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Adaptation of Indigenous Structural Textile Designs for Textile Prints: The Case of Selected Fugu Fabric Designs

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Abstract



This article concerns itself with the adaptation of some selected indigenous structural fugu fabric designs for textile prints. The objective of the study is to adapt the structural design concepts of Daboya fugu fabrics into fabric prints and fabricate fashion items from the adapted prints produced. The practice adopted the studio practice-based research design where an artefact is to be created with descriptions to give an understanding of the creation. Data was collected through interview and observation. The sampling techniques used for the study were purposive and convenience and a sample size of seventy (70) respondents were engaged. Findings revealed that the surface effects of structural designs from fugu fabrics can be adapted and produced with printing techniques and still maintain their unique characteristics. It was also noted that the applied designs were still recognisable by majority of users as true resemblance of the structural fugu fabric designs. The study

recommended that Textile artists should draw inspiration from other cultural structural designs like kente, adinkra and others and develop design concepts for contemporary usage and applications. It was also recommended that educators in textile study should encourage more adapted designs from indigenous textiles and make them beneficial to the country in terms of economy gains through exports.

Keywords: Fugu fabrics, adaptation, structural designs, applied designs, textile prints

Introduction

Textile has been with man from the prehistoric era to today. It has developed from its craft and hobby base to a trade base. It has helped man in different spheres of life, from basic need of protection from the elements of the weather to covering our nakedness to a level of economic and commerce. Textiles is a universal phenomena but the fact is that it manifest in different forms and functions in different societies. Its presence in all cultures makes it universal in nature. The level of manifestation is the point of argument, whether it covers the entire human body, draped partly or probably scantily hangings to the barest.

Indigenous textiles in Ghana abound and reveals the diversity of techniques and styles that stems from customary and cultural sensibilities, which are basically as a result of societal adventure through heritage, religion and trade. The indigenous textiles manifest within different geographic location across the length and breadth of Ghana. These practices present itself in cottage, small to medium scale enterprises. Typical among the textiles producers are the Asantes, the Northerners and the Ewes of the Ghana.

Asante (2005) cites that the Asante people present the *kente*, *ntiamu*, *nwomu*, *kuntunkunu*, *brisi*, *kobene* while the Northern region presents *fugu* (smock) and the Ewe's of the Volta *kete* (Ewe word for kente). All these examples of indigenous textiles design display both the structural and surface (applied processes) techniques of textile designs. The basic distinctions in the textile designs can either be a *structural* or *applied process*. *Structural* process meaning the design concept is inculcated into the fabric construction stage (the warp and weft interplay), this gives an extensive platform to the fabric producer to effect novelty effects on the loom or varied fabric construction process. Picton and Mack (1993) note that the structural possibilities of the weaving process clearly depends upon the relationship between variations of texture or colour of yarn, variation of structure which is created according to different ways in which warp and weft are interlaced with each other.

The *applied* means the design concept or decorative process is introduced after the fabric construction stage. In this study, reference is made to structural textile design with emphasis on *Fugu* designs because it will be the reference point for the adaptation for the creation of the adapted *fugu* fabric designs. Akalaare (2012) claims that the smock, otherwise known as *fugu*, *batakari* or *danshika*, was a treasured dress that was worn rarely, washed once in a blue moon and only used when the occasion necessitated it. Akalaare further stress that, not all could wear *fugu*(smock), and not all even thought of wearing it. Some people, according to their gods, were professed to wear certain smocks of specific designs. Once that professed smock is made for the person concerned, it is treasured as another god, worn carefully and stored strategically.

Ghanaian indigenous structural *fugu* fabric designs (textural and visual appearance) are difficult to achieve through other textile decoration techniques, however the designs have character; interplay of colour, lines, textural effects, variation in stripes, originality of design and philosophical meanings which is potential and worth adapting for contemporary implications. Perceptions of smock (*Fugu*) sewing not being an all for all job, thus made it impossible for some people to view the activity as a business. Rather, it was seen more of a treasured heritage than a commercial venture (Akalaare, 2012). In another instance, Dzamedo and Dabuo (2015) stress that production within the indigenous textile industry of which *Fugu* belongs lacks mass production approaches hence inability to meet consumers' demands and should have quicker techniques of production. This also makes it inaccessible to a wider audience and wider use. Structural textile design, which is characteristic of the *fugu* fabrics presents an extensive display of creativity, imagination, ingenuity, dexterity in design coupled with originality embodies a warehouse of resource for inspiration for the textile designers and fashion designers to explore for new possibilities. The purpose of this article is to adapt the concept of creativity, imagination, ingenuity, dexterity in design coupled with originality of the structural designs into prints to allow for wider possibilities and applications of the culturally housed designs.

Objective of the study

The objective of the study is to adapt the structural design concepts of *fugu* fabrics into fabric prints and fabricate fashion items from the adapted prints produced.

Research Questions

The research questions formulated for the study are:

1. How can structural designs of fugu fabrics be adapted for fabric prints?
2. What fashion items can be produced with the adapted prints?

Materials and Methods

This study employed the qualitative approach and adopted descriptive and practice-based research designs. The study sought to produce artefacts through studio artistic processes accompanied by descriptive documentation of the artistic processes to support concepts on the produced artefacts. The combination of the descriptive and practice-based research approaches was used to gather information for data analysis and documenting techniques used for the studio adaption strategies in executing the produced artefacts.

McNiff (1998) clarifies that the aim of descriptive research is to describe social systems, relations or social events providing background information about the issue in question as well as stimulating explanations. Descriptive research design was adopted to help discuss the characteristics of fugu and the processes used in facilitating the production.

Candy (2006) says practice-based research is an original investigation undertaken in order to gain new knowledge partly by means of practice and the outcomes of that practice. Claims of originality and contribution to knowledge may be demonstrated through creative outcomes in the form of designs, music, digital media, performances and exhibitions. Whilst the significance and context of the claims are described in words, a full understanding can only be obtained with direct reference to the outcomes. Candy (2006) further notes that creative output can be produced as an integral part of the research process. However, the outcomes of practice must be accompanied by documentation of the research process, as well as some form of explanation to support its position and to demonstrate critical reflection. Scrivener (2002) argues that practice-based research aims to generate culturally novel apprehensions that are not just novel to the creator or individual observers of an artefact; and it is this that distinguishes the researcher from the practitioner.

This process consists of acts: performances, works of art, periods of working, drafts and plans. All of these either already leaves a material track in terms of paintings, videos, photographs, audiotapes, texts, objects, or can be made to do so by writing a research diary, and documenting audio visually. Thus, the process creates a body of material that

can be used as the publicly available record of the phenomena that one wants to talk about in one's research. In reporting on the research, in making it available to others, this material provides means for arguing, showing, detailing, explicating, implying, and connoting.

Skill and procedure were the basic prerequisite. The practice-based research required systematic procedural approach to render and produce an artefact with documenting descriptions needed. The descriptive allowed the researcher for systematic interpretations of the intrinsic and extrinsic properties of the processes and created artefacts.

The methodological position of the researcher coupled with procedural knowledge of the work was critical for execution. Skills and procedures form bulk of the description of the creative process. The researcher adapted to the building blocks of art creation, the elements and their organisational principles, visual analysis, material review, material analysis, style and techniques.

Population of the Study

Fraenkel and Wallen (2000) describe population as any group of individuals that have one or more characteristics in common that are of interest to the researcher. The study population covered producers of fugu, key informants, retailers of fugu and users of fugu, fashion accessories designers, fashion designers, textile lecturers, textile technicians and students in fashion and textiles. The population helped the researcher to make inferences.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The sampling techniques used for the study were purposive and convenience sampling techniques. Creswell (2007) notes that purposive sampling is used in a situation when the inquirer selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study. The purposive sampling lessened the burden of the researcher considering the size of population. It helped the researcher to identify specifically or purposefully, sites and participants who could comprehend the research problem and give leads and thoughtful information in addressing the research objectives.

Leedy and Ormrod (2005) note that convenience sampling makes no pretense of identifying a representative subset of a population. It takes people or other units that are readily available. This approach helped the researcher in data collection because

not all the weavers and the custodians of the Fugu culture at *Daboya* were willing to share information. Some were of the view that Fugu and all its processes is a community secret and need not be shared. Others were just reluctant to explain names and concepts of production for the fear of the commercialisation of culturally nested techniques.

A sample size of Seventy (70) respondents were engaged. Ten (10) fugu fabric weavers from *Daboya* were observed during the weaving processes and interviewed. Ten (10) fashion product designers were observed working on artefact fabrication and interviewed while Ten (10) fugu users, Ten (10) fugu retailers, and Ten (10) Textile lecturers were interviewed. Eight (8) Textile technicians were interviewed and twelve (12) Textile students were interviewed about the acceptability of the new products.

Data collection techniques

Primary data was collected through interviews and observations. The researcher employed the open-ended interview questions, this helped the study to achieve consistency of responses across interviewers. Some secondary data were obtained from books journals articles, magazines, newsletters, the internet and unpublished materials.

The researcher employed observation, and interview as research tools to collect data. The observation activity was a visual examination of the existing fabric designs for designing purposes. It focused on colour, lines, and interplay of other design elements within the strip for purposes of adaptation. The interview questions were premised on two themes posed from the research questions;

1. How can structural designs of fugu fabrics be adapted for fabric prints?
2. What fashion items can be produced with the adapted prints?

Based on the research questions, the following interview questions were posed:

- What are the unique characteristics of structural fugu fabrics?
- How possible can the unique characteristics of woven fugu fabric be printed?
- What are your perceptions of these printed fugu fabric?
- How different are these printed fugu fabric from the woven ones?
- Are you satisfied with the appearance of the printed fugu fabrics?
- Do you recommend for its large-scale production?

- Please rate your level of acceptance of the printed fugu fabrics based on these parameters: Very Satisfied, Satisfied, Neutral, Not Satisfied and Not satisfied at all.

These interview questions were posed because the data required for this study necessitated critical observation of Fugu fabric characteristics and soliciting of information on Fugu creation concepts through descriptive engagements with custodians of the Fugu culture. The level of acceptability of the adapted fugu fabric prints was also determined by descriptive verbal survey.

Tools and materials

In the quest to achieve the set objectives of this practice-based research the researcher needed specific tools and materials as prerequisite. Tools for this study comprised of hand implement or equipment. They were used in easy production and task performance in relation to the work. Materials were the tangible substance of which the artefacts were made.

The production stages were in two phases:

- (a) Production of the adapted designs and
- (b) Fabrication of the adapted design into artefact. The practice employed tools and materials such as of computer, printers, developing box, printing table, silk screen, squeegee, print paste, mercerized cotton fabric, khaki fabric, ply wood, foam, nails, hammer, screws, hand drill and drill bit, PVA glue, pencil, ruler, and screw driver.

Adaptation and production of applied designed fugu fabrics

This section looks at adapting the structural designs of the Fugu and using applied technique in the form of printing to render it with screen printing. The structural designs were adapted by the help of an art rendering software. CorelDRAW was adopted as a tool to help in the rendering. After rendering there was the need to do a detailed colour separation in order to prepare specific screens for the multiple colours that are usual characteristic of most fugu fabric designs.

Before the designing commenced, the researcher scanned the pictures onto the Computer using a scanner. The design processes are as follows:

- Launch the CorelDraw software by going to the start menu. After launching, set the required size or paper size that will be good for the designing. The researcher chose A3 paper size and the layout was landscape as seen in Figure 1.

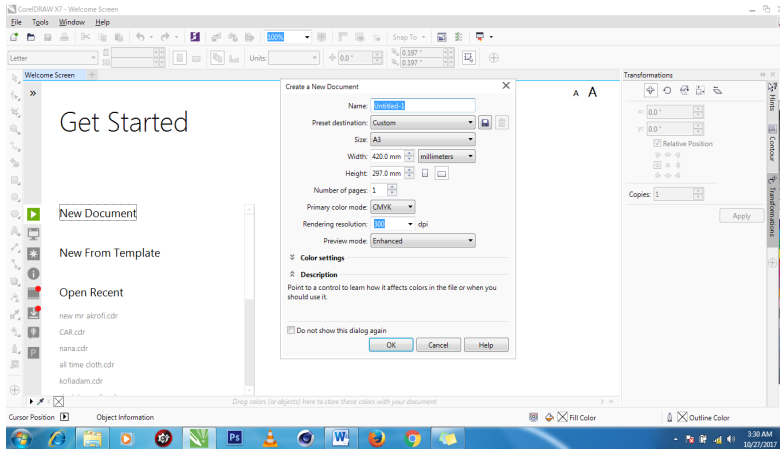


Figure 1: CorelDraw start menu

- Import the picture by dragging it into the CorelDraw or go to file then click on import. This will open the document then you locate the picture as seen in Figure 2.

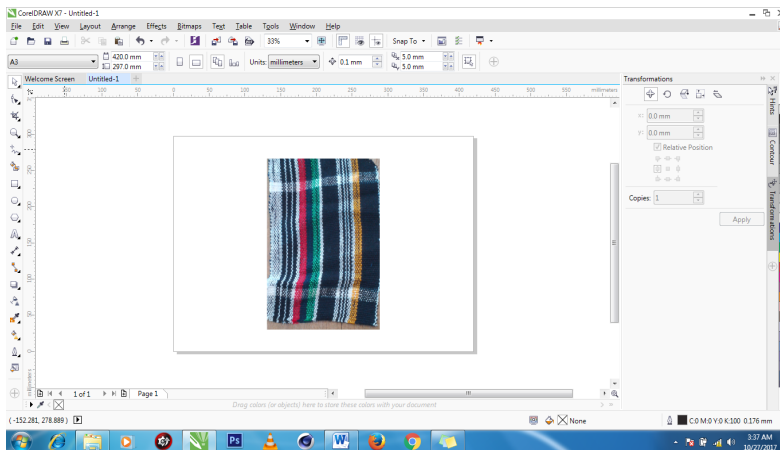


Figure 2: Scanned fugu fabric sample

- Locate the rectangle tool on the tool panel. The researcher did tracing by zooming an aspect of the picture and with the help of the rectangle tool traced the design according to the picture seen. He also sampled all the colours in the picture.

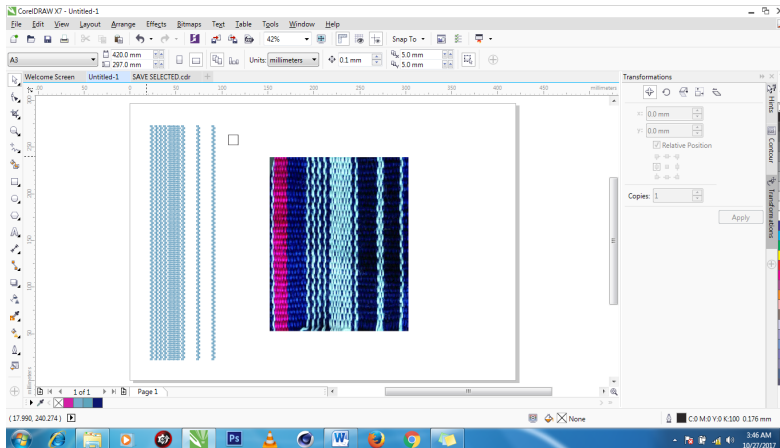


Figure 3: Tracing of colour bands

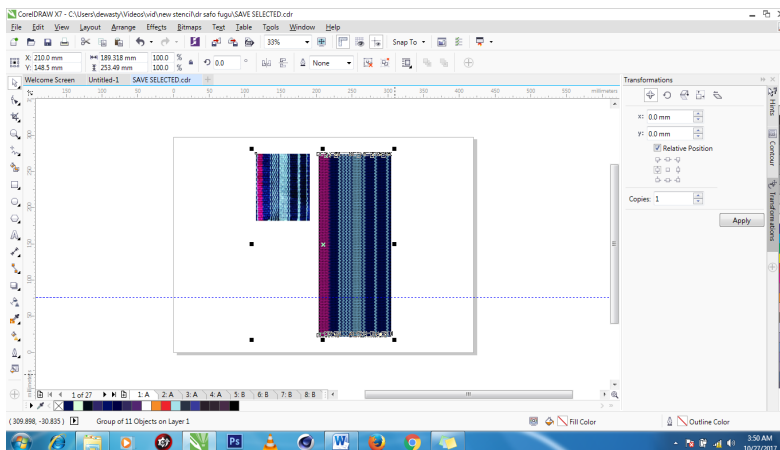


Figure 4: Tracing of colour bands

- After tracing there was the need for colour separations, all same colours were grouped one after the other with the help of pick tool and the separated colours are changed to black as seen in Figure 4.

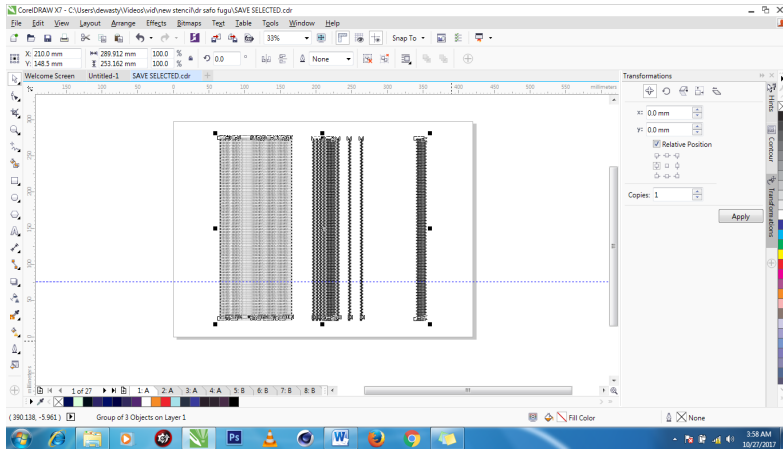


Figure 5: Colour separation

The following Figures 6 – 15 presents the final products from colour tracing and separation processes from the computer rendering. These forms bulk of the ready design for development. The individual colours have been separated and represented as black as requirement for the diapositive prior to screen development.

The following were selected Fugu fabric designs that were adapted. They were selected because they had character and uniqueness (concept of creativity, interplay of colour, ingenuity, dexterity in design coupled with originality of the structural design) worth adapting. They include 'Buipekilia' "Badari", "Kenyitiwale" "Sabasa"(Lordina), Ewuntomah,"Buipe Nkiliya", 'Angelina', "Jinapor", "Tangara","Baanbu" (Figures 6 – 25 respectively).

- Buipekilia



Figure 6: Buipekilia original sample from the field

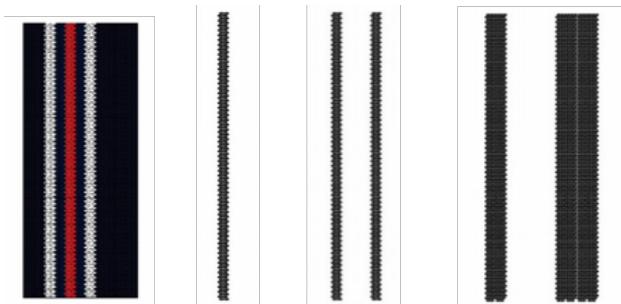


Figure 7: Buipekilia colour tracing and colour separation

- *Badari*



Figure 8: *Badari* original sample from the field

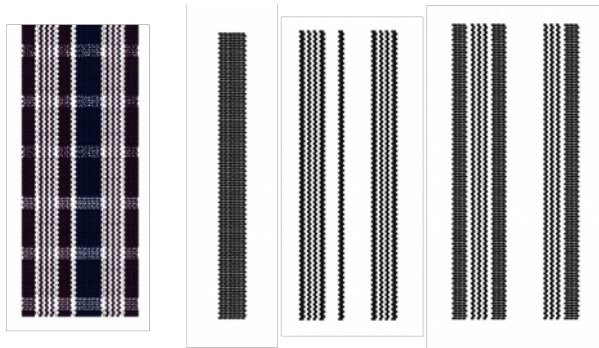


Figure 9: *Badari* colour tracing and colour separation

- *Kenyitiwale*



Figure 10: *Kenyitiwale* original sample from the field

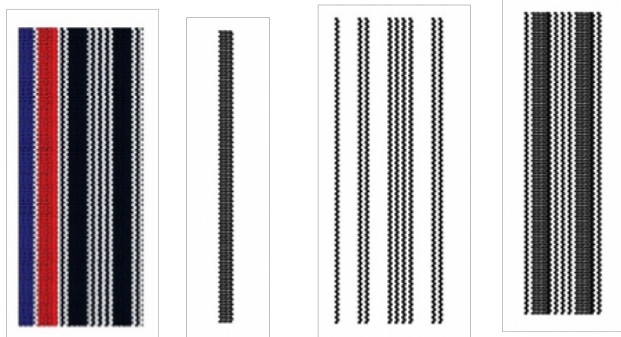


Figure 11: *Kenyitiwale* colour tracing and colour separation

○ *Sasaba(Lordina)*



Figure 12: *Sasaba original sample from the field*

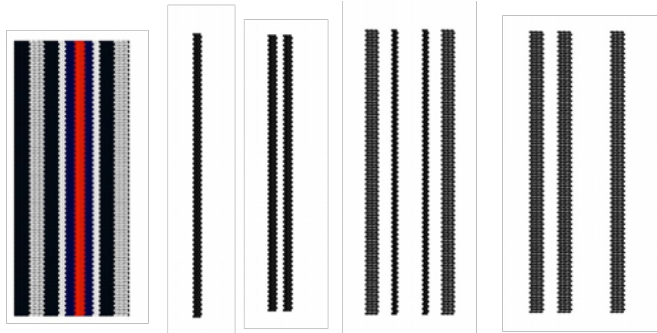


Figure 13: *Sasaba colour tracing and colour separation*

○ *Ewuntomah*



Figure 14: *Ewuntomah original sample from the field*

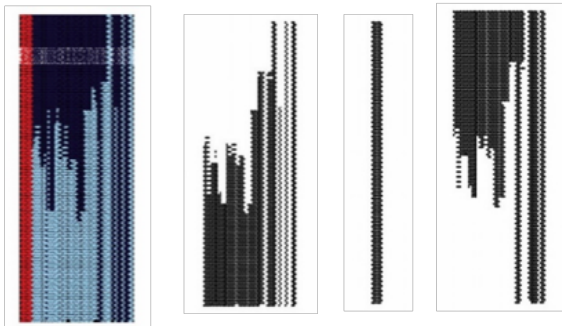


Figure 15: *Ewuntomah colour tracing and separation*

○ *Buipe Nkiliya*



Figure 16: *Buipe nkiliya original sample from the field*

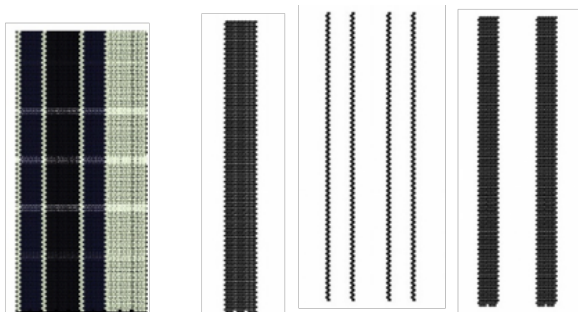


Figure 17: *Buipe nkiliya colour tracing and colour separation*

- *Angelina*



Figure 18: Angelina original sample from the field

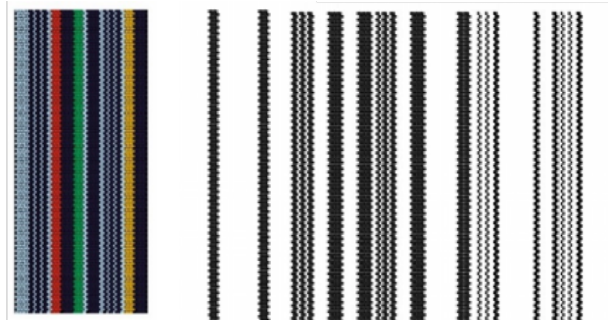


Figure 19: Angelina colour tracing and colour separation

- *Jinapor*



Figure 20: Jinapor original sample from the field

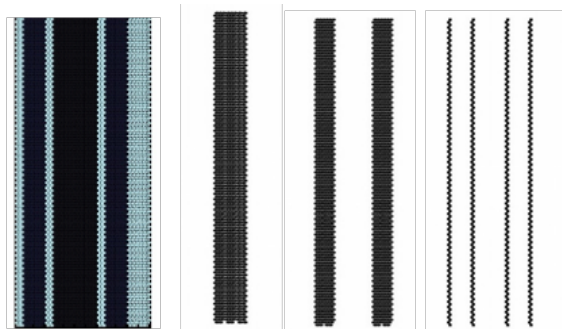


Figure 21: Jinapor colour tracing and colour separation

- *Tangara*



Figure 22: Tangara original sample from the field

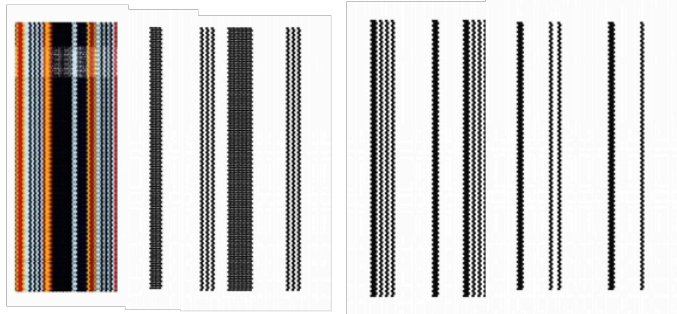


Figure 23: Tangara colour tracing and colour separation

- *Baanbu*



Figure 24: Baandu original sample from the field

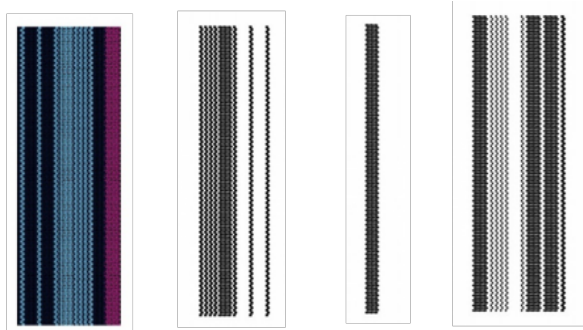


Figure 25: Baandu colour tracing and colour separation

New Possibilities for the adapted applied designed fugu fabrics

As part of the objectives for this study, it seeks to adapt the uniqueness of the structurally woven Fugu fabric and give it possibilities in usage. The project adapted the screen printing technique as the method for reproduction of the applied design. The computer was used to manipulate, separate and produce the diapositive for the design transfer with photographic transfer processes in screen printing. The items produced from the fabric produced from the screen printing was used as furnishing fabrics for home décor furniture which include *odo dwa* (love chair).

The production processes of the project items include: production of diapositive for screen printing, photo development of screens, printing process of furnishing fabric, and the construction of the furniture.

Photo development of screens

At this stage in screen printing technique, the screens to be developed are coated with light sensitive substances to render them appropriate for the photographic development. The coating of the silk mesh stretched on the rectangular frame was done with photo emulsion (white glue kemfix 104, potassium dichromate and colour) solution with the help of coating trough.

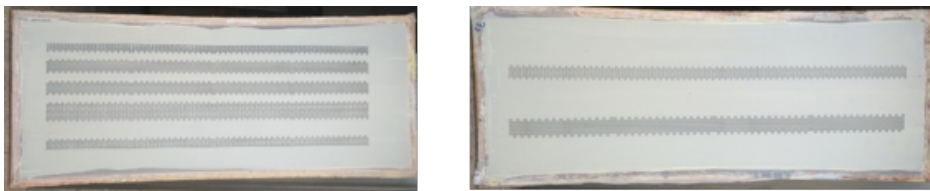


Figure 26: Developed Screens

Printing process of furnishing fabric

After the development of the screens, the next stage is printing the developed designs on the cloth. The selection of fabric and printing paste was critical because the project in question was used as furnishing fabric. The researcher used the water-based plastisol printing paste. This paste has a strong bonding property with cotton and synthetic fibres. This paste has the ability to withstand crocking even under constant abrasion. Because of constant abrasion on furnishing fabrics, the researcher selected khaki fabric as appropriate fabric for the project. Effective printing also requires a padded table with backgrey cloth and a rubberised squeegee. This is to achieve correct representation of design free from flaws and defects.

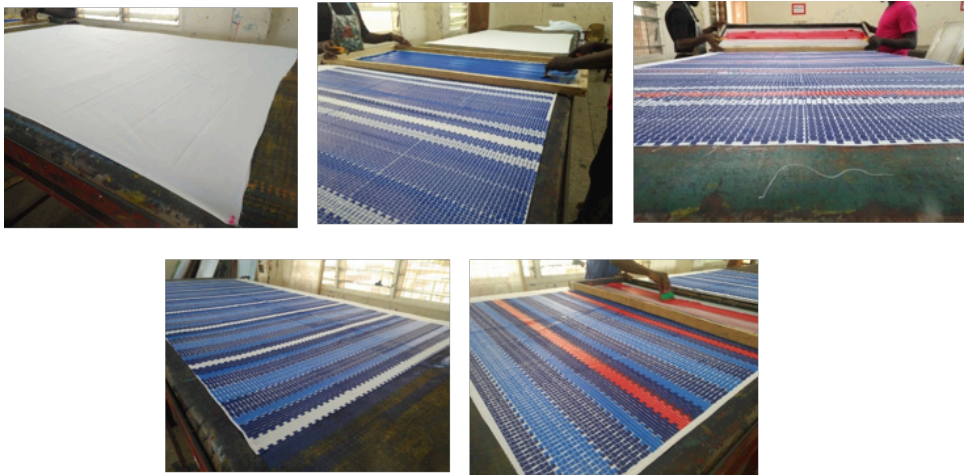


Figure 27. Printing processes of the adapted fugu prints



Figure 28: Final Applied Fugu Print

Acceptability of the Applied Fugu designs

The descriptive verbal survey was used to evaluate the responses from respondents. Open-ended interview questions were administered to a heterogeneous population for this study to ascertain the level of satisfaction and acceptability of the applied fugu designs. The population included, ten (10) fugu fabric weavers ten (10) fashion product

designers, ten (10) fugu users, ten (10) fugu retailers, ten (10) textile design lecturers, eight (8) textile design technicians, twelve (12) textile design students

□ **Level of satisfaction and acceptability**

Results from the level of satisfaction and acceptability of the Applied Fugu are shown in percentages.

Table 1

Descriptive verbal survey results presented in percentages.

Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Not satisfied	Not Satisfied at all
80%	20%	0	0	0

From Table 1, it can be noted that participants were positive and subscribed to the acceptability of the applied Fugu designs. Majority of the participants representing 80% decisively affirm the satisfaction and acceptance of the applied designs. It can be noted that participants were positive and readily accepted the innovation. Majority of participants engaged showed interest for the usage of the applied designed Fugu.

Based on the views of the majority of the respondents, the following quotations were taken to validate the survey;

These printed fugu fabrics will make fugu fabrics affordable.

With these printed fugu fabrics they can be washed without stress.

These printed fugu fabric because they will be cheaper can be used for fashion items.

These printed fugu fabric looks so much like the woven fugu fabric, I like them.

Construction of the furniture (artefacts)

After the production of the cloth, the next process was the construction of the project items. Lots of concepts came to mind but the researcher settled on one item, the *odo dwa* (love Chair). Line drawings and dimensional considerations were critical. These made the chairs appropriate in terms of its ergonomics, giving satisfaction to seating and not injuring the user (Figure 29 – 36).

ɔdo dwa (love chair)

This is a chair which is ideal for relaxing and leisure. It protects the spine because of its orientation and its shape. It is undulating in look, which is fit for the relaxing. It is non-traditional to the Ghanaian culture, but the introduction of the printed fugu fabric as covering materialises the chair's identity into the Ghanaian space. The conventional version of the *ɔdo dwa* is the *Tantra* chair but it has been tropicalised in this study and named the *ɔdo dwa* (love chair). It is a multi-purpose chair suitable for various uses, sitting, bending, relaxing, stooping, lounging, idling, reclining and other purpose deemed fit by the user. The fabric adopted in the production is the Khaki material, which has the strength to withstand the abrasion the chair is likely to encounter during usage.

Construction of the frame work for the *ɔdo dwa* (love chair) required line drawings and dimensional consideration. This was necessary to produce a chair that gives comfort and with perfect ergonomic implications.

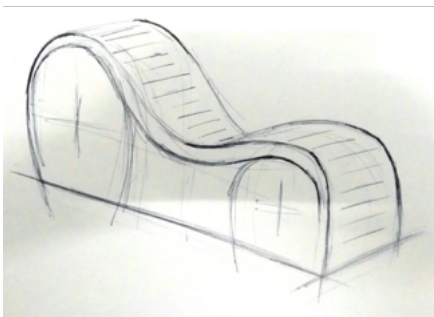


Figure 29: Line drawing of *ɔdo dwa*

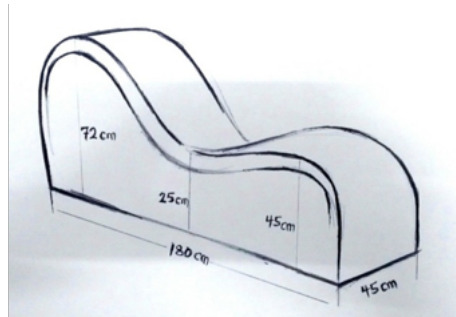


Figure 30: Dimensional consideration

- The marking out and cutting process of the template for the side view of the *Ododwa*. The jig saw was used to cut out the marked out pattern. The resultant (figure) represent the side view of the *ɔdo dwa*.



Figure 31: side view template of odo dwa



Figure 32: Side views of the odo dwa

This stage is where the individual components of the chair were put together with the help of PVA glue and nails for firm bonding of the components. It is a critical stage for the production of a good chair free from wobbling. The sides were joined and the beams were introduced to give firmness and strength as shown in Figure 33.



Figure 33: Wooden framework of the ɔdo dwa

Stuffing process was essential for the set requirement of the ɔdo dwa (love chair). It is intended to give comfort and fullness to the chair. Two inch (2inch) high density foam was used in the stuffing process. Comfort is one unique purpose of this chair, so it could not be compromised. It was attached to the wooden frame with help of Kender glue for firm bonding.



Figure 34: Stuffed padded wooden framework of the odo dwa



Figure 35: Final outlook of odo dwa



Figure 36: *odo dwa* in use

Conclusions

The study has showed enough evidence that the structural cultural designs of fugu can be adapted by screen printing technique and converted into home furnishing and other possible applications. The adaptation processes will facilitate massive production of fancy fabrics with smock characteristics and affordability implications. It was also noted that the applied designs were still recognisable by majority of users as true resemblance of the structural fugu fabric designs. The adaptation of the structural designs and the fabrication of the *odo dwa* gave evidence that the fugu fabric can be fabricated into contemporary home furnishing and other textile art creations.

It is recommended that Textile artists should draw inspiration from other cultural structural designs like kente, adinkra and others and develop design concepts for contemporary usage and applications. It is also recommended that educators in textile study should encourage more adapted designs from indigenous textiles and make them beneficial to the country in terms of economy gains through exports.

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About the author

Kweku Safo-Ankama holds a BA (Art) Textiles, MA (Art Education), MTECH (Textiles and Fashion) and PhD (Art and culture). He has extensive practical experience as a Textile Artist and an Art educator. He works in mixed media by exploring Textile materials from fibres state to fabric state. He works with fabric dyes, fibre, yarns, fabric, coins, to create artistic impressions for varied purposes. He also works in batiks and other resist dyeing techniques. Currently, his projects are geared towards adapting traditional Ghanaian textiles concepts and giving it contemporary possibilities. He has published articles both in local and international journals. Safo-Ankama Kweku is currently a Senior lecturer at Takoradi Technical University, Textile Design and Technology Department.

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