

Article

Symbolic Splendour: Integrating Adinkra Symbols in Ghana's Most Beautiful Set Design

Sika Koomson^{1,*}¹ Department of Theatre Arts, School of Creative Arts, University of Education, Winneba, Ghana

*Correspondence: Sika Koomson (skoomson@uew.edu.gh)

Abstract: This study explores the integration of Adinkra symbols into the set design of Ghana's Most Beautiful (GMB), a popular beauty pageant and reality TV show that has aired on TV3; a private television station in Ghana. GMB showcases beauty, intelligence, cultural knowledge, and traditional values, celebrating Ghana's rich cultural heritage through female contestants representing the country's diverse ethnic groups. In response to the lack of coherent Ghanaian artistic elements in previous set designs, this study employed an artistic methodology to incorporate four Adinkra symbols, Okodee Mmawere, Duafe, Dweninimmen, and Mate Masie, into the set design for the show's eighth season. These symbols, signifying beauty, strength, wisdom, and unity respectively, were creatively integrated into a crown-like set design for the grand finale, harmonizing aesthetic trends with cultural significance. The design process was informed by rigorous research and stakeholder interviews, ensuring that the selected symbols conveyed the intended cultural messages. The results highlight the potential of traditional symbols to enhance both the cultural relevance and visual appeal of television productions. The project enriches the cultural depth of GMB production and offers a blueprint for incorporating indigenous symbols into contemporary set design. The study recommends that future productions continue exploring traditional symbols to deepen the appreciation of Ghanaian heritage and strengthen cultural identity through visual arts.

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1. Introduction

Traditional symbols are vital in expressing and communicating the identity of a people. These symbols not only help in identifying a group but also convey the ideals and values of that group. They serve as visual representations through which a culture communicates its philosophies, knowledge, and skills, playing specific roles in society [1]. Throughout history, societies across the globe have used significant symbols to distinguish their communities. In the context of oral traditions, symbols are crucial for indoctrination, functioning as encoding tools that make important information more accessible and accurate [1].

The above description highlights that traditional symbols are not only essential in differentiating nations, societies, and authorities but also in conveying complex messages in simpler forms, making them easier to understand. Traditional symbols are a tangible aspect of every culture, representing invisible concepts through objects, characters, or other concrete forms [2]. These symbols are used to transmit coded messages, either directly or indirectly. In some cases, understanding these messages requires special insight into the symbols. Traditional symbols can inspire new meanings and insights, encouraging one to explore beyond their conventional definitions.

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In Ghana, the Adinkra symbols are a prime example of traditional symbols that have been instrumental in fulfilling these roles. This study focuses on using four selected Adinkra symbols to design a set for Ghana's Most Beautiful (2014). Adinkra symbols have been widely used by institutions and individuals to communicate ideas, philosophies, and concepts, supporting the transmission of a complex and nuanced body of practice and belief.

Adinkra symbols originate from the Asante region of Ghana, developed through observations of human interactions with objects and elements of nature [3]. Although they have roots in the Asante culture, their meanings have evolved and adapted to the social, cultural, and historical changes of modern Ghanaian society [4].

Over the years, designers and artists in Ghana have extensively incorporated Adinkra symbols into their works, including textiles, pottery, stools, umbrella tops, linguist staffs, gold weights, jewellery, swords, architecture, and national monuments like the state sword and the presidential seat in parliament. These artistic creations are used by people from diverse backgrounds.

Set design is not only essential for enhancing stage performances but also contributes significantly to the overall success of performances, whether on stage or television. A set design should reflect the themes, mood, and style of a production while indicating its historical or geographic context, serving as a communicator to the audience. Set designers achieve this through research and constant consultations. However, it is concerning when designs lack coherence or are given little importance in a production.

In an effort to promote and highlight aspects of Ghanaian culture, TV3 Network, a free-to-air private television station in Ghana, introduced its flagship program, Ghana's Most Beautiful, which aims to showcase Ghanaian culture through women. Despite commendable efforts to incorporate Ghanaian elements, such as costumes and properties (props) into the program, there is a noticeable lack of attention to the aspect of set design. Although the organisers are not obliged to use Ghanaian elements in the set design, it is my firm belief that incorporating Adinkra symbols would enhance the program's intention of reinforcing Ghanaian cultural identity.

After extensively studying the set designs over the years, it was apparent that Ghanaian artistic elements were rarely considered. As a set design student, the question arises: how can one apply design knowledge and techniques to create a design that will enhance TV3's efforts? That question motivated this study, aiming to contribute to filling the gap. The objective was to use four Adinkra symbols, *Okɔdeɛ mmɔwɛrɛ* (talons of an eagle), *Duafɛ* (wooden comb), *Dweninimɛ* (ram's horn), and *Mate Masie* (what I hear, I keep), to design a set for TV3's Ghana's Most Beautiful season eight.

The significance of this study extends beyond a mere application of design knowledge; it challenges the prevailing oversight of Ghanaian artistic elements in set designs, particularly within the context of high-profile productions like TV3's GMB. Integrating Adinkra symbols into the set design, this study enhances the visual appeal and infuses the show with deeper cultural meaning, fostering a stronger connection with the audience. The implications of that is that, it serves as a direct response to the identified gap in utilising indigenous artistic expressions within the Ghanaian television industry and that will pave the way for a more culturally relevant and authentic visual language in set designs. Secondly, by documenting the process and findings, this study provides a practical blueprint for other production houses and companies seeking to incorporate Ghanaian aesthetics into their projects. This could potentially lead to a broader shift towards celebrating and showcasing indigenous artistry on a national scale. Then, the study has significant pedagogical implications as findings can be an invaluable resource for aspiring designers in Ghana as it will encourage future designers to explore and embrace their cultural heritage in their creative productions. In essence, this study represents a crucial step towards a more culturally conscious and visually rich landscape

in Ghanaian television production and offers a practical model and educational resource to inspire future generations of designers.

1.1. TV3's Ghana's Most Beautiful Pageant

TV3 Network Limited, as noted on its official website, is a free-to-air private television station based in Kanda, Accra, Ghana. Launched in 1997, the station engages in broadcasting, communications, film, television, and video production. It offers a diverse range of television programs, including news bulletins, dramas, and children's entertainment shows, with a nationwide coverage of 65%. Among its flagship programs are Mentor, Talented Kids, Music Music, the UEFA Champions League, The Pulpit, and Celebrations, among others. The station has earned numerous accolades, including Best TV Station in 2004 at the Radio and Television Awards and Sports Station of the Year 2004 by the National Sports Journalists Association. TV3's competitors include Ghana Television (the national broadcaster), United Television, and Metro Television, all within Ghana.

In 2007, the station launched Ghana's Most Beautiful, a reality showed themed Redefining Beauty to Promote National Unity. The show aimed to showcase Ghana's unique culture while promoting national unity among the regions, their people, and their values. The show featured ten female contestants from each of Ghana's ten regions. These contestants were housed in a private residence for two months, where they received training and participated in rehearsals. Throughout the competition, the contestants displayed the rich traditions of their respective regions. When asked about the concept behind the show, Felix Dontoh, the Brands Manager of TV3, explained,

This is the show that gives us what is about us and makes us Ghanaian. At the heart of the pageant was the indispensable concept of national unity. The concept was centred on ethnic settings and as such purposefully created avenues that will cement the foundation of unity. Dontoh, F. (2014). Personal communication

Each week, contestants showcased something new from their regions, delivering presentations on social, historical, and cultural issues. After three months, the contestant who demonstrated the most knowledge, moral values, and a strong cultural upbringing was crowned Ghana's Most Beautiful. The program was not only entertaining but also highly educational and informative.

2. Review of Related Literature

The process of set design is deeply connected to semiology, the study of symbols and their meanings. Designers often use scenic elements such as shapes, forms, lines, and colours to convey symbolic messages. For instance, a set design might subtly suggest themes of love or hatred through its visual choices. Designers may also incorporate recognizable symbols, such as Adinkra symbols, to convey complex messages in a simple and evocative form. In theatre, semiology is concerned with how meaning is developed and conveyed to the audience, making it essential that a stage design express the core meaning of the production.

Africa is rich in symbols and symbolic expressions [5]. The diverse symbols throughout Africa have inspired artists to transform traditional forms into contemporary ones, now seen on pottery, bronze, wood, textiles, and even human bodies. Among these indigenous symbols are the Adinkra symbols of Ghana, which are the most famous among Ghanaian symbols.

Adinkra symbols as ideographs that convey the philosophy and culture of the Asante people of Ghana [4]. Adinkra is an ideographic script, a system where symbols represent ideas. Julius O. Boadu notes that in the Akan language (Twi), Adinkra also means goodbye or farewell. Adinkra symbols are based on observations of humans, objects,

nature, and abstract ideas [3]. Also, Adinkra symbols represent popular proverbs, historical events, attitudes, behaviours, or abstract concepts [6].

The origin of Adinkra symbols is subject to various, sometimes conflicting, historical accounts. Among the Akans, it is believed that Adinkra symbols were part of the Asantehene's golden stool, which was conjured from heaven by Okomfo Anokye, the first chief priest, placing their origin in the seventh century. Another account suggests that Adinkra symbols were obtained after the Asante-Gyaman war of 1818, when King Adinkra of Gyaman (now Ivory Coast) was brought to Kumasi as a prisoner of war, wearing robes adorned with Adinkra symbols [3]. A third theory links the origin of Adinkra to Islamic influences in the North, suggesting that Islamic writing, amuletic symbols, or Kufic script may have inspired Adinkra symbols [7].

Despite these conflicting accounts, the significance of Adinkra symbols transcends their origin. In Ghana, these symbols have evolved into a national artistic heritage, adapting to social, cultural, and historical changes. They are now widely used in various contexts, from churches and universities to banks and insurance companies, appearing on textiles, pottery, stools, jewellery, architecture, and other utilitarian objects. Artisans such as sculptors, carpenters, and architects incorporate these symbols into their works, and some corporate institutions in Ghana have even adopted Adinkra symbols as their logos. Key national institutions, including the Universities of Ghana, Cape Coast, and Winneba, as well as the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Parliament House, and the Supreme Court, have all adopted various Adinkra symbols to represent their values and ideals.

The literature review underscores the profound significance of Adinkra symbols as a visual language deeply embedded in Ghanaian culture. The symbols' ability to encapsulate complex concepts and values within simple yet evocative forms make them a powerful tool for communication and expression. The extensive use of Adinkra symbols across various artistic and cultural domains highlights their enduring relevance and adaptability in contemporary Ghanaian society. The study's focus on incorporating Adinkra symbols into the set design for Ghana's Most Beautiful aligns with the broader trend of utilising these symbols to reinforce cultural identity and promote national unity. The symbols' capacity to convey messages of beauty, strength, unity, and wisdom resonates with the pageant's core themes, making them an ideal choice for enhancing the show's visual narrative and cultural significance.

3. Method

The design process for the 2014 Ghana's Most Beautiful set was grounded in an artistic methodology, emphasising intuition, inspiration, and imagination alongside rigorous research [8]. The concept evolved from an initial idea sparked by observing a billboard advertisement to the incorporation of Adinkra symbols, driven by a desire to reinforce Ghanaian identity. The selection of specific Adinkra symbols was informed by interviews with stakeholders and further research, ensuring their relevance to the show's message. The final design was translated into a 3D computer model and presented to the show's producers, who approved it with minor revisions. The design process culminated in a site visit to the venue, enabling the creation of detailed technical drawings for the construction crew. The methodology underscores the importance of research, creative thinking, and collaboration in achieving a design that effectively communicates the intended message and resonates with the audience.

3.1. Design Concept

The scenic concept was inspired by both the program's central theme and the designer's personal intuition and artistic vision. The image of ten contestants running towards a crown, captioned *A run for the Crown*, (see [Figure 1](#)) sparked the idea of incorporating a crown into the set design. The crown, a widely recognized symbol in

beauty pageants, signifying distinction and victory, seemed a fitting element for the GMB stage. The designer's conviction in using the crown stemmed from its established association with beauty contests and its ability to resonate with the audience.



Figure 1. Billboard advertising GMB season 8 (Source: From field work).

3.2. Selected Adinkra Symbols

The four Adinkra symbols chosen for this project, *Okɔdee mmɔwere* (talons of an eagle), *Duafe* (wooden comb), *Dweninimmen* (ram's horn), and *Mate Masie* (what I hear, I keep), were carefully selected based on the researcher's understanding and their alignment with the overarching theme of GMB: redefining beauty to promote national unity. The selection process involved extensive research and discussions with key stakeholders, including the director, contestants, and viewers of GMB. The richness and diverse interpretations of Adinkra symbols made the final selection a challenging but thoughtful process, ensuring each symbol resonated with the pageant's core message. The following sections will elaborate on the meaning and significance of each chosen symbol, explaining their connection to the pageant and the researcher's design concept.

3.3. *Okɔdee Mmɔwere*

Okɔdee mmɔwere literally means talons of eagle. In the *Adinkra* parlance, this symbol stands for unity. Promoting unity among the contestants and by extension the people of Ghana was one of the core aims of GMB. All the ten regions of Ghana are represented on one platform and the aim is to promote cultural, social, religious and ethnic unity among the people. During the show, contestants from the ten regions beautifully display their various traditions and customs. As the show progresses, the contestants are also made to research on and showcase various aspects of other tribes and regions other than theirs. The underpinning rationale behind this is to foster unity in diversity. Choosing this symbol was therefore aimed at reinforcing the theme of unity (see [Figure 2](#)).

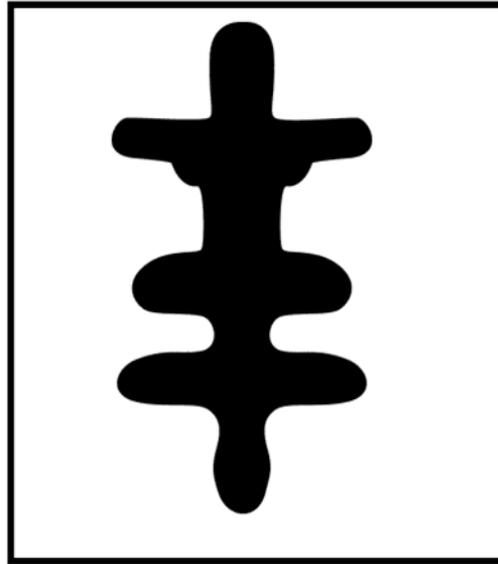


Figure 2. Adinkra symbols: *Okodee Mmɔwɛɛ* (Talons of eagle); Source: www.adinkra.org

3.4. *Duafe*

The word *Duafe* originates from the Akan words *dua* (wood) and *fe* (comb), translating to wooden comb. The *Duafe* symbol, widely recognized and used, embodies feminine values such as beauty, cleanliness, prudence, and care. The comb, an essential tool for women's grooming and maintaining their appearance, holds significant cultural value. The selection of the *Duafe* symbol in the set design serves to reinforce TV3's objective of redefining beauty. It plays a crucial role in the project by highlighting and celebrating feminine virtues, aligning perfectly with the essence of GMB, a pageant focused on empowering women (see [Figure 3](#)).

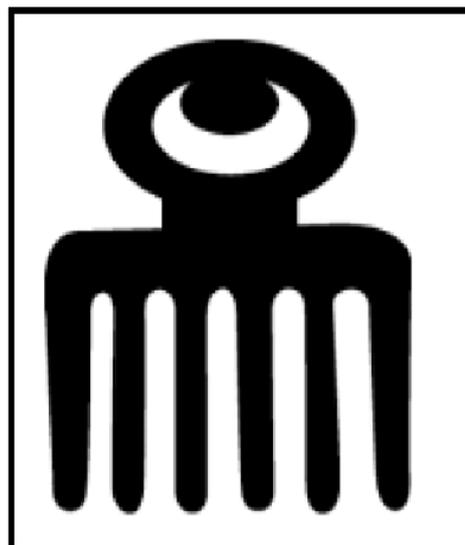


Figure 3. Adinkra symbol *Duafe* (Wooden comb); Source: www.adinkra.org

3.5. *Dweninimɛn*

The *Dweninimɛn* symbol, meaning ram's horn, combines the Akan words *Dwenini* (ram, symbolising humility) and *Mɛn* (horns, representing strength). The proverb

associated with it, *the strength of the ram lies in its horns; once they are plucked off, it is caught in a trap*, emphasises the coexistence of humility and strength. This symbol's selection was inspired by the nature of the contest, where ten women competed fiercely yet gracefully, showcasing their strength through humility. The contestants, metaphorically locking horns, demonstrated their knowledge and talents in a healthy competition, ultimately leading to the crowning of a winner. The *Dweninimmen* encapsulates the spirit of GMB, celebrating the unique blend of humility and strength embodied by the contestants (see [Figure 4](#)).



Figure 4. Adinkra symbol *Dweninimmen* (ram horn); Source: www.adinkra.org

3.6. *Mate Masie*

The phrase *Mate Masie*, which translates to what I hear, I keep, embodies wisdom, knowledge, and prudence. It signifies not just comprehension but also the discretion to value and safeguard shared information. The researcher believes this symbol also represents confidentiality, emphasising the importance of respecting trust and keeping secrets. In the context of the project, the *Mate Masie* symbol serves as a reminder that the messages conveyed through the design should resonate with the contestants and audience, encouraging them to appreciate and preserve the cultural significance of Ghanaian symbols for future generations. It underscores the project's aim to shed light on these symbols and their artistic value, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of Ghanaian heritage (see [Figure 5](#)).

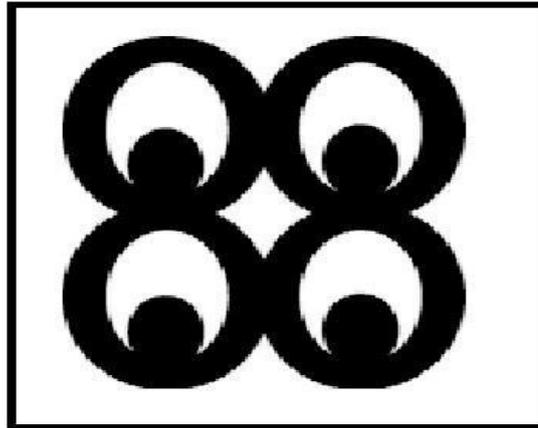


Figure 5. *Mate Masie* (What I hear, I keep); Source: www.adinkra.org

3.7. Design Technique

Following the purposeful selection of the Adinkra symbols, a meticulous process of artistic refitting ensued. This involved a delicate balance between honouring the intrinsic symbolism of the ancient motifs and adapting them to seamlessly integrate into a contemporary design aesthetic. Each symbol underwent a thoughtful transformation, carefully sculpted to harmonise with the crown-like structure while retaining its core essence.

This approach ensured that the final design captivated the eye with its aesthetic appeal and resonated deeply with the cultural significance embedded within each symbol. This unique design approach showcases a profound respect for tradition while embracing innovation. It serves as a testament to the dynamic nature of Ghanaian culture, demonstrating its ability to adapt and evolve while remaining firmly rooted in its rich heritage.

3.7.1. Artistic (Refitted) Renderings of the Selected Symbols

The following are the four selected original *Adinkra* symbols and the artistic renderings of them (see [figures 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12](#)).

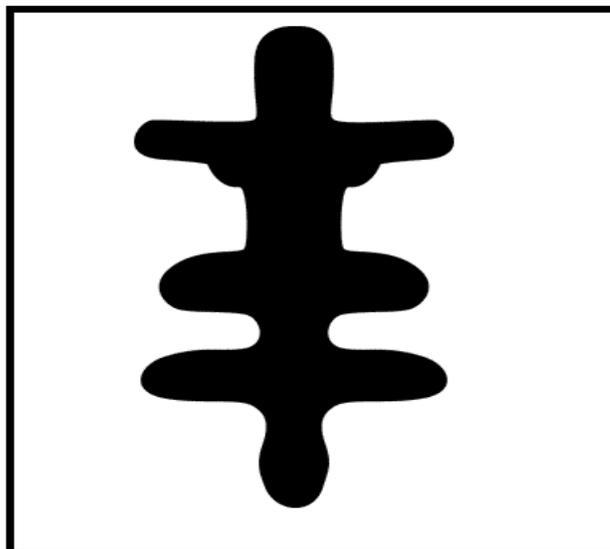


Figure 6. Original *Okɔdeɛ Mmɔwɛrɛ* (Talons of eagle) *Adinkra* symbol; Source: www.adinkra.org

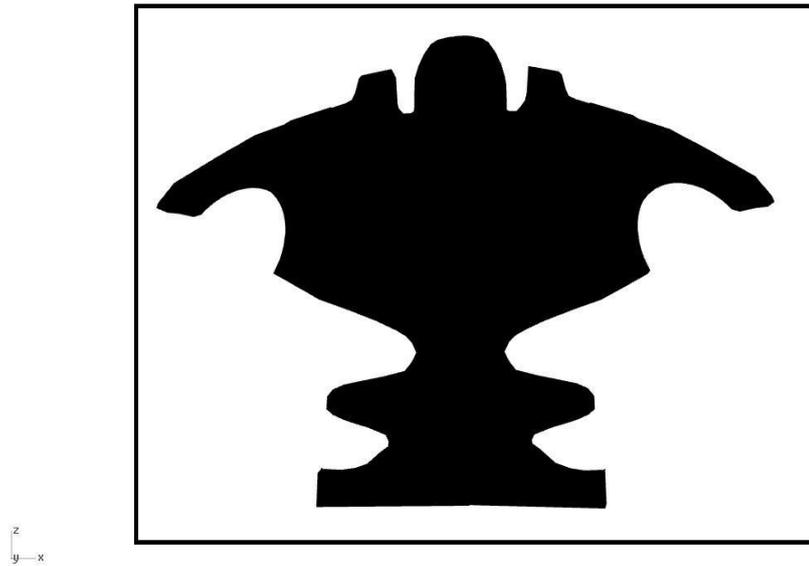


Figure 7. Artistically rendered *Okodee Mmɔwɛre* (Talons of eagle); Source: Researcher's construct

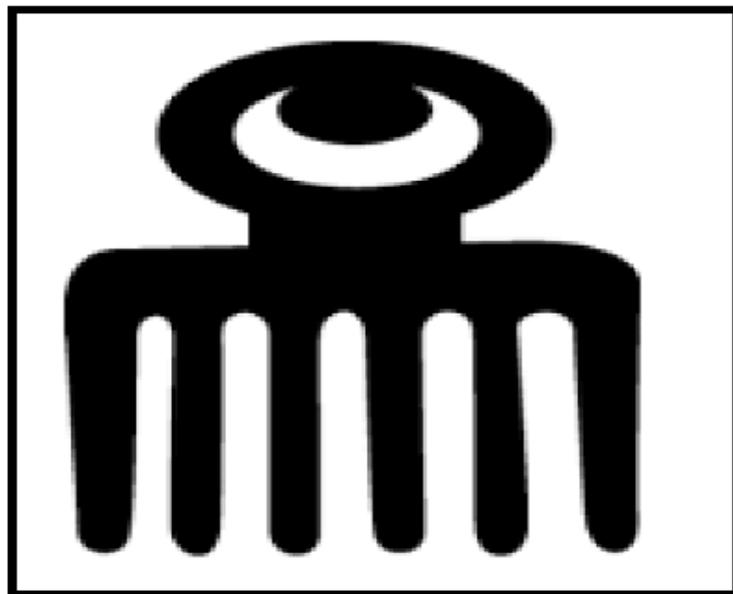


Figure 8. Original *Duafe* (Wooden comb) *Adinkra* symbol; Source: www.adinkra.org

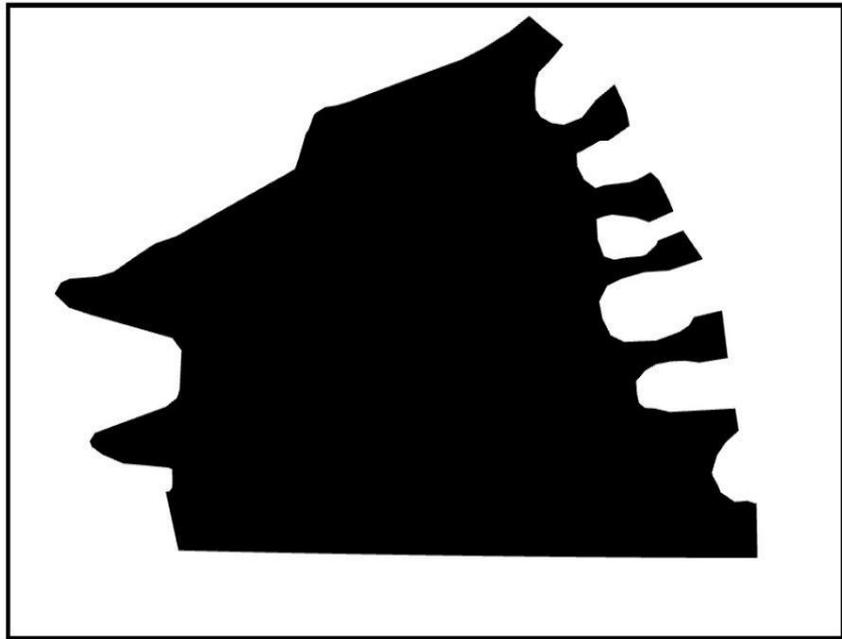


Figure 9. Artistically rendered *Duafe* (Wooden comb); Source: Researcher's construct

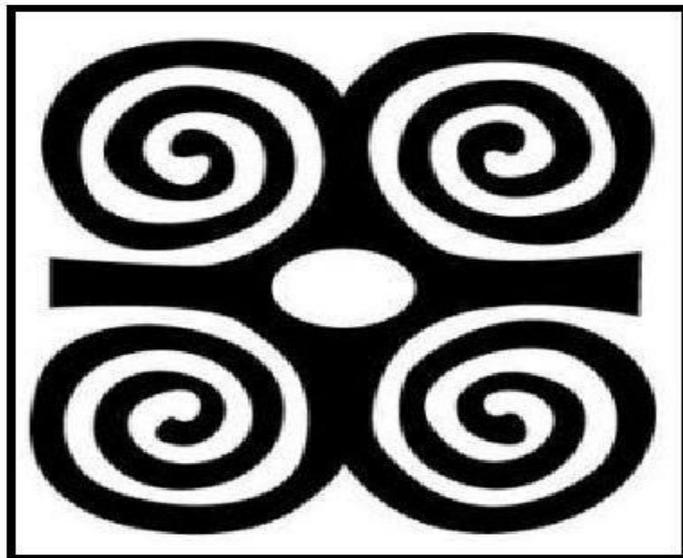


Figure 10. Original *Dweninimmen* (ram horn) *Adinkra* symbol; Source: www.adinkra.org

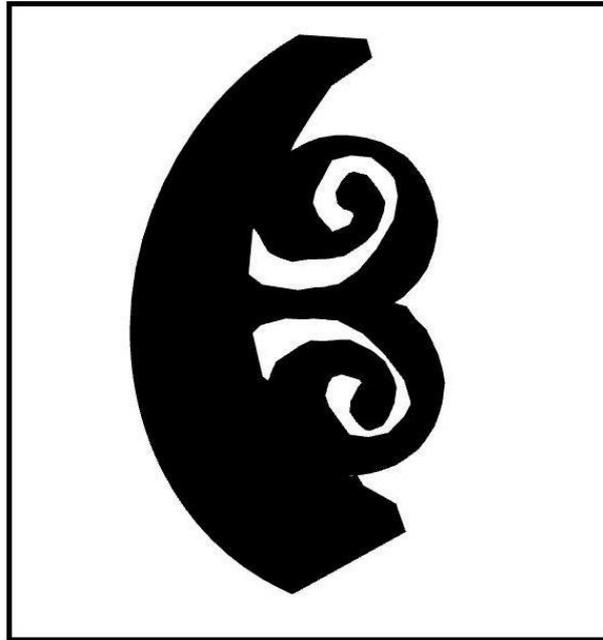


Figure 11. Artistically rendered *Dweninimmen*; Source: Researcher's construct

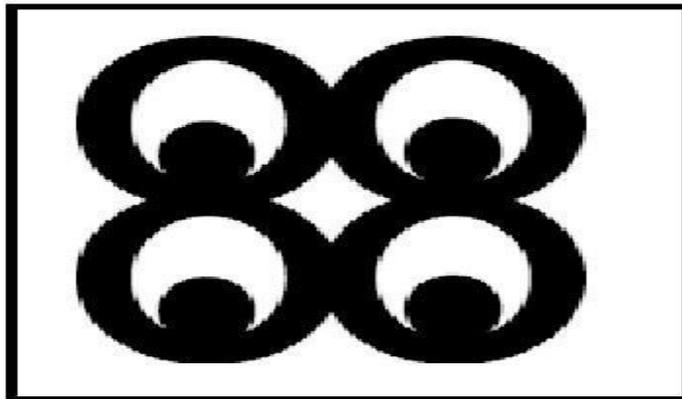


Figure 12. *Mate Masie* (What I hear, I keep); Source: www.adinkra.org

The *Mate Masie* symbol was not altered because, the very objective of using Ghanaian traditional *Adinkra* symbols in the design, depended on this symbol. Metaphorically, this symbol admonishes individuals to seek knowledge, keep it and be guided by it. It was the desire of the designer that patrons of GMB would acknowledge and appreciate the imperative role of Ghanaian traditional symbols in the social setting of the country. Eight of the above stars were used in the design to represent season eight of the GMB (see [Figure 13](#)).



Figure 13. Star; Source: shutterstock.com

3.7.2. Placement of the Symbols and their Significance

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

Just after the *Okɔdee mmɔwere* was the *Duafe* symbol. After the call for ‘national unity’, GMB was to redefine beauty and the *Duafe* symbol was placed just beside the *Okɔdee mmɔwere* to convey the message of redefining beauty. [Figure 14](#) shows the artistically rendered *Okɔdee mmɔwere* and the *Duafe*.

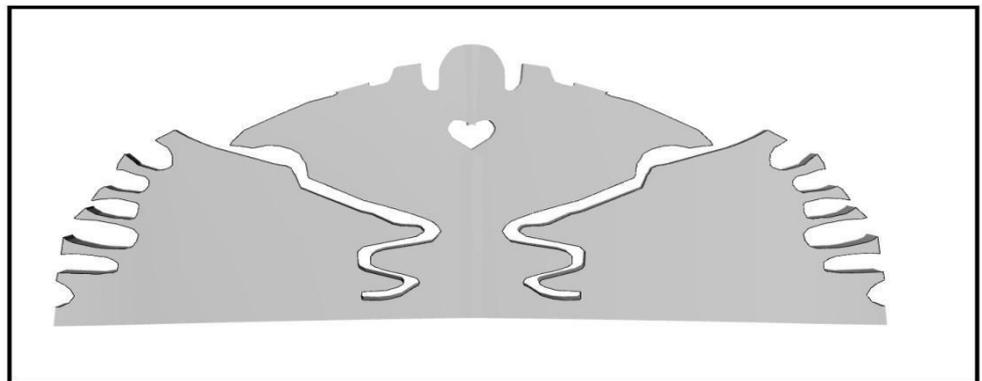


Figure 14. artistically rendered *Okɔdee mmɔwere* and the *Duafe*; Source: Researcher’s construct

The next symbol placed beside the *Duafe* was the *Mate Masie* symbol that stands for knowledge seeking and wisdom in keeping it. What the project sought to do was to give more currency to *Adinkra* symbols in scenic designs. It was the hope of the researcher that the contestants and the audience would appreciate and keep the message that came with the symbols; hence the choice of the *Mate Masie* symbol and its placement besides the *Duafe* symbol. [Figure 15](#) illustrates artistically rendered *Okɔdee mmɔwere*, *Duafe* and *Mate Masie* symbols.

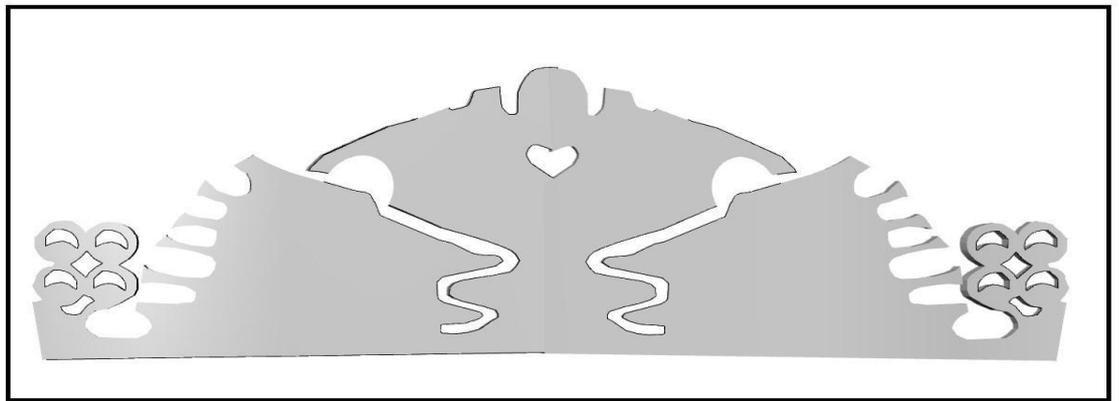


Figure 15. Artistically rendered *Okɔdeɛ mmɔwere*, *Duafe* and *Mate Masie* symbol; Source: Researcher's construct

The last *Adinkra* symbol used was *Dweninimmen*. The symbol stressed humility in every aspect of life, to learn and acquire knowledge. It discouraged people from being arrogant but instead humble in order to accomplish all their endeavours. It was used as a symbol of humility and strength. Artistic interpretation of this symbol shows two horns facing each other. It is observed that when two rams face each other, then they are in a fight or in a competition, and of course, *GMB* was a beauty contest where there was a healthy competition among the ten contestants and the ultimate winner was crowned at the end. The symbol was chosen to complement the other symbols and placed at the extreme ends of the design. [Figure 16](#) shows all the four artistically rendered symbols: *Okɔdeɛ mmɔwere*, *Duafe*, *Mate Masie* and *Dweninimmen*.

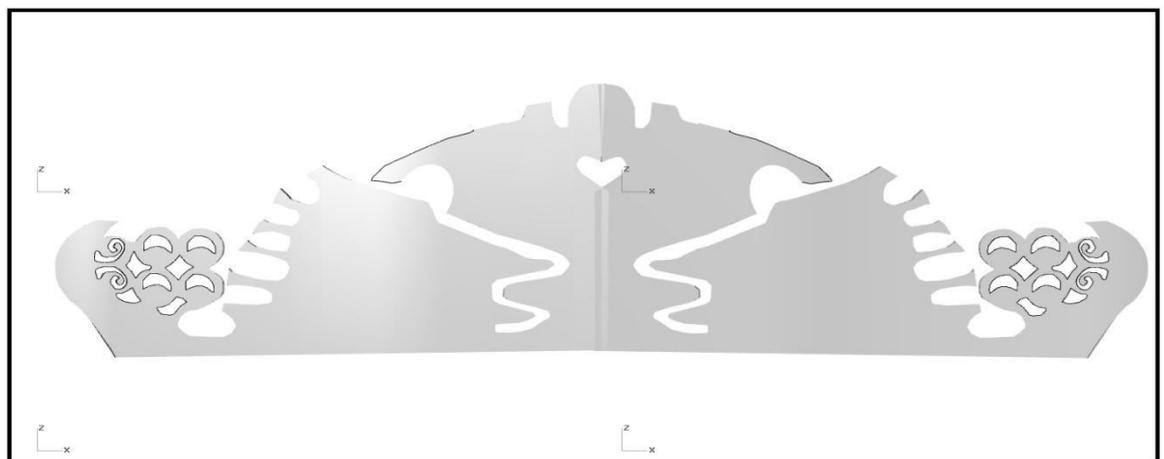


Figure 16. All four artistically rendered symbols: *Okɔdeɛ mmɔwere*, *Duafe*, *Mate Masie* and *Dweninimmen*; Source: Researcher's construct

To break the *Adinkra* monopoly in the design and bring in some variety, eight stars were placed on top of the design. *GMB* was an annual beauty pageant, and the 2014 edition was the eighth season. Therefore, the eight stars were to represent the eighth season (See [Figure 17](#)).

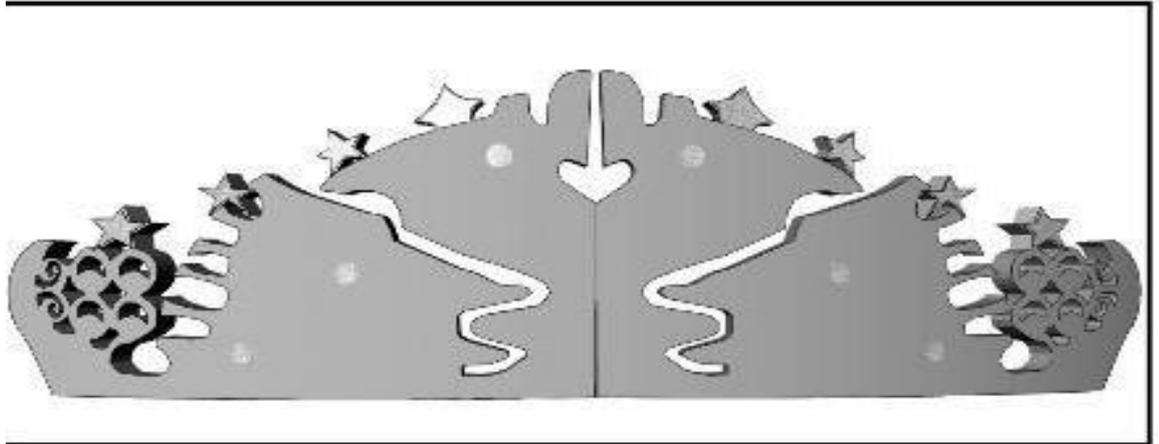


Figure 17. All four artistically rendered symbols: *Okɔdec mmɔwere*, *Duafe*, *Mate Masie* and *Dweninimmen* with the eight stars; Source: Researcher's construct

Again, the design was used for the grand finale of season eight, so the concept of a crown was adopted. The four symbols were infused into a crown. Readings on most beauty contests and *GMB* in particular revealed that a queen (winner) was crowned to distinguish her from the runners up. This influenced the choice of the crown (see [Figure 18](#)).

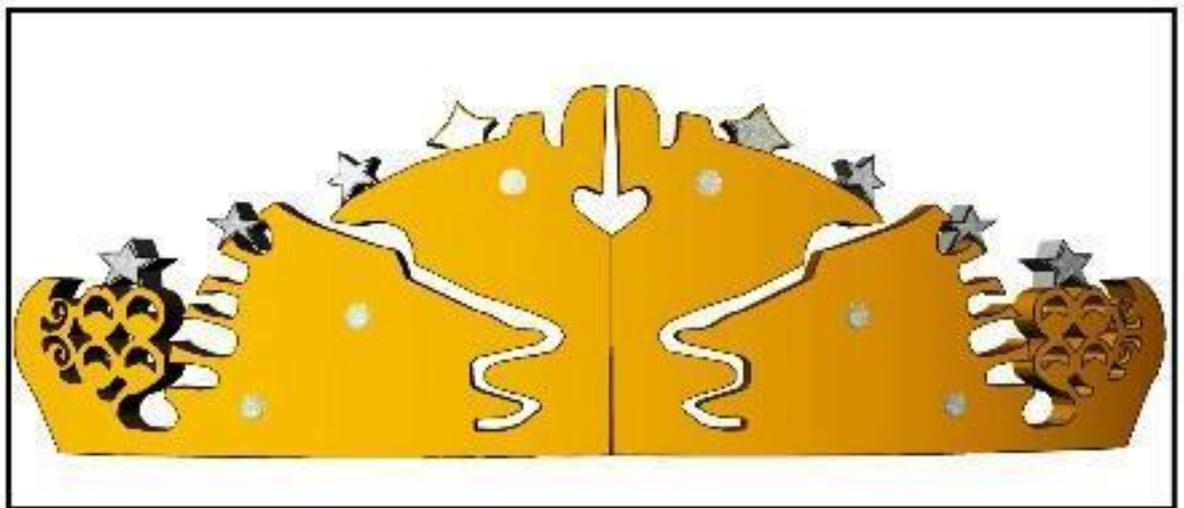


Figure 18. Final design; Source: Researcher's construct

3.8. Colour scheme

The choice of colours for this project was guided by the understanding that colour must be considered in terms of both light and pigment, as suggested by Parker et al [9]. Gold, representing love, wisdom, enlightenment, and forgiveness, was chosen for the main set, while silver, symbolising compassion and reflection, was used for the stars atop the design.

Gold and silver are often associated with royalty, further justifying their selection for a pageant where a beauty queen is crowned. The choice of colours was also discussed with the director, light designer, and costume designer to ensure a harmonious visual experience on stage and screen. In response to the director's request, glitters were added

to enhance the colours' sparkle, ensuring a visually captivating set for the television audience.

3.9. Working Drawings

Working drawings are technical drawings that show the carpenters in the scenic shop how to build a set [10]. The working drawings were supposed to provide the positions of such items as rails, toggles, braces, supports as well as breaks in the scenery and other details pertaining to the construction. The following working drawings were provided to the construction team for easy comprehension. The drawings were marked in feet and inches.

The following were the working drawings presented by the designer to the carpenters. These drawings, once again, were generated by the *Sketch-up* set design software (see figures 19, 20, 21, 22 and 23).

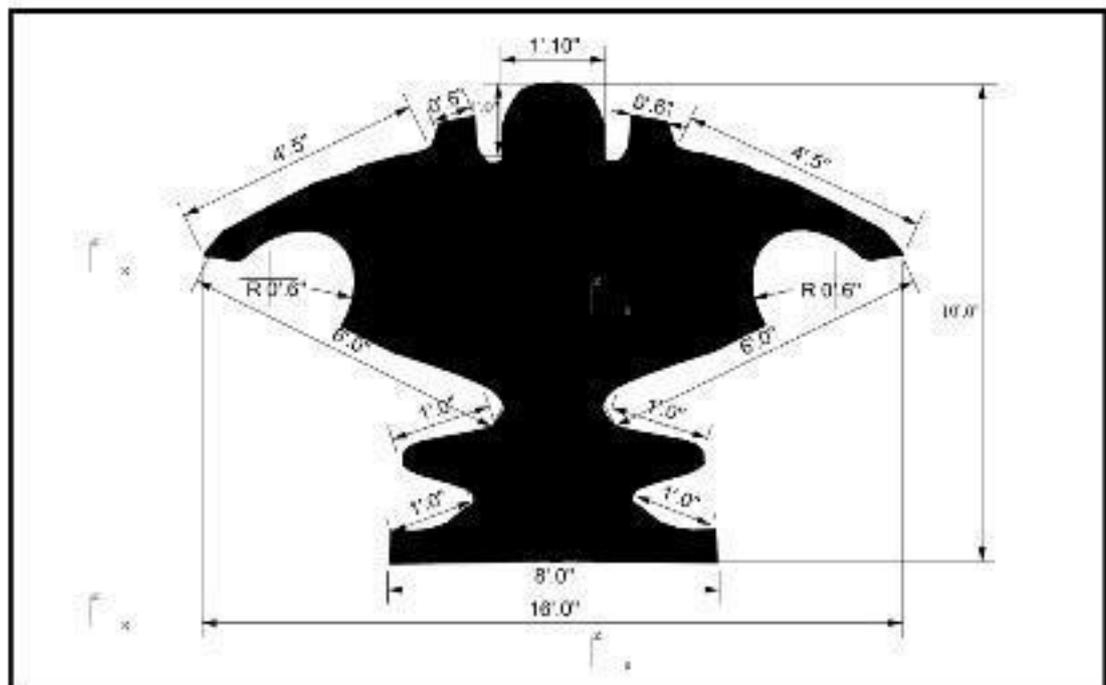


Figure 19. Working drawing for *OkJdee mmJwere*; Source: Researcher's construct

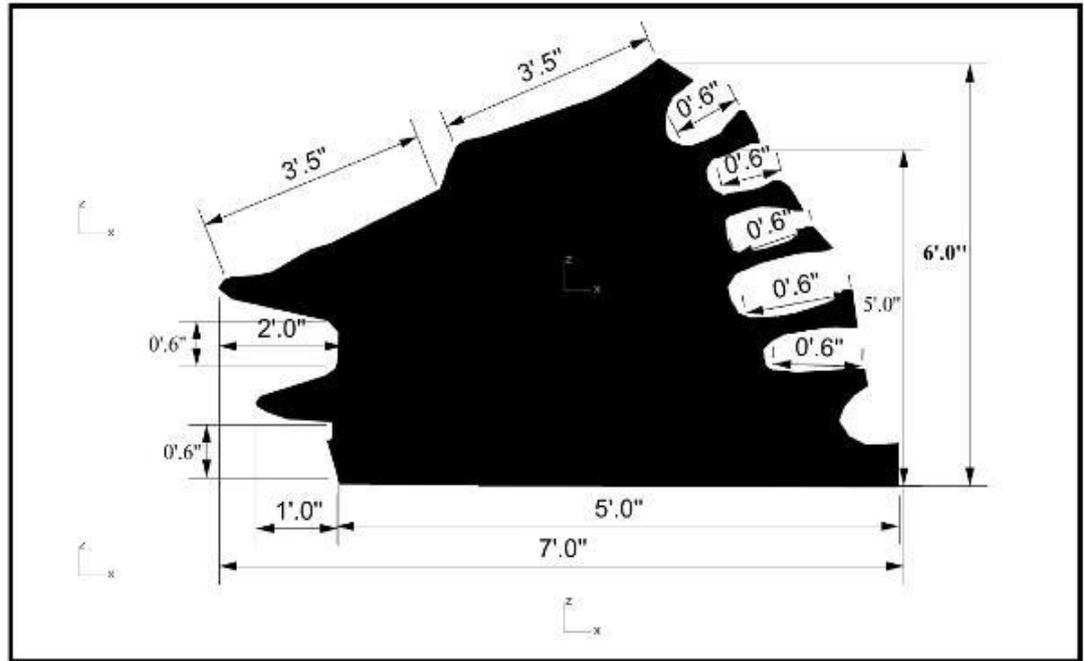


Figure 20. Working drawing for *Duafe*; Source: Researcher's construct

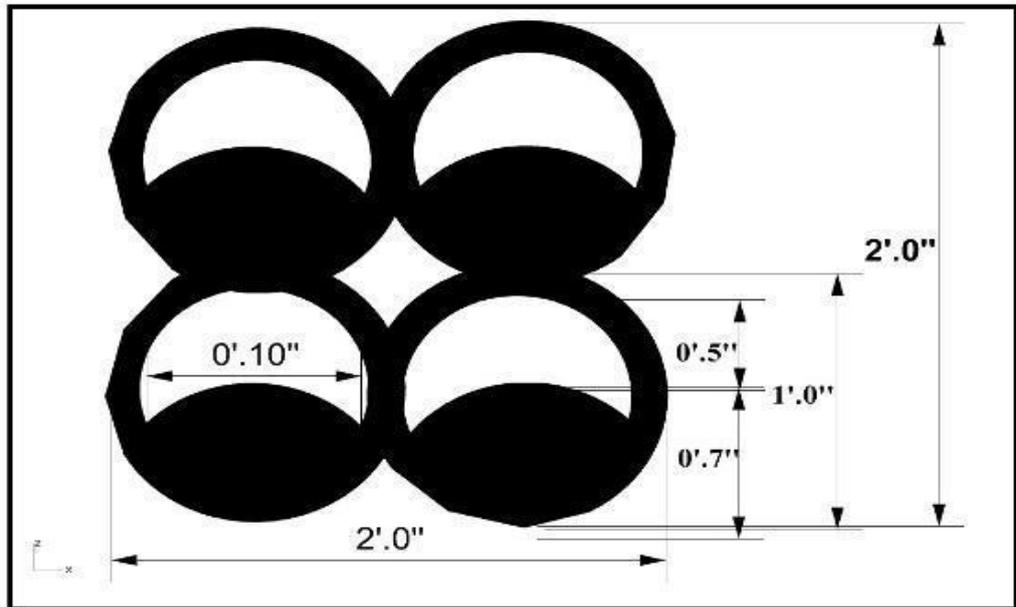


Figure 21. Working drawing for *Mate Masie*; Source: Researcher's construct

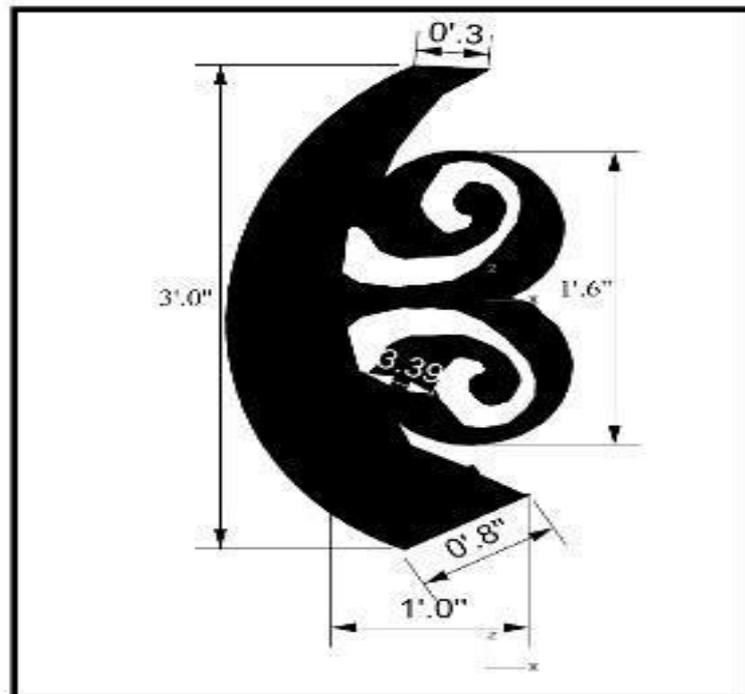


Figure 22. Working drawing for *Dweninimmen*; Source: Researcher's construct

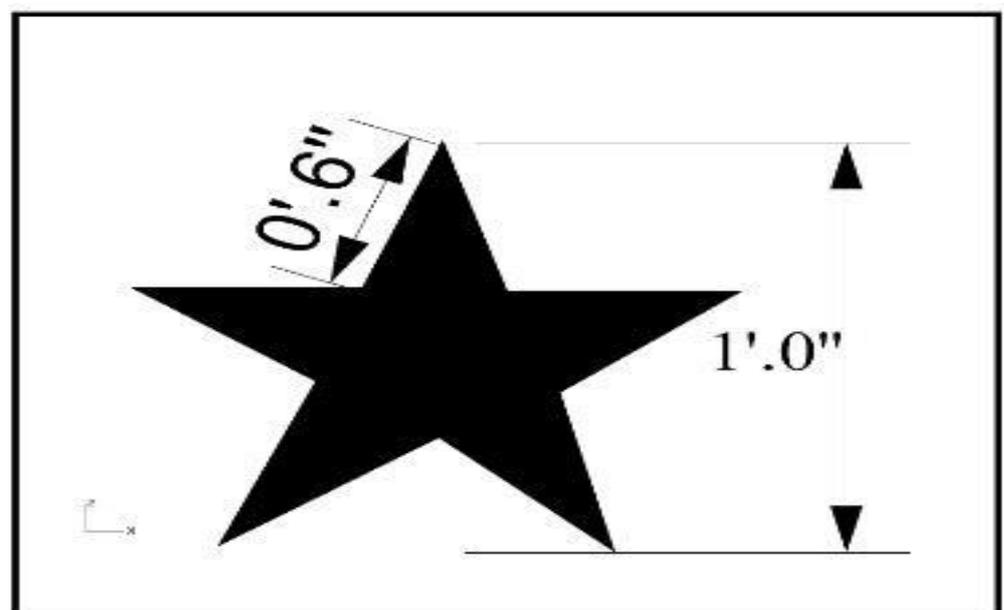


Figure 23. Working drawing for the stars; Source: Researcher's construct

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

4. Construction Process

The construction phase marks the realisation of the design concept, where the designer assembles tools and materials to bring the vision to life. It's a dynamic process involving various techniques like glueing, riveting, nailing, and welding to join the

different components of the set. The designer meticulously follows the design model to ensure the final construction aligns perfectly with the intended vision. The set construction took place at the National Theatre of Ghana, with the expertise of experienced stage carpenters. The construction team, comprising colleagues, graduate students, and service personnel, worked diligently under the guidance of the main supervisor. The construction process spanned four days. Following construction, the set was carefully transported from the National Theatre to the Accra International Conference Centre, the main event venue. A trial setup was conducted to identify and address any potential issues, and to familiarise the technical crew and contestants with the set. The opening night was a success, and after the event, the set was dismantled and stored at TV3's premises. The entire process, from construction to strike down, was executed smoothly and efficiently.

5. Materials used and the justification

In constructing the set, the following materials were selected for their specific properties and roles in the design:

2x4 Hardwood: This was used to construct the frame of the set. The wood was cut to the required dimensions and assembled to create a strong, stable, and durable skeletal structure. The choice of 2x4 hardwood ensured the frame's firmness and stability, essential for supporting the entire set.

3/4-inch Plywood: This material was used for constructing the main layout of the set, including cutting out all the Adinkra symbols. The 3/4-inch plywood provided a solid surface for the symbols and was also used for corner blocks to reinforce the overall structure, enhancing the set's strength and durability.

1/8-inch Plywood: Known for its flexibility, 1/8-inch plywood was selected for constructing the curves and intricate parts of the set that required bending. Its ability to easily meander made it ideal for achieving the desired contours in the design.

Polystyrene: Polystyrene was used to add thickness to the set. It was cut into shapes matching those of the 3/4-inch plywood and then glued onto it to create a more substantial appearance. This material was crucial in giving the set a dimensional, layered look.

White Glue: White glue was employed to bond the polystyrene to the 3/4-inch plywood. This adhesive was chosen for its strong bonding properties, ensuring that the materials remained securely attached.

Fila: Fila was used to conceal joints where polystyrene pieces were joined. This material helped create a seamless appearance by hiding any visible gaps, contributing to the set's polished look.

Gold Paint: Gold paint was initially intended as the finishing material to give the set a glittering effect. Although the desired effect was not fully achieved, the set was entirely painted with the gold paint before exploring alternative finishing materials.

Glitter: Glitter was applied specifically to the stars on the set to create a shimmering, glittery effect, adding visual interest and highlighting these elements.

Nails: Various types of nails were used to secure all wood joints in the set. The selection of nails was based on the specific requirements of each joint, ensuring a sturdy and durable construction.

Castors: Due to the set's need for an opening and closing mechanism, castors were installed beneath it to facilitate smooth movement. These also allowed for easy transportation of the set in and out of the venue.

Decorative Wrapping Paper: After the gold paint failed to achieve the desired effect, the team experimented with various finishing materials and ultimately chose gold-plated decorative wrapping paper. However, adhering the wrapping paper to the polystyrene proved challenging, as most adhesives were ineffective. The team eventually used a locally made starch to secure the paper, though this resulted in some folds that detracted slightly from the set's aesthetic quality.

6. Logistics and Materials Mobilization

Logistics and materials needed for the construction were purchased after the design and the budget had been approved. Most of these logistics and materials were readily available on the market so, together with the construction team, we bought the items from Accra central. Provision was made for any contingencies that might be needed. Tools gathered included hammer, jig-saw, saw, and tape measure, painting brushes, screw driver, claw bar, pincers and pencil. Other materials such as polystyrene, white glue, gold paint, masking tape, plywood, screws, castors and pins were also purchased (see figures 24, 25, 26, 27 and 28).



Figure 24. Cutting out of the symbols on the polystyrene; Source: Researcher on field



Figure 25. Sideview of the set under construction; Source: Researcher on field



Figure 26. Front view of the set under construction; Source: Researcher on field



Figure 27. Construction team putting finishing touches to the set; Source: Researcher on field



Figure 28. Final set with the final contestants playing in front of the set; Source: Researcher on field

7. Conclusions and recommendations

The integration of Adinkra symbols into the set design of TV3's Ghana's Most Beautiful highlights the profound impact of traditional symbols in reinforcing cultural identity and promoting national unity. Adinkra symbols, which encapsulate deep philosophical meanings and cultural values, served as the perfect medium to convey the core themes of the GMB pageant. By incorporating symbols such as *Okodee mmawere*, *Duafe*, *Dweninimmen*, and *Mate Masie*, the set design not only visually enriched the show but also provided a cultural narrative that resonated with the audience, emphasising unity, beauty, wisdom, and strength.

The design process, grounded in research and artistic intuition, successfully translated these symbols into a cohesive visual experience that aligned with the show's objectives. The creative placement and adaptation of the symbols into a crown-like structure further reinforced the connection between the traditional values they represent and the modern context of a beauty pageant, making a significant contribution to the show's cultural relevance. The study has demonstrated the potential for traditional symbols to be effectively integrated into contemporary design practices, offering a blueprint for future productions that aim to marry cultural heritage with modern media. The success of this project underscores the importance of thoughtful and informed design in enhancing cultural productions and ensuring that they resonate with their intended audience.

7.1. Recommendations

Designers, especially those working on cultural or national productions, should actively incorporate traditional symbols into their work to enhance aesthetic value, educate and reinforce cultural identity among audiences; the successful integration of Adinkra symbols in the *GMB* set design suggests that these symbols could be employed in other cultural productions, television programs, and public spaces to promote national identity and unity; ongoing research into traditional symbols and their meanings should be encouraged and documented to provide valuable resources for future designers and artists, ensuring preservation and adaptation to contemporary contexts; designers should

collaborate with cultural historians and experts when integrating traditional symbols into modern designs to ensure accurate and meaningful use, maintaining cultural significance; educational institutions, particularly those in the arts and design fields, should include modules on traditional symbols and their contemporary applications in their curricula to prepare future designers to draw from their cultural heritage in their professional work; and media houses should adopt culturally sensitive practices in their productions to preserve and promote national culture while appealing to a broader audience.

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