

Design and Production of Ghanaian Ceramic Tourist Souvenirs

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Abstract: Ceramic materials have been widely used in Ghana, but hardly as souvenirs in the tourism industry. Ceramic designs massively depict the historical, cultural and social antecedents of the Ghanaian. Many tourists return home with souvenirs as proof of the unique cultures they have experienced. How to design and produce ceramic souvenirs with unique Ghanaian cultural insignia as memento moments for the tourist market is therefore an important problem explored by the researchers. This project sought to derive inspiration in electronic drying production methods by designing and producing ceramic souvenirs with unique traditional Ghanaian emblems on them. The study employed the observation data collection method. Thus, the Art Centres in Accra, Kakum National Park, and the souvenir shops located close to the Cape Coast Castle were used as study sites. These places were selected because they were among the most visited and famous tourist sites in Ghana. The conceptual cultural design model was used to transform Ghanaian traditions, culture and social life into ceramic souvenirs. The studio practice research method was adopted and a brief description of the process made. Production methods aided in executing the works include clay model making, plaster mould making, and plaster model making. At the laboratory, the authors made glazes of gold, black, metal-like effects and other colours, many of which were fired with the electric kiln. These colours also depicted elements of Ghanaian insignia. All of the artworks were fired under a temperature of about 600 to 700^oC and then moved to the decorative stage using decorative glazes. The artworks were then cleaned thoroughly with clean water dripping from cushion material after first firing to remove all dust particles on the surface. Preliminary sketches and designs were made taking into consideration the Ghanaian cultural values. It was observed that most glazes had tactile or visual textures, and were a very satisfying embodiment of Ghanaian ceramic elements. In ceramic souvenir production for the tourism market, plaster moulding technology can deliver efficient production that embodies the aesthetics and tastes of tourists/collectors.

Keywords: Design, Ceramic, Culture, Souvenirs

1. INTRODUCTION

Ceramic materials have not been widely used in Ghana like other materials have been used extensively in the production of tourist souvenirs (Kugbonu et al., 2019). Souvenirs from Ghana are intended to integrate the long history, culture and tradition of the society, and could thus be used as mementos.

Tourists make souvenir purchase decisions largely based on their recognition of the combined value of the various attributes of the item (Kim, 1997). In general, they want a souvenir that is easy to carry, relatively cheap, easy to understand, clean, and usable when they return home. There are basically four attributes in a souvenir that are important to tourists: 1) value, 2) product display, 3) size, and 4) unique features such as colour, display and packaging. These souvenirs could also be given as gifts to friends, family, relatives or those who could not make the trip. Souvenirs are made of various materials such as wood, metal, rock, fabric and ceramics. Ceramic materials have been playing an important role in human daily life since the Neolithic period (Banning, 2002). In Morocco, an important global tourism destination, ceramics have remained emblematic of the culture of the people for which reason tourists travel to see and pick up important pieces for themselves (Frémot, 2020). This study, therefore, sought to use suitable ceramic materials to design and produce souvenirs for the tourism market. The intention is to embody Ghanaian culture and traditions in the artwork in a way that enhances the value of the art pieces for the savvy collector.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research adopted studio practice research method and a brief description process led by practice. Practice research method is based on natural observation (Cherry, 2022). This method was used to obtain the necessary data and help demonstrate the research problem. Preliminary sketches and designs were made taking into consideration Ghanaian cultural values.

2.1. The Design and Realisation of Ceramic Tourism Souvenirs

2.2. I. Concept of Design

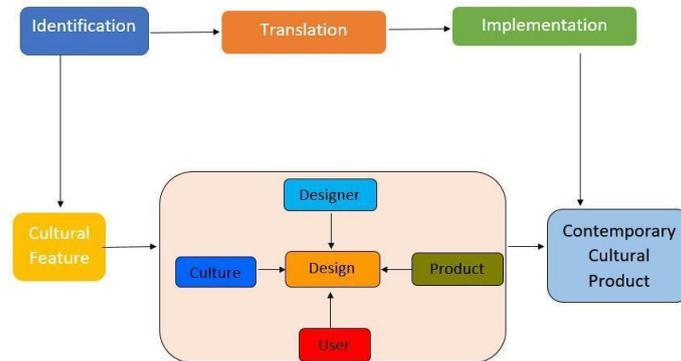


Fig1. Lin, R. T. (2007)

Guided by the proposed conceptual culture design model, this study was divided into three stages as shown in figure 1. In addition, the study identified and extracted cultural features or texts from original cultural objects such as shapes, forms, motifs, materials and patterns in traditional culture. In order to identify and extract the cultural features on the souvenirs that have been made, the authors replicated some concepts from Accra and the Cape Coast. Image data of heritage products were collected from famous tourist attractions and souvenir buying sites. It was observed that culture plays an important role in designing contemporary souvenir design. The study, therefore, extracted cultural characteristics (natural and artificial forms from the prevailing culture and traditions of Ghana) and transformed them into ceramic souvenirs by designing and encoding cultural symbols, motifs and other insignia common to the Ghanaian ethos.

The authors took initial designs through many modifications from the sketch stage until they had a suitable and satisfactory look. The objects in the sketch ranged from functional to decorative. Some objects were omitted in the design, thus forming the final products in abstract form. The study also experimented with making three dimensional (3-D) models of works. The three dimensional models helped to find out what the objects should look like in real life, while modifying and improving using the 3D software as showcased in figure 2.



Fig2. Works in 3D software

In the design process, consideration must be given to the properties of the souvenir and its attraction to tourists. For example, the authors used fewer lines, rounded surfaces and sharper edges, which were typically less common in Ghanaian product design.

Production methods aided in executing the works were clay model making, plaster mould making, plaster model making, and other methods as demonstrated in figures 3-6. Most of the sculptural figures were casted with the aid of plaster moulds. As some of the figures were slightly more complex, we had to find ways to simplify the form and leave only the most important details. Most moulds are made of four to five petal to prevent sticking and lack of detail. With the aid of liquid soap and lubricating oil, the plaster mould can be separated more easily by applying the mixture of the liquid soap and oil with the help of a brush on the parts where the plaster meets and needs to be separated during slip casting. The bowl and lid are made by drawing blanks. When the grouting is completed, the excess moulding material is removed with the help of special tools until the desired shape is obtained and the body is removed from the plaster cast. After that, the process can be repeated to get a bigger desirable object. Other sub mould models are made with clay because they are cheaper and easier to shape. The plaster mould is then dried in a dryer after repeated use. When the water in the gypsum evaporates, the slip casting continues till the required number is attained.

High white porcelain clay and red clay are the main materials used in the authors' creation. High white porcelain clay in the form of slurry for the works of casting. The more complex parts are cast separately and connected to the main body with the help of mud as seen in figures 3-6.

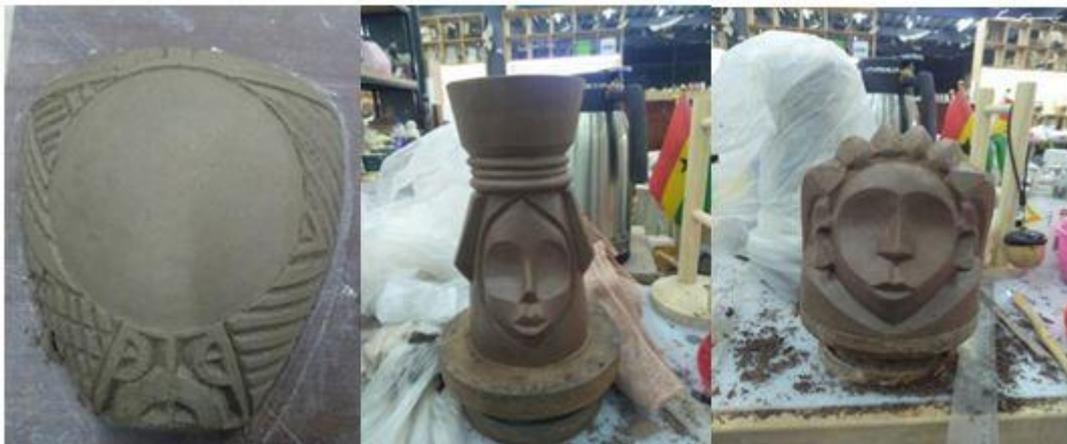


Fig3. Models



Fig4. Jiggering plaster models



Fig5. Slip casted works

All of the artworks were fired under a temperature of about 600 to 700⁰C (degrees Celsius) and then moved to the decorative stage using decorative glazes. The artworks were cleaned thoroughly with clean water and a piece of hand held cushion material after first firing to remove all dust particles on the surface. If they are not cleaned, these particles may cause some glaze defects on the ware. Samples of the bisque fired wares have been shown in figures 6.



Fig6. Bisque fired works



Fig7. Barrel firing Akuaba dolls

Different glazing methods like spraying, brushing, or dipping were used. Most of the glazes in the artworks were prepared by the authors at the laboratory. They were prepared, tested, and fired at 1180⁰C (degrees Celsius). During this period, many tests were carried out and good results were obtained. Successful glazes were pre-tested in an electric kiln as shown in figure 7to determine the outcome before applying them on the produced ceramic souvenirs.



Fig7. Glossy firing with electric kiln at pre-testing stage

At the laboratory, the authors made glazes of gold, black, metallic effects and other colours, many of which were fired with the electric kiln. These colours also depicted elements of the Ghanaian culture and ethos. We observed that some glazes had tactile or visual textures; we deemed that a very satisfying embodiment of the Ghanaian ethos. Samples of the produced glazed ceramic souvenirs are shown in figures 8 –12. Since souvenirs must usually be available in large quantities for sales and distribution outlets, the choice of plaster moulding technology can produce a large number of works.



Fig8. *Sculptural head nob bowls and vase on black glaze*



Fig9. *Sculptural head nob bowls on black bubble textured glaze*



Fig10. *Glazed Akuaba doll*



Fig11. *Head and pan*

Fig12. *Beauty*

Most of the existing traditional souvenirs on the market adopt some indigenous Ghanaian symbols, characters and other elements, and traditional proverbial languages. Cultural characteristics usually

seen in works of art are shapes, forms, and decorative patterns described in pottery and proverbs. Most of the elements were displayed in proportion to the body of the art. Women's bowl is associated with the head shape, as these works were inspired by the fact that pottery works were associated with women who use them to cook or store water. The role of women in Ghanaian culture is very important. Even in the case of ceramics, for example, in some areas, clay digging is only done by women. At the same time, the bonds and communication between women and men are extremely valuable and appreciated. So this is a very common theme in the work. The products include a range of human and instrumental creations transformed into contemporary products such as fruit bowls, lamp stands, bowls and decorative sculptures. The designed products are based on the existing products in the market.

3. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Tourism is travel for entertainment, leisure, religious, family, or business purposes, usually with some time to plan. According to Littrell (1990) tourists can be classified into three categories. First of all, shopping-oriented tourists are the activities that tourists are most often attracted to during their leisure and travel.

Tourism products focus on the design of product shape and material, aimed at meeting the needs of tourists. They could be seen as comprehensive products that reflect the sum total of a country's tourist attractions, transportation, accommodation and entertainment conditions and quality, with the ultimate goal of guest satisfaction (Holder, 1989).

Ponimin et al. (2021) have observed that craft products in Greater Malang have not shown any specific 'Malang' characters, which made them less interesting and badly affected tourists' interests because tourists demand unique and strong-character souvenir products that they can reminisce on when they return home. As every tourist likes to bring home an object from the destination visited, this makes shopping an essential part of the tourism and leisure experience (Sheena, 2006).

There are 12 components that motivate consumers to patronise specific businesses; price, quality, classification, fashion, sales staff, convenient location, and other convenient standards such as service; consumer value friendly conversation with knowledgeable sales staff, sales promotion, advertising, store atmosphere, reputation ranking (Do et al. 2004). Travellers want to experience the authenticity of the communities they visit that is why they visit art galleries, museums and theatres (Do et al., 2004). According to Turner and Reisingner (2001) tourists complete their travel experience with shopping which is an important complement that preserves the tourism experience.

Ghanaian habitats in many rural areas have their source of livelihood in the sale and production of art and craft (Akor- Achemfuor, 2012). In conclusion, if Ghanaian potters and ceramic artists adopt this type of design and production of Ghanaian ceramic tourist souvenirs, it would go a long way to promote tourism since these ceramic wares produced were handy and also through sales to tourists, could generate income to support the livelihood of most ceramic artists as alluded by Akor-Achemfour (2012). Again, in ceramic souvenir production for the tourism market, plaster moulding technology can deliver efficient production that embodies the aesthetics and tastes of tourists/collectors.

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