UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

SET DESIGN WITH ADINKRA SYMBOLS FOR TV3’S GHANA’S MOST BEAUTIFUL 2014.

BY

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THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF MASTER’S OF FINE ARTS DEGREE

2016
DECLARATION

I, Stephen Koomson with candidate number 10441752, hereby declare that this thesis-project: Set Design with Adinkra Symbols for TV3’s Ghana’s Most Beautiful 2014 is the result of my own research under the supervision of Mr. John Djisenu and Dr. Agyeman Ossei.

This work has not been presented for any other degree elsewhere. I also declare that I have duly acknowledged any citation, reference and ideas of other scholars in this work.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to the Almighty God for His continuous protection and guidance. I also dedicate this work to Mr. Seth Adjetey-Agoe for his unrelenting support and prayers.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am most grateful to Almighty God for seeing me through a successful completion of this thesis-project. I give Glory to His Holy name.

I wish to express my sincerest gratitude to my main supervisor, Mr. John Djisenu, for his patience, understanding and constant encouragement. J.K.D I will forever remain grateful.

Dr. Agyeman Ossei (my co-supervisor), your welcoming advice was a garrison against the inevitable storms of confusion and tension within me, thank you.

I am humble by the immense financial support from Mr. Seth Adjetejy Agoe throughout the period of my studies. I most grateful Daddy. To my parents, your constant prayers and encouragement were all that I needed. Thank you.

Nii Quaye Nash, Doreen Cudjoe, Flora Obeng-Adu and Anastasia Akosua Mussey offered their soft shoulders for me to lean on when the going became hard-hitting, God bless you.

This project would not have been successful without the enormous contributions and assistance from Agnes Adomako-Mensah, Comfort Effina-Williams, Harriet Debrah Otchere, Selorm Dotse, Michael Ayensu, Abigail Sena Atsu (Manye), Lenny Amoo (Chief), Ebenezer Teye Kwame, Iddrisu Kanazue, and Solomon Dartey, thank you.

To the management of TV3, Atta Oko, Mr. Abbey, Jojo Quansah all of the National Theatre, I am most grateful.
ABSTRACT

Seeking to project and promote the Ghanaian identity and culture through women, TV3, a private television in Ghana has since 2007 introduced its flagship programme Ghana’s Most Beautiful (GMB). A comprehensive deconstruction of the show reveals appreciable level of efforts put in by the producers to project and promote the Ghanaian culture in some aspects such as costume designs and dance performances. However, that commendable effort is quite negligible in the area of set design. Ghanaian elements appear loudly silent in the set designs for GMB. Owing to this shortcoming, this project used four selected Adinkra symbols Okɔdeɛ mmɔwɛre (talons of eagle), Duafe (wooden comb), Dweninimmen (ram horn) and Mate Masie (what I hear, I keep) to design the set for the eighth season of GMB. The design concept culminated in a blend of the four symbols into a “crown-like” set.

The thesis-project utilized the artistic methodology. This methodology became handy and effective as it required the researcher to practically construct the design and not only to describe and document it.

It became apparent that although Adinkra traces its origin to Asantes, its utilitarian relevance goes beyond the Asante culture. That notwithstanding, it was also strikingly obvious that perhaps artists have excessively utilized Adinkra symbols to the detriment of symbols from other ethnic and regional jurisdictions.

The thesis-project concludes and recommends that scenic design students are encouraged to extensively research on and use in their designs more Ghanaian symbols which are gradually becoming extinct. This will help preserve and document these symbols for posterity.
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**ABBREVIATIONS**

GMB. .......................................................................................................................*Ghana’s Most Beautiful*
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Overview

This chapter gives a general introduction and background to the study. The discussions cover four selected Adinkra symbols used for a set design for Ghana’s Most Beautiful (2014). It also covers the problem statement, objectives of the study and the research questions as well as the methodology used in executing the project. The chapter ends with the significance of the study, the limitations, delimitations and the organization of the work.

1.1 Background to the Study

Every society or group of people has certain possessions that can be readily used in identifying them. These possessions “cover their ideas, inventions, institutions, languages, technology, art and crafts, literature, music, ways of farming, buildings and traditional symbols.”¹ These possessions are described as the culture of the people.

The Macmillan Dictionary of Anthropology defines culture as a “complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired as a member of society.”² These traits do not only bind the people, they also give them their identity. This identity becomes a set of customs, practices and meanings and shared traits and experiences.³

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²Macmillan Dictionary of Anthropology
The identity of the people makes them conscious of their ethnicity, nationality and their religion. In essence, culture plays a very important role in the identity construction of every group.

One of the key ways of communicating peoples’ identity is through traditional symbols. Traditional symbols do not only aid in the identification of a group, they also help in communicating the ideals of the people. Traditional symbols are “visual representations for communication through which a particular culture has applied their philosophies, knowledge and skills to execute specific functions in society.”

Societies through the world have drawn upon important symbols as a means of distinguishing their community from others. Symbols are an adaptive necessity for our system of indoctrination. They are used as encoding instruments to make important information more easily and accurately assailable.

In the above description, it is evident that traditional symbols do not only play a key role in differentiating one nation, society and authority from the other, they are also used in sending otherwise onerous messages in a simpler form for easy accessibility and comprehension.

Traditional symbols form part of the tangible characteristic of every culture. Essentially, traditional symbols are “visible form of an invisible concept. They are objects, characters or other concrete representations of ideas, concepts or other abstractions.”

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4 Atiase, Cleveland Edem Kwesi (2012) Aesthetic and Educational underpinnings of Signs and Symbols Among the Central Ewes of Ghana (Thesis)

5 Ibid.

Traditional symbols are used to directly or indirectly send coded messages. In some situations, individuals need special insight of these symbols to be able to decode such messages. Traditional symbols can arouse one’s mind’s eye and intuition to discover new meanings and insights. Traditional symbols can also compel one to go beyond limited definition of what they stand for in order to explore other meaning or meanings.

In Ghana, one of such traditional symbols that have been very instrumental in the above mentioned functions is the Adinkra symbols. Many institutions and individuals have in, diverse ways, used Adinkra symbols to communicate ideas, philosophies, concepts, “supporting the transmission of a complex and nuanced body of practice and belief.”

The subject matter of this study is to use four selected Adinkra symbols to design a set for Ghana’s Most Beautiful (2014).

Adinkra “traces its origin to the people of the Asante region of Ghana.” These symbols were developed “based on various observations of and associations between humans and objects they use and elements of nature.” Although Adinkra traces its root to the Asantes, its usage “transcends the Asante culture and have adapted to the social, cultural, and historical changes that have characterized modern Ghanaian society.”

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7 See Appiah, Kwame Anthony, In my father’s house: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture
Designers and artisans in Ghana, over the years, have also used Adinkra symbols extensively in their works. Such works include “textiles, pottery, stools, umbrella tops, linguist staffs, gold weights, jewelry, swords, architecture”\textsuperscript{11} and on national monuments such as the state sword and the presidential seat in parliament, among others. Most of these artistic works are utilized by people with diverse backgrounds.

1.2 Problem Statement

Set design does not only spice up any stage performance but it is also required to contribute significantly to the overall success of performances; whether on stage or television. Set design for any performance should aim at reflecting “the themes, mood, and style as well as indicating the historical or geographic context of the production… and subsequently act as a communicator to the audience.”\textsuperscript{12}

In executing these functions, set designers utilize certain design elements that are relevant to the production. These elements are selected through research and constant consultations. Therefore, “it is disheartening to see designs which lack coherence and are given a poor second place in any production.”\textsuperscript{13}

In an effort to help promote and maintain the Ghanaian culture, TV3 Network, a free-to-air private television station in Ghana, has introduced a flagship program, Ghana’s Most Beautiful (GMB) that seeks to project Ghanaian culture through women.


\textsuperscript{12}Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones (2001): The Use of Set and Costume Design in Modern Productions of Ancient Greek Drama retrieved from www2.open.ac.uk/ClassicalStudies/GreekPlays/essays/LLJ1.do. p.1

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid
After a careful observation and analysis of the various components such as the costumes and the properties (props), of the program from the year 2007 to 2013, one can appreciate the effort made to use Ghanaian elements. For instance, during the weekly performances, contestants are seen clad in popular and well-known Ghanaian garments such as the Kente and beads. Various props such as traditional skins and stools from the different regions are also used by the contestants.

Despite that commended effort, one can also observe that one very key component of the program that lacks the same attention is the set design. Although it may not be binding on the organizers to, necessarily, use Ghanaian elements in the set design; it is the view of the researcher that using Ghanaian elements such as the Adinkra symbols in their set designs will boost their efforts of promoting and projecting Ghanaian culture.

After extensive study of the set designs for show from the year 2007 to 2013, the researcher observed that in almost all the set designs for the period, Ghanaian artistic elements have not been given much consideration.

As a set design student, the question that readily came to mind was: how does one utilize the knowledge and techniques in design to come up with a design that will boost TV3’s effort of projecting Ghanaian culture. That was the motivation for this study. The aim of the researcher was to contribute to filling this gap by using four selected Adinkra symbols to design a set for the final show of the season eight of Ghana’s Most Beautiful.
1.3 Objectives of Study

The objectives of this study were;

1. To use four Adinkra symbols Okədeɛ mmɛwɛre (talons of eagle), Duafɛ (wooden comb), Dweninimmɛ (ram horn) and Mate Masie (what I hear, I keep) to design a set for TV3’s Ghana Most Beautiful 2014.

2. To artistically alter and infuse the four symbols without compromising the recognition of the original design.

3. To recommend ways of adopting more of the traditional Ghanaian symbols in set design.

1.4 Research Questions

The following questions guided the researcher in the execution of the project;

1. What are Adinkra symbols?

2. What is the correlation between set design and Adinkra symbols?

3. How representative are Adinkra symbols as Ghanaian symbols?

1.5 Methodology

This research adopted the artistic methodology. This method “deals with relativity, contains elements that cannot be quantitatively or empirically measured, and allows for reliance on intuition, inspiration and imagination. The artistic methodology is for artistic creation and interpretation: developing a model...designing and building set or costumes.”14

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The researcher engaged in a string of interviews, discussions and consultations with the contestants, directors and producers of GMB. This enabled the researcher to get acquainted with the exact concept behind the reality show. Out of these meetings and discussions, the researcher put forward the concept of using *Adinkra* symbols. The final design reached was based on the appropriateness and significance of the selected symbols to the bigger concept of GMB.

The researcher kept a constant consultation with supervisors who are seasoned designers with vast knowledge on the subject matter. However, views and comments solicited from the various groups and individuals did not inform the final design but rather guided the researcher.

The researcher also went through the following steps in executing the project:

- Collected data from journals, articles and other publications on set design, *Adinkra* symbols and *Ghana’s Most Beautiful*.
- Sought permission from producers (TV3) of *Ghana’s Most Beautiful*.
- Attended rehearsal sessions of the contestants at studio ‘B’ of TV3.
- Mobilized essential materials and logistics that helped in the execution of the design.
- Measurements, thumbnail sketches and detail drawings of the design as well as the floor plan were outlined and drawn to aid in the construction.
- The set was constructed at the National Theatre of Ghana and shifted to the Accra International Conference Centre.
• A trial setup was carried out prior to the main event to help identify and correct any lapses and oversight that might have occurred during construction.

• The set was strike down for storage after the event came off successfully.

1.6 Significance of the Study

Despite its commended attempt in addressing and educating Ghanaians on our culture, values and norms, TV3 Network can do more by exploring how to inculcate more indigenous elements as Adinkra in its set designs.

The great visionary, Edward Henry Gordon Craig, has asserted that scenic design in any stage production “may transcend reality and function as symbols...thereby communicating a deeper meaning, rather than simply reflecting the real world.”¹⁵ Set design can be used as a very effective communicating tool in addressing any issue.

This study reviewed the program; Ghana’s Most Beautiful, explored and incorporated four Adinkra symbols in the set design for the season eight of the event. The project has also brought to light other ways of breaking away from the monotonous means of using the Adinkra symbols by artistically altering and infusing the symbols into one design.

This will serve as a blueprint for other production houses and companies who may want to embark on similar projects in future. Also, documented findings from the research will serve as a reference material for future designers at the School of Performing Arts, University of Ghana and beyond.

1.7 Delimitation

This thesis-project used four selected Adinkra symbols to design the sets for GMB (2014). It presupposes, then, that the design should be used for all the seasons of the reality show. However, though the research spans the eighth season of the program, it delimited its scope to designing for only season eight of the program. Again, the scope of materials used for the construction informed the delimitation.

1.8 Limitation

Although there were other traditional symbols, the main focus of the study was however, on Adinkra symbols. This limitation was as a result of the lack of adequate information on the other traditional symbols. There appeared to be disjointed, scanty, and scattered information on the other traditional symbols from other ethnic groups in Ghana. The study therefore limited its scope to using Adinkra symbols in the set design for season eight of TV3’s Ghana Most Beautiful.

This project was a creative work of art, and as such, ample time was needed to identify and experiment with a number of possible materials for use. However, time became a great challenge to explore other alternative designing process and materials. Time for designing and constructing the work especially with respect to the deadline for the grand finale posed a limitation in terms of the endless possibilities.
1.9 Ghana’s Most Beautiful

TV3 Network Limited (according to the station’s official website\textsuperscript{16}) is a free-to-air, private television station located at Kanda in Accra, Ghana. Commissioned in 1997, the station engages in broadcasting, communications, film, television and video business. It produces a variety of television programs including news bulletins, dramas and children entertainment shows. It also boasts of sixty-five (65\%) nationwide coverage. Some of its flagship programs include \textit{Mentor, Talented Kids, Music Music}, the UEFA champions’ league, the \textit{Pulpit, Celebrations} among a host of others.

The station has chalked numerous laurels including The Best TV Station 2004 at the Radio and Television Awards 2004, and Sports Station of the year 2004, (National Sport Journalists Association). Some of the station’s competitors include the national broadcaster, Ghana Television, United Television and Metro Television, all in Ghana.

In the year 2007, TV3’s \textit{Ghana’s Most Beautiful}, a reality show with the theme, “Redefining Beauty to Promote National Unity”, was initiated. This reality show sought to project Ghana’s unique culture by promoting national unity among the regions, its people, their culture and values.

The show brought together ten (10) female contestants from all the ten (10) regions of Ghana. The ten contestants were then housed in a private residence for two (2) months. During this period the ladies were trained and rehearsed. After the rehearsals the contestants displayed rich tradition from their various regions.

\textsuperscript{16}http://www.tv3.com.gh
In a quest to find out the concept behind the show, Felix Gontoh, the Brands Manager of TV3 told the researcher that “the show gives us what is about us and makes us Ghanaian. At the heart of the pageant is the indispensable concept of national unity. The concept is centered on ethnic settings and as such purposefully created avenues that will cement the foundation of unity.”\textsuperscript{17}

Every weekend (Saturdays), the beautiful and talented women displayed to the nation something new from their respective regions. The contestants gave presentations on social, historical as well as cultural issues from their respective regions. After three (3) months of the contest, the most beautiful in knowledge, moral values and good upbringing in the ways of her people was crowned Ghana’s Most Beautiful. It was an entertainment program but very educative and informative. With the year understudy marking the eight season, GMB has produced the following Beauty Queens:

2007: Hannah Ampomah Mensah (Central region)
2008: Naa Adoley (Greater Accra region)
2009: Nasara Miriam Abdul Rauf (Northern region)
2010: Nana Ama Agyeiwaa (Eastern region)
2011: Salomey Amoako Mensah-Akua (Ashanti region)
2012: Emefa AkosuaAdeti (Volta region)
2013: Lawrencia Ayapoka (Upper-East region) and the recently crowned
2014: Bentie Abigail Baciara (Upper-West region)

\textsuperscript{17}Felix Gontoh, Head of brands 15\textsuperscript{th} September, 2014, Adesawe, Kanda Accra
1.10 Organization of Work

The research was structured into the following five chapters;

Chapter one, the introductory chapter, covered the background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives, research questions and significance of the study. It also contains the delimitation and limitation and as well as the organizational structure of the research is contained in the chapter one.

Chapter two was structured into two broader phases. The first phase examined the historical background, development and practice of set design as well as the role and importance of set design. A correlation between set design and symbols was then established. The other aspect of the review interrogated the history, usage and importance of Adinkra symbols. The chapter concludes by discussing the relevance of using Adinkra symbols in the set design for Ghana’s Most Beautiful (2014).

The third chapter outlined the methodology used in executing the project. It started with a general overview of the methodology used and the rest of the chapter was organized into the following thematic subjects: proposal presentation and approval from the Department of Theatre Arts, University of Ghana, securing the right from TV3, preliminary studies and research, concept formulation for final design, rehearsals schedule, budgeting, logistic and material mobilization, construction process, shifting, trial and final set-up.

Chapter four analyzed the project as executed. The analysis covered brief descriptions of the four selected Adinkra symbols, the design technique, placement of the symbols and their significance, artistic renderings of the symbols and the final design, materials used and the justification and working drawings for the project are also discussed.
The fifth chapter concluded on the thesis-project. It discussed some findings, outlined the challenges faced and proffered some recommendations.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Overview

This chapter reviews relevant literature on the key areas of this research: Set design with Adinkra symbols for TV3’s Ghana’s Most Beautiful (2014). The chapter is structured into two broader phases. The first phase examined the historical background, development and practice of set design as well as the role and importance of same. The other aspect of the review interrogated the history, usage and importance of Adinkra symbols. It concluded by discussing the relevance of using Adinkra symbols in the set design for Ghana’s Most Beautiful (2014).

2.1 History, Development and Practice of Set Design

Set design falls under the general definition and principle of design. Bertaline et al (1998:58) has defined design as the act of organizing the creative and analytical process used to satisfy a needed or solved problem. According to Papanek (1972:36) a design is a mock of action which a design fulfills its purpose and function. In the view of Amenuke, et al (1991:32), a design is carefully planned arrangement of the various components that will make up the setting. In his support, Wong (1972:5) explained that, design is a process of purposeful visual creation. It is clear from these definitions that; the art of designing must be carefully planned to suit the purpose for which it is made. In the specific place of set design, it is defined as the art of creating a background or an environment for a theatrical or television production.18

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The Encyclopedia Britannica also defines set design as the art and technique of designing and building a space intended primarily for the performance of a drama and its allied arts by live performers who are physically present in front of a live audience.¹⁹

Set design is an area of the theatre’s visual systems that affects the creation and reception of a play. Set design is created within a specific theatrical space for a specific period of performance. The notion of theatrical space is, of course, very important in the understanding of set design.²⁰

Set design falls under the umbrella criterion scenery which embodies the visual images of sets, properties (props) costumes, and lighting. It has taken several names such as scenography, stage design, set design, production design, and scenic art among others.²¹ These terms are used interchangeably.

The history of set design in the theatre is traced to the classical Greek era. Designers of Greek theatres were the first to understand the communicative experience between the stage and the audience.²² Greeks started using the rear wall of their theatres as the scenic background to their plays.

Later, the Greeks introduced a background building called skene (hence, scene), which was connected to the stage. The skene was a small wooden hut erected behind the playing area in which the actors changed costumes. The skene became a two-storey building with doorways in front and an entrance by either side. The floor in front of the skene was

¹⁹ http://www.britannica.com/art/theatre-design
²⁰ Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones (2001): The Use of Set and Costume Design in Modern Productions of Ancient Greek Drama retrieved from www2.open.ac.uk/ClassicalStudies/GreekPlays/essays/LLJ1.do
²¹ Refer to http://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/Stage+Design
elevated with steps leading down to the orchestra and served as the scenic background of their plays.  

Other sophisticated scenic devices such as the *periaktoi* (revolving prisms with painted scenery), *eccyclema* (wagons for tableaus) and *mechane* (flying machines) were later developed. Connected to the *skene* was the *periaktoi*, a triangular wooden panels hinged together. The panels were painted to serve as the background for their productions. Each of these panels was painted differently to represent a different location. A change of scene will call for the rotation of the *periaktoi* to reveal the new scene.

Another device the Greeks used for their scenic background was the *pinake*, a type of flat with wooden frames covered with stretched fabric. Although the *pinake* served the same purpose as the *periaktoi*, the former was not hinged together and was covered with a stretched material.

Brocket (1994) as well as Wilson and Goldfarb (2008) have argued that scenic design during classical Greek period was minimal and not given much attention. Wilson and Goldfarb (2008:50) for instance, point out that in Greek theatre there were only hints that the setting had changed and frequently, these hints were provided only in the dialogue of the characters.

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24 Ibid
The apparent absence of elaborate set during this period was “because of the vast size of the theatres and the limitations imposed by an outdoor space, it was impossible to create a unique environment for every play.”26 Gist of the settings of the plays that were staged during the period as carried, mostly, in the lines of the characters, were emphasized by the choice of music and dance as well as the costumes used. This practice, although rudimentary, paved the way for scenic design convention in the theatre. The practice runs and developed through the various marked historical periods.

During the Roman era, the background, a three-door skene, was always a street; from the point of view of the actor facing the audience, off left indicated the town adjacent points and off right indicated an exit to the country or distant point. A curtain was sometimes used to open the play; it was dropped into a trough as the play began.27

The medieval era saw the introduction of mansions and wagons. These were extensive sets of visual signs that were used to communicate with a largely illiterate audience.28 Religious plays were performed first within, and later in front of, the church, with the separate scenes organized around and open spaces.29 Mansions were standardized scenic elements that depicted the various locations such as Heaven, hell, the Garden of Eden among other locations depicted in the liturgical drama.

26 ibid
Mansions were often mounted on a platform in front of a church, or in a town square. The mansions were arranged together with the wagons to create the appropriate setting. The wagons were usually held between one and three mansions and pulled from one location to the other.30

The practice of scenic design gained pronounced prominence during the 18th to 19th Centuries. This period experienced great changes in the theatre. The period profoundly affected intellectual life at the time and influenced literature, philosophy, art, music, politics, science, religion, and other aspects of intellectual analysis. As new ideas emerged, theatre took a new form. Creative reawakening affected the design of theatre structures as well as set design practice.

Theatres began to build permanent sets as part of their repertoire. The manner in which the scenery was created was not tailored to the specific needs of any particular production. Instead, they depicted locations that were standard and can be used for any of the production to the ordinary person. This included a nobleman’s library, a courtyard, and a forest among others.31

During this period, a movement known as realism and produced some of the first plays that focused on social issues in the lives of ordinary citizens rather than on actions of the aristocracy and monarchs. This shift of thematic focus caused a major innovation in scenery. Realism demanded and led to the proliferation of sets that represented everyday life.32

30 Retrieved from global.britannica.com/art/stagecraft on 13/06/2015
32 Ibid
This meant accurate representation on stage real life settings. Set designs during this period were characterized by historical accuracy, development of realistic box set and a revolt against two-dimensional world.  

The realism movement brought realistic details to scenic design. The set design establishes the frame of action on stage, using pictorial, plastic, architectural or other means and the set can communicate a variety of meanings, moods, and interpretations; chief among these is a sense of the historical period in which the production is located. However, this focus on historical accuracy resulted in scenery that too frequently became more important than the play itself. It was not until the early 1900s that scenic design began to move beyond the period, country and locale of the plays’ settings to focus on the socioeconomic status of the play’s characters and environment as well as the mood and spirit of the play. Set designers during this period tried to understand and connect with a play by visually reinforcing all of the aspect.  

The Elizabethan period followed with the realism movement. Following on the heels of realism advancements, designs during this period unified expression as far the social class was concern. Since staged productions during this period concentrated more on ordinary people, the set designs also aimed at meeting the expectation of the ordinary person in the audience.

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34 Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones (2001): *The Use of Set and Costume Design in Modern Productions of Ancient Greek Drama* retrieved from www2.open.ac.uk/ClassicalStudie/GreekPlays/essays/LLJ1.do  
The theatre productions including the set designs changed to reflect the times. Productions were carefully designed to tell the stories of the ‘ordinary’ person.

Productions were staged in different places on different kinds of stage. This period had a taste of realism so the sets represented the kind of scenes that are used in the real world life. A scene may take place in a dining room, for example, and will be set up and decorated as a dining room with chairs, tables, real food and so on. The next scene may take place in a forest and there may be trees and lights representing the sun filtering through leaves. Perhaps the next scene takes place in a bedroom and it will be a recognizable bedroom. There will be windows, doors to balconies, fireplaces, internal doors and so on.36

Over the periods, concepts such as realism, naturalism, symbolism, expressionism, among others have influenced scenic works over the years. Regardless of the concept a designer may employ, the design should be able to creatively carry and convey the fundamental underpinnings of every production. Steady advancement and the proliferation of sophisticated technology today, has revolved set design practice from its initial rudimentary role during the Greek period to a more innovative relevance.

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2.2 Role/ Importance Set Design

A set design properly conceived and executed should express the core meaning of the production\textsuperscript{37} by revealing the historical background, reinforcing the themes and mood as well as complimenting the emotions of the production. The set establishes the frame of action on stage, using pictorial, plastic, architectural or other means to communicate a variety of meanings, moods, and interpretations to the audience.\textsuperscript{38}

Set designs are not just a collection of images; they are the expression of mood, the presence that enhances and comments on the performance. Design creates dramatic action, causes tension in a visual form; it is a signifier of performance meaning.\textsuperscript{39}

Set design stands as one of the essential pillars upon which a director develops a concept for a production. On the other hand, a director’s preliminary conception of a production influences the set design. In either ways, the primary aim of the design is to communicate to the audience.

The designer must, therefore, have a clear, accurate sense of the audience, especially their expectation. This will help the designer determine the manner of presentation that will elicit the best response from the target audience and their (audience) understanding of the message.\textsuperscript{40} Therefore, the ability to get the message across to the audience serves as a fundamental purpose of every set design.

\textsuperscript{37} Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones (2001): The Use of Set and Costume Design in Modern Productions of Ancient Greek Drama retrieved from www2.open.ac.uk/ClassicalStudies/GreekPlays/essays/LLJ1.do
\textsuperscript{38} ibid
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid
The set provides an atmosphere and set the mood of the play that affects the feeling of the actors as well as the audience. All designers hope that their creations will arouse an emotional response in the spectator as it creates the correct atmosphere for the production. The mood is emphasized by the emblematic use of scenic elements or a particular design facet, which is singled out to stand as a hallmark for a production.\textsuperscript{41}

However, the set design must not dominate the rationale behind the play. The set design must not compete and seek to distract the attention of the audience from the message or theme of the play. What is important is the symbolizing details of the set that indicates the particular locale which should be kept to a minimum and just enough to orient the audience as a signboard matt in order to allow the expressive functions move the play (that is mood and atmosphere).\textsuperscript{42}

Set designed and constructed is generally the first element of a production that the audience sees; it is therefore to convey the information needed to launch the story. An effective set design (partnered with a great lighting design) helps the audience see and hear the play better by telling them where to look and whom to listen to. The audience will enjoy and understand the play more clearly, if the set focuses on delivering strong architectural detail that directs the eye.\textsuperscript{43}

\textsuperscript{42} Retrieved from socks-studio.com (17\textsuperscript{th} July, 2014) Fosco lucarelli \textit{A Revolution in Stage Design: Drawings and Productions of Adolphe Appia} December 13, 2013.
The set design should be able to reflect the artistic vision of the production and challenge or endorse the visual aesthetics of the audience, encourage creative picturization on the part of the director and the cast and serve the needs of the script.\textsuperscript{44}

It must be noted, also, that some performances were staged without set or created environment. While this may be due to budgetary considerations and/or technical availability, sometimes it is a conscious decision on the part of the designer and/or the director.\textsuperscript{45}

Colours play key role in the expressive function of every set design. Colours in set design convey mood and style. A set for a comedy tends to use brighter colours than a set for a highly charged drama or tragedy.\textsuperscript{46} In all of these, the role of the set designer cannot be overemphasized. As Llewellyn-Jones (2002) rightly captures;

A designer must share in a production’s creative process with the director, supporting, adjusting, augmenting or vetoing his/her creative decisions. The designer may be the first person to visualize the ‘look’ of a production, or may be called upon to help realize the director’s initial vision; ideally the two people will work together in mutual artistic harmony to create a single vision. The close partnership that is expected to develop between the director and the designer frequently results in the formation of close working relationships.\textsuperscript{47}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{44} Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones (2001): \textit{The Use of Set and Costume Design in Modern Productions of Ancient Greek Drama} retrieved from \url{www2.open.ac.uk/ClassicalStudies/GreekPlays/essays/LLJ1.do}
  \item \textsuperscript{45} Refer to the design approaches and considerations of DB ref. no. 1115 (Theatre Cryptic’s \textit{Electra}, designed by Matt Jason) with DB ref. no. 232 (University of Utah’s \textit{The Bakkhai}, designed by Gage Williams (set) and Brenda van der Wiel (costumes)).
  \item \textsuperscript{46} Effective Set Design: What makes an effective scenic design? Retrieve from \url{http://www.artsalive.ca/collections/imaginedspaces/index.php/en/learn-about/effectivesetdesign} on 17/06/2005
  \item \textsuperscript{47} Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones (2001): \textit{The Use of Set and Costume Design in Modern Productions of Ancient Greek Drama} retrieved from \url{www2.open.ac.uk/ClassicalStudies/GreekPlays/essays/LLJ1.do}
\end{itemize}
One key eminence of a designer is the ability to collaborate with other personnel in his field of work. The designer collaborates with his/her colleagues by presenting visual references, sketches, collages, photomontage among others, in order to make sure that the images and ideas that are presented are on par with the accepted concept.

Good collaboration can happen when there is a solid, clearly articulated framework for the production. When each artist on the creative team understands the production’s style and approach, everyone can work toward the same goal while maintaining enough flexibility to refine their ideas throughout the process.\(^48\)

### 2.3 Demands of Set Design

There are many considerations before the execution of every scenic work. These may include the scenic style, type of stage setting, and thematic concerns of the production among many others. Although some of these considerations may interrelate, others are independently considered.

Lynn Pectal 1975:2 avers that every scenic work should concern itself with the aesthetic and mechanical elements: place and locale, time and period, theme, mood, scenic style, social status of the characters, movement and position of the actors and changing of scenery.\(^49\) Parker et al add that these considerations are “to establish in the visual elements of the surroundings an expression of the dominant atmosphere, or mood.”\(^50\)

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\(^{50}\) Oren Parker et al (2003), *Scene Design and Stage Lighting*. Thompson Learning Inc.
One of the earliest and key considerations the designer bears in mind is the type of stage setting because each of the specified categories obviously comes with its own challenges and prospects. The general categories of stage setting are single set, multiple (individual) sets, unit sets, and simultaneous scene setting.\textsuperscript{51}

Lynn asserts 1975:2 that after the first, second and third readings of a script, a set designer should be able identify all the elements mentioned above. In productions where there is no script, however, the designer should be able to sit with the director, and the two should come out with a concept they will be working with and out of this concept, the designer will come up with a design that will satisfy the demands of the production. Brief descriptions of these demands will be of immense benefit to the discussion.

\textbf{2.3.1 Place and locale}

A set designer should be able to clearly identify where the action of the play or whatever production is set that is the ‘\textit{place}’ and ‘\textit{locale}’. Lynn (1975) educates that while the words ‘\textit{place}’ and ‘\textit{locale}’ can be interchangeable, \textit{place} is the type of area in which the action is set. This could be an executive’s office, a swamp, or an artist’s studio. The \textit{locale} is the geographical placement of the entire play. \textit{Locale} can be a country or a state such as Germany, Nigeria or Accra. Whilst the \textit{place} is the immediate environment of the play, \textit{locale} is the larger society or community the play is set. Some productions may go into detail to describe where the action of the play takes place; others may simply state it in a gist. No matter how the description is given, it should be able to “spark many ideas for a setting that would be proper for the production.”\textsuperscript{52}

\textsuperscript{52} ibid P. 2
2.3.2 Time and Period:

Parker et al (2003) reveal that the action of the play must occur in a specific time and place\textsuperscript{53} and to be able to establish this, the designer must discover the designated time of day in the play or production. Is the action taking place at dawn, morning, or evening? What is the season or month of the year? The designer should be able to identify all these and factor them in the design.

2.3.4 Theme and Mood

Theme and mood play crucial role in the design. Being the subject that keeps recurring throughout the work and the prevailing emotional tone of a play respectively, theme and mood do not only guide the designer, but also suggest to the designer things to avoid when designing.

2.3.5 Social status of the character(s):

Characterization bears an important relationship to the environment of the scene. The influence of the characters on the scene design can be sometimes obvious and on occasion symbolic.\textsuperscript{54} Are the characters in the play wealthy or poor? The designer should be able establish this through various research. The social position of the characters is very much a part of developing the design and designer must find out\textsuperscript{55}

\textsuperscript{53} Oren Parker et al, \textit{Scene Design and Stage Lighting}. P.46
\textsuperscript{54} Parker, Wolf and Block. (2013). \textit{Scene Design and Stage Lighting}. 10\textsuperscript{th} edition. Wadsworth. p. 38
\textsuperscript{55} ibid
2.3.6. Scenic Style

One other key elements Lynn identifies and which will lead to the next discussion, is the scenic style. The scenic style, basically, is the style of presentation by the designer. The scenic style could be how the designer, with the consent of the director, wants to execute his design. What type of setting does he want to build after consultation with the script and the director? Is it going to be a box set, a unit, multiple set, or even a simultaneous setting? Will it be in abstract form, a realistic set, or naturalistic set? These questions will ignite the designer’s creative mind to come out with the appropriate design.

2.4 Set Design and Symbols

The whole process of set designing can be closely linked to semiology- the act or science of reading symbols. A designer may decide to use particular scenic elements such shapes, forms, lines or colours for a symbolic representation. For instance, a set design that predominantly employs the colour red is seen frequently of symbolizing anger, aggression or tragedy.

Again as Amoah (2009) relays that the Akans of Ghana largely consider the circle as a motif that symbolizes the presence and power of God and the male aspect of society and appears in the circular plan of some shrines. With this information, a set designer may employ more circles in a design to convey Amoah’s assertion.

Edward Gordon Craig, a British designer whose stage designs strongly influenced the trends of the modern theatre, advocated strongly for symbolic reinforcement of set

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designs. Craig envisaged scenic environments designed to appeal to the emotion through visual suggestion, evocation and symbolist aesthetics. Craig promoted a visual theatre (he always argued audiences go to see, rather than hear, plays). Design elements have to function as symbols and communicate deeper meanings, rather than simply reflecting the real world.57

Apart from the whole set design process been allied to semiology, set designers may also employ recognizable and identifiable symbols such as Adinkra symbols in a design to either send onerous messages in a simpler and evocative form for easy accessibility and comprehension or to deliberately encode perceptible or esoteric messages to achieve artistic purpose.

Semiology in a theatrical context is concerned with the way in which meaning is developed and conveyed to a target audience. Therefore, a stage design properly conceived and executed should express the core meaning of the production.58

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58 Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones (2001): The Use of Set and Costume Design in Modern Productions of Ancient Greek Drama retrieved from www2.open.ac.uk/ClassicalStudies/GreekPlays/essays/LLJ1.do
2.5 Origin and History of *Adinkra* Symbols

Long before paper was invented, human beings were inscribing marks on objects such as cave walls, in their surrounding environment. The intent of making these marks, or signs, was to visually pass on information from individuals or groups to the other.\(^{59}\) This obviously marks the origin of symbols. Symbols have become imperative in the social and cultural setup of every society.

(Dzobo, n.d) notes that Africa is replete with symbols and symbolic expressions and “the rich diversity of symbols throughout Africa has inspired artists to refashioned the antiquated and unique into contemporary forms, which now appear etched on pottery, cast on bronze and precious metals, carved on wood, woven into textiles, stitched on cloth, or inscribed on the human body. Among these indigenous symbols are those conceived by Ghanaians known as *Adinkra*.

Dzobo (n.d.), classifies Ghanaian symbols into *Adinkra* symbols, stool symbols, linguist staff symbols, religious symbols, ritual symbols and oral literary symbols. Dzobo further informs that the above classifications are based on the context and situation in which the symbols are used. Among the six classifications, Dzobo identifies *Adinkra* symbols as the most famous of all the categories.

Danzy 2009 defines *Adinkra* symbols as ideographs, which through stylized pictures convey the philosophy and culture of the Asante’s of Ghana. *Adinkra* is a writing system, an ideographic script—a script that has symbols that represent ideas.\(^{60}\)


\(^{60}\) Danzy J. (2009), *Adinkra Symbols: an ideographic writing system*. Stony Brook University, New York.
Julius O. Boadu in his article *Adinkra As A Good Communication Tool In Ghana*,\(^6\) points that in the language of the Akan ethnic group (twi) of which Asante is part, *Adinkra* also means ‘goodbye’ or ‘farewell’.

Arthur 2001:33 also reviews that *Adinkra* symbols are based on various observations of and associations between humans and objects they use, flora and fauna scenes, the human body and its parts, and elements of nature, [geometric] and abstract ideas.

On his part, Boddy-Evans, n.d. adds that *Adinkra* symbols represent popular proverbs and maxims, record historical events, express particular attitudes or behaviour related to depicted figures, or concepts uniquely related to abstract shapes. Table 1 shows some the symbols and their meanings.

Table 1.0 Some *Adinkra* symbols and their meaning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image.png" alt="Symbol" /></td>
<td>Adinkrahene</td>
<td>Chief of Adinkra symbols</td>
<td>Greatness, charisma, leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image.png" alt="Symbol" /></td>
<td>Akoben</td>
<td>War Horn</td>
<td>Vigilance, Wariness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image.png" alt="Symbol" /></td>
<td>Akofena</td>
<td>Sword of war</td>
<td>Courage, valor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image.png" alt="Symbol" /></td>
<td>Akokonan</td>
<td>The leg of a hen</td>
<td>Mercy, nurturing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image.png" alt="Symbol" /></td>
<td>Akoma</td>
<td>The heart</td>
<td>Patience and tolerance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source:
http://www.earthmetropolis.com/Africa_West_and_South_of_The_Nile/adinkra_symbols_and_their_meaning.jpg

There are different and sometimes conflicting historical accounts about the origin of Adinkra symbols. The variance opinions have led to the loss of the actual history of the origin of Adinkra symbols and leave a void to be filled by the researcher’s subjective intuition.

One of the many accounts among the Akans, for instance, strongly posits that Adinkra symbols were part of the Asantehene’s golden stool that was conjured from Heaven.

There is a belief that Okomfo Anokye, the first chief priest, called upon the heavens to bring down the golden stool, an artifact that came to symbolize the power of the first king of the Asante nation, Osei Tutu as well as the power of every succeeding Asantehene. These theorists believe that Adinkra cloth was on top of the stool brought down from the heavens, which would place Adinkra’s origin in the seventh century.62

The above view is held strongly by the Asantes and they dispute any other account as erroneous and disapprove of it. However, Arthur 2001:24 provides yet another account from oral traditions. According to Arthur, Adinkra was obtained after the Asante-Gyaman war of 1818. This account claims that Adinkra was obtained after 1818, when Adinkra Kofi, the king of Gyaman (now Ivory Coast), was brought to Kumasi, the home of the Asante, as a prisoner of war because he King Adinkra had claimed that he had a golden stool.

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King Adinkra’s claim was seen as an affront to the Asante Kingdom hence the former’s incarceration after a fierce battle with the Asantes. Oral tradition has it that, when king Adinkra was brought as a prisoner to Kumasi, he was wearing robes with the *Adinkra* symbols on them and that is where the Akan obtained the symbols.

Another school of thought, Mato (1986), has linked the origin of *Adinkra* to the Muslim in the North. Mato (1986:64) argues that Islamic writing, amuletic symbols or Kufic script have been given as probable sources for *Adinkra* symbols. Mato cites two historians Robert Sutherland Rattray and Labelle Prussin in his book, clothed in symbol: the art of *Adinkra* among the Akan of Ghana to give credence to his claims.

According to Mato, Robert Sutherland Rattray avow that the Asante must have adapted the Islamic meanings of some of the symbols to suit their own beliefs making the *Adinkra* distinctly Asante. Mato credit to Labelle Prussin has also founding ‘word equivalents, association in folklore and direct takeover of certain design motifs’ to prove that *Adinkra* has come from Islamic forms. Mato appears to concur with Rattray and Prussin when the former states that the King of the Asantehene’s clothes was covered in symbols and Arabic script which proves that there was a strong Islamic influence among the Asantes.

Despite all the conflicting historical accounts of *Adinkra*, (Mato 1986, Wills 1998, Arthur 2001 among others), the symbols are widely accepted and have come to stay. Its significance and usefulness spans beyond its origin.
2.6 Importance of Adinkra Symbols

Notwithstanding the apparent clash of historical accounts about the origin of Adinkra symbols, the symbols and their meanings, which portray traditional wisdom, have transcended time and have evolved into a Ghanaian national artistic heritage. Its importance and usage have reached beyond the borders of Ghana. The symbols have adapted to the social, cultural and historical changes in all aspects of Ghana’s developing society. They appear on churches, Universities, banks and insurance houses. Again, Adinkra symbols appear on a variety of art mediums, textiles, pottery, stools, umbrella tops, linguist staffs, gold weights, jewellery, swords, architecture, and common on other utilitarian objects, like combs, stools, clothes much more.

2.7 Artistic Relevance of Adinkra

Designers in modern times use Adinkra symbols in creating and decorating other accessories than cloth. Other artisans/crafts men such as sculptors, carpenters, and architects also use the symbols to design their products. Some corporate institutions in Ghana now use the Adinkra symbols as their institutional Symbol or Logo.

Key national institutions in Ghana such as the Universities of Ghana, Cape Coast, Winneba, the Kwame Nkrumah of University of Science and Technology, Parliament House, the Supreme Court among many others have all adopted and used various Adinkra symbols in one way or the other. Obviously, these institutions rely on the expressive connotation of the symbols.

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63 Retrieved from http://www.uew.edu.gh/archive/201508
65 Ibid
For instance, the University of Ghana’s logo (see plate I) has three Aya standing upright in top half and Dweninmentoaso in the middle of the bottom half – all embossed in gold with a blue shield.\textsuperscript{66}

![University of Ghana logo](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b8/University_of_Ghana_(UG)_logo.jpg)

Plate I. University of Ghana logo

Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b8/University_of_Ghana_(UG)_logo.jpg

The relevance of the above discussions and examples to this project is that, \textit{Adinkra} has indeed transcended the Asante culture and can now be placed within the context of national heritage. The predictable argument of the symbols not been ethnic or regional representational may be frail. University of Ghana, for instance, cannot stand for unfairness towards students who may not necessarily associate themselves or come from the region or ethnic setting of the symbols. Apart from the artistic liberty that is guaranteed on the usage of such symbols, its expressive connotation cannot be ignored regardless of its source or originators.

\textsuperscript{66} See university of Ghana handbook for graduate studies Vol. 2 p.1
2.8 Ghana’s Most Beautiful: Harnessing Ghanaian Culture

Beauty pageants abound in Ghana. Apart from Ghana’s Most Beautiful, there is Miss Ghana, Miss Malaika, Miss Universe, Miss ECOWAS, Miss Earth, Beautiful (Miss Excel), Miss Tourism and about 30 more beauty pageants.

Most of these pageants are public entertainment processes of selecting young ladies in an elaborate, colourful and sometimes competitive manner. It is traditionally focused on judging and ranking the physical attributes of the contestants, personality, intelligence, talent, and answering judges’ questions satisfactorily.67

However, some pageants which include Ghana’s Most Beautiful have placed arguments in the minds of most Ghanaians as to whether their presences have made the Ghanaian culture better or worse.68

In a response to the above probing question, the Brands, Events and Promotions Manager of TV3, Mr. Felix Phil Gontoh in an interview with the chronicle69, which the researcher finds relevant and reproduces, Mr. Gontoh, observed that, Ghana’s Most Beautiful is a well-recognized and accepted event which has gained the thumbs up of all Ghanaian from all walks of life in the country.

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68 Refer to Beauty Pageants, A Platform To Enhance Or Exploit Beauty? from http://ghanasoccernet.com/beauty-pageants-a-platform-to-enhance-or-exploit-beauty/
69 a private newspaper in Ghana. That interview is published on http://ghanasoccernet.com/beauty-pageants-a-platform-to-enhance-or-exploit-beauty/
According to him, the concept being adopted by the management of TV3 from the ten regions is to entertain and educate the public on the Ghanaian culture whiles keeping the rich heritage.

The impact of the show in the country is very great which has changed the face of the show from elderly women to younger women participating in the show. The younger ones are able to articulate and express themselves in their local languages which are important values of each regional culture.

Mr. Gontoh said traditional leaders from all the ten regions and also some African countries have endorsed the show by contributing their quota through grooming and training of the ladies. He cited that, the show has promoted the Ghanaian tourism industry which has gained prominence in and outside the boarders of the Ghana.

In support of Gontoh’s assertions, Gayobi Achawa Sackey a contestant in the season eight reveals how well competing in the Beauty Pageant has made her confident and bold and further enhancing her personal development.

When I first went to TV3 I didn’t know anything about my culture as a Ga and didn’t want to go on with the competition at a point but, I had to encourage myself, learn and do my best, luckily for me my best was good enough to pull me through. Even though I didn’t win it has opened doors for me’ says the beauty contestant.  

Whilst the researcher, largely agrees with the above observations and commends the producers of GMB for their effort, I also concur with Barnard (2005:58) that “the relationship between [set] design and culture: the first is culture exists as a background for [set] design; the second is [set] design points to or reflects the culture it is found in” and (Carson, 2011) admonishment that contemporary designers should carefully exploit traditional techniques and elements in new approaches to narrative, ornament and detail. The researcher believes that if Barnard’s assertion and Carson’s admonishment are carried out by set designers for GMB, the pageant will be more worthy of its claim of promoting Ghanaian culture.

2.9 Conclusion

Adinkra symbols fall under the umbrella of visual and non-verbal communication tools in Ghanaian culture. Although the symbols are strongly allied with the Asantes of Ghana, their usage and importance, as illustrated in this chapter, transcends the Asante culture to, ostensibly every part of Ghana and even beyond.

Like any other symbols, the idea of communicating with them should not necessarily be associated with one particular sect of society only. It is the case of this work that, there can be a general acceptance of what the symbols stand for regardless of the addressee ethnic or regional background. ‘For instance, the “Gye Nyame” symbol connotes the supremacy of God in Asante. It also connotes the same if a Ga uses it.’ This is because there has been a shared meaning as to what the symbol signifies.

This probably is Boadu O. Julius’s reasoning that the symbols have “been adapted into all aspects of Ghana’s developing society and appears on Churches, Universities, Banks and Insurance houses and some Corporate Institutions in Ghana even use the Adinkra
symbols as their institutional Symbol or Logo.\textsuperscript{71} Therefore, using \textit{Adinkra} symbols for this project resonates with the general assertion that the utility of the symbols transcends its source and its originators.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Overview

Every designer has a distinctive way of conceiving and developing a concept for a design. This unique approach may vary from one production to another. Although there may be no rigid rules a designer needs to follow to develop a design, “there are certain progressive steps every designer moves through between his first discussion of a design project and the time it is finished and ready to be constructed.” The ultimate goal in going through the process is to convincingly make a visual statement that is consistent with the broader concept of the production being designed.

Having designed and constructed the final set for the season eight of TV3's *Ghana's Most Beautiful* (2014); this chapter outlines the methodology used in executing the project. The chapter starts with a general overview of the methodology used and the rest of the chapter is organized into the following thematic subjects:

- proposal presentation and approval from the Department of Theatre Arts;
- securing the right from TV3;
- preliminary studies and research;
- concept formulation for final design;
- rehearsals schedule;
- budgeting;
- logistic and material mobilization;
- construction process;
- shifting, trial, final set-up and strike down.

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Pecktal, Lynn (1975) Designing and Painting for the Theatre, p. 11
3.1 Artistic Methodology

The objective of this project was to use four selected Adinkra symbols: Okôdeê mmôwere (talons of eagle), Duafe (wooden comb), Dweninimme (ram horn) and Mate Masie (what I hear, I keep) to design the set for TV3's Ghana's Most Beautiful (2014). Therefore, there was the need to employ all the necessary skills to come out successfully.

The underlining methodology adopted to achieve this objective was the artistic methodology which according to Ukala (2006:14),

is for artistic creation and interpretation: developing a model ...designing and building set or costumes. It deals with relativity, contains elements that cannot be quantitatively or empirically measured, and allows, for reliance on intuition, inspiration and imagination.\(^\text{73}\)

This methodology became very handy to the designer because in conceiving and developing a design, the designer relied on his intuition, inspiration and imagination. As an artist most of the observations made were based on the artistic intuitions and interpretations of the designer and such observations may not necessarily be empirically established or validated.

The designer drew inspiration largely from a personal and unrelenting conviction that Adinkra symbols have assumed and play very important roles in projecting Ghanaian culture. This conviction was enough stimuli to propel the designer to press on, despite the various challenges.

\(^{73}\) Ukala, Sam (2006), Manual Of Research And Of Thesis Writing In Theatre Arts, p.14
Although the artistic methodology was practice-based and practice-driven and depended largely on the designer's convictions, it also required maximum research to be carried out by the designer before a final design was arrived at.

For this project, extensive research was carried on Adinkra symbols and discussed it with the producers, directors and the contestants of the show.

3.2 Proposal and Approval from the Department of Theatre Arts

After the designer considered using Ghana's Most Beautiful for the project, I consulted my supervisors, Mr. John Djisenu and Dr. Agyeman Ossei as well as selected set designers- Mr. Johnson Edu and Mr. David Amoo who as past students also had their project tied to private productions. The researcher/designer did this to be in a better position to know some of the demands and challenges that came with such projects. Although most of these deliberations were fruitful, some of these people expressed concerns and advised the designer to brace myself for the task. An initial proposal was drafted and presented to the Department of Theatre Arts, University of Ghana, for consideration and approval.

After the submission of the proposal, the Head of Department also expressed some reservations and concerns about using a private production for the project. Most of his concerns bothered on how to secure the right from TV3. Due to past and not too pleasant experiences by students with private organizations, the Head of Department requested that the designer make sure to overcome all possible bottlenecks likely to encounter with TV3, right from the onset before the department gave the final approval.
Another concern that came up was the fact that, the designer might not be given the liberty to freely express my artistic genuineness, if the project is tied to a private production such as GMB because apart from the producers who might want to dictate to me, sponsors might also come with their own demands. The designer acknowledged all the concerns and assured all concerned that all these genuine apprehensions would be tackled decisively.

After the assurance to the department, the designer was given an introductory letter from the department to TV3 to secure the right for the project. See appendix A for a copy of the introductory letter.

3.3 Securing the Right from TV3

After convincing myself that I wanted to use GMB for the project, the designer began to find out the producers for the show so I could seek their permission. Luckily, one morning, as I walked from my hall of residence (Commonwealth hall) to my department, I saw TV3 mount a stage in front of the Balm library and transmitting their morning show live from there. I took the opportunity and approached them and asked to meet the producer for GMB. I was asked to speak with Mr. Ekow Blankson, the head of brands of the station. Apparently, the brands department of the station was directly in charge of the running of GMB, so all correspondence about the show should first go to that department for consideration.

After speaking with Mr. Blankson about the intention, he warmly welcomed and accepted the idea to use GMB for the project. Mr. Blankson also introduced the designer to his executive assistant Mrs. Mercy Clottey. However, this initial arrangement and assurance
was just by word of mouth and also, the time was almost eight months away from the commencement of the program so I constantly placed a reminder to Mrs. Clottey by going to her office almost every week and calling her phone whenever I was unable to go to the office. Mrs. Clottey on her part consistently assured me that she would continue to remind her boss, Mr. Blankson, about our initial agreement.

Mr. Ekow Blankson, unfortunately, resigned as the head of brands for TV3 and this situation presented a challenge. The new head of brands, Mr. Felix Gonkor, for some inexcusable reasons, was not informed about all the initial arrangements I have had with his predecessor Mr. Ekow Blankson. Even if he was informed, there was no signed agreement binding him to continue dealing with me. This meant that, I had to start the whole process of securing the right for the project again.

Getting access to Mr. Felix Gonkor nearly did not happen because he was so busy and always on the move. Eventually, after trying so many times, I was able to meet him and had some discussions about my intention. Interestingly, Mr. Gonkor informed me that the TV station already had its own set designer with whom they worked on GMB. Besides that, the station had already commissioned its designer to build the set for the show. This was someone the TV station had worked with over the years and had gained their trust. Therefore, taking the job from him and giving it to another was impossible so I had to forgo it and wait till the next season.

Thoughtfully, I suggested to Mr. Gonkor that they should allow me to design the set for the final show and use their designer's already existing design for the preliminaries. Management of TV3 communicated to me that in view of budget constraints and to
ensure continuity, they normally did not use a different set design for the preliminary sessions of the show and another for the final. However, after a marathon of discussions, TV3 bought into the suggestion of designing a set for the final show but whatever designs I produced were merely to augment the designs for the preliminary session.

Having been able to strike that deal, I engaged in series of other discussions and consultations with the directors and producers of GMB. These discussions were to enable me acquaint myself with the exact concept underpinning the show. Views and comments solicited from these key actors were to guide me come out with a credible concept.

### 3.4 Preliminary Studies and Research

One of the hallmarks of a successful designer is his quest and ability to research. Researching when developing ideas and concepts helped the designer come to a realization and proper understanding of the nuances of concepts and ideas on whatever task he was embarking on. The research might not entirely center on the immediate obligations but often spanned earlier experiences.

Researching on any design would aid in refreshing the memory of the designer and offer him with other possibilities. In doing research for a specific work, most established designers examine a great deal of source material, capture the essence and then through their own individual style incorporate it into the design.⁷⁴

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The designer began to research on and read more about GMB and most importantly on Adinkra symbols. Whilst literatures on Adinkra symbols were replete, information on GMB was not only scanty, but also, they were patchy and scattered. The fragmented literatures on GMB were mostly newspaper articles and reviews by entertainment critiques. Although this presented some challenge, the steady assistance from the research department of TV3 was useful to overcome the challenge.

3.5 Rehearsal Schedule

The designer/researcher attended most of the rehearsal sessions with the contestants. These sessions took place at the Executive Theatre and Studio “B’, both on the premises of TV3 at Adesa We, opposite the French embassy in Accra. Some of the rehearsal sessions also took place in the mirror room of the National Theatre. The rehearsals took place twice in a week; Tuesdays and Thursdays. I normally would go for the Tuesday rehearsals so I could attend to graduate seminars on Thursdays.

The purpose of attending the rehearsal sessions was for the designer to interview and interact with the contestants. The engagements with the constants were very productive and insightful. Some of the contestants, surprisingly, told the designer that but for those interactions with them, they would have not paid much attention to the set design and its significance to the show.

The contestant did not see how the set design would, in anyway, influence their performances. Thankfully, the relations with them made them take a second look at the set. They then began, not only to ask questions about the set design but also contributed rather significantly to what they would want to see in a set design for the show.
During this period also, the designer was gathered resources and materials that informed final design. The designer/researcher visited the video library of the TV station to study the set designs for the previous seasons of GMB. These videos were of immense assistance to the designer’s quest to understand and carry out a structural analysis of the previous designs and see how best to improve on them. Although retrieving some of the videos proved a bit difficult, what was recovered were of much benefit to my cause.

3.6 Concept Formulation, Development and Translating the Final Design

Formulating and developing a scenic concept for a production embrace diverse approach. This concept is to bring to a production scenic interpretations and impressions. Design formulation goes through creative thinking and visual imagination. Whilst some designers may develop their concept entirely on their intuitions, imagination and inspiration, others may want to develop their concept exclusively on the instructions of the pay masters.

There are also designers who will combine their artistic instincts and the thematic demands of a production to develop their designs. In either ways, “creating this concept requires a great deal of skills, thought and vision.”75 In developing the scenic concept for GMB 2014 set, the designer relied both on the central idea of the program and my personal intuitions and artistic penchant.

After a successful rehearsals session one day, the picture above (in plate II) caught my attention. In the above picture, the ten contestants have been captured running to grab a crown with the caption, “A run for the Crown”. The designer had seen the billboard several times, however, this time I stood by it for quite some time. After source contemplation, I came to the realization that I could do something with it especially the caption “A run for the crown”.

After a careful deconstruction of the picture, I decided to adopt the crown and work with it. I thought it would be befitting because the crown had been widely accepted and used in most past beauty contests. Winners of beauty pageants are made to wear a crown to distinguish them from other contestants. Therefore, using the crown to develop the design, in my conviction, would not be out of place.

The designer started putting down sketches of how the design would look like. This went on for some time until eventually a preliminary design that looked more like a crown developed.
However, after the initial design, I realized I had not achieved my objective of using traditional Ghanaian Adinkra symbols in projecting Ghanaian culture. Gratefully, during a peer review session with some scenic design students and colleagues, it came up that I could infuse Adinkra symbols in the “crown-like” design.

I elatedly accepted the idea and enthusiastically started redesigning the initial work with the infusion of the Adinkra symbols. Ideally, the designer should have adopted and infused symbols from all the ten regions in the design. This clearly became a challenge and one of the limitations.

Effort of getting symbols from all the ten regions became more daunting because symbols from some of the regions were not only inaccessible but also those that were even accessible were not widely known, and communicating with them would be a major challenge.

Adinkra symbols then came up strongly. Initially, the designer dragged his feet on the whole idea of using Adinkra symbols because I felt Adinkra was more associated with a particular group and not all the contestants would associate themselves with it.

However, after several readings and consultations, I came to the realization that although Adinkra “traces its origin to the people of the Asante region of Ghana,” their meanings “transcend the Asante culture and have adapted to the social, cultural, and historical changes that have characterized modern Ghanaian society” and have become universally accepted and are accessible.

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77 Danzy Jasmine, Adinkra symbols: An Ideographic writing system (thesis)p.4
It is interesting to note that in a chat with some of the contestants, such as Bentie Abigail Bacira, popularly referred to as Bacci from the Upper West, and her fellow contestants from the Upper East region, Lamin, (see plates III and IV) they appeared to have deeper knowledge about the Adinkra symbols than any other Ghanaian symbols that anyone might think of.

Plate III: Interview with Lamin  
Source: Field Work: October, 2014

Plate IV: Interview with Bacci  
Source: Fieldwork: October, 2014
These two contestants could, for instance, identify some of the Adinkra symbols such as the Gye Nyame and the Duafe and what they stand for. They informed me that they associated themselves with Adinkra symbols and the use of it in a set design would not be disadvantageous to them. Bacci for instance told me that:

In Ghana today, I believe it will only take a naive person to conclude that a man wearing a smock is necessarily a Northerner or a young lady dancing intricate Adowa steps is by all means an Ashanti. I believe the time is ripped (sic) for some of these elements such as the Adinkra symbols to bring us together.\textsuperscript{78}

After these consultations and library research on Adinkra symbols, I finally settled on Adinkra symbols and incorporated them in the crown design. However, whichever symbols I had selected had to be suitable to convey an appropriate message to the audience.

After the creative thinking and visual imagination of the design, I set out to translate the formulated and developed concept. Translating a design is a visual means by which a designer “communicates his or her ideas to other members of the design and production team.”\textsuperscript{79}

Processes of translating a scenic design come in diverse forms: such as floor plans, sketches, models, elevations, photomontage, collage and computer models. In design translation, rigid process is not always followed as to whether the floor plan or the elevations should come first. While it is customary to start out with the floor plans, some designers may begin with the elevations and then go to the plan.

\textsuperscript{78}Bacci
\textsuperscript{79}Parker W. Oren et al, 2003. \textit{Scene Design and Stage Lighting}. p.67
The designer went on with the thumbnail sketches until something satisfactory was realized. The thumbnail sketches were transferred into a computer model. The computer model is a three-dimensional computer drawing.

Technology now allows a computer assisted design (CAD) of a set that can be rotated, allowing the designer to check the same sightlines as found in physical model.\(^{80}\)

I went back to the producers of GMB to discuss the design I had come up with. This offered me, the directors and the producers the opportunity to share ideas, regarding the designed set. Although they were very excited about the design, they raised some concerns that required an explanation of the mechanisms accompanying the design. Luckily, the in-house designer of the TV station was part of this meeting and he also threw his weight behind me in explaining the workability of the design because I had earlier on met with him for a full discussion.

The CAD was of great help because I could rotate and turn it design in various directions and angles for clearer and easy viewing. The meeting ended inconclusively because I was to effect some changes and come back for a final discussion. Hurriedly, I effected all the necessary changes and went back to show them. TV3 finally accepted the design and gave me the green light.

I went to Accra International Conference Center (AICC), the venue for the grand finale of the show to carry out a preliminary study of the place. Normally, the preliminary studies should be carried out, especially the floor plan, even before the final design was produced and accepted. However, TV3 was not certain about the exact venue for the final show so I

\(^{80}\) Ibid p.74
had to initially produce the design without the floor plan. Again, I was unable to meet with the producers early enough for them to accept my intent. By the time I finally had the approval; time was not on my side.

The preliminary study of the venue offered me the opportunity to take all the necessary measurements, most importantly the floor plan. I transferred the design once again to more advance scaled drawings. The scaled drawings included floor plans and the elevations. These drawings were to enable the technical and construction crew get better insight into my pictorial concept.

3.7 Budgeting

After the final design was approved, I presented a budget for consideration. There were series of meeting with some members from the finance, accounts, brands as well as procurement departments of TV3 to consider the budget. Key personalities involved in these meetings were Frank Nelson, head of finance; Sammy Xavi of account; Sammy Adanu, head of content creation and director of GMB; Felix Gontoh, head of brands, and Nii kwei Nash, colleague and my supervisor's assistant.

Our first meeting on the budget was inconclusive because TV3 pointed that they did not initially budget for a different set for the final show, so lots of cuts were done to contain the budget. See table 2.
Table 2.0 Budget for set design for GMB 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item No.</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Unit price (GHC)</th>
<th>Amount (GHC)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Polystyrene</td>
<td>15 sheets</td>
<td>45.00</td>
<td>450.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>White glue</td>
<td>2 gallons</td>
<td>80.00</td>
<td>160.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Primer</td>
<td>1 gallon</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Gold paint</td>
<td>2 gallons</td>
<td>200.00</td>
<td>400.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>SAV print</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>460.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Spraying</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>200.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>¾ plywood</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>70.00</td>
<td>700.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>1/8 plywood</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>35.00</td>
<td>350.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>2/4 hardwood</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30.00</td>
<td>300.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Castors</td>
<td>4 pairs-</td>
<td>25.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Nails</td>
<td>Assorted</td>
<td></td>
<td>50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>350.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>3,620.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.8 Logistics and Materials Mobilization

Logistics and materials needed for the construction were purchased after the design and the budget had been approved. Most of these logistics and materials were readily available on the market so, together with the construction team, we bought the items from Accra central.

Provision was made for any contingencies that might be needed. Tools gathered included hammer, jig-saw, saw, tape measure, painting brushes, screw driver, claw bar, pincers and pencil. Other, materials such as polystyrene, white glue, gold paint, masking tape, plywood, screws, castors and pins were also purchased.
3.9 Construction Process

Construction is the implementation of an actual design or concept by the designer. This is the stage of the design process where the designer begins to assemble tools and materials necessary for the execution of the design. Also, it is at this point that the designer begins to see the visualized nature of the design. During this process, the designer employs various assemblage techniques such as gluing, riveting, nailing, wielding as well as other processes necessary for joining the various parts of the cut materials. In construction, the designer must pay critical attention to the design, using the model in order to produce the exact copy of the intended design that has been selected.

Construction of the set started in earnest at the scenic shop of the National Theatre of Ghana. Due to the complexity of the work, two experienced resident stage carpenters of the National Theatre of Ghana; Mr. Abbey and Atta Oko were engaged. See appendix for pictures during the construction period.

The experience and depth of knowledge of these two masterminds were immensely brought to bear on the whole period of the construction. The construction team also included Frank Asare (National Theatre), Nii Quaye Nash, Harriet Debrah Otchere, Michael Ayensu, Agnes Adomako-Mensah, Selorm Dotshe, Comfort Effina-Williams (University of Ghana). Most of the members were colleagues and graduate students as well as service personnel that were scenic design majors. The main supervisor also passed by on occasions to give his support and input. Construction lasted for four days. Refer to appendix for pictures of the construction team members during the construction.
3.10 Shifting, Trial, Final Set-Up and Strike Down

Since the main event was at the Accra International Conference Centre (AICC) and construction took place at the National Theatre (NT), there was the need to shift the set. Shifting the set from NT to AICC took a great deal of planning to avoid any damage during the process.

A truck was hired to convey the separate units and any other materials that were required to cover the units during the shifting. We carried out a trial set-up to help identify and promptly rectify any lapses or oversight that might have occurred during the construction period. It helped other technical crew, particularly the lighting crew, to know the type of light instruments to use and to identify places to rig their light instruments.

The trial set-up was to also help the contestants familiarize themselves with the set before the main event. Before the trial set-up, there was a meeting with Raymond Schandolf technical head and Nil Takyi representative of lighting from TV3. The reason behind this final technical meeting was to explain any technical mechanism they needed to know.

All bottlenecks that were identified during the trial set-up were aptly corrected. The opening night came off successfully. After the successful production, the set was dismantled into units and conveyed to the premises of TV3 for safe keeping. The strike down process went on smoothly without any major hindrance.
3.11 Challenges

After the initial construction process, one would have thought that the finishing would go on smoothly but the reverse was the case. Finishing was a bit of a challenge because after painting the set, it was realized that it was not as “glossy” as expected. In view of the fact that we did not anticipate this challenge, we ended up complicating it by started exploring the use other materials which nearly marred the design but a solution was eventually found. However, we run out of schedule and could not finish at the National Theatre.

Also, in the course of shifting the scenery from the National Theatre to the Conference Centre, another challenge that came up was getting access to the venue. There was a program at the Conference Centre. Although the security at the venue cleared us to enter the premises, the organizers of that program did not want to agree. This nearly earned me getting some slaps because I had asked the organizers a harmless question, “Why can't we be allowed inside, Sir?”

When we were finally allowed inside the premises we had no place to continue with the finishing touches so we had to do that on the mosquito-infested lawns and this went on deep into the night.

For a show of that scenic enormity, ideally the final technical rehearsal should have taken place at least a day before the show to allow enough time for assembling of all the units, with a thorough check on details and possible repairs of any damage that occurred during the construction and shifting processes. Due to the ongoing programme in the main Hall, however, the trial set-up only happened a few hours before the opening.

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81 Since the set was going to be used for a television show, it needed to be well polished so it comes out on well on camera
We had initially planned to open the set to the wings stage but after the set-up, there was no space left. The usual collaboration that should have existed between my team and that of TV3 vanished to the extent that one of the producers threatened to have the set completely pulled off the stage because he felt were just wasting their time.

The lighting crew also claimed we have taken all the space so they could not effectively distribute their lighting instruments. This challenge turned out to be a great blessing because if we had opened the set to the wings, it would go completely go off the stage the whole thing would have been just a stage prop rather than a set. After several trials, we found an amicable solution to all the challenges and the program came off successfully.

3.12 Conclusion

Interviews and interactions with the contestants and producers of GMB, interactions with past scenic students, seasoned scenic designers and supervisors as well as extensive research on Adinkra symbols, formed the conceptual backing that culminated into the final design for this project. The processes leading to the execution of the project although absorbing, time, logistical, material and finical constraints coupled with the challenge in securing the right and the approval to execute this project were some of the staid challenges that bedeviled the process but were promptly resolved.
CHAPTER FOUR

PROJECT ANALYSIS

4.0 Overview

After successfully constructing the Set Design with Adinkra Symbols for TV3’s Ghana’s Most Beautiful (GMB) 2014, this chapter analyses the project as executed. The analysis covers the following:

- brief descriptions of the four selected Adinkra symbols;
- the design technique;
- placement of the symbols and their significance;
- artistic renderings of the symbols and the final design;
- materials used and the justification and
- working drawings for the project.

4.1 Brief Descriptions of the Four Selected Adinkra Symbols

The four selected Adinkra symbols for this project are Okɔdeem mmoɔwere (talons of eagle), Duafe (wooden comb), Dweninimmen (ram horn) and Mate Masie (what I hear, I keep). These symbols were carefully selected based on the researcher’s understanding of them.

In selecting these symbols, a considerable attention was given to the general tagline for Ghana’s Most Beautiful (GMB). The tagline reads as “Ghana’s Most Beautiful, redefining beauty to promote national unity.”

The four symbols were selected after a thorough research on them and subsequent discussions with the director, the contestants as well as some patrons of GMB. The research revealed that Adinkra symbols were not only replete with wisdom but also most of them carried different meanings and so settling on the four was quite challenging. The
four symbols are briefly described and reasons for choosing them advanced in the following paragraphs.

4.1.1 Okɔdeɛ Mmɔwere (Talons of eagle)

Plate V: Adinkra symbols: Okɔdeɛ Mmɔwere (Talons of eagle)
Source: www.adinkra.org 20/08/205

Okɔdeɛ mɔnwere literally means “talons of eagle.” In the Adinkra parlance, this symbol stands for unity. Promoting unity among the contestants and by extension the people of Ghana was one of the core aims of GMB. All the ten regions of Ghana are represented on one platform and the aim is to promote cultural, social, religious and ethnic unity among the people. During the show, contestants from the ten regions beautifully displayed their various traditions and customs.

As the show progressed, the contestants were also made to research on and showcase various aspects of other tribes and regions other than theirs. The underpinning rationale behind this is to foster unity in diversity. Choosing this symbol was therefore aimed at reinforcing the theme of unity.
4.1.2 *Duafe* (Wooden comb)

![Image of Adinkra symbol Duafe]

Plate VI: *Adinkra* symbol *Duafe* (Wooden comb)
Source: [www.adinkra.org](http://www.adinkra.org) 20/08/2015

*Duafe* is a coinage from two Akan words ‘dua’ which is wood and ‘fe’ which means comb; hence meaning “wooden comb”. *Duafe* is one of the symbols that is easily identifiable and commonly used. This symbol extols values of women such as beauty, cleanliness, prudence and fondness. The comb is one of the most cherished and commonly used household items for women who use it for keeping up their appearances. This symbol was thoughtfully and deliberately selected for the set design to re-echo TV3’s mantra of “redefining beauty.” The *Duafe* symbol was very pivotal in this project because it was one of the symbols in the *Adinkra* vocabulary that was used to highlight female virtues. This symbol was akin to the subject matter of GMB.
4.1.3 Dweninimmen (ram horn)

![Diagram of Dweninimmen symbol]

Plate VII: Adinkra symbol Dweninimmen (ram horn)
Source: [www.adinkra.org](http://www.adinkra.org) 20/08/2015

Just like the Duafe, the Dweninimmen symbol is forged out of two Akan words. Dwenini refers to a 'ram' and it signifies humility. Mmen also refers to horns (of a ram and other animals that bear a horn). The horn signifies strength so a ram's horn means humility and strength.82 This symbol was inspired by the Akan proverb 'Dwenini ahooden ne n 'aben; wopan n 'aben a nwoayi no, awie no; to wit 'the strength of the ram lies in its horns, once they are plucked off, then it is caught in a trap.'83

The inspiration for choosing this symbol was because; GMB was a contest between ten women. It is often said that women are very humble yet in their humility lies a greater strength. The ten contestants locked 'horns', as it were in a competition by putting up exhilarating performances on a detailed researched topic from various aspects of their respective communities and regions. The competition was a healthy one and at the end a winner was crowned.

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4.1.4 *Mate Masie* (What I hear, I keep)

Plate VIII: *Mate Masie* (What I hear, I keep)
Source: www.adinkra.org 20/08/2015

*Mate Masie* literally means, *what I hear, I keep*. This symbol represents wisdom, knowledge and prudence. The implied meaning of the phrase, “mate masie”, is “I understand”. Understanding means wisdom and knowledge and the symbol represents the prudence of taking into consideration what another person has said.\(^{84}\) The symbol, in the opinion of the researcher, also stands for confidentiality. One should be able hold as sacred whatever his fellow confides in him or her. One of the objectives of this project was to throw more light on Ghanaian traditional symbols and their artistic significance. The “*mate masie*” symbol served as a reminder to that whatever information was communicated by the design; contestants and the audience would not only be understood by them but also kept for posterity.

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\(^{84}\) Retrieved on 13/06/2015 from http://ids.chass.ncsu.edu/afs/symbols.php
4.2 Design Technique

Every designer employs a peculiar design technique in executing a project. The design technique was the means of implementing my conceptualized idea. The design technique ensured that a desirable result was achieved so after selecting the symbols, the design technique used for the project was the infusion of all the selected symbols in a crown-like set. To achieve this, the selected symbols were tactfully altered without changing their meanings. Instead, it was aimed at making the symbols fit into the concept of a crown.

_Sketch-up_, a computer assisted designing (CAD) software, was used to generate the floor plan, the initial and the final designs.
4.3 Artistic Renderings of the Symbols

The following are the four selected original *Adinkra* symbols and the artistic renderings of them.

Plate IX: Original *Okɔdeɛ Mmɔwere* (Talons of eagle) *Adinkra* symbol
Source: [www.adinkra.org](http://www.adinkra.org) 20/08/2015

Plate X: Artistically rendered *Okɔdeɛ Mmɔwere* (Talons of eagle)
Plate XI: Original *Duafe* (Wooden comb) *Adinkra* symbol  
Source: [www.adinkra.org](http://www.adinkra.org) 20/08/2015

Plate XII: Artistically rendered *Duafe* (Wooden comb)
Plate XIII: Original *Dweninimmen* (ram horn) *Adinkra* symbol
Source: www.adinkra.org 20/08/2015

Plate XIV: Artistically rendered *Dweninimmen*
The *Mate Masie* symbol was not altered because, the very objective of using Ghanaian traditional *Adinkra* symbols in the design, depended on this symbol. Metaphorically, this symbol admonished individuals to seek knowledge, keep it and be guided by it. It was the desire of the designer/researcher that patrons of GMB would acknowledge and appreciate the imperative role of Ghanaian traditional symbols in the social setting of the country.

Eight of the above stars were used in the design to represent season eight of the GMB.
4.4 Placement of the Symbols and their Significance

In creating the crown-like design, the symbols were arranged in a careful and deliberate chronology. Placed in the centre of the design was the Okødee mmwøwere, the symbol of unity. The call for unity played a central role in GMB. This was shown in the tagline for the show, ‘redefining beauty to promote national unity’ [emphasis mine]. With this in mind, Okødee mmwøwere, was placed in the middle of the design to draw all the other symbols together. The representation of this was a call for unity in diversity among the various ethnic groups. Despite the apparent cultural diversity, many commonalities bind the various ethnic groups and regions together as one.

Just after the Okødee mmwøwere was the Duafe symbol. After the call for ‘national unity’, GMB was to “redefine beauty” and the Duafe symbol was placed just beside the Okødee mmwøwere to convey the message of redefining beauty. Plate XVII shows the artistically rendered Okødee mmwøwere and the Duafe

Plate XVII: artistically rendered Okødee mmwøwere and the Duafe
(Not drawn to scale)
The next symbol placed beside the Duafe was the Mate Masie symbol that stands for knowledge seeking and wisdom in keeping it. What the project sought to do was to give more currency to Adinkra symbols in scenic designs. It was the hope of the researcher that the contestants and the audience would appreciate and keep the message that came with the symbols; hence the choice of the Mate Masie symbol and its placement besides the Duafe symbol. Plate XVIII illustrates artistically rendered Okrdeemwere, Duafe and Mate Masie symbols.

Plate XVIII: artistically rendered Okrdeemwere, Duafe and Mate Masie symbols. (Not drawn to scale)

The last Adinkra symbol used was Dweninimmen. The symbol stressed humility in every aspect of life, to learn and acquire knowledge. It discouraged people from being arrogant but instead humble in order to accomplish all their endeavors. It was used as a symbol of humility and strength. Artistic interpretation of this symbol shows two horns facing each other. It is observed that when two rams faced each other, then they are in a fight or in a competition, and of course, GMB was a beauty contest where there was a healthy competition among the ten contestants and the ultimate winner was crowned at the end.


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The symbol was chosen to complement the other symbols and placed at the extreme ends of the design. Plate XIX: shows all the four artistically rendered symbols: Okɔdeɛ mmɔwɛrɛ, Duafe, Mate Masie and Dweninimmen.

Plate XIX: all four artistically rendered symbols: Okɔdeɛ mmɔwɛrɛ, Duafe, Mate Masie and Dweninimmen symbols. (Not drawn to scale)

To break the Adinkra monopoly in the design and bring in some variety, eight stars were placed on top of the design. GMB was an annual beauty pageant, and the 2014 edition was the eighth season. Therefore, the eight stars were to represent the eighth season. See plate XX.
Plate XX: All four artistically rendered symbols: Okɔdeemɛwere, Duafe, Mate Masie and Dweninimmen with the eight stars. (Not drawn to scale)

Again, the design was used for the grand finale of season eight, so the concept of a crown was adopted. The four symbols were infused into a crown. Readings on most beauty contests and GMB in particular revealed that a queen (winner) was crowned to distinguish her from the runners up. This influenced the choice of the crown. Plate XXI shows the final design

Plate XXI: Final design. (Not drawn to scale)
4.5 Colour Scheme

Parker, Oren Parker et al (2003:216) assertion that a designer must be aware of the separate use of colour to seek a colour explanation that satisfies both light and paint, influenced the selection of colours for this project. Gold and silver colours were used for the project. Gold was for the main set while silver was used for the stars on top of the design.

Gold represents the predominant colour and its energy is that of love, wisdom, enlightenment, and forgiveness. Silver is the feminine equivalent of Gold that embodies compassion and reflection. Further readings on colours reveal that Gold and silver are most often associated with royals. Contextually, a beauty queen was crowned during GMB finals; hence the choice of the two colours.

The choice of colours was discussed with the director, the light designer as well as the costume designer. The collaborative discussion was done to avoid a possible conflict of colours on stage during the performance. One key thing that came up during this discussion was a request from the director that because the program was primarily meant for television, the colours should glitter so that when the cameras pick the set, it would sparkle. In words of the director, a sparkling set would be good for the screen. For this reason, glitters were added to the colours to achieve the glittry effect the direct wanted.
4.6 Lighting

Normally, the set and the lighting designers should come to terms on how the set would be lit. However, because GMB was also for the screen, lighting was more concentrated on the cameras rather than just the set. Nonetheless, the lighting designer and his team gave off their best.

4.7 Materials Used and the Justification

In constructing the set, the following inputs were purchased and used. The justifications for using the materials were as follows:

**2” by 4” Hardwood**

2” by 4” hardwood was used to construct the frame of the set. It was cut into the required sizes and nailed together to form the skeletal outline of the set. Due to its strong quality, the 2” by 4” hardwood made the frame firm, strong and stable.

**3” by 4” Plywood**

3” by 4” plywood was used to construct the proper layout of the set. All the symbols were cut out on this plywood. The 3” by 4” plywood was also used for all corner blocks to reinforce the firmness of the set.

**1” by 8” Plywood**

1” by 8” plywood was very flexible and could easily bend. Due to its flexibility it was cut and used to construct all the curves and every part of the set that required meandering.

**Polystyrene**

The polystyrene was used to give the set some level of thickness. It was cut into
the same shapes and forms as the 3” by 4” plywood was cut into. The polystyrene was glued onto the 3” by 4” plywood to reinforce the thickness.

**White glue**
What glue was used to join the polystyrene onto the 3” by 4” plywood.

**Fila**
There was the need to join some of the polystyrene and fila were used to conceal the joints.

**Gold paint**
Gold paint was intended as the finishing material for the set. However, after painting the set with the gold paint, the desired glittering effect was not achieved. Nonetheless, the whole set was painted with the gold paint and later alternative finishing material was found.

**Glitters**
Glitter was used on the stars to give it a glittry effect.

**Nails**
Various types of nails were used for joining all the wood joints of the set.

**Castors**
Due to the opening and closing mechanism adopted, castors were placed under the set to facilitate easy opening and closing of the set. It also aided easy movements of the set in and out of the main venue of the program.

**Decorative wrapping paper**
After painting the set, the desired effect was not achieved. The construction team therefore had to experiment with various finishing materials and finally settled for
gold plated decorative wrappers. The wrappers come in various sizes. Strangely, however, sticking the decorative wrapping paper to the polystyrene proved very daunting. Almost all adhesives used could not stick the paper to the polystyrene. Finally, the team had to manage with a locally made starch to fix the paper to the polystyrene. Tried as the team did, there were folds in the final work and that, obviously, took some aesthetic value away.

### 4.8 Working Drawings

Working drawings, according to Lynn Pecktal (1975:149), are technical drawing that show the carpenters in the scenic shop how to build a set. The working drawings were supposed to provide the positions of such items as rails, toggles, braces, supports as well as breaks in the scenery and other details pertaining to the construction.

The following working drawings were provided to the construction team for easy comprehension. The drawings were marked in feet and inches.

The following (plates (XXI-XXV) were the working drawings presented by the designer to the carpenters. These drawings, once again, were generated by the Sketch-up set design software.
Plate XXII: Working drawing for Okɔde mmɔwere (Not drawn to scale)

Plate XXIII: Working drawing for Duafe (Not drawn to scale)
Plate XXIV: Working drawing for *Mate Masie* (Not drawn to scale)

Plate XXV: Working drawing for *Dweninimmen* (Not drawn to scale)
4.9 Conclusion

This chapter analyzed the project and techniques employed in achieving the final design. The chapter advanced reasons for choosing the four Adinkra symbols used. Also, in this chapter, the researcher has shown the personal modified artistic renderings of the selected symbols and their chronological placement in the design.

The whole process of selecting the four Adinkra symbols, modifying and embodying them into a crown and communicating through them was the designer’s way of promoting the use of Ghanaian traditional symbols in diverse ways.
CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

5.0 Overview

This chapter concludes on the thesis-project Set Design with Adinkra symbols for TV3's Ghana's Most Beautiful (GMB) 2014. It gives a general summary of the entire process, leading to the execution of the project. Some findings are presented and discussed. In addition, challenges encountered in the process are also enumerated and expatiated. This chapter finally concludes by outlining some recommendations.

5.1 Summary

This project used four Adinkra symbols namely; Okøde mmoòwere (talons of eagle), Duafe (wooden comb), Dweninimme (ram horn) and Matemasie (what I hear, I keep) to design the set for Ghana's Most Beautiful 2014—a beauty pageant among ten contestants from the ten regions of Ghana. The contest was organized by TV3, a private television station, to project the culture of the diverse ethnic groups in the country.

One key element in every culture is the use of symbols as a visual representation and a non-verbal medium of communicating the skills, knowledge and philosophies, norms, ethics, laws and customs of group of people. Symbols make up a significant part of any ethnic group. They have the power to transform a concept into a reality, to speak without words and to effect emotional responses. The project was therefore necessitated by the quest to communicate certain important traits of Ghanaian culture such as unity, beauty, wisdom and healthy competition to the audience through the selected Adinkra symbols.

The role, importance as well as the origin of *Adinkra* symbols was subjected to a critical examination by way of a literature review. The review also touched on the role of symbols and scenic design practice.

Artistic methodology which is for artistic creation and interpretation: developing a model...designing and building set or costumes. It deals with relativity, contains elements that cannot be quantitatively or empirically measured, and allows, for reliance on intuition, inspiration and imagination was adopted in the execution of the project. This methodology became handy as it allowed the designer not only to design and to talk about the design, but also to construct the design.

There were series of research, consultations and discussions with management members of TV3 directly in charge of GMB, the contestants, as well as the supervisors for the project to solicit their views on using Adinkra symbols for the project. Although these views were not to directly influence the design, they helped shape the final work.

Two key things were presented in the analysis of the project. First, the four selected *Adinkra* symbols were discussed to show how appropriate and relevant they were to design. The *Adinkra* symbols for unity, *Okɔdu mmɔwere* (talons of eagle); beauty, *Duafe*; (wooden comb); wisdom, *Matemasie* (what I hear, I keep); and the symbol of 'healthy' competition, *Dweninimme* (ram horn); were thoughtfully selected to boost TV3’s concept of 'redefining beauty to promote national unity'. Secondly, the selected symbols were artistically rendered and arranged in a deliberate chronology to communicate the above meanings to the audience as well as the contestants.

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5.2 Findings

There was one major and very important finding during the course of this project that most of the contestants, especially those from the Northern part of the country appeared very conversant with *Adinkra* symbols. They could actually identify most of the symbols and tell their meanings. It was quite revealing when one of the contestants from the Upper East region, Bentie Abigail Bacira, popularly referred to as Bacci, made a convincing assertion that it about time Ghanaian cultural elements such as *Adinkra* symbols brought us together as one people. Bacci’s assertion was consistent with the general belief that although *Adinkra* traces its origin to the people of the Asante region, its meanings transcend the Asante culture and have adapted to the social, cultural and historical changes that have characterized modern Ghanaian society.

Bacci made the above declaration when a question was posed to her as to whether she would feel disadvantaged if *Adinkra* symbols were used in the set design because *Adinkra* was associated with Asantes. Her response was encouraging enough for me to carry on with *Adinkra* symbols.

5.3 Challenges

It is apparent that the use of *Adinkra* symbols has been over emphasized to the detriment of other symbols from the other regions of Ghana. It was the intention initially, of this project to use symbols from other ethnic groups and regions. That would have been ideal, especially for a program like *Ghana’s Most Beautiful* that had representations from all the ten regions of Ghana.
Designing with symbols from all the ten regions would have given those symbols some exposure, and made the design more representational and balanced. This, however, did not materialize because after the initial research, it was evident that other symbols apart from Adinkra were scarcely available. Those available were not widely known so communicating with such symbols would have been a hindrance. Again, even with Adinkra symbols, not everyone could appreciate their meanings and that became one of the limitations to the project.

The other major challenge was securing the right from TV3 to use the Ghana’s Most Beautiful platform. Management of the station dragged its feet for almost three months and understandably so because they had their own designer who was already commissioned to come up with a design. Therefore, accepting a new different design would distort their schedule and budget. Eventually, my proposal was accepted and approved, there was little time to finalize the design, discuss and agree on a budget, purchase materials and carry out with the construction. Time management enabled me to execute the project.

There was also financial constraint because the project had to be pre-financed by the designer for later reimbursement because TV3 could not disburse funds due to the limited time.
5.4 Recommendations

This research has exposed and provided a foundation for many areas of future research with the following recommendations:

1. It was obvious that apart from Adinkra symbols, most of the other symbols from other ethnic and traditional jurisdiction were fast becoming extinct. This was sadly evident as I interacted with the contestants of Ghana’s Most Beautiful. Most of them could not readily tell or mention names of symbols from their respective regions. This was akin to the researcher's own challenge of having access to other symbols from the other regions. This huge gap begs for attention.

What were on the lips of most of the contestants and other people interacted with were Adinkra symbols. Therefore, set design students should be encouraged to carry out extensive research on the various symbols from the other traditional, ethnic or regional jurisdictions and employ them in their designs. This will give them some prominence and room for documentation for posterity.

2. Programs such Ghana’s Most Beautiful provide a very important and useful platform for set designers, costumiers, directors, lighting designers and other personnel in the theatre to showcase their skills and capabilities. It is the recommendation of the researcher that the Department of Theatre Art, University of Ghana should foster a cordial relationship between the Department and TV3, so that students can to use the platform as an avenue for their final projects.
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APPENDIXES

Appendix A: Selected pictures from the construction process

a) Designer with one of the carpenters cutting out the design

b) A colleague designer assisting with the cut out in the polystyrene

c) Designer with the two carpenters in the carpentry shop

d) carpenters joining parts of the set

e) Designer cutting out design in the polystyrene

f) Two colleagues assisting
g) Work in progress

i) stretching the wrapping paper on the set

j) work in progress

l) Final work

h) Work in progress