

GHANAIAAN CLAY PRACTICES: A RETHINKING

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Abstract: This paper discusses Ghanaian clay practices and how their histories and some practices limit their clay discourse, creating a disconnect from ecologies of practice. Western contemporary and academic ceramics communities acknowledge the present and historic lack of diversity and inclusion of Global south indigenous practice, a condition that has been constant since there has been a conception of “contemporary ceramics”. Documentation of art has been largely the exclusive province of art historians, yet, Ghana never had art history has a major in any Ghanaian university including Achimota School that was set up by the colonial government. There are several ceramic material sites but no processing industries for creating products. This paper signals a rethinking of forms, economic exchange, materiality and recommends that it is expedient to expand Ghanaian clay practice discourse in all forms to connect to the ecologies of practice by forward-thinking, looking at the indigenous ceramic medium outside the pigeonhole, and pushing the boundaries of conventional Ghanaian ceramics.

Keywords: Rethinking, clay, ceramics, indigenous practices, Ghana

Abstrak: Makalah ini membahas praktik tanah liat Ghana dan bagaimana sejarah mereka dan beberapa praktik membatasi wacana tanah liat mereka, menciptakan keterputusan dari praktik ekologi. Komunitas keramik kontemporer dan akademis Barat mengakui kurangnya keragaman dan inklusi dari praktik adat global selatan saat ini dan dalam sejarah, suatu kondisi yang telah konstan sejak ada konsepsi "keramik kontemporer". Dokumentasi seni sebagian besar merupakan provinsi eksklusif sejarawan seni, namun, Ghana tidak pernah memiliki jurusan sejarah seni di universitas mana pun di Ghana termasuk Sekolah Achimota yang didirikan oleh pemerintah kolonial. Ada beberapa situs bahan keramik tetapi tidak ada industri pengolahan untuk membuat produk. Makalah ini menandakan pemikiran ulang bentuk, pertukaran ekonomi, materialitas dan merekomendasikan bahwa perlu untuk memperluas wacana praktik tanah liat Ghana dalam segala bentuk untuk terhubung ke ekologi praktik dengan pemikiran ke depan, melihat media keramik asli di luar pigeonhole, dan mendorong batas-batas keramik Ghana konvensional.

Kata kunci: Memikirkan kembali, tanah liat, keramik, praktik pribumi, Ghana

1. Introduction

Over the centuries and during the colonial period, it was a commonplace that Westerners considered African art as “primitive” and this perception carried with it a negative influence on the practice of art in Africa. Though Stevens (1930) opined that before the arrival of Western education in the Gold Coast now Ghana, the arts were in a more flourishing state, these ‘primitive’ perceptions of African art lacking technical abilities and low socio-economic status indeed may have limited the practice of art especially clay not to attend to its breadth of cultures and being exclusive in the global practice. The colonial hold on seeing some of the ceramic vessels being used for religious rituals and labelling them as ‘fetish’ contributed a great deal to limiting Ghanaian indigenous pottery and ceramic practice to expand its frontiers of production. While it is worth saying that tradition and culture evolve and change over time due to new developments, it is also significant to note that quite often, when it comes to the story of Africa, until recently, writers tended to isolate and associate tradition to the past and think of modern developments and art practices as not part or representations of African Art. Indeed, it was only after the historic exhibition that art from African, Caribbean, Asian origins began to

have the same leverage and attention as those from Europe (Magnin and Soullillou, 1996; Fisher, 2009).

Studies have looked into low ceramic specialization decisions at the tertiary level and one of the reasons was that they were not encouraged to pursue ceramics seriously because the best that could be hoped for was to become a 'roadside potter' (Nortey et al, 2013). Much of the pottery in Ghana is sold by the roadside mostly adjacent to the potters' work area, which is in turn located near the naturally occurring clay source. In short, most Ghanaians are completely comfortable using ceramics in everyday food preparation, but would be hesitant if not resistant to considering these items as art. In other parts of the world, there is a network of galleries and specialized spaces devoted to promoting 'Ceramic Art,' but the use of handmade ceramics in daily life remains relatively esoteric. Clearly, we have not attended to the breadth of our practices.

The ceramics juxtaposition between Ghana and the Global North becomes undeniable when it comes to ceramics materials. Ceramics practice in Ghana is limited to a very few accessible processed materials, and whatever raw materials are available locally. There is, for all intents and purposes, no ceramics materials industry and no commercial ceramics materials marketplace in Ghana. Ghanaian ceramics artists, in nearly all cases, use whatever clay is most geographically convenient, only minimally processed by removing large organic particles. Glaze materials are so much available but glaze is so limited that one may speak of 'the' Ghanaian glaze, at least in terms of indigenous pottery. Given these conditions, which may appear to be limitations, Ghanaian ceramists develop a far deeper understanding of local raw materials by the processing of feldspar in the KNUST Ceramics studio by crushing large 'rocks' of feldspar through a series of three hammermills and the mica impurities removed by hand, to make the material viable. Again, we have not expanded such hierarchy of materials processing.

Besides challenges relating to arts infrastructure, institutional appreciation, and ceramics raw materials, there are other challenges inherent to working as a ceramic artist in Ghana. African, and particularly Sub-Saharan African contemporary artists and artworks are often approached by outsiders with a biased (whether realized or not) set of assumptions, when and if they are engaged by the contemporary U.S./European art "establishment," subjected to an antiquated anthropological-like objectification rather than being considered through the lens of contemporary critical theory. In this capacity, "tradition" may be considered a double-edged sword; while the strength of the past may be recognized, a contemporary African artist may also be borne down by the weight of history applied by an outside agent, in a manner not experienced by contemporary "Western" artists. The international contemporary ceramic-art dialogue is overwhelmingly dominated by voices from the U.S., Western Europe and Asia. It is an unfortunate condition of this international (but somewhat less than globally representative) community, that voices from the African Continent and West Africa in particular are often included only as tangential or exoticizing elements in contemporary ceramics curating, critical writing, or events.

Before the arrival of Westerners in the Gold Coast (now Ghana), clay practice was far advanced in created studios and even at the homes of most families. The dexterity to which one could manipulate the clay was easily noticed. When Herbert Vladmir Meyerowitz arrived in the Gold Coast and became principal of Achimota Art School, Harrod (2014) referred to Meyerowitz as someone with an ambition and a background from Kunstgewerbe-schule and was interested in the craft-into-industry possibilities. He viewed the arts of the Gold Coast as craft. The colonial governments introduced education and specialized art schools to develop the skill through several reforms. In the process, our practice became a mixed-bag of indigenous and Western forms especially for those who had the opportunity to study at Achimota Art school and others who travelled to Germany, United Kingdom, USA and Netherlands such as James Kwame Amoah, Daniel Cobblah, Kofi Asante, Kingsley Kofi Broni, etc. Despite these exposures and practice, it appears Ghanaian clay practice has not attended to its breadth of cultures. Whilst other countries have been able to use their practice to promote their culture heritage through their indigenous concepts and expanding their frontiers of production whilst maintaining cultural consciousness, it appears we are struggling and very much exclusive in global ceramic conversations. It is important to note that these generation of Ghanaian ceramists –James Kwame Amoah, Kofi Asante,

Kingsley Kofi Broni and Daniel Cobblah were able to push their work by combining indigenous concepts and forms with modern and postcolonial ideas like their counterparts in painting and sculpture. It does appear that by the turn of the century, a generational gap had been created in the ceramic industry in Ghana. The older generation had retired and coupled with the lack of infrastructure for pottery and ceramics, students developed very interest in the field. WC Owusu took the practice to a certain level, making murals at our airports etc. Kofi Antubam also made some ceramic mosaic sculptures. There is the need to bridge the gap by introducing some reforms in the curriculum to accommodate contemporary trends in production and exhibition.

This paper argues that ceramics especially that of the Ghanaian practice has not attended to the breath of its cultures and have remained within certain practices allowing the hierarchies that shaped them to influence certain practices whilst the Western practices are expanding their ecologies of practice. A classic example is the production of earthenware bowls has been a common ceramic vessel of indigenous ceramists within the regions of Ghana which has remained largely as a commercial art up till now but could have been developed into installations and contemporary art piece. In this paper, an attempt is made to open up a discussion on how our Ghanaian clay practice have been limited to scope and signal rethinking of some of our activities by extending and closing the gap between us and the global ecologies of practice.

2. Method

This study employed a qualitative approach with adoption of historical and narrative methods (Mason, 2002). It relied on extensive travels to pottery/ceramic centres in Vume in the Volta region; several pockets of pottery/ceramic factories in Accra; Ekem Ceramics in Winneba, Central Regions and ceramic units and research institutions such Centre for Scientific and Industrial Research (Ceramic Section), Accra; The Geological Survey, Accra, and Tarkwa Manganese Limited. Material sites such as Moree Feldspar Encampment in Central region, Tarkwa Manganese, Western region; Teleku Bokasso Kaolin and Silica from Atoabo in Western region. gathering historic information on their establishments. It involved deeper interactions with these art makers, art historians and educators to understand the objective of the study and provide appropriate directions to appreciating the various stages of ladders the Ghanaian ceramic practice has gone through. There were also rigorous reviews of archival documents at the research centres and syntheses of several oral traditions gathered from the local centres over a five-year period. The study was interested in what was the practice in the colonial period and how has it been developed or shaped over the years. With experiences in the ceramic field for over 25years, there was much understanding of the primary data to substantiate the literature review process.

3. Discussion and Result

3.1. Making Pottery: A Subsistence Profession and Superstition

Indigenous ceramics have been a family practice long before the arrival of colonialization in Africa and more especially Ghana. Since clay abound in almost every town and regions in Ghana, the practice and production was somewhat an easy set up. Pottery products are a common spectacle to behold along the roadside as one embarks on a journey within the country. Berzock (2007) reveals that in parts of Africa where ceramic vessels are pervasive, some are clearly the focus of artistic elaboration, whether they serve as objects of both utility and beauty in domestic settings or carry symbolic import central to social identity, economic and political status, ritual practice, and belief (p.1). One hierarchy that has negatively shaped the practice of pottery or ceramics in Ghana has been the acceptance of the profession as a subsistence one and not a full- time profession. It was indigenously learnt through the transfer of mother to child by an informal apprenticeship. The clay is dug and deposited on the compound of families and whilst they form their vessels, the children watch and practice. It was perceived as a subsistence job and never devoted much time to the practice. Perhaps, the practice of leaving the ware to dry and using that period to farm or attend to other domestic chores could have negatively affected the development of indigenous ceramics.

Though these works and the various installations even at the roadside qualifies for a great deal of contemporary art, it was seen as craft. These potters stagger their 'apotoyowa' earthenware bowls in interesting installations similar to contemporary art practice. Contemporary art is concerned with the society engaging or interacting with the works produced and that was one characteristics of the earthenware bowl 'apotoyowa'. That 'apotoyowa' connotes communality because it is a vessel that brings the public together to feast. It could have been a fashionable model and vessel that would attract global connections and studies. Have we regarded the stacking of 'apotoyowa' at the roadside as an art installation or we were only interested in just selling?

The 'apotoyowa' is an iconic example, but the use of handmade pottery in Ghana is pervasive, and more so in rural and peri-urban settings. It hardly needs pointing out that this is far from the situation in the Global north where a household that uses handmade pottery is certainly the exception to the rule. This reversal continues into the upper reaches of contemporary art. Whereas ceramics is the current darling of the rarified ecosphere of Global north contemporary art, in the vibrant and imminently forward-looking Ghanaian contemporary art scene, ceramics is underrepresented to say the least, and clay is not widely viewed as a 'legitimate' profession. Studies have investigated low ceramic specialization decisions and one of the reasons was that they were not encouraged to pursue ceramics seriously because the best that could be hoped for was to become a 'roadside potter' (Nortey et al, 2013).

Religious superstition has been one of the indigenous practices that has limited and shaped the ecology of Ghanaian ceramic practice. We cite examples of several visitations to these pottery centres with our art students and the denial of females who are in their menstrual cycle not to go to the riverbanks where clay is collected. Female in their menstrual cycles is not allowed to touch clay and work and these negative superstitions that have colonized our thoughts and practice serves as deterrents to female production and lowering their opportunities to collaborate and compete on the global platform. What frame of mind are we to expect from these female students or apprentice who have been denied the opportunity to actualize what they have learnt in classroom? Inadvertently, we are telling these female students that they have no place in the ceramic industry. It is however interesting to note that these are female students studying clay subjects and programmes who do not adhere to this superstition of not touching clay during their menstrual cycle. They work throughout the month in the studio without any denial. Rethinking our beliefs on such superstitions and developing our indigenous concepts and presenting them in contemporaneity would be a great step to contributing to global ceramic art discourse. When this denial happens because of superstitious beliefs, production hours is lowered and likely to disappoint the public who will be yearning to engage with the work or customers who will need to buy. This led to cutting off from a vast population of fellow clay practitioners and customers who may look for other alternatives to these ceramic products. Already, there is the influx of products from the plastic industries which are competing favourably with ceramic products. Another issue worthy of mentioning is the adherence to same religious rituals of not working when someone dies within the town or village. This can be quite distracting and affects production.

In similar vein, it is interesting and significant to note that some of the local practices that has shaped the histories and attitude towards work as seeing everything as 'fetish'. This has great connections with the Portuguese colonial masters who referred to the indigenous priest they found on the local land as 'feticiao' (feticiao in Portuguese means fake). The interpretation is that the religious leaders of the people were 'fake priests. This gave most the ceramic production certain connotations since oral traditions show that the herbs and concoctions were brewed in these pots.

3.2. Rethinking Ghanaian Exhibition Outlets and Documentation

Significantly, the Ghanaian clay practice has not attended to the full breadth of culture and this is due to weak Ghanaian art history, documentation and market. With our limited art historians and no specialized art history school, Ghanaian clay histories were shaped by Westerners who inadvertently blurred some of the information about the works. Language and understanding of one's culture is a great pivot to documentation and interpretation of clay works. The canons of beauty are different

between the Ghanaian artist and the Western artist. Galleries, museums and public spaces were outlets of the showcasing the art works in the Western world. Today, it is prestigious to have your works in these acclaimed galleries, museums and contemporary public spaces. Whilst this was ongoing in Europe and America, it is distressing to note that the indigenous ceramic industry in Ghana had no galleries or museums to showcase works. Archival studies revealed there were little attempts from colonial governments to establish galleries or museums until years after independence. The public space was the gallery and the works were for the society to use and interact with. Is this not the objective of contemporary art? Contemporary art is concerned with the creation of art that can engage the public. Culturally, in Ghana, the practice was a reserve for females, these women potters were only producing ceramic wares for utilitarian purposes. Earthenware pots, bowls were simply to help prepare and serve food in the kitchen. There were also decorative pieces which were based on indigenous concepts. Our women, though very innovative, were making art based on same frameworks that were existing and satisfying domestic needs. Good in its function, we missed the opportunity of expanding these imaginations and experiences to a point that these local vessels would have become global vessels just as China did to their porcelain and blue and white wares.

There was complete disconnect between their production and the global art market. Their wares were at large only purchased by few tourists and these works were hardly documented. Berzock (2006) confirmed that there was no publication on the kinds of African vessels that were introduced to the market and adding to the sparseness of the vessels being purchased, there are rarely accompanied by documentary information (p.11). Meanwhile in the Global north, many of these works were found in galleries and museums attracting public viewing and this expanded clay constituency within Europe. The provenances and documentations of these ceramic works provided an archive for their works whilst the indigenous practices in Africa and more especially Ghana became mostly of oral traditions. Whilst Sieber (1980) introduces twenty-four vessels of African ceramics with brief captions, Stossel (1981) illustrates over 500 pots primarily from museums in Europe and America. This is simply an indication of how slowly ceramic art of the Global south was documented. Perhaps, the heritage of just producing to feed the family, the Ghanaian ceramics set up had limited scope failing to broaden the scope of the ceramics canon, these makers were documented, neither invited to participate on their own terms, speak with their own voices, and reap the benefits of a wider audience, both in terms of recognition, financial support and documentation.

Though there were intersections between people and clay, whether in a ritual or daily utilitarian context, have too long been the exclusive province of art historians (and only a small minority of that field), and Ghanaian clay practitioners have categorically been ignored by art historians. The attention has been more on the fine art such as painting, sculpture and textiles. To formalize the study of art, the then colonial government established Achimota School to train artists and art educators. However, we again missed the opportunity to include art history as a specialization in the field of art (seid'ou, 2006). Documentation of art has been largely the exclusive province of art historians, yet, Ghana never had art history as a major in any Ghanaian university including Achimota School that was set up by the colonial government. Whilst art history was the fundamentals of art programme be it Fine or Performing art in Western universities, the art programmes in Ghanaian universities only treated art history as a semester course and this to a large extent did not help the local ceramic practice in thoughtful documentation of their practice (seid'ou, 2006). The foundation of our ceramic art practice was weakened due to limited exposure to history and documentation. We rather focused on the 'hand and eye' curriculum which was industrially inclined but limited to creativity. Even with the numerous reforms, the Faculty of Art at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, does not have a full-fledged art history department to train art historians and curators to document and provide provenances for our works. With such poor training in art history and inability to document most of the oral traditions, we had little to show in terms of exhibitions because there is no professional curators to give directions to how to exhibit these 'apotoyowa' and the other art forms. It is distressing to note that Ghana has not expanded our programmes to have a fully-fledged department for Art history that would assist in documentation of our art practice until recently when rethinking on the part

of seid'ou karikacha and other faculty members have led to the establishment of blaxTARLINES, a contemporary art incubator which is assisting in training artists and curators.

3.3. Rethinking Market and Economic Exchange

Unlike Ghana, where it has been a challenge developing our clay practice to promote our cultural heritage and identity, the Chinese were able to develop their blue and white wares as well as their porcelain to the extent of exporting to Europe and other destinations. The development and exportation of their wares became a driving force for Chinese ceramic market. We again allowed the hierarchies that shaped our practice to influence us in relegating the use of pottery water coolers which promoted healthy lifestyles. The water coolers were means of cooling our water and considering the advantages of clay and purification, it was a better option to the use of refrigerators. We rather promoted refrigerators and other electronic appliances, and these affected our clay practices as demand for these ceramic water coolers gradually went down (Nortey et al., 2013).

According to Pierson (2012), the ceramics of China portrayed and developed their material culture and their wares served as a form of culture as well as economic exchange enabling individuals to experience another culture to become of it, in the process developing their notions of self-identity and "otherness" or alterity. Whereas in Ghana, both the local industry and the academia engaged in touristy exhibitions and largely interested in selling off products generally at the roadside and the local marketplace. seid'ou and Bouhwuis (2014) stated that Ghana's cultural fortunes waned in the last decades of the twentieth century with the inception of the neo-liberalization of state institutions and economies. An ensuing depoliticization and commoditization of art underpinned the hegemony of touristy of Ghanaian art and galleries. By the turn of the century, the default ethos of exhibition making in Ghana was premised on the trade-fair-flavoured salon style, that is filling up commercial gallery interiors with art works and souvenirs (seid'ou, et. al., 2021). For Ghanaian ceramic community to strike a chord on the international market platform, there must be a conscious effort to build a stronger relationship between the makers of the art, the art market and the art enthusiasts.



Fig. 1: Works of Sirigu Women in the Upper East of Ghana

Source: Image by Samuel Nortey



Fig.2: Earthenware bowls for serving dishes made by Sirigu Women
Source: Image by Samuel Nortey

Indigenous Ghanaian Ceramic Practice

The ceramic practice in Ghana was too much concentrated-on commerciality rather than the exhibition in its contemporaneity sense. These indigenous potters were more concern about producing wares for domestic use. Probably, since most of these indigenous potters were female, they were focused on satisfying their role of keeping the home which was customarily required of them. This practice of relegating the female to certain chores in the home are part of the hierarchies that shaped the practice of Ghanaian ceramic practice which has affected female ceramist inclusiveness in global discourse. These female potters are so skillful to produce any work of any form and figure however, the breath of cultures and the hierarchies limited them to producing just earthenware bowls and cups for their domestic uses. Even when an extended attempt is made to decolonize the mentality of these female potters to go beyond such limited scope and constituency, they are still skeptical and keep to same form. A classic example is Nortey and Bodjawah (2018) cognitive and design thinking of female potters at Afari and male potters as Mfensi workshop. The facilitators were interested in spurring innovations and decolonizing ideas of ceramic production whilst still maintaining cultural heritage and consciousness. Though the objective was achieved, these female potters are back to the production of earthenware products. Perhaps, a sustained training for a period is needed to make an impact in that direction. Warnier (2007) confirmed that pottery and its production preserve and administer the ‘vital substances’ that ensure the continuation, sustainability and prosperity of the community. As there is expansion in knowledge, greater development becomes unavoidable (Robinson, 2011). Currently, at these indigenous pottery centres, the average age of the potters is 45years. Most of the centres have folded up giving an indication that if we do not expand the frontiers of our practice and stick to the same scope of practice, it would soon have few practicing. An example is the Pankrono, Appiadu pottery centre in Kumasi which has collapsed and residential structures have been built on these clay lands. At Afari, there were over fifty female potters but there are less than ten female potters who are currently practicing and ageing as well. This is a strong indication for a rethinking of pottery activities to preserve a cultural practice and heritage. There is the need for a succession plan if this cultural heritage of ceramic art is to be preserved. One sure way to do this is consistent advocacy and sustained workshop that engages the youth as a starting point. Nortey et al., (2014) revealed through a project workshop on expanding the frontiers of pottery production in the Nanumba South District as a way of reviving the interest of the dwindling pottery activity in the district.

Again, we must rethink on developing our indigenous ceramic practice and being original in our creativity not always following the status quo but challenging established systems and forms. The quest on our minds should be on producing emotionally powerful and intellectual works. The finishes to these

earthenware bowls, the decontextualization of these forms and how these works would engage viewers and users.

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3.5. Rethinking of Ceramic Forms and Materiality

Most of the production forms of ceramics within Ghanaian clay and ceramic art practice has been in same indigenous forms such as cylindrical or spherical. The practice in terms of forms have very much the same way. These are practices that have been carried on over the years and needs rethinking that a pot should not always be round or spherical. Nortey et al (2013) experimented on how Ghanaian ceramic students' response to breaking creativity and spurring innovations in form. Students were asked to develop a concept and produce a pot. All the students produced spherical pots, all spherical. Though these pots were satisfactorily done, there was the need for design revision of a generative kind, a push not towards a particular form and aesthetics but towards spurring innovations in forms. These students just as the potters in the industry have allowed the hierarchies to shape their practice and are not attending to the fuller breath of their cultures. Breaking these hierarchies and spurring innovation in form, Nortey et al (2013) worked on how student can innovate ideas and concepts within the

environment and produce a pot that would be new to the public but maintaining same purpose. After rethinking on design and concepts, a 16th chapter pot was produced by one of the students, Frederick Ebenezer Okai. This pot was based on a concept of a millipede (see figure 1). These are the revisions we need to inject into our indigenous practice. Students may also produce works that may not be functional in the indigenous sense. They may downscale or upscale, introduce other mediums and unfamiliar colours.



Figure 3: Frederick E. Okai, *16th Chapter Pot*, Clay, oxides, variables 2012
Source: Photographed by Samuel Nortey

Although Ghana may not be endowed with all ceramic materials it does have certain key materials for the production of pottery and technical ceramic products. Our extensive visits to these material sites confirmed abundance of ceramic materials. In almost all the regions of Ghana, clay abounds in great quantities as well as kaolin¹. However, these clays and other materials have not been exploited in producing other materials. Apart from clay, there are huge deposits of feldspar at Akoboadze and Moree all in the Central region. It is strange that there are no material processing companies to convert these primary forming materials for ceramic productions. At these material sites, there are evidences of the forming of primary clay under the rocky feldspar material. Our investigations revealed that the Moree feldspar site has been sold to a foreign company. The same is happening at Teleku Bokazzo where kaolin is mined in commercial quantities. (see figures 4 & 5)

Materiality is one key area the Ghanaian ceramic community can rethink. We need to have an open-minded interdisciplinary approach to our creative works. This is the rethinking this paper is calling for. It appears in Ghana and sub-Saharan Africa we are still tied to clay as the only chief material for the ceramic artist. I believe the field of clay must be defined by intersection and material fluidity.

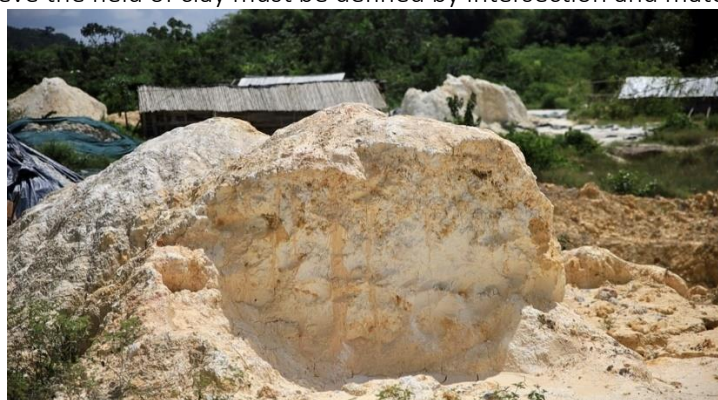


Figure 4: Kaolin at Teleku Bokazzo
Source: Image by Samuel Nortey

¹ The Ghana Geological Service Ceramic Department in 1999 did a test on clay minerals in Ghana and recommended their suitability



Figure 5: Feldsparthic rock at Moree, Central Region, Ghana
Source: Image by Samuel Nortey

El Anastui and Ibrahim Mahama are contemporary artists from Ghana who studied Sculpture at the Department of Painting and Sculpture, KNUST but are not limiting themselves to materiality. They used and work in media such as clay, wood, stones, etc. They are currently artists of global repute where top notch galleries and museums are hosting and following their works. This happened after rethinking their materiality and concepts not allowing the hierarchies that shaped that practice to mould their current practice such as sticking to formats that is if you are a sculptor then you must use only restricted materials. They mastered the used of clay, wood, stone but extended their materiality to cover other found objects. In this regard, their mold-breaking into the contemporary art market was done after they reconsidered their materiality. Ghana's pavilion at the 58th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia was represented by six artists who examined the trajectories and legacies of Ghana's Freedom. These artists were primarily sculptors, painters, photographers and film expert. All these examples point to an undeniable fact that Ghanaian ceramic art has been under-represented and not inclusive in global ceramic discourse. Ghanaian ceramics practice has far too long been stacked with clay as the only material. We must expand this to include other materials. In this contemporary ceramic art era, our materiality and forms must be decontextualized, recontextualized and decolonized.

4. Conclusion

Ceramic artists must begin to look into Ghana's rich ceramic resources and develop interesting ceramic bodies. The irony of a less-than-inclusive ceramics establishment is that ceramics is certainly one of the most broadly practiced medium worldwide, regardless of era, culture or locale. However, too often when individual artists or traditions from outside the cultural-geographic zones are attended to by the ceramics establishment, they are treated as exoticized departures from the norm, or relics of a bygone era relegated to a "traditional" designation, and in either case have their agency removed by a cultural outsider presuming to act in the role of "translator." We know from our own experiences learning from Ga, Akan and Ewe potters in Ghana and some ethnic potters in Nigeria, that the notion of "tradition" as employed by a Western actor, disallows the reality and lived experience of imminently contemporary makers. Besides broadening the scope of the ceramics canon, it is also imperative that makers are invited to participate on their own terms, speak with their own voices, and reap the benefits of a wider audience, both in terms of recognition and financial support.

Because the ceramics establishment has had such limited scope and constituency within Ghana and sub-Saharan Africa, we have not only cut ourselves off from a vast population of fellow clay practitioners and thinkers, but have additionally failed to study the rich diversity of contemporary contexts in which clay plays pivotal roles far beyond the limitations of gallery and collector. Vital and dynamic intersections between people and clay, whether in a ritual or daily utilitarian context, have too long been the exclusive province of art historians (and only a small minority of that field), and have been categorically ignored by establishment clay practitioners.

Ghanaian ceramics for total rethinking of our superstitious beliefs which are inadvertently affecting our production time and more importantly driving away potential female potters from joining the profession and practice. It is also suggested that Ceramic Councils such as National Council of Education for the Ceramic Arts (NCECA), International Association of Ceramics (IAC) etc. should widen their invitations to underrepresented ceramics communities and individuals in the Global south. It is imperative that the self-described “contemporary ceramics community,” which is in practice limited to British, Western European, North American and Asian voices, make a concerted effort to broaden the conversation, particularly to include ceramic artists from the Global south. Ghanaian clay practice has not been fully developed to its peak. Yes, the infrastructure of technology is not available but the skills and the people are what is needed to push Ghanaian ceramic art into the global platform. The rethinking of our ceramic practice should begin with a new approach to some of our cultural heritage and development of practice. The need to develop the local ceramic materials, exploring other forms, market drive and rethinking superstitious beliefs are key things among others to building a resolute Ghanaian clay practice.

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