patches of brown in it was to welcome the works as they were mostly in colours close to brown, which relates well with each other.

Though the ‘eternity’ had a dominant colour of green it was laid on the green turf which in a way created repetition, however the characters in the work were distinct.

‘obaatanpa’ and ‘still searching’ which are circular and solid were placed closer to the rectangular wall creating a contrast in the shapes as seen in figure 4.8. In that same figure one could observe that the two works have been closely absorbed by the wine colour paint used at the base of the wall as they struggle to come out of it. The question arises why this close arrangement of objects and colour? Man is destined to die but he is not ready to succumb to nature’s will hence the quest for immortality.

In figure 4.9 the living legend is seen to be relegated to the background as it hangs closely to the dark top part and creamy coloured wall with the tree all absorbing it, yet it can clearly be seen from afar. This further explains that if one is hidden by death he is still immortal through his deeds thus the characters that distinct the work. Likewise the untitled figure 4.13 that stands afar in the opposite direction with a clearly open space is also visually clear. Again both works have the similarity of being light in weight, soft and can be folded.

The black stool placed at almost the middle of the entire space and in between the two portraits stands firm and in unity and being embraced by all the works from their various positions. This shows that his soul is always “alive” as it rest in the object, man and animal. Therefore there cannot be immortality through resurrection, reincarnation and eternity without the soul. In totality all the works proclaim the message of hope for man that there is life after death. Therefore it is not only executing works in materials meant to be permanent that can give immortality but also through impermanent materials as natural fibre immortality can be achieved. That is using mortality to create immortality.

In the next chapter, which is the fifth and final of all the chapters, the curtain is lowered as it entails the summary, conclusion, and recommendation of the works.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

#### Summary

This chapter unfolds the summary, conclusion and recommendation of the project. The purpose of the project was to use non-conventional means to produce sculptures using natural fibre materials to reflect on the theme 'Exploring immortality through natural fibre'. Man has struggled between thick and thin to keep his head above water, however, death has been a thorn in his flesh which he has not gotten rid off. However, where there is a will, there is a way. Through the review of books and works of some artists, I was able to create works to express the dialectics of the mortal and immortal. The totality of the various projects comes out with the idea that immortality is about what is left behind or given out and not what is received. There is the need to have the confidence, feeling and hope that something of a man should remain after he 'has kicked the bucket'. It is to suggest a way of life that man should live to enable him attain eternity on this planet through the hustle and bustle of life. This is to say that eternity which is behind the 'door' has to be worked for as the saying goes that 'life is how you make it'. Destiny, which we know, lies in one's own hands. It is also to say that a well lived life coupled with good moral character opens the door to immortality.

In the light of this, some people perceive that only 'hard' materials such as stone, cement, wood, metal and some others could be used to achieve permanency. Different kinds of materials could be used for the project, but I decided to settle on natural fibre specifically coconut fibre, raffia, palm tree fibre, jute sack, jute yarn, white glue, wood, metal, and nylon string. The coconut, jute and raffia fibres are very strong, picked dyes easily and very flexible to work. Its strength and flexibility is much

appreciated by many people as it is used as ropes to draw water from the well, tying things and weaving basket. The palm fibre on the other hand could not pick the dye easily as it had some powdery substance on the surface. It was also quite flexible to work with. It was quite easy and enjoying working with these materials. Due to its flexible manipulation, the various ideas were brought up conveying messages that give hope to man about eternity after death, and encouraging him not to fear death as it makes life purposeful. If it could be priced, it would have been a million cedi question as some people were marveled to see works being done on the theme which is more inseparably connected to man's existence. Some comments were due to the fear and hate they had for death. All these helped develop the relationship between the concept and the materials and finally the works. The projects were done by administering weaving and gluing techniques and skills.

In order to successfully carry out this project, I did some investigations and reviewed other artists' works. Experimental works were carried to learn the use of the materials, tools, techniques and skills to come out with the final works namely: 'Eternity', 'Obaatanpa', 'Still Searching', 'Anidaso wo ho', 'The Living Legend', 'The Black Stool' and 'Osoree'.

The works were all brought under one umbrella as 'Hope for mankind' for a mini exhibition. The entire project was geared towards given hope and inspiration to viewers by creating art works to challenge them of the possible defeat over death by man through soft sculpture.

It is worth noticing that the lowering of the curtains on this project brings to light that a partial hold of immortality has been captured by my works.

The uniqueness in my works coupled with the awareness created is to serve as a welcome relief or remedy to the pain, unpleasant, undesirable, emotional torment, to mention only a few that is experienced by man through death.

## **Conclusion**

Mankind has been using sculpture as a primary means of artistic expression for many years back. Although works can be made from all kinds of materials, the mention of sculpture mostly brings to mind a three-dimensional or two-dimensional works made from 'hard' materials such as stone, metal, wood to mention only a few. These materials were used for works which were mostly referred to as permanent art works. However, one may wonder how permanent these works could be. Would the works be able to stand the test of time, the various weather conditions and environmental hazards without perishing? All things being equal permanence or immortality do exist in art through human life; biological, social, moral and some other ways.

Although the makeup of sculpture has witnessed a considerable change throughout the centuries, it will forever remain one of the most popular art forms. Sculpture keeps on growing in popularity due to its nature and has continued to develop gradually over time. It will forever remain one of the most appreciative art forms. Just as the clouds or seasons have not been the same and at all times seen new and varied subject or concept which had not been used, the subject matter of sculpture has never been constant. This inventiveness in the field of sculpture has been represented in various forms among which include soft sculpture. Being eager to add value to the creative skills and also improve the style of my works, I sought new appreciable ideas that enabled me to become self-conscious about the immortality of man. Soft sculpture

could be apparent and fascinating due to the uniqueness in the medium used. In this project, I produced soft sculpture works using natural fibre materials with simple tools. An intimate relationship was developed due to the use of simple tools like needles and crochet hook, and my hands to make works that addressed the issue of immortality which is a major societal concern. In embarking on the journey for this project, investigations were carried out which led to experimental, descriptive approaches and qualitative research methodology. In this project, there were no hard and fast rules to the choice of material usage. Materials which were environmentally friendly were used to make three or two dimensional works. The most important aspect of it is the message I intend to carry to my viewers. It is note worthy that in every field of study, people would like to spread their tentacles to promote growth and showcase their works extensively to the public. Hence the use of these simple tools and materials could entice artists to embrace soft sculpture rather than scaring them as the works produced from these materials are not heavy, can be transported easily due to its portability and some flexibility. The benefits man has derived from sculpture works creation through so many media cannot be over emphasized. The idea of art being done for doing sake should be a far cry and be seen to be like a folk tale carrying message to the audience. It could be poetic, figurative, metaphorical or ironical and should be a connection between the concept and also the materials used.

The brilliance of my works lies in the inspiration I hope it gives to others in reducing their fear for death as some people think that death is the end of man's life. Immortality may not necessarily be the idea of man connecting himself to something he thinks eternal or making him lives long on this earth. It is rather the good footprint on

the sand, its usefulness and what we can bequeath others, and which the society can embrace.

### **Recommendation**

Over the years most people carry the impression that sculpture is a difficult course to pursue. This, they attribute to the tools and materials used as being too bulky, heavy and probably dangerous to work with. In the same vain, people attribute permanency to ‘hard’ materials such as stone, wood and metals ignoring other materials such as the natural fibre that could be used for soft sculpture. This is an in not a good assumption and people should disabuse their mind of.

With my satisfaction in the turn out of this project, I find it expedient to recommend the following:

1. Artists could use natural fibre materials to produce works for permanence by using non-conventional sculpture techniques such as stitching, weaving and knotting.
2. Works can be presented in real or abstract forms using simple tools and materials to produce relief and in-the-round sculpture works.
3. Immortality does not hold for human beings only, but animals and objects as well.

The research covers part of the concept of immortality; hence artists and researchers should also explore it using other natural fibre materials. The materials used for the projects could be developed and expanded to broaden the scope of soft sculpture.

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