

KWAME NKRUMAH UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY,  
KUMASI COLLEGE OF ART AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

FACULTY OF FINE ART

DEPARTMENT OF PAINTING AND SCULPTURE

KNUST

**FORMAL REDUCTIONS: EXPERIMENTATION IN CONCEPTUAL  
PAINTINGS.**



By

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FORMAL REDUCTIONS: EXPERIMENTATION IN CONCEPTUAL  
PAINTINGS.

A Project Report submitted to the Department of Painting and Sculpture  
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By

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## CERTIFICATION

This certifies that, this project report is the candidate`s  
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Date.....

I DEDICATE THIS PROJECT TO MY FAMILY.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
Title Page	
Certification .....	i
Dedication.....	ii
Table of Content.....	iii
List of Plates .....	vi
Acknowledgement .....	vii
Abstract.....	viii
CHAPTER ONE	
• 1.1 Overview .....	1
• 1.2 Background to the Study.....	1
• 1.3 Statement of the Problem .....	2
• 1.4 Objectives of the Study .....	3
• 1.5 Justifications of Objectives .....	3
• 1.6 Research Questions .....	4
• 1.7 Delimitation .....	5
• 1.8 Limitation .....	5
• 1.9 Definition of Terms .....	5
• 1.10 Importance of the Study .....	6
• 1.11 Methododology.....	6
• 1.12 Research Methodology .....	7
• 1.13 Organisation of Thesis .....	7
• 1.14 Abbreviations Used .....	8
• 1.15 Facilities for the Study .....	8
CHAPTER TWO - REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE	
• 2.1 Overview .....	9
• 2.2 Formalism .....	9
• 2.3 Orphism .....	13
• 2.4 Neo-Plasticism .....	14
• 2.5 Reductionism .....	15
• 2.6 Minimalism .....	17
• 2.7 Conceptual Art .....	19
• 2.7 Summary .....	25

## CHAPTER THREE - METHODOLOGY

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

• 3.1 Overview .....	27
• 3.2 Strips of Wood .....	27
• 3.3 Hammer .....	28
• 3.4 Nails .....	28
• 3.5 Canvas .....	28
• 3.6 Stretching Plier .....	29
• 3.7 A Pair of Scissors .....	29
• 3.8 Primer .....	29
• 3.9 Acrylic .....	30
• 3.10 Cutting Board .....	31
• 3.11 Solution Tape .....	31
• 3.12 Cutter .....	31
• 3.13 Water Container .....	31
• 3.14 Measuring Rule .....	32
• 3.15 Rag .....	32
• 3.16 Pencil .....	32
• 3.17 Eraser .....	32
• 3.18 Brush .....	33

### EXECUTION OF PROJECT

• 3.19 Stretcher Preparation .....	34
• 3.20 Stretching the Canvas .....	34
• 3.21 Priming the Stretched Canvas .....	35
• 3.22 Sketching the Impressions .....	35
• 3.23 Relaxation and Pre-Work Analysis .....	36
• 3.24 Painting The Impressions .....	36

## CHAPTER FOUR - INTERPRETATION OF WORKS

• 4.1 Overview .....	38
• 4.2 Blind Digger .....	38
• 4.3 Broken Dreams .....	41
• 4.4 New Face Of Akuaba .....	44
• 4.5 Coming In Green .....	47
• 4.6 The Lawyer .....	50
• 4.7 New Birth .....	53
• 4.8 A Ghanaian Dirge .....	55
• 4.9 Mirrors .....	57
• 4.10 An African Sunset .....	57

## CHAPTER FIVE-CONCLUSION

- 5.1 Overview.....60
- 5.2 Summary .....60
- 5.3 Findings .....62
- 5.4 Recommendations .....64

REFERENCES.....66

APPENDICES .....70

# KNUST



## LIST OF PLATES

PLATE	PAGE
1. Michael Addae “ <i>Blind Digger</i> ” 2009 Ash-Town .....	40
2. Michael Addae “ <i>Broken Dreams</i> ” 2010 Ash-Town .....	43
3. Michael Addae “ <i>New Face Of Akuaba</i> ” 2010 Ash-Town .....	46
4. Michael Addae “ <i>Coming in Green</i> ” 2010 Ash-Town .....	49
5. Michael Addae “ <i>The Lawyer</i> ” 2010 Ash-Town .....	52
6. Michael Addae “ <i>New Birth</i> ” 2009 Ash-Town .....	54
7. Michael Addae “ <i>A Ghanaian Dirge</i> ” 2009 Ash-Town .....	56
8. Michael Addae “ <i>Mirrors</i> ” 2009 Ash-Town .....	58
9. Michael Addae “ <i>An African Sunset</i> ” 2010 Ash-Town .....	59
10. Michael Addae “ <i>The Lawyer</i> ” 2011 Ash-Town .....	70
11. Jean Chalgrin “ <i>Arc of Triumph</i> ” 1836 <u>Place Charles de Gaulle</u> (Paris) .....	70
12. Henry Bacon “ <i>Lincoln Memorial</i> ” 1922 <u>National Mall (Washington, D.C.)</u> .71	
13. Robert Delaunay “ <i>Circular Forms</i> ” 1930 Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, (New York,) .....	71
14. Michael Addae “ <i>Broken Dreams</i> ” 2009 Ash-Town .....	72
15. Piet Mondrian “ <i>So Simple, So Mondrian</i> ” 1921.....	72
16. Piet Mondrian “ <i>Fashion</i> ” .....	73
17. Frank Stella “ <i>Harran II</i> ” 1967 Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, (New York) .....	73
18. Osafo Agyemang “ <i>Untitled</i> ” Oforikrom .....	74
19. Marcel Duchamp “ <i>Fountain</i> ” 1917 Lost .....	74
20. El Anatsui “ <i>Duvor</i> ” 2007 .....	75
21. Emmanuel Konadu Agyemang .....	75
22. Jane Alexander “ <i>Butcher Boys</i> ” 1985/86 National Gallery, (Cape Town)....	76
23. Michael Addae “ <i>New Face Of Akuaba</i> ” 2010 Ash-Town.....	76



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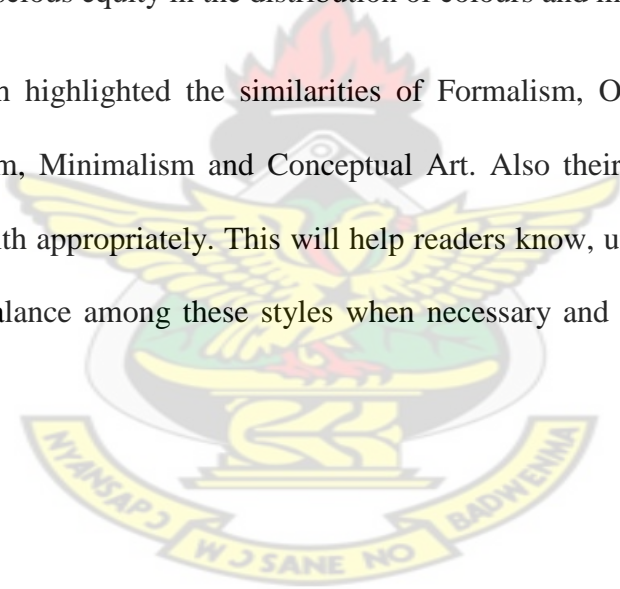
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## ABSTRACT

This project looked at experimentation in conceptual art through certain ideologies. These ideologies included; formalism, reductionism and conceptual art together with orphism, minimalism and neo-plasticism. The formalist theory does not encourage mere figurative expressions but rather emphasis on form and visual aspects of a painting. This research was used as a communicative tool to merge the narrative with the significant form through the paintings produced. In this research, formalism has been given a narrative face through the use of figures together with reductionism through conscious equity in the distribution of colours and movement of lines.

The research highlighted the similarities of Formalism, Orphism, Neo-Plasticism, Reductionism, Minimalism and Conceptual Art. Also their relation to African Art was dealt with appropriately. This will help readers know, understand and be able to strike the balance among these styles when necessary and their relation to African art.



# CHAPTER ONE

## **INTRODUCTION**

### 1.1 OVERVIEW

This chapter basically introduces the structure of the thesis and provides a skeletal view of it. It entails how the thesis came about, what constituted the problem to the buildup of this research, its objectives, scope, delimitations and limitations and the definition of some technical terms. Methods to be used in the research and facilities for the study will also be considered in this chapter among others.

### 1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

From the early days of man to this present age, mankind has had to battle with the problems associated with their every day life. Nature considered in isolation from man, is for man simply nothing, because men are prepared to deal with issues that affect them directly or indirectly. In view of this, I consider it appropriate that we discuss art through this research to be able to add to the existing knowledge that we have.

Formalism describes the critical position that the most important aspect of a work of art is in its form, that is, the way it is made and its visual aspects, rather than its narrative content or its relationship to the visible world. In painting therefore, a formalist critic would focus exclusively on the qualities of colour, brushwork, form, line and composition. Reductionism on the other hand "finds the ultimate meaning of

the object not in its inherent qualities but in the parts which compose it and in the lateral relations of those parts. Conceptual art is art in which the concepts or ideas involved in the work take precedence over traditional aesthetic and material concerns. This research therefore did some experimentations in conceptual art with some background knowledge from formalism and reductionism.

### 1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The social life of mankind is simply indispensable from art and so are the issues of the society to this research. The researcher throughout his art life has often been criticised for being rigid and overly conscious of his approach to practical painting when it comes to acrylic and oil paintings. A good example was in the second year when he was in the Objective Analytical Studies course at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology as part of his courses for his four years degree programme. His colleagues had often criticised him for being too rigid and simply lacking the ability to be fluid with his colours in his paintings. These criticisms came from not just critics but well-wishers making the situation worrisome to the researcher. These situations led the researcher to seriously consider the formalist and reductionist styles through painting. Also the paintings brought to the fore, the relationship of African art to formalism and reductionism. This research therefore serves as an alternative technique in practical painting for the researcher.

#### 1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

In order to undertake this research, it was important to set certain targets which would put this research in a specific path. These targets came in the form of objectives. Below are four set objectives which guided this research to a successful completion.

- 1) Get information on formalism and reductionism.
- 2) Experiment with the formalist and reductionist styles through paintings.
- 3) Communicate conceptually with these paintings.
- 4) Document the findings.

#### 1.5 JUSTIFICATION OF OBJECTIVES

- 1) Objective one was intended to help the researcher know about the formalist and reductionist styles and how they relate or contrast with other styles.
- 2) Objective two was to enable the researcher to create conceptual paintings with the formalist and reductionist styles.
- 3) Objective three, was to let the public know the researcher's position on certain societal issues.
- 4) And finally, objective four was set out to make this project report available as a useful research material for other artists in the collage and the general public.

## 1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In the late late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the invention of the camera brought about a reduction in the patronage of paintings from artists especially painting as imitation. This led artist to quickly shift to a style known as formalism. Since this research aims at exploring alternative technique for acrylic painting, it led to the formulation of the objective

- What is formalism?
- What characterised this style?

Formalism also involves the breaking down of visual concepts into forms to put pre-eminence on these forms. The idea of breaking down of the whole to the parts is associated with reductionism thus the formulation of the objective question

- What is reductionism?
- What characterised this style

Formalism and Reductionism are all ideologically conceived through intellectual thinking. If they are to relate African art, there should be a conceptual link between the two and African symbolism. This led to the formulation of the research question

- What is conceptual art?
- How does formalism and reductionism relate to African Art.
- How is its relation to African art necessary to this research?

## 1.7 DELIMITATION

The scope of study was the Ghanaian society with attention to some societal issues.

## 1.8 LIMITATION

The researcher's financial position was not balanced and that made movement for information a bit difficult.

## 1.9 DEFINITION OF TERMS

**Acrylic:** This is a permanent painting medium made from acrylic acid.

**Formalism:** This is an artistic style in which emphasis is placed on significant forms.

**Significant form:** Visual aspects of an art work as a result of the way it was made.

**Reductionism:** This is a painting style in which attention is given to the parts that build the whole.

**Style:** This is a particular way of approach to a painting.

**Part:** This is the basic element from which a painting evolved.

**Minimalism:** This is a style in which a work of art is reduced to the minimum number of its [values](#), [lines](#), [textures](#) and geometric [shapes](#).

**Conceptual idea:** This is the driving force behind an artwork.

**Impressionism:** This is a painting style in which atmospheric effect is felt on objects.

**Composition:** This is the putting together of ideas or impressions in one given unit.

**Aesthetic experience:** This is the pleasure we derive from art.

**Abstract:** This is a painting in which images and objects are manipulated to convey the artist message. It has more to do with geometric shapes.

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#### 1.10 IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

This project will be of benefit to art students and professional artists who will be researching into something similar to either formalism, reductionism or conceptual art.

#### 1.11 METHODOLOGY

Analytical, experimental and descriptive research methods were used. Observation was also employed in line with the qualitative approach used for this project.



## 1.12 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Analytical method was used in appreciating the already built theories in formalism, reductionism and conceptual art and other related works in chapter two. This helped in the understanding of the basic fundamental pillars of these theories.

Experimental method was employed in the execution of the project paintings that achieved the objectives.

Descriptive method was used in chapter two to describe the works of other artists working on similar concepts. In chapter three, the descriptive method was used in describing the materials and methods and in chapter four, to describe the final project paintings.

Project work was qualitative, therefore observation was used.

## 1.13 ORGANISATION OF THESIS

Chapter One deals with introduction.

Chapter Two is Review of Related Literature.

Chapter Three looks at the Research Methods and Execution of Project.

Chapter Four is Analysis of Works.

Chapter Five ends it with the necessary Conclusions.

#### 1.14 ABBREVIATIONS USED

KNUST ( Kwame Nkrumah University of Science And Technology)

MFA (Masters of Fine Art)

#### 1.15 FACILITIES FOR THE STUDY

- College of Art Library (KNUST).
- KNUST Library
- MFA painting studios.



## CHAPTER TWO

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

#### 2.1 OVERVIEW

This chapter deals with a review of a number of related literatures. These literatures have been organised under six main headings; Formalism, Orphism, Neo-Plasticism, Reductionism, Minimalism and Conceptual Art. It also includes analysis of observations of the works of two practicing artists in Kumasi.

#### 2.2 FORMALISM

Attention to form in art reaches back into antiquity, and can be found in the ideas of Plato and Aristotle. Its presence can be traced throughout the centuries, and it has been important in shaping the discipline of aesthetics. Formalism as a distinct approach to art began to emerge in the 19th and 20th centuries. This was encouraged in part by Romantics, who sought to locate the essence of art, in order that art might be set apart from other, more practical and utilitarian modes of communication; and also by Symbolists and Post-Impressionists, who emphasised the power of form to convey the artist's intention, over and above subject matter. (Wolf, 2010)

Different art historians give credit to different artists and critics for proposing the concept of Formalism. Greek philosopher Plato (428 BC-348 BC) made a reference of 'edios' (forms) in his Theory of Forms or Ideas. According to him, human eyes can see an object as a fundamental form, modified by the plurality of its existence. For

instance, the colour red is a form, which can exist in various tones and shades. We do not perceive each one of these variants as different factors, rather as single colour (factor) in different settings. Around the late nineteenth century, French writer and painter Maurice Denis (1870-1943) argued in his article 'Definition of Neo-Traditionalism', that the visual aspects of an art work is more significant than its theme. English painter & critic Roger Eliot Fry (1866-1934) and English art critic Arthur Clive Heward Bell (1881-1964) took the idea forward. During the early twentieth century, the duo promulgated the sensory distinction between 'significant form' (structure and arrangement) and representational factors in an artwork, giving priority to the former. (Labedzki, 2010)

Undoubtedly, one important cause of the evolution of this type of modern art was the advent of photography. Photography facilitated the production of pictures of remarkable verisimilitude both automatically and cheaply. Families could obtain portraits easily without the expenses in time and money incurred by posing for a painting. By the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, photography looked like it might put painting as imitation out of business. Artist had to find a new occupation or at least a new style, in order to survive. (Carroll, 1999).

Formalism is perhaps an advocate of deep intellectual thinking in art for both the artist and his subject in terms of artistic analysis. Perhaps, the essential assignment in painting is for the artist to be able to communicate effectively on the canvas or support and leave the long speeches and stories for the politicians and story tellers respectively. It also serves as advantageous position, reserved for only the imaginative and creative skill of the artist, leaving the machines grasping and

gapping at the dynamism of the human nature. Perhaps, we are but mere creatures of their hands, they might seem to say.

In a related work titled, 'The Lawyer', (Plate 10) the researcher uses squares to argue about the equality of the lawyer to other belonging disciplines. Though the work is representational, he places the representation in the concept and communicates with the concept using the representation as an illustration of the concept.

According to Bell, there must be one quality which is the essence of Art and without which an object cannot truly be called a work of art. That essential quality he refers to as significant form. Now, what does he mean by "significant form"? How do we know this quality? "Lines and colours combined in a particular way" and "certain forms and relations of forms" that produce the aesthetic emotion are the features of significant form. This is the account that Bell gives. (Quigley, 1996).

According to Dietz, (2000) Maurice Denis's famous 1890 dictum about the pictorial medium states that, "It is well to remember that a picture--before being a battle horse, a nude woman, or some story, is essentially a plane surface covered with colours assembled in a certain order".

Unfortunately, this classification of 'art' under significant form by Bell and other art critics is undermining the basic principle of formalism. Formalism is an attempt to bring artists to the state of form consciousness and not a denominator for art assessment.

The Arc of Triumph in Paris (Plate 11) is primarily designed to celebrate victories; the Lincoln Memorial (Plate 12) is designed to observe emancipation. Who could

think otherwise? But if many artworks are primarily designed to discharge broader social agendas, then the primary intention to exhibit significant form cannot be a necessary condition for all art, since it should be fairly evident that much art (most art?) is primarily designed with other functions in mind. (Carroll, 1999).

The statement above is indicative of the flaws of formalism when viewed as an assessing denominator. To add to this, the independence arc in Ghana is designed to commemorate the independence of a once colonised Ghana. To this length, one can say that, artworks may have several performing functions for which they are made and thus, significant form can be subjected to the artist's own discretion with respect to communication. Some artworks may be done solely for their aesthetic appeal. The artist may decide on what to choose whether line, texture, colour or symbolism for the aesthetic expression; Significant form may or may not be considered after the artist's satisfaction of his line of aesthetic appeal.

Again the subject of expression as an artistic quality is likely to attack shallow minded analysts in formalism. The discipline in the areas of sharp lines, sectional distribution of colours and the conscious order of arrangement attached to most formalist works may be seen as lacking in expression. In other words, the artist is overly cautious and refuses to allow his instincts to flow. An artist may express himself or herself in a way simply to fulfill his or her quest or meet one's required standard. Some artists may find expression in discipline. For instance, one cannot justifiably state that, a soldier's military life is devoid of expression.

According to Carroll (1999) Neither are all works of art possessed of expressive qualities; as we saw in the previous chapter, some artists even aspire to remove expressive qualities from their work, striving to create works of pure formal interest, such as many of the abstract ballets of George Balanchine. Thus, not all works of art are expressive.

### 2.3 ORPHISM

Orphism is a type of abstract or semi-abstract painting practised by a group of artists in Paris between 1911 and 1914. Orphism owed much to the fragmented forms of cubism (indeed it is sometimes called Orphic cubism). However, while cubism at this time was coolly intellectual and almost colourless, Orphism used lush and exciting colour. The name Orphism was first used in 1913 by the poet and art critic Guillaume Apollinaire, alluding to Orpheus, the poet and singer in Greek mythology; it indicated that the Orphists wanted to introduce a feeling of poetry to the serious and strict approach to cubism, as practised by Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso. The central figure of Orphism was Robert Delaunay, and other artists in his circle included Marcel Duchamp, Fernand Léger, Francis Picabia, and the Czech-born Franz Kupka. Initially the Orphists based their pictures on the external world (Delaunay, for example, did a series of paintings featuring the Eiffel Tower), but by 1912 both Delaunay and Kupka (whose work was very similar at this time) were painting pure abstracts. These were the first abstracts painted by French artists.

(Anonymous, 2009) Plate 13 shows Robert Delaunay's work titled "Circular Forms".



‘Broken Dreams’ (Plate 14) is the title of work by the researcher which has brilliant and expressive use of colours. Like the Orphism style, the work is characterised by geometric shapes and vibrant colours to express the broken link between the physical and the spiritual world of a man.

## 2.4 NEO-PLASTICISM

Neo-plasticism was coined by Piet Mondrian and first used in 1919 as the title of a collection of his writings published by the dealer Léonce Rosenberg. It gained currency as a descriptive term applied to Mondrian’s theories of art and to his style of painting, in which a grid, delineated by black lines, was filled with blocks of colours red, yellow and blue. The original term applied to some of his principles was *nieuwe beelding* (new imagery); he also used *abstract-reële schilderkunst* (abstract-real painting) and Neo-Cubism. Neo-plasticism applied to all aspects of design that were part of daily life. The evanescence of natural shapes was reduced to a few essential expressive means: horizontal and vertical lines, areas of red, yellow, blue and black and white (Plate 15). For Mondrian a composition had to present a dynamic balance, in which the internal was externalized and the external internalized. Mondrian published *Le Néo-plasticisme* while in Paris, having become convinced that his theories, published in De Stijl, were almost unknown beyond his native country. A collection of his articles was translated into German and published in 1925 as *Neue Gestaltung* as the fifth in the series of *Bauhausbücher*. His theories were published in English for the first time in 1937 under the title of ‘Plastic Art and



Pure Plastic Art' in Circle: An International Survey of Constructivism. (Henkels, 2009).

## 2.5 REDUCTIONISM

Reductionism "finds the ultimate meaning of the 'object' not in its inherent qualities but in the parts which compose it and in the lateral relations of those parts. The whole is equal to the sum of its parts, the significance being that if the whole is the same as the combination of its parts, there is no whole. Only the parts exist. Therefore, one should study the lower level elemental parts as the meaning of the whole instead of regarding the whole as the meaning of its parts. Put simply, "reductionism collapses or reduces the higher level of meaning and being into the lower level of elemental parts; when this collapse occurs what is left is not the whole but its parts". (King, 1996)

Structure is both a logical and an architectural conception: the recognition of an order among individual pieces in which the pieces are illuminated by their total arrangement. In the Renaissance vision, the pieces still had functions in themselves; they were not mere featureless units. In the vision of our age...the units are atoms, which are as indistinguishable as the bricks in a building. The whole, they say, is defined by the way in which the parts are arranged. As with modern art which tries to give each part of a painting equal significance, the parts of a structure are weighted equally, and it is, therefore, their arrangement that is important. (King, 1996)

According to deRoche (2003) thus, a “systems” thinker would support the biological vitalists over the mechanistic reductionists, on grounds that the special interactions of chemicals in organic systems do constitute something “new” that cannot be predicted from characteristics of the isolated components. Yet a systems approach would caution the vitalists that it is the special interplay of physical components in a system, and not some divine “extra” factor, that constitutes biological “life.” Likewise, a “social system” is made up of individual persons with psychological characteristics that influence their behaviour, but we must also pay attention to the “emergent properties” that arise “from social interaction.” We cannot discover the impact of social forces, as such, if we focus only on persons rather than the interplay among them.

According to Harth (2004) [The classic case of this unification brought together Newtonian mechanics and the theory of heat through the work of Clerk Maxwell and Ludwig Boltzmann. Here, the macroscopic science of thermodynamics is reduced to a statistical treatment of atomic collisions. It has to do with the fact that—with inanimate matter—causality works more strongly from the small to the large than in the opposite direction. Reductionism seeks out the roots of this causality. It is the nature of the atom that determines how bulk matter behaves, but there is little effect going the other way. The rule of the reduction of the whole to the small is also key in physics and science as a whole. By tracing the structure of ice crystal to the properties of water molecules and the forces between them we understand that, it formed by atoms of hydrogen and oxygen.

The several arguments about formalism and reductionism are indicative of the fact that, truth is an opinion which generates to become belief and for which the holders defend with much conviction.

To Garfield (2010) [Conventional truth is truth in a fiction we collectively constitute. Like a novel, the collective practices, including our language, our perceptual activities, our thoughts and attitudes constitute a world against and in which truth and falsity can be measured. The standards appropriate to that world are just those that mark off truth and falsity within the fiction. In other words truth and falsity are shaped by our culture and time]

## 2.6 MINIMALISM

Minimalism describes movements in various forms of art and design, especially visual art and music, where the work is reduced to its most fundamental features and core self expression ;as a specific movement in the arts, it is identified with developments in post-World War II Western Art most strongly with the visual arts. (Anonymous, 2008).

Frank Stella, in full Frank Philip Stella (born May 12, 1936, Malden, Mass., U.S.), was an American painter and a leading figure in the Minimal art movement. Stella studied painting at the Phillips Academy and history at Princeton University (B.A., 1958). He originally painted in an Abstract Expressionist style, but upon moving to New York City in the late 1950s, he began work on a series of innovative

paintings marked by an austere and monumental simplicity of design. These “black paintings,” which established his reputation, incorporated symmetrical series of thin white stripes that replicated the canvas shape when seen against their black backgrounds. In the early 1960s, Stella painted a series of progressively more complex variations on the theme of the frame-determined design and used both metallic-coloured paints and irregularly shaped canvases to this purpose. In the mid-1960s, Stella began using polychromy in an influential series of paintings marked by intersecting geometric and curvilinear shapes and plays of vivid and harmonious colours, some of which were fluorescent.

In the late 1970s, Stella broke with the hard-edged style of his previous work and began to produce sensuously coloured mixed-media reliefs that featured arabesques, French curves, and other organic shapes. (Anonymous, 2011) Plate 17 shows a work of Stella titled “Harran II”

Agyemang is a practicing artist in Ghana who works in digital art. His works are closely related to both formalism and reductionism. He builds his images from minimalist forms with triangles dominating his forms. The key characteristic of his works is the attention given to the buildup of the images (Plate 18). His reason for using digital art is among other factors, its speed to the execution of the work. The key elements in his works in relation to the researcher’s works are the use of forms. However, the differences between them are that, Agyemang forms his images with the forms while the researcher forms his images in the forms. Again while he

produces his finished works digitally, the researcher prints his images manually. Also thick strong lines can also be seen running through his works.

## 2.7 CONCEPTUAL ART.

Subverting traditional or accepted modes of artistic production with irony and satire is a hallmark of Duchamp's legendary career. His most striking, iconoclastic gesture, the readymade, is arguably the century's most influential development on artists' creative process. Duchamp, however, did not perceive his work with readymade objects as such a radical experiment, in part because he viewed paint as an industrially made product, and hence painting as an "assisted-readymade." Moreover, he had already begun to incorporate chance operations into his practice—for example, with three Standard Stoppages (1913–14)—and thus had already begun to surrender artistic control and empower other factors to determine the character of a work of art. With *Bicycle Wheel* (1913), the first readymade, Duchamp moved toward a creative process that was antithetical to artistic skill.

He wanted to distance himself from traditional modes of painting in an effort to emphasize the conceptual value of a work of art, seducing the viewer through irony and verbal witticisms rather than relying on technical or aesthetic appeal. The object became a work of art because the artist had decided it would be designated as such. *Bicycle Wheel* consisted of a fork and the wheel of a common bicycle that rested upon an ordinary stool. The mundane, mass-produced, everyday nature of these objects is precisely why Duchamp chose them (later works would include a snow

shovel, a urinal or fountain (Plate 19) and a bottle rack, to name a few). As a result, he ensured that the fruits of modern industrial life would be a fertile resource in the production of works of art. (Nan, 2004)

Few artistic movements are surrounded by so much debate and controversy as conceptual art. For conceptual art has a tendency to provoke intense and perhaps even extreme reactions in its audiences. After all, whilst some people find conceptual art very refreshing and the only kind of art that is relevant to today's world, many others consider it shocking, distasteful, skill-less, downright bad, or, and most importantly, not art at all. Conceptual art, it seems, is something that we either love or hate. (Schellekens, 2007)

Lewitt, (1969) [I will refer to the kind of art in which I am involved as conceptual art. In conceptual art the idea or concept is the most important aspect of the work. When an artist uses a conceptual form of art, it means that all of the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair. The idea becomes a machine that makes the art. This kind of art is not theoretical or illustrative of theories; it is intuitive, it is involved with all types of mental processes and it is purposeless. It is usually free from the dependence on the skill of the artist as a craftsman. It is the objective of the artist who is concerned with conceptual art to make his work mentally interesting to the spectator, and therefore usually he would want it to become emotionally dry. There is no reason to suppose, however, that the conceptual artist is out to bore the viewer. It is only the expectation of an emotional



kick, to which one conditioned to expressionist art is accustomed, and that would deter the viewer from perceiving this art].

El Anatsui is a Ghanaian sculptor. He is usually known for his collection of discarded caps and arranging them to form and make statements intended to provoke the viewer to think about the relationship between Africa and the West. Trained as a sculptor, Anatsui had long used “common” materials in his work, including wood, ceramics, and even discarded lids from tins of evaporated milk. But the chance discovery in 2002 of a large bag of discarded caps for bottles of whisky, schnapps, rum, gin and vodka – while Anatsui was walking near the southern Nigerian university – triggered what proved to be a fruitful, not to mention provocative, string of associations. As Anatsui has noted, alcohol was one of the first commodities “brought by European traders to barter for goods in Africa.” Later, rum became a staple of the transatlantic slave trade – produced in the Caribbean from cane cut by slaves, bottled in England, shipped to Africa. Anatsui acknowledges that “the colour of the bottle caps happens to be the colour of certain fabrics common to my part of the world ... But I’m not interested in fabric per se. It’s the format or the form of the cloth: that it’s free, that you can put it on a wall, squeeze it into a small ball, drape it on the floor, anything...as cited in James (2010). (Plate 20) shows a work of Anatsui titled “Duvor”.

Konadu Agyemang Emmanuel is a Ghanaian student at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology pursuing his Masters degree in Painting. He started his degree programme in 2008. He works on three-dimensional collage. The structures of his works are such that, the viewer is reminded of architecture which

has many planes. Using planes of canvases, he builds his images from and with forms. The geometric shapes in his paintings emerge from forms and are done on forms which come in the form of plane canvases. Illusion and texture are two qualities with which he tackles truth and falsity. He communicates conceptually with these planes by giving them one or more human sense organs (Plate 21). This is to say, walls can see, hear or smell. Notably is one of his works 'The Evil Can't Be Hidden'. By this work, he makes a strong statement that; the evil can be done but never be hidden so far as air, floors and wall exists. The similar line in his works and the researcher's works are that, they both have geometric forms as their styles. However, he paints his images while the researcher prints his images.

Wilkinson claims that, "The flipside is that since all concepts are governed by at least theoretically discoverable criteria and cannot be used at will, if what is made in Africa does not fulfill the logical requirements for art, there cannot be African art." Here Conceptual Art plays a role of identification.

Jeremy is a sculptor in South Africa uses photography, earth, and fiberglass sculpture to create enigmatic but resonant works that deal with issues such as borders and boundaries. Sandile Zulu has made paintings out of the unpredictable marks of fire upon surfaces, or created sculptural tableaux from natural materials ingeniously arranged. Alexander is a South African sculptor who took sculpture into new realms with disturbing figures that place the human form in extremes or subjected it to frightening transformations. (de Waal, 2010) Plate 22 shows Alexander's work titled "Butcher Boys".



For all these reasons, the kind of representation employed in conceptual artworks aims to transmit clearly formulated ideas and, moreover, to engage us cerebrally rather than, say, emotively. In conceptual art, the representation at work is generally semantic rather than illustrative. That is to say, it sets out to have and convey a strong meaning rather than to depict a scene, person or event. It is important to note that the representation favoured by conceptual artists is not merely semantic in the sense of words or language appearing quite literally on the work of art, but rather in the sense of representing a meaning, or having a meaning. So that even in cases where a work makes use of illustrative representation, conceptual art is still putting that representation to a distinctively semantic use, in the sense of there being an intention to represent something one cannot see with the naked eye. Accordingly, the conceptual artist's task is to contemplate and formulate this meaning – to be a ‘meaning-maker’. (Schellekens, 2007)

It is not at all clear where the boundaries of ‘conceptual art’ are to be drawn, which artists and which works to include. Looked at in one way, conceptual art gets to be like Lewis Carroll's Cheshire cat, dissolving away until nothing is left but a grin: a handful of works made over a few short years by a small number of artists... Then again, regarded under a different aspect, conceptual art can seem like nothing less than the hinge around which the past turned into the present. (Schellekens, 2007)

One can appreciate African art most by regarding it as generally intuitive and symbolic. People created these works to secure a relationship between themselves and unknown forces. In African art, aesthetics is a term used to sum up the

characteristics and elements clearly present in all arts objects. These elements include, for example, the resemblance of sculptures to human beings, and the way sculptures portray a reserved or composed demeanor. Similarly, in Western art aesthetics is also the term used to sum up the search for beauty, balance, proportion and conscientious use of materials, in order to achieve good craftsmanship in art objects. (Belton, 2011)

From the above statement, formalism and reductionism styles are not monopolistic to Western art but a common ground on which African and Western art express their ideologies and philosophies. It can be noted that, the physical appearance of an artwork is given pre-eminence by both Western and African art. Again these appearances have significance attached to them. While in formalism it is called significant form, in African art it is called aesthetics. In African sculpture for instance, despite its symbolism, attention is paid to the texture of a piece as formalism and reductionism will also look at in the parts that form the whole. In Plato's edios or theory of forms, he relates the seen to their real unseen forms. The symbolic nature of African art relates the physical to the spiritual or unseen.

“New Face of Akuaba” (Plate 23) is a title of a work by the researcher. In this work, the akuaba doll is trying to catch up with the current demands of the fashion age. However, one can see aesthetics in organization of the colours and physical features present in the work. The symbolic nature of the work and the relation of basic forms such as circular, rectangular and triangular shapes to certain beliefs of the African society are indicative of how formalism and reductionism relates to African art.

Artworks are done with a motivational concept behind them including formalism, reductionism and conceptual art. But on the other hand, a concept like Duchamp's "ready made" is far from putting into an artwork a concept but rather seeing the concept through the work. Backed by the mandate of critical and philosophical thinking, he was right to exhibit that which he did not produce by skill but intellectual insight. It is however important to know the distinction between the concept and the artwork. While the concept is the critical thinking put into the imagined work, the work is the applied skill to bring out the concept into being. Skill has most often dominated the appearance of a work creating an impression of sheer exhibition of talent. Thus, an artist creation may still be very much conceptual regardless of how skillful he or she is.

## 2.6 SUMMARY

Formalism, orphism, neo-plasticism, reductionism and minimalism are all conceptual in their principles of execution and are related to African art. These are very much related to African art since cubism which appears to be a strong advocate of formalism, reductionism and orphism was inspired by African art pieces specifically sculpture. Again tracing from history we are made to know that before the discovery of Africa by the Western world, these movements had not taken place in the Western nations. This gives credence to the fact that, African art has a role to play in the emergence of these styles. Shapes such as triangle, rectangle, circles and ovals were symbolic on the Ashanti traditional stool.

Formalism, reductionism, orphism, neo-plasticism and minimalism correlate each other in their philosophies. Whilst formalism concentrates on which or what kind of forms, reductionism, orphism, neo-plasticism and minimalism focuses on their buildup. Conceptual art on the other hand, plays a neutral role in their idea development. They are also associated in their areas of distinctiveness in terms of colour and contour.

Though, formalism may look at art in terms of form and not narrative, it is also important to note that the form produces the narrative. However, it is equally significant to understand that, it is the predominant nature of the form that produces the narrative. Formalism additionally serves as advantageous position, reserved for only the imaginative and creative skill of the artist, leaving the machines grasping and gapping at the dynamism of the human nature.

Significant form is not a universal criterion for what should stand as the definition for art since not all meaningful and significant art possesses it. Conceptual art in line with Duchamp's "ready made" is semantic to the critical and intellectual insight associated with the understanding of art. It awakened the intellectual debate about art as a result of his argument made by the exhibition of bicycle wheel, fountain among others.

## CHAPTER THREE

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### 3.1 OVERVIEW

This chapter will actually demonstrate how the researcher intends to achieve the objectives outlined in chapter one. Below are the materials and methods used for the execution of this project. It follows subsequently with the procedures in the execution of the work. Procedure One is Stretcher Preparation. Procedure Two is Stretching the Canvas. Procedure Three is Priming the Stretched Canvas. Procedure Four is Sketching the Impressions. Procedure Five is Printing the Impressions.

#### MATERIALS AND METHODS

##### 3.2 STRIPS OF WOOD

These are long strips of wood measuring in inches in width. It served as the frame work which held the canvas firmly for the printing process to be undertaken. The concept of formalism was taken into consideration and for that, the stretchers were made rectangular. However, their sizes played a major role in communicating the concept of the formalism. Varying sizes were employed to add not only to the concept of formalism but also also reductionism as well where the whole is equal to the parts that form the whole. Each stretcher whether big or small has its own purpose in adding to the conceptual statements of this research.

### 3.3 HAMMER

A tool consisting of a wooden handle and a rigid bar that rotates about a fixed point, called a fulcrum. The claw hammer was used so that nails could easily be removed if not placed properly.

### 3.4 NAILS

These are small, rod like metal fasteners, pointed and often headed or grooved, which were hammered to join or anchor materials, primarily the wooden stretchers.

### 3.5 CANVAS

Canvas is heavy and dense and has applications in making tents, sails, tarpaulins, awnings, upholstery, umbrellas, shoe uppers, embossed wall coverings that form a substratum for paint or gilding, and totes. Additionally, canvas serves as a support for painting, and is the name for the mesh fabric on which embroidery and needlepoint are done. (Elizabeth, 2003)

This is the cloth like material on which the printings were done to convey the researcher's message.

### 3.6 STRETCHING PLIER

A gripping hand tool with two hinged arms ending in jaws that are closed by hand pressure to grip something. This material was used in holding tight and stretching the canvas material.

### 3.7 A PAIR OF SCISSOR

A hand-held cutting instrument made up of two crossed connected blades, with a pivot and each with a ring-shaped handle, which are able to come together. This was used to cut the canvas materials to their required sizes.

### 3.8 PRIMER

This is the liquid which serves as the initial coating put on a support before you paint on it. It protects the support from the paint, some of which contain components that could damage it and provides the key (surface) for the paint to stick to, and affects the absorbency of the support. (Anonymous 2011)

This material was used to seal holes in the canvas material and made it workable.



### 3.9 ACRYLIC

Acrylic paints are a synthetic media made by suspending pigment in synthetic polymer emulsified by water. They are essentially plastic paints that are water-soluble and have good adhesive qualities. They are very stable. They resist oxidization and chemical decomposition, and will not yellow over time.

Acrylic paints dry quickly. This is both an advantage and a disadvantage.

The advantage of a fast drying time is that you can apply many layers of paint in a short amount of time. Artists can very effectively use glazing and layering techniques when using acrylics. The layers of paint bind to one another very well because of their good adhesive qualities.

Another advantage is their water-solubility, as this allows for easier clean-up and reduces the need to use chemicals that may create harmful fumes.

The disadvantage to paints drying quickly is that there is little time in which an artist can manipulate the paint once it is laid onto the surface. However, there are several acrylic mediums that can slow drying time, increase transparency, or help an artist achieve thick impasto effects with acrylics.

Acrylic paints dry quickly because they are water based. The time it takes for water to evaporate is how long it takes for these paints to dry. (Blick 1999)

Golden acrylics were used for this project due to their quality in nature.



### 3.10 CUTTING BOARD

This is a flat board of relative light weight which aided in the cutting of the solution tapes. Reserve tapes were placed on this board until it was time to use them.

### 3.11 SOLUTION TAPE

This is an adhesive spiral tape light in weight and usually used in joining objects together. This important material defined the positive and negative areas.

### 3.12 CUTTER

This is a sharp cutting edge with a safe handle. It is essentially for cutting objects of relative light weight and for sharpening pencils. It is preferred to the uncovered razor blades due to its safe handle.

### 3.13 WATER CONTAINER

This was a cup which was used in holding water for the manipulation of the consistency of the paints. It also helped in cleaning the bristle of the smaller brushes which was used to clean up any blotting of the paints from their intended region.

### 3.14 MEASURING RULE

A strip of plastic, wood or metal with at least one straight edge and units of length marked on it. It was used for measuring and drawing straight lines.

### 3.15 RAG

This was a piece of cloth that served the purpose of cleaning the water in the bristle of the brush after the paints were washed off.

### 3.16 PENCIL

This is a writing instruments made from sticks cut from high quality natural graphite mined at Cumberland in England and wrapped in string or inserted in wooden tubes. (Anonymous, 2000). The 3(b) pencil with its reasonable intensity in chroma was selected for the sketches in this project.

### 3.17 ERASER

This is the material that was used to remove unwanted impressions of pencils from canvas to enhance clarity in analysing the desired impressions.

### 3.18 BRUSH

Paint brushes are made from stiff or soft hairs, which can be either natural hairs or synthetic fibres. Soft brushes are ideal for thin paint which spreads easily and for detailed work as they form a sharp point which allows for precision painting. Robust, hard brushes are ideal for pushing around thick paint and for creating brush marks in the paint. (Boddy-Evans, 2002)

Broad flat brushes were used for printing the impressions to quickly achieve an even consistency of the paints.



## EXECUTION OF PROJECT

### PROCEDURE ONE

#### 3.19 STRETCHER PREPARATION

After the final conclusion on what will represent the basis of the arguments for this research, the stretcher was the immediate point of call. The stretcher served as the frame work which held the canvas firmly for the printing process to be undertaken. The strips of wood were cut to the required length and breadth sizes of the works. This was done with the help of the joiner at the KNUST Wood Works located around the Painting Section of the College of Art. These strips were joined with the aid of white glue and nails.

### PROCEDURE TWO

#### 3.20 STRETCHING THE CANVAS

The size of the canvas was cut with a pair of scissor to slightly overlap the size of the stretcher. The canvas was stretched tightly around the stretcher with the stretching plier, thumb nails and the hammer.

### PROCEDURE THREE

#### 3.21 PRIMING THE STRETCHED CANVAS

First coat painting was done to seal the porous surface and even out the texture of the canvas material for easy application of the finish paints and also to look bright. This was done with the industrial acrylic paint and a big flat brush. The primed canvas was then dried in the open air.

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### PROCEDURE FOUR

#### 3.22 SKETCHING THE IMPRESSIONS

The impressions were drawn onto the canvas directly with the pencil using the free-hand technique. These drawings had some sections emerging from inspired sources merged with imaginative constructions to carry out the statements which this research seeks to bring to the fore for artistic analysis. Occasionally in some works, the long rule was used to measure out equal distances when necessary. Shapes were deliberately done without the aid of drawing instruments. This is because perfection is not humanly possible and has no denominator of assessment. Movements of lines were given pre-eminence in most of the drawings. Symmetry in terms of physical appearance and not mathematical calculations was also considered. Variety in terms of shapes and lines were also considered. Linear perspective was employed in the work, 'Coming in Green'. Sketches were not done in one section but upon pressing inspirations. Erasers were used to clean out mistakes. After every complete sketch,

large sized works were viewed at a reasonable distance to see how successful they were. When satisfied, it meant a finished sketch.

### 3.23 RELAXATION AND PRE-WORK ANALYSIS

After every supposed finished sketch, the researcher relaxed and deliberated on how each work should be tackled which included the colours and styles to employ. These deliberations sometimes caused certain changes in the already finished sketch. Selected colours and necessary materials and tools were gathered to begin the creature's creations. Such relaxations were critical for renewed energy and fresh inspiration necessary for the unforeseen challenges.

### PROCEDURE FIVE

#### 3.24 PAINTING THE IMPRESSIONS

The impressions were painted using the stencil printing technique. This technique involved covering the negative area from being affected by the paints at that particular time while the positive areas were covered with the paint. This is a rigid system of paint application with a well-defined shape and sharp edges mostly allowing no room for accidentals. The technique permits the canvas to be laid down since an upright placement could encourage dripping of paints.

The researcher begun by cutting the solution tapes into long strips unto the cutting board and then into smaller sizes and arranging them unto the canvas to form the shape he wished to achieve. After that, the solution tape was checked to ensure a firm attachment unto the canvas so that spillage around the edges will be a low probability. Depending on the researcher's desire, one or more colours were picked with the palette knife unto the solution tape. The brush was then used to bring the colours unto the positive area and printing was done in one particular direction to ensure a pattern and even consistency of the paint. When the printing process was finished, the solution tape was removed with the help of the cutting knife and if there was any spillage, a small brush was used to clean out the spillage and allowed to dry before working around it. Several shapes that were not close were mostly worked on at the same time with different brushes and tonal variations as well. Each section was treated as a separate entity. The balance of light and shade was largely employed in the paintings to enhance clarity and offer a radiating variety of colours. Transparency was given attention in most of the works. Sharp contrast was used to separate certain sections when necessary.

Choice of colours was based on the theme. Yellows, reds browns and greens were mostly used on concepts directly linked to the Ghanaian society.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### **ANALYSIS OF THE WORKS**

#### 4.1 OVERVIEW

This chapter deals with the physical and intellectual analysis that the finished works were subjected to by way of its description in terms of appearance. The analysis will bring to the fore, the artist's statement which will include the philosophy behind it and also highlight its concept.

#### 4.2 BLIND DIGGER (Plate 1)

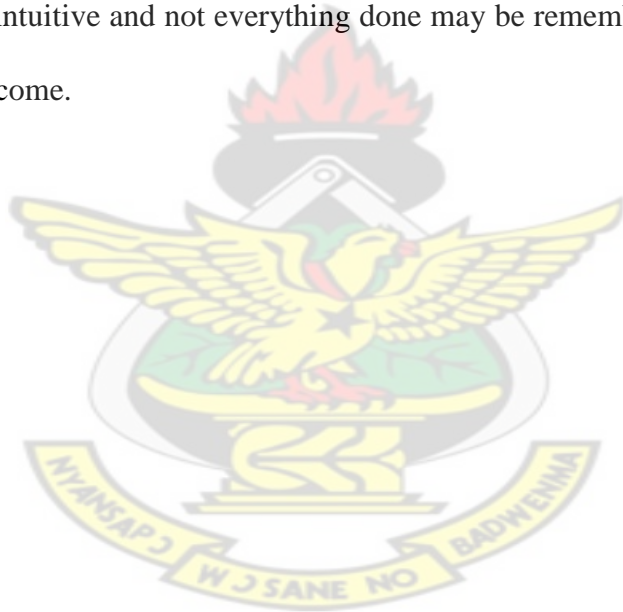
Head potters are very significant in the Ghanaian market places. Their activities significantly affect movements in, to and from the market places. However, the lots among them live a low life in terms of their finances. The irony that the living conditions of such influential personalities do not fairly reflect their toil, is what this work highlights.

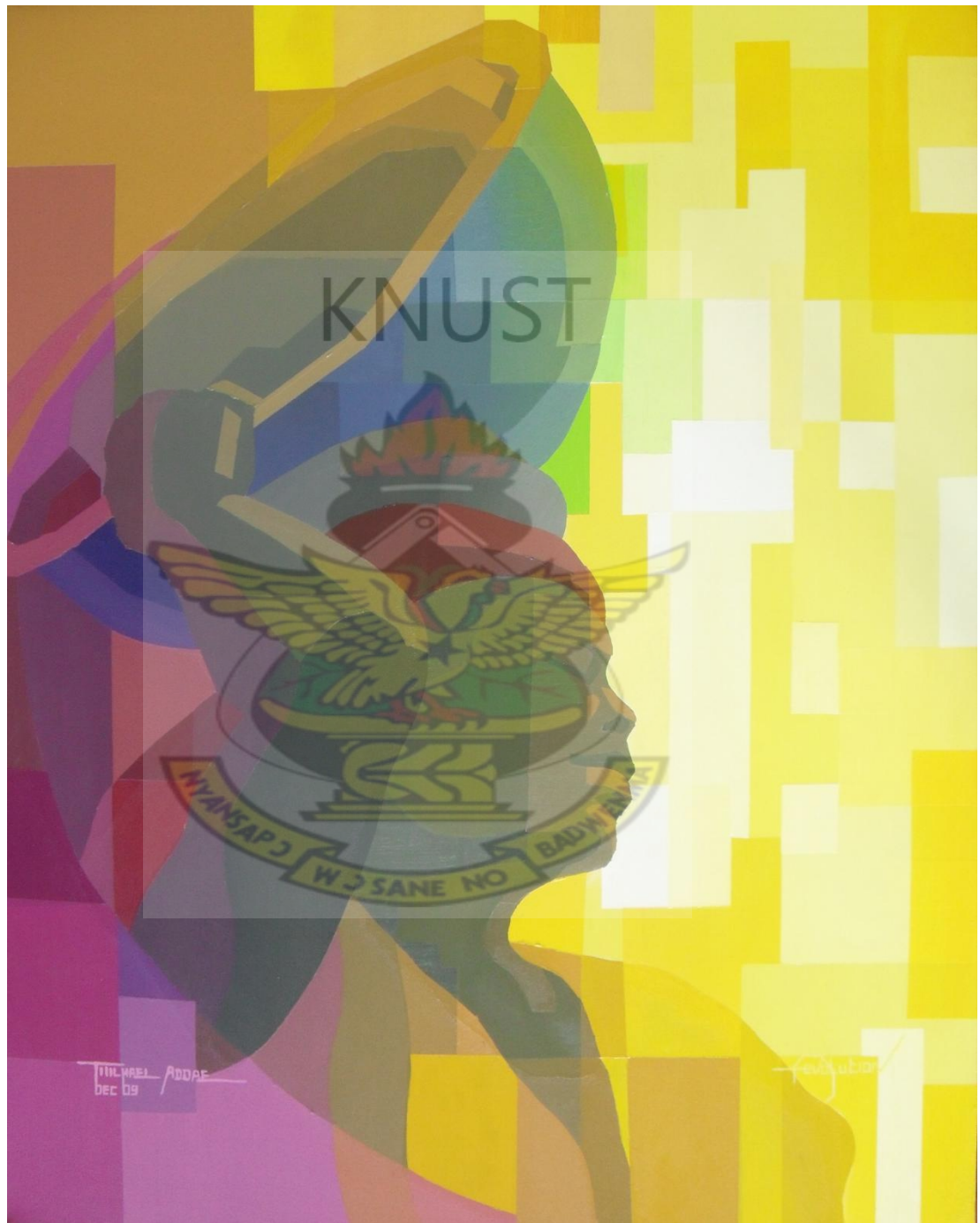
From a formalist point of view, the technical approach to the work should supersede the narrative. It is therefore not surprising that, emphasis has been placed on the formalist approach of sectional distribution of colours. Each particular part or section was treated as a full piece forming the whole which make up the composition. These have consciously been depicted in a rich, bright harmonious and vibrant manner. This does not only fall to the standards of formalism but also portrays the wealth that surrounds the head potter in spite of his or her inability to meet them. The yellows



symbolise the wealth while the whites represent the opportunities available. The greens and blues underscore the hardship and the violets steps in for the promising background where the head potter originates. The closed eyes are indicative of the head potter not being able to feel his or her opportunities. The carrying of the head pan is a statement of dedication and commitment to service.

The sharp and clean edges are characteristic of the attention given to the finishing of artworks by Africans as seen in sculpture by means of luminosity. It is also the researcher's commitment to duty and understanding of formalism. Painting and art in general are intuitive and not everything done may be remembered. All comments are warmly welcome.





**(Plate 1)** Michael Addae *Blind Digger* “Acrylic” 45X35 inches

#### 4.3 BROKEN DREAMS (Plate 2)

This is a work which reflects the broken link in the life of man. Coming from a Christian background, the researcher believes in the ruling authority of man over health and material prosperity. Yet millions of people fall extensively below the belt. What accounts for this is perhaps ignorance or mysticism. The work portrays a child who has been exposed to his destiny but whose broken link leaves him disappointed.

This style of work is mostly associated with Orphism. Like the Orphism style, geometric shapes and vibrant colours have been used to express the broken link between the physical and the spiritual world of a man. The work has been divided into regions of colour saturation with each region having sectional tonal variations. These regional divisions create barriers to the child; thus, giving meaning to the title. The balance of tonal variation is to create movement of the eye, foster tonal clarity and enhance discipline in the formalist technique. The style used in portraying the child brings him out in a three-dimensional form while the remaining work is executed in a two-dimensional form. The researcher falls on this technique to highlight the child as a stranger who has come to enquire of his destiny.

The child appears from a dark background suggesting his lack of knowledge about the world he lives in. He is symbolic of the average man who is innocent, unsuspecting and young in a world which is not just physical but spiritual and beyond his comprehension. The use of yellows and reds give the impression of richness and attraction and adds to the aesthetic experience. The greens and blues are cool and are supposed to complement the yellows, reds, oranges and violets and also

serve as a resting place for the eyes. Knowledge from the African society aided in the creation of a pot in which the wealth of this child is displayed. Two links have been separated from each other with one in the pot and the other above the pot. This can also be seen as a pivotal section in this work. The work measures 60 by 40 inches and is among the bigger sized works in this project. This was mainly to give the researcher enough room for expression.

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(Plate 2) Michael Addae *Broken Dreams* “Acrylic” 60X40 inches



#### 4.4 NEW FACE OF AKUABA (Plate 3)

This work is dominated by geometric shapes and almost devoid of mathematical measurement. Circular, triangular and rectangular shapes form the basic shapes around which the work revolves. With each revolving around yellow except white, the work gives an impression of warmth and richness in colour purity. Colours present in the work are yellow, ochre, orange, white and violet.

Originally, the Akuaba doll is an iconography of fertility among the tribes of both Akans and Fantes in Ghana. The geometric shapes have representations in line with the beliefs of the Ashanti's. On the traditional stool, the Ashanti's represent the fairness and just nature of God with circles and squares while rectangles and ovals represent the presence of males and females respectively. In this work, the circles represent the presence of God and the rectangles and triangles represents male and female respectively. From a critical analysis, the shape of the head can be seen to have been composed from a square, circles, rectangles, and triangles and above all, is an oval. On the left side of the composition, repetitions of circles, rectangles and triangles have been placed to emphasize the functionality of the akuaba doll. Their colours have been tamed to avoid competition with the face.

A Cream colour fills the circles instead of white, purple fills the rectangles instead of violet and yellow has been tamed with ochre to tackle the triangles. The significance of these colours with respect to their shapes has been tackled. White for the circles represents the purity of God, purple for the rectangles represents masculine strength and yellow for the triangles represents feminine fertility. Symbolism of these triangles, rectangles and circles to the Akan and Fante society emphasis the relation

of African art to Formalism. The reduction of the meanings of some African beliefs to these basic shapes and its relation to the society emphasis how reductionism operates practically in the Akan and Fante society and Africa as a whole. Three whites forming a triangle can be seen on the fore-head and ears. Again the two circles on the ears and one on the neck form another triangle. Put together, the two triangles will conceptually form a square or a circle.

The driving force behind the production of this work is the speed at which modernism appears to be moving with fashion in this contemporary age of technological advancement. With its functional purpose still in mind, the akuaba doll is trying to catch up with the current demands of the fashion age. Unique features such as hairstyle, ear rings and necklaces are found on the new face of akuaba. She appears to be in spectacles as well. The smoothness of her face is indicative of her respect for the celebration of cosmetics. Her slightly moody appearance depicts how serious she is to this change. Change is what has accounted for this speed of fashion and change is what she needs. The necessity of her change is with respect to the fact that, she refuses to be a mere antique but an ever green dull ready for the call of the society.



**(Plate 3)** Michael Addae *New Face of Akuaba* “Acrylic” 40X35inches



#### 4.5 COMING IN GREEN (Plate 4)

The elephants are majestically coming towards the viewer. They come in sizes and various tonal variations. They are without tusks. The work is characterized by serenity and the minimalism approach. Sfumato was used in a formalist style. Linear and aerial perspectives were employed.

The work is a supporting voice to the global campaign against global warming. The varying sizes in these giant creatures represents the big, small nations of various international influences coming together all in the name of “going green”. The omission of their tusks is symbolic of non-violence making them harmless. This is a global problem which affects the African and the world around him or her. The campaign is right and proper hence earning the researcher’s support. The work demanded a great deal of patience, commitment, passion and a conviction to duty. Similarly, the problem of global warming will require a great deal of patience, commitment, passion and a conviction to duty in order to reduce the dangers associated with it.

The researcher falls on the strong highlights in the work to give hope to the campaign. The lifting of the feet of the immediate elephant and two others is to foster movement to defend the title. The fore-ground is influenced with yellows to highlight clarity and enhance aesthetic cohesion. The size of the work measures 60 by 40 inches. This is among the bigger canvas sizes used in this project. The significance of the theme ensured that, its size could by no means be skipped over.

Expression in space also accounted for this size. On a lighter note, the work can be described as “big” on “big”. Big idea on a big canvas.

As usual, the sharp and clean edges are characteristic of the attention given to the finishing of artworks by Africans as seen in sculpture by means of luminosity. It is also the researcher’s commitment to duty and understanding of formalism. Painting and art in general are intuitive and not everything done may be remembered. All comments are warmly welcome.

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**(Plate 4)** Michael Addae *Coming in Green* "Acrylic" 50X40 inches

#### 4.6 THE LAWYER (Plate 5)

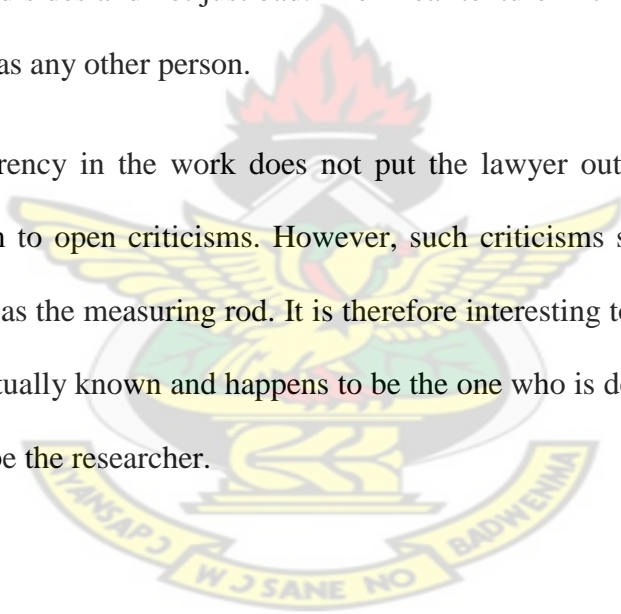
The lawyer depicts a portrait of a noble man who is seen looking ahead. His elegant appearance and the peaceful nature of the work are indicative of his gentility. The lawyer has been put in squares of different tonal variations and executed in shades of black and white. Each tone summarises all other tones towards its nature to omit minute details present in the original picture. With a smooth transition from either light to dark or otherwise, linear textures can be seen to be running vertically in the work. Transparency has had its fair share of the aesthetic experience as well as contrast. Balance, rhythm and movement were all treated with respect.

The idea of this work was generated as a result of some comments passed by some communicating friends who placed the labels of a liar, cunning and heartless being on an unknown lawyer. The situation developed within me, an immense sympathy for the lawyer and prompted me to a philosophical analysis of the situation.

The lawyer looking ahead is indicative of how he is minding his own business amidst the various ways in which different people see him. He is a legal practitioner and only practices legality as a profession. The tone of each square, determines how objects in that square should be toned. Black or white, he is only a reflection of what he is told by his clients. His ability to weave his case and knowing where to place each point as a painter does should be seen as a skill and not dishonesty. The placement of the entire work in squares represents the formalist concept of forms by Plato. The true forms are above and only through rational thinking can we get there. Only through the professional exhibition of skill by the lawyer can we know the true picture. It is important to note that, in the court room, legality and sincerity do not

mix and that, litigations are done in consonance with the constitution. The lawyer who wins the case does so by his or her skill and not craftiness. A good lawyer they say is paid to do a good job. Good or bad, right or wrong, guilty or not guilty can only be determined by the law and not intuition. Issues which paint the lawyer in an ugly picture usually are outside the courtroom thus, it becomes unfair and inadequate to judge only the lawyer outside his profession. The contrast, balance and rhythm in the work are statements suggesting that, the lawyer after all has good qualities as any other human being. The black and white colour scheme indicates that, he has both good and bad sides and not just bad. The linear texture in the work places the lawyer as sensitive as any other person.

The transparency in the work does not put the lawyer out as a perfect being but, subjects him to open criticisms. However, such criticisms should be done with the constitution as the measuring rod. It is therefore interesting to note that, the unknown lawyer is actually known and happens to be the one who is defending the lawyer who happens to be the researcher.





(Plate 5) Michael Addae *The Lawyer* “Acrylic” 40X35 inches



#### 4.7 NEW BIRTH (Plate 6)

This is an abstract impression which connects colours from one point to the other in a floral pattern. The interconnectivity between the colours creates a flowing partnering link. There is a concentration of yellows and oranges in the upper half of the work. The oranges around the yellows project the yellows to the eyes aside adding to the aesthetic experience. The mild violets and browns around the oranges create the impression of an exposition. These are mild and the work is generally harmonious.

Life is precious and an adorable gift in the Ghanaian society. The birth of a new born baby is mostly characterized by out-doorings and naming ceremonies. On such occasions, the unity and peace in that society or community are enhanced by the coming together of both far and near. It always brings joy and excitement all in the name of out-dooring life. The reduction of the members of the society into undulating pattern of various sizes and the varying tones associated with it is a philosophical way of conceptual interpretation. Here the viewer is forced to see and read through the art and not necessarily its closeness to nature. Reductionism has been used to carry out the message to the viewers. This work relates the varying forms to the conceptual ideology emphasising the relationship between formalism, reduction and conceptual art. The support on which the work was done is small as compared to the other works such as “coming in green” and “blind digger.” The size of the canvas is 35 by 25 inches. Conceptually, the work is about the out-dooring of a new born baby who is small both in size and age. Thus, the small canvas places the whole work in the adoration of the small.



**(Plate 6)** Michael Addae *New Birth* “Acrylic” 35X25 inches



#### 4.8 A GHANAIAN DIRGE (Plate 7)

Reds, browns, blacks and whites move through this work from one variation of tone to the other. Three musical instruments are seen in the middle of the composition. The work is dominated by arcs moving through one another in the formalism style of sectional display. Funeral rites mark the end of the rites of passage in the lives of people. In Ghana, a funeral ceremony is very important to every society and is performed with respect. Colours dominant on such occasion consist of; red, black, brown and white, on the “Thanksgiving service”. Like the “Out dooring” ceremony, it also brings together both people far and near. An occasion like this is characterized by the singing of traditional Ghanaian dirges amidst drumming and dancing.

The several arcs running through the work are indicative of the fraction from the whole. The departure of the dead are sometimes perceived as untimely and immature. The future was always promising and expectant. The transparency in the work is how the society recounts essence of the life of the deceased by looking through the deeds of such personalities. Interconnections among the arcs are symbolic. On such a day, the society pays their last respect and leaves the deceased to join their ancestors bidding them fare-well.



**(Plate 7)** Michael Addae *A Ghanaian Dirge* “Acrylic” 40X35 inches

#### 4.9 MIRRORS (Plate 8)

This is a geometric abstraction of rectangles. Depicting shades of blue, the work has been executed in relatively less chroma. There is a reflection at the bottom of the work. The lightness of the work creates a transparent effect. Each sectional tone may be seen as a reflection of the other. The work was done in the early stages of the researchers attempt at the formalist style hence, much emphasis was placed on the visual effect. Plate 8 is on page 58.

#### 4.10 AN AFRICAN SUNSET (Plate 9)

This is a typical Frank Stella technique of formalism in which the paints move in the direction of the brush strokes. The work is an abstraction of an african sunset. Here the researcher shows some underlying colours of the african sunset in their raw artistic conceptual form. This style of art engages the eyes directly in analysing for itself, some of the artistic combinations of the african sunset. The reds, yellows, oranges, browns, whites and purples are dominant colours present in the african sunset. In its state, the work looks golden and rich in chroma. It also portray the golden heat of the African sunset. The colours moving in the work can be seen as rectangles from one end to the other end of the canvas. However, they vary in sizes, this is because when one observes the sunset sky, these colours are stronger and weaker at certain shades and cause the smooth blending from one tone to the other. These sizes were not done with any mathematical measurement. Plate 9 is on page 59.



**(Plate 8)** Michael Addae *Mirrors* “Acrylic” 35X25 inches





**(Plate 9)** Michael Addae *An African Sunset* “Acrylic” 40X35 inches

## CHAPTER FIVE

### **CONCLUSION**

#### 5.1 OVERVIEW

In this chapter, summaries will be made on the research and findings will be noted as well. Recommendations necessary for the development of painting, both to the individual artist and the nation as a whole will be made. It will also provide the references and appendix.

#### 5.2 SUMMARY

In summarising this research, it is necessary that, the objectives are mentioned to demonstrate how the research has tackled the problems. Objective one was set out to acquire information on formalism and reductionism. This led the researcher to further consider other styles associated with them. Thus, the conclusions to objective one are: Formalism, orphism, neo-plasticism, reductionism, minimalism and conceptual art correlate each other in their philosophies. Whilst formalism concentrates on which or what kind of forms, reductionism, orphism, neo-plasticism and minimalism focuses on their buildup. Conceptual art on the other hand, plays a neutral role in their idea development.

Formalism suggests that, everything necessary for the understanding of art is found within the art. This concept to the, “understanding of art” is far from a mere

naturalistic appearance. To Bell, the significant form or inner nature of a work is most essential and should determine its value.

Though, formalism may look at art in terms of form and not narrative, it is also important to note that the form produces the narrative. However, it is equally significant to understand that, it is the predominant nature of the form that produces the narrative.

Conceptual art in line with Duchamp's "ready made" is semantic to the critical, and intellectual insight associated with the understanding of art. It awakened the intellectual debate about art as a result of his argument made by the exhibition of 'bicycle wheel', 'fountain', among others.

It was understood that, African art related to formalism, orphism, neo-plasticism reductionism and minimalism and is also conceptual.

Objective two was set out to experiment with the formalist and reductionist styles through paintings. These have been tackled with the paintings produced in the formalist and reductionist styles in chapter four.

Objective three on the other hand, was set out to communicate conceptually with the paintings. This has been achieved as chapter four, with its analysis of the work, showed how conceptually, this research had communicated with the above styles.

And finally objective four was set out to document the findings. The evidence of this project report shows that, objective four has been successfully achieved.

To a large extent the researcher has provided solutions to the problems that the thesis' objectives presented.

### 5.3 FINDINGS

- Acrylic paint is the most suitable paint for the printing technique.
- Acrylic paints when it dries give a smooth finish and together with the formalist and reductionist styles create a serene atmosphere in the work.
- Some colours such as yellow ochre, crimson, burnt sienna and veridian green have a higher obscuring capacity than yellows, purples and violets.
- Colours reduce in purity when they dry.
- When a section dries, acrylic paint can be worked over and it will still give a fresh inspiration.
- Colours such as yellow ochre and burnt sienna when dominant in a painting create a feeling of antiquity.
- Brown coloured cellular tapes usually have some textures which does give off its colours to the already painted work thus, it is not suitable for this project except the plain or colourless ones.
- Longer rulers are very much needed to get all straight lines accurate.
- Pencil impressions give a thin line of clarity necessary for this work.
- Formalism is not against the philosophical significance attached to painting but the philosophy itself should reflect and communicate effectively in the work and not on a paper.



- Formalism is a philosophical way of depicting reality based on the artist own understanding of the forms.
- Formalism also serves an advantageous position, reserved for only the imaginative and creative skill of the artist, leaving the machines gasping and gapping at the dynamism of the human nature.
- African art has a direct influence on formalism and reductionism as cubism which is a form of formalism was influenced by African art. Also before the discovery of Africa, formalism and reductionism had not come to the light though they might have existed in other ways. This gives credence to the fact that, African art has either a direct or indirect influence on these styles.
- Bell's classification of Art under significant form can best be seen as an individual opinion and not a conventional truth, since not all meaningful and significant art possesses it.
- Formalism, orphism, neo-plasticism, reductionism and minimalism correlate each other in their philosophies.
- The building components that form the whole are given pre-eminence by all.
- Distinctiveness in colour and contour in formalism, orphism, neo-plasticism, reductionism and minimalism does not suggest lack of expression.
- Conceptual art is basically the driving ideology behind art which is intended to make the viewer think beyond what he or she sees.
- Backed by the mandate of critical and philosophical thinking, Duchamp was right to exhibit that which he did not produce by skill but intellectual insight.

#### 5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

- More symbolic forms such as triangles, rectangles, ovals and circles that suggest the beliefs of the Ghanaian society may be incorporated in works of Ghanaian painters and artists as a whole. This will help the world to know the contribution of Ghana towards the Formalist and reductionist styles.
- Such contemporary and indigenous Ghanaian works which promotes the use of symbols to portray the rich cultural heritage of Ghana and Africa as a whole may be bought and kept in museums and galleries. This will serve as a hard copy or evidence by which posterity will be able to read and understand Ghanaian art in the years to come.
- Government and Non Governmental Organizations may help in holding exhibitions which will showcase these Ghanaian and some conceptual African ideas. This will prevent artists from selling to the outside world and foster easy documentation of what may come to be our own.
- Since not all artists in Ghana have acquired formal education, it will be very helpful if occasionally, seminars and workshops may be organised to enlighten artists on these symbolic forms and their meanings in the Ghanaian society. It will help artist towards the understanding and production of creative and conceptual art. This will help improve the Ghanaian art market.
- The difficulty in purchasing professional acrylic paints discourages most artists from using them thus, sometimes causing most artists to produce paintings with short life span. It is recommended that, most art shop keepers try to make professional acrylic paints available on the market.

- Again it is recommended that, stationeries and other art shops move into the sales of professional acrylic paints. The availability of acrylic paints on the market will create competition among sellers and thus reduce their prices. This will make it more affordable for young and amateur painters.

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## APPENDICES



**(Plate 10)** Michael Addae *The Lawyer* “Acrylic” 40X35 inches



**(Plate 11)** Jean Chalgrin, *Arc of Triumph* (Height 45m width 22 m. (vault 29.19 m))





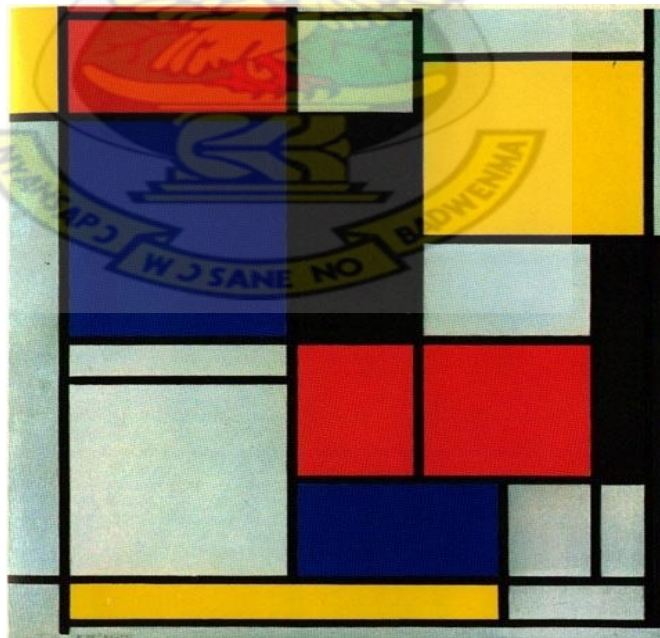
(Plate 12) Henry Bacon, *Lincoln Memorial* (Height 36.1m width 57.8 m. (vault 30m))



(Plate 13) Robert Delaunay *Circular Forms* (573 × 379)



(Plate 14) Michael Addae, Broken Dreams (50X40 inches)



(Plate 15) Piet Mondrian, *So Simple, So Mondrian* (1197 × 1188)

## INFLUENCE OF PIET MONDRIAN ON FASHION



(Plate 16) Piet Mondrian, *Fashion*



(Plate 17) Frank Stella *Harran* (573 × 287)





(Plate 18) Osafo Agyemang *Untitled* (No specific size)



(Plate 19) Marcel Duchamp, *Fountain* (321 × 305)



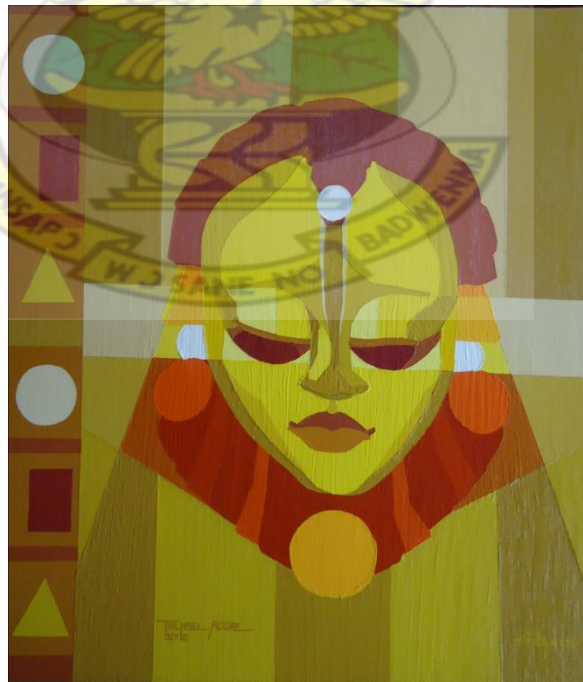
(Plate 20) El Anatsui, *Duvor* (1024 × 825)



(Plate 21) Emmanuel Konadu Agyemang *The Evil Can't Be Hidden* (43 X 23 X 80inches.)



(Plate 22) Jane Alexander, *Butcher Boys* (human life-size)



(Plate 23) Michael Addae, *New Face of Akuaba* (40X35inches)



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