

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**PROJECTING TWO WOMEN SET DESIGNERS IN GHANA, THEIR
PHILOSOPHIES AND STYLE.**

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DECLARATION

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, AUGUSTINA BLAY, hereby, declare that this submission is my own work towards the Master of Philosophy Degree in Arts and Culture and that, to the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published by another person or material which has been accepted for any other degree in this University or elsewhere, except where the acknowledgement has dully made in the text.

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SUPERVISORS DECLARATION

I hereby certify that the preparation and presentation of the thesis was supervised in accordance with guidelines and supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

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DEDICATION

To my supervisor; Dr. Johnson Edu, and my beloved brother Dr.. Francis Eduku.



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First of all, I thank Almighty GOD for everything He has done for me; for seeing me throughout from the beginning to the end of this thesis. Lord, I say may Your Name be Praise and adore.

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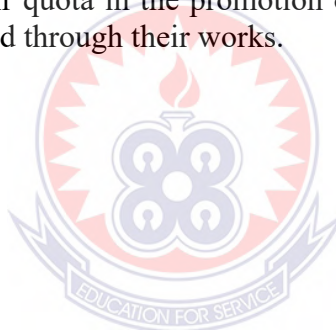
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ABSTRACT

Some existing works in the field of technical theatre have not adequately been given enough attention as compared to dramatic literature in Ghana. However, a number of researches appear to dwell more on the history and development of Ghanaian theatre forms and Ghanaian plays. In light of that it seems very little has been said on technical theatre practice which are equally essential in stage performance. The creation of set designs among other technical areas has contributed immensely to the development of theatre in Ghana. The study therefore seeks to project two women set designers in Ghana through use of qualitative research methodology based on in-depth interview with the designers in focus. With emphasis on philosophical contexts, each designer is examined on the areas of significance of work, motivations and philosophies behind their works. As a result, the narrative and descriptive inquiry designs, purposive and snowballing sampling techniques were employed to select participants for the study. Semi-structured interview and non-participant observation were used to obtain information from participants. The qualitative data gathered from the samples were transcribed from the digital format to the text format. Analysis were based on thematic analytical procedure and responses from participants were categorized into themes and themes linked cogently, and interpretations made finally to arrive at the findings. The research discovered that the two women set designers to an extent contributed their quota in the promotion of set design but did not have the opportunity to be projected through their works.



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Overview

This chapter described the nature of the research problem and attempts to justify it. In doing so, it highlights the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, and significance of the study, delimitations and organisation of the rest of the text.

1.1 Background of the Study

Theatre is popularly noted as the make-believe of the existent of life's circumstances artistically packaged by the playwrights and directors, which are in turn performed on stage by actors before a live audience (Wilson, 2004). In support, Paker and Smith (1974. p.12) has it that "theatre is the communication of ideas between two groups who are the performers and audience." These ideas vary depending on the theme of the play and the director's intent. In this regard, life situations may be very crucial or pertinent to a playwright in his or her area of jurisdiction. Being a form of art, theatre disseminates information to an audience through the actor, the set, costume, sound and lighting design which becomes significant ingredients to the development and success of the stage production audience (Wilson, 2004). Theatre however, is a collaborative art that uses live performers to present the experiences of a real or imagined event before a live audience in a specific place with the cooperation of the technical team members.

Within the scope of the success of a play or any stage production, there are several creative artists who are engaged in the transformation of the script into a living story. Among them is the scenic designer whose primary responsibility is to create the environment of action of the play. Set design in particular over the years has played

some indispensable roles making theatre performance an exuberant experience. This art form has undergone revolutions from the primitive campfires to the modern-day theatre set up with the intention of presenting meanings through visual sensations and interpretations as indicated by Schanker and Ommanney (2001). From medieval and renaissance periods through the avant-garde movements, theatre scenery of platforms with a common background or a backdrop with a poorly painted perspective of locales related to the play as opposed by the later that use realistic flats and naturalistic materials to create locales that really and naturally depict a specific environment respectively (Oscar, 1982). Shanker's point of view also indicates that whether realistic or non-realistic, a stage set should tell the audience where and when the play takes place. Simply put, the scenery of every play should indicate the locale, period and environment of the play to make it understandable for the audience. Like the other areas in theatre, there is an analogue between scene design and man's experiences in everyday life. However, in theatre experience, a designer deals with the scale differently from the real world as infers from Wilson (2001).

According to Rot and Bob (1999, p.206) "set design is the hub around which all other aspect of the production design revolves." Most importantly, theatre scenery supports in providing the acting area for the actors and also defining the place; the climate and geographical conditions, the socio-economic situation, the cultural background and the political or governmental system of the definite area.

Scenery is the first aspect of the theatrical technical discipline that introduces the audience to the environment where the action is taking place in the play. This area that supports the play creates an appropriate environment for the performance and gives a better understanding of the play to the audience. Importantly, when the audience enters into a theatre, the first thing they see when the stage light comes on is

the scenery of set. The set therefore becomes an introduction to the play for the audience since that is the first thing they see. In principle, the paths leading to designing a set in the theatre are numerous and varied. According to Wilson (2004), scenery should visually present the conditions to influence the act or motivate the characters to perform the action of the play (Gillette 2000). Wilson (2004) stresses that a good scenery must not be a picture but an image that depicts and support the setting and action of the play. He further indicates that the scenery must reflect the environment of theatrical action. Similarly, Parker and Smith (1974) assert that scenic design like any other creative design should be the creating of a form to fulfil a purpose or function. Obviously, the function of the scene design is to link the dramatic forms which it serves. Additionally, the scene design is to establish an exciting environment where the play takes place and to be able to transform the ideas of the playwright on stage to enhance mood and spirit to the audience. In fact, the written words of the playwright are transformed for the audience by the director in collaboration with the artistic team who provides a visual and a physical world for the play.

The scene designer in particular is responsible for the visual appearance of the stage setting in consultation with the director. Parker and Smith (1974) assert that, the scenic designer needs the vision and imagination of the creative artist, the ingenuity and skill of the stage artisan and above all the knowledge and sense of the theatre stage and the intent of the director as well as the idea of the playwright. The designer cannot design a scene without thinking of the movements of the actors, although the final action and positioning of the actor is the prerogative of the director. Key to the responsibility of the scenic designer, they aim at creating the mood and spirit of the environment in which the actors will perform. Also, they continue to contribute to the

understanding and enjoyment of stage production by providing visual reinforcement to the stage production concept. Within the scheme of work of the production design team members, they may also provide some technical needs; costumes for extreme prominence, stage machinery to enhance reality, sound for special effect and lightening to aid visibility. Besides, the set designer is also responsible for transforming the textual environment in the script into visual environment to arouse the emotions and feelings of the audience. In addition, the set designer ensures that scenery is coordinated with other production elements and develops a design concept consistent with the director's concept.

Additionally, the creativity of the set designer is extremely motivated by countless or numerous concepts and ideals enshrined in different personal ideologies. Basically, a concept developed by a set designer could be characteristically similar in elements or different from another set designer's approach while proclaiming artistic adventures in their works. Some unique elements that personalise the works of designers may be critically observed during the conceptualisation stage, design process, implementation and dismantling stage. Even though there might be standard practices and conventions in the execution of a scenic formulation task, previous experience on a similar project could influence the design process of the designer. These aforementioned thoughts are pertinent and linked to the philosophy and style of the or set designer under discourse.

In view of this, the study therefore, takes interest in looking at the philosophy and styles in the works of two women set designers in Ghana, Agnes Adomako Mensah also known as (Mensah) in the study. A freelance set designer who designs and constructs stage sets for corporate institutions, educational institutions and individuals. She had her first degree in the Theatre Arts Department, School of

Performing Arts, University of Ghana, Legon specialising in Scenic Design and Construction. That was not all; she proceeded to pursue her second degree in Technical Theatre at the same University. She is currently running a private scenic, props, interior and events Design Company for the past six (6) years. She has to her credit an impressive portfolio of works.

On the other hand, Harriet Debrah Otchereis a theatre practitioner with over ten (10) years' experience in set designing. She had her first degree from the Department of Theatre and Film Studies, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, where she majored in Scenic Design and Construction. She proceeded to pursue an MPhil. Degree at the School of Performing Arts, University of Ghana, Legon. Currently she is back at the University of Cape Coast where she is undertaking her PhD study.

In reiteration, with most set designers, every stage production is based on their unique design ideologies, experience, motivation and inspirations which require some core elements that depict the philosophies and styles exhibited in their work. To some designers, these design philosophies and styles act as standard authorities towards their decision making. For the audience, it becomes very necessary to understand the set designer's philosophy and style to enable better interpretation and appreciation of their works. In expressing the production concept, as well as production style, a set design appeals to the audience's sense of vision and emotion. This implies that, upon the glance at the "stage picture" the audience gain a fair idea or knowledge of the kind of mood and feelings the performance will offer.

Gillette (1996, p.105) states that, "scenery helps the audience understand and enjoy a play by providing a visual reinforcement of the production." This means that the stage scenery does not make the production but it contributes to the overall appreciation and

understanding of the drama. It is expected that the study will be based on an in-depth interview with the designers in focus, documenting their life experiences and analysing their design philosophies and styles, in relation to their creative development as revealed in their creative project works. Emphasis would be placed on philosophical contexts with regards to significance of their works, inspiration, motivation and key ideals.

In many societies for instance, most people have the notion and belief that women are less intelligent and creative in nature, and are moreover emotionally, spiritually and physically weaker than men. But it has been discovered by many scholars like Nikoi (1998) and Adu (1999) that both men and women generally have the same level of creative and intellectual capabilities. This means that given the same materials and task, woman (not necessarily an artist) may do it just as well as the men would and may be even better. Gloria Nikoi, a Ghanaian lady activist in her book, "*Gender and Development*." She throws more light on the need for gender balance for national development touching on the several international conferences aims at making known international development with reference to the 1995 Beijing conference in China as an example. Adu (1999) in her book on *Women in Human Development* describes women as the heart of development and that leaving them out means failing to make use of all the human capital God has endowed them with.

The 6th of March, 2018 edition of the Daily Graphic captures "the veteran Ghanaian artist, Mrs Theodosia Salome Oko, the designer of Ghana's national flag." In focus, she is among the few women that were projected as a result of her extraordinary contribution to the image of Ghana.

The benefit of studying women in African art is becoming more widely known with respect to theatre practice. With reference to Ghana, the contribution of women in art both traditionally and contemporarily is gradually gaining grounds to an extent. Some women indulge themselves in the visual art and performing arts activities in diverse ways; women are seen as actresses and technical theatre practitioners, visual artists; textile artists, jewellers, ceramic artists and wood artists among others. However, it appears very little has been said or written on their immense contribution towards national development of Ghana.

Certainly, many Ghanaian women play very significant roles in the socio-economic development of Ghana as artists. On the basis of this, the study seeks to examine the contributions of two women set designers in Ghana by assessing their philosophical perceptions and styles with regards to their creative project works. Through this study, their works could be recognized and appreciated in Ghana specifically in the field of theatre.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Set design is a technical theatre craft for both males and females within the scope of education and practice. However, within the theatrical fraternity, it appears the craft is the preserve for males only. Within Africa especially in Ghana, it appears men get almost all the attention for their creative works. Through observation, the researcher believes that in practice men showcase their artistic works more often than women, making their works very conspicuous to the artistic world, giving it prominence within the scope of theatre lovers. Even though in Ghana, some women just as men study technical theatre in some Performing Arts Educational Institutions [University of Ghana, Legon, University of Education, Winneba and University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast] women appear not to be visible in design sector or adequately recognised

at the centre stage of productions design in Ghana, which underscores the fact that much attention has not been given to women set designers with regards to stage design and construction in Ghana. However, it may be debatable, since it appears the percentage of women set designers in Ghana may be lesser than that of their male counterparts who ventured into technical theatre and practice.

Within the scheme of activities as regards the concern, to motivate and harness the talents of young women to be part of the growing theatrical industry, it is imperative to project women technical theatre practitioners [set design] to serve as a reference point and a motivation for young women who may venture into such a profession.

Even though some women are recognised in other artistic professions such as acting, costume design, make-up, pottery, clothing and textile, jewellery among others, it appears very little also has been written on their immense contribution to the development of art in Ghana.

On the basis of that, the study seeks to projects the philosophical perception and styles of two of such women in Ghana who have been working on several projects and have not been given enough recognition as compared to their male counterparts. Nikoi (1998) was of the view that both men and women generally have the same level of creative and intellectual capabilities, this means that given the same materials and task to the woman (not necessarily an artist) may do it as well as the man would.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to projects the works of two women set designers in focus.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

Specially, the study aims to:

1. Find out the philosophical perceptions of the women set designers in Ghana
2. Investigate the styles of the women set designers in their technical productions in Ghana
3. Discover the design concepts of the set designers in Ghana
4. Examine the design process of the set designers in Ghana
5. Ascertain why women set designers do not practice the set design profession in Ghana

1.5 Research Question

The study sought to find answers to the following research questions:

1. What are the philosophical perceptions of the women set designers in Ghana?
2. What are the styles of women set designers in their technical production in Ghana?
3. What inform the design concepts of the set designers in Ghana?
4. How do the set designers approach their design process in Ghana?
5. Why do some women set designers not practice the profession in Ghana?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The study is important because it will enlighten the general public on the significance of women set designers; its economic and educational opportunities, art appreciators and set designers will gain insight on the contributions of women set designers in

Ghana. The outcome of the study will also be disseminated through educational activities such as seminars and academic workshops. Again, it will also be a reference material for research into some aspects of technical theatre practice.

1.7 Scope of the study

The study showed much interest in two women set designers [Otchere and Mensah] in Ghana, specifically in the field of set design, focusing on their creative project works. It was also limited to some productions staged in the National Theatre of Ghana, Efua Sutherland Drama Studio and Efua Sutherland Children's Park. It also considered the biographies of the two women set designers.

1.8 Organisation of the Study

The thesis is in five chapters. Chapter one is the introductory chapter, which gives a general overview of the background to the study. It highlights the background and experiences of the designers. The chapter further indicates the statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions, and purpose of the study, scope of the study and the significance of the research. Chapter two deals with the review of related literature that is relevant to the present study. The chapter attempts at reviewing such scholarly works on the theoretical perspectives on philosophies and styles of the designers, design concepts and scenic design process. Chapter three, however, discusses the methodology and the specific methods that are employed in carrying out the research. It deals with the research design, population of the study, sample and sampling techniques, data collection instrument, data collection procedures and data analysis plan. The analysis and presentation of findings is done in Chapter four, while Chapter five provides the summary, conclusions and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0 Overview

This chapter connects the relevant literature concerning the entire study. It tackles the theoretical perspectives of the key works of the two women set designers in Ghana [Otchere and Mensah]. In pursuance of the work, the study reviews literature; both published and unpublished, relating to the research topic. This served as a direction for producing relevant materials for the research. At the end, a conclusion will be drawn on how reviewed literature shaped the contextual and conceptual clarity of the study. In view of this, literature was reviewed under the following topics:

1. Development of theatre in Ghana
2. Role of Set Design
3. Basic Principles of Design
4. Set Design Concept
5. Set Design Process
6. Style of Realism
7. Style of Symbolism
8. Philosophical perceptions
9. Harriet Debrah Otchere's Philosophy and Style
10. The Designer's Focus
11. Agnes Adomako Mensah's Design Philosophy and Style



2.1 Development of Set Design

Inquiries on the development of theatre all over the world have received great attention by most writers. According to Lokko (1980) tracing the history of set design in Ghana would be inconclusive without drama. For instance, the question of whether

or not drama existed or was present in Africa before the coming of the Europeans in the late nineteenth century was never quite resolved. Lokko (1980) confirmed that theatre has existed in Ghana in various dramatic forms. She asserts that long before the arrival of the Europeans culture in the fifteenth century, Ghana enjoyed a rich culture of pageantry in the arts of drama, music and dance, which mothers sought to pass unto their children as much as they could. During these performances, consciously or unconsciously, the situated environment was prepared to accommodate the enactment.

Kerr (1995) in corroboration with Lokko (1780) indicate that there have been series of heated debates as to whether drama did or did not exist in pre-colonial Africa, and to what extent it could or should be distinguished from rituals. This is attributive, according to Kerr (1995), to the confusion resulting from the use of such words as drama, theatre and ritual, which are loaded with meanings derived from European rather than Africa culture. Nonetheless, it is the belief that Ghanaian indigenous “arts culture” which came in a form of storytelling, impersonations, children’s game, singing, clapping of hands and dancing are still prominent in the traditional celebrations of festivals, rituals and rites of passages, among others.

Agovi (1990) affirmed that, “Unfortunately, we have never had the benefit of such comprehensive documentation on the origins of literary theatre in Ghana during the colonial period. Research and publication on the Ghanaian literary drama have almost always either concentrated exclusively on the post–independence works of Ghanaian playwrights” (p.3).

Years down the lane, other forms of theatre generated from this point, for example: Anansegoro, and the Abibigoro. These “new” forms of theatre had existed with our

great ancestors before the colonial period. These concerts were put up at courtyards and market places among other places; Designers therefore erected platforms for stage performance, which mostly were planks of wood arranged on packed cement blocks and the introduction of natural trees, landscape and the moon to serve as light during night performances among others. During performance, costumes, make-up, and props were employed in full force to enhance stage performance and promote better interpretation of the story.

2.2 Role of Set Design

“Stenography encompasses a broad and divergent sphere of activities. It focuses on the setting and atmosphere of a giving production [theatre, music, dance and special events]. In this regard, performances are being made in theatre spaces, site-specific spaces, found spaces and virtual spaces (Collins and Nisbet, 2010 p.1) to situate the activity within a specified space of action in the scheme of the production demands as regards the production brief, theme or the production approach. It is in light of this Gillette (2000) states that set design provides many functions other than aesthetics within an identified space. According to him, set designs have been designed for plays and event productions that tend to promote varied genre of stage performance. Benedetto (2012) has it that stage design is the first thing audience see when they walk into a theatre venue. Indeed, it projects the world of the play in question. Basically, for him, the stage sets the tone of the production, reveal the time, locale, set up the basic style, and establish the mood and the atmosphere. He further declares that an attempt to pursue a better appreciation of a stage performance to the audience, the designer had to employ varied props and techniques that give such an environment the appropriate atmosphere for stage productions. These props ranged from suitable furniture, shelves, cabinets, wall hangings and carpets among others used to designate

a certain locale or give decoration to a background. However, it is in the application of these props that provides better understanding of the performance. Set design also support film, video and television productions as far as mood, geographical locations and setting are concerned (Gillette, 2000). Significantly, the researcher identifies that the setting on its own cannot provide us with the meaning of the play; it needs to be integrated with the text by the actor in collaboration with the other production aesthetics.

2.3 Basic Principles of design

Lauer and Pentak (2008) submits that for designers to solve a challenge, there is the express need to employ the general concept of design and in the bid to achieve the desired intent, it is imperative to understand the design formulations and to fully understand its principles. Design ideas should translate into usable concepts and these can be achieved as a result of the designer adopting principles that define the design type within its frame of approach (Lidwell, Holden and Butler, 2015). Lauer and Pentak (2008) explain that, "design is inherent in the full array of art disciplines from painting and drawing to sculpture, film, theatre, graphics and animation" (p.4). Basically, designers describe design as a created object and the procedures used to achieve it. For them, the purpose of design is to stimulate artistic meaning and aesthetic reasons in order to create new forms of beauty within the environment. Lauer (1990) further espouses design "as a planned arrangement or elements to form a visual pattern" (p.2). The elements of design include, line, shape, form, texture, and colour. The link of an artwork in conveying visual messages to its recipients are of great importance in the education, information and appreciation of that activity. From here, it is logical that every designer relies on these elements in organising a visual image necessary for communication. Sufficiently, there are four basic principles that

most designers adapt to their work which appear to be interconnected. William (1993) suggests the principles as contrast, repetition, alignment and proximity and these are keys to design creation. To effectively use these principles, a better understanding of the design challenge is imperative in achieving a desirable aesthetic. The purpose of making the decision involved in designing with the aforementioned elements cannot be successful if not for these guiding principles. Agoba (2008) espouses his ideas on the fact that in designing, the guiding principles; harmony, rhythm, balance, variety, contrast, emphasis and perspective direct a designer's aesthetic creation within a given design challenge. As a result, every designer needs to be aware of principles that aid them to fuse successfully the diverse elements of design. For the reason being that the distinct features of the varied design elements harmonize or contrast with one another in creating a three-dimensional picture for that matter a stage design. Invariably, design creates meaning and brings about interactions among its users. Hence, not just making design as a means for beautification. This is supported by Gillette's (2000) assertion of design as an "artistic planning method that begins with the openness of our minds to opportunities and advances into finding resolution to any identified or defined problem" (p.70). A designer is confronted with the task of finding means of dealing with the problem encountered in order to convey that particular message. Thus, to get a problem solved becomes the aim for designing. Moreover, the stages of design process, elements and principles of design are some aids and guide in the actualisation of every design challenge.

2.4 Set Design Concept

Gillette (2000) affirms that scenic design concept is the idea a designer employs to execution of a setting required for a stage. The most attractive thing about scenic design is that the designer is constantly creating something out of nothing. When a

designer begins, there is a dark empty stage and an idea, then the scenery is constructed then there is an audience appreciating the physical manifestation of the scenery as a result of the contributions of the production team. The scenic designer's work is unique and appeals to the viewer. The designer showcases interesting concepts, new techniques, and unusual materials, whether they are anything between abstract or highly realistic ideas. More importantly, every designer adheres to a production approach to arrive at their design intent. Meanwhile, the approach is the general guiding principle that binds the production team together to achieving the goal as agreed by them, a significant aspect of the whole design process. Therefore, for a scenic designer to be creative and original he becomes the most important person to consider countless inspirations. Meanwhile, ideas would be derived from different motivations and influences. Under no circumstances should the quest to explore other resourceful design methods that would communicate the pictorial concept of the production come to an end.

2.5 Set Designing Process

The design process can simply be explained as a means or way of solving design problems in phases. It becomes the blue print to achieving your goal. Gillette (2000) defined design process as " ... series of steps through which we pursue the goal of creating what we wish or hope will be a work of art." (p.19). These steps do not always unfold on a linear progression, their movements shift "back and forth as the designer moves through the various stages of design process as he or she deems appropriate." The design process is not a simple linear progression. As you move from step to step, you must review your previous steps to make sure that you are headed in the right direction or path. The steps that unfold with the design process are the method for providing answers to the questions when designing for any stage

performance. Therefore, the principal reason for creation of any scenery is to identify the need for it and how best it solves the problem at hand. For most scenic designers, the major problem is creating an atmosphere for a performance not just for aesthetics but also for function. This atmosphere becomes the appropriate environment within which performance exist.

Again, Gillette (2000) categorizes the design process into seven main fragments, “(1) commitment (wholeheartedly commit to doing the best work), (2) analysis (gathering information that will aid clarify and refine the design problem), (3) research (study the historical background), (4) incubation (to allow the solution to float from your subconscious to your consciousness), (5) selection (shifting through all of the data accumulated and deciding on specific design concept), (6) implementation (this phase begins when you stop planning and start doing) and (7) evaluation (takes place within each step of the design process, and it also occurs when the projects is completed)” (p.19).

The researcher saw that the design process assists every designer to know the steps and direction to go through in designing a scenic locale or design problem. Attributing unique ideas to the design process, instructs the researcher as to how to identify the same designer’s use of his or her unique design philosophies and style in designing a scenic locale for stage performance. However, to every design field, commitment is the most essential accept in the entire design process. This requires the total assurance of the designer to take up the design challenge and moreover guarantees positive results in achieving the best designs. Observing any design as a task and committing to resolve the problem that it presents, fundamentally shows how the designer connects with his or her natural instinct towards nature. Therefore, the designers like

every human being, aim to survive, succeed and resolve any obstacle that comes their way or encounter specifically in the field of set design.

2.6 Style of Realism

Realism is considered as an artistic movement which begun in the 19th century (Shevtsova, 2020). A dramatist Stanislavski pushed forth this idea of realism and helped to fuel the realism movement. The methods he developed involved the actor staying true to the behaviours and feelings of people in real life rather than the more artificial or overly-dramatized and exaggerated acting that was common in theatre before his time. He focused just not on the physical, but the internal as well seeking to create the most genuine and realistic action possible through the conveyance of emotions and physical movements, achieving through tapping into the actor's own experiences and memories for emotions and actions. He also encourages actors to analyse their characters and discover the motivations as well as to empathise with the characters by placing themselves in their roles and figuring out why they behave the way they did. Significantly, Realism is the vehicle which carries realistic philosophy with intended portrayal of real-life experience on stage. Shevtsova believes that it is necessary for every play to have its appropriate setting. He could not come to terms with the fact that an abstract background can project the dialogues and behaviour of the characters on stage. For him; the aim of the style of realism is to create the illusion of natural space within the unnatural rigid frame of the proscenium arch. In his submission, theatre is a reflection of real-life situation. Therefore, theatre should not lie but should reflect the truth as it is. According to Demsstes (1996) a realistic novel or play reconstitutes its object by playing a key illusionary role of what is believed to be true. He pointed out literary realism strives to be the objectives representation of contemporary social reality. It claims to be all inclusive in subject matter and aims to

be objective in method, even though this objectivity is hardly ever achieved in practice. The researcher sees scenic realism as an art of make believe in terms of appearance, form and representation.

2.7 Style of Symbolism

Symbolism, a leading fine art and literary movement, started as a reaction to the Naturalism and Realism movements of the period, late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. Symbolism is the representation of objects, moods and ideas through the medium of symbols represented the whole. It is an artistic and poetic movement or style using symbolic images and indirect suggestions to express mystical ideas, emotions, and state of mind through the medium of symbols (Cohn, 2017). Additionally, the language of symbolism employs patterned rhythmical structures to portray the ultimate reality of intended idea. Studies show that a symbol is the sign of a designated object; but it is not dead and motionless. It gives rise to ideas even countless, general and single intents which in general way can be presented within a single conceptual idea. According to Peyre (1980) symbolism is an image considered from the viewpoint of symbolist or the conceiver; it is a sign endowed with the entire idea of myths and philosophies encapsulated in an image. Symbolist promotes that to an extent any image is, at least a symbol of unity of form and content, it results from creative activity and has symbolic significance. An artistic image may be both a holistic phenomenon and a single part of the whole. Basically, the image perceived by the observer is a specific sign, a face of imagined reality that is constantly activated by the designer. Sperber discuss that the image is defined as a specific form of artistic construction of reality with its inherent features being vividly perceived. Sperber (1995) states that, symbols exist only within interpretations that

are not necessary conscious. Most often, they are symbols in which culture reads itself giving various things, images, and perceptions as interpretations.

2.8 Philosophical Perceptions

The word philosophy means love of wisdom, since most people seek wisdom in diverse forms; in the areas of technology, social and political perspective and general world views on opinions and ideas (Chandra and Rejendra, 2002). The eternal quest for truth lends the origin of philosophy which presumably is the search for understanding of man, nature and the universe. Chakraborty (2003) makes us understand that there are different fields of philosophy such as education philosophy, social philosophy, political philosophy and economic philosophy among others. Meanwhile, there are also different philosophical approaches such as idealism, naturalism, realism, symbolism and materialism among others according to Chakraborty.

Significantly, each of us has a philosophy, (Hegel, 1975) even though we may not be aware of it. Some scholars are of the view that we all have some ideas concerning physical objects, our fellow persons, the meaning of life, design and beauty and the like (Barrett, 1978 and Kaplan, 1977).

Most often we are continuously engaged, especially during the early years of our lives, in acquiring views and attitudes from our family, from friends and various other individuals and groups. These attributes may be greatly influenced by what we see and read. They may result from some reflection on our part or they might likely result from a conventional or emotional bias (Barrett, 1978). One may argue out that philosophy is a set of views or beliefs about life and the universe, which are often held uncritically, which becomes an informal sense of a thought or belief. In further promotion, it is a process of reflecting on and criticizing our most deeply held

conceptions and beliefs. As reported in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, (January 26, 1994) philosophy seeks to combine the conclusions of the various sciences and human experience into some kind of consistent world view. The attempt to seek answers or solutions to ideas has given rise to theories and systems of thought, such as idealism, realism, naturalism, symbolism and pragmatism among others. Functionally, philosophy also means the various theories or systems of thought developed by the great philosophers: Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and Augustine among others. Without these people and their thoughts, philosophy would not have the rich content it has today. Even though, we may be unconscious of the fact that we are constantly influenced by ideas that have come down to us in the traditions of society. To this end, the study looked at the philosophical perceptions of the two women set designers and their artistic style within their creative works as a fundamental base for assessing their thought pattern with regards to their artistic work.

2.8.1 Harriet Debrah Otchere's Philosophy and Style

Harriet Debrah Otchere's main design philosophy and style are that she adheres strictly to the script and remains truthful to the demands of the production. From her point of view theatre is the replication of real-life experience so for her, the presentation of the visuals of life must appear real and convincing. In most of her projects she portrays realism in her scenic structures and some naturalism.

"Scenic design, for any given performance must be embedded in realism," according to Otchere. Realism in its broader sense relates to a simple rendering of set designs in natural forms. However, Cohen (2000) Posits that the 18th and 19th century marked the foundation of serious challenges of traditional thinking in designs which were accompanied by public debates and disputes for new design styles.

The past years of scenic design practise affirm Cohen's statement that, realism has come to mean the presentation of forms and material that are simply primary representation of things that already exist. It is the scenic designer's job, therefore, to create a locale or performing area for the actors and a physical environment for the play's action. The degree of realism she [Otc here] portrays in her designs philosophy and style was determined by the degree to which it represents aspects of natural life, especially social realities.

Furthermore, all realistic arts are regarded to have characteristics that recognize and reveal some aspects of life, with specific conventions, determine the aesthetics that are truthfully reflected during a stage performance. In this sense, Otc here's philosophy through designing and constructing of realistic scenic locales are characterized by her conviction that the core objectives of a production depict the real world. She believes art interprets life truthfully, whether past, present or future, because art has been the oldest form of social expression. Hence, excluding any sort of fact in consideration of the principle of realism raises a question of truthfulness to nature in her creative works.

Eventually, there are surely several successful attempts to interpret realism in most of the stage performances she designs. Observing some of her creative works, Harriet's "Androcles and the Lion" written by George Bernard Shaw directed by Martin Owusu at the School of Performing Arts, University of Ghana, Legon emphasized the concept of realism in the stage design. She produced a well colourful painted forest with a very big tree and a very dark backdrop representing night in the deep forest, providing a smooth and spectacular texture of backdrop treatment. Burst of light beams of yellow ambient colour fill fades unto the establishing locale creates a magnificent appearance of a tropical ever green forest of an African setting of the

play. This therefore portrays her sincerity in the expressing suitable function and structure in form through the creative works that reflects a reality in scenic locale. Designers believe that realistic creative works ensure that a clearer understanding of the design to the audience is accomplished and its reality is attained. Thus, to fulfil the physical need, scenic designs or creative works must be rooted in reality and to project the level of realistic characteristics on stage during performance. Moreover, Otchere adds that her designs are being influenced by the environment we find ourselves with regards to what feels becomes the perceptions of her style.

2.8.2 A Designer's Work is not done only when there is a Curtain Call or the end of a Production.

Per Otchere's principle, she believes that the designer's work is not done when the production ends. Looking at her designs since she ventured into the field of set design, after each project work, she sits back to analyse the whole work and see if things are in order before she boldly says the work is completed. She adds that, some director's work closely with what the playwright intends so they are bound to be additions and subtraction in conceptualisation as perceived by the director. For that matter, as a designer, there could be changes right from the beginning to the end of the performance because when the set is not built to suit the directorial concept or vision, as designer you need to effect some changes to suit the directorial approach, thus the director's concept shouldn't be different from the design concept either than that it will distort the performance and might confuse the audience in terms of interpretation. However, there is never enough time to finish designing, detailing and documenting everything about a production. Fundamentally, almost every set design is a prototype until it is used. (Rothwell & Kazanas, 2011). Besides, to put emphasis on every single structure or assemble the scenery units would actually demand the designer's

finishing with adjustments to achieve a much more realistic feel. Following Otchere's design process to attain the expected design, and combining it with the fact that she aims to achieve a realistic feel, she occasionally goes back and forth to redesign different parts of the task on hand to improve them or accommodate inevitable new directorial requirement. Goel (1995) explains this design process as "a process in which, a designer interactively identifies the things which they will attend to and frame the context in which he will attend to them" (p.29). This makes Harriet conclude that scenic designing should be considered as a never-ending cycle until the performance is done. She adds that, even as the set construction takes place, the design may not fully correspond with the ideal locale due to some unseen challenges, or the director can request alternative additions or suggestions for the production to suit his taste or experience. Generally, it comes to a point where an additional alteration to the set becomes so necessary because part of the set may malfunction. Such as a jammed door, weak staircase and broken window which may have occurred during the technical rehearsal. It often affects the production, which she addresses as unfinished work.

There has been instance where some scenic designers are nowhere to be found during the performance period and an unforeseen malfunction occurs. Does this mean the scenic design was actually finished? She asked. Should it be that in every stage performance there has to be points where certain difficulties are faced, and will only be addressed for significant reasons? Most scenic designers experience such uncalculated situations but these are not the only reason a design is not finish until the performance ends. For instance, when it comes to a point at which the director approves the design, but the challenge is always about what level of details the director is authorizing.

Occasionally, directors like to leave their modifications to the designer's discretion and decisions to make changes at the last minute, which might not be 'healthy' for the production. As a designer, knowing the possibility of some modifications to the scenic locale, it is therefore advisable to keep an open mind and other alternatives for the inevitable." Otchere believes in presenting real life experience on stage and she is always fulfilled in such regards.

2.8.3 Agnes Adomako Mensah's Design Philosophy and Style

Mensah's, major philosophy with regards to design is to portray an African theme in her scenic design projects with some symbolic appearance, and also a set should be functional and fulfil its purpose. Mensah believes in the promotion of the African art forms through her stage projects and are often in symbolic terms. However, she encourages the usage of Realism in some scenic projects as a matter of need and response to the production approach.

Fundamentally, a lot of design practitioners have explored varied kinds of scenic designs in stage production which involve the representation of nature (naturalism), portrayal of fantasy (fiction), the make-believe (realism), the improvisational (abstract) and then the representative (symbolism). The latter is the design approach which Mensah depends on.

Mensah proceeds with complete design philosophy and style, designing symbolically with African motifs as an inspiration. She stated that, "the intended message of a production and kind of audience response that is desired by the performance team, determines the exact or specific style to design the performance." Agnes's assertion is supported by Macgowan and Melnite (1995) when they posit; "stage design elements have to function as a symbol and communicate deeper meanings, rather than simply

reflecting the real world (p.445). Mensah's main aim at designing and constructing her scenic locale in a symbolic style is because she gets to include the designs with African themes. She explained that,

As a theatre practitioner (scenic designer) and a lover of symbolism, I ensure to project the African culture and heritage in my design forms. With symbolism I get to use the Adinkra symbols and our indigenous symbols making meaning out of them what somebody sees them to be. In exploring symbolism, I have worked with African plays like the Slaves and with that, I take the symbols and customise them into my set designs and own that particular work. I also go by abstract expressionism, it goes hand in hand with symbolism because you get to express yourself, you are not bound by certain conventions of a particular style, the designer needs to move and personalise ideas and sell them out to the audience or the people out there. (Personal Interview; 11th February, 2021).

Mensah added that symbols have been natural to man even before formal languages were instituted. For some symbols, the meaning or the messages they communicate are manifested to the observer at a glance, while with others we are not even aware they exist, therefore in designing a scenic locale for a performance. She considers the integration of the performance and type of audiences accompanied simultaneously with the aspect of African symbols, she incorporates as design concepts. For the reason that man's appreciation of the world, himself and surroundings is characterised and connected with varied symbols, both the conscious and unconscious.

The study of Mensah's six years African (Ghanaian) symbols, motifs and approach to symbolism makes people appreciate her creative works. Also, the treatment of her symbolic concept of design makes the understanding of her design philosophy and styles easy when conceiving her creative project works. This demonstrates that every symbol is incomplete but the full positive reception or appreciation relies greatly on explanation from the designer to assure the fullness meaning of the symbols.

Observing the scenic designs for the various stage performances of Mensah and her variation depiction of design symbolism that makes up these stage performances can be well understood taking her philosophy and style into consideration. In fact, she employs the Adinkra symbols and other indigenous artistic elements to communicate her ideas to her audience.

Fascinatingly, looking at some appearance of her creative works, it seems they do not always have a complete meaning; occasionally her creative works have the tendency of making the audience or viewer look beyond the ordinary. She stated that: This requires the audience to exercise their acquaintance with African (Ghanaian) symbols in trying to find out what the scenic designer is communicating within her designs. However, one can also add or say that her symbolic scenic locales carry meanings that artistically support the productions; this is because it allows people to read and uncover meanings that are hidden or implied for the performance. A vivid example is the play, “The Slaves” where a scene was designed and constructed to project an aspect of symbolism through the stage design which had a representation of Adinkra symbols that gave traditional meanings of cultural ideas, Duafe (which means wooden comb). The symbolic connotations of the Adinkra symbol are reflection to add up meanings to her creative project works. She further lamented that the usage of the Adinkra symbol was her ways of sending messages to viewers or audience during stage performance. Mensah adds that when she is mounting a set for a production, she designs in such a way that her scenic designs send messages to the audience and keeps them in suspense to make them think through to have a deeper understanding of her presentation. This idea according to Mensah would make her audience think and analyse what messages she puts across.

A set should be functional and fulfil its purpose with regards to the play text. We exist in the era of modernity; therefore, diverse objects surround our daily life and it would be an obstacle to picture living without all of those supportive things. Every scenic locale designed and constructed for stage production in every era is the work of a particular scenic designer. When designers mount a stage set for a particular performance, the set should be functional and fulfil its purpose, it should be able to communicate what the playwright or the director is trying to put across to the audience because if it does not happen that way it can distort the play or the performance.

Differences in periods have led to the performance of some designs that might seem strange, beautiful and some even astonishing to the observers. An observer and or a designer of different periods would interpret the same visual image in their own personal view because everyone recognizes creativity in diverse ways. With functionality of set, it should serve the needs of the production its purpose to explore other areas in designing for stage production.

Mensah believed that a set should not just look beautiful but then the key characteristics of every set design should be functional and fulfil its purpose, complement the total stage picture which includes wall hangings, curtain, chairs and tables and all the needed ideas that makes the set (scenic locale) complete for the performance. Mensah advocates that if a set is not functional then it has not achieved its purpose.

Her creative project provides an opening to reflect and appreciate modern design trends. Her design style sometimes is influenced by contemporary trends and accepted fashionable ideas of today's world. In fact, her past experiences and exposure to the

current technologically advancing world influences her creative works as a whole. She makes sure that a scenic locale should not just look beautiful but it should complement the total stage pictures such as props includes wall hangings, chairs, curtain and all the necessary stage elements that makes a complete scene so far as the performance is concern so that it achieves its purpose.

2.9 Theoretical Framework

The foundation of the study is based on women in development theory (Koczberski,1998; Cohn, 2008). This theory is significant to the study since the appreciation of women's contribution to national development within the scope of economic activities has become a global concern after the Beijing Conference. The researcher believes that this theory provides the needed impetus for the projection of two women in theatre practice and related art professions in Ghana.

Theory in Women in Development

Theory of women in development is an approach to developmental projects that emerged in the 1960s according to (Monsem, 1991). Monsem believes that inclusion of women in every societal aspect of development is very essential to the holistic approach of a nation's vision leading to a more comprehensive output of the vision in focus. In her attempt of discourse, she calls for treatment of women's issues in development projects as key to the success and survival of humanity. In focus, the researcher finds the study as an important leap to focus on two women set designers: Harriet Debrah Otchere and Agnes Adomanko Mensah as designers who excel in their professions and are not projected with regards to stage design and construction. Within the space of the Performing Arts Educational Institutions, they are recognised. However, little is said or heard of them within the creative arts industry in Ghana. However, the study revealed that for the quality of work or project they exhibit in

Ghana, there is the need to leverage on their expertise in the development and promotion of set design and construction in the creative arts industry and as a motivation for the young ones who may venture into such profession. In support of the researcher's promotion, Cohn (2008) indicates that the integration of women into the global economies is an important indicator to the status and assistance in total economic development of a society. More importantly, Koczberski (1998) has it that, for most societies the common denominator of gender is female subordination which does not promote a cohesive state. To this end, a gender-balanced decision-making concept may define the identity of a state, in part by specifying the actions required for international recognition (Nelson and Dorsey, 2007). In this case, women in the third world suffer this predicament and as such worsened by economic crisis and cultural implications and religion. In-deed, this has led to the policies of the gender factor to development theory promoting equal distribution of the benefits of economic development through restructuring of the process of development (Elizabeth, 2015).

Elizabeth (2015) highlights the fact that the concept of women's development has now become an integral part of the development discourses and policy initiatives which is very critical to the human development agenda. This growth has been informed by a remarkable though gradual shift in the perception about women, from the stature of victims and passive objects to that of independent agents. In her discussion, she affirms the significant impetus to raising such an informed platform that came with the adoption of development issues within the United Nation system, in the background of increasing activism of development practitioners. This concept critically traces the contours and its possible shades of this awakening that rises from the less 'threatening' planning for Women in Development to the more 'confrontational' gender planning with its aspiring goal of empowerment and

emancipation. These movements have occasioned an increasing space for policy initiatives and interventions in favour of poor women in the Third World. There has been a gradual shift in orientation of these policy approaches towards women from ‘welfare’, to equity’ to anti-poverty’ to ‘efficiency’ and finally to ‘empowerment’. The policy reorientation reflects the changes in the basic economic approaches of the time, from modernization policies of accelerated growth, to basic needs strategies of growth with redistribution, to the recent so-called ‘compensatory measures’ for the neo-liberal ill fare. More importantly, to elevate the plight of women in general, it is prudent to employ a more discussive approach that offers a more promising way forward for theorizing and analysing the life cycles of international norms opening up to both ‘internal’ and ‘external’ sources of dynamism. In focus, two global equality norms worth noting are; gender-balanced decision making and gender mainstreaming (Barnes, 2006). Study shows that, Associations such as International Theatre Institutes and Technical Theatre Designers Association of Ghana have been formed as an all-inclusive gender-based Association to cater for the needs of all members in an equity form.

Finally, development institutions, organizations and associations must be recognized as being deeply gendered in their structure, and strategies to institutionalize women's interests and gender-sensitive accountability policies for development which must be oriented to institutional transformation and economic empowerment.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Overview

This chapter discussed the procedures that will be used in obtaining data for the research work. It also seeks to outline Qualitative Research approach used in the research that focuses on the different procedures employed in establishing reliable data on the set designers and their design philosophies and styles. It also discusses the guiding principles of the study and the methods employed in gathering and interpreting the primary data and secondary data. This involved how both primary and secondary data were collected to address the research questions. The primary source included information obtained through interviews, field studies and observations. Whereas the secondary data sources were gathered from textbooks, articles, newspapers and photograph. The key headings explored under the methodology are research design, population, and sample, sampling techniques, data collection instruments, trustworthiness, data collection procedures, data analysis plan and ethical considerations.

3.1 Research Paradigm

Research paradigm plays a major role in every field of research. The researcher employed this study into qualitative research. This is because it elicits relevant narrations of participants lived experiences; collecting design image concepts, perusing through and describing stage sets and their functionality with regards to identified women set designers. These steps led to a rigorous analysis and interpretation of gathered data thereby promoting sound conclusions. Sociologist, Krauss (2005) referred to this form as interpretative sociology. Hence, the research was centred on the interpretive paradigm to explore and analyse the works of two

women set designers in Ghana in perspective. To this end, the nature of the research problem, the purpose, the research objectives and the research questions as well as the research methodology informs the reason for the interpretive approach to the research

3.3 Descriptive Research Design

The descriptive research design was used in the study to describe the works of the women set designers in focus which emphasised their design concepts and constructional techniques employed on their various projects. In effect, it projected their works and put them into context and organised the study such that, there exist relational engagement between the researcher and the participants (Hinchman & Hinchman, 1997). The idea focused much on the sequential unfolding of participant's live experience or story so as to achieve understanding coherency. Usually, qualitative researchers delve into the human behaviour and how they read meanings into the situations and the meanings people attach to things in their lives (Hamersley & Atkinson, 2007). Significantly, the research engaged the experience contained in the lived and untold stories of the research participants and analysed them through descriptive analysis in retelling the stories of the individuals in a chronological manner with a social, cultural and historical twist and focused on the important themes in the lived experience, which fundamentally was one of the ways the researcher approached the descriptive research (Creswell, 2007). The ability of descriptive inquiry to change or transform fragments of data collected into a well-arranged or planned artistic form that employs convention of fictional literature to present not just a mere ordered way of life but a rich artistic one that helps to interpret information. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) assert that, human lives are fragments of description about their daily lives and experiences which when thought about could be understood in descriptive unities or otherwise. This sort of inquiry has the tendencies of the focusing on certain explicit

context jurisdictions (Creswell, 2007). The data collected from the participants were organized and fused with existing field text (existing documents) and pictures. Certainly, the descriptive inquiry tool ensured further clarification, interpretation, explored explanations about ideals of their works and extract facts from mannerisms in the unfolding story.

3.4 Population for the Study

The total number of all units needed and are available to be investigated for the researcher is considered to form the population for the study. Thus, representing the portion of the accessible to the investigator, and covers the total set of individuals or experiences with familiar characteristics needed for the research (Kumekpor, 2002; Twumasi, 2001).

The population for the study consisted of Event organising Houses in Ghana, Women set designers and Male set designers in Ghana. Head of Performing Arts Educational Institutions in Ghana, specifically theatre arts departments. However, the estimated target Population for the study was a maximum number of twenty (20). These were the estimated population, from which the researcher envisaged responses to questions relating to the topic, Women set designers in Ghana: Their Philosophy and Style.

Table 1: Categories of Population

Category A	Category B	Number in each category
Heads of Theatre Arts Educational Institutions in Ghana	Knowledgeable in development and promotion of the performing Arts	3
Female Set Designers in Ghana	Professional Scenic Designers	5
Male Set Designers in Ghana	Professional Scenic Designers (Males)	9
Event Stage Managers in Ghana	Experts in Stage Management Activities	3
Total		20

3.5 Sampling

The sample for the study consisted of ten (10) participants as shown in Table 2:

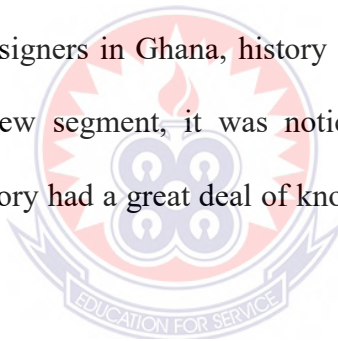
Table 2: Sample for the Study

Experts	No. of Participants
Heads of Theatre Arts Educational Institutions in Ghana	3
Male Set Designers in Ghana	3
Event Stage Managers in Ghana	2
Female set Designers in Ghana	2
Total	10

3.6 Sampling Technique

In every research work or a field of study, there are numerous sampling techniques available for every researcher to use, and the selection of a particular type is largely dependent on the kind of research design adopted by the researcher. As defined by Dawson (2002), sampling is the researcher's ability to choose "a smaller, more manageable number of people to take part in the research" (p.47). For the purpose of

this study, the purposive sampling technique was adopted for the research work in selecting participants for the study. The purposive sampling technique was used to select the participants for the study since the study focused on knowledgeable experts within the performing arts domain. These were experts in their respective fields selected to provide adequate and relevant answers to the research questions. These participants provided both past experiences and technical information for the study. The purpose was to secure a number of responses from the interview determined by the researcher to help facilitate useful and adequate information about the projection of two women set designers in Ghana. The category under Set Designers answered questions on stage design and construction with regards to their creative works. The Heads of Department of Theatre Arts also gave responses about the education and job prospect of female set designers in Ghana, history and development of set design in Ghana. After the interview segment, it was noticed from the responses that the participants of each category had a great deal of knowledge in the field of performing arts.



3.7 Data Collection Instruments

Data was collected from the participants using semi-structured interview schedules and non-participant observation methods.

Additionally, the primary and secondary sources effectively aided the researcher obtain accurate and relevant information on the issues as well as an understanding of the chronological order of events.

3.7.1 Interview

The purpose of the interview was to gather information with regard to lived experiences of the respondents. The interview type used for the study was the semi-structured which worked very well during the narration of the participants' lived

experience. In this type of interview as described by Dawson (2002), the researcher wanted to know specific information which can be compared with information gained in other interviews for clarity and focus. Hence, in doing so, participants were allowed to share their lived experiences in their creative arts and event management careers. As a result, the schedule carefully focused the interview on topics to cover on the study area per the research questions. Brinkmann (2013) explained that the semi-structured interview allows the interviewer directs the interview more closely, which was the order in which the researcher conducted the interview. The researcher's road map was clearly defined through a process of introduction, submission of questions and closure. In this regard, the researcher understood the people's perceptions and experiences. Occasionally, during participant's interview, some questions needed follow-up questions which sought further clarification to untold lived stories during the sessions. With the permission of the participant, the interviews were recorded in an audio format and later transcribed by the researcher. Attached to the study is permission to interview letter (Appendix A) written by the researcher to seek permission to interview the participant and her intent, introductory letter (Appendix B) was gotten from the Department of Music Education introducing the researcher to the participant as a student from the University of Education, Winneba pursuing Masters of Philosophy in Arts and Culture and conducting an interview with regards to the topic: *Women Set Designers in Ghana: Their Philosophy and Style* and an informed consent form (Appendix C) indicating ethical issues and agreement to participate in the study. A set of semi-structured interview schedule questions are attached as Appendix D.

3.7.2 Observation

In carrying out the study, the researcher employed observation method to the study. Pertaining to that, the researcher adopted non participatory type of observation to the study. As a result of that, the researcher visited the set designers severally at their constructional site during the study to examine their creative project works, specifically the construction, set up and to watch some productions they designed. Also, a physical examination of some available parts of design structures was carried out, by personally visiting the storage sites to take pictures, compare and to consider into details the materials and type of structural formulation to ascertain the design styles of the women set designers. Some official visits were carried out to inspect the performance space such as the National Theatre of Ghana, the Accra International Conference Centre and University of Ghana, Efua Sutherland Drama Studio and the Efua Sutherland Children's Park. The visits were appropriate in order to confirm the effectiveness of pictorial evidence accessed from the set designers through photographs submitted to the researcher and in a way also contributed to the success of the project work. In reiteration, the observation method also offered the researcher the opportunity to critically examine the styles and concept behind their creative works as indicated in objectives (2), *to examine the style of their technical productions and (4), to examine the design process of the set designers.*

3.8 Data Collection Procedures

Before data collection at each stage, the researcher had visited each participant to submit a permission letter to interview the participant as well as an introductory letter to inform participants on the purpose of visit. Having explained what researcher was looking for backed with the letters; appointment dates were scheduled and followed

up subsequently. On different slated interview dates, permission was asked from the participants to interview and record the session. Before the interview, a general idea of the whole process was discussed; outline of the interview, thesis topic, research questions and significance among many others. This prepared the participants for what was ahead of them. The nature of the interviews was semi-structured with participants narrating their lived experience or event witnessed. The language used for the interview was English because of the participants sampled. The tools used were a note book, researcher's smart phone camera, laptop computer and audio recorder on researcher's smart phone. The researcher's smart phone camera was used to capture the theatrical elements specifically, the set and props among others, while the audio-visual device was used as digital voice recorders to capture the narrations of the participants besides the use of laptop computer which was used as a backup output device for the audio-visual. The researcher also made note of certain portions of the narrations for the post-narration sessions. During the interviews with the participants, minor of disruptions occurred such as a knock on the door, visits by friends among others but these did not affect the information gathered in any way. The interview gave room to the interviewees to express themselves. All interviews were held in the office and at certain times the homes of the participants as it was much convenient for them. In addition, the free atmosphere used enabled the researcher to ask further questions and other areas to be covered as they popped up.

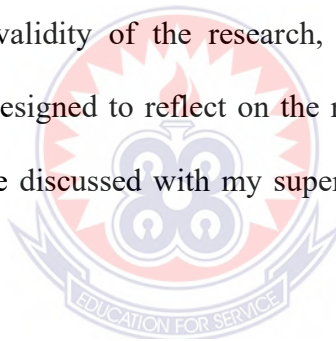
Even though data were collected from participants, it was still important to source data from books containing stage constructions and development of set design in Ghana. These were accessed from the Osagyefo Library of the University of Education, Winneba and George Padmore Research Library in Accra and the School of Performing Arts library at the University of Ghana, Legon. Finally, data gathered

were sorted and ensured that it effectively corresponded to the research questions and also linked to the research objectives.

3.9 Trustworthiness

As in qualitative methods, researchers describe certain concepts related to reliability and validity. Guba (1981) proposed “trustworthiness” as a substitute measure for validity and reliability in naturalistic inquiries. By structuring the study to address the aspects of trustworthiness, the following outcomes emerged: credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. The notion of trustworthiness also known as “validity,” “authenticity,” or “credibility” is “seen as a strength of qualitative research (Creswell & Miller, 2000 in Creswell, 2003, pp.195- 196).

In order to ensure the validity of the research, an instruments schedule and an observation guide were designed to reflect on the research objectives and questions, the interview guides were discussed with my supervisors for acceptance and further suggestions.



3.10 Ethical Issues

Ethical issues of research were considered as an important part of the whole study. The research made participants fully aware of purpose for which information were being sought from them. Participants were not tricked to provide any information to the researcher. Enough notice was given to the participants by way of introductory letters which were sent ahead of time before the beginning of the data gathering or data collection process. Consent forms were administered to them for their perusal and acceptance before engaging them in the data collection process. The issue presented in the study are a true reflection of what was gathered on the field.

3.11 Semi- Structured interview

To gather relevant information for the study as indicated earlier, the semi- structured interview method was an appropriate procedure as it gave room for less formality and yet more interactive interview sessions. This type of interview method gives access to pursue any interesting point that may develop in the course of the knowledge sharing because follow up questions could be asked based on the answers given by the interviewee. The interview guide captured issues on women who are into set design in the field of theatre and their contributions to the social and economic development of Ghana as artist. As part of the investigative items for the interview guide, the question that the researcher believed was pivotal to his study that attracted a positive response was “Why do women who are into technical theatre (set design) not seen or recognised at centre stage of production design in Ghana?” This question attracted the average response of a positive influence on the sets designed. Mensah, who has been practicing set design for quiet sometime, now, added that although introduction of performing arts in the academia has been of great importance in promotion of stagecraft, the teaching and learning of set design could be improved with the introduction of modern technology with regards to the application of software facilities to improve stenography. She further explained that set designers have currently been boxed up and stagnated with the same old process of designing thus producing the same old results or outcome; hence there must be modifications to improve the aesthetics enhancement of stage performance in Ghana specifically within the scope of theatre practices.

She finally added that set design is not a technical craft for men only therefore women who are into such field of study should do their possible best to encourage and

motivates the young ones who may venture into that area and shouldn't make it seem like it's an area specifically the preserve of men.

3.12 Secondary Sources

The secondary sources of data for the research are materials mentioned in this study, as providing related and supporting information that serve as indirect contact with the situations under investigation. Therefore, they act as relevant literature or information on a particular subject of research. It also helped the researcher to further understand the design philosophies and styles narrated by the set designers as stated during the interview section. Also, on the subject of the study, the researcher was able to draw the similarities and differences in other research findings on the research topic. Therefore, the study consisted of articles, text books (including electronic books) as secondary sources.

3.13 Method of Data Analysis

Data analysis is a process of reducing large amount collected data from different sources and trying to make meaning out of them (Elo & Kyngas, 2008). In analysing the data, thematic analytical procedures were considered appropriate for the study. Importantly, in doing so, there were three stages the researcher considered, the data were organised, reduced through summarisation and themes and patterns, and themes in data were identified and linked. At this stage, the researcher created meaningful implications on the data collected. In other words, the analysis of the data focused on the identification, selection and analysis to remove or reduce and make sense of huge amount of information from different sources and organisation which required interpretation by the researcher so that impressions that shed light on the research questions emerged. Meanwhile, the researcher immersed herself in the data. Familiarization of data was done through reviewing of observational notes taken on

the field, listening to recording interviewing, and carefully reading through all field note documents. More so, the digital recording device was later transcribed into text formats while pictures were developed into picture charts.

The focus of the study was on the Women set designers in Ghana in perspective. Certainly, data collected were therefore categorised according to the related focus per the research questions. Initially coding was undertaken to establish emerging ideas and trends and later developed into final coding. The emerging ideas and established trends were put under themes in relation to the research questions. These identified themes enabled the researcher to refine all the data for easy analysis.



CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF DATA AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

4.0 Overview

At this stage, data was collected, presented and grouped under the instrument, interview. The interview type used to collect data was semi-structured. Additionally, the same chapter discusses logically the outcome of the study that the researcher found in relation to the research questions and existing knowledge in the field of study. Hence, the outcomes were gotten from the transcription of the interviews of the participants per the administered interview schedules and also pictures taken by the aid of a digital camera by the researcher and developed into picture charts to give cogent results. The chapter therefore analysis, synthesises and interprets data collected to suit each of the five (5) research objectives.

4.1 The philosophical perceptions of the Women Set Designers in Ghana

4.1.1 Projection of Real-life Situations

Otchere, one of the female set designers in Ghana whose philosophies and styles of set design are being studied by the researcher, happens to be a past student of University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast. She intimated that:

“... I believe in being close to real life as possible because we keep saying performance is the creation of real life as far as drama, film and theatre are concern. Indeed, if we say we want to recreate a situation about democracy or something about the political landscape in Ghana, then whatever idea that is projected on the stage for the audience to see should be close as possible to what is in real life. Therefore, whatever stage design I create, I try to stay faithful to the real thing, unless the concept is to be abstracted or something else.” (Personal Interview, 23rd January, 2021).

The set designer believes that in working on an artistic project, the artistic replication of real-life presentation needs to be projected and true to its dictates. Hence, her argument is based on the fact that if theatre is an illusion of real-life situation, then her artistic presentations need to be true to the demands and principle of realist reflections of her creative work. Gillette (2000) in this regard promotes that “a designer’s emotional reaction to the script and the production concept will intuitively guide her design work on any project which has been the philosophical perception of this set designer. Study showed that Otchere stays close to the real task and she designs based on what she feels or sees in the environment because that is what inspires or motivates her in designing her works. Each creative work was based on the production concept mostly generated by the director and she adhered strictly to the script. Parker and Smith (1979) concur that the significance of drama to the designer is evidenced by the fact that major portion of a designer’s training for the theatre is spent in learning to interpret and expand the ideas of the playwright (p.6).

With regards to technical theatre within the scope of a theatre performance, there is always collaboration among the production design team as promoted by Gillette (2000) in his submission to the fact “the production design team read the script and then develop the production concept.”

The designer’s guiding philosophy ensures that her scenic designs interpret the script and aid the work of the director. Otchere has tried to achieve this in all her scenic designs because as a theatre practitioner or artist, her understanding of the script would help in a better interpretation of the stage performance and will be appreciated by the audience.

4.1.2 Projection of African Art Forms

Another respondent, Mensah a female set designer who happened to be one of the designers in Ghana whose philosophies and styles of set design is being studied is a graduate from the School of Performing Arts, University of Ghana. She stated that:

“I believe in projecting African Art forms in the presentation of my set design. I am fulfilled as a set designer when I promote our Ghanaian culture and heritage. I do not believe in projecting none African art forms but take pride in exhibiting the Ghanaian rich culture. For me, a set design should not look only beautiful but then, the key characteristic of every set design is that, it should be functional to fulfil its purposes. It should complement the total stage picture because if a set is not functional then it has not achieved its purpose.” (Personal Interview, 11th February, 2021).

In Mensah’s submission, “art should not be for art sake,” it must have a utility base, an element of purpose within the scope of functionality. Set design must communicate the theme of the production, mirror the director’s intent, tell the story, enhance the theme and project the setting (Parker and Smith, 1994).

Above all, her intent in the scheme of theatrical production is to project and promote culture through the design and presentation of her stage works. According to Mensah, that is the only way we as Africans can put together a strong collection of traditional heritage that provides focus and identity (Abbey, 1997).

4.2 The Styles of the Women Set Designers

4.2.1 Realism and Naturalism

Otchere said, “When it comes to my stage designs, I am a realist and a naturalist. I prefer to do the exact thing and to replicate nature as it is.”

Otchere, believes in replicating life through her artistic projects and for that matter, her stage designs represent either realistic settings or naturalistic settings, but she prefers to be seen as a realist. Per her inclination, she believes in the illusion of life experiences (reflection of life) which plays out well within the stage space she creates for a production. Cohen (2000) posits that realism has come to mean the presentation of forms and materials that are simply primary representations of things that already exist. However, the degree of realism in design depends on the degree to which it represents aspect of natural life, especially social realities. Furthermore, all realistic arts are regarded to have characteristics that recognize and reveal some aspect of life which specific conventions determine the aesthetics that are truthfully reflected during a stage performance. Figure 1 is the production, *Androcles and the lion* written by George Bernard Shaw and directed by Martin Owusu.



Figure 1: A Technical Rehearsal on set of a Production, *Androcles and the Lion*. Written by George Bernard Shaw and Directed by Martin Owusu. Source: Harriet Debrah Otchere, 2016.

The set design is a realistic represented set design. The environment of the lion as in the design is serene within a heavy dark textured locale, creating the abode of a lion. Closely behind the lion is a beige spottily textured natural tree with firm dropping flappy leaves that suggests the realism of the tree representation. The lion character beneath the tree was in a beige coloured jump suit crawling on the ground to mimic the movement of a lion in the wake to portray the illusion of realism. In the narration of Otchere, the director employed the style of realism and naturalism in the treatment of the script which was the main production approach with regards to the setting of the play.



Figure 2: A Rehearsal on the set of *The Dilemma of a Ghost* at the Main Auditorium, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast.
Source: Harriet Debrah Otchere, 2018.

Figure 2 in the *Dilemma of a Ghost*, written by Ama Ata Aidoo, directed by Elolo Gharbin and set designed by Otchere, the designer Otchere employed the style of realism to the treatment of the set and selection of properties in synchrony with the production approach. The locale in figure 2 established by the set designer was in conformity with the playwright's intent and was in synchrony with the director's

vision. The representation was indeed an application of the period 1960(s)-80(s) architectural formulation as it existed in the then Gold Coast era in the rural area. The surface textured walls were roughly treated in terracotta emulsion paint colours with low tones of brick red shades depicting the aged walls. Straw thatches were used to roof some part of the house while bamboo sticks were partially used to fence the yard. The environment created by these scenic elements projected the desired atmosphere set for the play. According to the designer, the scenic treatment of the building enhanced the setting.



Figure 3: *The Slaves* written by Mohammed Ben Abdallah, Directed by Sika Koomson and Set Designed by Harriet Debrah Otchere for the production. Source: Harriet Debrah Otchere, 2021.

Figure 3 represents the set for the production, *The Slaves* written by Mohammed Ben Abdallah, directed by Sika Koomson and designed by Otchere. The style the designer employed was the style of realism. Evidently the director, Koomson is a realist and a naturalist. With regards to the treatment of the set, the designer ensured that the walls of the slave castle in figure 3 were painted in off white colour and treated in an aging effect with stains on the wall to depict hands and foot marks in order to project the theme and mood of the play. From the lower portion of the walls to a quarter- level

above the floor, features heavy dirty painted wall effects against the upper portion of the peripheral wall which are slightly messed up wall marks representing different features of slave hand marks stains. The doors and windows to the dungeons were created and painted to appear old and rusty as a result of the presence of the sea close to the castle. The spaces revealed through the windows and doors appeared very dark and serene creating signs of horror and misery. As a result of the application of the intended scenic approach, the set per observation projected a realistic setting. According to Otchere, she dreamt and visualised the end product of the project so it was not surprising when the characters gelled very well with the set to project “The Slave” on the stage of the main auditorium of University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast.

4.2.2 Style of Symbolism

Mensah, the woman set designer also indicated that:

“I am a lover of symbolism and with symbolism; I get to use the adinkra symbols and our indigenous symbols making meaning out of them. In line with this concept, I have worked on African plays like the tenth revisit of the *Slaves* by Mohammed Ben Abdallah and *Son of Umbele*. I normally take the symbols and customize and adopt them in my set designs and own that particular work. I observe that abstract expressionism goes hand in hand with symbolism because you get to express yourself. In so doing you are not bound by certain conventions of a particular style but you just move and personalise your ideas and sell them to the people out there.” (Personal Interview, 11th February, 2021).

The designer believes that her interplay with symbols enhance her creative expressions.

Symbolic objects and the part can represent the whole. This assumption clarifies the fact that symbolism is a psychological phenomenon. According to Zhang (2005) the symbolic thinking mode is that the subject makes a comparison between the two

symbols according to some connection between the symbol and the object. Zhang emphasizes that symbolism is widely used in different cultural traditions, such as art, theatre, religion, ritual and mythology (p.683). It is for this reason Mensah the set designer incorporates some adinkra and indigenous symbols in figure 4 to make meaning out of her design principles and knowledge.



Figure 4: Adinkra, A Set Designed by Agnes Adomako Mensah for the production.: Agnes Adomako Mensah's Library, 2017.

The design replications in figure 4 in the *Adinkra* production was generally composed of symbolic adinkra and some traditional symbols of various forms, textures and colours in different artistic expressions with different meanings. These symbols could be a clear theme, thought or a vague emotion used to represent part or the whole of the theme of the production. For Mensah, the inclusion of adinkra symbols in her stage design works is to promote, project and present the Ghanaian art form within the scope of theatre. Significantly, a good design should not only focus on the surface sense of reality, but also select the representative part from a large amount of material to promote the general idea. Hence, in projecting symbolic images it is assumed that a

symbolic image has emerged, representing the symbolic object and that part can represent the whole.



Figure 5: A Rehearsal Scene of the *Slave* Production, written by Mohammed Ben Abdallah at the Legon Botanical Gardens and Set Designed by Agnes Adomako Mensah. Source: Agnes Adomako Mensah, 2016.

The *Slaves* locale, figure 5 was constructed in a natural forest (Legon botanical garden) by Mensah in a found space, while the main hall of the University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast stage presented *Slaves* production designed by Otchere contrasted the latter in Figure 5 in its form, venue and presentational style. Additionally, both ideas had different unique presentational dimensions but same theme except different visual treatments. As in figure 5, the venue was a found open space and the scenic elements on set included masks, skulls of human head, chains attached to the necks,

legs and hands of the characters as slaves. The forest as the locale had foreground and background enhancement of natural leaves and tree canopies among others, establishing a realistic locale for the setting. Shadows above the performance area that fell on the ground and on the actors projected the horror and secluded atmosphere of the environment which contrasted figure 3. Indeed, the performance space in figure 5 was a departure from the conventional physical performance space as in figure 3; a theatre stage with an established configured seating area and a stage.

Figure 6 represents a Pepsodent tunnel created by Mensah at the Efua Sutherland Children's Park. The programme for which the pepsodent tunnel was created was for an educational purpose geared towards educating the public on the use of the tooth paste, pepsodent. Walking through the tunnel gives the participant a sense of using which gives a clean set of teeth. This design was very symbolic in presentation and visually imposing where patrons could see the prop from any distance within the parameter of the programme space, since it was constructed larger than life.



Figure 6: The Pepsodent Tunnel designed by Agnes Adomako Mensah, Mounted at the Efua Sutherland Children's Park in Accra. Source: Agnes Adomako Mensah, 2021.

4.3 What Informs the Concept of the Set Designers in Ghana

4.3.1 Scenic Design Concept and the considerations of the Designer

According to Harriet Otchere:

“My design concept depends on the productions I am designing for and I do not think there is a fixed concept that cuts across every design. May be there may be underlining principles of design which also can be seen as design concepts but as a designer when you sit and analyse a script, what comes to your mind and how you see actors moving about on stage all form design concepts. The colours used also form the design concept.”
(Personal interview; 23rd January, 2021)

Parker and Smith (1974, p.14) has it that “scenic design in the modern theatre is concerned with the total visual effect of a production; dance, musical or dramatic production.” In addition, the total visual effect is the sum of all the elements that are seen to make their impression on the audience. Among these is the scenic background which is the largest and most obvious visual element that supports the spoken word of the dramatic form. As a set designer, the design concept does not end with the designing of the set alone but integrating the stage lighting and its overall effect on the set as a whole. Planning of the quality and intensity of the light that reveal the scene, the set dressing, the careful consideration of the actor’s costume to blend or to contrast with the background and the ample movement areas for the actors are all conceived as part of the design concept. Hence, Otchere’s submission appears to be the ideal situation within the scheme of production design, setup and rendition. At the end, the aesthetic responsibility of the total visual effect is normally in the hands of the scene designer, although his importance and influence may vary with the extent of his talent, experience and likes. At the end, the designer needs to be true to the production script, approach and total overall picture.

Prince Kojo Hilton clarified that:

“First of all, I go through reading the script to understand the content and then breakdown the script through an analytical procedure to outline the visual elements like the props, costumes, setting and then make-up. Thirdly, I then do research and then generate series of thumb nail sketch to support my ideas. The fourth stage is to meet the director to have a discussion about my concept so the director and I could agree on the desired approach or idea.” In fact, I employed the scenic design concept and also involve my personal consideration that is sourced from my experiences. (Personal Interview; 2nd may, 2021).

Hilton agreed with the formal laid down process [scenic design concept] in analysing a script as a production design team member with focus on costume, setting, and makeup among others. With this direction or process in mind, the designer stays true to the demands of the production, even though at a point his background or experience might interplay with the concept. Which is more like his personal considerations?

Nana Brefo stated that “the design concept employed in my stage design projects largely depends on the project type. There is no one single concept for all artwork.” I normally think out of the box but guided by the scenic design concept.

His argument stems up from the fact that there is no one way to executing a design task but rather it largely depends on the nature of the project in question even though he thinks out of the box, he is guided by the scenic design concept. Importantly, per the needs of the design idea or problem to be resolved, the designer needs to analyse and adopt the desired approach to solving the problem task Govier (1991). To this end, every set design is based on the needs of the play, design concept and the experience of the designer.

Daniel Mantey was of the view that:

“In achieving the required concept, the greater fragment is attributed to the discretion of the director together with the production design team. So, the concept varies according to the demands of the play text in connection with the playwright’s intent, directorial concept and the production scheme but in these entire one must be guided by the scenic design concept.” (Personal Interview; 27th April, 2021).

Mantey is of the view that the production approach determines the total visual landscape of the production. Therefore, he corroborates with Brefor’s ideas where he promotes that set designs are treated on individual requirements in connection with the design concept and the needs of the production. Gillette (2000, p.2) make it clear that the “members of a production design team read the script and then develop the production concept, also referred to as the ‘production approach.’”

4.3.2 Thinking out of the box with the visualization of an image picture chart

Process

Agnes Adomako Mensah hinted that:

“I attach irregular flats to my designs and also pick out images from the design. I normally think out of the box by doing a visual scout of ideas but ensure I work within the production approach. Moreover, I love to keep the audience in suspense about what I have created.”(Personal Interview; 11th February, 2021).

Mensah’s concept for her stage design and setup is rather informal. She attaches importance to irregular scenic flats to express her visual statements and redefines her images with regards to their forms and presentations. Irregular artistic expressions as an element of design concepts may be referred to as fragmented or symbolic representation. Pezeshk, Camp and Chen (2000) affirms that irregular structures incorporated with unconventional and unusual shapes are often set to become an

outstanding peace of artistry and that is what Mensah seeks to achieve with her scenic projects.

4.4 How Set Designers Approach their Design Process in Ghana

4.4.1 Adopting the Seven Design Processes

Harriet Otchere stressed that:

“I sometimes follow the seven (7) design steps propounded by Gillette (2000), which stresses reading and analysing the script but most of the time I do thumbnail sketches as I do the first reading. After which I begin to effect changes. I also like to pause a lot to think out of the box in order to brainstorm into deep visual concepts. Usually when you sit after a long time, you keep sketching the same thing over and over, but when you sit and relax yourself from the task you get fresh ideas, especially when you take a walk to observe nature and the activities of people. Gillette calls it incubation process.” (Personal Interview; 23rd January, 2021).

Gillette, (2000) indicates that to achieve the preparation and construction of a stage setup principally, seven design processes have to be employed: Commitment, analysis, research, incubation, selection, implementation and evaluation. However, Gillette stresses that there is no standard way of designing and constructing a stage set for a production. The designer’s background and experience could influence their stage concept. It was in light of this; Otchere made reference to the seven steps of Gillette and indicated that she in particular develops her ideas from reading the script and developing her thumb nail sketches through visualization and observation.

Daniel Mantey submitted that:

“The seven steps of the Design process is a necessity in a realisation of any set design. In tackling the design process, I make sure to totally delve into each step as specified by Gillette (2000) so as to exhaust the design skey stages.” (Personal Interview; 27th April, 2021).

Mantey appreciates the fact that the realization of a set design is the need to adopt specific steps to reach the design goal. For that matter, for him the steps are a sure way to achieving his design goal.

4.4.2 Guided by the Production Approach but Observe a Lot of Visual

Impressions

In Mensah's narration, she said that:

“For instance, if I am given a project to design, I will first of all read the script, get myself abreast of the production approach and its nuances before I discuss the script with the director about how they will want the treatment of the production to be, then I will know how to go about the task in consultation with my design colleagues based on the production concept. But more importantly, I read the script three (3) times to determine the visual images, technical constructional demands and the colour symbolism. In all these, I compared notes with the director with regards to the design approach to ensure that I am within the scope of the production approach.” (Personal Interview; 11th February, 2021).

Theatrical design is a collaborative process that seeks to solve production challenges. According to Parker, Wolf and Block (2003) with reference to the design process, one needs to identify a problem which the design will address. This step is very important because it informs the rest of the design process and defines how success will be measured. It is also imperative to conduct research to formulate ideas and recognize constraints for the designs based on the production approach or scheme. At the end, possible design solutions will be reached for implementation of the task. To this end, design process becomes the blue print on which design challenges are founded.

Brefo shares his thought on how he develops his design process:

“I observe a lot and thus get inspired by a whole lot of visual and textual ideas. Basically, my design process is using what inspires me in creating

satisfaction with my design elements but guided by the production concept. Most often, the visual ideas are generated into several thumb nail sketches after which the most suitable design is implemented for the task. The sequence is however unstructured because it takes different forms and approaches.” (Personal Interview; 18th April 2021).

Brefor gets his design process steps through the observation of visual content and ensures that the ideas fall within the production approach agreed by the production team members. Meanwhile, the visual elements become his inspiration. Gillette (2000) posits that the design process is fixed as a lay down principle because a designer’s background and experience may influence the design type or concept.

Hilton indicated that:

“I am mostly guided by my imagination when I read the script visualises through my imagination then sketch and develop my concepts but in all these idea generations, I make reference to the production approach.” (Personal Interview; 2nd May, 2021).

Hilton’s steps in his design process supports Brefor’s assertion of observing in visual terms to come out with design solution for the set design and set up. However, reference is made to the production design.

5.0 Why Some Women Set Designers do not Practice the Profession in Ghana

5.1 It is the Preserve and a Profession for the Men

Dr Evans Asante said:

“The perception most people have in Ghana is that set design is a preserve and a profession for men. Meanwhile, it appears that there are not many avenues for such women seeking to practice. The question is how many production houses do we have in Ghana? Now in Ghana most of these production houses have men as their set designers. For instance, in Ghana

Broadcasting Corporation and most television stations, it appears all the set designers are men. That is why it appears the women do not have the interest to practice but rather venture into a different area after school. Also, i may say that set design has been seen as or perceived as men's work so most female student who take up that course do not practice as indicated earlier. In reality, what we can do best is to focus much on theatre in general by promoting it in the various institutions so that when it becomes vibrant set design will be improved.”(Personal Interview; 22nd March, 2021).

The last wave of the twentieth century, women's movements began in the 1960's and the focus of discussion was why we do not see a more equal ratio of successful and eminent women to men in creative fields? (Henry 1910). The proposers stated that the number of creative men surpassed the number of creative women. As a result, a researcher wanted to study whether this difference was caused by social, cultural and economic discrimination, or whether the gender inequity could be attributed to psychological and biological differences. Fifty years ago, according to Henry, some commonly held beliefs were that women were not ambitious and this might account for their lack of eminence and follow through in the creative fields. Not much has changed, perhaps, for even today, it seems that the main creative fields where women are equally well known as men in the theatre are creative writing, acting, costume and makeup. In the Ghanaian scenario within the performing arts field, most women are seen as actors, makeup and costume designers. Set design appears to be a 'no go area', as a profession preserve for men. According to Asante, when the Performing Arts Educational Institutions focus much on theatre in general by promoting it to become vibrant, set design will be improved and other related technical special areas would improve in participation” which will translate into job opportunities for both men and women.

5.1.2 Few students opt for the course because it is believed one need to be an Artist to read the course

In Professor Yankah's own words:

“Set design is not an area that lots of people go into or even in our institution; only few students want to get into set design because some people believe you need to be an artist to qualify to read the course, set design. In the institution where I belong, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, we get only two to three students who want to venture into that area. Sometimes only a student who ventures into that area (set design) and most of the time many of them are males. What we should be doing actually is not just focusing on set design but rather focusing in promoting theatre in general in this country. Hence, if we have many theatrical activities happening and it's vibrant, then evidentially, we will see a lot of different set designs and there will be more people going into that area.” (Personal Interview; 30th March, 2021).

In Yankah's exposition, his experience with his institution confirms the fact that few students pursue the set design course. Most students see the course as a technical course that goes with the skill of visual art and an area that needs talent acquisition that is why it appears most students shy away from the course. But the researcher believes that the profession is about passion, dedication and the right spirit to bring creativity to life as a theatre practitioner. Crabtree and Beudert (2005) are of the view that successful scenic shops are made up of many talented craft people whose dedication to and enjoyment of the unusual demands of theatre is evident.

However, Yankah estimates that the increase of theatrical activities and the massive participation of personnel within the scope of employment will definitely see more technical personnel venture in set design and other technical related areas.

5.1.3 Women set designers put up their craft but not seen

According to Professor Yankah:

Women set designers in Ghana frankly speaking design and construct theatrical stage set but do not know how to project their works. Perhaps, it might be as a result of numbers. Largely because we do not have quite a number of them in that profession. That might account for the inability to get them projected.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Overview

This chapter outlines the major findings of the study. As a result, findings were made and conclusions were drawn from which corresponding recommendations have been made. Suggestions have been made for further research based on the outcome of the study. On the basis of that the findings, conclusions and recommendations have been listed for ease of verification.

5.1 Summary of Major Findings

The study was based on five specific research objectives. The first objective found out the philosophical perception of the women set designers, while the second objective found out the styles of the women in their technical production, followed by the third objective which found out the design concept of the set designers in Ghana. The fourth found out the design process of the set designers in Ghana, while the fifth finally ends by finding out why women set designers do not practice the set design profession in Ghana.

Objective one focused on the philosophical perception of women set designer and the study revealed that:

1. The philosophical perception of one of the females set designers known as Otchere, is the representation of realism in her stage design projects.
2. The other woman set designer also known as Mensah, believes in the projection of the African art forms in her stage design projects.

Investigate the styles of the women set designers in their technical productions happened to be the second objective which revealed that:

1. Otchere promotes the style of realism and naturalism in her set design Projects.
2. Mensah promotes the style of symbolism in her set design projects.

The third objective looked at the design concepts of the set designers in Ghana, which revealed that:

1. The considerations of the design elements inform their design concepts.

The fourth objective found out the design process of the set designers in Ghana, which revealed that:

1. They adopt the seven stages of the scenic design process.
2. They are guided by the production approach but observe a lot of visual impressions.

The fifth objective found out why women set designers do not practice the set design profession in Ghana.

1. It is the preserve and a profession for the Men.
2. Few students opt for the course because it is believed one needs to be an artist to read the course.
3. Women set designers contribute their quota and not seen

5.2 Conclusions

The study concludes that theatre is a collaborative art that uses live performers to present the experiences of a real or imagined event before a live audience in a specific place with the cooperation of the technical team members (Wilson, 2001).

Within the scope of the success of the play or any stage production, there are several creative artists who are engaged in the transformation of the script into a living story. Among them is the set designer whose primary responsibility is to create the environment of action of the play. For every play, a stage set should tell the audience where and when the play takes place. Simply put, the scenery of every play should indicate the locale, period and environment of the play to make it understandable for the audience. Most importantly, theatre scenery supports in providing the acting area for the actors and also defining the place; the climate and geographical conditions, the socioeconomic situation, the cultural background and the political or governmental system of the definite area. According to Wilson (2004), scenery should visually present the conditions to influence the act or motivate the characters to perform the action of the play.

Additionally, the creativity of the set designer is extremely motivated by countless or numerous concepts and ideals enshrined in different personal ideologies. Basically, a concept developed by a set designer could be characteristically similar in elements or different from another set designer's approach while proclaiming artistic adventures in their works. Some unique elements that personalise the works of designers may be critically observed during the conceptualisation stage, design process, implementation and dismantling and filling the set pieces. Even though there might be standard practices and conventions in the execution of a scenic formulation task, previous experience on a similar project could influence the design process of the designer. These aforementioned thoughts are pertinent and linked to the philosophy and style of the scenic or set designer under discourse.

In view of this, the study therefore, has taken interest in looking at the philosophy and styles in the works of two women set designers in Ghana, Miss Agnes Adomako

Mensah known as (Mensah) in the study, a freelance set designer who designs and constructs stage sets for corporate institutions, educational institutions and individuals. She had her first degree in the theatre arts department, university of Ghana, Legon specialising in scenic design and construction. That was not all; she proceeded to pursue her second degree in Technical Theatre in the University of Ghana, school of performing arts, Legon. She currently operates private scenic, props, interior and events Design Company running from the last 6 years called Hue Essence. She has to her credit an impressive portfolio of works.

On the other hand, Harriet Debrah Otchere known as Otchere in the study is a theatre practitioner with over ten years' experience in set designing, which is her major field. She had her first degree from the Department of Theatre and Film Studies, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast where she majored in Scenic Design and Construction. She proceeded to pursue a Master's of Philosophy degree at the School of Performing Arts, Department of Theatre Arts, University of Ghana, Legon. Currently, at the time the study was being conducted, she was at the University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast undertaking her PhD studies.

In reiteration, with most set designers, every stage production is based on their unique design ideologies, experience, motivation and inspirations which require some core elements that depict the philosophies and styles exhibited in their work. To some designers, these design philosophies and styles act as standard authorities towards their decision making. For the audience, it becomes very necessary to understand the set designer's philosophy and style to enable better interpretation and appreciation to their works. In expressing the production concept, as well as production style, a set design appeals to the audience's sense of vision and emotion. This implies that, upon

the glance at the “stage picture” the audience gain a fair idea or knowledge of the kind of mood and feelings the performance will relate.

Gillette (1996, p.105) stated that, “scenery helps the audience understand and enjoy a play by providing a visual reinforcement of the production.” This means that the stage scenery does not make the production but it contributes to the overall appreciation and understanding of the drama. It is expected that the study will be based on an in-depth interview with the designers in focus, documenting the designer’s works and experiences and analysing their design philosophies and styles, in relation to their creative development as revealed in their creative project works. Emphasis was placed on philosophical contexts with regards to significance of their works, inspiration, motivation and key ideals.

Additionally, in many societies for instance, most people have the notion and belief that women are less intelligent and creative in nature, and are moreover emotionally, spiritually and physically weaker than men. But it has been discovered by many scholars like Nikoi (1998) and Irina Adu (1999) that both men and women generally have the same level of creative and intellectual capabilities. This means that given the same materials and task the woman (not necessarily an artist) may do it as well as the man would and may be even better. As part of the study there was the need find out why some women set designers after their education study in set design do not take up jobs in that profession [set design].

Certainly, many Ghanaian women play very significant roles in the socio-economic development of Ghana as artists. On the basis of this, the study seeks to project the two women set designers in Ghana and their contributions.

5.3 Recommendations

Owing to the problems found by the researcher, the following recommendations are made for to project the works of women set designers and increase their participation in technical theatre with particular reference to set design and construction.

1. It is important to harness the talents of young women to be part of the growing technical theatre practice. To this end, female students should be encouraged and motivated to study technical theatre (set design) in the Performing Arts Educational Institutions in order to increase female participation in set design in the job market for economic benefit and gender balance in representation.
2. The need to demystify the notion that technical theatre practice is the preserve for men, especially set design and construction.
3. Performing arts educational institutions need to promote theatre in general in this country. Hence, if we have many theatrical activities happening and its vibrant, then evidentially, we will see a lot of different set designs through churned out productions and there will be more people going into that area.

5.4 Contribution of the Study to the Discipline of the Performing Arts and Culture

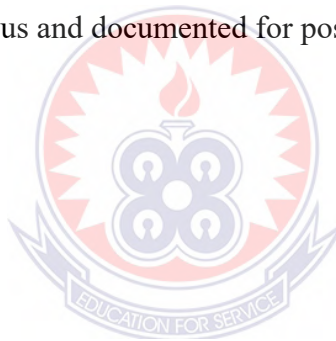
Through the study, the significance and understanding of the projection of Women set Designers in Ghana has been much more deepened in scope and interpretation, making the subject matter debatable for an enhanced balanced participation in theatre practice by both male and female practitioners. The study has also pointed to the fact that the women set designers work in the background and do not publicise their works unlike the men. Hence, to the women, they must increase their visibility and participation in award schemes so that their works would be recognised and promoted

Theatre is one of the biggest job creators and as such, it employs, the performing artist, visual artist, literary artist and the performance artist. Therefore, it has to be accessed by all for the development of the arts in Ghana and culture in Ghana.

The study has brought to the fore the significance of set design as a visual communicative element in the education and information of the audience in projecting societal issue through design concepts.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Studies

Through the findings of this study, it is recommended that the performing arts scholars pay attention to the study of Ghanaian theatre practice with focus on practicing theatre personnel and their philosophies, style and theatrical activities would be brought into focus and documented for posterity.



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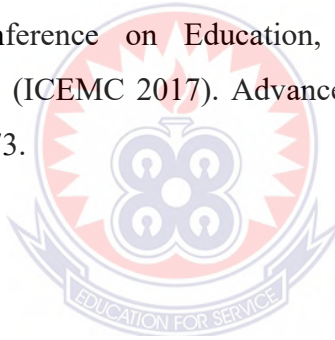
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: PERMISSION TO INTERVIEW

My ref. no: AB/20/D1

Department of Theatre Arts
University of Education, Winneba
Winneba
Ghana.

3rd December, 2020.

Dear Sir,

PERMISSION TO INTERVIEW YOU FOR AN MPhil STUDY

I am an MPhil. (Art and Culture) candidate in the Department of Music Education, University of Education, Winneba and currently conducting research on the topic **“Women set designers in Ghana; their philosophy and style.”**

I am humbly soliciting for your voluntary help in this research to interview you on the above subject matter at your own convenience to enrich this study whose findings may be used to promote the works of women set designers in Ghana and to recognise and draw more attention to their contribution to national development. It may also promote, and preserve the performing arts in Ghana and the rest of the world.

Your responses would be treated confidentially.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Yours Sincerely,

(Augustina Blay)
Researcher

APPENDIX B

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION



APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Project Supervisors: Dr. Samuel M. Yirenkyi and Dr. Johnson K. Edu

Researcher: AugustinaBlay

Department of Music Education

University of Education, Winneba.

Purpose of this research

The purpose of conducting this research was to examine the philosophical perceptions and style of two women set designers in Ghana and to project their works.

What you will be expected to do

With all due respect, if you so wish to contribute in this research, you will be led through a guided interview with the researcher and this interaction will be recorded with the aid of a digital format. It is envisaged that the interview will take approximately forty (40) minutes of your time.

Your right to confidentiality

The data collected will be treated with a high sense of confidentiality. In that case, with your permission, you will be required to fill an agreement form for authorisation. Importantly, it is only the researcher that will have access to the data.

Your right to withdraw at any time

Your acceptance to participate in this research is voluntary. You may discontinue, withdraw or otherwise. However, you can skip questions you prefer not to be asked. You may also request for the destruction of your data without any consequences.

You have the right to ask questions at anytime

You have the right to seek for clarification with regard to the research or fine tune your data at any time by e-mailing the researcher at blayaugustina3@gmail.com

Benefits

The research will benefit schools in teaching and learning and a source of reference for the performing arts industry.

Possible risk

When you feel intimidated or harassed during the time of interview, you may discontinue and refrain from answering any questions if you wish.

Participant consent

By signing the consent form:

- You agree that you have read and understood the above, that you have been given satisfactory answers to questions concerning the research, that you are

aware that you are free to withdraw your consent and to discontinue participation in the research any time, without any prejudice.

- In case you may have any questions about your right as a participant in this study or any concerns or complaints, please contact the office of the Dean, School of Creative arts.
- **Participant:** I have read and understood the above information, and that the interview will be audio-recorded, and voluntarily agree to participate in this research.

Name (printed)

Signature

Date

Please keep a copy of this consent form for your records.



APPENDIX D: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE
QUESTIONS FOR THE PARTICIPANTS

Topic:

“WOMEN SET DESIGNERS IN GHANA: THEIR PHILOSOPHY AND STYLE”

Your views are kindly solicited in this study in providing much needed information that can lead to making scholarly attempts on the **“Women set designers in Ghana; their philosophy and style.”** This would lead to the promotion and projection of the women set designers in Ghana and beyond. Such perspectives would be enriched by your voluntary participation in the study. The researcher appreciates your time and values of the information you provide in this study on the topic **“Women set designers in Ghana; their philosophy and style.”**

All your responses will be treated confidentially.

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR WOMEN SET DESIGNERS IN GHANA

1. CV/Resume of the interviewee (*You may attach it*)

.....

2. What is the philosophical perception of your set designer?

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3. What is your dominant style of set design?

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4. What design concepts do you employ in stage design and construction?

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5. How do you approach your design process?

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6 To what extent is your general knowledge and perception about designing?

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7 What is set design?

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8 What is the history of set design in Ghana?

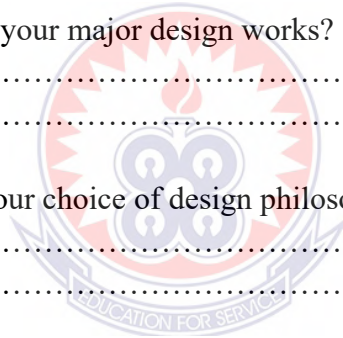
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9 What are some of your major design works?

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10 What motivates your choice of design philosophy and style?

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11. How many set design projects are to your credit?

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.....

12. To what extent have you contributed to the development of set design in Ghana?

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.....

Thank you

Topic:

“WOMEN SET DESIGNERS IN GHANA: THEIR PHILOSOPHY AND STYLE”

Your views are kindly solicited in this study in providing much needed information that can lead to making scholarly attempts on the “**Women set designers in Ghana; their philosophy and style.**” This would lead to the promotion and projection of the women set designers in Ghana and beyond. Such perspectives would be enriched by your voluntary participation in the study. The researcher appreciates your time and values of the information you provide in this study on the topic “**Women set designers in Ghana; their philosophy and style.**”

All your responses will be treated confidentially.

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR MEN SET DESIGNERS IN GHANA

1. CV/Resume of the interviewee (*You may attach it*)
.....
2. What is the philosophical perception of your set designer?
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3. What is your dominant style of set design?
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.....
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4. What design concepts do you employ in stage design and construction?
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5. How do you approach your design process?
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- 10 To what extent is your general knowledge and perception about designing?
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11 What is set design?

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12 What is the history of set design in Ghana?

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13 What are some of your major design works?

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11 What motivates your choice of design philosophy and style?

.....
.....

11. How many set design projects are to your credit?

.....
.....

13. To what extent have you contributed to the development of set design in Ghana?

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.....

Thank you

“WOMEN SET DESIGNERS IN GHANA: THEIR PHILOSOPHY AND STYLE”

Your views are kindly solicited in this study in providing much needed information that can lead to making scholarly attempts on the “**Women set designers in Ghana; their philosophy and style.**” This would lead to the promotion and projection of the women set designers in Ghana and beyond. Such perspectives would be enriched by your voluntary participation in the study. The researcher appreciates your time and values of the information you provide in this study on the topic “**Women set designers in Ghana; their philosophy and style.**”

All your responses will be treated confidentially.

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR HEADS OF PERFORMING ARTS EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

1. CV/Resume of the interviewee (*You may attach it*)
.....
2. Why the study of set design as a course in the performing arts educational institutions?
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3. To what extent do you know practicing women set designers from your institution?
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4. How many student ladies set designers have graduated from the Department of Theatre Arts, University of Education, Winneba since its inception?
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5. It appears women set designer do not take up the profession after they graduate from school. What is your take on this?
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6. How can women set designers projects be recognized and promoted in the scheme of affairs?

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7. What in your opinion do men set designers do differently to gain recognition than women set designers?

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8. Do you have any further comment on the activities of women set designers or o set design in general?

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Thank you

APPENDIX E: BIOGRAPHIES OF THE WOMEN SET DESIGNERS AND THEIR WORKS

HARRIET DEBRAH OTCHERE'S LIFE AND WORKS

Harriet Debrah Otchere popularly known as Otchere is a theatre practitioner with over ten (10) years' experiences in set design, which is her major field or areas of studies in the University of Cape Coast in the Central Region of Ghana. Otchere discovered passion for set design and visual art work after her completion of her Senior High School education while she was preparing for her enrolment in an undergraduate programme at the University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast in the Central Region of Ghana. With regard to the interest, she had in set designing (specifically in the field theatre) and visual art, she worked passionately with professional set designers who were already in the field of stage design and construction as an assistant while waiting to be enrolled in a theatre arts institution. As a determined young lady who has discovered passion for set design and art work, she did not joke with her interest, therefore she focused on how to enter to the University so as to portray what she had as a young lady. By the grace of God, she received an admission letter from the University of Cape Coast where she started her undergraduate programme where she majored in set design.

In her third year in school, she had an internship at the Ghana National Theatre, where she was assisted to the Technical Director. The fascination of how well the designers manipulated materials to achieve great and amazing designs works motivated her to advance her studies in set design and in costume design.

According to Otchere, her tertiary education has largely focused on the development of new modes of set designing during her undergraduate study. The gained ideas and

experiences pushed her to pursue a postgraduate study in set design and the study of historical perspective of the development of set design in Ghana. This led to the award of Master of Philosophy in set design.

After school, as a set designer, she has designed several sets for performances, ranging from play productions, musical concerts and dance dramas at the University of Cape Coast, University of Ghana and the Ghana National Theatre Folks Place among others. She added that recently, she has designed the stage setting for the Pan African Historical Theatre Festival (PANAFEST) 2019 celebration dubbed “The Year of Return. At the time of data collection, she was a demonstrator at the Department of Theatre and film studies where she taught and lead students to construct set designs for various theatrical and music or dance performances. She said all these opportunities came as a surprise, the reason being that she did not joke with the opportunities she had but rather she worked hard in that area she found herself through her research and practice.

Otchere has become increasingly aware of the damage or havoc caused to the environment through a number of unsustainable practices in set design and construction. Apparently, the Cape Coast municipal area (where the University of Cape Coast is located) is also unpopular for various negatives, principal among which is improper waste management systems. In the light of the global efforts towards achieving various Sustainable Development Goals, appropriating “waste” towards creative ends appear to be a worthwhile venture. She added that most students have the perception that set design has been perceived as a male area of jurisdiction but she made it clear that ladies who get the opportunity to venture into that area ought to have the mind set and strong will to take up the challenge to motivate other ladies to take it as a profession, because there are not many set designers who happens to be

ladies so if a lady is in that area, it should be an opportunity for them. According to Otchere, ladies who are already in the field should promote themselves by projecting their creative works so that they can be recognised just as their male counterparts. This is because, their male counterparts do nothing different from what the women designers do, but rather the males design and showcase their works to the general public. However, the male designers are many and off course since they are, there is going to be more male set designers' assisting in productions and so their works would be recognised and promoted. She estimates that she is hopeful that if a woman designer does the same calibre of work output, she might do a better design than the man but because women do not exhibit their set designs, it will not gain the general public recognition. If we have more women designers out there showcasing their creative works or designs obviously, we will get more people to appreciate them better than their male counterparts so it is just a kind of a cycle, if you have more people doing it, we will see more of it.

Certainly, it is under the aegis of this that she intended to explore how, within the framework of bio mimicry "waste" material can be used in sustainable set design practices. She is now a practicing set designer and currently she is back to the University of Cape Coast undertaking her PHD programme. Her design passion really is in the presentations of realistic and naturalistic setting, even though she passionately focuses on realism as a style.

Otchere is down to earth, very dynamic and seem to motivate young ladies in the arts. Creating workshops and supporting their activities in all levels. She is very energetic and poised for every artistic endeavour she finds herself in. Find attached some of Otchere's stage design and constructional projects. Figure 7 is the production, "Life Begins at 40," written by Ray Commey and directed by Emefa Dzakah and set

designed by Otchere. Figure 8 is the production “Eglodom: A tribute to our fallen stars. Written by Jason Otoo and directed by the writer and set designed by Otchere. Figure 9 is the production “The Dilemma of a Ghost” which was written by Ama Ata Aidoo and directed by Eलो Gharbin and set designed by Otchere. Figure 10, “The Witch of Mopti” (2018) and (2019) written by Mohammed Ben Abdallah and directed by Otchere and set designed by Otchere herself. Figure 11, “The Piano Lesson,” (2019), written by August Strindberg and directed by Stephen Koomson and set designed by Otchere. Figure 12 “Asona,” (2015), written by Bill Marshall and directed by Belinda Bediako and set designed by Otchere.

OTCHERE’S WORKS



Figure 7: Life Begins at 40. Written by Ray Commey, Directed by Emefa Dzakah and Set Designed by Harriet Debrah Otchere for the production. Source: Harriet Debrah Otchere’s Library, 2019.



Figure 8: Eglodom; A Tribute to our Fallen Stars. Written and Directed by Jason Otoo and Set Designed by Harriet Debrah Otchere for the production. Source: Harriet Debrah Otchere's Library,2019.



Figure 9: The Witch of Mopti. Written by Mohammed Ben Abdallah, Directed and Set Designed by Harriet Debrah Otchere for the production. Source: Harriet Debrah Otchere's Library, 2018.



Figure 10: The Piano Lesson. Written by August Strindberg, Directed by Stephen Koomson and Set Designed by Harriet Debrah Otchere for the production. Source: Harriet Debrah Otchere's Library, 2019.



Figure 11: "Asana," written by Bill Marshall, Directed by Belinda Bediako and Set Designed by Harriet Debrah Otchere for the production. Source: Harriet Debrah Otchere's Library, 2015.



Figure 12: “The Dilemma of a Ghost.” Written by Ama Ata Aidoo, Directed by Elogo Ghaarbin and Set Designed by Harriet Debrah Otchere for the production. Source: Harriet Debrah Otchere’s Labrary, 2018.

AGNES ADOMAKO MENSAH’S LIFE AND WORKS

Agnes Adomako Mensah, a practising scenic designer who at a very tender age discovered the talent of knowing how to draw, moreover knowing how to work artistically with her hands. She developed the artistic interest at a very tender age and that has led her to where she is now, she stated. According to Miss Agnes, it started actually with the learning how to clean her room. Growing up as a young girl who did not know much but had anything but had the confident in herself that she could whatever she plans to in connection with art and craft.

With regards to that, her confident level increased as little girl, which motivated her to draw and paint beautifully as if it was done by an adult.

For instance, putting things appropriately together, arranging them in a very nice and well-ordered manner was all influenced by her talent in visual art. To the extent that

she participated in visual art competitions right from the basic school to the second cycle institution. According to Mensah, she was the first student to design a school cloth for Bishop Bowel School, that was the school she attended at the basic level, then at the JSS (junior High School), as a determined young lady she also competed for the 2002 FIFA World Cup design competition hosted by TV3 network of which she was declared the winner after the competitions. At her Senior Secondary School level of education, she went to Saint Mary's girls where she did visual Art after which she enrolled into University of Ghana, Legon to read set design at the School of Performing Arts.

Initially, Mensah wanted to read architecture at the University but because of her dislike for mathematics she opted to enrol into the performing arts programme at the school of performing Arts, Legon to read Theatre Arts. At the University, after she has spent the first and second years in the theatre arts class it took her about two (2) years to uncover the fact she could do scenic design even though she had the passion for interior decoration since childhood and scenic design happened to be the closest course to interior decoration. Since that was the area she wanted to specialise, she took the opportunity to pursue the scenic designing course at the School of Performing Arts, Legon. She added it was something that she had a passion for so with regards to her tertiary education, she had her first degree in the Theatre at the University of Ghana, Legon. Her second degree in Technical Theatre was also in the School of Performing Arts, University of Ghana, Legon. In 2007-2008 she also pursued a Diploma in Graphics and Web Designing at IPMC.

MENSAH'S WORKS



Figure 13: “Murder of the Surgical Bone,” written by Faustina Brew, Directed and Set Designed by Agnes Adomako Mensah for the production. Source: Agnes Adomako Mensah’s Library, 2018



Figure 14: An Al-rayon School Drama Project. Directed and Set Designed by Agnes Adomako Mensah for the production. Source: Agnes Adomako Mensah’s Library, 2019.



Figure 15: Abb Talk Show, Aku Boahema Boateng TV Programme. Set Designed by Agnes Adomako Mensah for the production. Source: Agnes Adomako Mensah's Library, 2012.



Figure 16: "Night of Laughter" at the Tema First Baptist Church. Set Designed by Agnes Adomako Mensah for the production. Source: Agnes Adomako Mensah's Library, 2020.