Utilitarianism And Symbolism Of African Traditional Graphics

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Abstract: This paper appraised utilitarian and symbolic values of African Traditional Graphics. It considered concepts of utilitarianism and symbolism, various African graphic designs and their utilitarian and symbolic values. The paper concluded that utilitarian values are essential in graphic arts production. The great thing about understanding design techniques and mood is that you can impact the mood of your audience. The use of a combination of color, typography and space to design a mood that fits your brand and is most appealing to users, is important in African Traditional Graphics. While you can't make everyone have a good day, a design that uses groupings of elements that have associated positive or negative feelings can greatly affect the happiness of people looking at a project. Symbolic features such as cultural elements and identity also greatly affect the values of African Traditional Graphics and should be inculcated to clearly distinguish and establish the origin of the art forms.

Keywords: utilitarianism, symbolism, African Traditional Graphics, arts, culture, utility, mood

I. INTRODUCTION

Utilitarianism is an ethical theory that states that the best action is the one that maximizes utility. It is mainly characterized by two elements: happiness and consequentialism. Utilitarian happiness is the biggest happiness which (supposedly) every human being looks for. In utilitarianism everything useful to happiness is good. Therefore, the name of the doctrine is utilitarianism, based on the principle of utility. Utility is found in everything which contributes to the happiness of every rational being. The criterion of good and evil is balanced between individual's happiness and the happiness of the community, "each counting in an equal way". Generally, art yields good values of utilitarianism, especially when colours, typography and culture are entwined in the design. African Traditional Graphics is usually rich in colours, typography and cultural symbolism. The term "symbolism" is derived from the word "symbol" which derives from the Latin *symbolum*, a symbol of faith, and *symbolus*, a sign of recognition. Symbolism was largely a reaction against naturalism and realism, anti-idealistic styles which were attempts to represent reality in its gritty particularity, and to elevate the humble and the ordinary over the ideal. Symbolism was a reaction in favour of spirituality, the imagination, and dreams. Some writers, such as Joris-Karl Huysmans, began as naturalists before becoming symbolists; for Huysmans, this change represented his increasing interest in religion and spirituality. Certain of the characteristic subjects of the Decadents represent naturalist interest in sexuality and taboo topics, but in their case this was mixed with Byronic romanticism and the world-weariness characteristic of the *fin de siècle* period. Symbolists believed that art should represent absolute truths that could only be described indirectly. Thus, they wrote in a very metaphorical and suggestive manner, endowing particular images or objects with symbolic meaning. This paper examines the various forms of African Graphics, their utilitarian and symbolic features.

II. OVERVIEW OF AFRICAN GRAPHICS

Africa is the home to the oldest images in the world. The origins of African art can be traced back to long before its recorded history. About thirty millennium BC, rock art was used to depict different aspects of life with imagery appearing on rocks. The rock art which includes paintings, drawings and engravings depicts animals and human figures in narrative scenes (15). In fact Southern Africa is sometimes referred to as one of the richest depositories of prehistoric mural art in the world. There are at least 15,000 discovered San rock, or Bushmen,art sites in South Africa with many more sites that are still undiscovered not only in South Africa but also in the neighboring countries of Swaziland, Lesotho, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Namibia (16). Later on the rock art of the Sahara in Niger from the fourth millennium B.C. continues this tradition. For the arts of the Blacks, just like their ritual, their symbolism and their social and political organization are means of exhibiting a general conception of the universe, its origins, workings, goal and meaning (12). While excavating the Blombos cave near the southernmost tip of South Africa, the U.S. and South African palaeontologists discovered two pieces of ochre rock with a rather complex geometric design. These are the oldest forms of graphic design ever found (11).

In Algeria, more than 15,000 drawings and engravings record the climatic changes, the animal migrations and the evolution of human life on the edge of the Sahara (16). In a series of expeditions since 1932 Almásy and Clayton succeeded in entering the three hidden valleys in places like Wadi Hamra, Wadi Abd el Melik, and Wadi Talh. Almásy also reached Regenfeld and a magnificent series of paintings were discovered at Ain Doua at Uweinat, above the well, in caves formed by the gigantic granite boulders lying on top of each other. On yet another expedition, Almásy discovered painted 'caves' at the base of the cliff in the western Gilf Kebir, at Wadi Sora (the "Valley of Pictures"), containing among others the now famous figures of the "swimmers". There are innumerable numbers of powerful rock prints in these areas (16).

Far from the main concentration of sites, they came unexpectedly on a very large shelter, some thirty meters long, that is covered by superb paintings of the late *Bovidian Phase* that is thought to have commenced about 6000 years ago, some showing humans in the characteristic Karnasahi style. Artistic creativity or Expressive individualism: In Western African art in particular, there is a widespread emphasis on expressive individualism while simultaneously being influenced by the work of predecessors. An example would be Dan artistry as well as its presence in the Western African diaspora (16).

The human figure has always been the primary subject matter for most African art, and this emphasis even influenced certain European traditions (Denise, 2008). For example, in the fifteenth century Portugal traded with the Sapi culture near Ivory Coast in West Africa. The following are common features in African Traditional Graphics:

A. THE AFRICAN TATOOS

Tatoos have formed common body graphics in Africa, especially in the North and some parts of the East. Perhaps the most typographical body-markings are the ranchers' brands burned into the flanks of animals as marks of ownership (5). Some look like modern-day logos. Perhaps brands were what Stefan Sagmeister had in mind when he took a razor-blade to his body, literally cutting words into his flesh, in a kind of temporary designer-self-mutilation for a poster advertising an AIGA (American Institute of Graphic Arts) lecture of 1999. Forget about the pain-free body painting of the Brownjohn poster (and countless other examples)–cutting himself was a commentary on the absurdity of indelibly inking the body with tattoos. And yet it served its purpose. It was not only a startling way to communicate a message, but also an unforgettable lettering composition. In some African cultures, tattoos are used to identify tribes or kindreds. They are given at birth or when the child is in puberty age. Whether indelibly inscribed or temporarily tattooed on skin, body type's long tradition of use gives it continued resonance.

B. PICTOGRAPHY AND TYPOGRAPHY

In some parts of Africa, pictography is used as a form of writing in schools. This set of pictographic characters was intended "to create narrative visual material, avoiding details which do not improve the narrative character," as Neurath wrote in one of his books propagating his unique idea to improve visual literacy. He believed that Isotype, formed of pictograms, icons or symbols, could, as the world's first universal pictorial language, transcend national borders (5). The International System of Typographic Picture Education (Isotype) was introduced in the 1930s by the Viennese political economist and museum director Otto Neurath and his wife, Marie Reidemeister. Isotype was originally designed as an alternative to text, a starkly graphic means of communicating information about locales, events, and objects on the one hand, and complex relationships in space and time on the other. Neurath's Vienna School was rooted in a simple graphic vocabulary of silhouetted symbolic representations of every possible image, from men and women to dogs and cats to trucks and planes. This storehouse of icons was a kit of parts that could be used to present any informational or statistical data. Neurath's illustrators, the German Gerd Arntz and the Viennese Augustin Tschinkel and Erwin Bernath, created a wealth of simplified characteristics that distinguished between, for example, laborers, office workers, soldiers and police officers. The neutral silhouette was preferred because it avoided personal interpretation. It could also be viewed as a signpost rather than a critique (5).

Neurath was keen on objectivity and ordered the artists to make silhouettes from cut paper or simple pen-and-ink drawings. Yet Arntz injected warmth and humur through gestures in the way a figure held a newspaper or carried a lunchbox. Neurath's work influenced the cartographic and information graphics of his day and well into the late twentieth century. He also used pictograms to stand for quantities–what he called "statistical accountability"–so they could convey

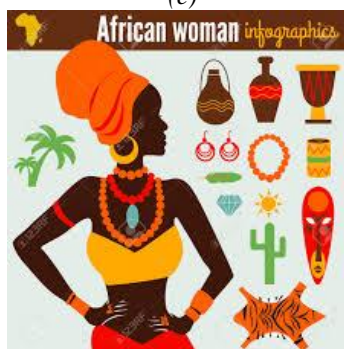numerical information at the same time as their primary meaning.

(a)   *(b)*

(c)   *(d)*

(e)   *(f)*

(g)   *(h)*

Figure 1 a-h: Selected Images of African Traditional Graphics (18)

III. UTILITARIANISM OF AFRICAN TRADITIONAL GRAPHICS

Three basic design techniques could be found in African Graphic Designs. They include: color, typography and space. These are the key components for establishing the mood of a project. Moods are an extension of emotions (6). This less defined sort of feeling often falls into the category of good or bad and last for longer periods of time than a specific emotion (3). Moods can change based on events, environmental factors or even by viewing something, but mood is primarily a feeling that just happens and is less intense than a specific emotion. It can impact how a person thinks about everything he or she comes in contact with. End- users of African Graphics have experienced a lot of mood changes based on features of the graphics (8). For instance, graphics depicting festivals in full colours, have impacted positively on the moods of consumers of the art projects or works while clumsily selected colours, typography and space have negative effects on moods of consumers (3).

What makes mood especially interesting and important for designers is that research has shown mood influences advertising and brand attitudes (4). One common finding is that almost everyone surveyed, regardless of gender or expressed mood, preferred to view information that's presented in a happy way. When you think about mood, two extremes come to mind – good and bad (or positive and negative). These moods often emerge from emotional influences such as anger, fear, disgust, happiness, sadness and surprise. Mood can also happen for a group or crowd, resulting in a common mood that creates a shared emotional experience. So how does all of this impact design? Mood establishes how users will connect to a project. Will they view it in a positive or negative way? How will they process the information presented? Does the mood of the project establish a connection with the mood of users in a way that creates a commonality or group feeling? (3).

Color associations in terms of mood require a lot of context (7). How the color is used – a dominant color versus accent – and other colors in proximity to it can have great impact. Design techniques such as tint, tone, saturation and contrast make a lot of difference as well. The warmness or coolness of colors is also directly associated with mood.

✓ Warm colors are soothing and creative but can feel chaotic or stressful (red, yellow, orange)
✓ Cool colors are inviting and professional but can feel unfriendly or stark (blue, green, purple)

Positive color associations greatly affect the mood of end-users (3). The following colour associations have been identified in this respect:

✓ Red: Love, urgency, youth
✓ Orange: Energy, ambition, enthusiasm
✓ Yellow: Cheer, joy, energy
✓ Green: Growth, nature, luck
✓ Blue: Peace, trust, security
✓ Purple: Wisdom, respect, wealth

Negative color associations affect mood negatively. The following colour associations have been identified in this respect:

✓ Red: Warning, war, annoyance

✓ Orange: Anxiety, aggressiveness, nervousness
✓ Yellow: Insecurity, distraction, panic
✓ Green: Envy, apprehension, uncertain
✓ Blue: Grief, remorse, dispassion
✓ Purple: Boredom, loathing, disgust

Adding black to any color gives it a more negative association, while adding white creates a more positive feeling. This applies both to the actual color mix of each hue and surrounding colors and contrasts.

Typography can present an interesting case study in mood. There are two primary considerations – aesthetics and readability (4). Typography can be used primarily as a visual element and in this regard offers more opportunity to create different kinds of feeling. Moreover type is used to convey information and needs to be readable. Type that is not easy to read, regardless of context, will create a negative association. Readable type includes every word on the canvas from headlines to body text. When thinking about type for readability, designers often opt for a serif or sans serif style. Serifs are considers to be a little more professional and serious while sans serif typefaces are associated with more modern, clean and informal designs (2).

Typography used for purely aesthetic purposes can fall into almost any category. Connecting type to the overall context of the design can greatly impact the mood it conveys as well, especially if your typefaces are fairly neutral. (Helvetica, for example, is thought to take on the properties of surrounding typefaces.) (5).

Positive type associations in typography include:
✓ Serifs with thin strokes
✓ Rounded lettering
✓ Novelty typefaces
✓ Type styles with log tails or flourishes
✓ Fancy scripts
✓ Open lettering
✓ Modern typefaces

Negative type associations in typography include:
✓ Thick strokes
✓ Letters with harsh strokes or lines
✓ All caps lettering
✓ Messy handwriting or shaky strokes
✓ Ransom lettering style (using mixed typefaces)
✓ Tight lettering
✓ Black letter or old-style type styles

Just a physical space can make you feel a certain way and create a mood, so can design space. And the concept parallels physical space in that generally open spaces are more positive and inviting while closed or tight spaces are more negative in association (2).

Space is the connecting element in a design project that gives users a visual break. Space creates a flow from element to element, telling people where to look, what to read first and what's important in the information they are processing. Space can also make you feel at home in the design or lost in the chaos of it. Designers often use space to imply an overall mood for the project. Simple spacing and organization can bring together color and typography to create a positive mood or lack thereof can have the opposite impact (4).

Positive space associations in use of space include:
✓ Open space

✓ Consistent leading for type
✓ Common text wrap and element spacing
✓ Organization of elements/use of a grid
✓ Plenty of margins
✓ Contrast between open or negative spaces and other elements

Negative space associations in use of space include (5):
✓ Tight space
✓ Poor alignment of objects
✓ Broken spaces between text that make reading difficult
✓ Elements that are too small or large in context of other items
✓ Overlapping elements or elements that bump against one another
✓ Lack or organization or order

IV. SYMBOLISM OF AFRICAN TRADITIONAL GRAPHICS

Symbolism in literature is distinct from symbolism in art although the two were similar in many aspects. In painting, symbolism can be seen as a revival of some mystical tendencies in the Romantic tradition, and was close to the self-consciously morbid and private decadent movement. The effect of globalisation is becoming increasingly evident, and serves as a threat to different cultures, destroying cultural diversity in the process by ignoring cultural identities (9). In order to confront such a global phenomenon it is important to promote cultural identity and symbolism. Graphic design, as a powerful tool, has a role to play in this process. There were several rather dissimilar groups of Symbolist painters and visual artists, which included Gustave Moreau, Gustav Klimt, Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis, Jacek Malczewski, Odilon Redon, Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, Henri Fantin-Latour, Gaston Bussière, Edvard Munch, Félicien Rops, and Jan Toorop. Symbolism in painting was even more widespread geographically than symbolism in poetry, affecting Mikhail Vrubel, Nicholas Roerich, Victor Borisov-Musatov, Martiros Saryan, Mikhail Nesterov, Léon Bakst, Elena Gorokhova in Russia, as well as Frida Kahlo in Mexico, Elihu Vedder, Remedios Varo, Morris Graves and David Chetlahe Paladin in the United States. Auguste Rodin is sometimes considered a symbolist sculptor.

The symbolist painters used mythological and dream imagery. The symbols used by symbolism are not the familiar emblems of mainstream iconography but intensely personal, private, obscure and ambiguous references. More a philosophy than an actual style of art, symbolism in painting influenced the contemporary Art Nouveau style and Les Nabis (2).

African artworks tend to favor visual abstraction over naturalistic representation. This is because many African artworks generalize stylistic norms (9). Ancient Egyptian art, also usually thought of as naturalistically depictive, makes use of highly abstracted and regimented visual canons, especially in painting, as well as the use of different colors to represent the qualities and characteristics of an individual being depicted (10). Igbos are known for masquerades associated with the *Iko Okochi* harvest festival, in which the forms of the masks are determined by tradition. The festival theme varies

each year. The Igbo use thousands of masks, which incarnate unspecified spirits or the dead, forming a vast community of souls. The masks are made of wood and fabric. The remarkable characteristic of these masks is that they are painted chalk white, the color of the spirit. Masked dancers wore extremely elaborate costumes (sometimes ornamented with mirrors) and often their feet and hands were covered. With their masks, the Igbo oppose beauty to bestiality, the feminine to the masculine, black to white. The masks, of wood or fabric, are employed in a variety of dramas: social satires, sacred rituals for ancestors or invocation of the gods, initiation, and public festivals. The white maiden masks, danced by men, have several layers of meanings encompassing spirit characters of different ages. The masks of the eldest daughter and her younger sisters are characterized distinctively and are decorated with elaborate crested hairstyles. They all have small pointed breasts and wear bright polychrome appliqué cloth "body suits" whose patterning loosely resemble monochromatic designs painted on youthful females in the area (1).

All through the African continent, there have been various calls for graphic designers to generate visual communication that reflects the identity of the African continent (13). Africa inspired the world during the 21st century through its Art and culture. From time immemorial, African art has influenced artists working in various styles and media. African art forms inspired the works of modern pioneers such as Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, and Georges Braque. These artists came into contact with few of these art forms and made a big issue of it bringing about the birth of art movements such as Cubism and Expressionism. These pioneers depended on African art for solutions to aesthetic problems. Unfortunately, artists from the original home of such inspirational art forms are not themselves using their own art forms to their advantage.

The influence of African culture on the works of the African graphic designer if not absent can hardly be seen. Culture reflects in the artworks of graphic designers worldwide with the exception of Africa (16). The works of African graphic designers have not been described as possessing cultural identity, but rather have been characterised by Western aesthetics and conventions. This is due to the fact that most students receive training based on Western models and theories. In search of ideas for their work, most African graphic designers rely on their foreign contemporaries for inspiration through surfing websites, television, movies and magazines; more so, they give little attention to their environment and its rich cultural values. In situations whereby designers have endeavoured to depict African culture, they end up adding to the existing stereotypes (1).

For example, the depictions of Africa map, indigenous flora, fauna, Adinkra, Kente and Ndebele pattern. It is as a result of these foregoing problems that this study is conducted to evolve new ways in which graphic design students, especially in Ghana, can generate ideas that will enable them to create visual statements that are inspired by indigenous African art forms (5).

The British social anthropologist defined the concept of culture as " that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (17). This definition portrays culture as the attribute of man that distinguishes him from others by virtue of the culture or society one finds himself, because of the kind of skill, knowledge, art a person possesses, or the manner or way in which one professes his religion or custom. Thus culture is a way of tracing a persons' lineage or ancestry.

This observation is further noted by Banks and McGee that, culture may be deemed as the values, symbols, interpretations, and perspectives that distinguish one people from another, it is not only material objects and other tangible aspects of human societies (12) People across cultures, usually construe the meaning of symbols, artefacts, and behaviours in same or similar ways. This definition of culture states that, people are distinguished by values, ideas, and viewpoints, which are a collection of invisible frameworks that are represented by visible elements, such as symbols, artefacts, and behaviours. The converging theories as espoused by the authors above is one of a visibly emerging skill and knowledge the individual or group possesses, or of values, artefacts or religion, the bottom of which is the result produced by the individual or group because of his/her cultural background.

There are some authors, however, who base their ideas about culture on human behaviour, the attitude of the mind, the mental process that produces the result and the information that has been fed to the persons' person and not particularly on the materials of the society or culture. Kottak (11) opines that culture is based on a behavioural pattern. It is created by consistently learning beliefs and the use of language and symbols transferred to generations, which culminates into rules of conduct and an approach to communication. This interpretation of culture indicates that, culture is based on the learned and shared language, symbols and behaviours that convey human beliefs and norms. Hofstede (15) developed a definition of culture as "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another" (15). Hofstede (15) considers the concept of cognition as affecting thoughts and feeling, beliefs, attitudes, and skills in a manner which is taught and nurtured by the environment of the person (15).

The activities and conduct of the individual or group of people within the same generation or region can be appertained to his culture through the mental processes developed. People from the same culture usually adopt similar patterns and means to connote the meanings of their visible materials. This assertion throws light on the contradicting approaches different people from different cultures adopt in arriving at the same result. Lederach (13) supports this idea expressed earlier about differing processes of a cultural mindset, by saying that culture is the knowledge and schemes created by a set of people for perceiving, interpreting, expressing, and responding to the social realities around them. The observation of Lederach, presumes that in the area of graphic design, a designers choice of colour, pattern, form or composition or even the design processes can be limited to certain choices exclusively, or enhanced or varied because of the scope of the individuals culture based learning and understanding of the concept of aesthetics by reason of his cultural enabling environment.

Having understood the concept of culture, it is expedient that the dichotomy between culture and the creation of a cultural identity be drawn. The theory of cultural identity is defined by Collier and Thomas (12), as "identification with and perceived acceptance into a group that has shared systems of symbols and meanings as well as norms/rules for conduct". This definition implies that individuals' cultural identity is formed by the attribute and character of the individual that qualifies him as eligible to be accepted and identified as part of a group or whole. The identity may be associated with language, religion, art forms, beliefs or skill coupled with the manner and processes through which they are manifested by the person or group. Wieder and Pratt (14) emphasise that cultural identities exist in everyday life; the members of a culturally identified group employ similar skill, art forms, symbols and speak the same or similar languages and understand the same views, ideas and interpretations - this being what identifies them as people with the same cultural background.

In Ethiopia, the *Madonna and Child*, an Ethiopian masterpiece of African art from an illuminated Amharic manuscript is unique. The compositional balance of the design along with the stylistic definition of faces are stunningly expressive and elegant It contained elements of fluidity and symmetry, that are conventional representations sufficiently suggestive to convey the intended images to the mind, without destroying the unity of the theme. Ancient Nubian painting resembles Egyptian painting but that does not mean all of their art was derivative. Meroitic art was especially idiosyncratic and full of playfulness. Emily Teeter of the Oriental Institute told Smithsonian, "It became a very spontaneous art, full of free-flowing improvisation." Westerners had long misunderstood African art as "primitive." The term carries with it negative connotations of underdevelopment and poverty. Colonization and the slave trade in Africa during the nineteenth century set up a Western understanding hinged on the belief that African art lacked technical ability due to its low socioeconomic status (16). At the start of the twentieth century, artists like Picasso, Matisse, Vincent van Gogh, Paul Gauguin and Modigliani became aware of, and inspired by, African art. In a situation where the established avant garde was straining against the constraints imposed by serving the world of appearances, African art demonstrated the power of supremely well organised forms; produced not only by responding to the faculty of sight, but also and often primarily, the faculty of imagination, emotion and mystical and religious experience (16). These artists saw in African Art a formal perfection and sophistication unified with phenomenal expressive power. The study of and response to African Art, by artists at the beginning of the twentieth century facilitated an explosion of interest in the abstraction, organisation and reorganisation of forms, and the exploration of emotional and psychological areas hitherto unseen in Western art. By these means, the status of visual art was changed. Art ceased to be merely and primarily aesthetic, but became also a true medium for philosophic and intellectual discourse, and hence more truly and profoundly aesthetic than ever before.

European architecture was strongly influenced by African art. Pioneers like Antonio Sant'Elia, Le Corbusier, Pier Luigi Nervi, Theo van Doesburg and Erich Mendelsohn were also

sculptors and painters; Futurist, Rationalist and Expressionist architecture discovered in Africa a new repertoire of proto-symbols; in a formal level, the space is now composed by single forms that do not only refer to human proportions and scale, but to its psychology; surfaces are modelled by geometric patterns (16). During the 1950s, European architects transformed buildings into big-scale sculptures, replacing unnecessary decoration (so criticized by Adolf Loos), by integrating textured murals and large bas-reliefs in walls. During the 1960s, African Art influenced Brutalism, both in language and symbolism, particularly in the late Le Corbusier, Oscar Niemeyer and Paul Rudolph. The powerful work of John Lautner reminds of artifacts from the Yoruba; the sensual projects of Patricio Pouchulu honour the bare wooden sculptures of the Dogon and Baoulé. Unlike Europe, African art never established boundaries between body art, painting, sculpture and architecture; thanks to this, Western architects can now extend towards different art expressions (14).

Africa is home to a thriving contemporary art: fine art and culture. This has been sadly understudied until recently, due to scholars' and art collectors' emphasis on traditional art. Notable modern artists include El Anatsui, Marlene Dumas, William Kentridge, Karel Nel, Kendell Geers, Yinka Shonibare, Zerihun Yetmgeta, Odhiambo Siangla, Elias Jengo, Olu Oguibe, Lubaina Himid, and Bili Bidjocka, Henry Tayali. Art bienniales are held in Dakar, Senegal, and Johannesburg, South Africa. Many contemporary African artists are represented in museum collections, and their art may sell for high prices at art auctions (16). Despite this, many contemporary African artists tend to have difficult times finding a market for their work. Many contemporary African arts borrow heavily from traditional predecessors. Ironically, this emphasis on abstraction is seen by Westerners as an imitation of European and American cubist and totemic artists, such as Pablo Picasso, Amedeo Modigliani and Henri Matisse, who, in the early twentieth century, were heavily influenced by traditional African art. This period was critical to the evolution of Western modernism in visual arts, symbolized by Picasso's breakthrough painting "Les Demoiselles d'Avignon." (*12*).

Today Fathi Hassan is considered the early real representatives of contemporary black African Art. Contemporary African art was pioneered in the 1950s and 1960s in South Africa by artists like Irma Stern, Cyril Fradan, Walter Battiss and through galleries like the Goodman Gallery in Johannesburg. More recently European galleries like the October Gallery in London and collectors such as Jean Pigozzi, Artur Walther and Gianni Baiocchi (*12*) in Rome have helped expand the interest in the subject. Numerous exhibitions at the Museum for African Art in New York and the African Pavilion at the 2007 Venice Biennale, which showcased the Sindika Dokolo African Collection of Contemporary Art, have gone a long way to countering many of the myths and prejudices that haunt Contemporary African Art. The appointment of Nigerian Okwui Enwezor as artistic director of Documenta 11 and his African centred vision of art propelled the careers of countless African artists onto the international stage.

In Tanzania, Tinga Tinga art has roots in decorating hut walls in central and south Tanzania. It was first in 1968 when

Edward Said Tingatinga started to paint on wooden sheets with enamel colours when Tinga Tinga art became known. Many books in the classical world were illustrated, although only a handful of original examples survive. Medieval religious illuminated manuscripts have used graphics extensively. Among these books are the Gospel books of Insular art, created in the monasteries of the British Isles The graphics in these books are influenced by the Animal style of the "barbarian" peoples of Northern Europe, with much use of interlace and geometric decoration. In Islamic countries graphic designs were used to decorate their holy book, the Qur'an. Muslim scribes used black ink and golden paper to write utilizing an angled alphabet, called Kuffi. Such writings appeared in the 8th century, and reached their apex in the 10th century. Many believe that calligraphy adds a mystical dimension to writing. Such mysticism appears to be consistent with the feeling that a religious text tries to convey. This is why to create a spiritual feeling many religious texts use calligraphy (16).

The Sapi culture created elaborate ivory saltcellars that were hybrids of African and European designs, most notably in the addition of the human figure (the human figure typically did not appear in Portuguese saltcellars). The human figure may symbolize the living or the dead, may reference chiefs, dancers, or various trades such as drummers or hunters, or even may be an anthropomorphic representation of a god or have other votive function. Another common theme is the inter-morphosis of human and animal (Denise, 2008). The art of Ile-Ife flourished from about A.D. 800 to 1600 and exhibited great technical excellence and artistic refinement. Between the eleventh and fifteenth century the artists of Ile-Ife developed a highly naturalistic sculptural tradition in terra-cotta or pottery sculpture. Later, this was translated into bronze and brass castings using alloys of copper and zinc.

Bronze portrait heads and figures were produced to commemorate deceased kings and chiefs. Benin Head, a bronze sculpture from the Kingdom of Benin was one of the Iconic works among the masterpieces of the arts of Africa. To exalt Oba and his lineage, artists created a vast variety of cast-metal objects in the technically challenging *ciré perdue* technique. An American writer who visited a Tsogo village in the 1860s was most impressed by the decorative designs on the doors of many of the houses and commented on the red, white and black patterns of their complicated graphic designs. (16)

At least one graphic design genre dates back to Neolithic times. The tattoo, whether as decoration or symbolic icon, has stood the test of time–even if the actual injected images tend to fade and degrade as skin ages and wrinkles. Tattoos are more popular in some cultures and subcultures than others–sometimes even sacred–while other cultures strictly prohibit them.

V. CONCLUSION

Utilitarian values are essential in graphic arts production. The great thing about understanding design techniques and mood is that you can impact the mood of your audience. The use of a combination of color, typography and space to design a mood that fits your brand and is most appealing to users, is important in African Traditional Graphics. While you can't make everyone have a good day, a design that uses groupings of elements that have associated positive or negative feelings can greatly affect the happiness of people looking at a project. Symbolic features such as cultural elements and identity also greatly affect the values of African Traditional Graphics and should be inculcated to clearly distinguish and establish the origin of the art forms.

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