

JOURNAL OF AFRICAN ARTS & CULTURE

ACADEMIC RITES AND CULTURAL SYMBOLISM: ARTISTIC REPRESENTATION OF THE ABOAKYER DEER FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA CHANCELLOR'S INVESTITURE

Johnson Kwaku Edu

jkedu@uew.edu.gh

Department of Theatre Arts, University of Education, Winneba

CITATION: Edu, J. K. (2025). Academic rites and cultural symbolism: Artistic representation of the Aboakyer Deer for the University of Education, Winneba Chancellor's Investiture. *Journal of African Arts and Culture*, 8(4), 1-18.

Abstract

In contemporary academic institutions, the integration of indigenous cultural symbolism into formal ceremonies serves as a critical mechanism for preserving heritage and fostering community inclusion. Situated within this context, the distinct cultural heritage of the Effutu municipality and the academic ceremonies at the University of Education, Winneba, offer a unique framework for examining this synergy. This paper explores the artistic design, construction, and theatrical integration of the Aboakyer Deer, a sacred symbol of the Effutu people, in the Chancellor's Investiture ceremony at the University of Education, Winneba (UEW). Adopting a studio-based research paradigm and an aesthetic-action research design, the project documents the technical and creative processes involved in translating a cultural icon into a functional theatrical property (prop). The creation process was theoretically grounded in Csikszentmihalyi's Flow theory, highlighting the psychological immersive state required for artistic production. The paper details the construction techniques, utilising foam, synthetic fur, and structural engineering, to achieve a realistic representation suitable for ceremonial display. Findings indicate that the visual presence of the constructed Deer enhanced the aesthetic spectacle of the investiture and successfully bridged the gap between academic traditions and the host community's customs. The paper concludes that fusing traditional iconography with academic rites cultivates a sense of identity and cultural pride, validating prop construction as a vital form of scholarly and cultural practice within institutional storytelling.

Keywords: Aboakyer, academic rites, cultural symbolism, flow theory, prop construction, studio-based research

1. Introduction

In a globalized world where cultural homogenization poses a threat to diversity, the preservation and revitalization of indigenous practices have become critically linked to sustaining cultural heritage and identity (UNESCO, 2005). Within this context, institutions of higher learning are increasingly recognized as vital agents of cultural safeguarding and transmission (Abdi, 2012; Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986). The University of Education, Winneba (UEW) in Ghana stands as a salient beacon of this dual mandate, merging academic excellence with active cultural preservation. Its unique position enables it to bridge scholarly pursuits with the rich, living traditions of its host community (Amissah, 2019). This paper examines the deliberate design, construction, and integration of a sculptural Deer into a major academic ceremony at UEW. The analysis focuses on the integrative process, interrogating both the functional and symbolic dimensions of this artistic intervention. Central questions guiding this inquiry concern the implications for embedding cultural artefacts within academic ritual and the spectrum of interpretations offered by its multifaceted audience.

2. Review of Literature

Integrating such a purpose-built cultural icon into the formal activities of an academic institution does more than merely enrich the ceremonial ambience; it actively underscores the essential place of visual art as a conduit of local custom and communal values (Meyer, 2015; Ottenberg, 1997). This artistic integration was particularly significant for the investiture ceremony of the University Chancellor, as the use of a live animal was impractical. The conceived artefact thus served as a potent reflection of the institution's commitment to cultural inclusion and symbolic representation, especially resonant given that the appointed Chancellor was also the King of the Effutu State (Agyei, 2020). To gauge the impact of this integration, the perspectives of diverse stakeholders including students, faculty, community elders, and international attendees, were considered, providing a comprehensive understanding of its perceived relevance and effect (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The paper concludes by advocating for a conscious and harmonious fusion of tradition and modernity in academic pageantry, considering the broader implications for cultural sustainability and inclusive practice within university life (Appadurai, 1996).

Key ceremonial events that structure the academic calendar at UEW, such as matriculations, graduations, and investitures, consistently incorporate visual and performing arts. This practice aims to elevate the occasion and foster a culture of traditional inclusiveness (Sefa Dei, 2014). The 2023 appointment of a new Chancellor necessitated an investiture ceremony demanding significant spectacle. For this event, the School of Creative Arts was commissioned by university management to develop a central artistic concept, particularly for the pivotal moment of the academic robe presentation. The author, a practitioner and scholar in technical theatre, was tasked with spearheading the project's design and execution, positioning this study within the framework of practice-led research (Haseman, 2006).

2.1 Why the Nod for the Deer Creation

The *Aboakyer* Festival is a traditional celebration observed by the people of the Effutu ethnic group, specifically in the Winneba area of the Central Region of Ghana. The festival is marked

by various rituals, ceremonies, and cultural performances, making it a significant event in the Effutu calendar. Historical account of Enock (2015) indicates that the Effutu's celebrate three main festivals: the vibrant Masquerading festival, which takes place on January 1st every year at the Advance Park (previously called Humphrey's Park) located behind the South campus of the University of Education, Winneba. The second is the *Aboakyer* festival, which takes place in the first week of May every year and features a plethora of events. The third celebration is called *Akomase*, and it takes place in August. It is a religious festival where domestic animals are sacrificed to the lesser gods of Winneba. The main attractions of each of these festivals are works of art and music that are dear to the Effutu people (Brown, 2005).

For this paper, however, the focus is on the creation of the Deer for the investiture of UEW, an idea from the artistic presentation of the *Aboakyer* festival, which translates to mean "hunting for game" in the Fante language. This concept aligns with the author's imagination and insight, which became the focus of creativity for the author. Additionally, the *Aboakyer* festival symbolises strength and leadership, characteristics of the chancellor. It also represents the connection between humans and nature; hence, the Effutu State holds a deep reverence for the Deer as its totemic animal (Donkor, 2019; Micah et al., 2022; Takyi, 2015). Reverence for the Deer reflects the Effutu people's commitment to preserving their cultural heritage and ancestral traditions, as seen in Figure 1. Through the continued recognition and observance of the significance of the Deer totem, Effutu culture remains vibrant and resilient, passed down through generations as a source of pride and identity.

2.2 Integration of Cultural Elements into an Academic Ceremony

Academic ceremonies, such as the investiture of an Effutu-born chancellor, provided an opportunity to showcase and represent the cultural heritage of the Effutu people. The introduction of symbols from the Effutu state, particularly the Deer, provided an opportunity for the creative artist at the University of Education, Winneba, to bring some aesthetics to the presentation of the academic robe during the investiture (Osei & Addei, 2018). The goal of the creative artist's use of the Deer as a visual representation was to convey and celebrate the Effutu cultural identity in a visually appealing manner in relation to the Effutu-born Chancellor.

As part of the investiture, cultural performances such as traditional music, choral songs and dance performances were represented during the ceremony. These displays were showcased during the procession of university council members and convocation into the Jophus Anamoah Mensah conference hall in Winneba, where the investiture took place. The procession saw faculty members in their academic regalia, while colourful traditional costumes were donned by the dancers and musicians who led the procession. By consciously incorporating cultural components into academic ceremonies, institutions foster respect, understanding, and appreciation of different cultures while also creating unique experiences that honour the diversity and richness of the academic community.

2.3 Theoretical Underpinning

The theory that guided the study was the theory of Flow as seen in Fig. 1, proposed by psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (Csíkszentmihályi, 1988; Emerson, 1998; Rogala & Cieślak, 2019).

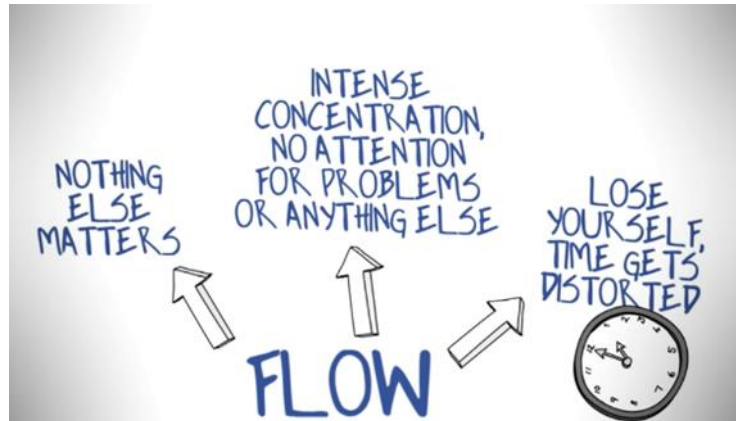


Figure 1: The Flow theory by Csikszentmihalyi.

Source: <https://www.bing.com/images/search?view=detailV2&insighttoken=bcid>, (2023).

The theory of flow describes a mental state in which a person performing an activity is fully immersed in a feeling of energised focus, full involvement, and enjoyment in the process of the activity, as seen in Fig. 2, where the creative artist is seen in a state of immersion, depicting the flow theory. Artists often seek to enter this state while creating, as it enhances creativity and productivity. In this paper, the researcher, after identifying the elements to be used in the creative process, immersed himself in a state of flow as he designed and executed the aesthetic presentation of the academic robe.



Figure 2: *The state of immersion (the flow theory)*

Source: Researcher's studio, 2023

3. Methodology

The researcher employed a studio-based research approach, using an aesthetic-action research design (Young et al., 2015) to analyse and understand the various aesthetic elements that contribute to the effect of the Deer (Yang & Zhang, 2020).

3.1 Studio-Based Research Design

The studio-based research illustrates the imaginative and intellectual works undertaken by an artist. According to Marshall (2010), studio-based research involves the use of creativity and aesthetics in producing functional products such as the Deer. Importantly, creative practice is gradually developing into a significant focus of research activity, both as a process and product through the concept of praxis and exegesis (Marshall, 2010). As developed in most artistic research designs, where materials and tools are paramount in the research design and the writing component. The author employed the imaginative process through the design process and intellectual design works as affirmed by Gillette (2000) to promote and project the ceremony through the use of techniques, tools, materials and processes for the execution of the Deer. This research design was chosen to analyse the sequential way of executing work and documenting results by detailing instruction explanations of the studio-based ideas that were evident in the study. Hence, in developing the Deer, the artist employed his imaginative intellect in creating, criticising and constructing new knowledge that transforms understanding of the known.

3.2 Construction and Production of the Deer

The translation of the *Aboakyer* Deer from a conceptual design to a functional theatrical property represents the critical praxis within the studio-based research paradigm. This phase operationalises the aesthetic-action research design by rigorously documenting the technical interplay between artistic vision and material constraints. Consistent with Marshall's (2010) framework, the construction process is treated here not merely as manual labour, but as an intellectual inquiry where creativity generates new knowledge through the manipulation of form and substance. Drawing on Gillette's (2000) emphasis on the synergy between imaginative processes and technical execution, the following section details the sequential application of tools and synthetic materials required to achieve a high-fidelity representation. Furthermore, this procedural documentation reflects the researcher's immersion in Csikszentmihalyi's state of "flow," ensuring that the resulting artefact fulfils both its aesthetic requirements and its institutional role in storytelling.

3.3 Tools and Materials for Construction

The materialisation of the prop relies fundamentally on the strategic selection and application of specific tools and materials, which serve as the tangible interface between the artist's conceptual vision and physical reality. In the context of studio-based research, the choice of materials is functional. It constitutes a core component of the "intellectual design works" described by Gillette (2000), where the properties of the medium dictate the possibilities of the form. As Marshall (2010) posits, the materials and tools are paramount in artistic research designs, acting as active agents in the generation of new knowledge and the transformation

of understanding. Consequently, the following inventory represents the essential technical apparatus required to execute the realism style and structural integrity necessary for the construction of the props. The following are the tools and materials used in the construction process.

3.4 Tools

Metal tape measure, a pair of scissors, a cutter, a pencil, an eraser, a blue pen, black pen.

3.5 Material

½ inch low foam, white bond glue, white synthetic hair mesh, brown synthetic hair mesh, black synthetic hair mesh, clear nail polish, palm kernel, acrylic black paint, binding wire, white polyester material, Formica 99 glue.

3.6 The Construction Process

Step One: Conceptualisation.

Designing and constructing a theatrical deer prop involves a combination of artistic vision, practical engineering and stagecraft. Hence, to conceive the concept of the Deer construction, a reference image of a deer was searched, as in Fig. 3, to aid the conceptual sketching and prototyping, as in Fig. 4, for the formulation. This graphical activity was to determine the size and scale of the deer, physical appearance and material choices. The information then became a guide to the physical construction of the Deer.



Figure 3: A captured Deer during one of the *Aboakyer* festivals
(Picture reference for the prop)

Source: <https://www.bing.com/images/search?view=detailV2&ccid=qynhb7bK&id>, (2023)

Also, the measurement was needed for the relational measurement of the bearer of the Deer, who will be mounting the Deer across his shoulder. The style of creation was realism to increase audience relationship, interest, spectacle and a sense of illusionary reality.

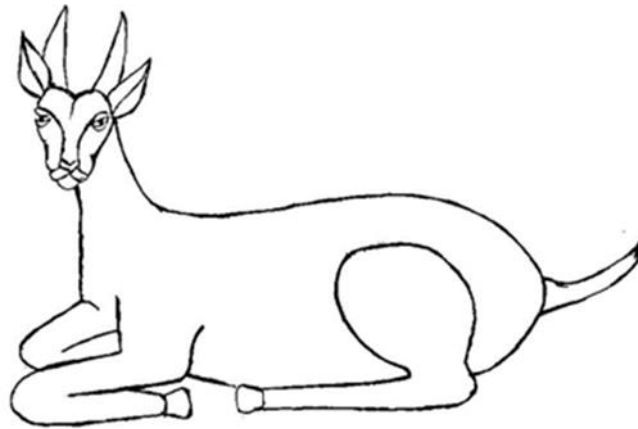


Figure 4: *Conceptual drawing of the referenced deer with bent backward front legs.*

Source: Researcher's studio, 2023.

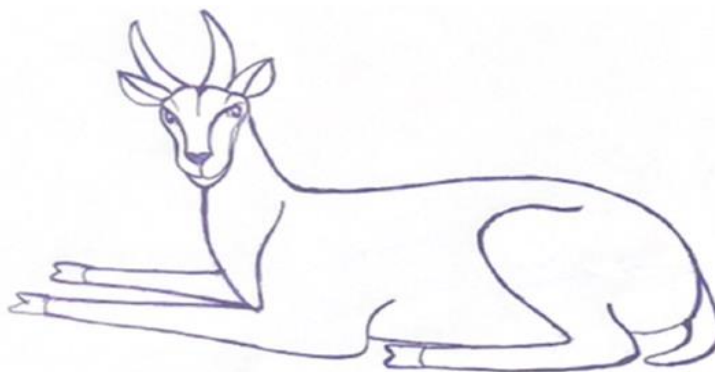


Figure 5: *Drawing of referenced deer with straightened frontal legs.*

Source: Researcher's studio, 2023.

In essence, the design sketch Fig. 4 gave the researcher a vivid idea of the constructional expectation of the deer within the scope of technical considerations and formulations. Meanwhile, due to the nature in which the Deer is to be carried during the ceremony, the lower front legs had to be straightened as in Figure 5. After producing the conceptual drawing, the next stage was to identify and gather the construction tools and materials to begin the task.

Step Two: Profiling.

The construction of the Deer process begins with the profile drawing of two sides of the head and neck of the deer on a one-inch latex form sheet of thirteen-by-thirteen inches, as in Figure 6.

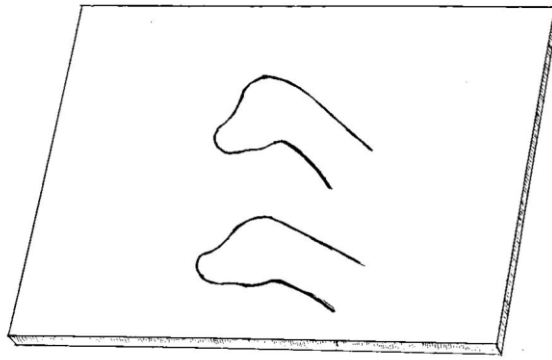


Figure 6: *Profile drawing of two sides of the head and neck of the deer.*
Source: Researcher's studio, 2023.

After the profile drawings are cut-out from the foam piece to reveal the profile shapes (a) and (c), formica adhesive glue is applied to the edges of the head and neck foams and allowed to dry for one minute as seen in Fig. 6.

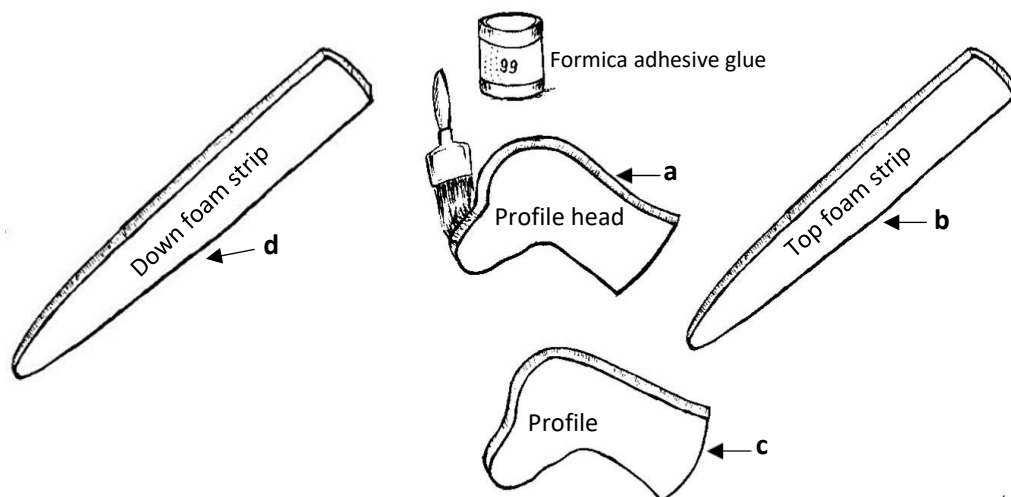


Figure 7: *The foam profile head cut-outs, formica adhesive glue and top and bottom foam strips.* Source: Researcher's studio, 2023.

Step Two: Assembling

The assembly phase involved the systematic bonding of these components using formica contact adhesive. As demonstrated in Figure 8 (mould I), the adhesive was applied to the mating surfaces and allowed to cure for one minute to achieve optimal tack. The dorsal strip (b) was secured between the two lateral profiles, extending from the nasal region to the cervical base (neck), as shown in Mould II. Simultaneously, the ventral strip (d) was attached along the mandibular line, spanning from the mouth to the neck. This "boxing" technique effectively closed the geometric form, resulting in the completed preliminary head armature presented in Figure 9.

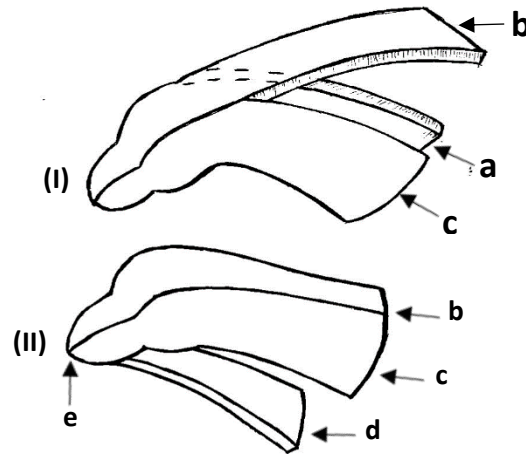


Figure 8: *Mould (I) and (II)*

Source: Researcher's studio, 2023.

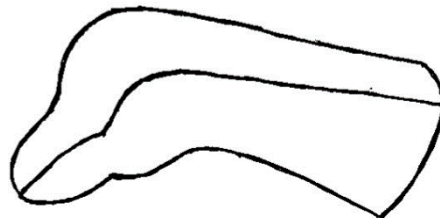


Figure 9: *Completed deer head foam mould.*

Source: Researcher's studio, 2023.

Step Three: The Somatic Trunk

This phase necessitates the construction of the primary torso, exclusive of the cranial assembly, cervical region, and appendicular structures (forelegs, hind legs, and tail). This stage aims to formulate the somatic volume within precise dimensional parameters: a longitudinal span of 3.5 feet, a dorsal width of 3 feet, and a ventral (base) width of 2.5 feet.

To achieve the requisite geometry, specifically a tapered, quasi-cylindrical form known as a frustum, the primary foam substrate (Body Sheet III, Fig. 9) required structural manipulation. As illustrated in Figure 10, the sheet underwent a pleating process, with darts introduced at a depth of 4 inches and a width of 3 inches from the peripheral edge. Subsequently, the material was subjected to lateral curvature (rolling) to establish the final volumetric profile of the deer's body.

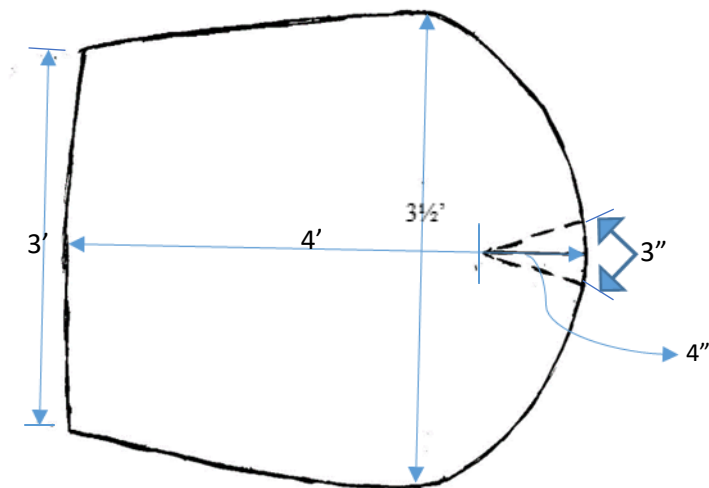


Figure 9: *Body sheet (III)*
Source: Researcher's studio, 2023.

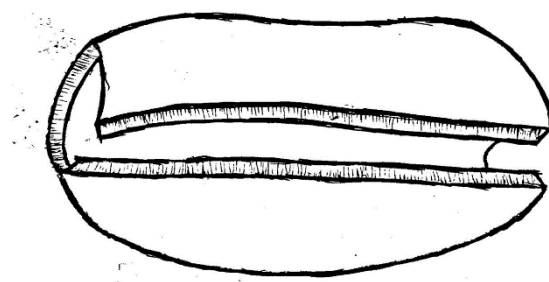


Figure 10: *Curled sideways body sheet.*
Source: Researcher's studio, 2023.

Step Four: Component Integration and Structural Unification

The fourth phase focuses on the holistic synthesis of the prop's disparate elements. The process begins with the structural fusion of the cranial-cervical assembly (head and neck) to the primary somatic trunk (body), as illustrated in Figure 11. Following this, the supplementary components, detailed in Figure 12, are systematically integrated. These include the locomotor appendages (forelegs and hind legs), sensory organs (ocular and auditory units), and cranial features (horns and nose).

To ensure anatomical fidelity and achieve the project's goal of high verisimilitude realism, all appendages were fabricated according to strict proportional ratios relative to the main body.

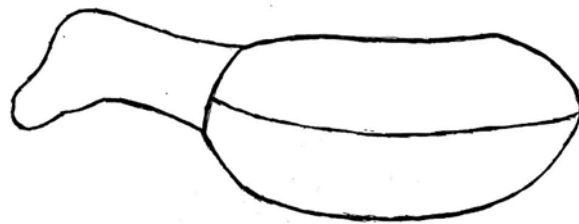


Figure 11: *Head and neck attached to the body.*
Source: Researcher's studio, 2023.

The physical attachment of these elements utilises Formica contact adhesive (Grade 99) as the primary bonding agent. The adhesive application must be executed with precision; meticulous handling is required to mitigate surface contamination or adhesive residue, thereby ensuring a refined, professional aesthetic finish.

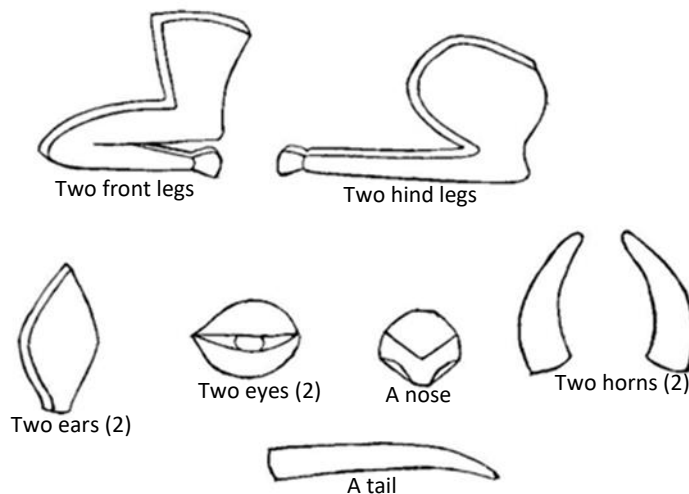


Figure 12: *Other parts of the body cut out from one-inch foam.*
Source: Researcher's studio, 2023.

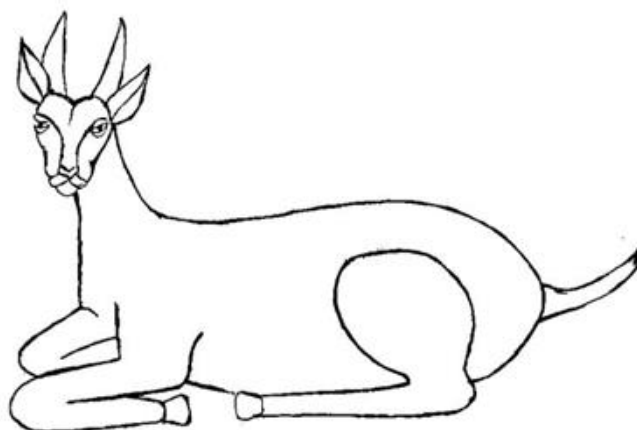


Figure 12: *Attached body parts without the fur.*
Source: Researcher's studio, 2023.

Step Five: Textile Encapsulation and Surface Lamination

Following the integration of all anatomical modules, the construction phase transitions to surface finishing and structural reinforcement. The foam armature is subjected to an encapsulation process using a textile sheathing composed of polyester fabric or grey baft (unbleached cotton). This fabric layer is secured to the foam core utilising formica contact adhesive to ensure a seamless bond.



Figure 13: *Lined the outer part of the deer's body with polyester fabric.*

Source: Researcher's studio, 2023.

To finalise the surface integrity, a coating of white bonded glue (Polyvinyl Acetate) is applied topically over the entire textile surface, as depicted in Figure 13. Upon curing, this adhesive layer acts as a sizing agent, increasing the tensile strength of the fabric and ensuring the sheathing remains taut and rigid against the underlying form.

Step Six: Concealing Posterior Compartment

The subsequent phase necessitated the architectural definition of a hidden storage volume located posterior to the main prop structure. This internal compartment was strategically engineered to house the requisite academic regalia, specifically the mortarboard and gown, ensuring their complete obfuscation prior to the designated "reveal" sequence.

Structurally, this enclosure was fabricated to precise volumetric specifications: a longitudinal span of 2.0 feet, a breadth of 1.5 feet, and a vertical elevation (height) of 9.0 inches, as detailed in Figure 14. This cavity serves as a functional void, facilitating the seamless retrieval of props during the climax of the performance.

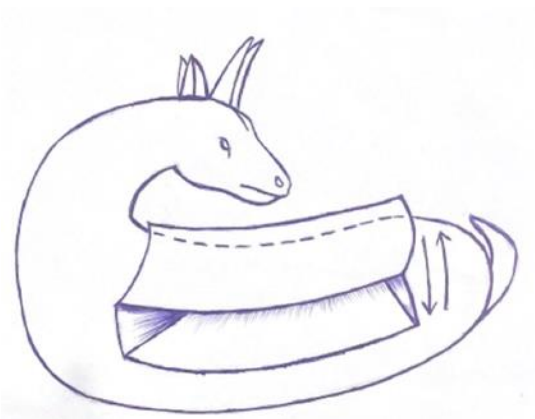


Figure 14: *The compartment at the back of the Deer prop.*

Source: Researcher's studio, 2023.

Step Seven: Surface Texturing and Synthetic Integument Application

The culminating phase of the construction process addressed the surface articulation through the application of a synthetic pile (hair mesh). To ensure chromatic fidelity to the biological subject, a specific tri-tone palette was selected, comprising golden brown, jet black, and white fibres.

The technical application involved the precision trimming of the mesh into uniform two-inch strips. These segments were systematically laminated onto the anterior and lateral planes of the body utilising a white bonded adhesive (Polyvinyl Acetate). To achieve a high degree of verisimilitude, the placement of the fur followed a strict sequential layering technique known as imbrication. This method mimics the natural directionality and growth patterns of cervid fur, thereby enhancing the illusion of organic texture.

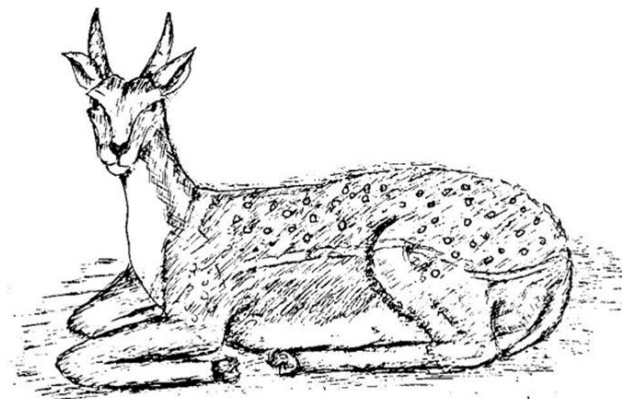


Figure 15: *Completed Deer with all body parts and details.*

Source: Researcher's studio, 2023.

While this procedure yields a visually striking aesthetic, it is notably labour-intensive and demands meticulous diligence to ensure seamless integration. Figure 15 presents the fully resolved artefact, integrating all anatomical and surface details. The overarching objective of this creative synthesis was to generate a hyper-realistic theatrical property designed to seamlessly fit the visual requirements of the ceremonial occasion.

Step Eight: Rehearsal For Ergonomic Viability & Manoeuvrability

Upon the construction completion, the project transitioned into a critical period of operational testing. A series of technical rehearsals was executed involving the designated performers tasked with animating the artefact. These sessions were conducted under the direct supervision of the designer to assess the functional dynamics of the prop in a real-time environment.



Figure 16: *The completed Deer being used during the ceremony by the student performers during the investiture.*

Source: Researcher's studio, 2023.

As illustrated in Fig. 16, this iterative process was essential for validating the ergonomic feasibility of the structure (weight distribution and comfort) and the manoeuvrability of the apparatus. The objective was to ensure that the prop could be effectively embodied by the operators while maintaining structural integrity and aesthetic consistency during the performance.

These steps represent a systematic translation of artistic intent into physical reality, moving from a two-dimensional conceptual framework to a fully articulated, three-dimensional prop. The process concluded with rigorous rehearsals, ensuring that the prop was not only visually faithful to the subject but also viable for use.

4. Findings and Discussions

4.1 Audience Reception and Critical Feedback

The integration of the *Aboakyer* Deer into the Chancellor's Investiture ceremony elicited profound and multifaceted responses from attendees, underscoring the project's success in achieving its cultural and aesthetic objectives. Feedback from both local and international participants consistently highlighted the profound impact of the prop, which transcended mere visual spectacle to become a powerful embodiment of Effutu heritage within the academic space. Its presence was not perceived as a decorative addition but as a narrative anchor, making the intangible values of strength, leadership, and communal reverence tangible and accessible to a diverse audience.

The Deer's artistic execution played a pivotal role in this reception. Its hyper-realistic design, achieved through meticulous craftsmanship, generated a sense of awe and excitement that elevated the ceremonial atmosphere beyond conventional formalities. The prop became a focal point that transformed the event into a living tableau, merging pageantry with cultural storytelling. This artistic intervention was widely acknowledged as a masterstroke that redefined the visual language of academic ceremonies at UEW, setting a new precedent for incorporating high-calibre, culturally-specific artistry.

Feedback from stakeholders revealed several layers of significance. Faculty members observed that the ceremony, centred around the Deer, functioned as "a symbol of continuity between the past and the present, bridging the gap between traditional customs and contemporary academic practices." This comment speaks to the Deer's role in creating a tangible lineage, connecting the university's modern mission to the deep historical roots of its locale. Another academic participant noted that "the presence of the Deer reinforced the importance of preserving cultural traditions within educational institutions like UEW," highlighting the project's implicit argument for cultural safeguarding as an institutional responsibility.

For members of the Effutu community, the event carried deep affective and educational resonance. One community member emphasised that "the ceremony provided an educational opportunity for both students and faculty, offering insights into the cultural significance of the Deer and its relevance to the Effutu community." This indicates a successful two-way dialogue, where the university not only showcased culture but also positioned itself as a learner, fostering mutual respect and understanding. The ceremony effectively sparked curiosity and sustained dialogue about cultural heritage and identity, extending its impact beyond the event itself into ongoing conversations on campus and within Winneba.

The then Vice Chancellor's reflection encapsulated the dual effect of the project: "The effect of the Effutu Deer not only captivates and entertains the audience but also creates a sense of cultural pride and identity among the Effutu people." This statement acknowledges the prop's success in both external engagement and internal affirmation. For the Effutu, seeing their sacred totem honoured at the heart of a major university ceremony validated their cultural patrimony in a prestigious forum, fostering a strengthened sense of pride and belonging.

In essence, audience reception confirmed that the Deer's presentation had a transformative effect on the nature of the event itself. It shifted audience engagement from passive observation to active emotional and intellectual participation. The experience fostered a palpable cultural appreciation, enhanced the ceremonial atmosphere with a unique sense of place, and created a memorable, resonant experience that attendees referenced long after the conclusion of the investiture. Furthermore, the process of gathering and analysing this feedback provided the author with critical insights into the social impact of artistic work, completing a full cycle of practice-based research where creation, deployment, and reception were integral to understanding the project's total contribution to knowledge and community.

5. Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated the profound cultural and academic significance of integrating indigenous symbolism into formal university ceremonies through the artistic creation and theatrical deployment of the *Aboakyer* Deer for the Chancellor's Investiture at the University of Education, Winneba. The project transcends mere spectacle; it represents a deliberate scholarly and creative intervention that bridges the Effutu community's heritage with the institution's academic identity. The successful fusion of the sacred Deer, a totem of strength, leadership, and ecological reverence, within the investiture ritual validates the potent role of culturally-grounded visual art in enriching institutional narratives and fostering inclusive pride.

The relevance of this paper is multifaceted. Firstly, it provides a rigorous, documented case study on the praxis of cultural translation, turning a revered symbol into a functional, realistic theatrical property. This process underscores the necessity of a studio-based research approach, which positions artistic practice not as an ancillary craft but as a core mode of intellectual inquiry. Within this framework, the act of making, conceptualising, profiling, assembling, and texturing became a site for generating new knowledge, aligning with Marshall's (2010) assertion that materials and processes are active agents in research. The detailed, step-by-step documentation of the Deer's construction offers a valuable methodological blueprint for practitioners and researchers in technical theatre, prop design, and cultural performance, highlighting how aesthetic vision is systematically realised through material intelligence and engineering.

The paper also highlights the intellectual significance of applying Csikszentmihalyi's Flow Theory to artistic production. The researcher's immersive state was not merely a personal condition but a critical methodological component that facilitated innovation, precision, and aesthetic coherence. This theoretical grounding elevates the discussion beyond technical reportage, embedding the creative process within psychological and phenomenological discourse. It argues convincingly that such deep engagement is essential for achieving works that carry both ceremonial gravitas and cultural authenticity.

In terms of contribution to practice, the project establishes a replicable model for other institutions seeking to honour and incorporate local heritage. This aligns with Koomson's (2023) observation in a study of televised pageantry, where the 'strategic placement of culturally specific symbols within a performance frame actively constructs a narrative of heritage and modernity for a national audience.' The Deer served as a dynamic conduit for storytelling, transforming a routine academic rite into a memorable, culturally resonant event. The positive reception from diverse stakeholders, university leadership, faculty, students, and the Effutu community confirms that such integrations enhance communal belonging, educate audiences, and strengthen the social contract between academia and its host community. Moreover, the ergonomic testing and rehearsal phase underscored the importance of practicality and performance viability, ensuring the artefact was not only symbolically potent but also functionally robust.

Finally, this work contributes to broader knowledge in the fields of cultural studies, performance research, and artistic methodology. It advocates for the recognition of prop construction and technical theatre as legitimate forms of scholarly and cultural preservation. By meticulously documenting the synergy between tradition and innovation, the paper argues for a continued, intentional space where indigenous iconography and academic ceremony coexist, not as tokenistic gestures, but as meaningful, co-created practices that sustain cultural diversity within globalising educational landscapes. The project exemplifies how artistic research, grounded in local symbolism and executed through disciplined studio practice, can transform institutional ceremonies into living narratives of identity, pride, and continuity.

References

- Abdi, A. A. (2012). Decolonizing philosophies of education. In Decolonizing philosophies of education (pp. 1-13). Sense Publishers.
- Agyei, S. K. (2020). Chieftaincy and development in Ghana: The role of traditional authorities in the Effutu State. University of Ghana Press.
- Amissah, E. K. (2019). Cultural education and the mission of the university in Ghana: The case of University of Education, Winneba. *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 31(2), 145-160.
- Appadurai, A. (1996). Modernity at large: Cultural dimensions of globalization. University of Minnesota Press.
- Brown, K. E. (2005). *Social conflicts in contemporary Effutu festivals* (Master's thesis, Bowling Green State University).
- Csikszentmihályi, M. (1988). The flow experience and its significance for human psychology. In M. Csikszentmihályi & I. S. Csikszentmihályi (Eds.), *Optimal experience: Psychological studies of flow in consciousness* (pp. 15-35). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511621956.002>
- Currell, D. (2004). *Puppets and puppet theatre*. Crowood Press.
- Donkor, A. E. (2019). *The making of an African king: Patrilineal and matrilineal struggle among the Awutu Effutu of Ghana*. Hamilton Books.
- Emerson, H. (1998). Flow and occupation: A review of the literature. *Canadian Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 65(1), 37-44. <https://doi.org/10.1177/000841749806500105>
- Enock, I. S. (2015). *Artistic elements in the festivals of the Effutus-Ghana* (Doctoral dissertation, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology).
- Gillette, J. M. (2000). *Theatrical design and production* (4th ed.). McGraw-Hill.
- Haseman, B. (2006). A manifesto for performative research. *Media International Australia*, 118(1), 98-106.
- Koomson, E. (2023). Symbolic splendour: Integrating Adinkra symbols in Ghana's Most Beautiful set design. *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 35(2), 145-162. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13696815.2023.2178945>
- Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2009). *InterViews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.
- Marshall, C. (2010). A research design for studio-based research in art. *Teaching Artist Journal*, 8(2), 77-87. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15411791003611577>

- McAuley, G. (2012). *Not magic but work: An ethnographic account of a rehearsal process*. Manchester University Press.
- Meyer, B. (2015). *Sensational movies: Video, vision, and Christianity in Ghana*. University of California Press.
- Micah, V. K. B., Donkor, E. K., & Ankrah, O. (2022). Traditional beliefs and practices in masquerading: Effutu context. *International Journal of Culture and Art Studies*, 6(1), 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.32734/ijcas.v6i1.7413>
- Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. (1986). *Decolonising the mind: The politics of language in African literature*. James Currey.
- Osei, D. E., & Addei, C. (2018). An analysis of the Aboakyer festival as drama. *Journal of Education and Learning*, 10(1), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.17722/jell.v10i1.384>
- Ottenberg, S. (1997). *New traditions from Nigeria: Seven artists of the Nsukka group*. Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Rogala, A., & Cieślak, R. (2019). Positive emotions at work and job crafting: Results from two prospective studies. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10, 2786. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02786>
- Sefa Dei, G. J. (2014). Indigenous knowledge and education in Africa: The case of Ghana. In *Indigenous knowledge and education in Africa* (pp. 1-20). Springer.
- Takyi, E. H. (2015). *A comparative study of the concept of atonement in the Aboakyer festival of the Effutu tribe in Ghana and the Yom Kippur festival of the Old Testament: Implications for Adventist mission among the Effutu* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Adventist University of Africa.
- Technical Stage Services. (2024). *Safety guide to using prop weapons and large structures*.
- Tillis, S. (1996). The actor occluded: Puppet theatre and acting theory. *Theatre Topics*, 6(2), 109–119. <https://doi.org/10.1353/tt.1996.0014>
- UNESCO. (2005). *Convention on the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions*.
- University of Education, Winneba. (n.d.). *Brief history*. Retrieved October 26, 2023, from <https://www.uew.edu.gh/about-uew/brief-history>
- Yang, S. X., & Zhang, C. (2020). Creative product design based on Dong culture creative. *E3S Web of Conferences*, 179, 02116. <https://doi.org/10.1051/e3sconf/202017902116>
- Young, C. D., Reid, J., & Meehan, B. (2015). Taking action: Researching an innovative pedagogy for an aesthetic visual approach to environmental issues. *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability*, 16, 64–72. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cosust.2015.07.002>

EDITORIAL BOARD

JAAC have committed editorial board with expertise in the diverse fields in the African Arts and Culture disciplines. They are well grounded and work together to maintain the reputation of the journal in academism.

Chief Editor

Prof. Emmanuel Obed Acquah

Editorial Assistant

Dr. Benjamin Oduro Arhin Jnr

Editors

Prof. Ernest Kwesi Amponsah

Prof. Osuanyi Quaicoo Essel

Prof. Alfred Joshua Amuah

Prof. Mary Dzansi - McPalm

Prof. C.W.K. Mereku

Prof. R.E.K. Amissah

Dr. Ebenezer Acquah

Associate Editor

Prof. Joseph Essuman

Prof. S.M. Yirenkyi

Prof. Evans Asante

Graphics Editor

Prof. Patrique deGraft -Yankson

Nicholas Opoku

Advisory Board

Prof. J.Y. Sekyi-Baidoo

Prof. Edward Appiah

Prof. Christiana Hammond

Prof Eric Debrah Otchere

Rev. Dr. Elias Asiamah

Prof. Michael Olatunji

Past Chief Editor

Prof. Kojo Fosu

Call for Paper

The Journal of African Arts & Culture (JAAC) is an open access online platform for scholarly dialogue relating to African Arts and culture. It is committed to publishing and disseminating high quality scholarly materials that demonstrate the power and significances of the arts and culture in general in African society past and present. This journal with interdisciplinary scope publishes progressive research in the field of ancient, contemporary and modern African Arts and Culture. It covers issues in both performing and visual arts; accepts original scientific papers, critical essays, interviews, exhibition and book reviews, critiques, short reports amongst others.

JAAC welcomes article submissions at any time. JAAC is published four times a year: March, June, September, and December.

Send all inquiries about your article submission to:

jaac.journal@gmail.com OR

jaac.journalsca@gmail.com

For more information on submission guidelines visit <https://jaac-sca.org>