



School Based Visual Arts: Documentation Of Selected Students Artefacts As A Potential Resource Material For Teaching And Learning Of Aesthetics

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Abstract:

The study concerned itself with the documentation of unexploited and hidden artefacts in six selected Senior High Schools offering Visual Arts in Ghana. The study which is qualitative in nature specifically sought to identify, describe, analyse and document selected artefacts produced by students as a useful resource material for aesthetics teaching and learning. The study was conducted on sampled artefacts from the six Senior High Schools randomly selected from Eastern and Ashanti regions. Fourteen works comprising picture making, sculpture, ceramics, textiles, graphic design and jewellery were finally sampled out, discussed and analysed in descriptive form. The findings of the study revealed excellent manipulative skills and competencies exhibited by students in artefacts produced. The results of the study largely confirm that there is valuable inherent information such as philosophies, technical aspects, expressive and communicative qualities attached to the artefacts that could be exploited and utilised fully as a useful resource material for teaching and learning.

Keywords: Documentation, Appreciation, Artefacts, Visual Arts.

Introduction

The Visual Arts as a composite programme at the Senior High School in Ghana embraces all artistic activities that result in the creation of two – dimensional and three – dimensional forms. The scope and content of the Visual Arts is therefore to provide adequate foundation and enough knowledge and skills in the creation of two- dimensional and three- dimensional art forms. According to the Ghana Education Service 2008 Register of Programmes of Study for Public Senior High Schools, 238 out of the total 494 Public Senior High Schools offer Visual Arts. It is very obvious that the Senior High Schools offering Visual Arts are endowed with artefacts produced by students.

In a visit to selected Senior High Schools in the Eastern and Ashanti regions of Ghana, the researchers experienced magnificent art works that are considered worthy of sustained appreciation, attention and other hidden interest that are unexploited. Apart from the artistic and aesthetic qualities portrayed by these artefacts, there is valuable inherent information on philosophies, technical skills, expressive and communicative qualities attached to them that could be exploited and utilised as a useful resource material for teaching and learning. The researchers hold the view that documenting some of these artefacts may contribute meaningfully to the effective teaching of aesthetics and criticism in schools. Also, documenting school based Visual Arts would serve as a record of students' art works for a particular period of time which might have either deteriorated or forgotten to provide appraisal and evaluative map for the progress of the Visual Arts programme in Ghana.

It is hoped that, many aspects of recent artistic objects and activities will be accessible in documentary form in the future in order that they do not vanish from history without a trace.

As a result of documenting these works, it becomes a good review and would help other student artists learn about how artists of the past have developed ideas for their creative works. Barry (1991) holds that works of art speak a common language that can be learned and enjoyed therefore critical encounters with works of art can stimulate a variety of creative ideas that could be later applied to the making of art. Therefore, the researchers hold the view that documenting selected school based artefacts may contribute meaningfully to the effective teaching and learning of aesthetics.

Visual Arts Activities

Visual Arts are thought of as a process of creative activities for students in which product is the result or record of the experience (Mattil, 1965). When one speaks of Visual Arts, he/she may in fact, be considering the entire process of creation. The Visual Arts programme is an

engrossing activity that fosters creativity in students. One of the general aims of the Visual Arts is to develop effective manipulative skills using tools and materials to create artefacts as enshrined in the Ministry of Education Teaching Syllabuses (2008) for Visual Arts subjects.

Mattil (1965) contends that Visual Arts activities allow the individual the opportunity to feel fulfilled, having initially to conceive his idea and to carry it through every stage to completion. A good Visual Arts activity according to Mattil brings the student face to face with himself as he applies his own ideas to a material, using tools that must respond to his will and skill, finally creating in tangible form a fresh combination of ideas into works of art. Works of art are therefore communicated through specific media or materials which give visible shape and form to an artist's idea and emotions (Nemett 1992). The term medium, therefore, according to Nemett refers to the type of material an artist uses for artistic expression. Painters, for example, may employ the medium of oil, water colour, or acrylic paint. Sculptors may employ the medium of clay, stone or metal. The fundamental challenge for every artist therefore, is to come to terms with just which medium most expressively sets into motion his/her particular strengths, insights, and eccentricities.

It is worth noting that, artists over the years have mastered their chosen media and methods in production of art works. These methods and materials employed affect a work's basic structure and appearance. Hence, they become influential in the appreciation of works of art.

A major factor in the understanding and appreciation of art is knowledge of its structure and compositional relationships created in a work of art. Nemett (1992) underlines the structure of a work of art as the way the components of visual expression merge to create an organized whole. Bates (2000) explains that all works of art consist of certain qualities and relationships put together in a particular way. Those qualities which are basic visual components are called elements of art. The major elements of art are line, shape, colour and texture (Katz et al., 1995). These elements of art are essential, for without them there would be no work of art. They are common to all works of art and are the visual instruments with which artists orchestrate their compositions. The elements can function independently or in conjunction with another. This means that some artists choose variations or only one element to create their work of art. Other artists may use several elements at the same time. The structure of a work of art is therefore based on the organization of elements of art according to certain principles called design principles. They are generally defined as relationships created by art elements working together in a composition as expressed by Bates (2000). They include rhythm and movement, unity, variety, emphasis, proportion, and balance etc. When the elements and principles are used together effectively, the resulting work of art can express moods, feelings, and visual messages.

Katz et al. (1995) contend that, there is need to be familiar with the elements and principles to appreciate the essential components of a work of art and the essential qualities of a work of art that produce desired expressive effects.

Materials And Methods

The materials for the study are sampled artefacts from six senior high schools selected from Eastern and Ashanti regions of Ghana offering Visual Arts subjects. These schools were randomly sampled out with three schools from each region respectively. The descriptive method and content analysis approach were adopted and relied on observation checklist for the data. The descriptive method was used to record, describe, analyse and interpret secondary data from books (Best, 1981; Ngadi, 1984). This provided evidence on what has been done already on the study. The content analysis method on the other hand, was adopted for description of the body of material for study to give precise definitions and descriptions of the characteristics looking for (Leedy, 2005). This helped in the appreciation of the artefacts through critical observation of art forms, a description of the compositional structure, qualities of art elements and analysing the visual relationships within the composition, expressive and communicative qualities and personal meanings portrayed by artefacts. The researchers visited the schools and sampled artefacts produced by students from collections at the schools. Due to the fact that artefacts appeared in different art forms, characteristics and proportions, both stage sampling and proportional stratified sampling techniques were employed for selecting the artefacts from the six schools. After careful examination and critical analysis of the works based on inherent and expressive qualities attached to them, 14 works were finally sampled out for the purpose of this publication. The results of the study are presented and analysed in qualitative descriptive form with the corresponding data retrieved in the form of pictures. The artefacts are under the following categorisation: sculpture, ceramics, jewellery textiles, graphic design and picture making.

Results And Discussion

Characteristics Of Students' Artefacts

It was inferred from the study that students generally produced realistic as well as figurative and totem-like abstracted works of art. The meanings of some of the abstracted forms remained elusive and are subject to many interpretive discussions. Majority of clay objects observed are small-scale figurines which were glazed or unglazed, painted or unpainted. The spirits of sculptures are more revealed in their postures which are highly expressive with emotional

intensity and characteristics. The materials used in producing some art works are very deceptive and cannot be easily identified because of the finishing. Sculpture figures compositionally have monumental qualities. They are highly expressive individual figures with mastery manifesting itself in their execution. Some clay and cement sculptures show bodily distortions and complexities of pose, reduction of forms to their essentials and bringing out the intrinsic beauty of material. There is a clear indication that students over the years have mastered their chosen media and methods in production of artefacts which affect a work's basic structure and appearance. This supports Nemett (1992) assertion that the artists must discover what media or materials that best suit their needs and strengths; and also materials an artist chooses for a project must be determined by the inherent properties of that material to fulfil the requirement of a given project. There is an emphasis on the titles of compositions that the viewer shared direct emotional communication. Compositions were based on issues of personal, social, cultural, and educational importance from memory, imagination and observation.

Appreciation Of Selected Artefacts Produced By Students



Figure 1: Tetteh Juliana. Emancipation of women. 2006.

Clay High Relief, 38cm × 28cm.

Asafo Akim Senior High School



Figure 2: Agyare S. Thinker.1999.

*Wood, height- 90cm
Prempeh College, Kumasi*

- a. The Emancipation of Women is a high relief clay work. The composition consists of four female figures, engaged in masonry activity. The material used in producing the work is very deceptive and cannot be easily identified because of the finishing. The work was given a fine smooth textured surface treatment and painted in silver colour. The figures were well carved and modelled with all the technical proficiencies. The scene is a direct impression executed with all the spontaneity possible in the clay medium. The activities of the figures are easily and well identified and understood by the viewer. The figures appear columnar with schematic bodies and identical costuming. The composition creates an effect of action because the structural systems are exposed and self-explanatory. Unity, rhythm and balance are seen in the clothing of the figures, postures and activities they perform. These give a real feeling of natural setting. The artist expresses her own subjective experience about the theme “Emancipation of Women”. In the traditional African society, there is a division in the work of art among the sexes. For example, masonry, stone and wood carving is reserved for men whiles pottery and dress making are for women. The artist’s view on the subject therefore indicates women being freed from the restriction of undertaking

masonry activities which are reserved for men. It exhibits a way in which women could be given the opportunity to apply their skills and knowledge to execute a product for specific functions in their culture. Similarly, it is also educating us about how the creative potentials of indigenous women could be harnessed for nation building, given us an idea about women empowerment to buttress the saying that “what men can do, women can also do”.

- b. The sculpture labelled fig. 4 is a free standing wood carving figure titled “The Thinker”. It stands approximately 90 cm high on a circular base.

The sculpture piece was carved out of a hood wood and the appearance suggests an acacia wood.

The Thinker is massive and block like having a long cylindrical neck and a bulging forehead. The face is enhanced by lunette shape eyes, pyramidal nose, small shut mouth with a sense of soft flesh around the lips, and small curved chin. The figure is in an upright sitting posture with the head and neck resting on the right hand. The left hand is clinched to the body and rests beneath the left thigh on the plinth. The chest is broad and the breast well defined. The lower torso was organized more according to geometry than to nature. There is simplified abstraction and exaggeration in the thighs, legs, feet and toes. The tool marks leave finely incised parallel and vertical lines on the surface of the body.

The work stands at a balance and attention position. It is nicely proportioned and there is a correct relationship in body parts and this stimulates unity, harmony and balance. The spaces and illusions created and the general contour of the body stimulates a sense of life and movement.

There is an emphasis on the title that the viewer shared direct emotional communication. That is, the relaxed pose gives immediate meaning to the viewer. The head leaning on his hand as the seated figure gazes out into space with those furtive implied little eyes, engrossed in thought or meditation, has a serious and cryptic expression that suggests depression. The sculptor was therefore successful in achieving his theme, the thinker.



*Figure 3: Antwi Rebecca. Beggar. 2005.
Clay, height-36cm high.
Yaa Asantewaa Girls Senior High School.*



*Figure 4: Offei Ofori Godfred. Unity.1999,
Clay, height-36cm high.
Okuapeman Senior High School*

- c. The “Beggar” (fig.3) is a terra cotta male figure. The limbs are exaggerated and the neck is short, thick and cylindrical. The figure is relaxed in pose with the head slightly raised up and gazes out into space with those furtive implied little eyes and the tightly pursed thick lips. The arms and legs are heavy with well defined bulging muscles. Both arms rest peacefully stretched on the laps with the palm in an open position. The figure is bare chest with bulging pectoral muscles and the abdomen is flat and sunk and joined by a small waist. The sculpture is near realistic and creates an impression of a portrait of a man’s life, his daily existence judging from the expression on his face, posture and outward disposition. Again the composition seems to portray the emotional quality of the man’s state of being. The distorted feet and hands are purposeful and convey the feeling of swollen parts and which have meaning. One can see in the figure a man who might have been in poverty for a long time judging from the sorrowful, calm and dispassionate face. The flat and sunken stomach portrays a prolonged state of starvation or hunger. From the imitationalist view, the image is too sloppily rendered and features are modelled out of shape. It is made crooked, ugly and weird. But from emotionalist view, its sloppiness and weirdness have expressive qualities. The artist has conveyed feeling through the use of subject matter and composition, for it really has an emotional impact. She has made one to feel exactly the way she wanted the viewer to feel. The artist communicated her message very well indeed. It is a suitable demonstration material for teaching expressivism in aesthetics.
- d. Fig.4 is a symbolic presentation of snail, tortoise and a gun. The artist translated his ideas into three- dimension with the malleable material of clay through both additive and subtractive processes. The figure was finished by rounding the edges and burnishing it to give the surface a smooth treatment. The surface appearance suggests that it was finished by fingertip rubbing before given bisque firing and later covered with a thin layer of fine-grained clay colouring siliceous mineral pigment. The work piece commands enough space with its projections. There is variety of dynamic negative volumes created to separate the totems which enhances visual harmony. Though a single figure, the component parts are well defined and the entire composition stands at a balance and unified position which heightens the action and sense of unity that suffuse the representation. The tortoise together with the snail is a totemic representation which signifies peace and harmony. The gun is a weapon used to kill but the humble nature of the snail and tortoise does not call for gunshot. They are a sort of creatures with

repulsive force when touched. They readily withdraw to their shells to be taken, meaning that there is no need for them to be shot with the gun. There is therefore an Akan proverb “Ekaa nwa ne akyekyedee nko a, anka otuo rento wɔ wuram da” which literally translates that, left to the tortoise and snail alone there would be no gunshot in the bush. The image is therefore, a symbol of unity through which the artist expresses his ideas about people living in peace and harmony with others to avoid conflicts.



*Figure 5: Michael Asiedu. Ceramic Sculpture.
2000. Clay, 40cm high.
Asamankese Senior High School*



*Figure 6: Matilda Yeboah. Pectoral Ornament 2008.
Leather, 30cm×30cm.
Abetifi Presby Senior High School.*

- e. The ceramic sculpture (fig.5) is a representational symbol of a reptile clinched to a Y-shaped trunk of a tree. The reptile depicted is a lizard with an abstracted hollowed head with twelve small punched holes on it and the tapering end opened. The surface of the lizard is full of tactile reflex and the trunk is smooth. The artist adopted the additive method of forming clay sculpture. The composition is firmly and beautifully unified in all parts. It creates an effect of action because the structural system is self-explanatory. The manipulation of the posture of the lizard on the support gives a real feeling of a naturalistic representation and there is a sense of unity, balance, rhythm and movement that convey an aesthetic response. The surface of the work piece glisters in the light, and the rough texture of the finishing adds visual and tactile interest. This is representational of totemic symbol of a lizard which has socio-cultural importance in the lives of indigenous people in some parts of the country. Proverbially the lizard teaches us wisdom to talk less and think more as it constantly nods its head. More so like the lizard which clings so tightly to the wall lest it loses its grip falls and dies, so, too must we as human beings cling to those things we hold dear lest we lose them. Therefore the composition becomes essential as a reminder for us to protect and preserve our history and culture at this present day influx of foreign culture.

f. Fig.6 is a jewellery product and the title is a Pectoral Ornament (Breast Plate). The background colour of the pectoral ornament is brown. In the middle lies a triangular shape in khaki colour and inside it is a symbol appearing in red. The ornament was enhanced with other jewellery materials such as seeds, bones and cowries painted in gold and silver colours. Attached to the plate is a woven necklace from stone and bamboo beads with leather stripes at the ends for fastening. The main material for the ground work is leather. The artist developed the shape of the plate from a traditional symbol called “Akoben” which literally means war horn. The ground work was designed through the in-lay and on-lay techniques of appliqué. The desired shape was first cut out from brown leather. A triangular shape was then cut out from the brown leather and the khaki leather were in-laid and the edges secured by thonging with leather thongs. The outline of the appliqué symbols and portions of the surface were enhanced with seed, cowries, and bones through stitching. The breast plate is symmetrically balanced and the enhanced materials which come in varied sizes and colours help in creating interest, harmony, movement and dynamic effect in the overall structural design. The design derives its strength largely from the striking movement and dynamic effect in the overall flow of the network around the surface of the plate. The flow is dramatic and it adds visual and tactile interest. The pectoral ornament is a decorative piece worn on the chest by hanging around the neck, normally by the royals such as the Queen mothers. They are worn for body adornment, protection of the chest and also for showing the status of the wearer. The Breast plate is often triangular representing the smallest unit of the society which is father, son and mother with the spirit of God binding them. So the King/Queen wearing the pectoral implies that he or she has the society at heart that is why it lies on the chest where the heart is. The triangular pattern is therefore symbolic. The silver colour used in painting the seeds signify second in position next to the king. Therefore the pectoral ornament is designed for a queen mother. The gold colour symbolizes the wealth of the queen mother. The “Akoben” symbol the artist adopted for the shape is symbolic. The symbol signifies alertness and readiness to serve a good cause. It encourages people to be ready at all times to serve their nations even in times of war. The breast plate therefore communicates the loyalty, devotion and service of the wearer.



*Figure 7: Kwaakye Rockson. Necklace. 2006. Clay, 44.5cm long.
Abetifi Presby SHS.*

- g. The necklace (fig.7) is basically composed of a pendant and three varying sizes of beads and sequins, all threaded on a doubled thickness of strong cotton thread with metal hooks for fastening. The beads were modelled with clay and then given a bisque firing to become permanent. The beads were finished by painting with nail polish to give a glossy surface. A definite order was followed in stringing up the beads and sequins. This has resulted in symmetrical balance of the necklace and a rhythmical pattern. The artist translated her ideas from the shape of palm kernel into the modelling of the beads. To this, the artist names the necklace as “Ti koro nko agyina” which literally means, one head cannot go into counsel. This proverb is a reminder of collaboration and act of cooperation. The artist elaborates that it is impossible to extract oil from a palm kernel nut. It takes more of the palm kernel nuts which come in different sizes for the extraction of oil. This concept has been technically translated into the fashioning of the necklace. It is portrayed in the varying sizes of the beads which have been strung up to form a harmonious unit that emphasises the attributes of togetherness that pervade in unity. The necklace could be worn by a traditional leader who believes that wisdom is not vested in the head of only an individual and therefore adheres to collaboration and act of cooperation.



*Figure 8: Owusu Ansah. Batik Cloth. 1999.
Cloth, 90cm×270cm.
Juaben Senior High School*



*Figure 9: Edem Adjei. Mourning Cloth. 2006.
Appliqué, 90cm×270cm.
Abetifi Presby Senior High School.*

- h. The fabric shown in fig.8 was decorated by combining the techniques of batik and printing. The background stimulates textured linear patterns with patches in white, brown and black colours. The dominant motif is Akan traditional symbol “Sankofa” in brown colour emerging from a circular dark background. The arrangement of the motifs in the cloth gives the cloth a horizontal look. On the background is a printed motif of three hearts and two crossed swords in sea blue which seem insignificant as compared with the vast background and colour intensity. These motifs are repeated in between the “Sankofa” motifs.

The fabric is actually beautifully decorated. The striking visual effect of the fabric is created through the background colours of vein lines and the contrast in the darker

circular shapes to the colour of the “Sankɔfa”. The two worlds of the “Sankɔfa” and the darker background co-exist in harmony. The white contour of the “Sankɔfa” is a subtle accent to the general outlook of the batik. The “Sankɔfa” is a symbol which indicates that it is not a taboo to return to fetch something that has been forgotten. It means we can always correct our mistakes. The sword in Ghanaian context also signifies the social standing of the clan, group or state in terms of strength, wealth and attitudes while the heart is a symbol of patience and endurance. The batik based on its horizontal appearance could therefore be suitable for table cover at a public place such as the chief’s palace, community centre or town halls. The only defect of the design is the sea blue colour introduced which does not match the other colours and therefore, not adding to the beauty of the cloth.

- i. The “Mourning Cloth” (fig.9) is an On-lay spaced dark ground appliqué. The background is black with three distinct “adinkra” motifs in red colour repeated all over the surface. The three proverbial “adinkra” motifs are “Mmusuyideɛ” (The agent, which removes ill luck or curses), “Owuo atwedee” (Death ladder) and “Nyame biribi-wɔ-soro” (God, something is in the heavens). The artist relied on the principle of spaced layout in arranging the motifs. In effect the motifs have more room around them making them more prominent in character and noticeable. The colour of the motifs in contrast to the ground relatively isolates itself against the field, and the black colour given to the ground adds density to the appearance of the cloth. The “adinkra” symbols are proverbial and they express the general beliefs and ideas of the people in the Ghanaian traditional set up. They are used for royal funerals and their significance is to bid farewell to the spirit of the dead. Their names indicate their significance. For example, the “Mmusuyideɛ” is a symbol of good fortune and sanctity, “Owuo atwedee” expresses the notion that all men shall climb the ladder of death, and “Nyame biribi-wɔ-soro” literally means God, there is something in the heavens, let it get to me. It is a symbol of hope. The artist therefore adopted them to express his feelings about mourning the dead. Similarly, the colours used are associated with funeral and mourning activities. The red signifies a deep feeling of melancholy and black also shows prolonged grief over the death of a loved person. The cloth could therefore be suitable for mourning persons such as a mother, father, husband or wife.

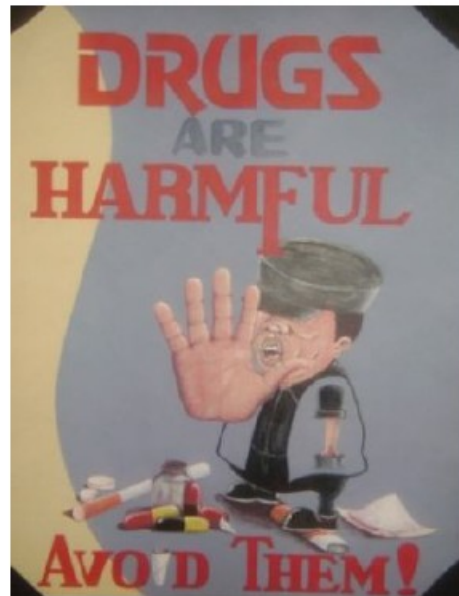


Figure 10: Asomani Samuel. Poster Design.
2000. Size- 42cm×59.4cm.
Ofori Panin Senior High School. Kukurantumi

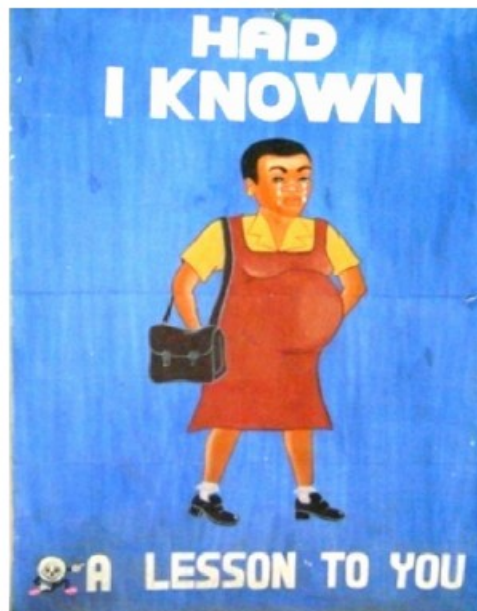


Figure 11: Osman Banji. Poster Design 2000.
Size- 42cm×59.4cm.
Abetifi Presby Senior High School.

- j. The poster (fig.10) conveys a clear and precise message that educates and informs the public to avoid the abuse of drugs. The poster draws on the fusion of images but it is executed in a comic style. The image has been distorted but other representation like the drugs and hand has been realistically portrayed. The hypnotic convincing of this comic

figure is the signalled hand appearing in the middle, augmented by the well depicted drugs and the cool background colours. The type style used is bold having thick strokes. This makes the letter forms to look simple in appearance. The caption is cleverly worded and written. Letter spacing and word spacing are well planned, resulting in compactness of words which enhances reading. Both the positive and negative areas have been worked together to form a harmonious and interesting unit that attracts attention. The illustration has not been over-decorated to overshadow the information the wording is intended to convey. People who cannot read can get the information, which the illustrations give. The clarity, boldness and legibility of the message make it possible to be read and understood from a reasonable distance. The poster perfectly illustrates how the artist adapts cartoon techniques to maximise the communication of his message. Probably, the artist might have intended to portray some of the harmful effects of abusing drugs in the illustration, hence, the distortion of the figure. However, the emotional impact is not much felt from the figure. The full force of the poster is rather seen in the use of intense red colour to convey the message. The colour red is symbolic and it is used as a sign for warning against danger. Its use therefore, emphasizes the meaning of the message. The message has priority over other forms but the feel of the expression in the signal of the hand is a great accent to creativity and perfect design.

- k. Fig.11 is a poster that combines an image and message on a flat painted blue background. The image portrays a teenage school girl with tears dropping from her eyes as she stands alone in a desolate condition. The artist aimed at simplifying his design and producing a poster in a language that could be understood at a glance. Hence, the caption "HAD I KNOWN, A LESSON TO YOU". The vast space around the girl could be explained as the desolate condition which the artist wanted to portray. Generally, everything was directed toward suggesting an event of the victim recalling the agony she is going through as a result of her teenage pregnancy, yet the artist could not convey a definite type of physiognomy that portrays regret. Similarly, her shoes and the hand bag are not normal in reality. Girls who normally find themselves in such a condition often appear poorly groomed. Therefore, the feeling of regret of the girl is not much felt since the outward disposition of the figure does not bring the viewer so immediately into the poster.



Figure 12: Juliana Agyeiwaa. *Unity*. 1999.
Acrylic on canvas, 40cm × 55cm.
Akim Asafo Senior High School



Figure 13: Brenya E. Artist. *Music Makers*. 1999
Acrylic on plywood, 40.5cm by 60cm
W.M.B. Zion Senior High School, Old Tafo-Akim.

1. The painting (fig.12) consists of three abstracted portraits and the Ghanaian traditional symbol “Obi- nka-bi”. The elements are horizontally positioned on the picture plane and

they were rendered using geometric forms. The artist was greatly influenced by the African mask. The faces are crude and horrifying forms with an emptiness in them that seems to touch the soul of the viewer. The close-fitting hat and the over grown beard identified with the figure on the left side portrays a Moslem. Similarly, the clerical collar of black and white with the cross pendant attached to the rosary on the neck of the middle figure portrays a priest of the Christian faith. The coiffure, the dots on the forehead and the whorl neck identified with the other figure also portrays a traditionalist. The middle figure was superimposed on the others and the artist carefully painted the faces in thick flat colours over the background. Varying scrubby colours were settled on the background to create texture. All the organization, its balance, contrast, echoes, and rhythmic flow, was of course perfectly conscious on the part of the artist. The principle of simultaneity is in action in this painting. That is, all the three faces are viewed at once. The composition rely on more than one point of focus to bring the component parts into an ordered whole. The size of the portraits significantly limits the depth of space between the front and back planes. This shallow space serves to distant the viewer by making it difficult to enter the pictorial space. However, the apparent size of the symbol "Obi nka bi" in proportion to the size of the portraits and the diminishing colour intensity and value contrast of the background enhances the illusion in the work. The component parts are well defined and the entire composition stands at a balance and unified position which heightens the sense of unity that suffuse the representation. The precise meaning of this composition remained elusive. However, the incorporated cultural element of the traditional Ghanaian icon and its concept brings the viewer closer to what the composition stands for. The symbol "Obi-nka-bi" which literally means "bite not one another" or "avoid conflict" is a symbol of unity. Its inclusion in the composition is therefore aiding to portray the theme "Unity". The icon serves as a subtle accent to the emotions being conveyed. Symbolically, the square represents the stainless purity of God in African context. Therefore, the faces which are filled with the motion of elaborate square patterns represent such qualities of God as peace, fairness, faithfulness, and mercy which must transcend in the lives of the various religious groups therefore, living in peace and harmony. The painting may look like it was produced without forethought, but its development was actually directed through the artist's steady manipulation of the painting medium and cerebral decision-making. Technically, the composition is beautiful in the absolute control of arrangement and painting.

m. This presentation in fig. 13 is a semi-abstracted painting showing four men playing musical instruments, that is, two traditional northern base drums, a harp and a horn. The painting has been applied without any attention to detail. The figures share dark elongated necks with their heads rendered flat, in profile and placed in different positions, emerging from a blue background. Every inch of the environment has been limited in cool shades of sky blue and deep purple with clutter of white spaces crowding in around the composition with interplay of orange spots and zigzag lines.

The colours were smoothly applied and the entire composition apart from the heads was modelled in subtle tonal gradation to give a greater sense of three-dimensional form. The artist picks out the textures with different types of dots and lines. The figures were superimposed on each other creating a shallow space. However, the relative diminishing in size of the two figures on the right side together with the grading and diminishing colour intensity of the background conveys an illusion of greater depth on a flat surface. The colours are rhythmically placed across the canvas, and they possess a spontaneous, lyrical quality creating a light-hearted mood.

The use of contrasting blue and orange colour draws the viewer into the focal point in the centre. Each of the figures receives individual attention which in effect, enhances multiple points of attraction. The shallow space created in the composition enables one to observe the scene from a close range, thereby intimately engaging the viewer with the action unfolding.

There seems to be tension and agitation created between the elements in the composition resulting from the jarring rendering of the dots and lines. Also the clutter of white spaces crowding in around the composition seems to distract the viewer but it is purposeful as it gives and conveys feeling and spirit that pervade the scene. The artist has used subject matter to elicit emotional responses. One can easily observe the figures fully absorbed into and enjoying the activity they perform. The artist really communicated his message well, for the emotions are still very clear to the viewer.



Figure 14: Boamah George. *At the Clinic*. 2001.
Acrylic on Manila, 40cm×55cm.
Pope John Senior High and Seminary

- n. The representation in fig. 14 is a realistic composition of a female nurse dispensing medicine to patients who are supposed to be students. The three figures identified all shares a ruddy complexion and dark hair set against a lighter dull background with no foreground.

The orange toned shirts worn by the students contrast with the light blue clothing of the nurse and the table mat. The arrangements of the colours on the support suggest that it consumed much of the time the artist spent painting the composition. He might have shifted these bright colours around the support until he felt they had reached this state of tonal harmony.

The composition was softly and smoothly modelled with full of fluidity and light streams onto the figures, creating shadows which enhance the planes of the faces and their three dimensional character. There is a shallow space created in the painting, limiting the depth of space between the front and back planes. This make it difficult for the viewer to enter the pictorial space, however it enables the viewer to observe the unfolding event from close range. The two seated figures have been balanced with the standing figure which leads the eyes of the viewer to all the three points on the picture plane. The focal point was carefully achieved by the use of two diagonal lines of the hands which lead the viewer's eyes to the unfolding action. This focal point was reinforced by the composure of the standing figure whose eyes leads one back into the picture. Tonal values have been carefully arranged and the anatomical structures of the figures are proportional. The

overall painting has an organic flow. It has a sharp graphic quality that is especially strong and rhythmical. The standing figure conveys heaviness and sadness, perhaps contemplation which suggests a weak and sick person. Contrary, the seated student receiving the medicine looks livelier and healthier. It is not clear whether he is receiving the medicine on behalf of the standing figure or for himself. It is therefore suggested that, although both students might be sick, the artist should have offered the seat to the person wearing heaviness, sadness and depressed facial expression. The dramatic effect at the dispensing table is not much felt. The atmosphere portrayed is full of silence. The mouth of the nurse or the drug recipient should have been rendered to open a little bit to bring a sense of communication that will enhance the dramatic effect of the composition. Also the artist should have introduced some of the cool colours in the dress and the skin tone. Notwithstanding all these shortcomings, the artist has portrayed every detail of this environment. The artist's skill, his attention to detail and his ability to create the illusion of reality and form and human substance on this flat piece of paper is highly recommended.

Conclusion

The study is a clear manifestation that, the schools are endowed with magnificent and interesting art works produced by students that are considered worthy of sustained appreciation, attention and interest hidden and unexploited. Apart from the artistic and aesthetic qualities portrayed by the artefacts, there is valuable inherent information as philosophies, technical aspects, expressive and communicative qualities attached to them that can be exploited and utilised fully for the purpose of Art Education. These artefacts are locked up and kept in stores and obscure places that are deleterious to their conditions. Improper storage and preservation measures of students' art works had therefore, led some objects to deteriorate for which if no proper measures are adhere to, such art works would be lost forever. Therefore, the objective of documenting school base Visual Arts is in the right direction since it would serve as a record of students' art works for a particular period of time which might have either deteriorated or forgotten to provide appraisal and evaluative map for the progress of the Visual Arts programme in Ghana. It is hoped that, many aspects of recent artistic objects and activities will be accessible in documentary form in the future in order that they do not vanish from history without a trace.

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