

THE GHANAIAN WOMAN – A PORTRAIT OF LIFE

By

ANAKWA, MARGARET ASTREA ASABEA

KNUST
A PROJECT REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF PAINTING AND
SCULPTURE, KWAME NKRUMAH UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, IN
PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF FINE ART

Faculty of Art, College of Art and Social Sciences

JUNE, 2012

©Department of Painting and Sculpture

DECLARATION

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

KNUST

Anakwa, Margaret A. Asabea

(Student)

Signature

Date

Dr. Mrs. Dorothy Amenuke

(Supervisor)

Signature

Date

Mr. Micheal Adashie

(Supervisor)

Signature

Date

Mr. Felix Annor Anim

(Head of Department)

Signature

Date

ABSTRACT

Are cultural practices and myths still having strong grips on the woman? The study of the general life of how the woman was portrayed from the early days of civilization, the contextual and conceptual approach in both painting and sculpture can give a fair clue to how one can combine these disciplines in this postmodern era in portraying the advancements and pending challenges of the woman. In this research, the woman is portrayed through some everyday tools and materials found in her immediate environment. Typical examples are her wearable, everyday conversation of people about the woman, her own knowledge about herself, the role she plays to humankind as well as her everyday challenges. These may go beyond her physical appearance. These are few of the principles and elements of designs that compose the woman. The concept of the woman has been wheeled through the use of gourds, giving unrestricted boundaries to the Ghanaian woman as long as cross culture and foreign influences prevail. The woman, to the researcher, operates more effectively in an undefined space that welcomes changes, flexibility, and dynamic attitudes. It must be noted that the result of this research does not give a frame to her portrait since every now and then things keep on shifting.

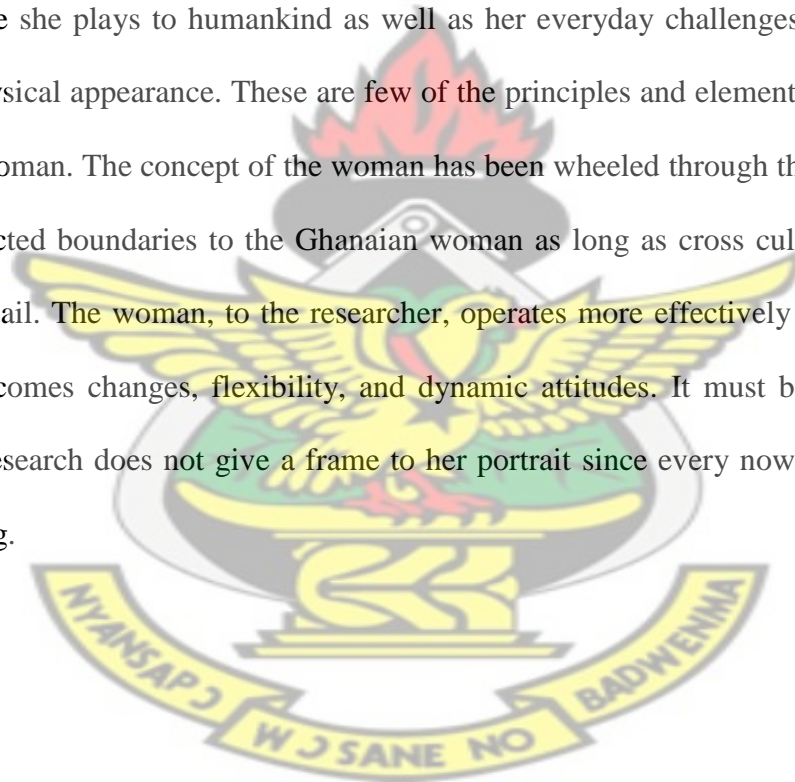
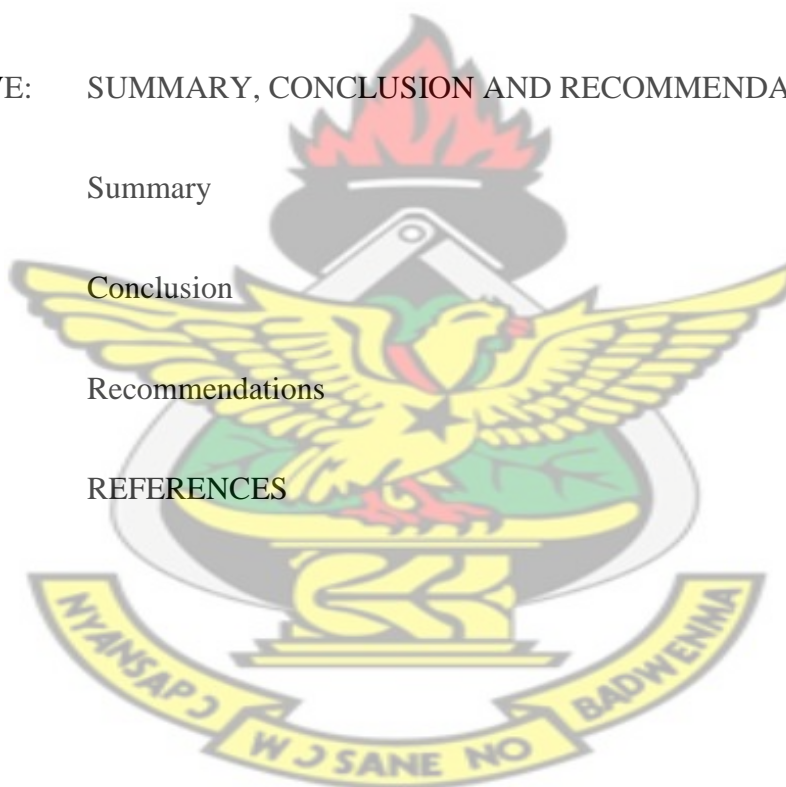


TABLE OF CONTENT

	Page
CERTIFICATION	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
TABLE OF CONTENT	v
LIST OF FIGURES	vii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	xi
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
Background to the Study	1
Statement of the Problem	8
Objectives	9
Justification	9
Importance of Study	10
Delimitation	10
Facilities Available	10
Definition of Terms	10
Abbreviations	12
Arrangement of Text	12

CHAPTER TWO:	REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE	13
	Myth and Cultural Practices	13
	Cultural Challenges – Feminist Approach	19
CHAPTER THREE:	METHODOLOGY	39
CHAPTER FOUR:	ANALYSES	70
	Analyses of Results, Interpretation and Appreciation	70
CHAPTER FIVE:	SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION	107
	Summary	107
	Conclusion	108
	Recommendations	109
	REFERENCES	110



LIST OF FIGURES

Figures	Page
1. Venus of Willendorf	4
2. 'Mona Lisa' by Leonado Da Vinci	4
3. Self portrait, Artist: Salvador	5
4. Cindy's self portrait 'Untitled'	5
5. Tracey Emin 'my bed'	6
6. 'nomonde' mixed media by Yamokoshi-Kenya.	6
7. Dipo Initiate by Mr. Fancey – Accra	7
8. The Initiant by Asabea – KNUST	7
9. Achetez du pomme	15
10. 'No Money no Case	17
11. 'Das atelier' Self Potrait	20
12. From Kitchen to Parliament	23
13. Some Radical Feminist Protesting Against Discrimination	24
14. Dinner Party by Juddy Chicago	26
15. (a) Small Frida Khalo – The Broken Column and (b) Frida – Deigo	27
16. Delima of the Heart and Kayaye by BON	29
17. Copy of early morning and copy of Ladies day	30
18. Jeunes Femmes a guitar aux Flutes" by Marie Laurencia	31
19. 'Black Iris' by O'Keefee	32
20. Yaa Asantewa – Photographed by Asabea	34
21. 'Interior Scrol' by Carolee Schneemann	35
22. Portrait of a Guerrilla Girl	

23. Pen on Paper – (2010) by Asabea	36
24. Untitled – (2010) by Asabea	37
25. Untitled – (2010) by Asabea	39
26. Untitled – (2010) by Asabea	40
27. Untitled – (2010) by Asabea	41
28. Untitled – (2011) by Asabea	42
29. Untitled – (2011) by Asabea	43
30. Untitled – (2010) by Asabea	43
31. Gourds Obtained from the Local Market	44
32. Wooden Tray Obtained from the Wood Market	46
33. Synthetic Hair from the Beauty Saloon	46
34. Acrylic Nails Bought from Beauty Saloon	47
35. Iron Rods and Chicken Wire	47
36. Ladies Sanitary Pad	48
37. Assorted Ladies Under Pants	49
38. Assorted Shoes obtained from researcher and neighbours	49
39. Washing and Seasoning of Gourds by Asabea	50
40. Welding of Iron Rods into a Gourd like Shape by researcher and an assistant	51
41. Fixing of Chicken wire on Iron Rod by researcher and an assistant	52
42. Fixing of Wearable unto Armature – Animus by researcher	54
43. Sowing of Accessories unto Armature – Animus by the researcher	55
44. Work in Progress	55
45. Fixing of Accessories by Asabea	56
46. Almost Completed Gourd, a Section of the Woman	56
47. A Detail of a Section of the Portrait of the Woman	57

48. Adinkra Symbols, Obtained from Omany House	58
49. Maps of Different Countries, from Collins distributors	58
50. Use of Soldering Iron in Scotching, by Asabea	59
51. Painting Already Scotched Gourds, by Researcher and Assistant	59
52. Fixing Bolts and Nuts, by Asabea	61
53. The Balanced ‘yombo be Ga’ (2011) Asabea	61
54. Fixing Velcro unto Gourd by Asabea	62
55. The Completed ‘Obaa Sima’ (2011) Asabea	62
56. Cutting and Crushing Process	63
57. A Subject not An Object (2011) Asabea	63
58. Creating of a Foreskin by applying heat from a dryer	64
59. Rape and Sexual Assault (2011) Asabea	65
60. Unsafe Sex (2011) Asabea	66
61. Single Parenting (2011) Asabea	67
62. High Rate of HIV aids on the part of the Woman (2011) Asabea	67
63. Mechanical Reproduction (2011) Asabea	68
64. Marriageable Subjects (2011) Asabea	68
65. Value In Child Bearing (2011) Asabea	69
66. Female and Male gourd	70
67. Penis Sheath gourds	72
68. The Ghanaian Woman, A Portrait of life (2011) Asabea	74
69. On Going Discussion on the Portrait of the Woman	75
70. Answering Questions Posed by Other Supervisors on the Portrait	76
71. From Afar they Admired and Disputed Over the Portrait	76
72. The Ghanaian Woman Projecting into the Sky	79

73. The Match of The United Force of the Ghanaian Woman	81
74. A Detail of the Ghanaian Woman	82
75. A Detail Section of the Ghanaian Woman	83
76. A Subject not An Object (2011) Asabea	86
77. Unsafe Sex (2011) Asabea	88
78. Rape and Sexual Assault (2011) Asabea	90
79. Higher Rate of HIV aids on the part of the Woman (2011) Asabea	91
80. Mechanical Reproduction (2011) Asabea	93
81. The Ideal (2011) Asabea	95
82. Single Parenting (2011) Asabea	96
83. ‘Yoomo be Ga’ (2011) Asabea	98
84. Value in Child Bearing (2011) Asabea	99
85. Marriageable Objects (2011) Asabea	100
86. A Seminar at the Engineering Guest House – KNUST – (2010)	101
87. Researcher at Senam Okujeto’s Presentation – Dei Centre – Accra (2011)	102
88. Participating in an Art Discussion at a workshop – Du Bois Center (2011)	102
89. Interview with Bon, a Painter and a Lecturer – KNUST	103
90. Researcher’s Visit to the Pedicure and Manicure Beauty Shop – Mamprobi	103
91. Buying of Textile Prints at ‘Makola’ – Accra	104
92. ‘Obaatan Na Onim Nea Nemma Bedi’	105
93. ‘Felicia’	105
94. Kofi in Pose, Photographed by Asabea	106

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

‘Dua koro gye mframa ebu’ an akan proverb among the people of Ghana which means ‘when a tree stands alone in resistance to the wind it falls’. Truly, much support from divers’ areas contributed to the success of this thesis project.

I am indebted to the following lecturers who on so many occasions helped to stretch my mind to this standard I now find myself. A few of them are Dr. Mrs. Dorothy Amenuke, Dr. karikacha seidou, Dr. Jectey Mante, Mr. Kweku B. Kissiedu all of the painting and sculpture department KNUST.

Can I proceed without acknowledging my family: my husband, Mr. Ernest Akpey for the financial support and encouragement? I appreciate my children; Aduwaa, Amate, Amanor and Amateye for bearing with my absence most of the times they really needed me.

The arrangement of the text and photographs could not have been successful without the help of Mr. Kwamena Edonu and Mr. Sarfo my colleagues.

Finally, I am really grateful to Mr. Lee Nukpe and Mr. M. Adashie for the time spent in supervising this thesis project.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the study

History is superimposed from one tradition to the other. Meaning, works of art are produced with regards to the cultural rules in a particular era and with time these rules move gradually towards the horizon. There have been series of revolutions in terms of art traditions. Brian O'doherty (1976) asserts on these revolutions as he commented on 'inside the white cube'.

Adams (1996) commented on Karl Marx opinion that the changes in the production of art necessarily depend on its immediate context. He said, Greek art for example, requires Greek Mythology, and would be impossible in the 19th century industrialization.

Art grows and is not static. In the spectacle of growth and changes that affect the art world, Walter Benjamin predicted as far back in the 1900s that profound changes are impending in the ancient craft of the beautiful. In all the arts there is a physical component which can no longer be considered or treated as it used to be. It cannot remain unaffected by our modern knowledge and power. He emphasised that neither matter nor space nor time has been what it used to be from the past twenty years and has been so from the time immemorial, even the very notion of art is affected. Blumen (1998)

Hence the researcher argues that the definition of a portrait may not be the same now, as compared to the early days of civilization. There may equally be some shifts in

the art of portrait making itself. What then is a portrait? An attempt to answer this question will take us to Stuart Hall who says:

“It is worth emphasising that there is no single or ‘correct’ answer to the question. ‘What does this image mean?’ or ‘What does this ad saying?’ Since there is no law which can guarantee that things will have ‘one true meaning’, or that meanings won’t change after time” Rose (2005 p. 2). It is therefore necessary to note that in visual terms it is a little difficult to make strict rules of interpretation to an image and expect all to conform to. Thus, a portrait in these post-modern times can be said to be tracing the way of life of a person which can be tackled from the physical appearance, that is, shape, form, colour and texture. It can also be how a person talks, acts, dresses, and reacts to circumstances or even a particular trait unique to a person or a group of people. It can even be a symbolic representation or an idea that portrays a personality. Medium, style and technique convenient for the artist to carry his or her message across are not restricted.

A quick sampling of already existing portrait of the woman will be discussed. This will help confirm the variety of approaches to the definition of a portrait being interrogated. During the Palaeolithic era most sculptors represented the woman through the Venuses portraying women adult life and glorifying women fertility. Rice (1981). This is why the researcher believes that much emphasis was placed on the breast, enlarged womb, the bulbous buttocks and the valve as seen in the Venus of Willendorf. This is a statuette in terracotta seen in figure 1. Can we talk about the Pre-Hellenistic Greece sculpture made of caved stones? Yes they are portraits executed to carry messages in their days and in materials readily available. Naturalism and perfectionism in nature were seen during the renaissance. Leonardo

Da Vinci and his counterparts carefully used oil colours and other media and with exactitude portrayed the woman as seen in 'Mona Lisa' figure 2. What about the distorted figures seen in the surrealist and the Dadaist approach to portrait making as seen in figure 3? Self-portrait of Salvador Dali is another to talk about. Can this be called a portrait? Indeed it is. Photo realist such as Cindy Shernman used her photographic images to make her statement about the 1950 American woman. Another form of portrait is seen in Cindy Shernman untitled portrait in figure 4. To Tracy Emin her portrait can best be seen in how her bed is dressed as seen in figure 5. 'Nomonde' figure 6, are mixed media bottle shaped figures from Kenya representing portraits of the woman. Mr Fancey, a Ghanaian sculptor carves in wood and communicates through the same medium as seen in figure 7, 'Dipo Initiate.' Asabea uses gourds in portraying the same theme in figure 8, 'The initiation'.

All the above portraits confirm the variations and the great innovations in the art of portraiture as stated in the researcher's definition earlier on. Among the several important elements of the art of portraiture are: veneration, record keeping, decoration, self admiration, philosophical evaluation of features, value, appreciation as well as to project and support an idea.

PORTRAIT – VARIATIONS

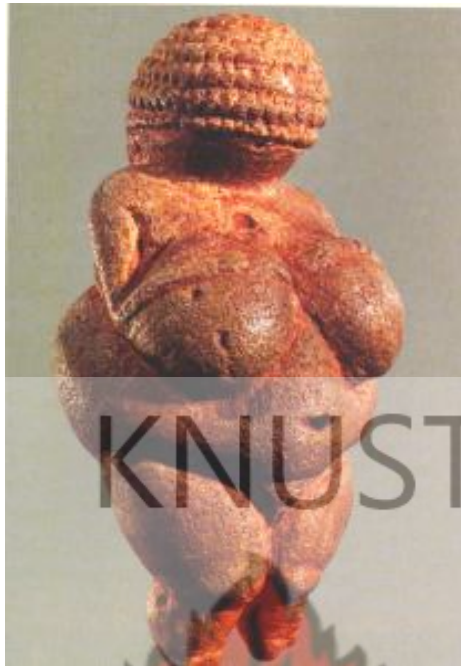


Figure 1, *Venus of Willendorf*, 11.5 cm, Lime Stone
Source: <http://www.blindloop.com/index.php/2010/03/5-famous>



Figure 2, Leonado Da Vinci, *Mona Lisa*, Painting
Source: <http://direct-mall.com/store/self-portrait-with>



Figure 3, Salvador, *Self portrait*,
Source: <http://direct-mall.com/store/self-portrait-fried-bacon-surrealism-statue-by-salvador-dali.html>



Figure 4. Cindy's Self Portrait 'Untitled'
Source: http://thebookmann.blogspot.com/2009_11_01_archive.html



Figure 5, Tracey Emin, *my bed*, mixed media
 Source: <http://www.saatchi-gallery.co.uk/artists/artpages/tracey>



Figure 6, Yamokoshi-Kenya, *nomonde*, mixed media, variable
 Source: <http://www.trueafricanart.com/uploads/b-nomonde->



Figure 7, Mr Fancey, *Dipo initiate*, Wood – Ghana, Photographed



Figure 8, Asabea, *the initiation*, Installation – Gourd, Sponch, pot, eggs, and mats.

Statement of the problem

The world of the woman has been full of different challenges. Through these challenges she recalls her past experiences, build on them to appreciate her present and give direction into her future. Challenges come in different areas in life. The art world has its challenges yet woven into everyday life. The challenges of the Palaeolithic artist in terms of tools, materials, styles, techniques as well as beliefs and concepts in portraying the woman may not be the same as the medieval, the renaissance, the impressionist, the cubist, the realist and the abstract artist. All steps taken to address a challenge in the life of the woman affect her portrait artistically. Different approach to the portrait of the woman is obvious in all the art movements yet artists were able to communicate their intentions through their works.

In this present time of high technological advancement, given a holistic definition to a portrait is even a challenge as Walter Benjamin predicted in the 1900s that the very notion of art cannot remain unaffected by our modern knowledge and power. Where does sculpture end, and where does painting start? This is another challenge. Where do we put the diffusion of smoke in the atmosphere by the Chinese artist Cai in making profound statement in art? Painting, sculpture or any other may be the answer but the underlying importance is the ability to communicate successfully through art for the benefit of all.

Analysing all the above critically, one may ask, how best can one portray the woman? Can she be portrayed best in three dimensions, or in the two dimensions? Is she that woman clothed or naked? Should she be appreciated from her inner abilities or her physical body curvature? Besides the answers to these questions come such questions

as: Where should the emphasis be? To the first wave feminist, the emphasis is on equality of sexes and ending of women subordination. To the second wave, emphasis is on equal right to education, job and ownership. The third wave feminist sees the woman endowed with much abilities but can best be realised in global unification. To artist such as O'Keefee, the woman is seen from her womb, to Judy Chicargo, the emphasis is on her birth canal; to Carolee Schneeman dramatic use of the woman's naked body in different ways portray who she is.

How then can the woman be portrayed in terms of fusing painting and sculpture techniques, styles, materials and concepts in this contemporary age? This thesis project is an attempt to interrogate the shifts and changes due to challenges face by 'The Ghanaian woman'.

Objectives

- To employ contemporary approach in painting and sculpture in creating a discourse on the portrait of the Ghanaian woman.
- To mount an exhibition of practical works produced and present a written document that covers the details of the thesis project.

Justification

This project will help highlight many of the challenges in the sphere of the woman and argue the necessities that suggest some changes in the art of portrait making as long as the woman is concerned.

Importance of the study

The variation to the approach of portrait making highlighted in this research will help bring more understanding to the contemporary trends and technologies that are affecting the normal or generally accepted way most Ghanaians might have perceived a portrait of the woman to be.

Delimitations

This project is limited to the contemporary materials commonly found in the space of the woman - the Ghanaian woman. It combines two dimensional and three dimensional installations.

Facilities Available

The painting and sculpture studio, faculty of Art, KNUST

University main Library, KNUST – Kumasi

The College of Art Library – KNUST

The Balm Library – Legon

Consultations from supervisors – KNUST

The Internet

Other Reliable Sources

Definitions of terms

Akan – A tribe in Ghana

Awowa Aware – A type of marriage among the Akans of Ghana where a young girl is given to a creditor until all debts are settled.

Adinkra symbols – A set of traditionally accepted symbols which contains a lot of proverbs and adages used among Ghanaians in explaining concepts, transmitting culture and also as motifs in art especially in the textile industries.

Animus – the male tendencies in woman.

Animas – The feminine tendencies in men.

Bragoro – A puberty rite for virgins among the Akans.

Governess – A woman employed to teach children in a private home.

Kyiribra – A traditional rite – punitive measure designated for a young girl who does not experience her menarche before becoming pregnant.

Ko Afikyiri – A period of menstruation

Makola – The biggest market in the center of Accra - Ghana

Obaatan na onim nea ne mma bedi – It is only the mother who knows what the child will eat.

Obaa Sima – a lady

Adinkra symbols – A set of traditionally accepted symbols. Obaa dendan – a strong woman

Trotro – Mini vans that offer short distance services with low charges compared to taxis.

Yoomo be Ga – There is no old lady in Ga – a city in Ghana.

Abbreviations

BON – Ben Ofei Nyako

WHO – World Health Organization

UNICEF – United Nations Children Emergency Fund

WAJU – Women and Juvenile Unit

FIDA – International Federation of Women Lawyers

DOVSU – Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit

GSHRDC – Gender Studies and Human Right Document Center

WAI – Women Artist International

KNUST – Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology

Arrangement of the text

Introduction to the main thesis project is seen in chapter one together with the statement of the problem, objectives, justification, importance to the study, delimitations, methodology, facilities available, definition of terms and abbreviations. Chapter Two involves related literature to the topic. In chapter three, tools and materials as well as the general procedure to the practical works are seen. Detailed discussion, analyses and interpretation of works is seen in chapter four. The entire project thesis is concluded with recommendations in chapter five.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

‘The portrait of the woman’ has predominated many fields as well as in the art disciplines. Prominent among these disciplines include photography, film, painting and sculpture. Philosophers such as Foucault, Deleuze and Felix Guattari have debated extensively on issues pertaining to the women. Equally important and worth mentioning are Psychoanalysts, Laura Mulvey, Lacain and Sigmund Freud, Gynaecologist Llewellyn-Jones, Feminist analyst Mary Garrard as well as the Art historian Linda Nochlin have volumes of books that suggest various perspective from which the woman can be viewed in an attempt to portray her. ‘The woman’ the main subject for this thesis project engages in a multiplicity of roles which cannot be underestimated.

This chapter unearths some challenges encountered in myths and cultural practices that have in a way affected the entire life – the portrait of the woman. It also reviews some approaches used by some feminists in trying to enhance the general status quo of the woman, the similarities and differences in directions to their approaches.

‘My self-image is greatly affected. I stand, sit, and lay in a number of suppositions’.

Myth and Cultural Practices

During the Victorian era the myth surrounding the woman was that her scope of operation was relinquished to the home. From the Victorian principles in the early 19th century, women played a secondary role to men. The woman was portrayed as ‘governess’. Her education, job, and entire life circulated in the home. (Vicus 1989) This limited the woman’s scope of operation (working space) as compared to her

male counterpart who explores beyond the home to the public space like the factories and offices. Academic disciplines favoured men in the field of mathematics, science and art during this era. In Ghana, around the same era, the situation about the woman in the labour force was not much different. According to Tettey (2002) the highest rate of female participation in education in the 1980s was one female against four males while in the 1970s it was one female to sixteen males citing from a UNICEF/ Government of Ghana report.

Sigmund Freud a psychoanalyst uses terms like 'Castrated Complex', 'Penis Envy' to describe the woman who always look up to the man with hope of having something she lacks. He proves his assumption from the fact that girl children see themselves as lacking – already castrated, and thereby detaching themselves from their mother and attaching themselves to the father as the child locates the break from the mother and the beginning of subjectivity with the intervention of the father. Rose (2001).

Broverman and colleagues argue out in Rose (2001) that therapist hold different standards of mental health for men and women. The 'Healthy Male' is defined as active, independent, competitive, and logical while the 'Healthy Female' is described as dependent, passive, and illogical. Here in the mind set of these therapists the elements that design the woman – elements of design are dependency, passiveness and illogical.

In the field of film making Mulvey argues out precisely that visuality is structured in gendered way. Related to this is the art historian, Nicholin and her analysis on visuality. To her the dominant form of visuality tutors us into finding only women suitable objects for sexual display. She uses the soft porn post card - Figure 9,

‘Achetez du Pomme’ where the woman offers not only fruits but herself as sexual object to the audience.



Figure 9, Linda Licholin, *Achetez du Pomme*,
Source: <http://www.french-engravings.com/images/artworks/ART-7911/HQ.jpg>

The Nudity of a woman in films and at other places such as the artist's studio, the cinema hall is mostly accepted comparative to the male.

“In many relationships, a woman was treated as, and accepted the role of, a sexual puppet available for a man when he requires release of sexual tension”. Jones (1989 p 44)

In Walsh (1987) Deutsch stresses that although the myth that women are innately and inevitably masochistic is an old one yet still debatable. According to the Encarta

dictionary masochistic means – experiencing the desire to be humiliated and abused by others in order to feel sexually fulfilled. ‘Is this notion really the truth about my portrait?’

Women are men’s chattel, property, in fact are owned, and are seen as objects not subjects which the male uses for his sexual satisfaction. Shakespeare made this clear in *The Taming of the Shrew* “I will be master of what is mine own. She is my goods, my chattels; she is my house, she is my wife, my household stuff, my field, my barn, my horse, my ox, my ass, my anything” as he commented on Petruchio’s proclamation. Welsh (1987 p 69) Cusack and Manuh (2009) Suggested some primary ingredients for gender based violence among men in Ghana. One of these ingredients throws more light on the man’s notion of the woman being his property. “Men have a proprietary attitude to women with its attendant jealousy . Women are perceived as sexual and reproductive “property” which they own. Their women are their territory, over which they have staked their ownership”.

With this notion of ownership in relation to the man’s view, some men are inspired to physically abuse the woman and treat her as one of the household stuff. Visual representation is seen in Figure 10, ‘No money no case’. In this scene the pains, the suffering and the cries of the woman seem to be adamant to an angry man so far as she remains an object to him.

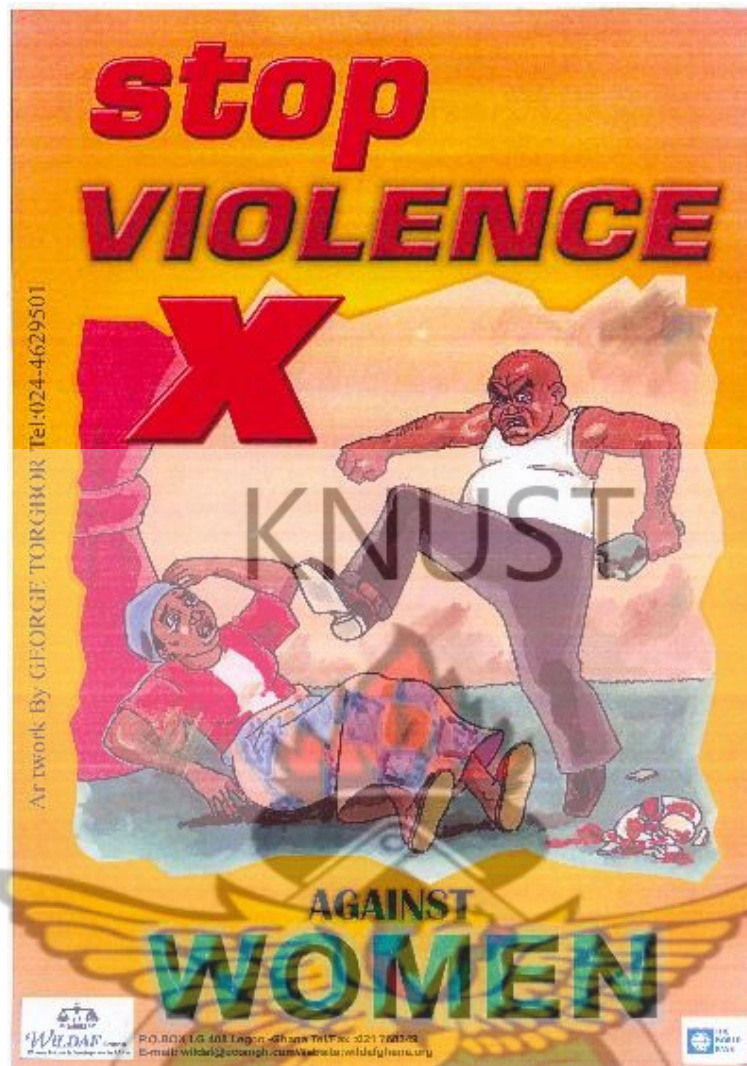


Figure 10, George Torgbor, *No money no case*, painting
Source: <http://www.theghanaijourn.com>

Even if this woman was a shrew does it mean that she deserves such treatment? What qualifies this man out of all guilt and mischief to treat a fellow human being in such a manner? The scene, though pathetic yet ignorance of one's right and poor self-image, poverty and total dependency on man coupled with culturally hailed masculine ascendancies keep some women including most Ghanaian women in this plight in this contemporary era.

“Being a ‘Daddy’s Girl’ is good.... Being a ‘Mama’s Boy’ on the other hand is a bad thing.” The Guerrilla Girls (n.d. p 12). These myths which most societies have held on to might have affected how the woman has been shaped and portrayed over the years mentally, culturally, socially, religiously and politically.

In Cusack and Manuh (2009) Hassan points out that the way Islam has been practiced in most Islamic communities over the centuries has left millions of Muslim women with not only battered bodies but battered mind and soul as most women imbibed it without questioning. Feminist theology have sought to enhance the equality of men and women with believing that God does not discriminate on the basis of biological grounds such as sex and also race - Haddad (2006).

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feminism>.

‘Awowa aware’ - a traditional believe among the akans of Ghana was a practice that suppressed the girl/woman’s freedom of choice. This practice allows a family to donate a young girl to a man they are indebted to. The girl is given to marriage without considering her sentiments, and her consent. She has no right to leave the marriage until all debts are settled. Kantanka (n.d, p 71). Oh! What slavery on the part of the poor girl. Adding to this belief is ‘kyiribra’ another belief that excommunicates a young girl who does not experience menarche before conception. She can only return home after three months when some sacrifices and rituals have been performed to pacify the gods. Kantanka (n.d. p 69). This culture was really unhealthy for both mother and the foetus from the researcher’s point of view. According to Jones (1998) during pregnancy the embryonic period is very vital and this falls in the first three months of conception. During this period all structures which make the normal foetus are formed. For women who might have faced the ordeal of ‘kyiribra’ spent this important face of pregnancy alone, in the outskirts of

town and in mental and emotional torture. So you see the elements and the principles that form my portrait have a direct negative or positive effect not only on my life but even my offspring. Now due to education and global culture much has been learnt about the biological functions of the woman, therefore curbing down these practices.

Cultural Challenges – Feminist Approach

In 1938, Jurgens's successful combination of her roles as a young, independent, urban woman and a Hanoverian realist painter came under extreme duress when the Nazi party's cultural policies reached the city. Jurgens, like many of her colleagues, was declared a "degenerate" artist. Until the end of the Second World War, her artistic identity unravelled.

No longer permitted to exhibit in public, her practice became even more intimately tied to her Podbielskistrasse studio as she entered what has come to be known as "inner exile," an exceedingly painful experience for those artists. Meskimmon (2000) Note the term – ‘Degenerated Artist’ Jurgens and her colleagues no matter the level of autonomy gained during that period were hit by the cultural determinants during their time – (The Nazi party’s cultural policies) and this had a drastic effect on their operational space. This is seen clearly in her self-portrait as she combines her inner feelings with the attic space in her studio, and also in her visual biography. Through her self-portraiture she exposed the problem she encountered as a woman artist as seen in “Das atelier – Self-portrait” figure 11.

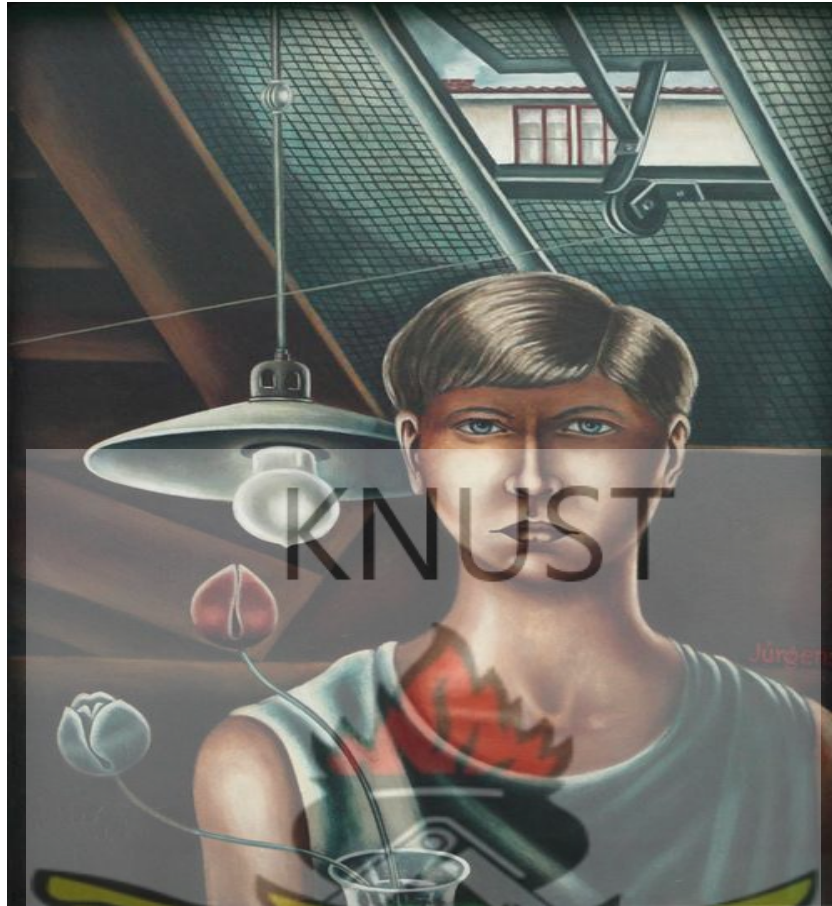


Figure 11, Jürgen -Das atelier – *Self-portrait*, 1943, Painting
Source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/kraftgenie/4659157933/>

It is not surprising that Jürgen used her studio as the focal point of her autobiographical work given the significance for newly emancipated women of having a studio of their own. Produced at the time of her inner exile, when the studio was both her heaven and her prison, *Das Atelier* delineated a unique moment in which Jürgen negotiated between emancipatory and reactionary ideals of woman, art, politics, and popular culture. Miskimmon (2000)

In figure 11, one can identify the compatibility of the artist's head in relation to the attic created. The inner agony that reflects on the facial expression is a clear indication of the artist ordeals she was going through as a female artist in an unfavourable cultural set up.

Cultural practices, Political, educational, Religious policies and many others, practised through the years have had tremendous effect on the portrait of the woman. Situations and conditions cannot remain static. Surely, there have been changes. It is therefore obvious that the twenty first century woman of our days cannot be portrayed in context to the portrait of the past. Culture is dynamic and so is art.

“As the scale changes, layers of time are superimposed and through them we project perspectives with which to recover and correct the past. No wonder art gets bollixed up in this process; its history, perceived through time is confounded by the picture in front of your eye witness ready to change testimony at the slightest perceptual provocation”. O’Doherty (1976)

In view of this the woman’s socio cultural role today cannot be separated from her experiences of yesterday.

Was it Jürgen and her colleagues alone who have ever faced an unfair treat of cultural discrimination on the grounds of gender, colour, sex and the like? Let’s proceed as we unveil the historical curtains. A close look of the portrait of the woman today will call for the understanding of the word ‘feminism’ a very good associate of matters concerning women.

Feminism: According to the Encarta Dictionary, is the movements for women’s committed to securing and defending rights and opportunities for women that is equal those of men. To Asabea, revisiting this definition in this postmodern time will call for a change at the tail end since ‘equal to men’ becomes a measuring standard and limitation for the woman. Meanwhile rights and opportunities for the woman should advance her beyond any limitation.

It was not until the eighteenth century that Virginia Woolf and her group – The First Wave Feminist movement fought against the social construct that restricted women in such issues as; sex and gender. She argued in her book ‘A Room of One’s Own’ that women are simultaneously victims of themselves and of men.’ Through their efforts there were opening of higher education for women, access of women in the professional sector and property right for marriage women among others. This was before the First World War. The general portrait of the woman would exclude education and professionalism until she came to the realisation of her right and fought for it.

This was followed by the second wave movement. (1960 – 1980) They continued in fighting for women on the grounds of equal pay as well as the right to vote. They did not concentrate on the western societies alone but across the world. They encourage women to understand aspect of their own personal life as deeply politicized. Echols (1989). <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feminist-movement>. During this time there arose a wave of educational reforms in Ghana urging parents to send their Girl child to school. Through these efforts, standing to the challenges of the day, the Ghanaian woman has now access in the professional sector and occupies such positions as the Speaker of Parliament, Chief Justice, Minister of state, doctor, nurse, national best farmer and the like. Figure 12 reveals one of such. ‘From kitchen to Parliament’- The Rt. Honourable Joyce Adeline Bamford –Addo. There is a great transformation on the portrait of the Ghanaian woman. Her scope of operation has widened especially in this post- modern times.



Figure 12, *from kitchen to parliament*,

Rt. Honourable Joyce Adeline Bamford –Addo, Speaker of Parliament
http://www.parliament.gh/speaker_parliamentjpg.html

Some years ago the Ghanaian woman was not recognized when it comes to major decision making. Using the akan language to express this, the woman was normally told, ‘Ye koom! Se Mmerima kasa a Obea nka bi’ which means ‘Be quiet! When men are talking women keep mute.’ Whenever one swallows her suggestions due to suppression, it affects her general outlook – her portrait. The researcher gives credit to all stakeholders who have sacrificed to enhance the portrait of the woman.

This was followed by the third wave movement. (1960 – 1980) They campaigned against cultural and political inequalities.



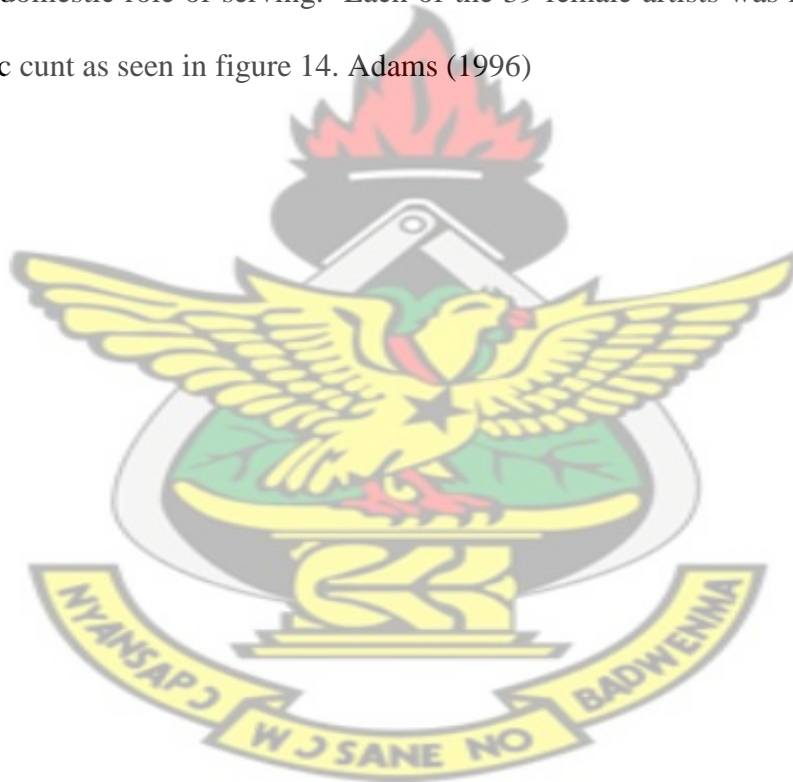
Figure 13, *Some Radical feminist protesting against discrimination*,
Source: <http://ivylam8.files.wordpress.com/2011/02/womensmarch-400x251.jpg>

What comes to mind looking at these radical feminists? Noise, movement, unism from their lips and finally the combination of black and white suggest strength in unity. The passive female is now active by removing all barriers of race and colour as well as stereotypes that bracket her as soft and inactive. These feminists seem to be shouting out all unwanted elements of designs that composed them.

The portrait of the woman indeed goes beyond her painted and sculptured images and touches areas such as cultural, religious, social, political and even technological determinants affecting her. In this sense the researcher finds it necessary to continue probing into what has gone into her subject in the immediate past and the challenges facing her in these modern times?

Generally, most women artist were excluded from the major art history survey book. Works by women were typically considered inferior to those by men and were priced accordingly.

Apart from very few exceptions, it is known through art history that men have maintained a studio system which has excluded women from training as artist and maintaining a gallery system that has kept most women from exhibiting and selling. Adams (1996). The unequal cultural determinants reflect how the woman has been treated and thereby portrayed visually over the years. Juddy Chicago, a feminist artist saw this to be a great challenge to women and decided to write 39 female artists and writers back to history. Through a sculptural installation she represented each of these women in a work entitled *Dinner Party* where she emphasized on the female sexuality and the domestic role of serving. Each of the 39 female artists was represented by a symbolic cunt as seen in figure 14. Adams (1996)



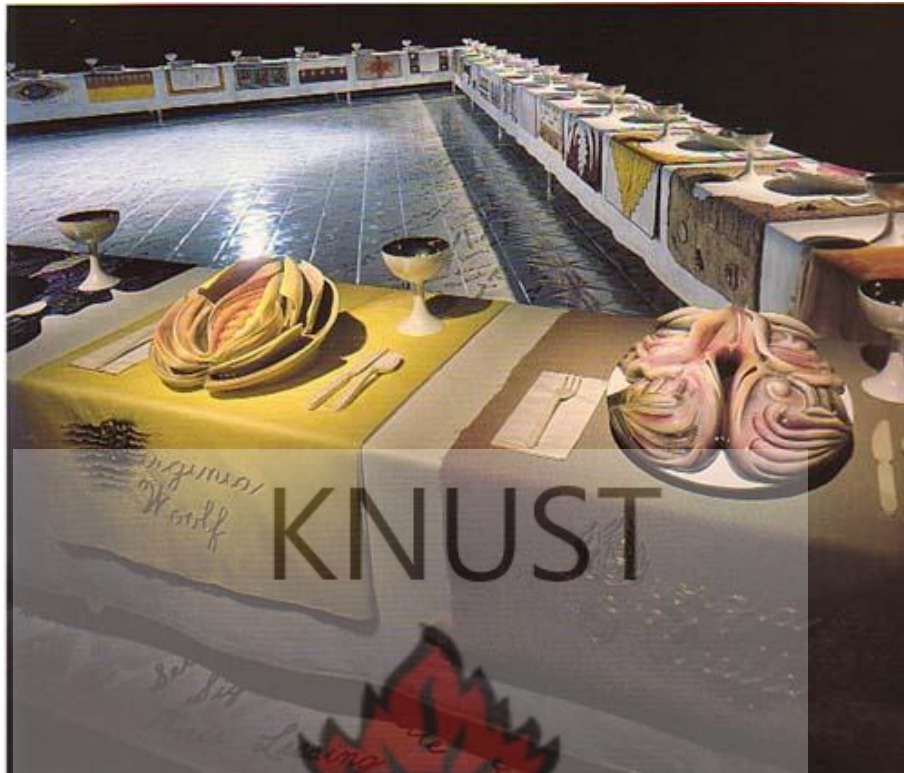


Figure 14, Juddy Chicago, *Dinner party*, 1979
Ceramic and Textile.

Size: 48 x 42 x 3 inches, Source: <http://raggedclothcafe.com>

A Mexican surrealist Frida Kahlo when she had the opportunity to express herself as a female artist used herself portraits to express all ordeals she faced in life and became very famous after her death in 1954. 'The broken column' and 'Frida and Diego in figure 15a and figure 15b are some of her paintings. If the woman had gained this privilege of self-expression through art as far back in the school of the academy then the visual culture about her might have been greatly affected positively. Painting from a nude figure was inappropriate for women but now female artist like Frida can draw in nudity as compared to the academies that were established in Europe in the beginning of the sixteenth century. 'Petit a petit l'oiseau fait son nit' a French adage meaning 'little by little the bird builds its nest' the niche of the woman is advancing gradually.

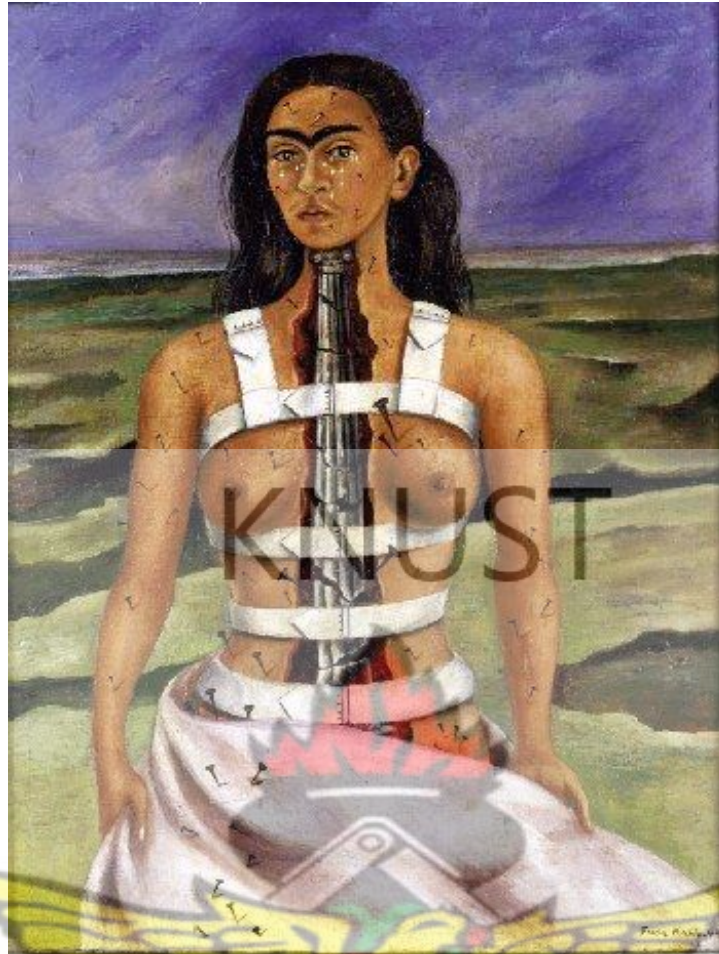


Figure 15a, Frida Kahlo, *Small Frida Kahlo-The Broken column*, 1944

Source: <http://bloody-tampons.blogspot.com/2010/11/frida-khalo.html>

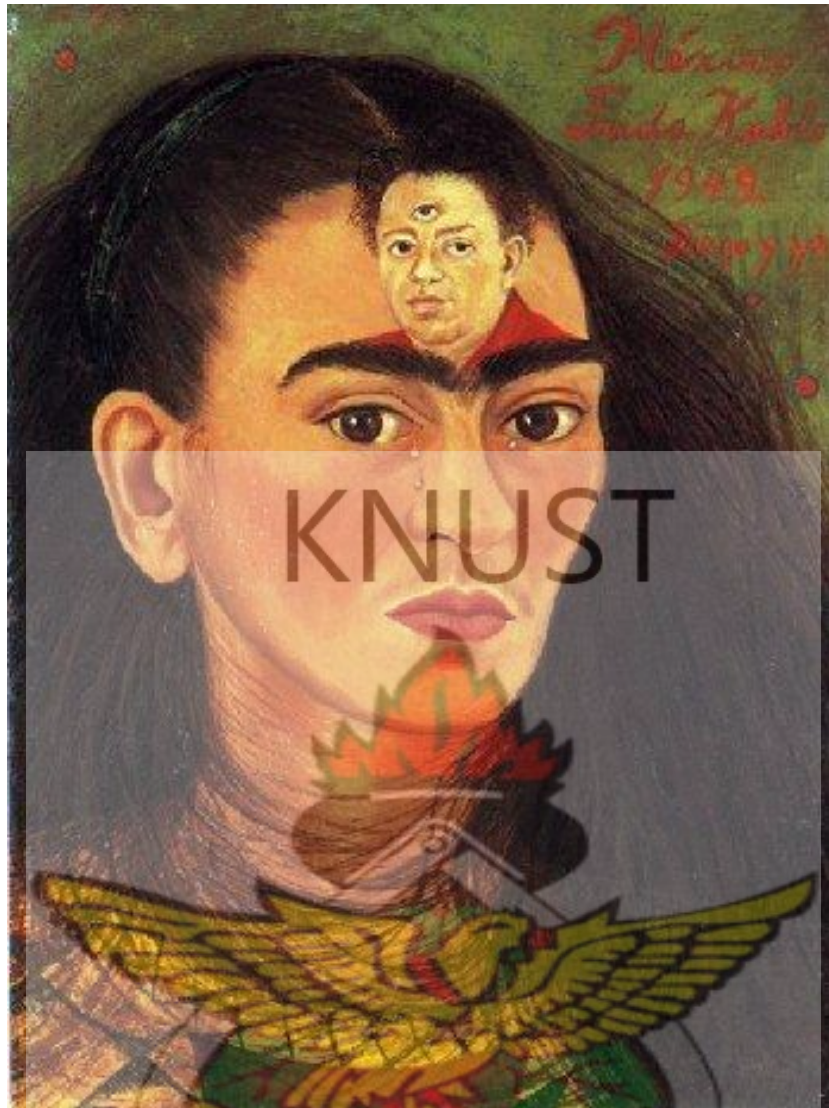


Figure 15b, Frida Khalo, *Frida – Deigo*, 1949

Medium: Oil. Size: 844x1132

Source: <http://bloody-tampons.blogspot.com/2010/11/frida-khalo.html>

Interviewing most Ghanaian painters including Benjamin Ofei Nyarko a painter and a Senior lecturer of KNUST confirms that most Ghanaian painters engage the Ghanaian woman in their paintings for the ultimate purpose of her numerous and inevitable role she performs yet least appreciated. For ‘BON’ his paintings scarcely wear smiles. The researcher likens the seriousness shown on the faces of his portrait to that of Frida Khalo’s. In the same vain most of the works of Larry Otoo are devoid of smiles and exhibit the hard working nature of the woman and her daily chores. The paintings:

“kayaye” and “delima of the heart” by ‘BON’. Figure 16 “Copy of early morning” and “copy of ladies day” figure 17 by Larry Ottoo are also examples of serious faces women wear due to some hardships they go through.



Figure 16, Bon, *delima of the heart*, and *kayayo*, Oil on Canvas

Source: <http://www.artistallianz.com/home/portfolio>



Figure 17, Larry Otoo, *copy of early morning* and *copy of ladies day*, oil on canvas

Soure: <http://www.artistallianz.com/home/portfolio>

Moving on in the field of art, modernism with its propounding philosophies of the ideal debased the woman and promoted principles that were mathematical and satisfies the male ascendancy. For instance, in abstraction, Piet de Mondrian and his constructivist movement sought for clarity, certainty and order – Led by the avant-garde they initiated rules, implemented and ruled over them. Modernism virtually gave a little space for women artist.

Some writers, performers, critics, groups and individual artist revolted against modernism and portrayed the woman from the feminine approach.

Feminine artist such as Marie Laurecin the first woman from the avant-garde sought for space to highlight the avant-gardism and its focus on women and women artist.

Around the 1908 she made paintings in pastel pinks, blues, greens and greys whose languid forms and domestic or poetic-fantasy subjects gave qualities of feminine ‘feminine art’ almost to a point of parody. Cottington (2005)



Figure 18, Marie Laurencin , *Jeunes femmes a la guitar et aux flutes*, oil on canvas- 32x39 inches. 1908

Source: <http://www.artnet.com/artists/marie-laurencin/>

Marie was all out in projecting the woman not in visual terms alone but verbally. This is what she said. “I feel so far removed from the painters. It is because they are men... Their discussions, their researches, their genius have always astonished me...The genius of men always intimidates me”.

Her paintings do not follow the rules and principles that favour the masculine ascendancies. In fact, the painting above suggests tenderness, relaxation, gracefulness, and horizontality.

Around the 1910 Georgia O'Keeffe also searched for a means to evade the masculinist cliché which was so strange and far removed from what she felt of herself as she stated; "I feel there is something about a woman that only a woman can express" Adams L. (1996, p 96-98). Her *Black Iris III* of 1926 figure 19 epitomized a kind of image that promoted a painter of female sexuality.



Figure 19, O'Keeffe, *Black Iris III*, 1926

Source: <http://www.arthistoryarchive.com/arthistory/modern/GeorgiaO'Keeffe.html>

In this painting O'Keefee carefully exhibits the contractions and expansions of what goes on in the woman's womb as well as the vulva of the woman. To her this is the woman.

Has the Ghanaian woman the qualities of active, competitive, and logical reasoning? Attributes culturally designated for men. Indeed all these tendencies are inherent in the woman but in a way have been suppressed due to gender stereotype and other factors. As far back as the 1900s Yaa Asantewaa, the Queen Mother of Ejisu in the Asante Kingdom portrayed courage, bravery, competitiveness and logical reasoning when she stood against the British invaders. In her bravery she said "If you the men of Asante will not go forward, then we will. We the women will... We will fight the white men." Sertima (1984 p.10). This was when the men in her Kingdom had refused to play their role. Due to these characters portrayed by her, most women who are assertive, courageous and active are believed to possess masculine tendencies and are referred to as 'Yaa Asantewaa,' 'Woman soldier' or 'Obaa denden'. The society normally gives such women an odd look. The masculine tendency portrayed by Yaa Asantewaa is rather normal as the researcher believes with Walsh (1987) in affirming Jung belief that all individuals have animas and animus thus (male and female character) present in them. Figure 20 shows Yaa Asantewaa ready to defend.



Figure 20, 'Yaa Asantewaa'
photographed – Asabea, Cement, Ejiso - Kumasi

Arguing further, her bravery can be compared to the feminist Carolee Schneemann in the field of performing art who publicly celebrated the active female in contract to the established masculine principle of the passive woman. “Schneemann ritualistically stood naked on a table, painted her body with mud until she slowly extracted a paper scroll from her vagina while reading from it.” In dealing with serious issues affecting our lives as women a little radicalism is sometimes necessary. The visual culture portrayed in this performance may carry a stronger message equally as what might have been read.



Figure 21, Carolee Schneemann , *Interior Scroll*, Performance
Source: <https://www.brooklynmuseum.org>

The 'Guerrilla girls' after being discriminated against in an international art fair, in 1985, have become radical feminists who fight against all forms of discriminations. They have been very instrumental in reinventing the 'F' word – 'Feminism' To them in this present era the woman should not allow herself to be bound by stereotypes or archetypes presented to them by the society. "Trophy wife, Bitches, Gold Digger, etc. stereotype or archetype, it's really a girls own choice. It's a label someone else gives you to make you less or more than you really are" The Guerrilla Girls (n d p. 7).



Figure 22, *Portrait of a Guerrilla girl*

Source: <http://blogs.artinfo.com/lacmonfire/files/2011/02/guerrilla.jpg>

Figure 22 shows how the Guerrilla girls portrayed themselves in addressing the issues of discrimination against women in the art world. They also wrote several books in contrast to gender stereotypes. Their very mind-set, their way of thinking also adds to their portrait.

Eurocentric Exhibitions, unfair selections as to who can exhibit internationally and locally and other male ascendancies, dominating in the art world have greatly curbed down especially in this twenty first century. The resultants of the various radical feminist artists and the waves have had and are causing a great impact on the portrait of the woman. This is obvious in the international functions of *the biennale* and other art fair that seek to promote peace, friendship, and inter-cultural exchanges through art. Men and women alike have equal access to *the biennale*. Not much masculinity but fairness to all.

Marcel du Duchamp was among other few men who were radical in their approach to pave way for art to be freed from restricted rules and formalities. This is one of his quotations: “What I have in mind is that Art may be bad, good or indifferent, but

whatever adjective is used, we must call it art, a bad art is still art in the same way as bad emotion is still emotion” The “Creative Act” Art News, Summer (1957), <http://www.alternativereel.com/includes/top.ten/display> This quotation though not directly quoted for women, its content liberates. It serves as an open door for acceptance of all art works including that of women to be accepted in all fields without any cultural or social constraints.

The researcher chose to portray the woman and as such the Ghanaian woman because so far as the subjectivity of the woman is concerned the Ghanaian woman is just like her counterpart elsewhere with breast, vulva and womb regardless of race, colour, stature, and form. The researcher is challenged by the influence of global culture and the objectives of the third wave feminist – intersecting race and gender as well as the quest for global unification and development of the woman. The welfare of one woman affects all, which means that the challenges of the Ghanaian woman and her prospects become a global issue though may be prominent in her life – her portrait, comparing to her counterparts.

It is therefore obvious judging from the different ways the woman has been portrayed in this chapter, that the challenges facing the woman which affect her total life were the main concerns in the feminists approach to their portraiture. Portraying the woman renders one a big space to operate in. Which method is the researcher considering in portraying her subject? Installation that combines both painting and sculpture and even beyond would be appropriate. This project brings a little shift in already existing body of knowledge. Though feminist artists like Judy Chicago and Tracy Emin with others have used this approach to promote and portray the life of the woman yet one can be assured that the result of this thesis will not be exactly as theirs

since much knowledge about the woman at that time might have been super-imposed or juxtapose by other knowledge gained about the woman.

KNUST



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

A lot of experiments in the form of drawings, paintings and installations were done during the incubation and idea development stage. A critical look at some of these experiments will aid us to perceive the various components of the portrait of the woman that might have crossed the researcher's mind. The researcher has chosen not to name the various experiments but leaves the names and interpretations to the 'other' that is the reader and the viewer. Though the researcher has interpretations for these visual imageries yet she respects Hall's view cited in Adams (1996) that visual imageries come with coded meanings by the producer yet these meanings can be decoded by a specific audience. What different ideas run through your mind as you critically observe figures 23 to 30? Does any idea of preservation, nurturing, technological advancement, permanency in the kitchen, total freedom and others cross your mind? Go on and interpret.

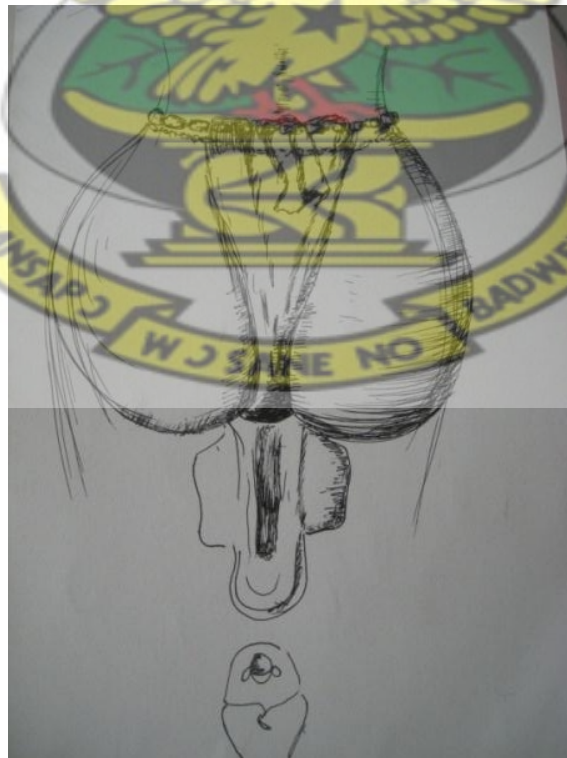


Figure 23, Asabea, Untitled, 2010, pen on paper, 15x10 inches



Figure 24, Asabea, Untitled, 2010, pen on paper, 15 x10 inches



Figure 25, Asabea, Untitled, 2010, pen on paper, 10x15 inches



Figure 26, Asabea, Untitled, (2010) acrylic on canvas, 45x24 inches



Figure 27, Asabea, Untitled, 2010, pen on paper, 15x10 inches



Figure 28, Asabea, 2010, acrylic on canvas, 26x22 inches



Figure 29, Asabea, Untitled, pen on paper, 15x10 inches



Figure 30, Asabea, Untitled, Gourd, Currencies on Wooden Tray, Variable

As already discussed, installation of contemporary painting and sculpture techniques would be employed. It can also be noted that most of the feminist artists geared their priority towards portraying the woman through the challenges they faced in their times but not so much on aesthetics and already established rules in art. They promoted a facial shift in the portrait of the woman. Some portrayed the woman through the womb, the vulva, showing emotions and pains in their paintings, the use of photographs and dramatizing with their bodies as well as installations.

Availability of tools and materials facilitate and ease production when it comes to practical works. Fusing painting and sculpture in a single piece liberates the researcher into a wide range of styles, techniques, as well as materials. To this effect, the researcher did not struggle much since the greater percentage of the tools and materials that constitute her subject are found in her immediate environment. Observation of everyday life of the Ghanaian woman, everyday conversation among

men on their views about women as well as the Ghanaian woman's perception about herself was a useful tool. Attending of seminars, workshops, exhibitions studying of the cultural norms and laws that affect the woman so long as her portrait is concerned are all part of the research tools. Taking a little rest to refresh one's mind is also inclusive. The general knowledge acquired through the extensive reading of different books and information gained from the KNUST main library, the college library, as well as the internet is inclusive. It is just like any step you take from the start of a programme till you end it – your life – your portrait.

Other tangible tools and materials include natural gourds, wooden trays, metallic trays, nails, tread, needles, iron rods, chicken wire, acrylic paints, cutlass, painting brush, soldering iron, the digital camera, as well as the various wearable of the Ghanaian woman.

Some of these wearable include: shoes, underwear, synthetic hair, nails, cloths, assorted hair gears, sanitary pads, combs, mirror, perfumes, nail polish, bags and necklaces. With the combination of various techniques such as sowing, scotching, painting, assemblage, nailing, welding and mounting, the project was carried out successfully.

For the sake of visualisation and better understanding to the methodology of the portrait of the woman, it is important to showcase some of the materials listed above.



Figure 31, Gourds obtained from the local markets.



Figure 32, wooden tray, obtained from the wood market - Kumasi



Figure 33, Synthetic Hair Obtained from the Beauty Saloon



Figure 34, Acrylic Nails Bought from the Beauty Saloon



Figure 35, Iron Rods and Chicken Wire



Figure 36, Ladies Sanitary Pad bought from different producers



Figure 37, Assorted Ladies Underpants obtained from Individuals and the Market

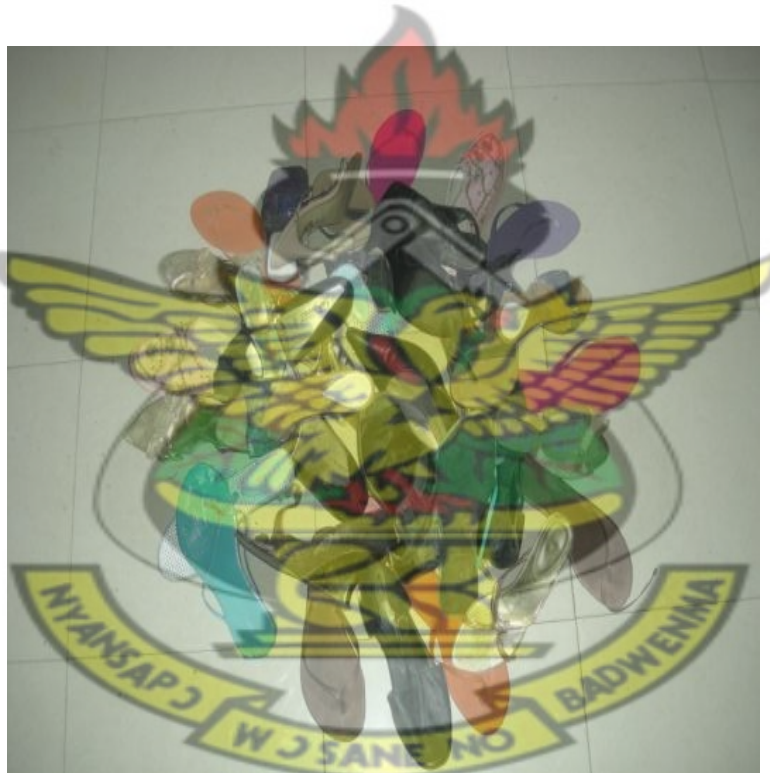


Figure 38, Assorted Shoes, Obtained from Researcher Home and Neighbours

Not all the materials can be showcased in the methodology since more will be seen in the analyses. This chapter aims at expanding the general procedure the researcher went through to achieve the visual and conceptual imagery of the woman.

Procedure

After buying the gourds from the local market they were given a thorough wash in water after which they were dried from time to time in the sun to be well seasoned as seen in figure 39.



Figure 39. Washing and Seasoning of Gourds by Asabea

Building of a Gigantic Artificial Gourd.

While waiting for the well-seasoned gourds, an artificial one was built. This was made of iron rods, chicken wire and binding wire. It is also known as the armature, but in this research it is called the animus. The iron rods were cut to shape and first bounded with binding wire. The parts were joined firmly by welding them together. An assistant was employed to help in the binding and welding aspect of this. The animus, the gigantic iron shaped gourd, representing a conceptual masculine sphere of the woman was constructed at the painting and sculpture studio of KNUST as seen in Figure 40 and 41.



Figure 40, Welding of Iron Rods into a Gourdlike Shape





figure 41. Fixing of chicken wire on iron rods by reseacher and an assistant



Clothing the Armature – the animus

Different wearable readily available in the Ghanaian community and used by Ghanaian women were painstakingly arranged on the entire armature. These were collected from different neighbours, friends, beauty salons, the market, and also from the researcher's own wardrobe. With the aid of tying, sewing, and gluing, the wearable were fixed onto the armature successfully. This was done taking into consideration a number of issues happening in the portrait of the present day woman. Figure 42 and 43 show tying and sewing wearable procedures involved.

Figure 44 shows a portion of the artificial gourd, while figure 45 projects the researcher fixing various accessories unto the gourd. The full size of the artificial gourd is seen in figure 46 while the side view is seen in figure 47.

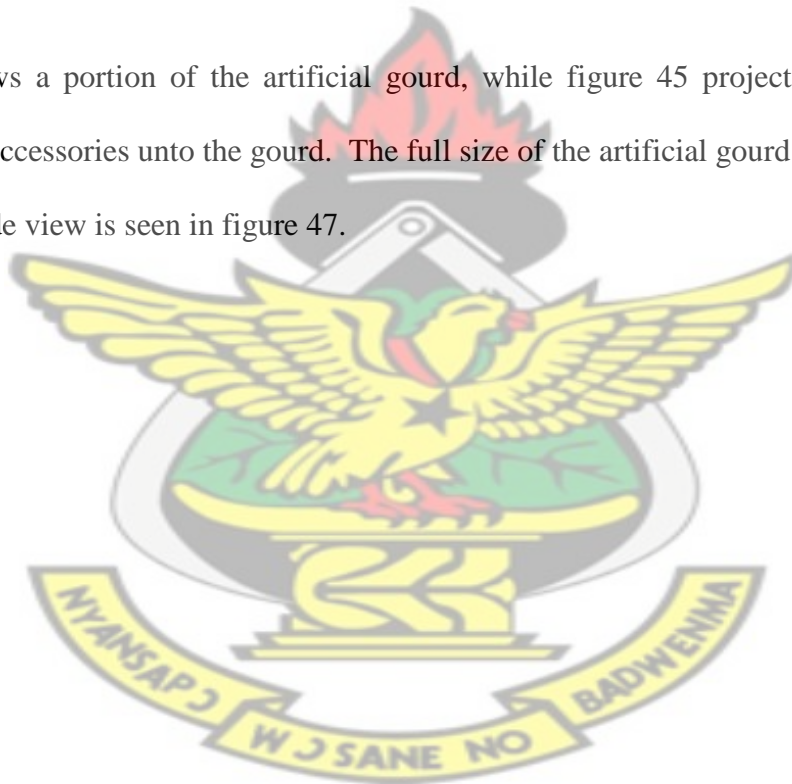




Figure 42. Fixing Wearable unto Armature – Animus – by Asabea



Figure 43, Sowing accessories unto armature – animus – by Asabea



Figure 44. Work in Progress.



Figure 45, fixing of Accessories on the Portrait of Life by Asabea



Figure 46, Almost Completed Man-made Gourd, Studio – KNUST



Figure 47, Detailed of the portion of the *Portrait of the Ghanaian Woman* at the Studio

Adding Aesthetic and Conceptual Value to Natural Gourds

After couple of weeks the gourds were well seasoned. The gourds were then decorated with local symbols known as ‘adinkra’ symbols and flags of different nations. The ‘adinkra’ symbols seen in figure 48 were scotched unto the various natural gourds as well as the wooden trays with the use of the soldering iron. Flags of different countries figure 49 were also painted unto the gourds and the wooden trays. This was successful with the use of brushes and acrylic paints. The procedure is seen in figure 50 and 51.



Figure 48. *Adinkra Symbols*, Obtained from Omanyeh House, Accra



Figure 49, *Maps of Different Countries*, from Collins Distributors, Accra



Figure 50, Using Soldering Iron in Scotching, by Asabea



Figure 51, Painting Already Scotched Gourds, by Asabea and an Assistant

These are various challenges the Ghanaian woman faces as individuals and as a group. The uses of the natural gourds, the wooden trays, as well as some few wearable dominate the projection of these challenges. Ten challenges namely, “Yoomo be Ga”, ” Obaa Sima”, A Subject not Object, Rape and Sexual Assault, Single Parenting, High rate of HIV aids Among Women, Mechanical Reproduction, Unsafe Sex, A Marriable Subjects, Value in Child Bearing. Each of these challenges was showcased by arranging the gourds in a manner that suggest the challenge. The Procedure for each is shown one after the other.

KNUST

Yoomo be Ga

In ‘Yoomo be Ga’ a crown was made out of fibre and P.O.P. It was afterwards fixed on the knoblike head of the gourd. A black satin material was wound round the gourd living only a portion uncovered. The decorated gourd was fixed onto a broom after which it was fixed again unto the painted and scotched wooden tray. In fixing these parts the researcher used bots and nuts. The fixing process is seen in figure 52 and the finished work in figure 53.

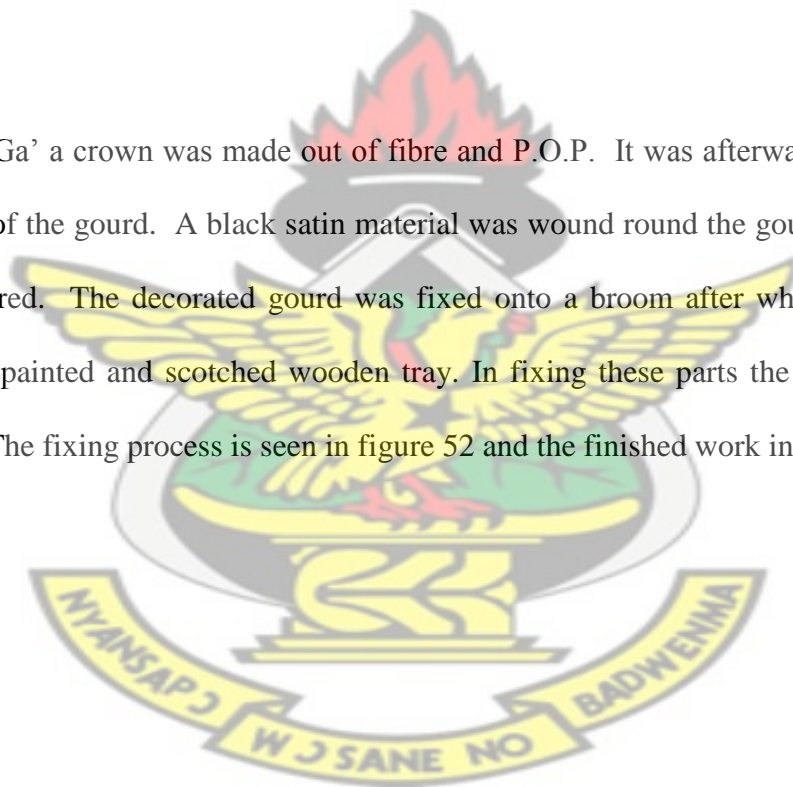




Figure 52, Fixing Bolts and Nuts, by Asabea



Figure 53, Asabea, *Yoomo be Ga*, 2011, Installation, Variable

[B] 'Obaa Sima'

The 'Obaa Sima' is a plumb short necked gourd fixed onto a wooden tray with the aid of a Velcro. The gourd together with the different medicines surrounding were fixed unto the wooden tray by the help of a Velcro as seen in figure 54 and 55.



Figure 54, Fixing Velcro unto Gourd, by Asabea



Figure 55, Asabea, *Obaa Sima*, 2011, installation, variable

A subject not Object

A crushed and a disfigured gourd stained with blood (red acrylic paint) with a cutlass and a mallet feature in this work. The researcher purposefully cut off the head of the gourd – the woman and used mallet to crush the remaining part so that all the inner contents could be seen. The cutting and crushing process is seen in figure 56 and the finished work in figure 57.



Figure 56, Cutting and crushing process of the female gourd



Figure 57, Asabea, *A Subject not Object*, 2011, Installation, variable

Rape and sexual Assault

In this work, two different naturally shaped gourds are seen. One was attached to the other using Velcro. The same Velcro was used to attach the gourds unto the wooden tray. The soldering iron was used to create a female sex organ on one of the gourds while an electric dryer was employed in scotching the pointed edge of another gourd creating a foreskin. Red acrylic paint was splashed on the work to give the feeling of a bloody act. The use of the dryer in scotching the gourds is shown in figure 58 and the finished work in figure 59.



Figure 58, Creating of a Fore Skin by applying heat from a dryer



Figure 59, Asabea, *Rape and Sexual Assault*, 2011, Installation, variable

Unsafe Sex

A gourd with scotched foreskin representing the phallus was stuck on a supposed female gourd. A condom was fixed on the phallus. This condom was purposefully torn and stitched at the torn edges. This arrangement was done to create an act of unsafe sex between heterosexual partners as seen in figure 60.

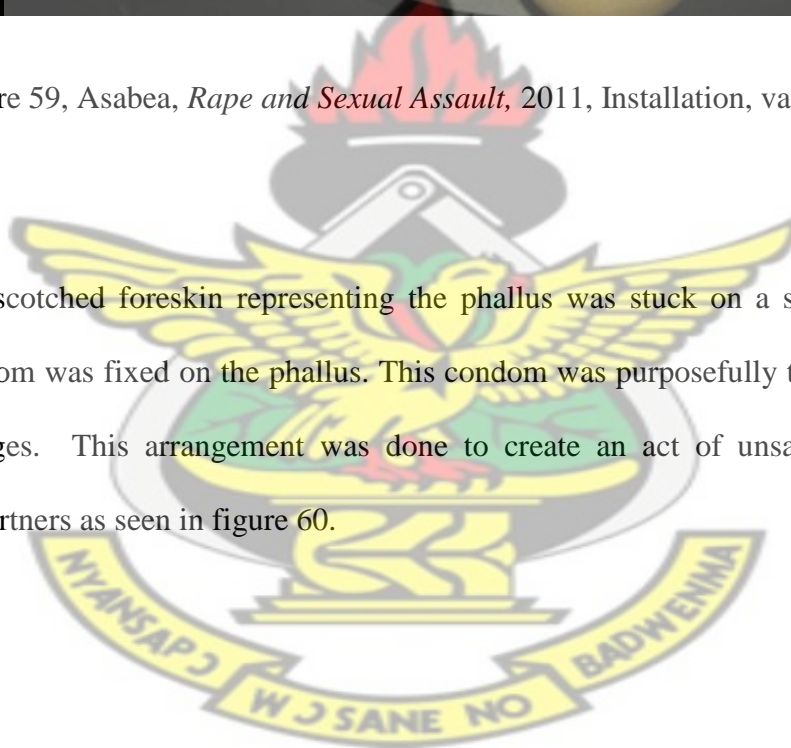




Figure 60, Asabea, *Unsafe Sex*, 2011, Installation, Variable

Other works which went through similar processes of gluing, nailing, scotching, painting and the like are shown with brief discussions since much would be said about them in the next chapter.

Figure 61, Single parenting, a bigger gourd pulls along three other gourds alone with the aid of raffia cords. The bigger gourd represents a single mother who pulls along the responsibility of parenting alone with her children behind.

As one can observe figure 62 has been named High Rate of HIV aids Among Women. The international symbol for HIV aids is obvious alongside the gourds and calabashes. The bigger symbol for the HIV aids is attached to the female gourd – the woman. This will be discussed as we proceed.

In Mechanical Reproduction, that is figure 63, the knoblike head of the female gourd is covered entirely with mechanically reproduced synthetic hair of different colours and

surrounded by acrylic nails. This to the researcher represents a greater percentage of mechanical reproduced items used by the contemporary woman.

Figure 64 is titled *Marriageable Subjects*. A male gourd has been attached to a female gourd with the aid of a Velcro. The two gourds have become one just as in marriage. At a glance it suggests heterosexuals embracing.



Figure 61. Asabea, *Single Parenting*, 2011, Installation, variable



Figure 62, Asabea, *High Rate of HIV aids on the Part of Woman*, 2011, Installation, variable



Figure 63, Asabea, *Mechanical Reproduction*,
2011, Installation, variable



Figure 64, Asabea, *Marriageable Subjects*,
2011, Installation, variable



Figure 65, Asabea, *Value in child bearing*, 2011, Installation, variable

In this work, a mother gourd is surrounded by smaller ones. This depicts a mother surrounded by her children and the pride of most Ghanaian women.

CHAPTER FOUR

Analysis

Much have been discussed in chapter two and visualised in chapter three yet in chapter four a lot more will be seen and discussed in line with principles and elements of art. It will also discuss aesthetic qualities as well as conceptual roles relating to everyday life of the woman – her portrait.

Analysing of Results: Interpretation and Appreciation

Curved and vertical gourds

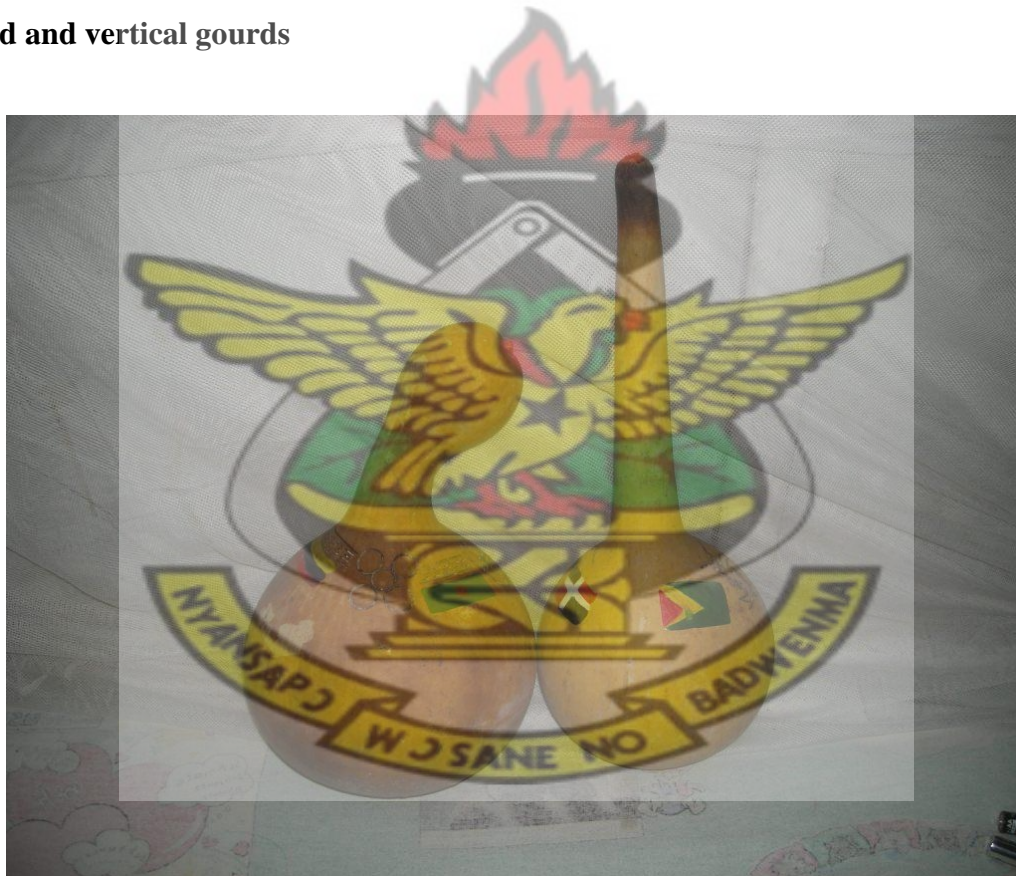
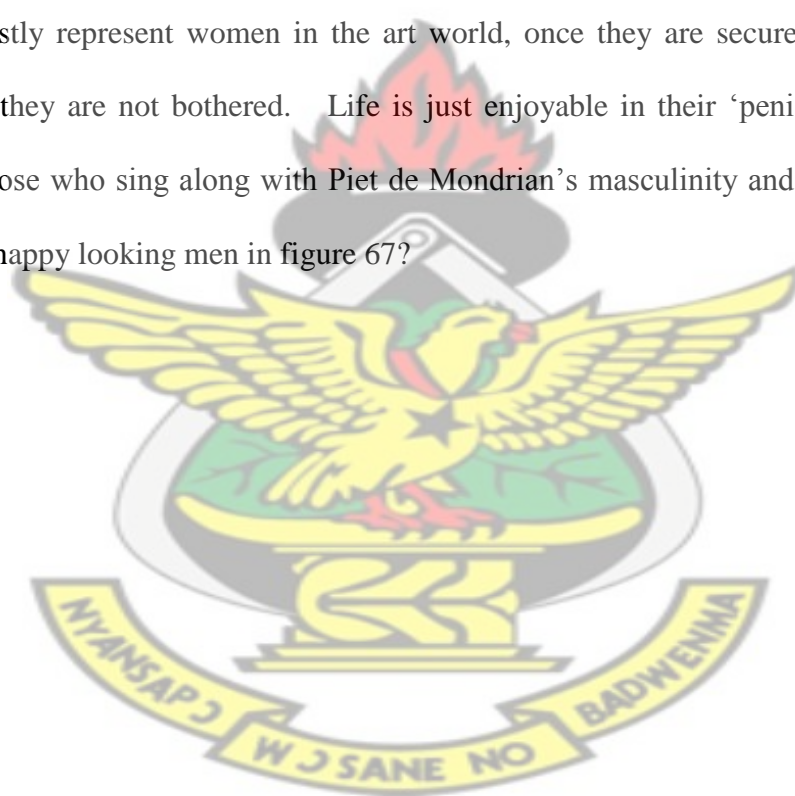


Figure 66, Female and Male Gourd

Gourds from the family of (cucurbits) come in variety of shapes. Physical qualities of these gourds make it easy to get the artistic qualities designated for the woman - graceful, round and curves. There is a naturally shaped gourd which is just like the phallus or the dildo

which the researcher has used to represent all male ascendancies. One can easily identify how the name God and the homophone gourd present to us both female and male on the account that God possess both qualities. From the literature review one can really appreciate the woman from a lot of phallocentric cultural ascendancies. It should also be noted that whatsoever affect the woman indirectly affect the man who is her social partner. It is no wonder that in figure 66. 'Female and Male gourd' the woman has been placed by the phallus.

For these young men in figure 67 there is no room for stereotypes, whether curves and horizontals mostly represent women in the art world, once they are secured by the use of curved gourds they are not bothered. Life is just enjoyable in their 'penis sheath gourd'. What would those who sing along with Piet de Mondrian's masculinity and verticality have to say to these happy looking men in figure 67?



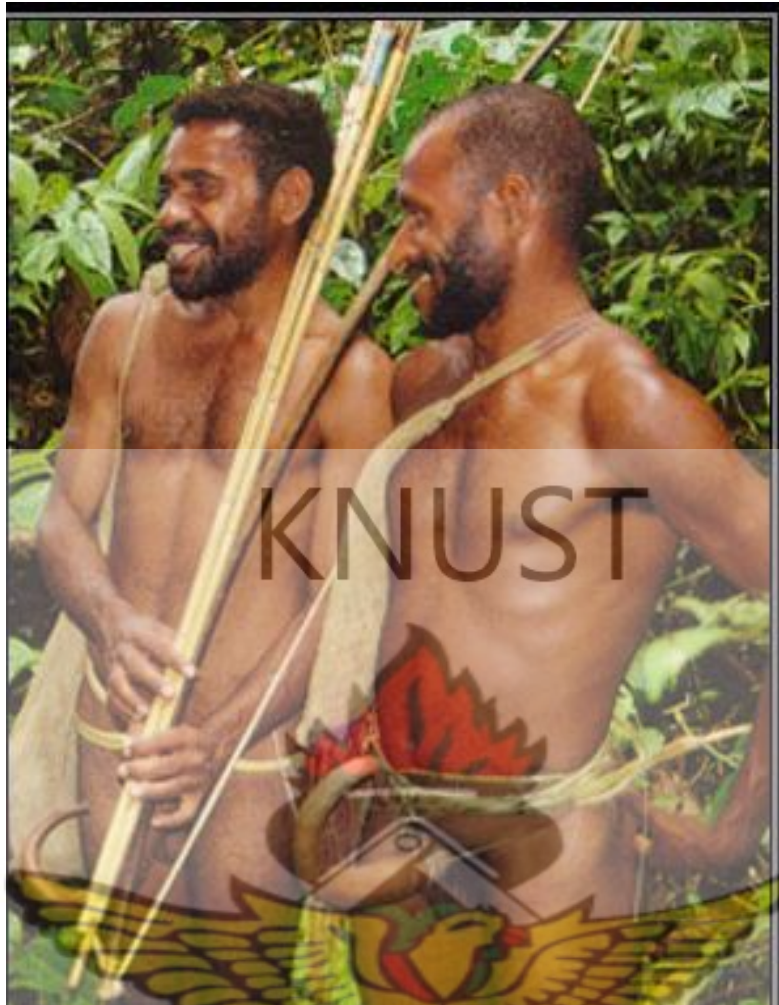


Figure 67, *Penis Sheath Gourds*

Source: <http://waynesword.palomar.edu/ww0503.htm>

One can easily tell from the broad smiles in figure 67, the perfect blend of curves [the symbol for a woman] protecting the verticals [the phallus] for a soothing life. The gourd has very interesting variables of curves and verticals.

Other qualities of the gourd that led to the use of it in this portrait are:

The Ability to Preserve

The gourd has been used in the past and even now as water jar when embarking on a long journey and also when going to the farms. In addition it is used to store shear butter, concoction, and palm wine. There are other numerous uses of the gourd in the Ghanaian

community but prominent among them is the storage of liquor which is a symbol of life. Most women have been endowed naturally with the ability in procreation to store lives thus babies in their wombs, preserving the home through management, and also preservation of culture. The on-going ‘Ghana Most Beautiful’ which aims at ‘redefining beauty through our culture’ confirms the zeal for the woman in preserving her culture. The woman is noted for this unique ability of preservation just like the gourd.

From figure 68, one can identify the female gourd with a knoblike head tilted downwards. This is also likened to:

The Devotional Life of the Woman

If one can join the researcher on her early morning observation trips then one can attest to the enthusiasm with which the Ghanaian woman bows down now and then in devotion to a task. This includes making of supplication for the family, sweeping, cooking, washing, and even dosing off in ‘trotro’ due to insufficient sleep. All these devotional lives are seen in the tilted head of the gourd in figure 68.

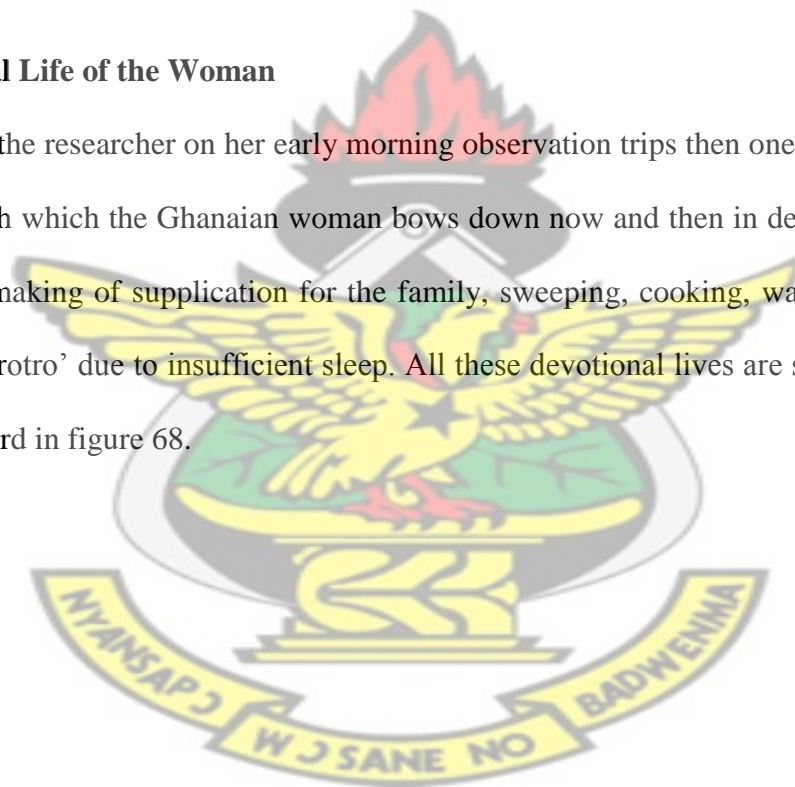




Figure 68, Asabea, *The Ghanaian Woman – A Portrait of life*, 2011, Installation, variable,

The portrait was outdoor one early morning in an open space beside a small grove, a bank, a maintenance garage, a principal street to the KNUST campus and also near the University Hospital.

The site chosen for the outdoor of this newly ‘birthed’ Ghanaian Woman was very important since where a work is situated could contribute to the type of audience expected. It attracted the lower, middle, and upper class, as well as literates and illiterates. The work could therefore not be completed as long as it resided just in its place of production without the viewer. This may be one of the reasons why Jon Bird, Mash, and Robertson, commented on some methodological tools: sites and modalities under visual culture. This includes the importance of (i) the site of production, (ii) the site of the image itself, and (iii) where it is seen by various audiences as stated by Rose (2005). No wonder Hall had earlier on affirmed that the production of visual images are encoded with preferred meanings by the producer yet these meanings could be decoded in quite different terms by a specific audience.

In figure 69, 70 and 71 viewers are seen giving more interpretation to the Ghanaian Woman.



Figure [69] Ongoing Discussions on the Outdoor *Ghanaian Woman* Among Viewers.





Figure 70, Answering Questions Posed by Other Supervisors on the *Ghanaian Woman*



Figure 71, From Afar they Admired and Disputed Over the Portrait of the *Ghanaian Woman*

Looking into the space where the woman was exhibited reminds us of her working space.

Working Space of the Woman

There was ample space for viewers as seen in the figure 71 above. Appreciating or criticizing the Woman from both far and near was done with fewer restrictions. Just as most women of our day with fewer restrictions operate beyond the kitchen even to the office of the president. So you see the woman in the same line, enjoys life much better when her cultural, social, economic, political, religious codes advance her into a less restricted space. In the review of literature we saw many instances where the life of the woman became unpleasant for her with a whole lot of restrictions and stereotypes defining her. The young woman undergoing mental, emotional and physical torture as a corrective measure for 'kyiribra' during pregnancy is seen by the researcher as limitation to growth especially to the growing foetus.

'My sister my brother you can best understand me when I behave like the Guerrilla Girls agitating for more space to showcase myself. Even the foetus in my womb does not need only geographical, biological or mental space, it also needs emotional and all other type of space you can name that advances human development.'

The duress that Jürgen went through as a young artist due to the cultural practices of the Nazi party discussed in chapter two was another example of limitation by space. She was not even allowed to exhibit in public.

In the field of education, job, voting, ownership, and unequal pay, the first and second wave movements stood up to bridge the space between the man and the woman.

Judy Chicago studied critically the space of the woman in terms of art history and noticed that women have not been included in art history books and to this she used art as a vehicle to write them back into history. As for the young Kholo her portrait is her life. She artistically represented her life right from the union of her parents, her conception, her childhood,

marriage, her tragic life and pains; even how she was dying slowly was all inclusive in her portrait. The researcher believes Khalo painted her life after death but it was highly metaphysical so the people around could not visualise it not alone to exhibit it. To the researcher the portrait of her subject is so vast that this research is just a tip of it. It is really an on-going research which requires everyday search in life. Another question that arises from this portrait is its variables in colour, shape, size, and materials. These introduce us to the versatile role of the woman.

KNUST

Versatile Nature of the Woman

As seen in figure 70, the Portrait of Life can be appreciated from below eye level, at eye level, and above eye level. Her challenges surrounding her are seen below eye level. For a better understanding of who the woman is, one is advised to view her from different eye levels. Different colours; blue, green, red, yellow, violet and the like are engaged in this portrait. Just name the colour and you will find it in the woman. Shapes of different materials such as round earrings, square beads, are also involved. Stone, glass, and synthetic plastic beads, cotton wool from sanitary pads obtained from different producers, cloth from both local and international textile producers, and shoes from different classes of women have been used to create the woman. The colours, shapes, different eye levels, different classes of people all in summary represent the versatile nature of the woman. Which area can't the woman operate in and even excel? The woman is seen as president – President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia, Secretary of State - Hillary Roodham Cliton of USA, Alice Coachman the Olympic high jumper in 1948 and so on. Time and space will not allow us to talk about boxers, and footballers. Even women are winning best national farmers award. What other field can one imagine? As far as ones imagination can stretch, is a woman already seated. The height of the woman shoots into the sky and blends perfectly into the

atmosphere where there are not much limitations. The gigantic gourd subdues all other challenges around her which shows the woman's ability to stand tall amidst limitations.

Living beyond Limitations

The researcher has purposefully created a gigantic gourd subduing all challenges – the smaller gourds; surround the woman because she believes her subject is endowed with much power and strength beyond her natural size. It is a clear indication that any woman who is conscious of who she is, the elements of design that she is composed of, thus the abilities and capabilities invested in her can operate in an open space irrespective of challenges. She gives no room for any form of suppressions and oppressions but by mere virtue of the indebt knowledge about herself, moves her into a space of fewer limitations as we see in figure 72.



Figure 72, Asabea, *The Ghanaian Woman Projecting into the Sky*.

It is of great importance for the woman – the Ghanaian woman to be conscious of the challenges her predecessors went through and the mechanism they put in place to meet these challenges. This will strategically position the woman amidst her challenges just as in this portrait the woman is incomplete without her challenges. She stands tall over her challenges. The researcher believes in the third wave feminist goal of Global unification. That is laying aside all differences that exist in the world of the woman, be it colour, class, age, and race, ethnicity, language and the like. There is the need to unite as one body as we walk towards our challenges in order to find antidotes. A collection of foot wears from different classes of women, different ages with different shapes, colours and heights have been used to represent the differences in the world of the woman in this portrait. Interestingly, they have migrated from one major source – the gigantic gourd which is their strength towards the substations of their challenges – the round tables with gourds and bowls. This gives beautiful divergent lines which conceptually represent majestic and bold steps in all directions towards all challenges as seen in figure 73.

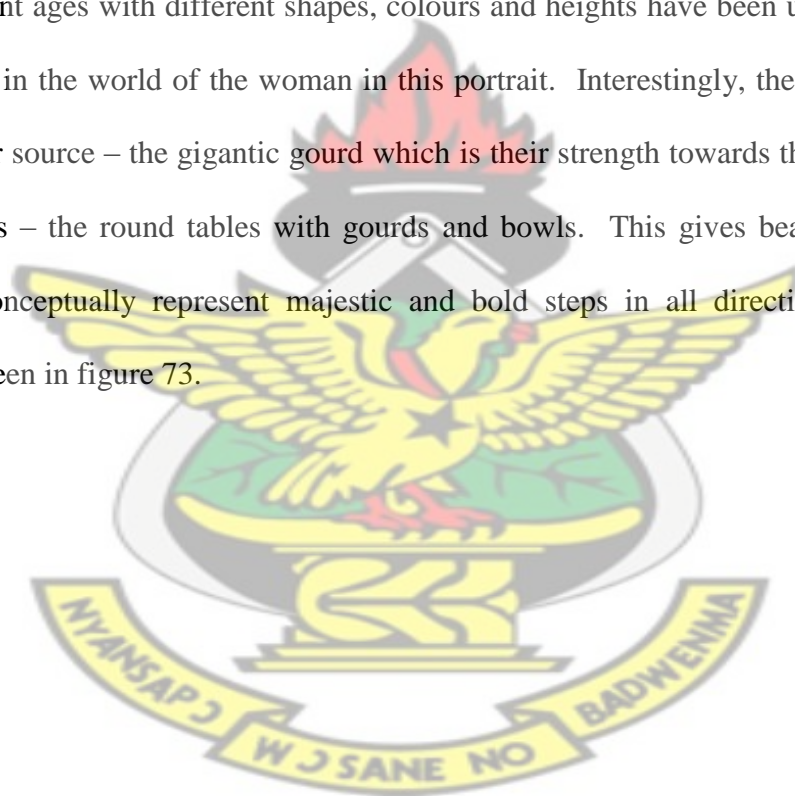




Figure 73, The March of a United Force of *The Ghanaian Woman*



Figure 74, Asabea, A Detail of *The Ghanaian Woman*, 2011, Installation, *variable*



Figure 75, Asabea, A Detail section of *The Ghanaian Woman*,
2011, Installation, Variable

A gradual shift due to innovations.

This work may be a little different from the portrait most Ghanaians are familiar with, yet to the researcher it is nothing new. She agrees with Foucault as he said; things keep on revolving through discovery and recovery, placement and replacement. Whatever happens at a time

is the position of that thing at its place in time. Even stability of a thing is an indefinite slowing down of movement for that thing as Foucault referred to Gallilio's discovery of the earth revolving around the sun. Foucault (1967)

Sculptural representation among many Ghanaian portraits may come in a visual imagery in clay, cement, stone, wood, bronze and at times in fibre glass. So also it is in painting. A portrait may suggest a painterly image in oils, acrylic, water colour, or shaded work in pencil charcoal and the like. To the researcher, these media have almost become monosymic because their place in time have been slowed down for a long time just as the woman's place as 'governess' slowed down for centuries. The displacement and replacement of these media in conceptual terms in this portrait are just their place in their time, because there has always been discoverings, displacing and replacing of values and concepts in the art world. Due to challenges faced by the woman every now and then, covered ideas beneficial to the woman are being uncovered to replace those which might have retarded her progress. Indeed things are shifting gradually. The shift may be so slow that sometimes with our naked eyes we cannot see, some are swift and forceful that it is obvious to man. Did it ever cross the mind of the Ghanaian woman who seemed to be permanently positioned in the kitchen some centuries ago as seen in figure 25 in chapter three that gradually her position would include that of a speaker of parliament as seen in figure 12 in chapter two - a gradual shift in the portrait - the life of the woman.

In figure 75 items have been placed at different locations depicting the gradual shift of certain values. The 'amoase' - the sanitary pad which was some years ago very prominent in use has received much advancement in technology and gradually the 'amoase' is giving way to a less time consuming, easy handling and more hygienic ones. Few examples are: 'Always', 'Proper', 'Pretty Lady' and 'Forever Easy' sanitary pads. Unlike 'amoase' which is washed

with its stains of blood so that it can be reused, the improved ones are not re-usable but are disposed off after use. Scarcely does one fidgit with blood during her flow. The woman who for the reason of her menstruation, that is, 'ko afikyiri' stays outside the coartyards of her home for seven or more days is now everywhere working to make ends meet. She is found in the banks, schools, restuarants, paliament, court, hospitals and such places where seven days rest each month, due to menstruation will although be a relief on her part yet deprive her of economic opportunities. So in figure 75 an 'always' sanitary pad, a content in a blue rectangular pack has been placed by the 'amoase' a red long satin strip hooked onto cords of locally designed beads. This is a sign of a shift pushing the 'amoase' gradually yet searving the same purpose. For reasons which are still not clear to understand, underwears are shifting from beneath garments and are now prominent as outer garments. Anyway, if the positions of things are gradually shifting who also said the place of underwears will permanently remain unchanged. There are supper impositions, juxtapositions and other placements and displacements all proving this point in figure 75. Waste beads and braziers which used to be covered are now worn as outer garments in this contemporary days. A number of inner garments have turned to outer garments. It is on this note that one may agree with the reseacher that the portrait of the woman comes along with both challenges and interventions past and present to affect the future. Few of the challenges that surround the contemporally woman are analysed below. It must be noted that most of the names given to these challenges are the reseachers own choice.

In the world of the contemporal woman lies the challenge of 'A Subject not Object'.

‘A Subject not Object’

To the researcher the woman is not an object but a subject. Her sentiments, emotions and rights should always be respected. Yet the challenge most women face is ‘the use of the woman as an object’. Most women, ignorant of what they are worth and their capabilities, allow themselves to be used as object and thrown away like empty milk tin. Some unfortunate ones end up losing their lives after they have been hewed down like trees, butched like mutton and stamped like the killing of a cocroach. In figure 76 the woman has been crushed with mallet, with blood stains all around with intestines gushing out.



Figure 76, Asabea, *A Subject not an Object* , 2011, Installation, variable

The woman is placed on a circular tray which appears in almost all challenges yet to be discussed. This is a symbol of how perfect the woman is in creation irrespective of her shape, colour, race, and ethnicity. The ‘edinkra’ symbols and the flags on the gourd and on the tray represent both the indigenous Ghanaian woman and the one influenced by foreign culture.

One will agree with the researcher that foreign influence through cross culture in this present day is just like the moving wave of the sea which is uncontrollable. The Ghanaian woman is of no exception. This is why in the united force of Global unification one woman's plight is of much concern to all.

Secondly, there is the challenge of unsafe sex. There are lot of theories and beliefs about sex by Jones, in dealing with the gynaecology of women. Freud in his psychoanalyses theories as well as Arthur and Kroker with many other philosophers have also said a lot about the sexuality of the woman. To the researcher, the summary of all the analyses should create much awareness for the woman so as to make every possible effort to avoid unsafe sex. Most sexual partners demand abortion because they may not be ready for another child. Meanwhile, whether safe or unsafe, abortion puts the woman at risk. She can easily die. Innocent children receive unfair treatment due to the frustration of parents not prepared for their arrival. Sexually transmitted diseases are contracted due to unsafe sex. The researcher believes that whenever one's partner is not fully in agreement to the sexual act which she believes takes two mutual partness, then the act is unsafe. When the two are not ready to take responsibility for the aftermoth consequences then that act is also unsafe. The awareness not to practice unsafe sex due to its hazards is a giant step for the woman. The era of the woman as a sexual puppet is shifting giving way to mutual agreement. Mating of two heterosexual partners are seen in this 'Unsafe Sex' in figure 77. The arrangement of the elements of design makes the work beautiful and attractive just as sex may look mutually beautiful and attractive. Yet a slight mistake can cost the woman a lot. The slight mistake is represented by a torn and patched condom on the phallus.



Figure 77, Asabea, *Unsafe Sex*, 2011, Installation, Variable

What about rape and sexual assault? Indeed it is a challenge in the woman's world. The woman has struggled with this challenge since time in memorial and even now. The accounts in 2 Samuel 13: 11-15 in the International Bible Society (1984) version of the Holy Bible reads:

But when she brought them near him to eat, he took hold of her, and said to her, "Come, lie with me, my sister." She answered him, "No my brother, do not force me; for such a thing is not done in Israel; do not do this wanton folly..." but he would not listen to her; and being stronger than she, he forced her and lay with her.

It is recorded that Amnon lured her half sister and raped her after which he hated her. Whether it is a fiction, parable or a true story the core value is that it communicates to us what Tamar went through because of the uncontrolled lust of her brother.

A Song to Tamar and Amnon – by the researcher

Oh! my poor sister Tamar what did you do to deserve this.

Where are you?

Come, come ! come along !

Join babies, teenagers, women and wrinkled old ladies who are raped on daily basis...

Sing along, discipline! self control! the hall mark.

For a slogan is roaring like a lion

Seeking whom it may devour

‘Wherever there is a hole there can be a rape’ – (slogan)

Think deep about your act thou Amnon.

For the set time for self control is come.

Among the several reasons for this indelicate act in the present day of the woman may include; everyday body language of the three year old girl, the semi-developed breast in a transparent mini dress worn by the adolescent, the rhythmic body of that woman or the tattered ‘kaba and slit’ worn by that poor old lady in the farm. To the researcher, all these reasons may have their grounds but the strongest of all is lack of self control by the Amnons. Arthur and Kroker (1991) believe that there is a great political reversal. The erected penis is losing its sacramental code, semiotic value and cultural prohibitions and now a predatory power over women and children. If the researcher is allowed to add to this belief then she will say the predator’s attention is not only on women and children, oh! but on men as well.

The bloody nature of a predator is seen in figure 78 ‘Rape and Sexual Assault’.



Figure 78, Asabea, *Rape and Sexual Asualt*, 2011, Installation, variable

In this work the bloody dildo is seen withdrawing from the tiny hole while tears of blood run down the annal of Tarma.



Figure 79, Asabea, *Higher rate of H.I.V. aids among women, 2011*, Installation, variable

Artistically, the female symbol for H I V aids is bigger than the male as seen in figure 79 above. This describes how the pandemic is sweeping more women than men. It is time that all women become aware of this and be extra carefull in their decisions. Without the awareness of our challenges our magestic global walk will be meaningless. This is a national and global issue as both the local and international symbols engulf the gourds.

Another challenge that hungs on the shoulders of most of the women, both Ghanaian and beyond is the challenge of mechanical reproduction. Life becomes more attractive with variety of colours and styles that come along with mechanical reproduction. Almost every part of the woman is becoming reproducible. Talk about the teeth, the nails, the hair, eye lashes and even the colour of the eye. What about the hyped breast and hips? Well, it may be a things' place in its time as Walter in the 1900's predicted about mechanical reprocuotion

in our days. To the researcher, the use of these mechanically reproduced items depend on individual decisions yet a caution is sound on the awareness of its hazards that it might cause to the natural, original and the authentic. Some have their natural nails getting softer and breaking off due to excessive fixing of acrylic nails. Some women have contracted some cancerious diseases which seem to be incurable. These, they attribute to excessive use of some drugs that could enlarge their breast to a required size they desired during their youthful days. Some of these women wale and cry during most of Opera Winfrey's programmes. They might have been attracted to the beauty and confort of the hyper real without much thought into the long term negative effects. Mechanically reproduced hair of different colours with acrylic nails have been used to represent the above challenge in figure 80.

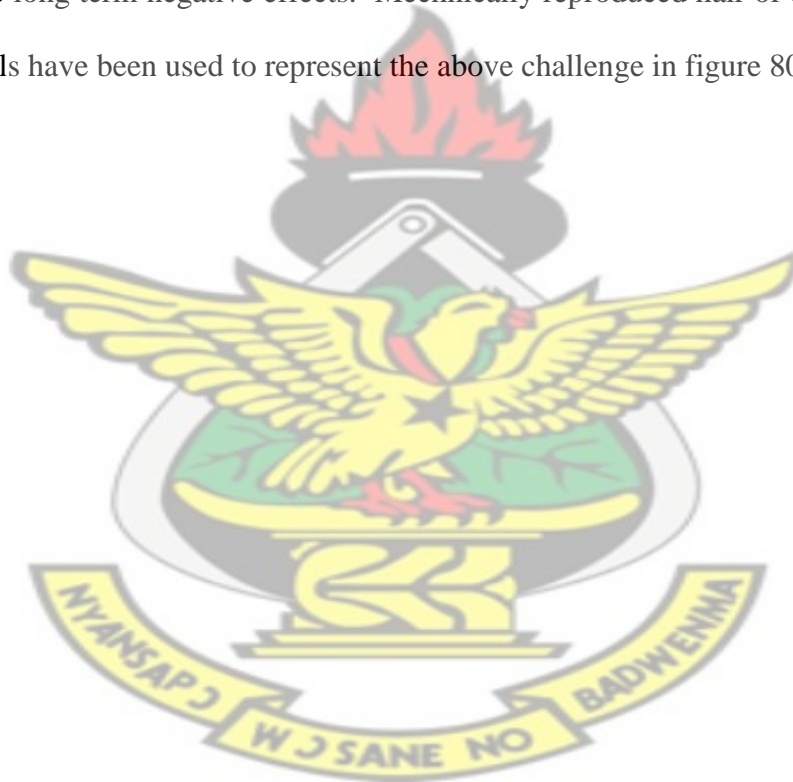




Figure 80, Asabea, *Mechanical Reproduction*, 2011, Installation, variable

This work has more breathing space around it. The woman with ample space in this work can explore more and more in the use of mechanically reproduced items, yet amidst it comes dangerous claws as designed in this art work ready to pounce and scrape off whichever flesh, the body, the natural, the original that avails itself.

The next on the list is the challenge of the 'Ideal' Artist like Polyclitus worked hard through portraits in sculpture to establish the ideal mathematically calculated form of the human figure. Hitler, a leader of the Nazi Party before World War II in 1932 preached the ideal world with paintings of serene cities with erected domes. The Rise of the Nazi Party (1918-2001] That may be the reason why he went ahead in an attempt to wipe off all tribes who do

not meet the standard of the ideal, Oh! How swiftly were the death of most Jews! This was some years ago. Yet in the portrait of the woman the place of the ideal is having an indefinite slowing down of movement. Some women keep on following any ideal fashion, style, and models like the pencil slim and cigarette slim. An ideal figure painted in their eyes from books and on screens. This is what the Guerrilla girls talked about that some people end up hating themselves for their very shape and their biological families due to certain family traits they might have inherited. Because they cannot accept themselves as the ideal, they take in drugs of all kinds with the intention of becoming the ideal. Just as they are about attaining the standard of the ideal they have so desired, then pops out another ideal standard. Oh! Woman when would you become the ideal? To the researcher the slim is also taken drugs equally as the fat. Some end up getting anorexia and bulimia all in an attempt to become the ideal they prefer. The idea of the ideal to the researcher is a restricted zone for the woman. An arena where there is mental suffocation because one is never satisfied with the air around her. Figure 81 is an artistic representation of 'The Ideal'. There is no space for the woman at all in this work. She is enclosed with too many drugs, ideas both local and international which are swallowed in day by day, night by night in an expectation to become the ideal.

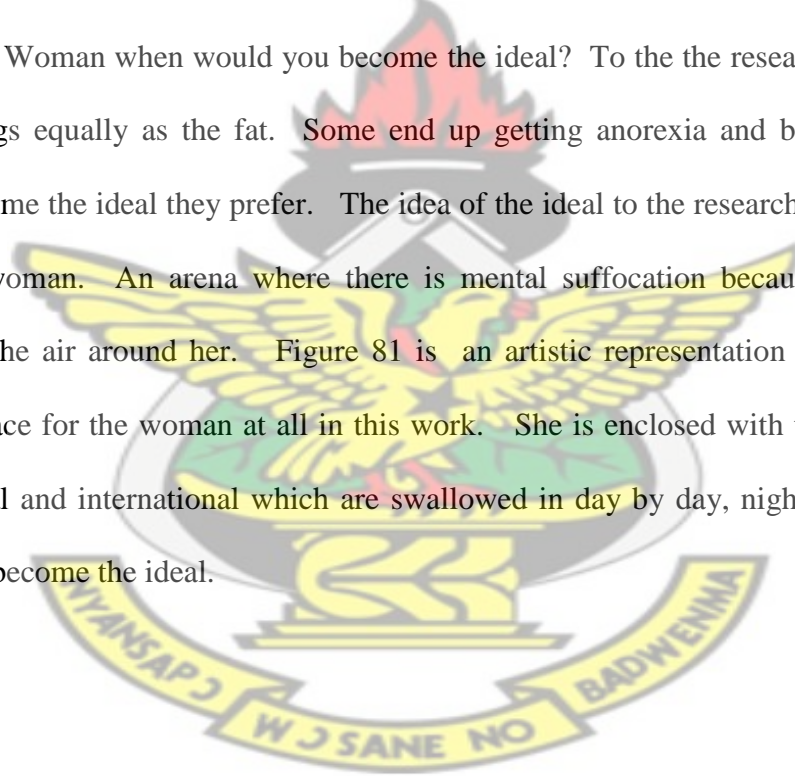




Figure 81, Asabea, *The Ideal*, 2011, Installation, Variable

As we march towards our challenges let us bear in mind that everyday of our existence is the ideal. Acceptance and appreciation of oneself on daily basis makes you settle with space enough to work with each day.



Figure 82, Asabea, *Single Parenting*, 2011, Installation, Variable

Another challenge included in this portrait is the challenge of Single Parenting, figure 82. In this work, the mother, the woman pulls along three children alone. In the Akan language among Ghanaians exist a proverb that says ‘wonam baanu sum firi a, wonam baanu na ewhe’ which literally means ‘if two set a trap, then it takes two to check on it.’ Though it takes two in the act of procreation, an egg from a female and a spermatozoa from the male to form a zygote yet most women are seen nurturing children alone. This may be due to many reasons. Some of which may include a search for greener pastures that necessitates migration from spouse, a claim for autonomy, irresponsible fathers, death of spouse and most at times a broken marriage. Though these reasons may have their grounds, yet for many other reasons this proverb suggests to all that, it is expedient for two to nurture. A number of children, both young and old can agree with the researcher that most single mothers don’t find it easy at all in matters of this kind. Some single mothers fast and pray to bring back home wayward children, some also sell their clothes and jewels in order to pay their children’s school fees

and also to put food on table. Amidst all, as we march towards our challenges let us bear in mind that in every challenging situation, one can create something good out of it. After all, the animus aspect of the woman represented by the iron rods in this portrait is not seen outside but covered yet it helps give the portrait stability. The iron rods can withstand test of time, yes that unique strength within! “So woman, do your best to bring the best out of that child or those children. You are endowed with much strength”

There is a sense of movement in this work which suggest to the woman that life continues even if it becomes necessary for her to carry the load of two alone. The three children are tied to their mother with the aid of a cord. Looking at this artistic cords reminds the mother of the umbelical cord that hooked these children to her navel at birth and never give up in such a situation. The cord can also be an artistic language for total obedience required from children towards mothers in such situations.

Now after the identification of all these challenges, overcoming them one after the other comes the challenge of societal and cultural stereotype. The old hug, the evil shrew and a witch await the woman at old age. The Guerrilla girls interestingly but seriously put it in this way; “...The dirty old man has an enviable side: He gets a credit for still having a sex drive. Our culture turns aging women into evil shrews instead of venerating them as wise women...” The Guerrilla Girls (n.d p 35). ‘Yoomo be Ga’ has been created artistically to represent this age where the woman goes through the stereotype of a witch. A female gourd clothed in a black satin cloth with a crown on the head squarts on a long broom. This represents a witch. It traces its source from Shakespear’s witches in Macbeth to Madam Defarge and Miss Havisham in Dickens. Witches do not exist in Greek methology alone but in most cultural and spiritual beliefs world wide.

At Gambaga witch camp in the Northern Region of Ghana a woman was burnt to death on suspicion of being a witch. African Women's Development Fund - published 2011. In figure 83 'yoomo be Ga' is a message for all. It literally means; 'there is no old woman in Ga' - the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. Among the Gas, as much as possible, running away from all appearance of old age is the best. Gray hairs are dyed black, wrinkles are overlayed with thick facial powder, dangling breasts are hyped to stand firm with synthetic foams just to mention a few. If in anyway, the attitudes of some elderly women have any traits of witches, causing harm to our communities then it is our duty to exorcize this stereotype decently in our magestic walk. All those who accuse the woman falsely should repent and honour her for her numerous services to humankind.



Figure 83, Asabea, *Yoomo be Ga*, 2011, Installation, Variable

What else needs to be discussed? In figure 84, there is the challenge on child bearing. The researcher's observation from childhood on child bearing has a lot to be analysed in this thesis report. Children were a great source of labour to most farmers, especially, in the community where the researcher grew up. Family planning was a matter of nature's own choice. Wives who by biological or any other reason could not produce many children saw husbands marrying other wives for the sake of having more children. Now there seem to be a shift on this value. Combine harvestors, tractors, weedicides and other advanced technology have been employed to reduce the manual hands that need to work on a farm. The Government is also spending a lot money on the importation of family planning drugs and the training of health personnel so that birth control will get to every home. Today, emphasies seem to dwell on quality but not soo much on quantity, the pride of the woman may no longer be many children surrounding her as seen in figure 84. Presently, most men may run away from sexually fertile women who at the slightest sexual contact with them results in another baby.



Figure 84, Asabea, *Value in Child Bearing*, 2011, Installation, Variable

Marriage is a very vital aspect in life, if not for any reason, at least for procreation. In the life of the contemporary woman certain qualities expected of her as she gets ready for marriage are gradually being replaced by technology. Talk about the work of rice cookers, microwaves, washing machines, hoovers, blenders and dish washers. Manual cooking, sweeping, hand washing, and other domestic chores may not be highly emphasised without a higher education that attract a reasonable income to support the family. Some even go an extra mile looking for highly spiritually inclined women to marry. Let us consciously nurture our girl child to be an all round marriageable subject for there is a big challenge on what used to await the young girl after 'bragoro'.



Figure 85, Asabea, *A Marriageable Subject*, 2011, Installation, Variable

The researcher appreciates some intangible tools that aided the commencement and conclusion of this thesis project. The researcher is particularly grateful to organisations such as UNICEF, WHO, GSHRDC, FIDA, DOVSU, WAJU, WAI, and others who have volumes of books and information on the woman. The researcher sees all photographic imageries taken during the workshops, seminars, exhibitions, at the market places as part of working space for the formation of the portrait. They are shown in figures 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, and 91.



Figure 86, A Seminar at the Engineering Guest House KNUST
with Dr kari and Dr. Shalom Goetz-2010.



Figure[87] Researcher at Senam Okujeto's presentation – Dei Center – Accra (2011)



Figure 88, Researcher Participating in Some Art Discussions at a Workshop
– Du Bois Centre – Accra (July 2010)

It is very vital to socialize with other artists, listen to their concepts and presentations. It is a healthy tool while writing ones thesis.



Figure 89, Interview with BON, A Painter and a Senior Lecturer - KNUST
on why he Paints Women?

Everybody may have a reason for something he or she engages his time in. In order not to jump into a hasty generalisation, it is good to inquire from the person if the information about him is true.



Figure 90, Researcher's Visit to the Pedicure and Manicure Saloon – Mamprobi Accra.

Most women are so fascinated on hearing that an artist is incorporating their activities into her work. They open up and give you more information on the grounds that the work would be exhibited at their convenience for them to view. It is one of many factors why the siting of the portrait of the woman in this project should be at a location accessible to all classes of people.



Figure 91, Asabea buys Textile Prints at 'makola' - Accra

It is very interesting being part of the everyday activities of the Ghanaian woman. Buying and socializing under the scorchy sun. The textile industry is one of the sectors in Ghana where women are highly appreciated. A number of the clothes purchased for this project bear the names of women or are made in honour of women. The researcher preferred these Ghanaian textiles to any others because the Ghanaian woman works so hard and deserves appreciation. Few of the names worth mentioning are seen in: figure 92, 'obaatan na onim nea nemma bedi' and figure 93, 'felicia'



Figure 92, 'obaatan na onim nea nemma bedi'



figure 93, 'Felicia'

In figure 92, two birds are actively feeding their baby in a nest – a sign of care and concern, making sure that there is food at table no matter the challenges the woman goes through.

Infact, there are millions of men in this present day who appreciate “the world of the woman” so much that they learn how to walk, talk, dress and act like women which in the former days

were seen to be an abomination. Kofi, a photographer at Bomso - a suburb of Kumasi, is such one male character. When interviewed by the researcher, he says he is just comfortable with his appearance. Figure 94 shows Kofi in earrings and chemicalised hair strands, traits normally associated with the Ghanaian Woman. As for the nose and mouth rings they can be said to be a cross cultural influence.



Figure 94, Kofi in pose.

Infact the world of the woman is shifting from a sexual puppet, a weaker vessel, a man's property, a chattle ... as discussed in chapter two into an inevitable subject of appreciation where some men are so proud to be affiliated.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMEMDATIONS

Summary

The portrait of the woman in this project touches on most major aspects of her life. It portrays the woman in areas such as cultural beliefs, myths, educational, religious as well as her everyday challenges. Emphasis is not on just a portion, for example, frontal, three quarter view or profile satisfying neither the minimalist, nor rules that emanate from the stereotypes of the Avant Gardiest beliefs, nor the idealist who does not promote feminism.

The style, techniques, as well as materials which formed the elements and principles of designs in this portrait, come from a wide range of disciplines though much emphasis was given to painting and sculpture. These show the versatile and dynamic nature of the woman which go beyond defined boundaries and yet suggest a polysemic and heterogeneous space in which she operates.

The portrait gives a deeper and a wider spectrum to the life faces of the woman's role as she migrates from governess, a man's chattel and property, from the demarcated zone of the home to the public space like the offices and factories. It elaborates on the works of various artists like Juddy Chicago, Georgia O'Keefee, Caroline Shernmann together with other feminist movements whose artistic emancipation greatly advanced the facial shift in the portrait of the woman. In the portrait lie unforeseen expectations, an open ended space for the woman to explore and change circumstances around her as she confronts her everyday challenge.

Conclusion

Painting, sculpture, textile, graphics, ceramics and the like are all visual media through which the artist communicates. Whether painting or sculpture, painting and sculpture combined or better still combination of all the known disciplines the most important objective is a successful communication of an intended idea. It must therefore be noted that every single step from observation, idea development, preliminary sketches, the production process, where and how it was made are equally important in this portrait.

The site of exhibition - the open field welcomed different class of people who could view the woman from afar and near. This was a necessary tool in the portrait of the woman as well.

How do you see the woman? What elements and principles of design do you see in the woman that calls for appreciation? Do you have ample space to observe the woman from afar and also closer? Does the space around you encourage advancement in the life of the woman? How do you deal with myth and cultural practices that either reduce the woman into a restricted zone of stereotype or raise her too high into an archetype that she has not yet attained? Anyway, in this present day where there is flow of communication across borders in both soft and hard copies, one must make sure to have updates in all areas of the woman so as to avoid the use of old data in a current situation. This will help us to appreciate the woman from afar and closer. It will also help us to reprogram our minds to welcome innovations that occur in the life – portrait of the woman. Materials, styles, and techniques also move from one position to the other depending on the contextual settings. Karl Marx put it earlier on in chapter one that the production of art necessarily depends on its immediate context.

Recommendations

1. Depending on how one sees the woman and what information the artist wants to carry out there can be several variations in the art of portrait making. It can be in terms of materials, tools and techniques. It doesn't necessarily have to be an exact replica of a person through painterly, shaded, or sculptured images.
2. In the art of portrait making emphasis can be on the hand, legs, eyes or any other part of the body. In instances where metaphorical and conceptual aspect of the woman is the core, different object like stone, plants, animals can even be used to represent a portrait. In this thesis project, the gourd has been used in different ways to conceptualise the woman.
3. Installation portraiture gives room for mounting and dismantling when appropriate. It makes it more flexible with the same portrait to be re-arranged differently to give different meanings as things keep on shifting.
4. The knowledge and the approach to the art of portrait making in this project are recommended as a source of information to Undergraduates, Senior High School students and wherever education can penetrate. Most students, town folks, bank officials, traders, security personnel, just to mention a few, who came around during the exhibition least expected a portrait to take such a form and to carry such messages.
5. As already discussed in chapter four, this project thesis does not give a defined boundary or a frame to the entire knowledge of the woman but gives room for the researcher and all stakeholders to go on and on in search of what has been covered and uncovered, what needs to be shifted gradually or swiftly for others to take over. This will help improve on the portrait of the woman.

Bibliography

- “A Teachers Guide to the Holocaust” (2005) The Rise of the Nazi Party, Florida Center for Instructional Technology, College of Education, University of South Florida.
<http://fcit.usf.edu/holocaust/TIMELINE/nazirise.HTM> Accessed 25 January, 2012
- Adams L. S. (1996) The Methodologies of Art, An introduction. Westview Pres, 5500 Central Avenue, Colorado U.K
- Arthur & Kroker M. (1991) The Hysterical Male, New Feminist Theory. Ctheory Books in Partnership with NWP
- Bluden A. (1996) The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction, Proof and Corrected Feb. 2005.
<http://www.marxist.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/ge/benjamin.htm>
- Brain O’doherty (1976) Inside the White Cube Inside
<http://www.societyofcontrol.com/whitecube/insidewc2.htm> . Accessed 17 January, 2012.
- Cusack K. and Manuh T. (2009) The Achitecture for Violence Against Women in Ghana, Unik Image Ltd.
- Echols A. (1986) Daring to be Bad: Radical Feminist in America 1967-1975.
Minneapolis: University of Mannesota Press. Pp. 416. 29 December 2011.
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feminist-movement>. Accessed 26 January, 2012
- Haddad M. (2006) “Egalitarian Pioneers’ Betty Freedan or Catherine Booth?” Prislila Papers 20 (4). 3rd August 2011. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feminism>

International Bible Society, (1984) The Holy Bible, N.I.V., Bible Society in
Australia Inc.

Jones D. L. (1998) Every Woman, The Gynaecological Guide for Life. Ninth Edition,
Penguin Books Limited, England

Kantanka S. B. (n.d.) Twi Kasa Mmara Ne Amammre II, Eridas Printing Press Airport
Round About.

Meskimmon M. (2000) “Das Atelier” Spatiality and Self Portraiture in the work of Greth
Jurgens. (vol. 21) Women’s Art Inc. 31 July 2010
<http://www.jstore.org/stable/1358866>

Micheal Foucault (1967) “Des Espaces Autre” French Journal
Architecture/Movement/Continuite in 1984.
<http://Faucult.info/documents/heteroTopia/foucault.Topia.enhtml>
Accessed 26 January, 2012

Rose G. (2005) Visual Methodologies of Art. Sage Publications Ltd.

Sertima V. T (1984) Journal of African Civilization, Black Woman in Antiquity Vol. 6,
No. 1. Journal of African Civilization Ltd. Inc.

Tetty R. E. (2002) Motherhood. An experience in the Ghanaian Context, Ghana
University Press.

The African Women’s Development Fund (AWDF) Published on 20th January 2011 by
AWDF in AWDF Blog. <http://www.uwdf.orggg/browe/1497>
Accessed 17 February, 2012

The Guerrila Girls, (n. d) Bitches and Binbos, Ballbreakers (A penguin Book, Women Studies)

The “Creative Act” Art News, Summer (1957), Top Ten Quates from the Surrealists # 10
– Bad, Good or Indifferent.

http://www.alternativereel.com/includes/top.ten/display_review.php?id=ooo93

Accessed 6th February, 2012

Vicinus M. (1972) Suffer and Be Still: Women of the Victorian Age.

<http://books.google.com.gh/books?id=zd00AAQAAjandpg>

Welsh R. M. (1987) The Psychology of Women, an On Going Debate. Vail – Ballou Press, inc., Binghamtom New York.

