REFLECTIONS OF GHANAIAN LIFE AND SYMBOLISM IN APPLIQUÉ

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in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Fine Art (Painting)

By

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CERTIFICATION

This certifies that this thesis is the Candidate's account
of her own research

DR. R. T. ACKAM
Supervisor

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I will in no doubt give my greatest thanks to the almighty God for the special grace he endowed me in the course of the research. I would not have made it without that.

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ABSTRACT

Name: Maureen Haizel

Title: Reflections of Ghanaian Life and Symbolism in Appliqué

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Appliqué as an artform involving the sewing of cut-out shapes especially of fabric onto the surface of another fabric has been with us for a very long time as reflected in Fante Asafo Flags, umbrellas and palanquins in the traditional setting of Ghana.

The objective of the thesis is to adapt appliqué as a painting technique, drawing inspiration from Ghanaian life and symbolism.

The outcome of the research reveals the potential of the appliqué technique in innovative painting and its enhancement of the royal regalia such as the umbrella, cloth, smock, and palanquin in a new academic environment for appreciation.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Ghana like most African countries has a rich cultural heritage, which includes some fascinating visual artforms. Some of these artforms, such as appliqué exemplified by the Fante Asafo Flags, can be utilised innovatively especially in the academic environment to enhance their preservation and artistic development.

The researcher with this project attempts to adopt appliqué paintings to reflect Ghanaian life and symbolism on some of the items associated with royal regalia that are prevalent across the nation from the north to the south. The items include the smock, palanquin, and umbrella. Traditional Ghanaian images and symbols such as those in the Fante Asafo flags, Adinkra symbols and some linguist staff top insignia serve as the basis of the idiom.

Kenneth states that:

> When we congratulate an artist for being creative, however, it is not because he was able to obey rules that were known before he painted his picture, or wrote his novel or poem, so that thereby he succeeded in doing what had been done before. We congratulate him because he

embodied in colours or in language something the like of which did not exist before and because he was the originator of the rules implicitly followed while he was painting or writing. Afterwards others may explicitly follow the same rules and there by achieve similar success. /

The most exciting and challenging experience for man is probably the creative impulse that remains something unique to man. The sense of fulfilment that follows a successful creative activity is something else. Over the centuries man in the field of art has titillated the senses with varying and never ending ways of enjoying the aesthetics of nature.

The variety of artistic expression throughout history to date attests to the unending manifestations of art, bearing testimony to a large amount of art work to the credit of man. Yet that is not to say all is exhausted because new experiences keep inspiring new ideas and ways of perception that invigorates the aesthetic receptors of the human mind and eyes.

Art indeed emanates from ordinary as well as complex human insights, feelings and experiences that all human beings partake. Jonathan Fineberg puts it this way:

> The implicit underlying subject matter of modern art is always the personality of the artist in its encounter with the world – the alternately painful and exhilarating intersection

> of psychological forces, intellect, society, and events. Brushwork, line, composition, even representational matter constitute metaphors for the artist's experience of events (internal and external). *2*

Art is generally about expressions by individuals, the more unique the expression, the better the outcome, the more original an artist's vision, the more his or her frame of reference will vary from what others see or think. To an artist, the most important thing is to respond positively to the urge to create. This urge is universal and hence sad to note that certain people believe they have no artistic talent, making them hesitant to create and to enjoy the art of others. It is even more unfortunate when people who call themselves artists fail to be innovative, creative and experimental in their quest to produce artworks.

Cézanne in a letter to Emile Bernard, a young artist made the following statement:

> With a small temperament, one can be very much a painter. One can do good things without being much of a harmonist or a colourist. It is sufficient to have a sense of art. *3*

The researcher is in total agreement with Cézanne's statement. All human beings are endowed with enough artistic sense necessary to appreciate or to make art. Art can be created by everyone and with almost anything, even

though of cause there are levels of creativity and degrees of artistic sensibilities. Exceptional works of art generally are created by the efforts of individuals who have come to terms with the facts of their existence. The inspiration could be immediate or nurtured, the idea may be derived from past or recent experience, and the result could be a far cry from the original idea. Such is the nature of artistic creativity.

The artist referred to as the researcher thus explores old forms with fresh outlook in using the appliqué art form of the Akans and other people in some African countries as a means of painting with fabric. Is it possible to paint with fabric?

The researcher, by producing the appliqué works with fabric tries to break the myth surrounding what a painting is as accepted in the traditional sense of the word. This thesis seeks to narrow, or if possible eliminate the divide between painting and appliqué. After all the most important considerations of painting are colour and form, which considerations the appliqué technique can conveniently portray.

The quality that matters most in a painting is the combination of lines and forms that moves one aesthetically. This Cave Bell calls, 'Significant form.'

When questioned about the omission of colour in the phrase, this is what he said:

> The distinction between form and colour is an unreal one, you cannot conceive a colourless line or a colourless space, and neither can you conceive of a formless relation of colours. *4*

The researcher finds Bell's reasoning very laudable, the appliqué technique indeed has all it takes to create 'significant form'. Fabrics come in different colours; fabrics can be cut into any form; different fabrics can be put together; fabrics can be employed to create 'significant form'.

The researcher's special interest in fabrics due to her occupation as a fashion designer brought about the idea to paint with fabric. Her connection with Cape Coast, her hometown, also accounts for her involvement with Asafo flags and its imagery. The idea was not to duplicate what has already been done, but rather to revitalise them in a contemporary setting. It is, as Guillaum Apollinaire explains; the blending of experiences gained in life with the natural qualities of the art medium. Guillaum states that:

> When an artist is well equipped with conscious feeling, memory and balanced sensibilities, he intensifies his concepts by penetrating his objects and by condensing his experience into a reality of the spirit complete in itself. Then he creates a new reality in terms of the medium. *5*

This is exactly the researcher's dream. A new reality in terms of the appliqué technique is unfolding. By these compositions also, the multi-purpose nature of African traditional art pieces is maintained, but expressed with a new sense of perception that is very contemporary.

> Painting is living and all that the artist is able to make the observer see through vision and perception. Its ephemeral manifestations are not so much the ultimate, but a vehicle in transmitting information to the emotions of the being. What is primary to the artist is to open new vistas of the perception (cortical rhythm). To the artist anything is as good as a frontage. *6*

Problem

Appliqué has not been much explored as a technique of painting in Ghana. Therefore it has become necessary to experiment with it in order to explore its potential.

Objective

To adapt appliqué as a painting technique, drawing inspiration from Ghanaian themes and images.

Justification

The research will expose the potential of Appliqué as a painting technique.

Scope of study

The study is restricted to the use of already coloured and printed fabric. The study involves using some images of Asafo flags in Cape Coast, some Adinkra symbols, and the researcher's own images.

Importance of study

There has been limited specific research on the subject of appliqué in Ghana and such a study might lead to the discovery of new forms from unexpected sources.

The study will be of benefit to painters and would be painters who are interested in appliqué. It would also widen the scope of techniques available to artists and especially art students.

The study would also create awareness of and interest in Asafo flags and Adinkra symbols.

Research Methodology

a) Reviewed literature related to topic.

b) Produced preliminary works on paper and canvas.

c) Worked with some craftsmen to produce the umbrella and palanquin (supports for appliqué compositions).

d) Produced project works in appliqué.

e) Analysed data.

Arrangement of Text

Chapter One of this thesis report begins with an introduction that spells out the problem, the objective and justification for the thesis. The scope of study and the importance of study are included. Also stated are the method of the research and the definition of terms.

Chapter Two serves as the review of related literature and art works. Some of the authors reviewed include Maude Southwell Wahlman, Beryl Dean, and Herbert Cole and Doran Ross. The works of Wini McQueen, Mary Billingsley, Diane Itter, all Americans and that of Olu Oguibe and Ada Odechukwu, both Nigerians are also reviewed in relation to the researcher's.

Chapter Three introduces some garment designs by the researcher and preliminary works on paper and canvas.

Chapter Four focuses on the analysis of the project work.

The summary, conclusion and recommendation form chapter Five.

Endnotes

1. KENNICK, W. E. Art and Philosophy. N.Y.: St. Martins', Press, 1979, p131.

2. FINEBERG, Jonathan. Art since 1940. N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2000, p14.

3. CHIPP, Herschel. Theories of Modern Art. L.A.: Univ. of California Press, 1975, p 30.

4. KENNICK, W. E. Art and Philosophy. N. Y.: St. Martins', Press, 1979, p 68.

5. CHIPP, Herschel. Theories of Modern Art. L.A.: Univ. of California Press, 1975, p 216.

6. ADASHIE, Michael. Kumasi: 2001, a fellow artist.

Definition of Terms

Abstraction: Art that departs significantly from natural appearances. Non Representational.

Acrylic: A clear plastic used as a binder in paint and as a casting material in sculpture.

Adinkra: Farewell or complimentary notice given at departure. It is also the name of an ancient Gyaman King after whom the Adinkra symbols are named.

Aesthetic: Pertaining to the beautiful, as opposed to the useful.

Appliqué: Technique or product of sewing cut-out shapes especially of fabric onto the surface of another fabric.

Artist: The Researcher himself.

Asafo: Warriors in Ghanaian communities.

Composition: The organisation of lines, shapes, colours, and other elements in a work of art.

Culture: The integrated pattern of human behaviour, that includes, thought, speech, action and artefacts.

Design: Both the process and the result of structuring the elements of visual form.

Embroidery: Ornamental needlework made by hand or machine, and applied to all types of fabrics.

Idiom: A style or form of artistic expression, characteristic of an individual.

Medium: The material or technical means used to create a work of art.

Motif: A recurrent element (symbol) in a design.

Painting: An arrangement of shapes and colours to make a statement.

Philosophy: Theory underlying activity or thought.

Realism: A style of art based on the theory that the method of presentation should be true to life.

Spontaneous: Proceeding from natural feeling.

Stylised: Simplified or exaggerated visual form which emphasises particular design qualities.

Technique: A particular method of doing something.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

HISTORICAL

'Appliqué', may be defined as the art of sewing cut-out shapes onto the surface of fabrics, banners, bags, caps, costumes, flags, umbrellas and the like. It is a technique that has been in existence for a very long time in various parts of the world.

Undoubtedly applied work or appliqué may have been used in different cultures. Appliqué was definitely used not only to repair but also to decorate articles. Europe has been named as one of the areas where the earliest to survive comes from. This account is according to Beryl Dean./. In her book, Creative Appliqué, she shows a work dating back to the fourteenth century (Fig. 1) which is now in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.

Only a few isolated pieces of applied fabric can be found in English medieval church embroidery (mainly on chasubles of the early sixteenth century). It was

for domestic and heraldic work that appliqué was so widely used in the Middle Ages. Some have been preserved and are now in the British Museum.

Beryl also states that, the writings of Chaucer, and later the chronicles of Raphael Holinshed, reveal the richness of the lavish embroidered decoration of the past, much of which would have been carried out in appliqué for pennants, hangings, banners, surcoates and also for dress decoration. As a less costly substitute for solid embroidery, applied fabric has always been used.

With particular reference to the Renaissance period, Beryl explains that woven brocades and damasks influenced the designs carried out in appliqué, which were usually of velvet and silk.

Some Italian pilaster hangings according to her were carried out in appliqué as much of the costume decoration. Other countries named concerning appliqué include Germany, France, and Spain. Of outstanding interest is the series of great allegorical hangings at Hardwick Hall, Derbyshire made for the countess of Shew'sbury in the late sixteenth century. They were twelve feet high and considerably wider. A typical subject, 'Faith', with a Turk reclining at her feet is carried out in various fabrics applied to a background of black velvet. (Fig.2)



Figure1. An appliqué fourteenth century Hanging

Photo source: DEAN, Beryl. Creative Appliqué. N. Y.: Watson Guptill Publications, 1970.

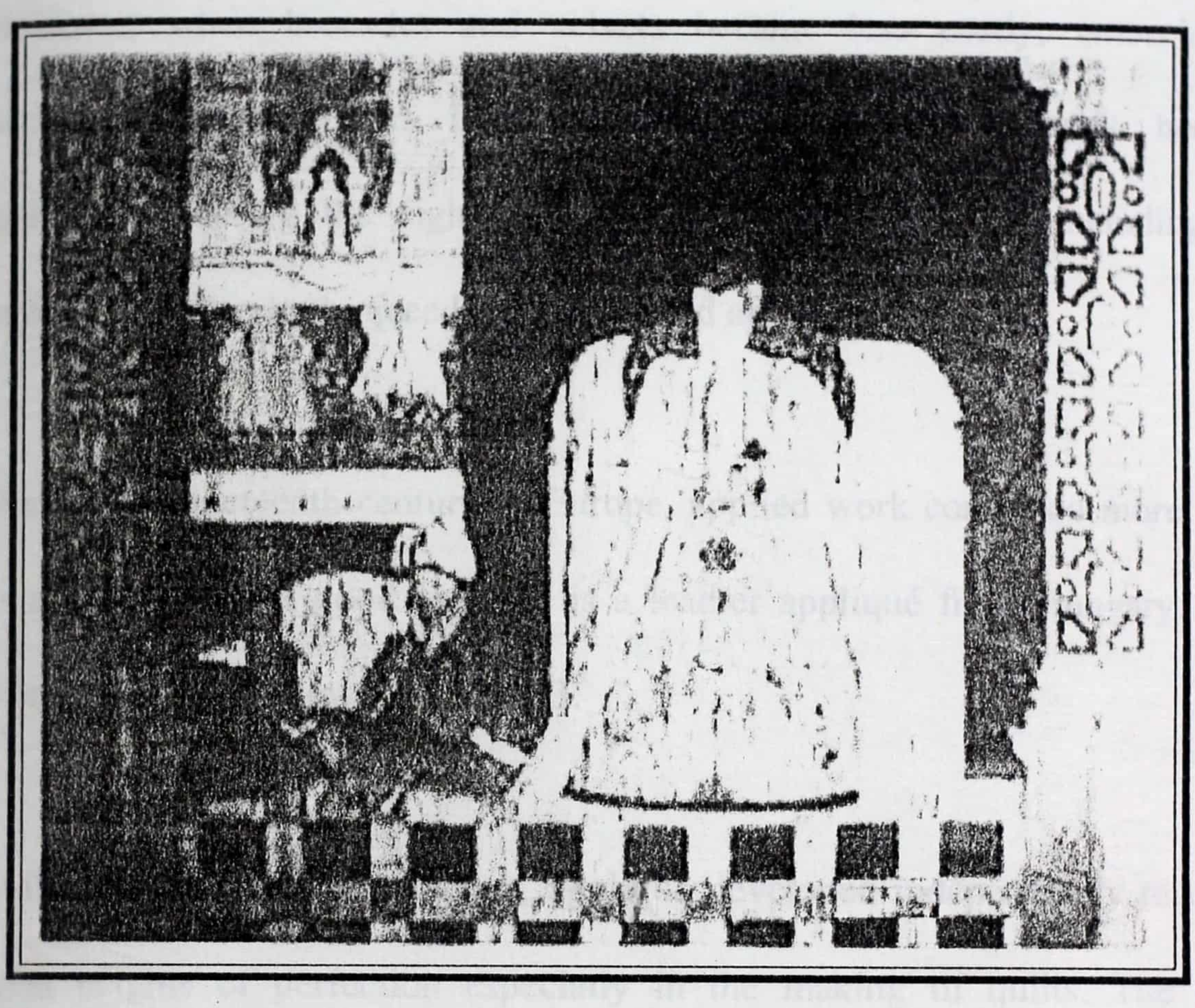


Figure 2. 'Faith', late sixteenth century appliqué

Photo source: DEAN, Beryl. Creative Appliqué. N. Y.: Watson Guptill Publications, 1970.

In Europe, as stated by Beryl, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, appliqué continued to be used for ecclesiastical work, also for secular furnishings such as bed valances and hangings, chair coverings, and the like. However, when brocades and velvets became less costly, embroidered decoration declined. In England many embroidery methods became fashionable during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, including the making of quilts, both pieced patchwork and appliqué.

During the nineteenth century in Europe, applied work continued more often as a peasant art. A good example is a leather appliqué from Hungary: 'The woman's jacket', shown in Figure 3.

In the United States of America, appliqué developed independently reaching great heights of perfection especially in the making of quilts. The older examples were worn out through constant use, and only the later ones have survived (Fig.4). These gay, beautiful works are still prized possessions: there are several collections including those in the Brooklyn Museum, New York City, in the Smithsonian Institute in Washington D.C., and in the Victoria and Albert Museum, in London.

Although the resulting designs were so different, the method followed varied little: having decided which of the traditional designs would be used, the

pattern, was cut-out in colour fabrics, by these quilters, allowing turnings, then this patch was basted to the foundation block. The edges were turned under and hemmed down. These blocks when completed were over-sewn together and the turning pressed out flatly. The quilt back was then set in the frame and stretched, and the two layers of cotton filling were pressed evenly. Over this was placed the appliquéd top: it was all tacked (basted) together, and the whole area was quilted. From this simple basis all the variations of designs have developed.

Maude Southwell Wahlman *2*, writing on African images in African-American quilts reveals the similarities and differences in African-American quilts and textile forms in some parts of Africa. According to her, African-American quilts have their roots in African textile techniques and cultural traditions.

> African influence on the history of music, dance, and speech in the New World has long been documented, but African influence in American folk art such as quilt making is less well known. Yet, it is possible to trace African textile techniques, aesthetic traditions, and religious symbols that were adapted by African American textile innovators to the needs and resources of a New World. *3*

Although some contemporary African-American quilters may not be generally aware of the continuities between African textiles and their quilts, design and symbolic similarities are so striking so as to prompt historical explanation.



Figure 3. 'The Woman's Jacket', nineteenth century Hungarian appliqué

Photo source: DEAN, Beryl. Creative Appliqué. N. Y.: Watson Guptill Publications, 1970.

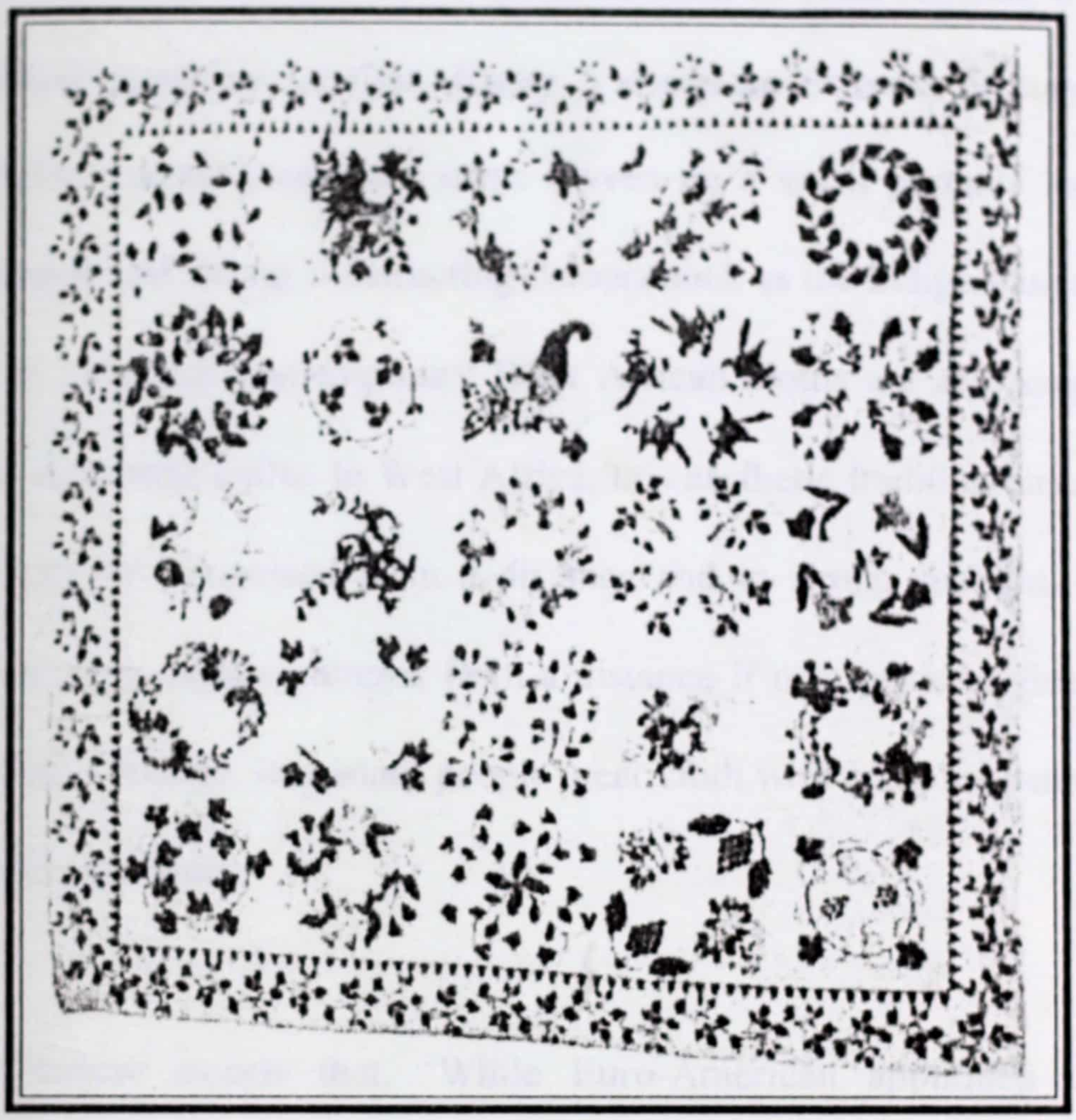


Figure 4. 'Bridal Quilt', American mid nineteenth century appliqué

Photo source: DEAN, Beryl. Creative Appliqué. N. Y.: Watson Guptill Publications, 1970.

For example, she states that the use of strips is a chief construction technique, a dominant design element and a symbolic form in West African, Caribbean, and African-American textiles. Figure 5 shows an eleventh century cloth in West Africa constructed from strips woven on a small portable loom. Also large shapes and strong constructing colours such as the indigo blue and white found in early and contemporary West African cloths are also employed in African-American quilts. In West Africa, this aesthetic tradition ensures that a person can be recognised from a distance and in strong sunlight. It can be important to recognise patterns from a distance if one needs to give a proper greeting to someone. Important people wear cloth with complex patterns and a great deal of colours.

Maude further asserts that, 'While Euro-American appliquéd quilts are primarily decorative, African-American appliquéd quilts often express stories and ideas in the same manner as appliquéd textiles do in Africa.'*4*. With bold appliquéd shapes, African cultures recorded court histories, religious values and personal histories of famous individuals, using designs symbolising power, skill, leadership, wisdom, courage, balance, composure, and other personal and religious qualities.

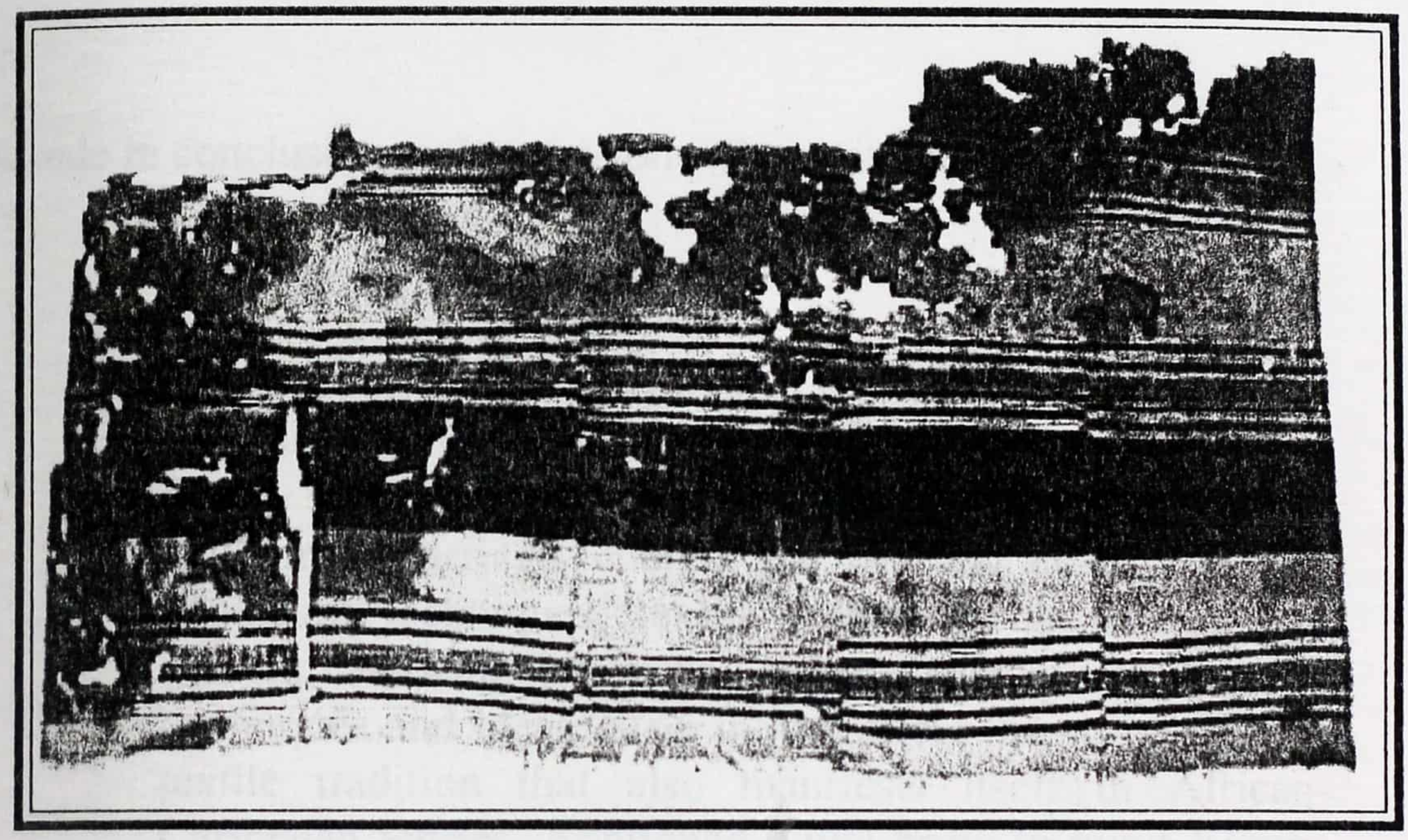


Figure 5. Fragment of woven cloth from Mali(11th-12th century)

Photo source: WAHLMAN, Maude S. Signs and Symbols. N.Y.: Penguin Books, 1993.

Some of the contemporary African–American quilters that Maude makes mention of in her book include; Mozell Benson, Arester Earl, Jesse Lane, Wini McQueen and Alan Pearson. The works of some of them would be discussed later on in the chapter. Plates 1 to 4 show some quilts by African–Americans.

Maude in conclusion makes the following statement:

> These beautiful quilts symbolise more than just an artform; they also stand for a way of life full of laughter, tears, dance, music, hard work, money, birth, youth, school, childbirth, marriage, church, old age and death…In their choice of techniques, textile forms, design, names and colours, African–American quilters perpetuate African techniques and ideas. Strip quilts reflect the strong Mande textile tradition that also manifests itself in African-Caribbean fabrics. Appliquéd quilts bring to mind Yoruba Egungun cloths, Yoruba Shango bags, Ibibio funerary hangings, and Ejagham Epke cloths as well as Fon and Fante banners, flags and umbrellas. *5*

Best known African appliquéd cloths were made by the Fon people of the Republic of Benin. Originally these cloths were made by a guild of male artisans to decorate the walls of the royal palaces and to depict historic events. The techniques according to Louise E. Jefferson *6* was similarly used to decorate royal umbrellas, flags costumes, and banners. Appliqué makers in Benin still sit in the cold open courtyards and decorate their white cotton

cloths with old motifs, which show scenes of wars and the heroic deeds of the ancient kings. Every child has learned the history of his country through these cloths, which often represent legends, or sayings of worldly wisdom. Africans traditionally would use stories to teach and entertain.

In Ghana, Ewe, Fante and other chiefs in the southern part often wear a type of robe on ceremonial occasions, which also employs the appliqué technique.

The appliqué according to Herbert Cole and Doran H. Ross 7 is made on a felt, damask, or other imported cloth. The symbols used are either cut from cloth of contrasting colour and texture and or embroidered with various coloured threads, usually on a black ground. These appliqués and embroideries are commonly called 'cloths of the Great' (akunitan), probably because they are only worn by chiefs. Motifs of these cloths are familiar symbols of royal power and wealth and like so many from the 'Motif pool' can be associated with proverbs underlying these chiefly traits.

Representational symbols of elephants, umbrellas, state sword, lions, crowns, crocodile, stool and so forth are depicted. Quite apart from these appliqué and embroidered cloths, are Asafo flags, which also employ the appliqué technique. In fact, when appliqué is mentioned in Ghana, Asafo flags of the Fantes (Figs. 6 to 9) come to mind first.



Plate1. 'Everybody' by Pearlie Possey: Appliquéd Quilt, 78 x 67in., 1981.
Photo source:WAHLMAN, Maude S. Signs and Symbols. N.Y.: Penguin Books, 1993.



Plate 2. 'Cowboy' by Pearlie Possey: Appliquéd Quilt, 73 x 64in., 1981.

Photo source: WAHLMAN, Maude S. Signs and Symbols. N.Y.: Penguin Books, 1993.



Plate 3. 'Being in Total Control of Herself' by Yvonne Wells: Appliquéd Quilt, 70.5 x 81.5in.,1990.
Photo source: WAHLMAN, Maude S. Signs and Symbols. N.Y.: Penguin Books, 1993.



Plate 4. 'Melrose Plantation' by Clementine Hunter: Appliquéd Quilt, 72 x 54in.,1990.
Photo source: WAHLMAN, Maude S. Signs and Symbols. N.Y.: Penguin Books, 1993.



Figure 6. Asafo Flag from Anomabo

Photo source: COLE, Herbert & ROSS, Doran. The Arts of Ghana. L.A.: Univ. of California Press, 1977.

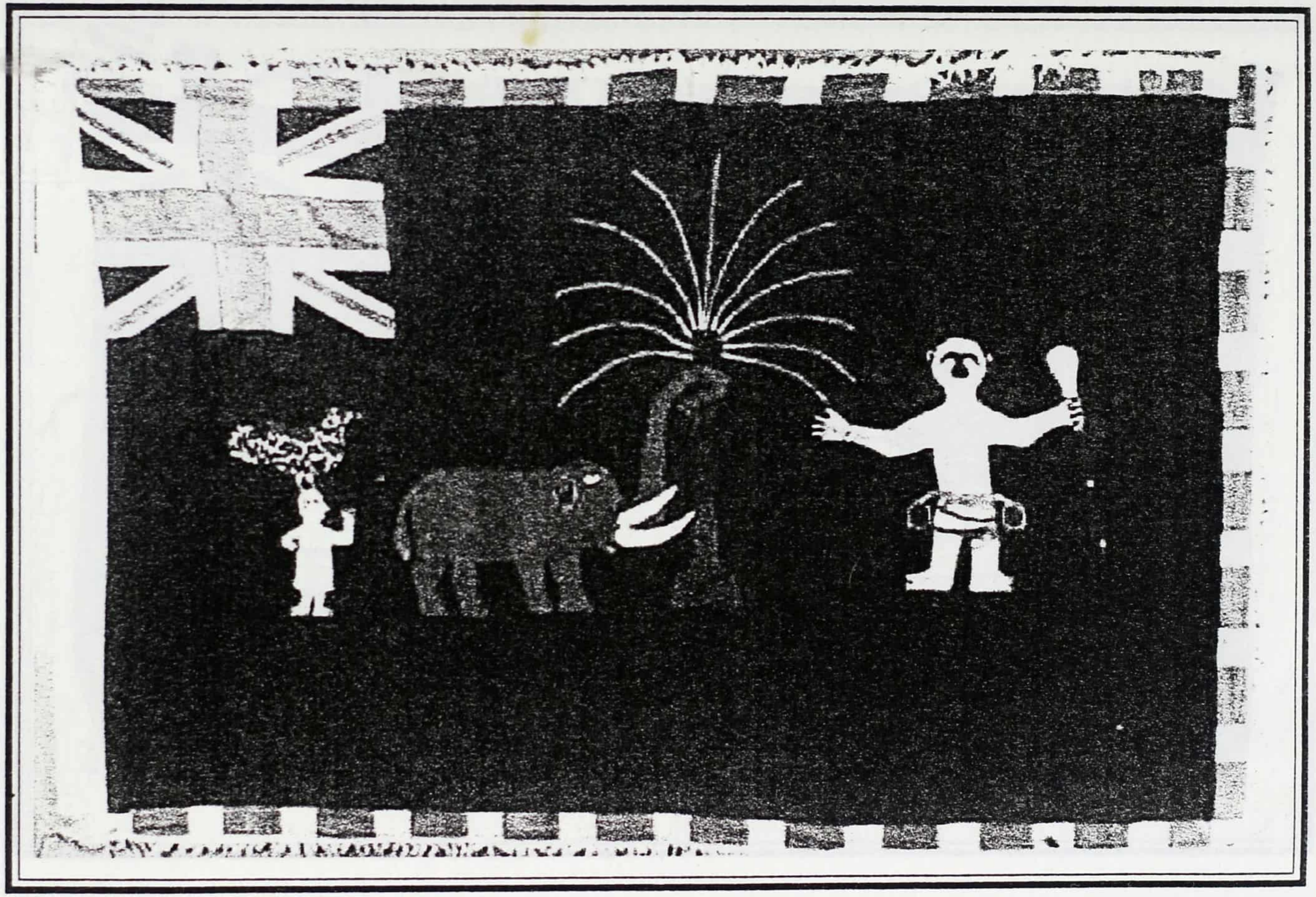


Figure 7. Asafo Flag from Anomabo

Photo source: COLE, Herbert & ROSS, Doran. The Arts of Ghana. L.A.: Univ. of California Press, 1977.

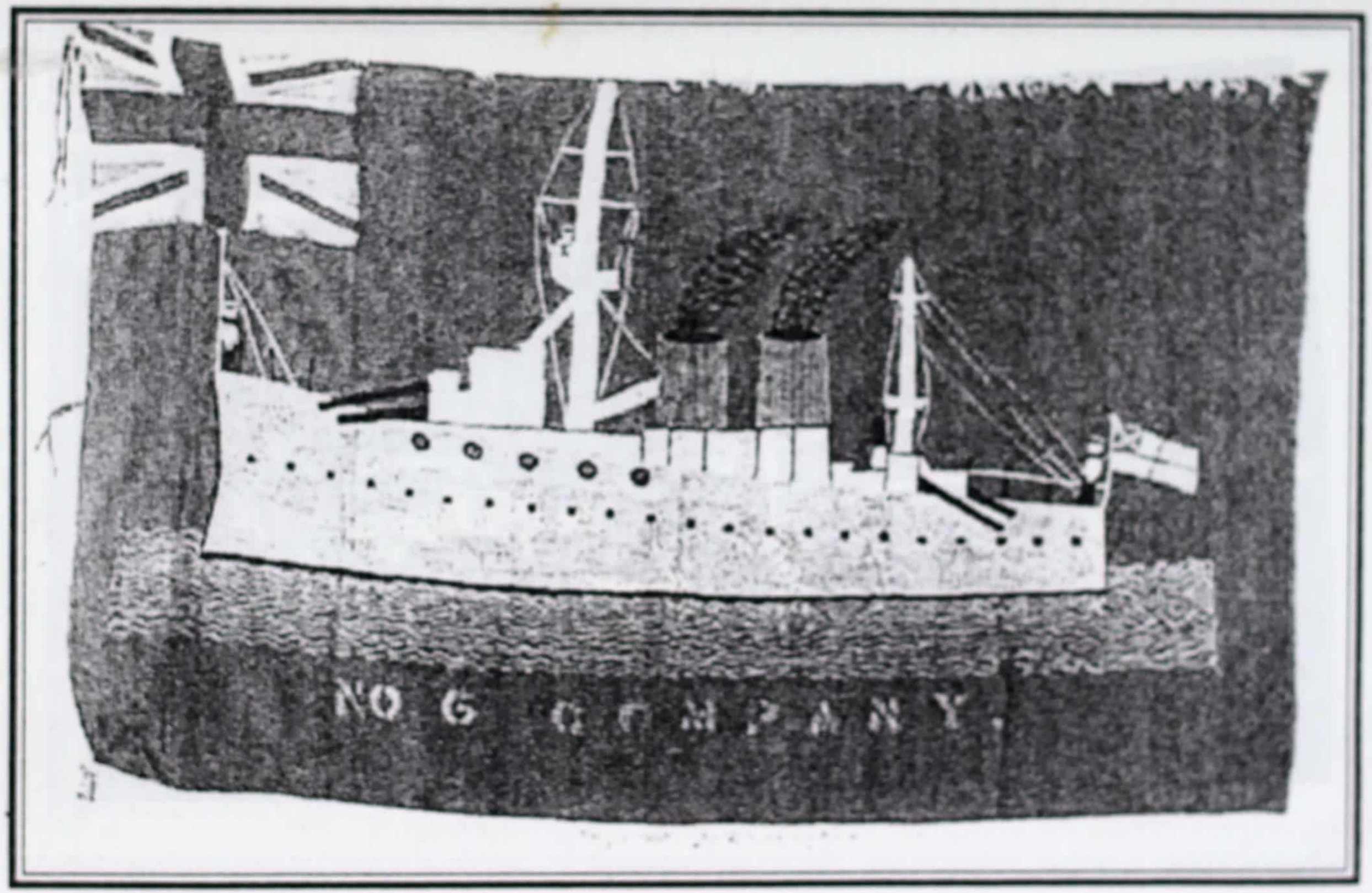


Figure 8. Asafo Flag from Anomabo

Photo source: COLE, Herbert & ROSS, Doran. The Arts of Ghana. L.A.: Univ. of California Press, 1977.

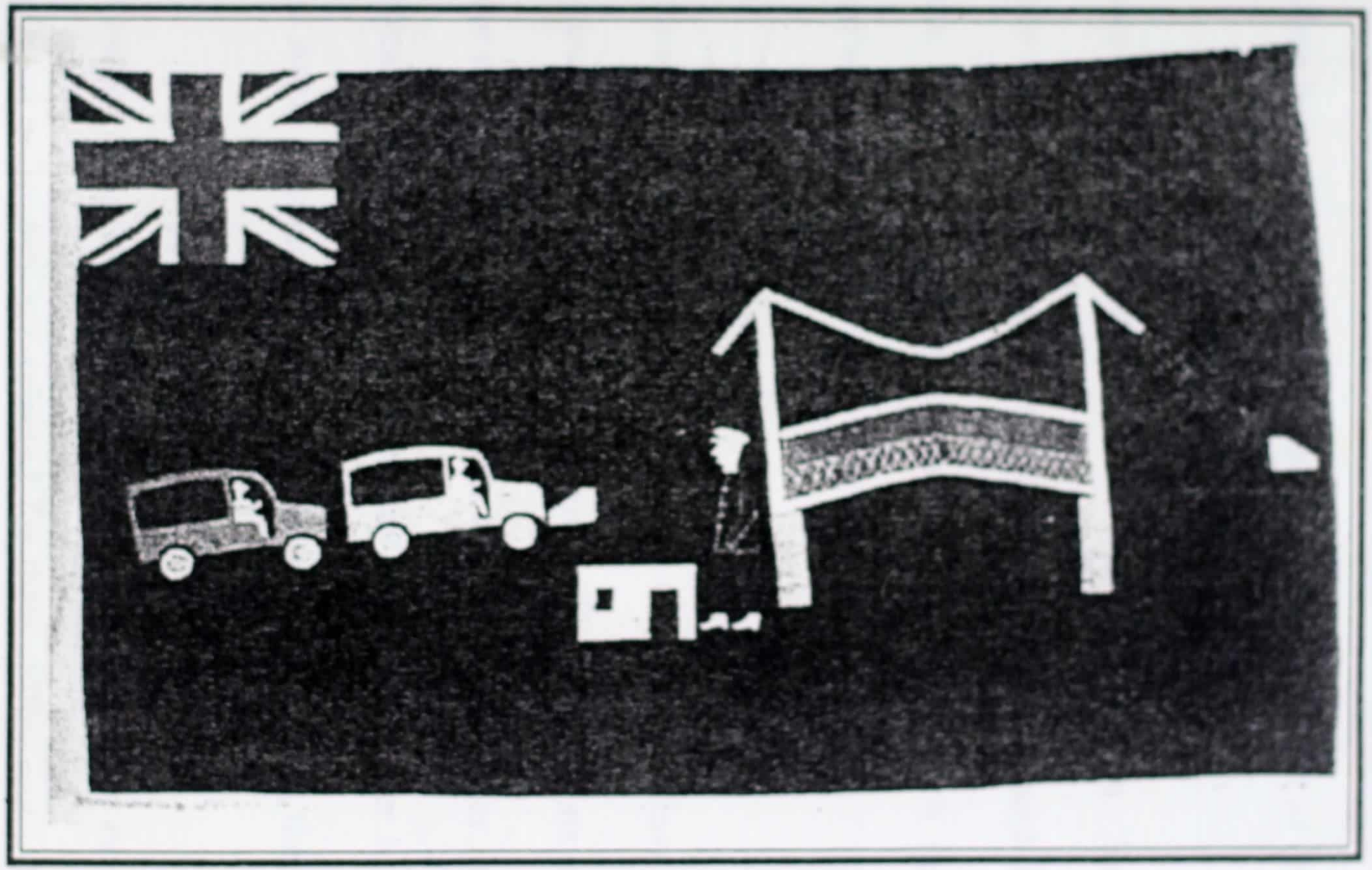


Figure 9. Asafo Flag from Anomabo

Photo source: COLE, Herbert & ROSS, Doran. The Arts of Ghana. L.A.: Univ. of California Press, 1977.

It is believed according to Cole and Ross that the historian Cruickshank in 1853 was the first to conclusively document the existence of 'Asafo and to recognise the importance of flags in their regalia. This is in spite of the fact that flags date back at least three hundred years on the coast of Ghana.

'Asafo' may be defined as traditional warrior organisation. 'Sa' in Fante or Akan means war. Asafo therefore refers to warriors. Although it exists in all Akan states, only the Fante Asafo have developed much more elaborate traditions of visual art.

Asafo companies were originally formed as resistance to invasion by often stronger inland groups, especially the Asantes. These invasions or battles were waged in the course of their journey from one place to another. It was a means for self-defence against any possible enemy attack. However in the twentieth century, the Asafo companies more frequently fought among themselves.

Asafo companies are generally composed first of headmen or generally old men. These men or leaders are selected for their ability and influence in the society. Then come the flag bearer, the drummer and the general Asafo body. Important personalities in each company include: the 'Supi', the 'Asafohemfo', the 'Frakaakitanyi', the 'Asafokyere', the 'Akyerekwam', the 'Ɔsahen', and the 'Ɔkyerema'. 'Supi' is the chief captain; he keeps the flags,

drums, gunpowder and other properties of the company. He sees to the sewing of new flags and supplies the gunpowder for war or any display. When the company is training, they go under the command of the 'Ɔsahen' the general.

The general is normally a bombastic forceful person and is selected by the company to lead them. The 'Asafohemfo' are the other company captains who see to discipline. They are in charge of marching and parading. The 'Frakaakitanyi', or the flag bearer is always guarded by twelve or fifteen people called 'Asekanbɔfo' or scouts .The 'Ɔkyerema' or drummer goes to the battlefront. Through his drumming, he directs the warriors on whether to fight hard, advance or retreat.

Most Fante towns including Winneba, Elmina, Anomabo and Cape Coast have Asafo companies. They normally do not exceed seven in a particular town. The Asafo companies in Cape-Coast are seven in number. Their numbers mainly identify the companies.

They are: Number One - Bentsir

Two - Anafu

Three - Intin

Four - Nkum

Five - Brɔfo-Nkowa

Six - Akrampa

Seven - Amanful

Each company has a main colour and one or two subsidiary colours. For example, the main colour for Number One is red, and their subsidiary colours are black and white. For Number Three, dark green is their main colour, and violet and khaki are their subsidiary colours.

The background of the flag of a particular company should always be the main colour of the company. In the past, the union Jack, the United Kingdom national flag was always placed at one corner of the flag. The Ghanaian national flag has replaced the union Jack for obvious reasons. The flags are designed to suite the taste of individual companies. The designer uses limited colours at his disposal in portraying the most significant part of his design and this is done to the liking of the particular company.

Realism means little to the flag designers perhaps because of the limitations of the material. The drawing looks like child art or naive art. Despite this characteristic, the designers must know the culture and the history of the company and the people around.

Asafo flags are made for memorable events in the company and for social purposes. The flags are therefore made to reflect many aspects of the life of the town and of the company.

Inter-company rivalry and competition always beset Asafo companies. It is interesting to note that the rivalries usually centre on their art forms, which include costumes, flags and shrines.

The flag is the most precious thing in the Asafo companies. It is therefore guarded jealously. The capture of a flag is a disgrace to the company, hence the flag bearer is always guarded. Apart from specific colours, each company can have certain cloth patterns, emblems and motifs reserved for their exclusive use. Violation of the artistic prerogatives of one company by another is considered an act of aggression.

Most flags are used to taunt other companies. When one company wishes to annoy another, it may parade through the street flags exhibiting some cowardly deeds of the other company. Usually opponents understand the devices in the flags and sometimes the result is a bloody fight. These feuds often flare up during the festivals since it is during this season that the companies are in the habit of parading themselves in groups on the streets.

They make these processions with arms in their hands, accompanied by their women who shout out the praises of their men.

Asafo flags according to Ross and Cole, are described as 'kinetic' counterparts of the 'pusuban' (Concrete shrines). The average Asafo flag is about four feet by six feet. Asafo flags are appliquéd on both sides. In spite of the often serious militant imagery of Asafo flags, their entertainment value must not be ignored. As stated by Ross and Cole; 'there is a certain playfulness in much Asafo subject matters, and flag-dancing performances are lively and fun to watch' *8*. The Akans in general speak mostly by expressing their minds through proverbial idioms, and symbols. Some of these expressions could really be serious but entertaining. Symbols used do not only pertain to human beings, but to animals and other objects as well. This is so because Akans associate many things with animals and related objects. For example, any person who is a lair and is deceptive is likened to a fox. The appearance of such an image hence carries an obvious message. As to the imagery of Asafo flags, this is what Ross and Cole stated:

> Asafo imagery carries a significant educational value as well. In spite of the often-arrogant assertions, many basic social values are expressed on flags or monuments. When flags are displayed in the company area, it is common to see a father explaining the motifs to his son or nephew. In this way, history and proverbial lore are often passed down through the Asafo flag. *9*

RELATED WORKS

Some artists have employed the use of fabric in various ways and art forms, which are some how similar to that of the researcher. This section attempts to bring to light the uniqueness of the researcher's work in relation to the other artists discussed.

In comparing the researcher's work and Asafo flags, while some ideas may be similar, the differences are obvious. Of cause, the appliqué techniques are employed in both, but while Asafo flags hardly emphasise the use of embroidery stitches, the researcher's technique, does that, to an extent that all the forms in her compositions are bordered with embroidery stitches. Normally, Asafo flags do not superimpose two or more fabrics, the researcher in her works does this to enhance contrast, harmony, and relationship of forms. Her compositions are heavy with a wide range of hues; that cannot be easily said of Asafo flags, which normally portray loose compositions, and employ limited colour. That is so because, the designers in the case of Asafo flags are restricted and expected to work in a particular way.

The imagery of Asafo flag is proverbial and symbolic; that of the researcher on the other hand while borrowing from Asafo flag is directed more towards aesthetic appreciation.

The researcher has always admired the simplicity of Asafo images and hence, sought to achieve that, even with quite heavy compositions.

She agrees with Hans Hoffman that, 'every creative act requires elimination and simplification. Simplification results from a realisation of what is essential'. *10*

The major differences between the researcher's works and that of the other artists discussed here is that, her idea is based on her cultural background as related to Asafo flags. The similarity lies with the use of fabric in their work in part or whole. Some of these artists hold a similar philosophy in terms of seeing appliqué as painting. In the same way, the researcher considers appliqué as a form of painting.

Talking about her work (Plate 5) and textiles, Diane Itter, who sees her works as both painting and sculpture states:

> I have come to realise what it is about textile arts that fascinates me. Among other things …it is that capacity to be both painter and sculptor at the same time. That is, the visual image is created by the integration of colour and structure – one cannot exist without the other. *11*

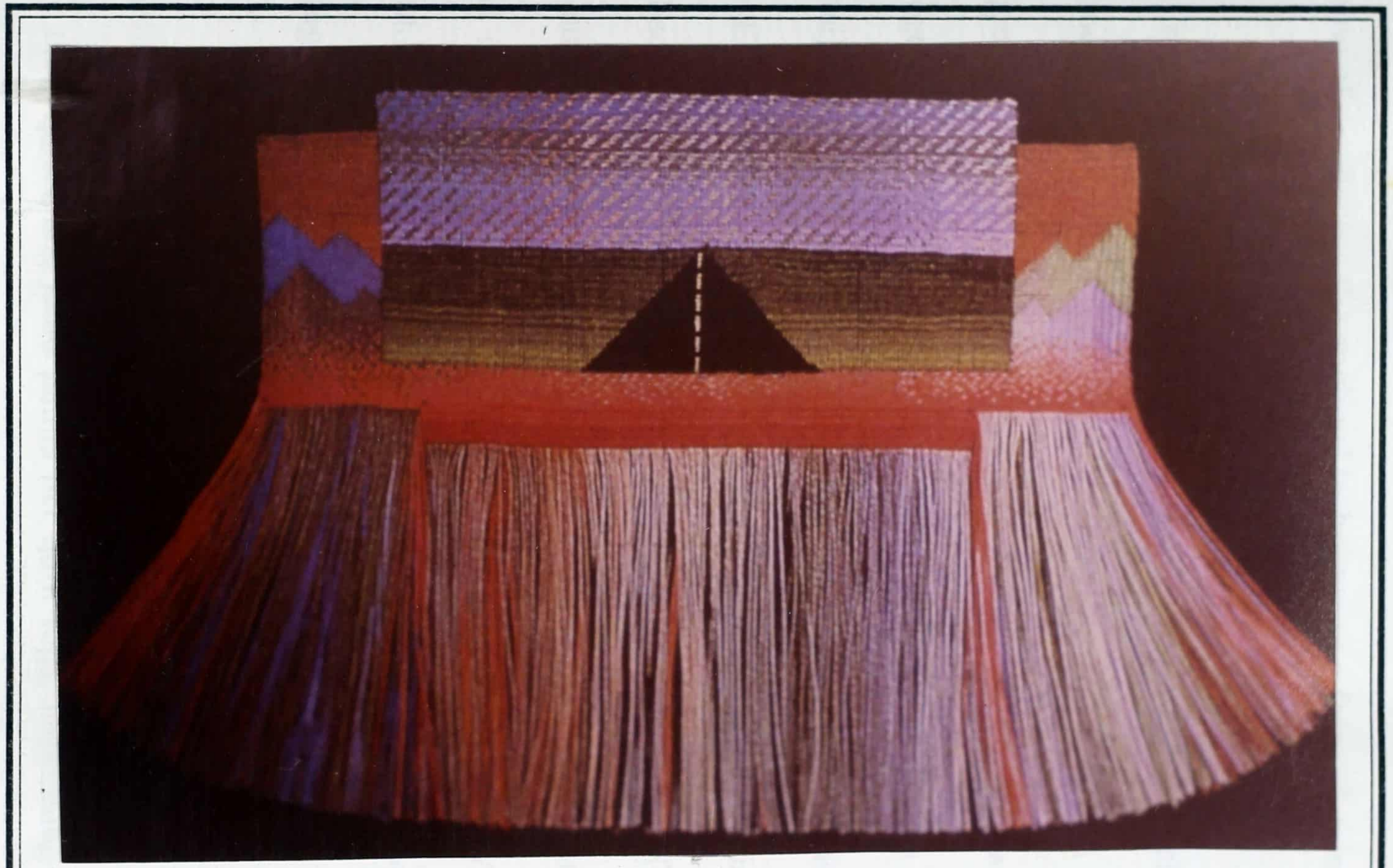


Plate 5. 'Pattern Scape' by Diane Itter: Knotted Linen, 10 x 11in.
Photo source: PATRICK, Frank. Artforms. N. J.: Longman, 1998.

It is this same fascination with colour and structure of the Asafo flags and the researcher's background as a fashion designer that gave impetus to the conviction of developing the appliqué technique as a form of painting.

Related also is the art of quilting mentioned earlier on in the chapter. In the same book Signs and Symbols, Maude Southwell Wahlman explains the technique of quilting. 'African-quilt tops are made either by sewing pieces of cloth together (piecing) or by sewing cut-out shapes onto a larger fabric (appliqué)'*12*. She further points out that this tradition goes as far back as ancient Egypt. Quilting is seen in ancient Egyptian robes. Piecing can be traced back to an Egyptian canopy quilts made from squares of dyed gazelle leather and dating to 980 BC. African-American women are still producing appliqué quilts. They may have carried this tradition over to America. One noticeable artist is Faith Ringgold who unlike the researcher applies painting to quilting.

Also unlike most African–American quilt makers who use appliqué to decorate their quilts, she hand paints her quilt tops, expressing narratives of African-American folk tale and social issues as seen in her work, 'Tar Beach'. (Plate 6)



Plate 6. 'Tar Beach' by Faith Ringgold: Hand painted Quilt, 65 x 65in.,1990.
Photo source: WAHLMAN, Maude S. Signs and Symbols. N.Y.: Penguin Books, 1993.

The work of another African-American artist, Wini McQueen also deserves mentioning. She thinks of herself as a fabric designer and a fibre artist. While employing the appliqué technique just as the researcher, she combines African textile tradition, African-American quilting ideas and contemporary art techniques such as beadwork, batik, hand-block printing, photo blue-print and resist–dye technique. Of particular interest is her work, ' Little Oba's Heritage' (Plate 7). Using the narrow strip motif of West Africa, she interspersed family photos with images of Egyptian gods and Adinkra symbols. She even pieced together satin hair ribbons to simulate royal Asante robes.

The researcher also makes use of Adinkra symbols but in many different ways, such as combining symbols and abstracting some, sometimes to an almost unrecognisable state.

The researcher approaches appliqué in two different ways. She sometimes uses selected gradations of colours and at other times contrasting and clashing colours as she may when using pigment to paint. Apart from Asafo flag imagery, she also employs Adinkra symbols and simplified figuration in her compositions. This style differs from contemporary quilt artworks and the traditional Asafo flags. The blend of figuration and abstractions sets a new trend.



Plate 7. 'Little Oba's Heritage' by Wini McQueen: Appliquéd and Screen printed Quilt, 52 x 39.5in.,1990.
Photo source: WAHLMAN, Maude S. Signs and Symbols. N.Y.: Penguin Books, 1993.

In principle, the researcher's technique is similar to that of Mary Billingsley who refers to her work as, 'paintings in fabric'. She has hand-dyed fabrics to create the colours she wants and mixes them as freely as paints.

She says of her work:

> My easel is the floor of my studio where I lay in areas of colour as in 'underpainting', and gradually develop until the whole takes on a life of its own. I then begin to stitch the colour pieces together. I continually adjust the composition until the vision becomes the completed structure. *13*

Mary Billingsley's work (Plate 8) unlike that of the researcher is very non-representational. It is totally abstract and its total visual effect is a seamless interlocking of related colour shapes.

Another artist who also borrows from Asafo flags and Adinkra symbols is Olu Oguibe, a Nigerian. His artistic expressions could best be described as ephemeral or volatile. He has experimented with Uli, Nsibidi, Adire, Mbari, Dogon sculpture, Ndebele murals; and the list goes on. In his own words:



Plate 8. 'Interior' by Mary Billingsley: Cotton twill colour with Spectrum Reactive Dye, 1987.
Photo source: ZELANSKI, Paul. Colour. N.J.: Prentice Hall Inc., 1994.

I have referenced Uli, Nsibidi, Adinkra...in addition to my own forms and ideas. Many of the works in my last show drew on the format of Fante flags, the very way. Brancusi drew on Nordic totem sculpture. *14*

The researcher considers Olu Oguibe as one of African's great artists. He has experimented many techniques and media, including painting on baskets and mats (Plates 9 & 10). The total visual effect of these paintings is similar to the works of the researcher. However unlike the researcher who works directly with fabrics, Olu Oguibe works mainly with acrylics. His paintings 'Painter' and 'Martyr' (Plates 11 & 12) respectively are works produced with ideas from Asafo flags and Adinkra symbols.

Another Nigerian artist who makes use of appliqué as a form of painting is Ada Odechukwu, wife of the famous Nigerian painter Obiora Odechukwu. Interestingly she also doubles as a painter and fashion designer. Uli influence is much evident in her works, obviously acquiring knowledge of it from her husband and their artistic friends. After experimenting with Uli motifs for sometime, she broke away towards modified designs based on her own lines. This she expresses in her garments. This is what Elizabeth Ohene a fellow graduate from the University of Nigeria Nsukka said of her:

> The idea behind her creations is unobtrusive presence, sublime yet averting...we see her manipulating Uli

> symbols not transferred in their purest forms but adapted as purely decorative elements which reflect a greater concern with aesthetics. *15*

Unlike the researcher's works that usually are playful and gay, Ada's works in appliqué most often portray her emotions, which occasionally could be unstable. Her untitled work in appliqué (Plate 13) portrays a dismembered human figure; also portrayed is a smaller white, headless figure, with its arms out-stretched, as if on a cross.

This review of related literature and works point to the fact that the researcher's bold attempt at using the appliqué method of the Asafo flags to create paintings with fabric is an innovation; even though it has been attempted in some different ways by other artists elsewhere. The researcher on her part conquers new territories in the Ghanaian setting, by breaking the traditional idea of painting, and bridging the gap between textiles and painting. Finally, she challenges the sensibilities of the observer to see Ghana as a Nation revealed in appliqué. This is reflected by the different aspects of Ghanaian culture, portrayed in the series of the appliqué paintings produced for the thesis from Plate 14 to Plate 35.



Plate 9. 'We are all Lizards Sprawling in the Sun' by Olu Oguibe: Gouache on Basket, diametre, 62in.

Photo source: OTTENBERG, Simon. New Traditions from Nigeria. Washington: Smithsonian Inst. Press, 1997.

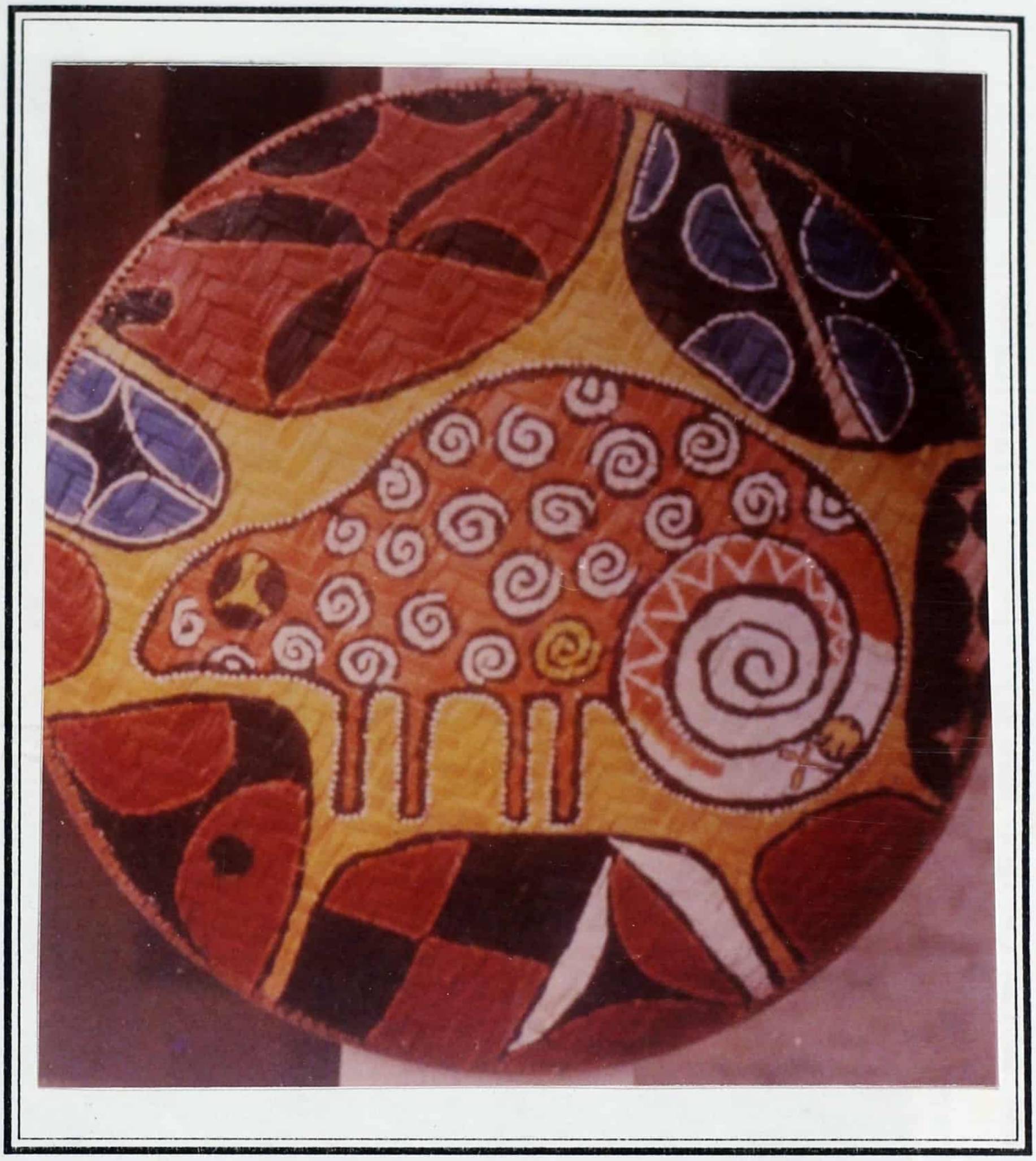


Plate 10. 'Tiger or Chameleon' by Olu Oguibe: Gouache on Basket, diametre, 62in.

Photo source: OTTENBERG, Simon. New Traditions from Nigeria. Washington: Smithsonian Inst. Press, 1997.

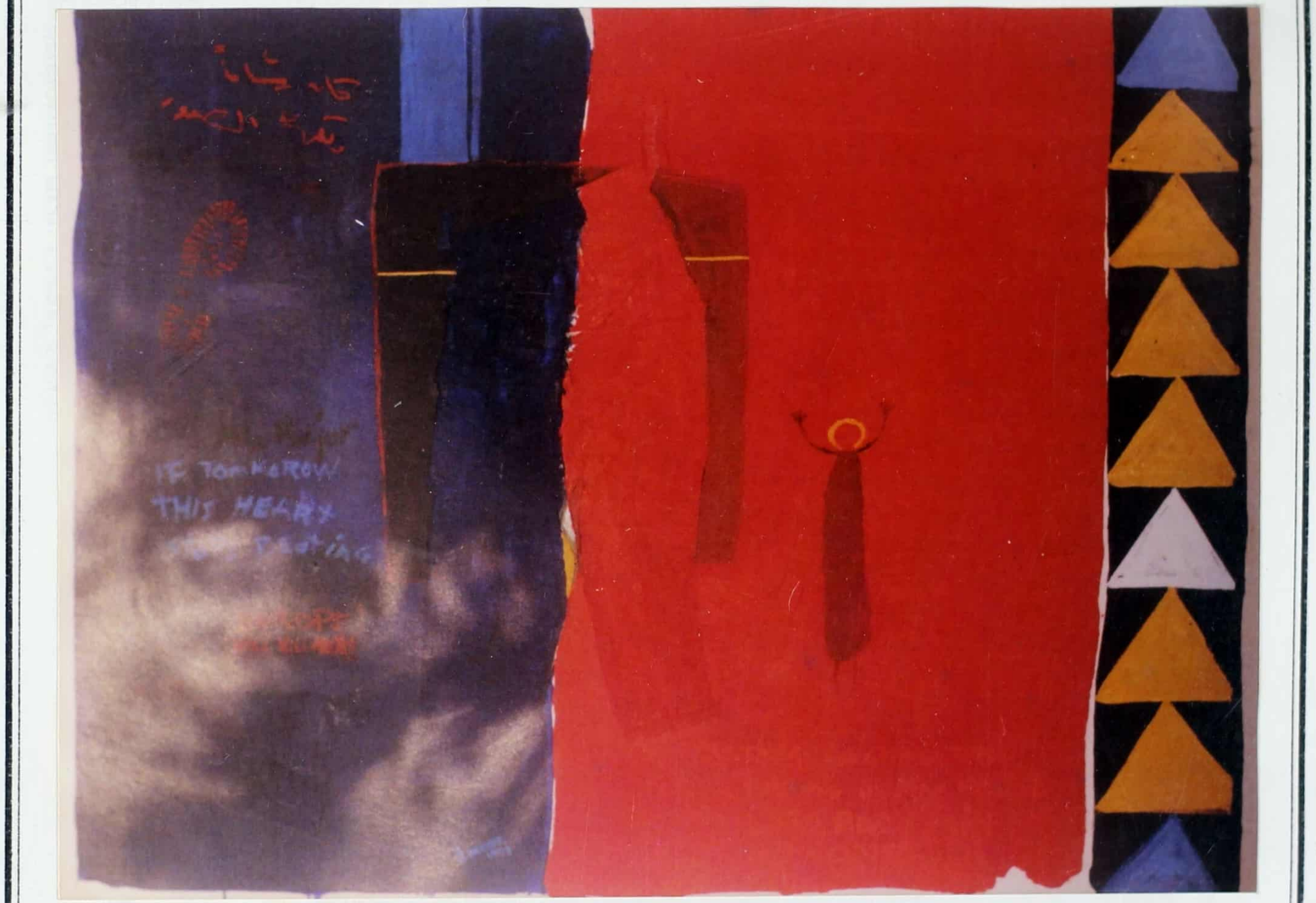


Plate 11. 'Painter' by Olu Oguibe: Acrylic on canvas, 152 x 198cm.

Photo source: OTTENBERG, Simon. New Traditions from Nigeria. Washington: Smithsonian Inst. Press, 1997.



Plate 12. 'Martyr' by Olu Oguibe: Acrylic on canvas, 190 x 190cm.

Photo source: OTTENBERG, Simon. New Traditions from Nigeria. Washington: Smithsonian Inst. Press, 1997.



Plate 13. 'Untitled' by Ada Odechukwu: Appliqué, 130 x 68cm.

Photo source: OTTENBERG, Simon. New Traditions from Nigeria. Washington: Smithsonian Inst. Press, 1997.

Endnotes

1. DEAN, Beryl. Creative Appliqué. N. Y.: Watson Guptill Publications, 1970.

2. WAHLMAN, Maude S. Signs and Symbols. N.Y.: Penguin Books, 1993.

3. Ibid. p21.

4. Ibid. p21.

5. Ibid. p116.

6. JEFFERSON, Louise E. The Decorative Arts of Africa. London: William Collins and Sons Co. Ltd., 1974.

7. COLE, Herbert,

   ROSS, Doran. The Arts of Ghana. L.A.: Univ. of California Press, 1977.

8. Ibid. p198.

9. Ibid. p198.

10. CHIPP, Herschel. Theories of Modern Art. L.A.: Univ. of California Press, 1975, p30.

11. DUANE, Preble,

    DUANE, Sarah,

    PATRICK, Frank. Artforms. N. J.: Longman, 1998, p 207.

12. WAHLMAN, Maude S. Signs and Symbols. N.Y.: Penguin Books, 1993, p151.

13. ZELANSKI, Paul,

    FISHER, Mary. Colour. N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1994, p133.

14. OTTENBERG, Simon. New Traditions from Nigeria. Washington: Smithsonian Inst. Press, 1997, p 223.

15. Ibid. p 231.

CHAPTER THREE

EXPERIMENTAL SURVEY

The idea to paint with fabric was to the researcher an extension of the use of a medium already known to her. She has been interested in designing garments ever since she was a child. This interest materialised some where in 1994 when she started making cloths commercially.

Appliqué has been an integral part of her style ever since. This research is however, the first attempt at using appliqué for painting. It is also the initial attempt at incorporating Asafo flag imagery into her compositions. This preliminary study concentrated much more on using the images of Asafo flags for pictorial expression.

The idea for the researcher was in the end, to be able to create paintings after the manner of Asafo flags. It must immediately be added here that, fully studying and interpreting the proverbial meanings of the flags so as to use them as such in her compositions was not at all the main aim of the researcher. She intended to take in the images, digest them in her imagination and where necessary recreate them through the process of adaptation and mutation. As

stated earlier, the decision to use appliqué was in response to a desire for an approach different from the traditional techniques of painting and an approach not much exploited in Ghana.

Appliqué though simple can express a wide range of ideas and serve different kinds of needs from the utilitarian as in clothes and dressmaking to the purely aesthetic; all of these could be both rewarding and stimulating.

To create in appliqué, all the researcher needed were a piece of fabric for the background, bits and pieces of different coloured fabric, scissors, pins, needles and threads. An electric sewing machine capable of making close zigzag stitches was necessary due to an interest in embroidery stitches.

As Beryl Dean, puts it; 'the magical quality of fabrics will spark of unpremeditated ideas; these can grow and develop spontaneously in a satisfying way'[1]. This can automatically get you going without being held up by tiresome or boring preparation.

Some information about the nature of fabrics was important. It was not necessary to go looking for fabrics to buy for the appliqué, except perhaps for

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1. DEAN, Beryl. Creative Appliqué. N. Y.: Watson Guptill Publications, 1970, p33.

the background, which needed to be big. Enough raw materials by way of pieces of fabric were collected from tailors' shops.

Since in most cases, part of the background fabric remained exposed, it was necessary to consider its aesthetic properties. Fabrics that would not pucker, not fray, stretch out of shape, and would lie flat were chosen for the appliqué. It was also important to have a wide range of coloured fabrics. Human beings respond to colours in individual ways. Ones reaction to and use of colour are largely instinctive; this is an advantage, which out weighs knowledge of colour theory.

As stated earlier, what was important was to have a wide range of colours to select from. To use a musical analogy, it was limiting to try to play everything on the violin when a whole orchestra of instruments was at ones disposal.

When the materials necessary for creating were ready, the following considerations were made.

1. The areas of background or the negative areas were of much importance hence spacing was done with care to achieve good balanced.

2. Proportions of images or forms were varied, and well planned as a part of the whole, forming rhythm within the composition where applicable.

3. Generally, the focus or interest was directed towards the middle, but never in the centre of the composition.

One of the great advantages of appliqué is that it is not expensive, as most people either have bits of or can get hold of old pieces of fabric.

Plates 14 to 19 show the use of appliqué in the design of clothes by the researcher. Plates 14 and 15 show her early interest in the Adinkra symbols. The symbols are 'Epa', and a stylized version of 'Hye wonnhye'. The fabric used for the appliqué in Plate 14 is batik, which is very common in Ghana; it is a simple design that harmonises well with the background. Plate 15 shows the use of close zigzag stitches to compliment the design. The zigzag stitches in this design, enhance the over all impression of the motif.

Plate16 is the back view of Plate 15. It shows an interesting and elegant motif or design created by the researcher. In this composition, zigzag stitches are used both around the appliquéd pieces and on the background fabric. Although the motif is symmetrically balanced, the organic nature of the forms and the flow of the zigzag stitches, make it visually pleasing.

Plates 17 and 18 show a different kind of appliqué. In this case, the geometric shapes forming the design were cut out of the background fabric and another

fabric was placed under. Zigzag stitches were then used around the shapes holding the two different fabrics together. The abstract design created though symmetrically balanced is interesting. The variety in the geometric shapes, the blend of rounded and angular forms, and the glittering lines around the shapes unit the composition in a manner that is quite difficult to explain.

Plate 19 was designed with pieces of printed cloth cut out into varying shapes. The arrangement of the pieces shows no particular pattern. The relatively light-coloured pieces stand out strongly against the black background fabric. The designs in the pieces of fabric used are creating a feeling of movement controlled by the white zigzag stitches around them. This design generally excites the senses.

Plates 20 to 29 are acrylic works on paper and canvas painted as preparatory studies before the execution of the main project works. These compositions served as a form of exercise to consciously and unconsciously inject into the memory bank of the researcher, the nature of Asafo flag imaging. With these compositions, an attempt would be made to explain the proverbial images since the images appear almost the same way as they are applied in Asafo flags. The backgrounds of cause are different; these are purely abstract compositions by the researcher. Another reason for explaining the use of some of the images is also to give the reader an idea about Asafo flag imagery in Cape Coast.



Plate 14. Appliquéd jumper designed with 'Ɛpa'



Plate 15. Appliquéd shirt designed with 'Hye wonnhye'



Plate 16. Back of Plate 15

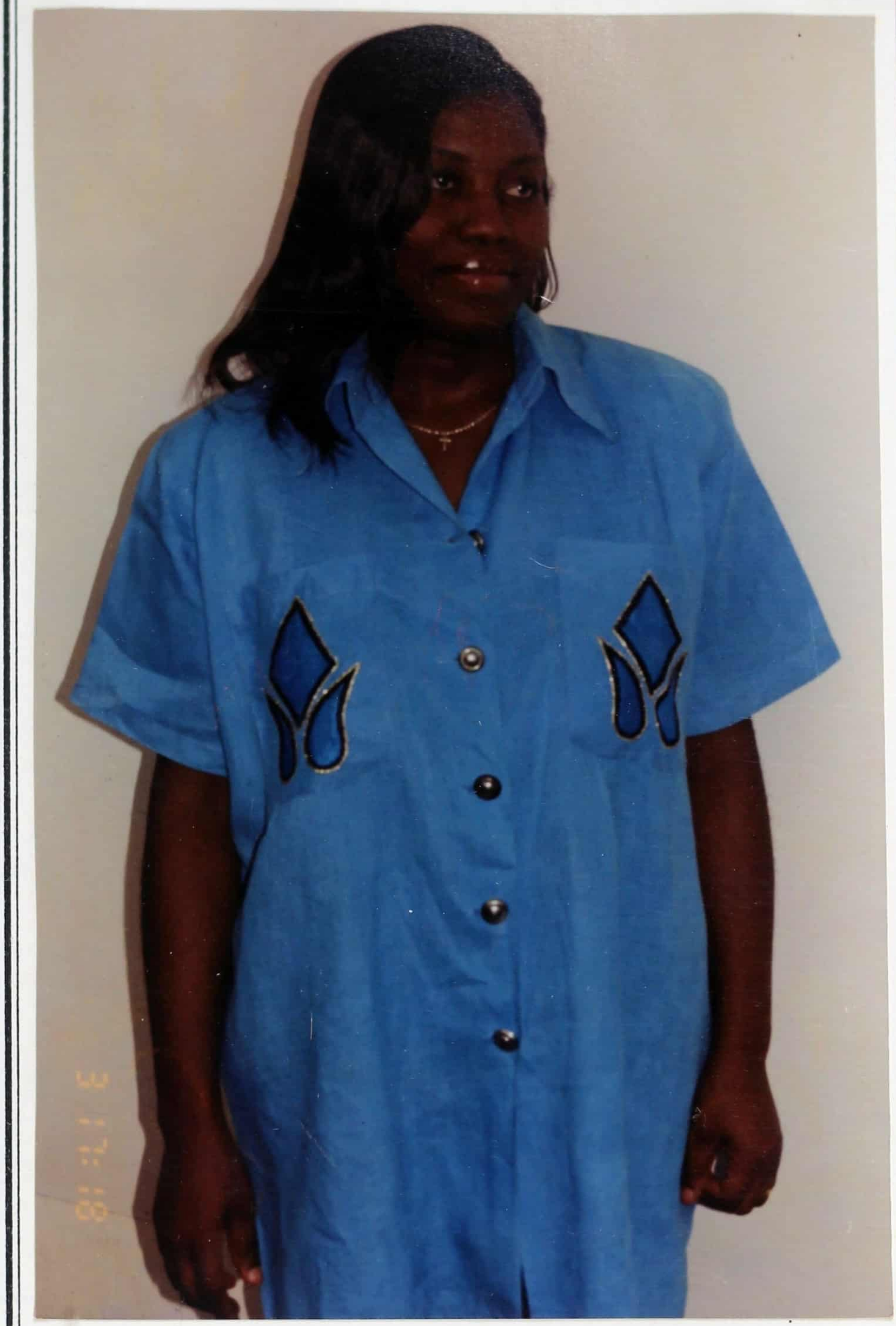


Plate 17. Appliquéd shirt designed with geometric shapes and floral motifs



Plate 18. Back of Plate 17



Plate 19. Appliquéd shirt designed with pieces of printed fabric

PRELIMINARY WORK 1

'Mysterious Anoma' (Plate 20)

This is a composition of acrylic on paper portraying two crows. The crow a symbol or image of the number two Asafo company of Cape Coast is believed to be gifted with foresight. Crows are said to predict things before they happen. In a way, this could be true because, as soon as one picks a stone with the intention of killing a crow, it quickly flies away. This symbol when used communicates to the other companies that, the number two company is fully aware of all the evil plans of the others. The composition was painted directly and spontaneously.

Although many of the colours used are strong, the tint of blue at the left side of the composition seems to bring a balance that is very welcome. The visible brush strokes in the ochre area to the right, and the red lines around the same area, produce some energy and vibration in the composition. The crows are depicted in the most simplified way, yet nothing has been taken away from them. Their essential details are maintained all the same.

They really seem to be in control of affairs around them even though also ready to fly away in case of any danger.



Plate 20. ‘Mysterious Anoma’ - Acrylic on paper, 30 x 25cm.

PRELIMINARY WORK 2

'Challenge' (Plate 21)

An acrylic on paper portraying two men, one with a bowl and spoon, the other with a chamber pot and a gourd instrument used to enema. Literally, this scene means, ' do you want to enema before eating or do you want it afterwards?' The question is an incitement and equivalent to asking someone if he is ready to fight or prefers to fight later.

This painting has a generally dark background, which is typical of Asafo flags. There are abstract forms floating in the space between the two figures, which suggests some dialogue between them. The figures appear to be standing on what looks like a cliff with a very deep valley below. The figure on the left may seem stronger but that could be deceptive. Any struggle between them is sure to land one if not both of them in a place of no return.

The generally cool nature of the composition, amidst the activity in the dark background, suggests a feeling of unpredictability.

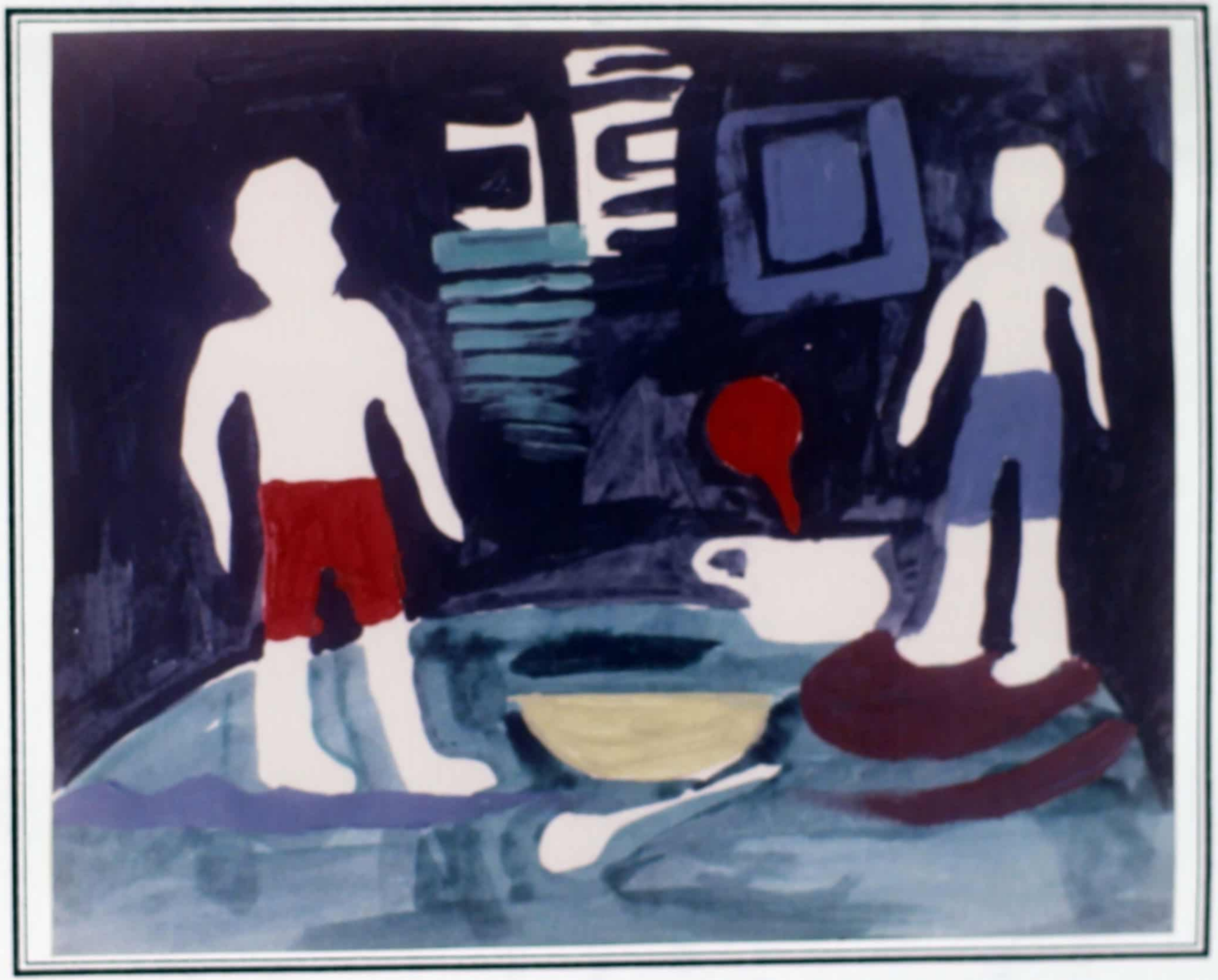


Plate 21. 'Challenge' - Acrylic on paper, 30 x 25cm.

PRELIMINARY WORK 3

'White Keys' (Plate 22)

This composition shows two keys, which symbolise leadership. The number one company uses the 'key' symbol since it is the parent in the Cape Coast tradition.

The painting has a generally green background with visible brush strokes, which sets the nature of the painting. The keys, the main motifs of the composition are white, perhaps a symbol of transparency in leadership. The black bordered red quadrilateral in the middle area suggests some seriousness amidst the generally calm tone of the composition.

Although much of the activity is centred in the middle, the organic nature of the brushwork in general seems to activate the whole surface-area, hence taking the attention from the centre of the composition.

The composition is harmonious and soundly balanced, emphasising stability in leadership.

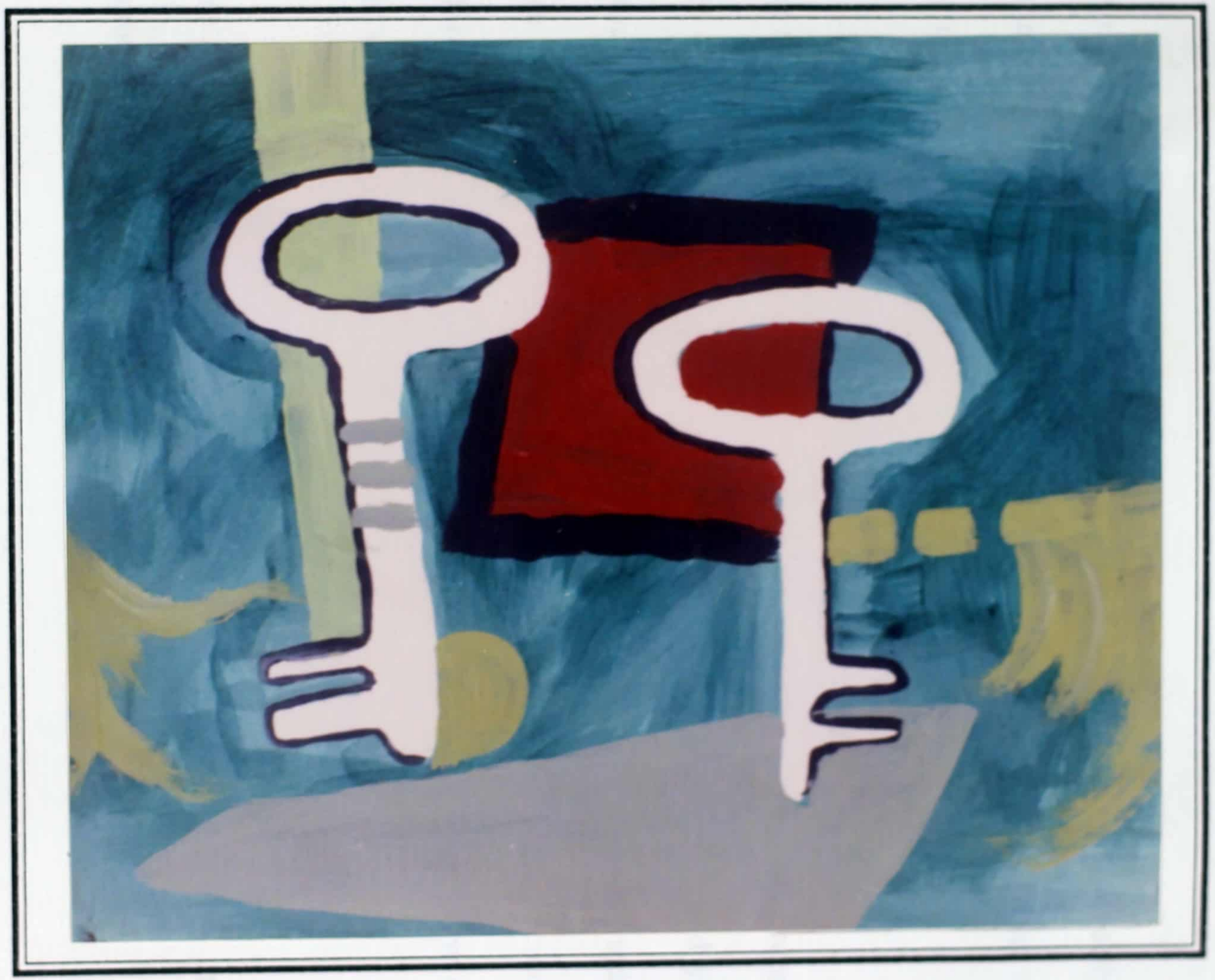


Plate 22. 'White Keys' - Acrylic on paper, 30 x 25cm.

PRELIMINARY WORK 4

'Akokɔ' (Plate 23)

This is a composition with geometric shapes. It was also painted directly and spontaneously despite the fact that it looks well planned in terms of its structure.

Hens and cocks are normally what the number one company uses to represent other companies. Two of such are depicted here. Although red and yellow dominate the composition, the total effect is quite intense, yet accommodating. There is a general feeling of neatness, which is accentuated by the colour of the birds. The negative areas around were painted to bring out the form of the birds, which maintains the colour of the paper (white).

There are two Adinkra symbols ('Adinkrahene' and 'Krapa') in the composition.

The balance achieved in this composition is not forced or rigid. One interesting thing about this composition is the achievement of the feeling of layers with the geometric shapes despite the lack of transparency, which could easily have created that.

The uneven and violent nature of the brushwork suggests some energy. The composition indeed breathes. The alert nature of the birds aids in creating this feeling.



Plate 23. 'Akokɔ' - Acrylic on paper, 30 x 25cm.

PRELIMINARY WORK 5

'Where is your Head?' (Plate 24)

A composition of acrylic on paper portraying four-sided shapes of different colours arranged side by side. The outstanding image in the composition is the headless human figure. When used in a flag, it stands for an unwise man-a person with no brains. This is normally used by the number two company against any other company that misbehaves.

The symbol of death-the skull and bones portrayed are used by the number three company to symbolise their nature of not fearing death. A dead man indeed fears death no more. Although the headless figure and the skull seem to be hanging in the composition the generous use of verticals and horizontals create some stability that over shadow this defect. Also in this composition as in the others already discussed, is a general neutral tone despite the use of some strong colours. The blue and the white areas in the composition have effectively toned down the composition.

This painting shows the behaviour of white colour under various colour environments. The white in the dark blue environment feels the most comfortable and settled, followed by the white at the top right corner of the

composition. The white in the yellow square obviously has lost its purity and intensity. The same can be said of the white in the red environment.

Although not consciously intended, this composition also servers as a guide to placement of colour within another colour environment.



Plate 24. ' Where is your Head?' - Acrylic on paper, 30 x 25cm.

PRELIMINARY WORK 6

'Wasi ne Tsri Ase' (Plate 25)

Here, the researcher, after painting for some time with the canvas positioned as shown, turned it upside down and continued painting without attempting to change the images already created. The major figure shown with the green square around the head and arm area, head downwards, is used by the number two company to rub in the shame of other companies.

This composition was painted mainly with white over a red background. The negative areas were rather painted, leaving the positive areas (red) out. Also painted without a sketch or plan, this was an exercise to test and sharpen the direct compositional skill of the researcher. The placement of the other colours was an after thought.

The interesting thing about this composition is the immediate feeling of the energy with which the researcher painted it. This energy has really been captured and frozen well within the limitations of the medium. The violent brushwork, the placement of the zoetic forms, and organic nature of the edge of the forms add to the energy the composition vibrates.

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The researcher indeed enjoyed the process of making this painting. The process in this case, which is still imprinted in her mind, was more important than the outcome.



Plate 25. 'Waasi ne Tsri Ase' - Acrylic on canvas, 80 x 18 inches.

PRELIMINARY WORK 7

'Black Sea Sharks' (Plate 26)

Painted in similar fashion as Plate 22, this composition was also done on a red background, but with black acrylic paint used for a major part of it. The Ghanaian flag, which normally appears in all Asafo flags, is portrayed at the top of the composition.

The images in this composition are that of the number one company. These include the rifle and some sharks. The shark as said, swallows anything that comes its way when moving. This is a warning to other companies that dare challenge the number one company. The whole composition looks like a cross-section of the ocean, with the Ghanaian flag looking like the atmosphere above the ocean.

The swimming sharks at the bottom of the composition and the other animated forms at the top part are aiding in creating this feeling. The black star in the middle of the Ghanaian flag rather looks like a human figure with both arms and legs stretched. The dominant colours, red and black and the fluidity in rendering the forms add some spirituality that must have been injected by the 'gods of the Asafo Companies'. The researcher was surely getting some where, the gods were behind her!

The composition gives an idea of how images of lighter colours set against a dark background behave.

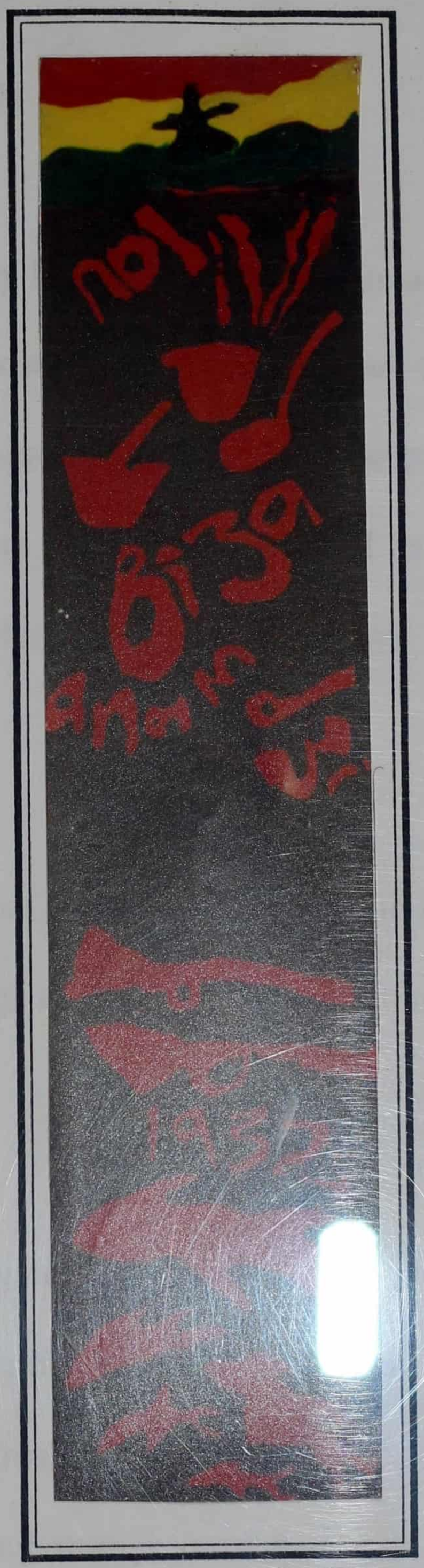


Plate 26. ‘Black Sea Sharks’ - Acrylic on canvas, 80 x 18 inches.

PRELIMINARY WORK 8

'Pelican Venture' (Plate 27)

Here is a composition in only black and white. White acrylic was used to paint over a black background. Most of the images used are that of the number three company. The dominant image in the middle of the painting shows a pelican trying to swallow a fish from its tail end. It would have been easier if it had started from the head, implying one should always tackle a problem from where one can handle it.

What they mean to say is that any company trying to attack the number three will have as much difficulty as a pelican trying to swallow a fish from the wrong end.

At the bottom of the painting is an image of a strange looking bird resting on a strange looking man's head; literally meaning; 'there are no trees left in the bush and so birds are now resting on men's heads'. When this happens, one should known that something strange must have caused it. The composition shows an exciting blend of simplified representational forms and some Fante words and phrases such as, 'wiadze ye sum', meaning, the world is evil.

The forms in this composition are of varying shapes and sizes, which effectively compensates for the monochromatic nature of it. Just like Plates 21 and 22, the approach is very direct and fluid; almost like a non-stop kind of action.

The organic nature of the edge of the images, makes the composition very zoetic. This exercise brings to mind the need to combine forms of varying shapes and sizes to create an illusion of depth.



Plate 27. 'Pelican Venture' - Acrylic on canvas, 80 x 18 inches.

PRELIMINARY WORK 9

'Slave Ship' (Plate 28)

This is a simple silkscreen- printed composition on canvas. The black medium used is acrylic. This composition was developed with 'Ɔdenkyem', an Adinkra symbol and other simplified animal forms. The 'Ɔdenkyem' motifs used have interesting patterns created in them. In fact, these patterns are the main contributors to the beauty of this composition.

Although the negative areas are quite a lot, and the painting quite simple, the whole composition looks like a slave ship. This is due to the arrangement of the motifs. The effect created looks like a colony of black ants.

More over the composition gives the feeling of a work made with the cut and paste method, which is close to the appliqué technique.

This composition and the process of its creation were very important, in the sense that, it gave the researcher a preview, so to speak of how appliqué on canvas would look like.

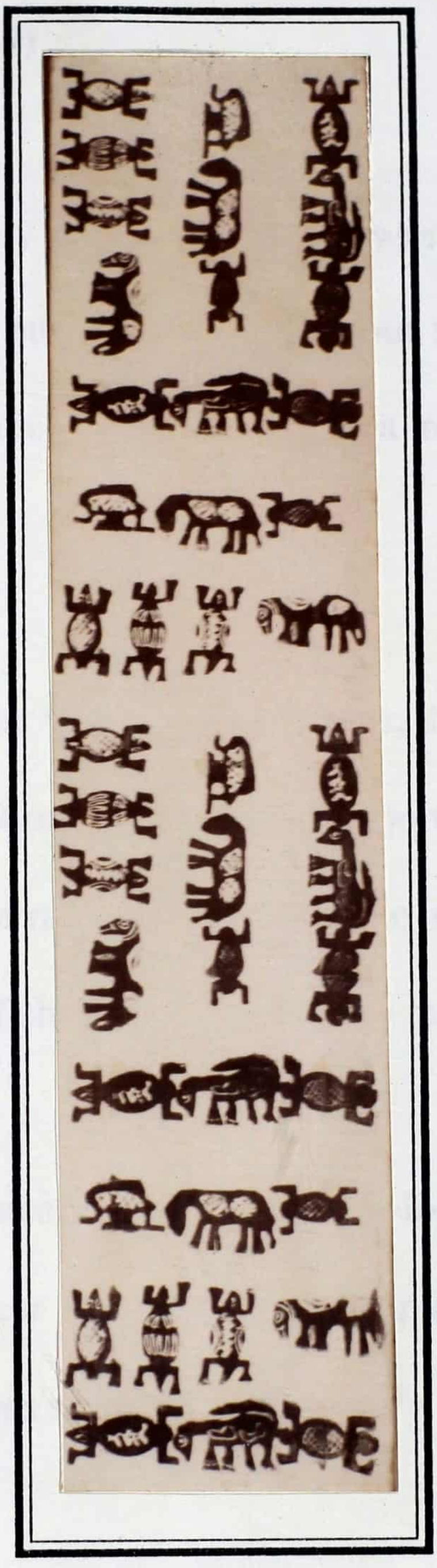


Plate 28. ‘Slave Ship’ - Acrylic on canvas(screen printed), 80 x 18 inches.

KUMASI-GHANA

PRELIMINARY WORK 10

'The 'Yellow Dog' (Plate 29)

This is the final preliminary work. In fact, it was a test exercise for the researcher. It was the first attempt at bringing out the images stored in the mind and imagination of the researcher, without relying on any reference material.

The whole exercise was done within eight minutes; there was no time to think through it. That was intentional. The images portrayed include a man, a crocodile and a dog. The arrangement follows no intelligible sequence and rather looks like the work of child or someone very naïve yet bold.

Indeed the images were meant to appear child-like and be elements that needed no reason to appear at any particular place or the other in the composition. The process was exciting.

Unintended, the white around the edge of some of the forms gave a prelude to the effect of bordering the edge of images with a contrasting colour - to be precise the prelude to the use of zigzag stitches of a lighter and contrasting colour around an image.



Plate 29. 'Yellow Dog' - Acrylic on canvas, 14 x 17 inches.

The process of experimentation and the production of these preliminary works were very helpful to the researcher. Not only did it help in getting her into the 'working mood', but also it sharpened her compositional sense, deepened and enriched her colour appreciation, stocked her image bank, and most of all made her feel like a real artist!

Naturally, the stage was set for business.

CHAPTER FOUR

APPLIQUE PAINTINGS

After a period of experimentation and the production of preliminary works, the researcher who at this stage is referred to as the artist felt confident and produced the project paintings in appliqué. This chapter presents the results of her endeavour.

The choice of supports such as the umbrella, palanquin, smock and cloth for the paintings were made after careful considerations. These objects, which are all part of a chief's regalia, best project the arts and culture of Ghana. These supports perfectly suit the topic of the research-'Ghana: a nation revealed in Appliqué'.

Most chiefs in Ghana either dress in cloth or in smock; all of them use the umbrella, and a number of them ride in palanquins on ceremonial occasions.

Although these supports are basically functional, for the purpose of this research, their aesthetic attributes are considered most important. Together with the images on them, they must primarily be viewed as paintings.

The compositions though generally inspired by Asafo flags, and to a lesser extent by the Adinkra symbols, are the products of the philosophy of the artist, which in principle emphasises aesthetic considerations in a work of art. Images and symbols used appear mainly because of their aesthetic qualities and not necessarily because of their symbolic or proverbial considerations. They were subjected to various manipulations in order to derive from them aesthetic qualities the artist desired. In all these, the artist aimed at simplified expression of a complex thought. She favoured flat forms devoid of details. This was greatly enhanced by the flat treatment of forms in the appliqué technique.

Though the artist normally prefers to work directly and spontaneously, the demands and challenges of this research, mainly in terms of the nature of the supports made it difficult for her to work in that way. It was a bad plan that could not be altered, therefore the artist had to adjust and work in a more controlled manner. The artist hence found herself in certain cases, making sketches and some planning before executing the works. To still give a sense of spontaneity, she deliberately did not colour her sketches.

In addition, in all the compositions a Singer embroidery machine was used to fix the cut-out forms onto the main background fabrics.

Appliqué can effectively be employed as a painting technique. Painting for that matter art can be created in a thousand and one ways and will portray variations beyond measure. One must open-up and enjoy all the variations.

> To hold that one kind of art must invariably be superior or inferior to another kind, means to judge before experiencing; and the whole history of art is there to demonstrate the futility of rules of preference laid down before hand: the impossibility, that is, of anticipating the out come of aesthetic experience.[1]

The six Appliqué paintings in this chapter ranges from 'Ɛpo Kɔkɔɔ' to 'Naa Ga'.

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[1] CHIPP, Herschel. B. Theories of Modern Art. L.A.: Univ. of California, 1975, p131.

PROJECT WORK 1

'Ɛpo Kɔkɔɔ' (Plate 30a)

Measuring 95 x 220 inches, this cloth, 'Ɛpo Kɔkɔɔ' is probably the biggest single-piece dressing cloth. The cloth is an important traditional and formal attire. Most chiefs in Ghana with the exception of those from the northern parts use the cloth as their main out fit. The president of Ghana also uses the cloth during very important national occasions. Normally, the more important a person, the more sophisticated and attractive his or her cloth.

The support for this composition was a plain red fabric. Figure 10 shows the plan of this composition. Sewing a black polyester ribbon on to the cloth with zigzag stitches created the grid-nature of the cloth, produced by the black horizontal and vertical lines. The grid pattern created formed the plan for the composition.

Later, Adinkra symbols were drawn directly onto different coloured satin fabrics that had already been stiffened on the reverse side and cut-out. These were then placed in the areas marked X in Figure 10 and held into

	X		X		X
X		X		X	
	X		X		X
X	O	X	O	X	O

Figure 10. Plan of 'Red Sea'

KEY

X ----- Areas where Adinkra symbols were placed

O ----- Areas where linguist staff top images were placed

place with office pins. The choice of colour for the various motifs and the distribution did not follow any particular order.

In order to make the bottom of the composition much more compact to support the symbols at the top, images of linguist staff heads were also cut-out and arranged, filling the empty areas at the bottom. These were also held in place with office pins in the areas marked O (Fig. 10). With the aid of the embroidery machine, the cut-out symbols and images were firmly fixed onto the cloth with close zigzag stitches.

The Adinkra symbols used include 'Ako-ben' (first motif from right in Plate 30b), 'Epa' (middle motif in Plate 30e), 'Duafe' (first motif from left in Plate 30b), and 'Krado' (middle motif in Plate 30c). Linguist staff heads used include: 'Sankofa bird' (middle motif in Plate 30b), 'a lion trampling on a hunter' (left motif in Plate 30c) and 'Antelope on an elephant' (right motif in Plate 30c). White, yellow, orange, blue and green are the colours of satin fabrics used. The dominant nature of the background colour (red) has toned down the intensities of the other colours. A bit of the red is seen through all the colours, creating harmony in the whole composition. The organic nature of the motifs makes the cloth surface breathe. Not even the almost perfect nature of the black grid-pattern is interfering. The close and half step arrangement at the bottom of

the composition (Plate 30d) adds some strength and vitality. The total visual effect created is one reminiscent of a gently agitated evening sea with a variety of excited floats on the surface.



Plate 30a. ‘Ɛpo Kɔkɔɔ’ - Appliquéd cloth, 95 x 220 inches.



Plate 30b. Detail, ‘Ɛpo Kɔkɔɔ’.



Plate 30c. Detail, 'Ɛpo Kɔkɔɔ'.



Plate 30d. Detail, 'Ɛpo Kɔkɔɔ'.



Plate 30e. Detail, ‘Ɛpo Kɔkɔɔ’.

PROTECT WORK 2

'Batakari Gallery' (Plate 31a)

The artist designed the support (Batakari or smock) for 'Batakari Gallery'. The smock, which is also a ceremonial attire in Ghana, comes from the north. Hand-made smocks acquired from the north are priced possessions. The composition on this support was put together with individually painted leather amulets or objects. These objects were carefully painted by the artists and attached to the smock by leather strings at the backside. The paintings on the leather object are pure abstract compositions.

The composition (Plate 31d) in the first position from left, at the top row of Plate 31b, was painted with red, yellow, blue and white pigments. The composition looks like a segment of a circle. The pattern created looks like the reverse impression of a snakeskin.

Another composition (Plate 31e) is at the top row, first from the left of Plate31c. The composition, which looks like one in three sections, was painted with, white, yellow, orange and blue. The middle area in the composition shows a pattern created by a swift circular movement of the

brush, with yellow and white pigments. The design created feels animated and in motion.

The irregular grid-like pattern at the bottom segment of the composition sets one part against a dark blue background and the other part looks like an enlarged point in the grid-pattern within a white background. The two triangular white forms at the top segment of the composition, together with the shapes forming the grid-patterns have created some rhythm and harmony in the composition, echoed by the swift brushwork in the middle segment.

The composition in (Plate 31f) is the first from the right in the top row of Plate 31b. The colours used in this case are blue, white and yellow against black background. The composition has been divided diagonally; the bottom portion has been painted blue. The most exciting part of the composition is the delicate white and yellow design uniting the two parts. Part of it looks like a bass clef.

The smock and the miniature paintings in totality feel like a wall in a gallery. Perhaps what is quit strange is the red colour of the interior wall, which blends in well with the paintings.



Plate 31a. 'Batakari Gallery' - Appliquéd smock(Hand painted leather objects applied)

Height: 36 inches Width: 70 inches



Plate 31b. Detail, 'Batakari Gallery'.



Plate 31c. Detail, 'Batakari Gallery'.



Plate 31d. Detail, 'Batakari Gallery'.



Plate 31f. Detail, 'Batakari Gallery'.

PROJECT WORK 3

'Nyame Akurase' (Plate 32d)

Chiefs during festivals normally use the palanquin. The chiefs ride in the palanquins normally under the cover and shade of umbrellas amidst drumming and dancing. In the past when there were no means of transportation, the palanquin was also used to transport chiefs from one place to the other. This was especially in the southern part of Ghana where there were no horses or donkeys.

The support for 'Nyame Akurase' which is a palanquin was made with the help of a master craftsman from Ntonsu, a town about twenty kilometres from Kumasi.

The nature of this support called for a plan for the various compositions that would be fitted to it. The artist identified four major areas of the palanquin that could each take one composition. The areas are the two round or circular extreme ends and the two opposite linear sides. After identifying the areas and taking some measurements, the artist against her normal approach to painting made sketches (Plates 32a, 32b, & 32c)

Plates 32a and 32b show the sketches for the two round ends while Plate 32c shows the sketch for the two opposite linear sides. The sketches were made with ideas and images from Asafo flags and abstract shapes. The images were composed with no regards to their proverbial or symbolic meaning, hence they do no follow any intelligible sequence or tell any particular story. To inject some spontaneity and direct approach into these compositions during the appliqué process, the artist intentionally did not colour the sketches.

The process of selecting different coloured fabrics for the various shapes and images after they had been traced onto stiffening paper was the most exciting. The artist had in front of her many pieces of coloured fabrics and she selected appropriate colour for the various shapes. The already cut-out pieces were then arranged on the main fabric which had already been cut to appropriate shape and size. Office pins were then used to keep the pieces in place before zigzag stitches were used to fasten the pieces onto the main fabric.

Plates 32e, 32f and 32g show the three major cut fabric pieces with the four completed compositions on them.

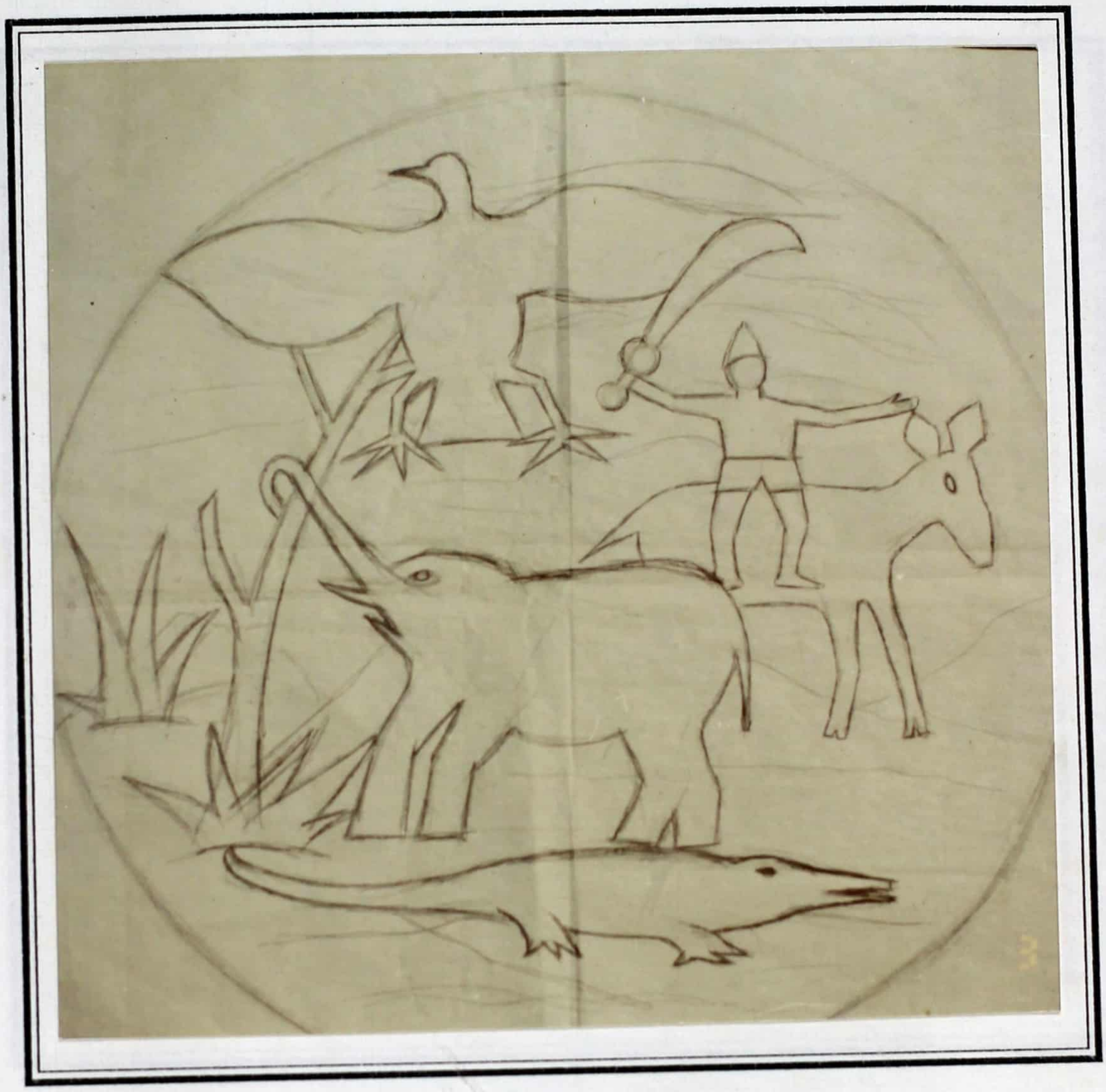


Plate 32a. Sketch 1, 'Nyame Akurase'

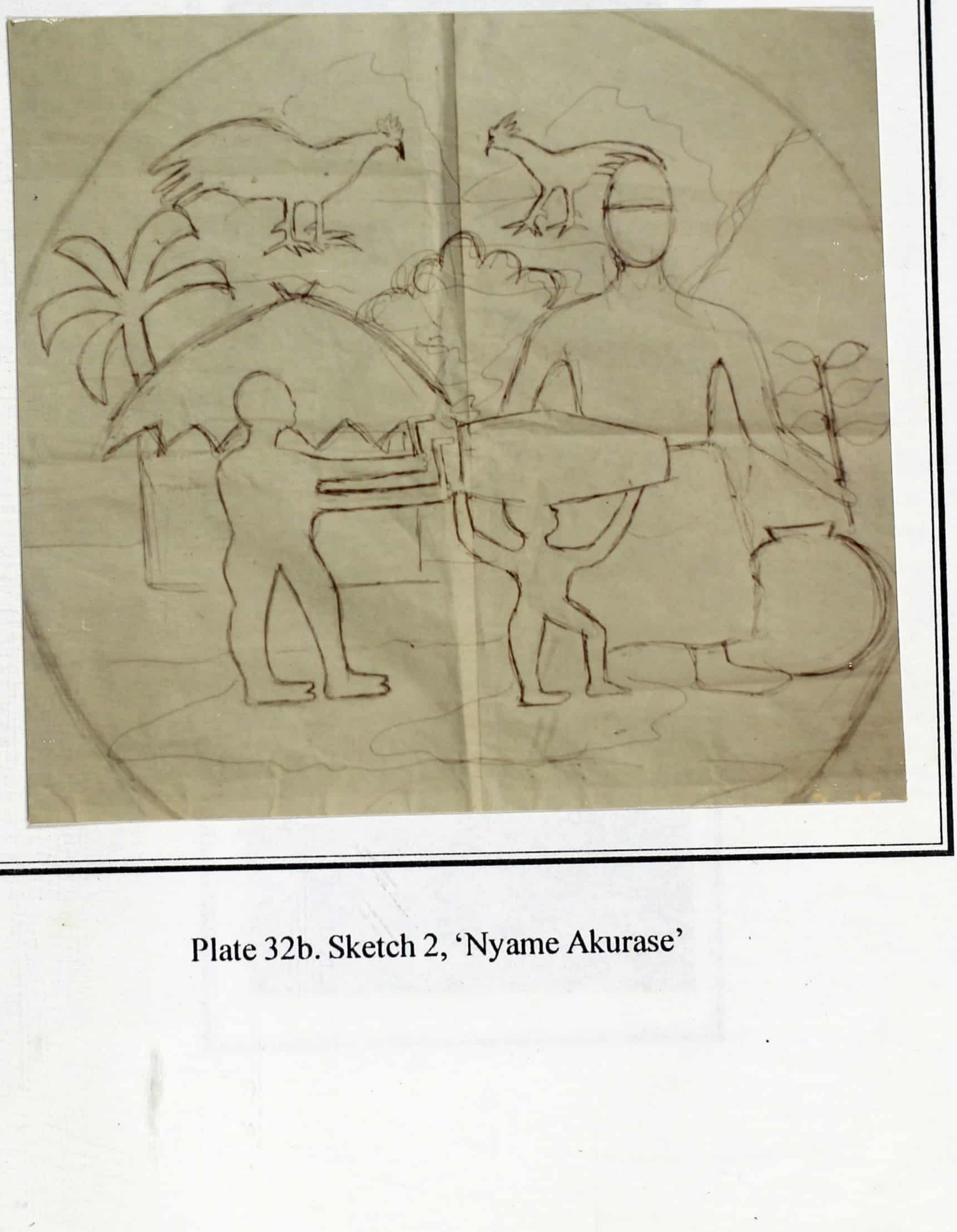


Plate 32b. Sketch 2, 'Nyame Akurase'

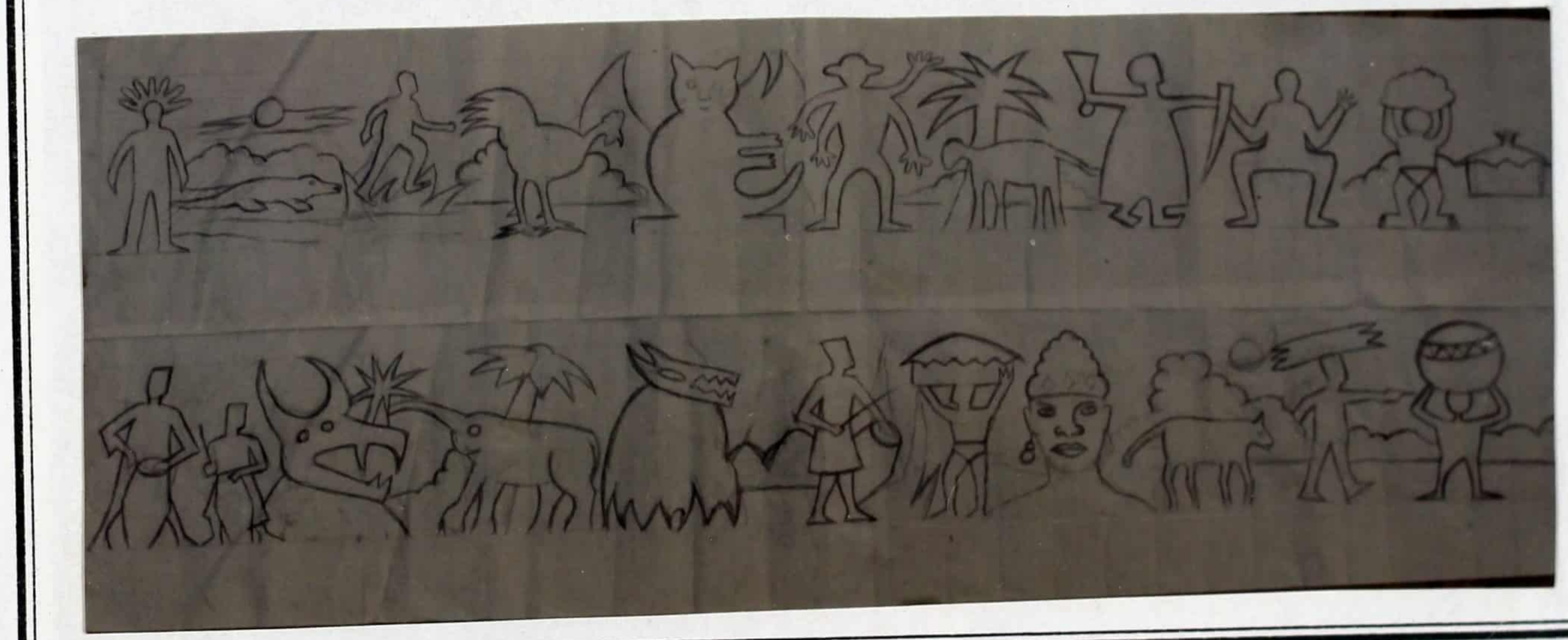


Plate 32c. Sketch 3, 'Nyame Akurase'



Plate 32d. 'Nyame Akurase' - Appliquéd palanquin.

Height: 28 inches Length: 70inches Width: 28 inches

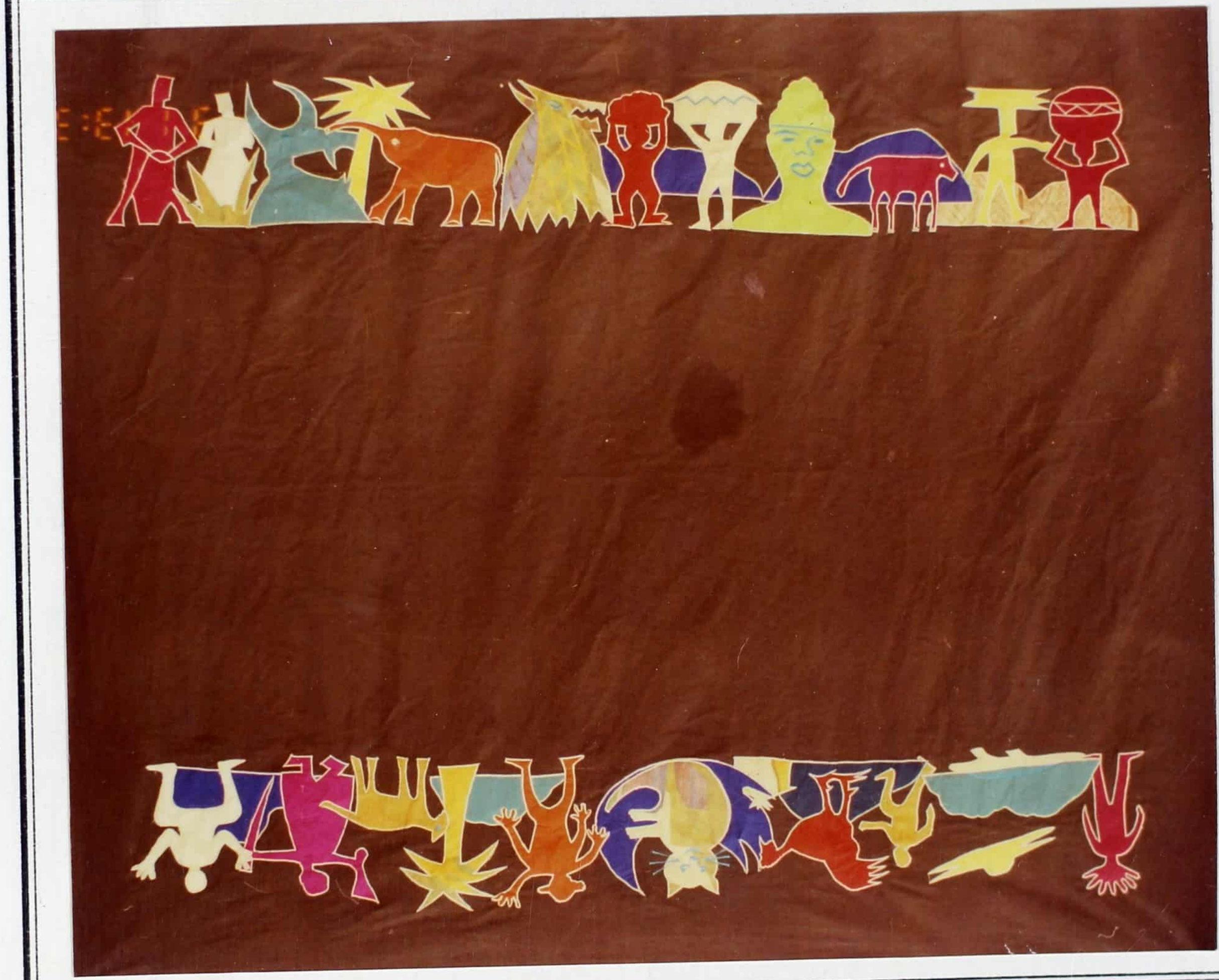


Plate 32e. Fabric supporting Compositions 3.1 and 3.2



Plate 32f. Fabric supporting Composition 3.3



Plate 32g. Fabric supporting Composition 3.4

Composition 3.1 (Plate 32h) 'Nyame Akurase'

The first composition presents a linear arrangement of images and shapes. The images include human and animal forms. Some of the images are set against selected shapes. These are enhancing the images. The images and shapes are arranged such that they torch each other, creating a kind of unity in the composition. The cream zigzag stitches around all the images and shapes are adding some strength to the composition. Plate 32i shows a section of the work.

The immediate reaction to the close-up (Plate 32i), would be the strangeness of the relative sizes of the images depicted. A cock that is taller than a man, and far bigger than a hut. Notice also the size of the cat as compared to that of the human figure. It would be difficult for some one appreciating this composition carrying with him or her only ideas of images in real life to enjoy this composition.

The arrangement of the forms, the variety in the shapes and the distribution and range of colour were coherently considered. The various shades of blue, cream and ochre, together with the red and pink, look and feel very pleasant. The close relationship between the nature of the head of the pink figure, the cock's tail, the blue shape around the cat, and the

sun, generate some rhythm that continues well into the other half (Plate 32j) of the complete composition.

In this section (Plate 32j), apart from the animal and the abstract tree that are closely related in terms of colour the rest have different colours. Yet, together they work to form a unified whole. The colours to the left are quite analogous and that to the right are contrasting. The negative areas created between forms re-enforce the images.



Plate 32h. Compositions 3.1



Plate 32i. Detail, Compositions 3.1



Plate 32j. Detail, Compositions 3.1

Composition 3.2 (Plate 32k) 'Nyame Akurase'

This shows the other linear composition on the opposite side of the palanquin. The side by side arrangement, the variety in the images and the effect of the zigzag stitches make this composition unique. Plate 32l portrays human, animal and plant life in close relationship. The mask head, the tree and the elephant reflect this.

The active pose of the figures, the excited and agitated nature of the mask, and the stance of the elephant generate some life into the painting. The other half of the composition (Plate 32m) seems to be calm. The blue areas behind some of the images, the generally cool stance of the figures and the sense of stability portrayed by the red figure to the far right together are relaxing. It is like the feeling after taking a bath in the evening on a very hot and busy day.



Plate 32k. Compositions 3.2



Plate 321. Detail, Compositions 3.2



Plate 32m. Detail, Compositions 3.2

Composition 3.3 (Plate 32n) 'Nyame Akurase'

This work depicts a rounded composition created to suit the part of the palanquin it was intended for. The composition basically comprises figures, birds, a tree and a pot. These elements have been put together in a way not with the aim of being realistic but to harmonise and form a circular procession. Despite the unrealistic nature of the composition, a sense of depth has still been achieved perhaps because of the arrangement of the images.

The negative areas in this composition have a life of their own. An example is the area between and under the two cocks. The shape created in this case looks like a cat in mid-air.

Another point of interest is the simple yet effective rendition of the human figures. The approach is devoid of details yet maintains the essentials. The drummer in red is a good example.

The fabric used in creating the hut in the composition has intricate designs that add some texture. This is complimented by the designs in the bottom part of the fabric used for the big figure to the right of the composition.

One unavoidable part of the composition is the ultramarine blue form behind the hut. Although it is simple in structure, its colour and position serve as a central hill around which the other images revolve.

The atmosphere created generally feels very welcoming. This is the ideal village, or nature's village.



Plate 32n. Composition 3.3

Composition 3.4 (Plate 32o) 'Nyame Akurase'

This is the final composition on the palanquin. It is, in style and content, an appropriate compliment to Plate 32n. It is made up of figures, animals, vegetation, a bird and the sun. The elements in this composition just like Plate 32n are arranged in the form of a circle and in no realistic manner.

Every image in this composition with the exception of the crocodile is performing a kind of activity. The composition is therefore charged with some force. What adds to the ebullience of this composition are the jagged ends of some of the forms especially around the elephant. The cool nature of the supposedly dangerous crocodile, and the impression of water below, acts as the resting-place in this composition.

Indeed this composition depicts the other side of 'nature's village' (Plate 32n); this is nature's off springs at work.



Plate 32o. Composition 3.4

PROJECT WORK 4

'The Great One' (Plate 33)

The support for 'The Great One' is the umbrella. Every one can use an umbrella. There are however, some special and bigger ones used by chiefs when they step out for occasions. Some of those ones can be very big and are normally very colourful. The frame of these umbrellas is formed from wood and bamboo. They have sectional structures just like the ordinary ones.

The framework for the project umbrella was done with the help of a master craftsman at Adum in Kumasi.

The structure of the umbrella traditionally is likened to the eye of the human being. Thus, the design of the umbrella covering follows some traditional order. Figure 11 would help to explain.

Traditionally, the umbrella is also seen as a sign of authority. It carries with it some power, which is almost silent. This kind of authority is normally associated with chieftaincy. Apart from serving as a shade, it also symbolically protects those under it. The umbrella interestingly also could serve as

some kind of fan. It is able to generate enough air when it is moved swiftly up and down.

Undoubtedly, the size of an umbrella tells the size of authority as well, especially during durbars. Thus, the size of a paramount chief's umbrella is usually bigger than that of the divisional chiefs. Never the less during ordinary outings, paramount chiefs could decide to use smaller umbrellas.

Although the umbrella made for this project is quite huge, it was not meant for any chief, it was to serve as support for a series of appliqué paintings like the palanquin for 'Nyame Akurase'.

For this series, the artist decided to make use of Adinkra symbols mainly. Whether stylised or otherwise, some sketches were made. In Plates 33a & 33b some of the symbols were further developed, and combined with others.

Due to the huge nature of the umbrella, the artist divided it into six segments, so that each segment would take one composition (fig 12). While this was being done, measurements especially of the diameters and segments were taken. The framework was stretched out for the exact measurements, to be taken. With these measurements, the main fabric was

measured and cut to required sizes, allowing some ease especially due to the round nature of the umbrella. The measurements were very necessary for getting the measurements of fabric for the series of compositions.

As part of the traditional form of the umbrella, a circle of diameter about 70 cm was drawn in the centre of the main fabric and cut out. This was replaced by stitching another of a darker colour, so that, that part would correspond to the pupil of the eye. When the main body or fabric was ready, motifs created by the artist were cut-out in red fabric after they had been stiffened, and arranged a step lower around the pupil of the umbrella. The motifs at a glance look like Adinkra symbols. The motifs were affixed on to the main fabric of the umbrella with red zigzag stitches.

In order for the whole work to be colourful and attractive, the artist decided to use different coloured fabrics as backgrounds. For this reason, the series of compositions, which number six, had to be executed individually before being fitted onto the main body. The compositions were created on coloured fabrics that had to be trimmed to the circumference of the umbrella.

Plates 33c to 33h show the six different compositions created. The selection of symbols and motifs were spontaneous without any particular

formula. Each composition determined its suitability and aesthetic considerations. The motifs were carefully drawn out in pencil (Plate33a & 33b)) on paper and transferred on to the selected fabric with varying colours. Each motif was thus cut-out and neatly edged out, ready for placement. They were however permanently stiffened with paper stiffening and hot iron before being cut out. For each of the compositions, the cut-out motifs were arranged and adjusted several times until the artist felt certain. At this point, they were kept in place with zigzag stitches.

The problem that occurred was the appropriate treatment of the edges, which had not been fore planned. One way out which the artist decided on, was to cut-out carefully along the edges of each piece, at the same time working in the motifs which could stand out against the golden colour of the ground.

When this was done, cream zigzag stitches were used around the edge of all the six series of compositions. This was done to give a clear contrast between the edge of each composition and the background. Cream was most suitable because it worked well with all the colours used.

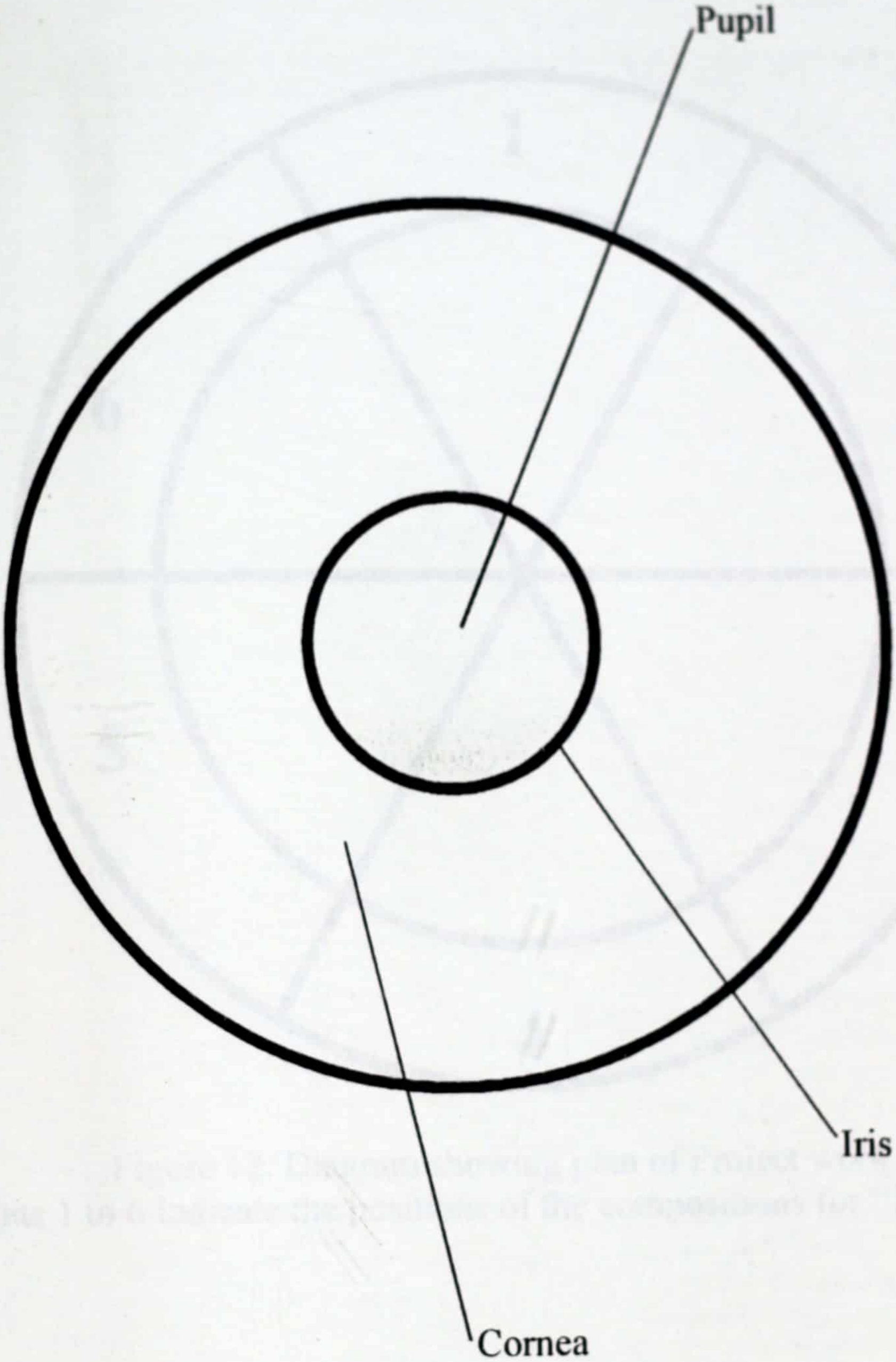


Figure 11. Diagram showing plan of traditional umbrellas as related to the eye.

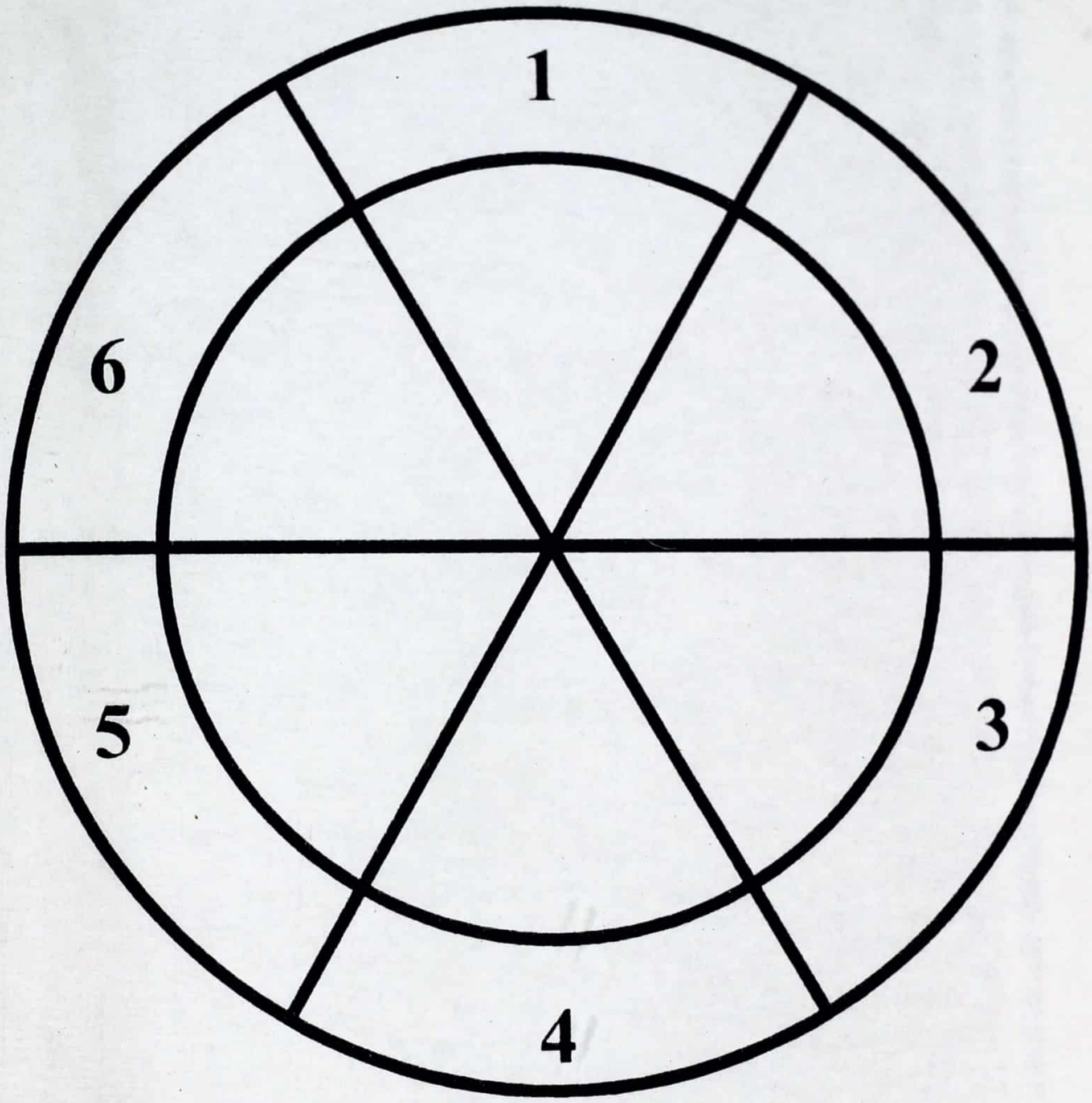


Figure 12. Diagram showing plan of Project work 4
Segments 1 to 6 indicate the positions of the compositions for "The Great One"



Plate 33a. Sketch 1, 'The Great One'

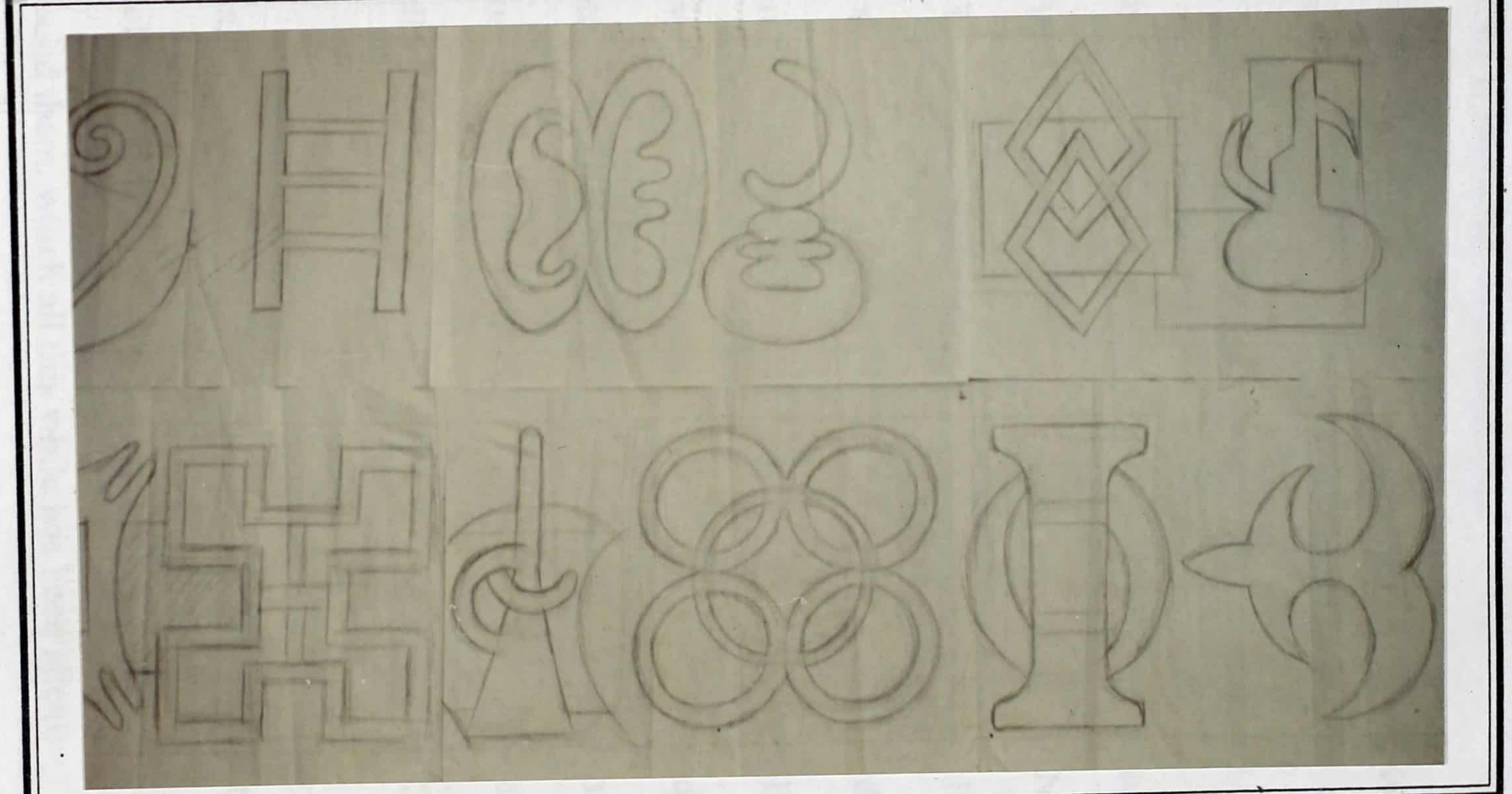


Plate 33b. Sketch 2, 'The Great One'

Composition 4.1 (Plate 33c) 'The Great One'

Not only have we as human beings inherited cultural associations, but we also respond to colour and form in different ways.

This is a simple composition comprising four motifs, two Akuaba dolls, 'Kontire ne Akwam' (yellow motif) and a stylised version of 'Nsae' (light blue motif). The Akuaba dolls have also been stylised from all angles to make them strongly feminine. These have been juxtaposed with the stylised Adinkra symbols that look angular hence masculine. Sharp contrasts have been created between the dark ground and the light coloured motifs. Also of considerable interest is the relationship between the motifs and the negative areas. That between the two Akuaba dolls - where the yellow Adinkra symbol has been placed is unique.

The side by side arrangement of the motifs makes it look as though they are asking help from each other. The dark nature of the ground suggests the world around them, which all this while has been silent.

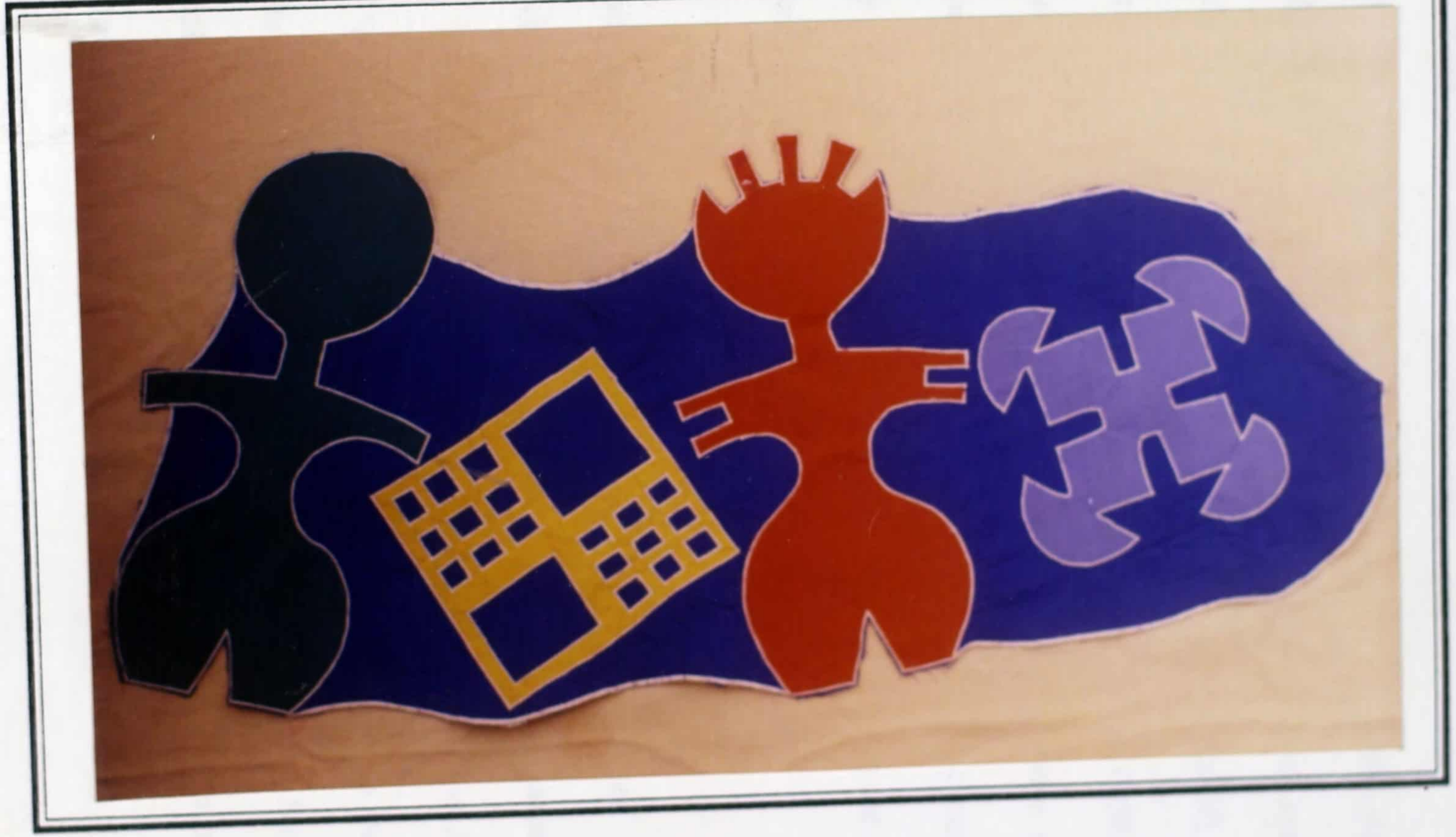


Plate 33c. Composition 4.1

Composition 4.2 (Plate 33d) 'The Great One'

This composition shows an interesting arrangement of the motifs derived from Adinkra symbols and the Akuaba doll. Identifiable Adinkra symbols used include; 'Ako – ben' (red motif), ' Akokɔ nan' (yellow motif), 'Gye Nyame' (middle of stool), and 'Nsoromma' (first motif from right). The 'Gye Nyame' is incorporated in the stool motif in the middle of the composition. The 'Akokɔ nan' motif which is in yellow fabric has been completely placed on the Akuaba and 'Ako-ben' motifs to the far left of the composition; creating a new kind of accidental motif.

The combination of the three colours, pink-rose, yellow and orange together with the almost black background colour is very strong and vivacious. The opposite side, comprising a combination of the Akuaba head, the 'Nsoromma' motif and the white shape appears to be inter-woven. The colours here are very placid. The dominant serene blue stool in the middle of the composition seems to be serving as a buffer between the two opposites.

A lesson could be learnt here. Although there are differences in characters, there could always be a way of living together peacefully.



Plate 33d. Composition 4.2

Composition 4.3 (Plate 33e) 'The Great One'

Incidentally this composition also has the 'Gye Nyame' symbol right in the middle but not stylised, or incorporated into any stool design. Also present is the 'Nsoromma' symbol (cream motif). Other symbols represented are, 'Ɔdenkyem' (first motif from right), 'Fihankra' (yellow motif) and 'Nkyinkyim' (green motif).

The motifs have been set side by side with very few over-lapping. The 'Gye Nyame' has however been placed on two other motifs. The red background colour seems to be having a considerable effect on all the other colours by showing through them. They have all been subdued some how. Not even the cream zigzag stitches used in securing the motifs to the ground are saving the situation. The rest of the colours just cannot match the strength of the red background.

Life indeed is in phases and human beings in sizes.



Plate 33e. Composition 4.3

Composition 4.4 (Plate 33f) 'The Great One'

This composition obviously is dominated by the middle chair motif. To its right are the Adinkra symbols, 'Ɔhene tuo' (grey motif), and 'Akoma ntoaso' (orange motif). To its left is the symbol 'Kuntinkantan' (green motif).

This composition in terms of colour is immobile despite the occurrence of yellow and orange. The tranquil nature may be due to the effect of the blue background. The arrangement of the 'Kuntinkantan' symbols and the yellow abstract motif has created an enchanting effect.

The eye-like form of one of the circles of the 'Kuntinkantan' symbols controls this. The imposing nature of the middle motif seems to be dividing the composition into two. What is fighting quite effectively against this tendency, is the abstract yellow shape, which is serving as an uncompromising link. The grey 'Ɔhene tuo' to a lesser extent may also be serving that purpose.

Size indeed does not determine the usefulness of something.



Plate 33f. Composition 4.4

Composition 4.5 (Plate 33g)

Another stimulating arrangement of motifs is seen in this composition. 'Duafe' (yellow motif), stylised 'Donno' (orange motif), a sliced 'Fihankra' (grey motif) and a stylised 'Akoma ntoaso' (pink motif) are the Adinkra symbols used.

There are other motifs including a stool and some abstract shapes. Contrast is quite strong in this composition due to the dark background and the beautifully coloured motifs.

Inter-lacing inter-play between images and ground has created a puzzle-like effect in certain areas, especially around the stool. The zigzag nature of the edge of the stool may be helping to emphasise this effect. Despite the very sharp contrast between the yellow 'Duafe' and the background, general colour distribution is balanced.

The total visual impression is rather serene.

It pays to be nice.



Plate 33g. Composition 4.5

Composition 4.6 (Plate 33h) 'The Great One'

'Nsae' (light blue motif), 'Akokɔ nan' (blue-black motif), 'Pagya' (light green motif), stylised 'Donno' (first motif from left) and a combination of 'Ese ne tekrema' and 'Nkonsonkonson' (first motif from right) are seen in this composition. These motifs have been set side by side and abstract shapes of varying colours used to link them in one way or the other. There is an obvious space at the far left of the composition. It was intentional, part of composition five would fall on that space when the six compositions are arranged or put together.

This composition depicts for the first time so far, a very dark coloured motif 'Akokɔ nan' placed under the 'Nsae'. Although the red background is dominating or dictating the tone of the composition, the effect is an open work with red enclosed areas.

The towering placement of the 'Nsae' and the 'Akokɔ nan' symbols which are almost in the middle of the composition, and the jutting 'Akokɔ nan' symbol leaves an impression of a military beret.

Respect for authority is important.

KUMASI-GHANA



Plate 33h. Composition 4.6

Plate 33i, depicts the complete umbrella with the six compositions set in place. Together, the compositions form a continuous array of colourful motifs.

The different coloured backgrounds of the compositions add some glamour that is enriched with the golden colour of the main ground of the umbrella.

The motifs are fully agitated, highly spirited and amidst the euphoria, they seem to be making certain noises that are typical of traditional processions of 'The Great One' during festivals.



Plate 33i. 'The Great One' - Appliqué on umbrella.

Diametre: 120 inches



Plate 33j. Detail, 'The Great One'

PROJECT WORK 5

'Akuaba and the Combman' (Plate 34a)

This composition is quite different from those discussed so far because it stands on its own. It was meant to be hanged just like a painting on canvas. Hence, the fabric was stretched unto a wooden framework (stretcher).

Adinkra symbols form the major images in the composition. Identifiable symbols include 'Epa', 'Duafe', 'Dame-dame' and 'Nkonsonkonson'.

The dominant image in the composition is however that of an Akuaba.

The general shape formed by the composition is a triangle – a wide base that tapers upwards, reflecting the ascending build up of the motifs.

In arranging the various shapes on the fabric after they had been stiffened and cut-out, the artist kept adjusting the positions of the shapes until she was satisfied and held the shapes in place with office pins. Zigzag stitches were then used to fasten the arrangement.

The composition abounds in different shapes and forms of varying sizes, making it a bit complex. The nature of the orange 'comb figure' and the head of the Akuaba infuse a human presence in the composition. This is a composition about colour and shapes.

The range of colour is wide; from the cool tints through mid-range tones to the dark background colour and strong white tones as well. The whole appliquéd surface is glamorous, to the extent that it is difficult for the eye to find a resting-place; the eye quickly skips from one spot to the other like an excited lamb.

The alluring nature of the 'Dame-dame' symbol caught up in the struggle between the 'Combman' and the Akuaba cannot be escaped.

In totality, the composition is highly potent, very spirited, image rich and just charming.



Plate 34a. 'Akuaba and the Combman' - Appliqué on canvas, 18 x 30 inches



Plate 34b. Detail, 'Akuaba and the Combman'

PROJECT WORK 6

'Naa Ga' (Plate 35)

This is perhaps the most involving and engaging composition of the research. Incidentally, it happens to be the last to be made. Just like Plate 34a this composition was meant to hang on a wall, the same way traditional paintings are treated. It was also stretched onto a wooden framework after it was made.

The artist in order to be fair in terms of making use of ideas across Ghana, decided to concentrate on Accra after representing the north and the middle belts with the smock and the umbrella respectively.

Contrary to the traditional approach of the artist, she made painstaking sketches (Plate 35a) for this composition. The idea was to make a work having in mind the life style of the Ga people indeed Ghanaians. The sketches reflect some of the day-to-day activities of them. The artist did not colour the sketches because he wanted to tackle the colour aspect in the course of selecting the pieces of fabric for the work.



Plate 35a. Sketch, 'Naa Ga'

After tracing and cutting-out the images from paper stiffening, the researcher embarked on the process of selecting the colours from a pile of coloured fabric pieces, gluing the stiffening to the fabric after it had been selected. This was the most stimulating aspect of the whole process.

When the selection process, the gluing and cutting-out processes were completed, the images were arranged and adjusted before they were held in place with office pins. As part of the adjustments large pieces of fabrics of different colours were cut into abstract shapes and placed beneath some images to provide them with a kind of ground.

The composition (Plate 35b), which is in three layers, depicts the major daily and seasonal activities of the Ga people. The upper layer portrays adult life in terms of marriage, nightlife, procreation (pregnancy), vocations, and finally out-dooring in that order beginning from the top left.

The middle area also reveals kids at play, trading activities, and some maize plants also in that order starting from the left. The lower layer shows the festive activities during the Homowo.

The composition, which is very intense and rich in terms of colour and imaging, would surely captivate and enchant most viewers. The whole

surface area is filled with active images. The Ga people are by nature usually high-spirited. This has really been captured in the composition.

The composition charged with ebullience and vigour is most enjoyed when viewed in totality – when the image and ground areas are both considered. Quite supportive are the exotic abstract shapes scattered in the composition. They are in no small way helping to unify the composition. Specifically they serve to relate the ground to the images and induce some amount of illusion. For example when one takes a look at the right side of the composition (Plate 35c); the inter-play or image and ground beneath the man with the baby, stretching down to the bottom, and beginning from the left side of the blue woman carrying a flat pan, and stretching to the right end, is alluring. The black ground that stands out feels like a shield cut-out in certain areas to reveal some activities behind it.

Gas celebrate life. They enjoy nightlife after a day's work. It is a common scene to see couples in the bars enjoying some drink (Plate 35d). Plate 35e also portrays people trading. The inter-play of figure, ground and the abstract shapes is evident here.



Plate 35b. 'Naa Ga' - Appliqué on canvas, 50 x 80 inches.



Plate 35c. Detail, 'Naa Ga'



Plate 35d. Detail, 'Naa Ga'



Plate 35e. Detail, 'Naa Ga'

Mild textured effect is created with the use of fabrics with designs in them- the basket carried by the red woman and the load on the head of the grey woman, add texture patterns to the usual flat surfaces.

Plate 35f shows figures in procession during one of the days of the Homowo festival, when twins are paraded carrying bowls filled with water and leaves.

The light blue figure with the yellow abstract shape around its upper part depicts a traditional priest. The white strip backdrop links all the figures together.

Food for the festival (kpokpoi) is prepared and enjoyed as part of the festivities. Plate 35g shows people eating together from one bowl, which is characteristic of the festivities. Some of the food prepared as part of custom is sprinkled. The blue figure portrays a chief doing just that.

The composition really captures the ebullient nature of Accra life



Plate 35f. Detail, 'Naa Ga'

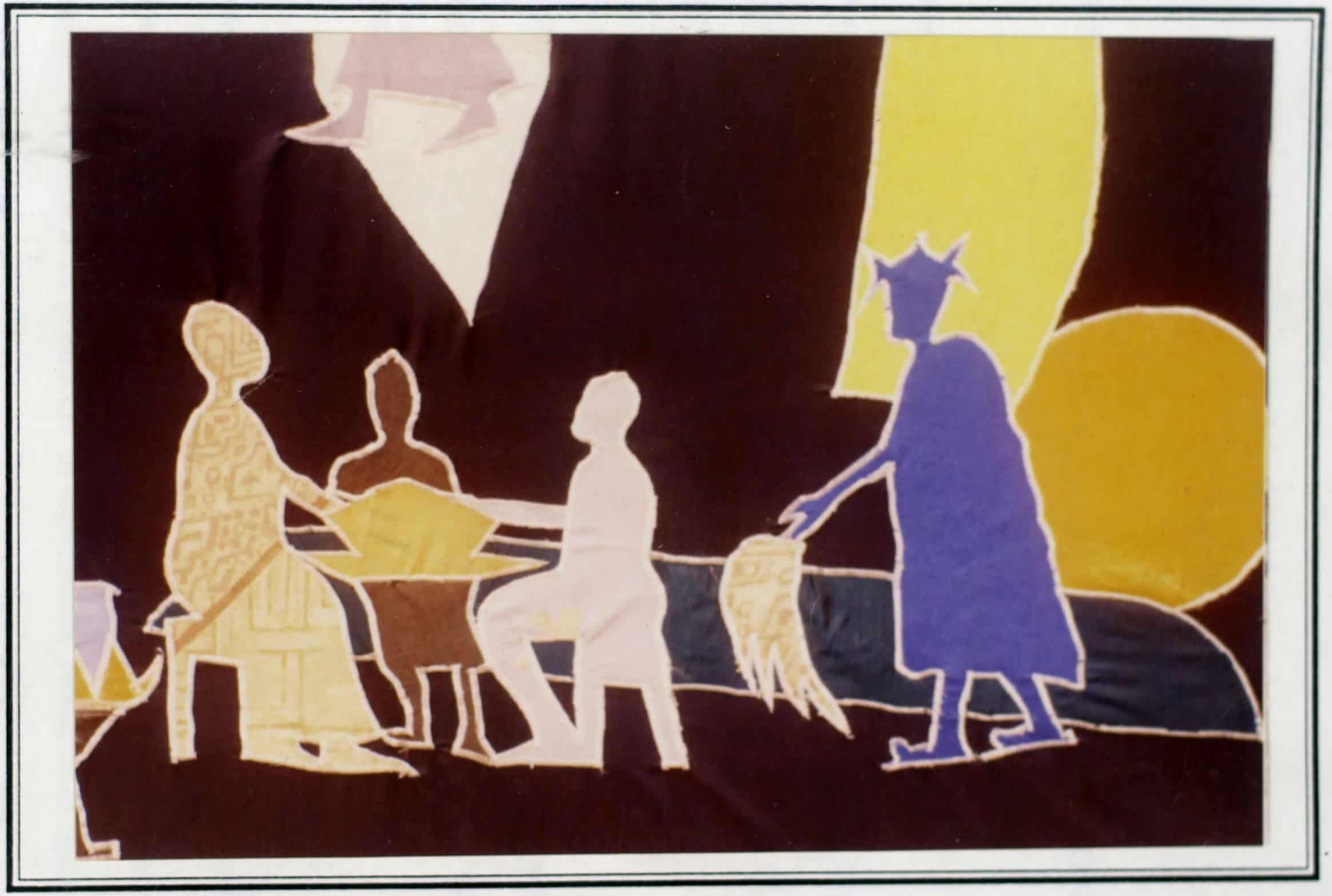


Plate 35g. Detail, 'Naa Ga'

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Appliqué has been made in the past in various ways both to repair and to decorate articles. Its development can be traced to various parts of the world.

The United States of America reveals some of the best forms of appliqué as applied in quiltmaking. Some of the exponents include Winni McQueen, Pearlie Possey, and Clementine Hunter.

In Africa, the Fon people of the Republic of Benin are known to have produced the best appliquéd cloths. The Ewe and the Akan people of Ghana are also noted as producers of ceremonial cloths with appliqué, normally used by chiefs and important people. Asafo flags of the Fantes are however the most popular in terms of appliqué in Ghana.

Other artists elsewhere in modern times have also employed the use of fabric in various ways and artforms. Some of them share a similar philosophy of seeing appliqué as painting with the researcher. The artists include Diane Itter, Mary Billingsley, Olu Oguibe, and Ada Odechukwu.

Olu Oguibe for example has made use of Adinkra symbols and worked with the format of Fante Asafo flags. Ada on the other hand just like the researcher, whiles using appliqué as a technique for painting, also makes use of it in the designing of clothes.

The researcher, during the preliminary studies made use of acrylics on paper in paintings that sought to get her acquainted with the imagery of Fante Asafo flags. It was a period used to enrich her image bank.

The main project saw the traditional artforms of the smock, the palanquin, and the umbrella being decorated with appliqué paintings and perhaps for the first time, being placed in an academic setting in Ghana for appreciation.

The production of the appliqué paintings, from 'Ɛpo Kɔkɔɔ' through to 'Naa Ga' was in principle no different from painting with pigments or paint. It involved composing elements, 'mixing' or manipulating colours,

and sewing fabrics with different colours together. This process strengthened the researcher's conviction that appliqué indeed is just a technique that can effectively be employed in painting.

Conclusion

The research has successfully projected the traditional artforms of the smock, the palanquin, and the umbrella into an academic environment where together with the paintings on them, they have been placed for appreciation through innovative exploration.

Some images and symbols that identify Ghana have been successfully employed as idiom in the production of the paintings. In fact, a look at the paintings in general points to Ghana.

The research has also re-echoed the fact that appliqué is one of the techniques that is very adaptable to painting.

It is the hope of the researcher that similar efforts in revealing Ghana through appliqué, and placing traditional artforms into academic environments would be encouraged, so that a tradition of a continuous documentation of the dynamics in our cultural heritage would be enhanced.

Recommendations

Appliqué

1. The Background fabric should be firm, not loosely woven, neither too thick or too thin. Either way will limit the kinds of fabric that can be used.
2. Very thick fabrics should not be combined with very thin ones.
3. If the desire is to get a firm surface or to make use of the embroidery machine, then all the fabrics should be stiffened. For some machines, it may be necessary to also stiffen the background fabric completely.
4. If texture is desired, the use of printed fabrics with designs or patterns is recommended.
5. Above all, experimentation and creativity are most important.

General

1. Research into the indigenous arts of Ghana should be encouraged in our institutions so that techniques such as appliqué and the like would be made popular.
2. Government should institute awards in the field of art for unusual creative and innovative endeavours to encourage artists and students.
3. Contemporary Ghanaian artists should be encouraged to take inspiration and ideas from our indigenous arts.

4. Art institutions and bodies must organise workshops and seminars that would broaden knowledge and information about less popular indigenous arts.

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