

Inspiration and Innovative Approach in Creating Textile Designs and Prints from Sekondi-Takoradi's Masquerade Costume Designs

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Abstract

Masquerade culture is an essential part of Sekondi-Takoradi cultural embodiment. The masquerade festival titled *Ankos* displays interesting costumes that have artistic elements of potent colour display and performances. The masquerade costumes manifest intricate fabric decoration techniques for example pleating, folding, gathering, smocking, hand and machine stitching and the use of varied colour schemes. These decorative techniques make costume production laborious, tedious and downtime constraints. In contributing to the innovative approaches to creating textile designs and prints, the study explored the inspirational possibilities of surface designs of the masquerade costume for textile designs and prints. The art-based research design and direct observation as research instrumentation were employed in the artistic creation for the study. Adobe Photoshop was used in the simulation design processes. The study revealed that the simulation design processes produced an innovative imitated visual appearance of the masquerade costume and production processes from a machine-stitched work to a hand-printed fabric. It is recommended that costume makers adopt the contemporary possibility of using hand screen to print hitherto the traditional laborious and tedious process of producing masquerade costumes.

Keywords

Masquerade Costumes, Textile Designs and Prints, Adaptation, Inspiration, Sekondi-Takoradi

1. Introduction

The masquerade culture is a critical part of the cultural embodiment of Sekon-

di-Takoradi historical and cultural representation. It manifests the historical, aesthetic and contextual visual identity. The masquerade culture materializes portions of their cultural identities and heritage. The arts and the visual knowledge of the citizenry translated into tangible well-crafted performance costumes coupled with choreographed dances with regimental performances. This essential cultural embodiment forms bulk of the material culture of the people.

The term material culture is contextualized as the artefacts or other concrete things left by past cultures. The term “material culture” emphasizes how apparently inanimate things within the environment act on people, and are acted upon by people, for the purposes of carrying out social functions, regulating social relations and giving symbolic meaning to human activity. Objects range in scale and size from discrete items such as a pencil, key, coin or spoon, costumes for example daily necessities and may be seen as works of art but they are not art in the traditional sense, it is seen as visible dominant culture [1].

The material culture of the people of Sekondi-Takoradi (Twin City) has direct integration into all facets of humanity and an essential basic need that is indispensable to nearly all of the Twin City’s citizenry; this implies that it is an interpretive tool to advocate the cultural, social, and locality identity on performance grounds. Again, it sends visual signals as to neighbourhood affiliation to a visually identifiable generational grouping or an appreciator. For example, costumes communicate age, group affiliation, and social status.

The masquerade festival has artistic elements that display interesting costumes with potent colour manifestation and performances. The costumes manifest intricate fabric decoration techniques, for example, pleating, folding, gathering, smocking, velcro attachments, hand and machine stitching, and the use of varied colour schemes. The processes of costume manufacturing are handed over from different epochs to this current generation. Culturally, there are custodians who believe in the school of thought that even though the costume production processes are laborious, the paradigm should be the same even though the number of performers keeps soaring, making it more laborious for costume fabricators to create costumes to meet deadlines for the festivity. However, in an attempt to adopt innovative approaches in creating textile designs and prints, the study explores the inspirational possibilities of surface designs of the masquerade costume for textile designs and prints.

1.1. Masquerade Culture

Sekondi-Takoradi masquerade, popularly known as *Ankos*, is a communal celebration and an integral part of the societal fabric. According to oral history, the *Ankos* group in Sekondi-Takoradi is one of the pioneer groups. Custodians of the culture stated that the Sekondi-Takoradi masquerade originated from Saltpond in the year 1956. The masquerade is popularly known as *Ankos*, which is also the fancy name for the first masquerade group. Historical accounts indicate that people from Takoradi travelled to Saltpond to secure and transport mas-

querade costumes during Christmas celebrations.

According to oral history, the masquerade tailors in Saltpond came to Tako-radi to train the *Ankos* groups on how to sew their own kind of masquerade costume. Another school of thought also suggests a possible influence from Winneba's masquerading culture [2] [3]. However, a critical analysis of costume elements, style, and general outlook suggests and establishes specific essential characteristics similar to those of the Saltpond masquerade manifestations. Masquerading in Sekondi-Takoradi was witnessed by its masquerades in any fashionable fabric and sewing colourful designs on them before adopting Saltpond's masquerade costume idea. The colourfully designed materials are removed from the base fabric, and then they use the base fabrics for their daily wear. They came in splinter groups as the first mother group (*Ankos*) became bigger and other local neighborhoods formed new groups (clubs).

All these clubs had different costume designs that separated them from each other. Because of the sacred nature of costume design and production, it was very difficult for masquerade groups to know the design concept of any of the groups that were brought out every year on December 25. The reason was that each group had a tailor who developed the design concept from geometric representations, natural sources like flowers or animals, or other zoomorphic characters.

Folkloric secrecy is upheld and treasured in the culture. If a person is caught wearing his costume without a mask, he or she will be publicly punished by the group leader. If the costume is seen in public before the date to be worn, that person will be expelled from the group. The uniform costume must be worn in the group meeting on the day of the performance; this secrecy secures the beauty and uniqueness of the costume from other competing masquerade groups.

Ankos (masquerade) is largely embraced by many inhabitants of Sekondi-Takoradi in the Western region of Ghana. The Christmas celebration in the twin city of Sekondi-Takoradi is never completed without the display of a colourful masquerade parading through the principal streets with brass band music and dancing to the admiration of the public [4]. The culture parades unique dancing skills, colourful costumes by different designers, and masks of simple to scary manifestations.

Masquerade festivals in Sekondi-Takoradi are not only about masqueraders dancing to the brass band music but also psychologically imbibing the spirit of common humanity, friendly and giving [5]. Cheering squads, audience and appreciators donate to the performers' Christmas gift moneyboxes as a way of acknowledging their mastery of the masquerade art. The costumes are art objects intrinsically and extrinsically; they radiate and awaken sensibilities.

1.2. Costumes Used during Masquerade Festivities

The Sekondi-Takoradi masquerade costumes derive their uniqueness from their decorative and technical craftsmanship. Costume appreciation is connected with

many difficulties, from crafting processes, interpretations, surface design technicalities, and secrecy of production. As established in masquerade culture, [6] noted that costume designs are peculiar and a common concept all over the world; the difficulty is the degree of covering, whether scanty to the barest or complete covering all over the body. The uniqueness and peculiarities in design are the issue of communal knowledge systems and cultural differences, which is the cultural orientation and possibly stemmed from human ecology.

The masquerade costumes manifest the concepts of cultural orientation and human ecology as criteria for form, style, and interplay of colour in costume design as shown in **Figure 1**. The concept is narrowed down into group identification and neighborhood affiliations (**Figure 2**). The group of affiliation prescribes the overall costume form and style, and most importantly, the colour choice and interplay to reflect the group's general disposition for the ensuing year. The costume ensemble includes a mask and a headdress, the dress that is usually jacket and trousers to colour match, white gloves, socks, a canvas and a horsetail as a whisk to propel the dance movement. Typical of the jacket and trouser is shown in **Figure 3** and **Figure 4**. The element of interest for this study on the Sekondi-Takoradi masquerade culture is the costume and its inspiration for textile designs and textile prints.



Figure 1. Masquerade costume. Source: Myjoyonline.com.



Figure 2. Group of Masqueraders dancing. Source: Myjoyonline.com.



Figure 3. *Tumas* Masquerade costume dancing. Source: Field data, 2022.



Figure 4. *Tumas* group of Masqueraders. Source: Field data, 2022.

1.3. Theoretical Framework

This study adopted the Schumpeter theory of innovation. Innovation is introducing a new product or modification to an existing product. Schumpeter further noted that innovation does not mean invention; rather, it refers to the commercial application of new technology, new materials, new methods, and new sources of energy. The theory is classified into five main points: the introduction of new methods of production; the introduction of new products or goods; new sources of supply with raw materials; the opening of new markets; and new ways of organizing business [7].

The researchers chose this theory because it supported the position that the traditional masquerade costume designs are not completely changed but modified by a new production method adopted to produce a new design that still has

essential characteristics of the original masquerade costume. The adaptation also brings forth new products that also open up new market for the masquerade industry. The production method for producing the masquerade costumes such as sewing, applique and patching techniques to create pleats and patches are replaced with the screen printing method, facilitating production but still maintaining the original appearance and appeal.

1.4. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework is dependent on the manipulation of these variables in the generation of the design concepts and the final output. It involved; Old masquerade costume designs → Research inspiration → Innovative approach → Creative process Simulation of design → Masquerade costumes inspired textile designs as seen in **Figure 5**.

The relationship between these variables is critical in developing a motif and pattern concept in this study. The old masquerade costume design remained a constant, the research inspiration, innovative approach; creative process and simulation of the designs were the tools in the researchers' hands to manipulate to arrive at an output, which are the textile designs inspired by Masquerade costumes.

2. Materials and Methods

The study employed the qualitative research approach using the art-based research inquiry due to the artistic and studio demands of the production processes. Art-based research according to [8] can be defined as the systematic use of the artistic process, the actual making of artistic expressions in all the different forms of the arts as a primary way of understanding and examining experience by both researchers and the people involved in the study. The researchers agreed with [8] statement because the research involves creating artistic expressions from masquerade costume design, and representing it in artistic creation. Art-based inquiry is distinguished from research activities where the arts may play a significant role but are essentially used as data for investigations that take place with academic disciplines that utilized more traditional scientific, verbal and mathematical descriptions and analysis of phenomena. Art-based research is often termed as “practice-based” or “practice-led” [9]. These inquiries involve studio-practice and in this kind of research, the application faculties and physical skills determine the value of their research to others who work in the field of applied art. [9] went on to say that art-based research is useful in a variety of fields, including textiles, jewellery, ceramics, blacksmithing, painting, weaving, and many others. The researchers agree with [9] based on the fact that the research involves the use of tools and materials such as print pastes, fabrics, and tools in expressing an idea on a piece of fabric in a studio. The significance and context of practice-based knowledge were described in words; a full understanding of it can only be obtained with reference to the artefact itself [10].

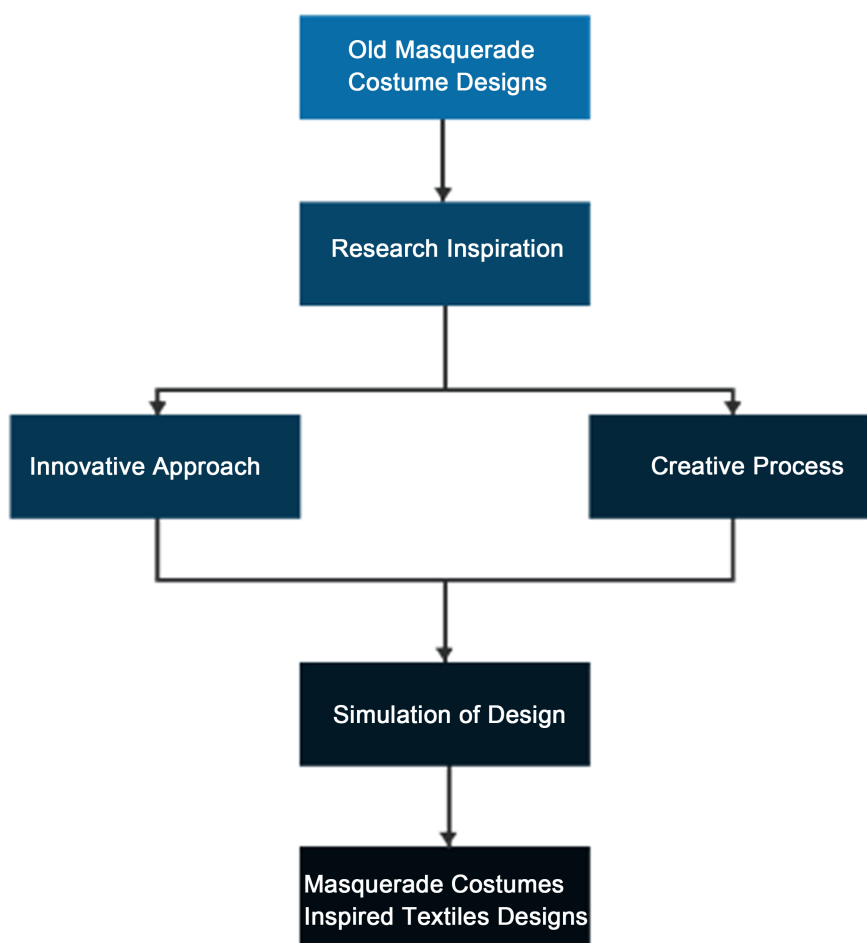


Figure 5. Researchers' construct 2022.

The researchers agreed with Candy's statement due to the nature of the project. The project involves the examination of selected Sekondi-Takoradi *An-kos* masquerade costume designs that can be adapted by changing the design with computer-aided tools and screen-printing techniques. The procedures incorporated creating and blending prospective designs for the research work and producing the final project work. The production of the work took place in an art studio where the study purposively sampled two individual costumes from thirty (30) masquerades' groups in Sekondi-Takoradi metropolis. Direct observation was used to identify individual costumes of the thirty (30) masquerades' groups. These costumes were examined to critically bring out the details of the costume design and the accompanying fabric decoration techniques adopted in the creation of the costumes.

Adobe Photoshop was used to creatively explore all possibilities of achieving resemblance in the final design outlook. The selected area (frame of reference) was duplicated to fill the working area in an all-over design pattern.

The screen-printing technique was able to render details and delicate stitch effects and other fabric manipulation effects in the costume patterns, thereby making manifestation of the visual identification of structural designs.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Creative Process

Based on the methodology adopted (artistic research paradigm), which highlights the creation of an artefact with an interpretation, the purpose of this study also demands the researchers produce an artefact [8] [9] [10]. The costume elements in the masquerade costumes were identified through critical observation and analysis. The researchers selected two (2) costume designs out of the thirty (30) masquerade clubs.

The selection was based on masquerade costumes with character. Direct observation was relevant in the study; it afforded the researchers the opportunity to critically and visually study the dynamics and characteristics of the selected costumes [11]. Observation in this study was guided by:

- What kinds of images (motifs) are used by the creators of the costumes?
- What colour, texture, and line have the images (motifs) adopted by the costume creators?
- Appropriateness of a frame of reference as a resource for textiles.

The researchers looked out for colour, lines, movement in pattern, decorative pleat concepts, interesting colour scheme combinations, addition of trims, and the adoption of the principle of harmony of all the elements of design to achieve the concept of unity.

In relation to the Millionaires' Club costume, the researchers localised a design area (frame of reference) in the general pattern of the costume. The local area that became the focal point for adoption had character, a good depiction of colour scheme, and essential characteristics that added to the totality of the general outlook of the costume. This choice is essential and made it more appropriate because, after simulation and production, the new hand-printed design should have an essential resemblance to the costume that was adapted.

Colour is a critical component in the costume design process. The researchers represented all the dominant colours in the overall costume and manifested those in the simulated printed version. The dynamism in the sewn costumes was represented in a flat representation. Technically, the effects of pleats and gathers were visually displayed in a simulated form but not tactile.

Steps for Designing the Adapted Masquerades Costume into Textile Prints

The masquerade groups number about thirty (30), but for this project, two (2) masquerade group costumes were selected (Millionaires and Supreme Masquerade Groups). However, the same innovative approach, creative processes, and processes for the simulation of the designs can be adopted for the rest of the costumes of the group.

1) Design One (*Millionaires' Club*)

The Millionaires' masquerade costume is made up of different colours and textures, which have suggestive parallel folds. The applique method was used as a decorative method to emboss a combination of kite-like shapes on top of the

parallel folded patterns arranged and sewn in a circular motion. It has a colour blend of orange, yellow, sea blue, and a touch of red.

Step 1: Import the picture of the Millionaires masquerade costume into the working area of the software by using the import command on the keyboard “CTRL + I” or by going to the menu bar, click on the import icon, browse for the image and place it into the working area as seen in **Figure 6**.

Step 2: Select the interesting part of the imported costume by using the rectangular tool as shown in **Figure 7**. Drag the tool on the costume to make selections. The researchers selected the interesting part of the masquerade costume because it has a good blend of colours and has essential characteristics that go with the totality of the costume.

Step 4: Duplicate the trace work to fill the working area of the software by holding CTRL + D on the keyboard (**Figure 8**). **Figure 9** presents the final design from series of duplications, the series of calculated duplications prevents misfits during the printing process and improves proper alignment of designs.

2) Design two (Supreme)

The Supreme masquerade costume has many motifs that look like an outline of flowers in three different colours with a touch of white. It has vertical patches in yellow, red, and green that look like the flag of France. It also has parallel folds that have been sewn in different ways, such as waves, circular and vertical directions. Below is the systematic design process:

Step 1: Import the picture of the supreme masquerade costume into the working area shown in **Figure 10**, using the import command on the keyboard

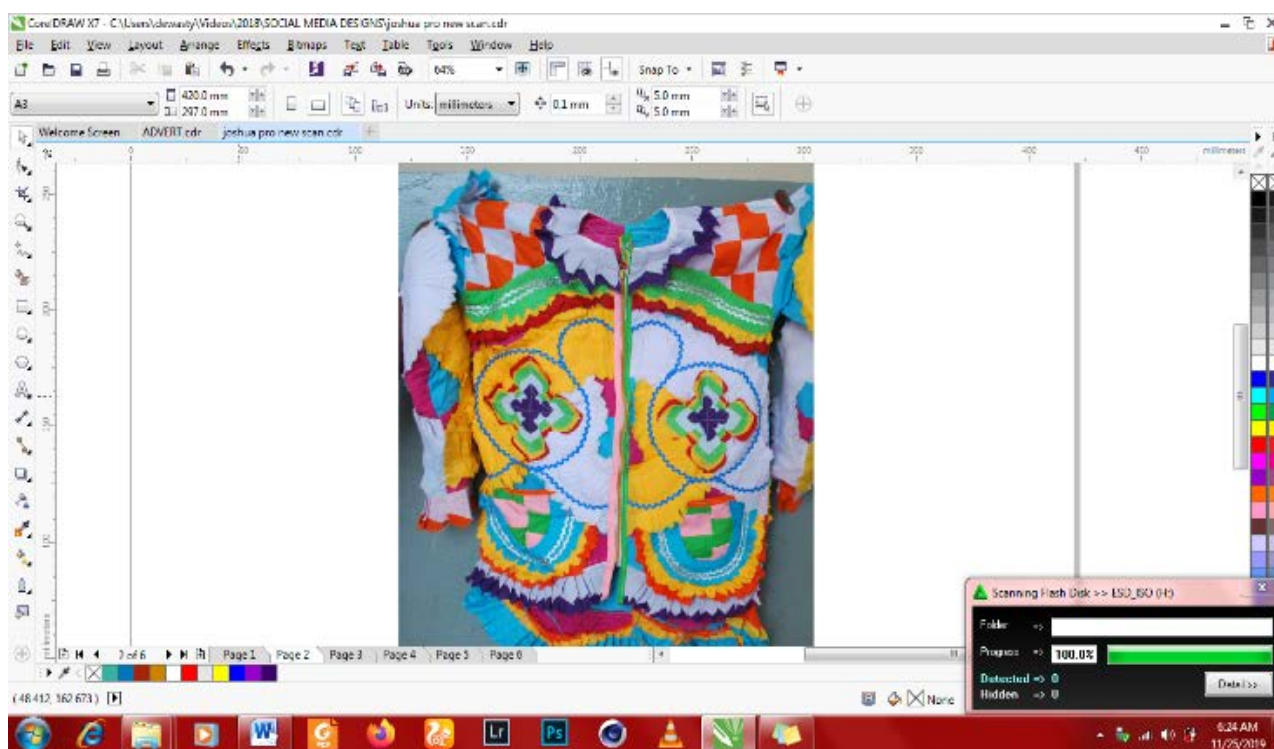


Figure 6. Imported picture of the Millionaires club costume.

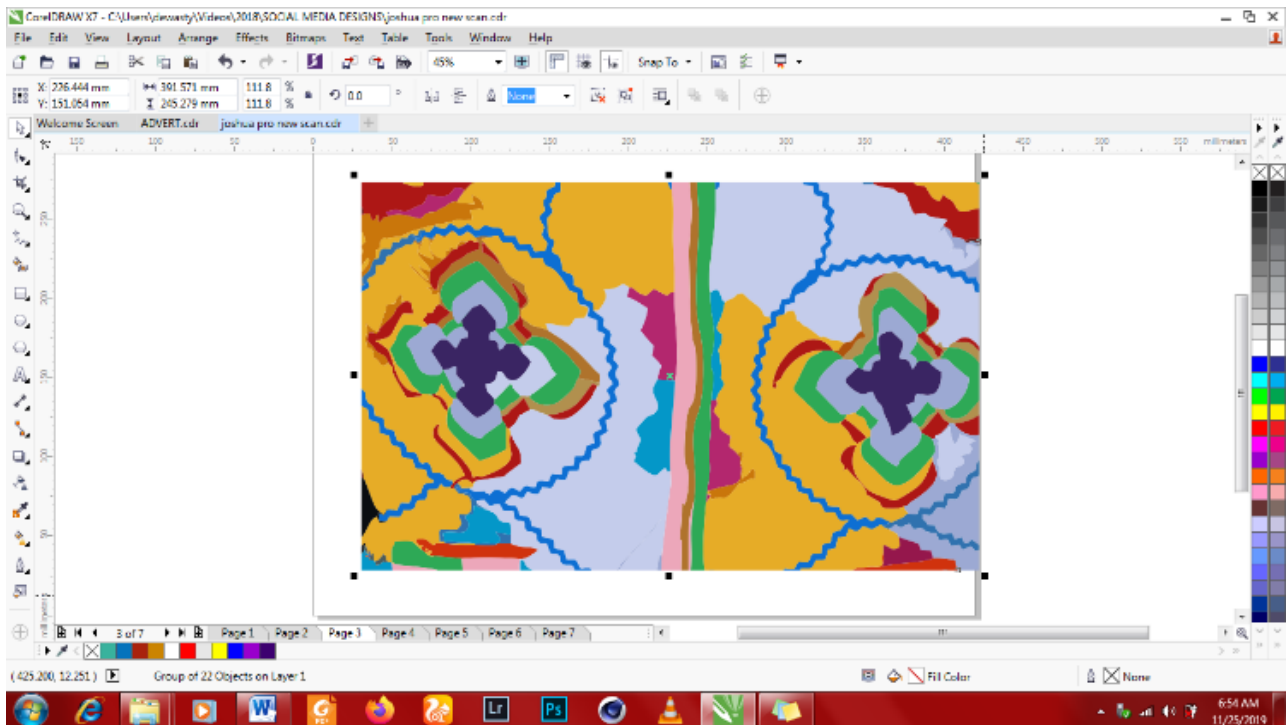


Figure 7. Tracing of the selected picture.

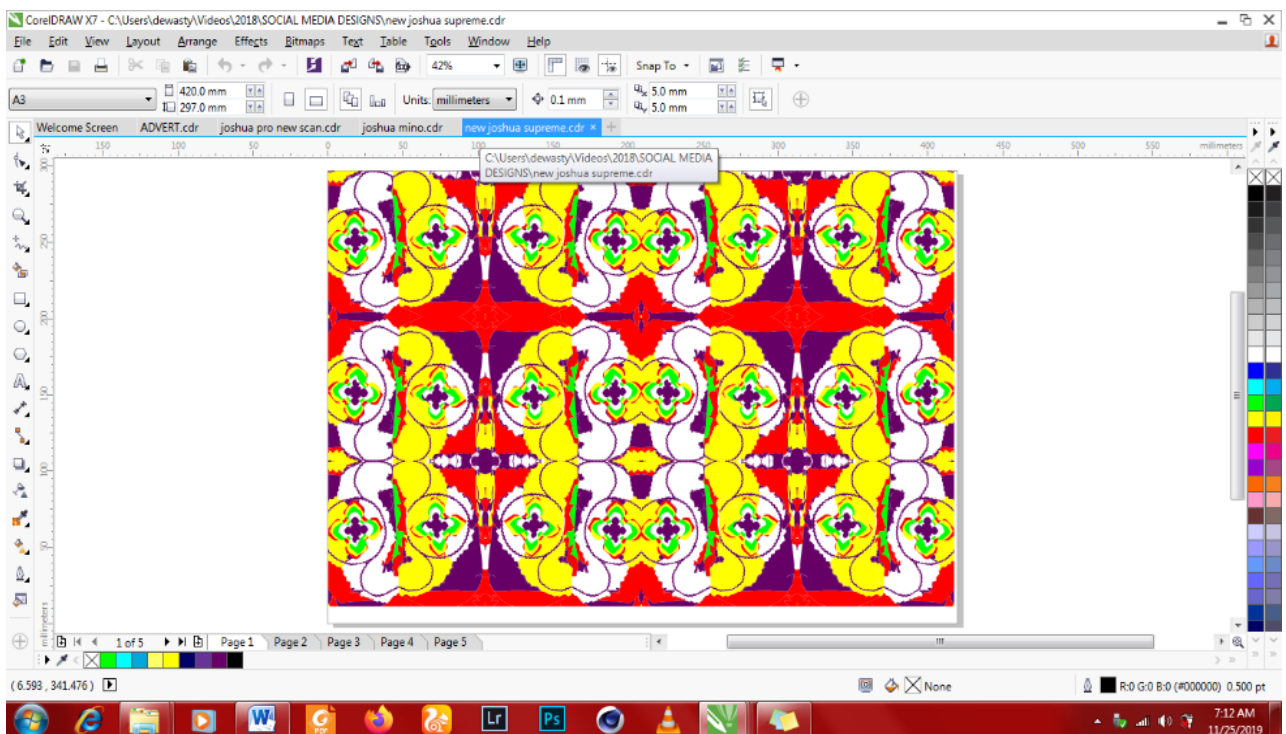


Figure 8. Duplicating the traced work.

“CTRL + I” or by going to the menu bar, clicking on the import icon, browsing for the image, and placing it into the working area.

Step 2: Using the CorelDraw application, the Bezier and Ellipse tools were

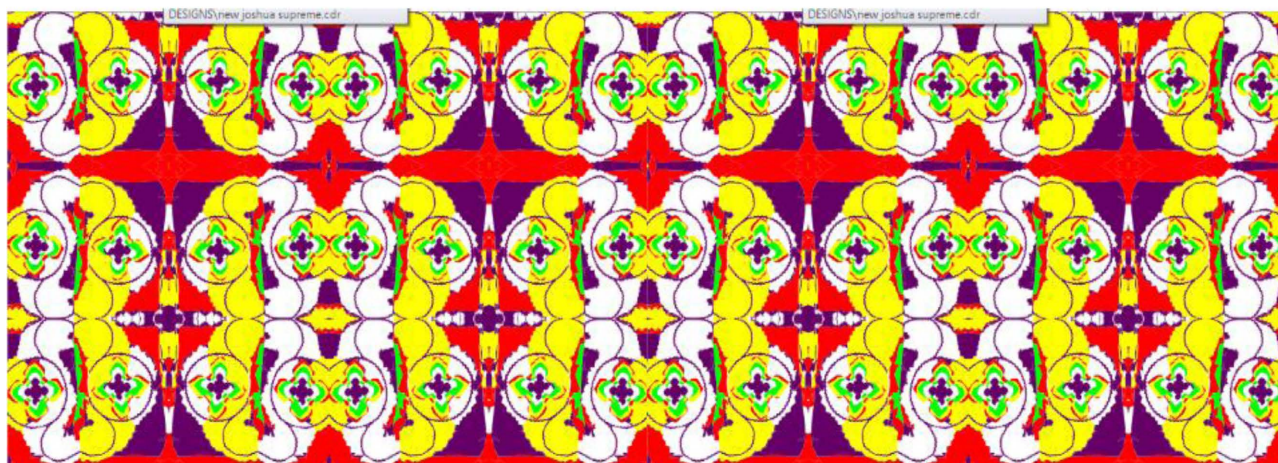


Figure 9. Final designs.

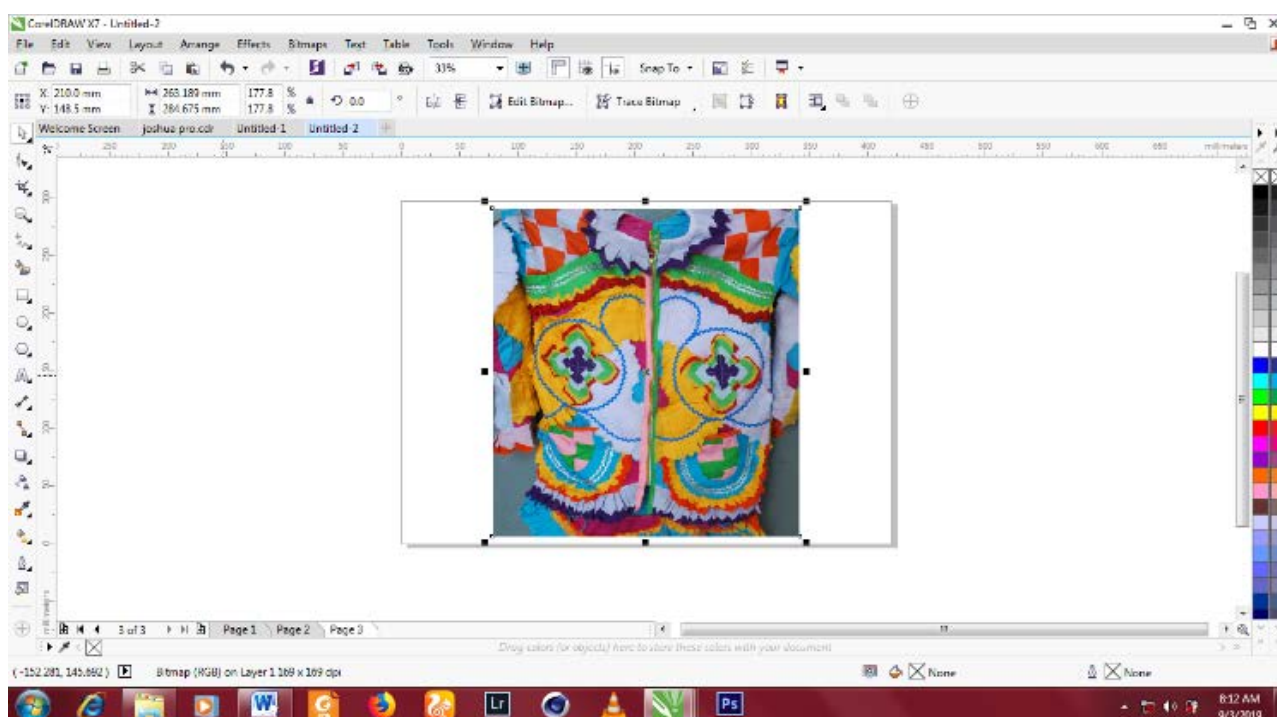


Figure 10. Imported picture of the Supreme club costume.

used to draw the masquerade club logo (Figure 11). The shape tool was used in conjunction with the Bezier tool to transform the shape into the logo and fill it with colours, respectively.

Step 3: The design textures were derived from the logo of the masquerade club. It was then resized so that it could be repeated on the fabric as seen in Figure 12.

Step 4: Taking inspiration from the already supreme masquerade club garment, use the rectangular tool to draw a series of square shapes and repeat them horizontally on the above texture created. Fill it with colour as shown in Figure 13.

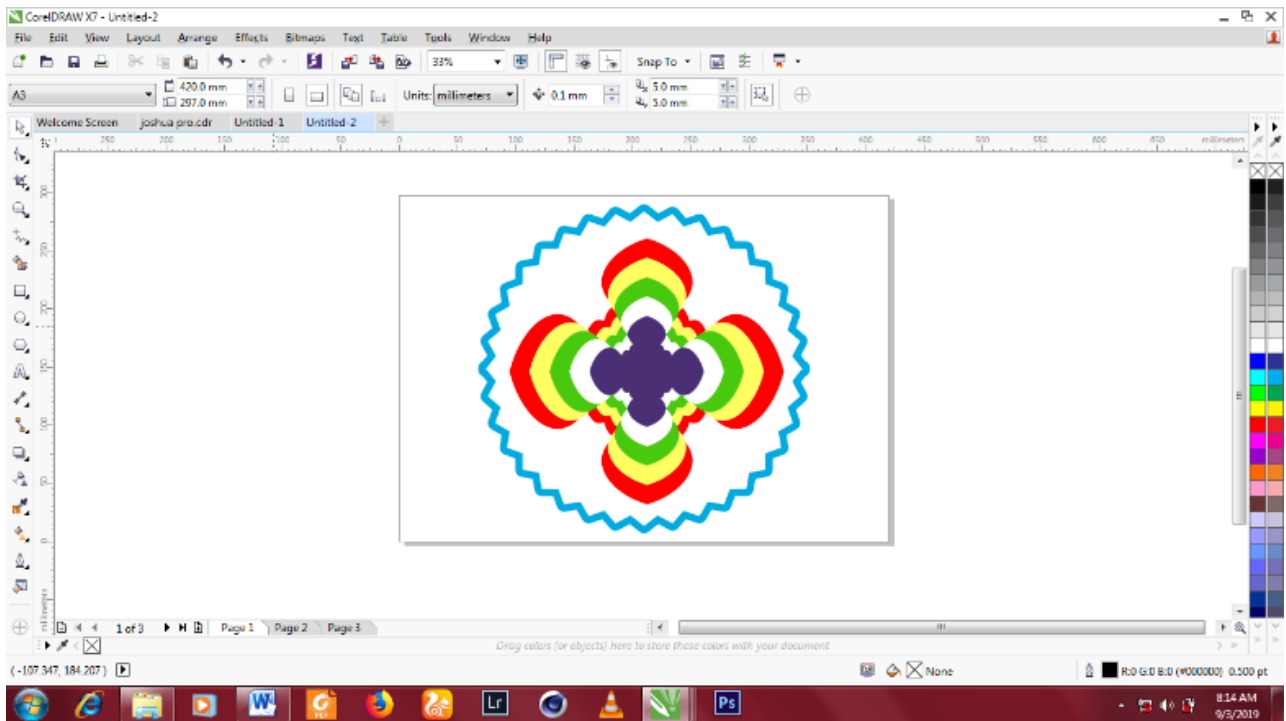


Figure 11. Masquerade logo.

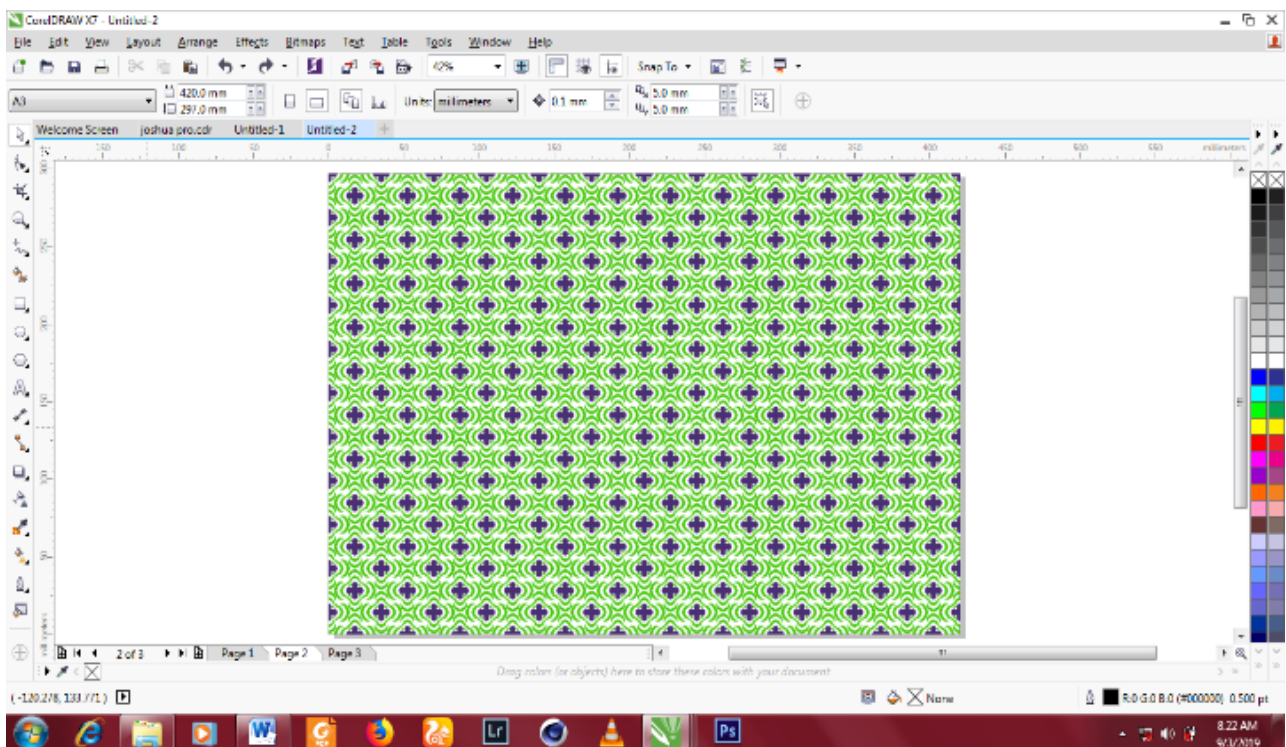


Figure 12. Repeat of the textures.

Step 5: Using the motif arrangement technique, distribute the motif or logo of the club on the design texture in a half-drop manner as shown in **Figure 14** and **Figure 15**.

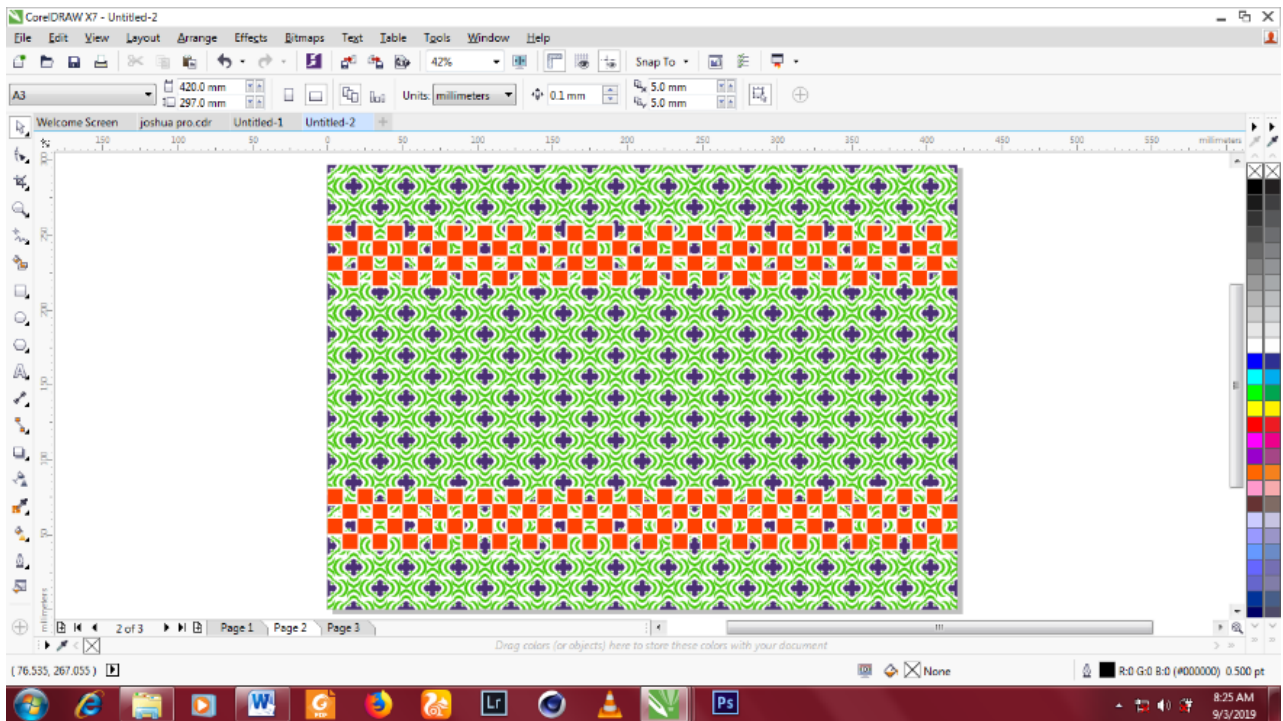


Figure 13. Design textures.

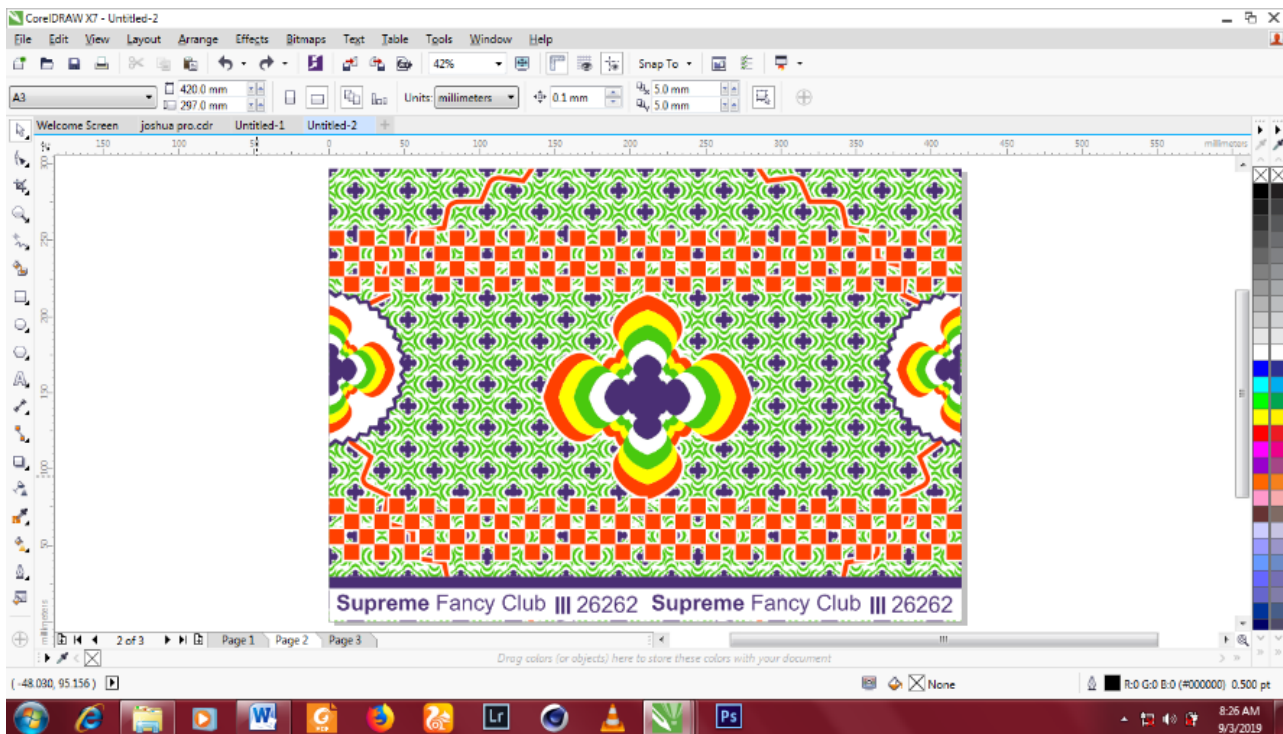


Figure 14. Logo and textures repeated.

3.2. Production

The hand screen printing technique was used to transform the costume designs from stitched environments to surface-applied designs. However, the unique

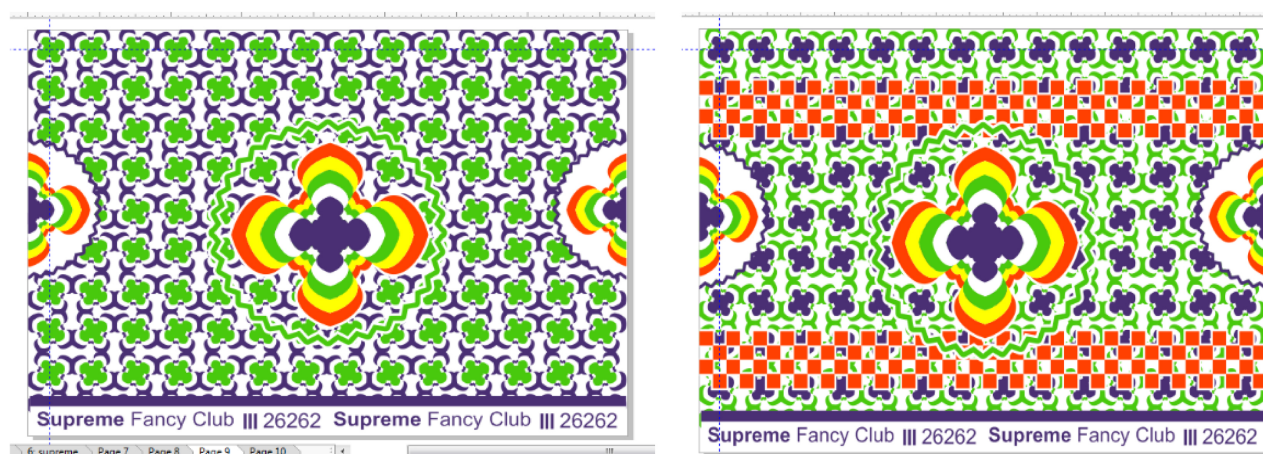


Figure 15. Final designs.

visual characteristics and the emotional attachments they create were simulated and maintained. The process of screen printing is explained by [12] as a method of printing whereby the patterns are blocked out on a mesh fabric or screen so that the colour is squeegeed through the screen to penetrate the unblocked areas. The coloured paste is then forced through the screen by a squeegee. [13] affirmation corroborates [12] and notes that screen printing is one of the most exciting methods of printing because it offers the widest range of possibilities. It makes possible the printing of fine line drawings, various hand and commercial lettering techniques, as well as photographic half-tone positives.

The production processes for converting the designs onto the silk screens detail a number of preparatory steps that aid in effective and efficient hand screen-printing. Preparing the screen for printing, applying photo emulsion to the screen, developing the screen for printing, setting the fabric on the printing table, and the final printing process are all critical steps.

Printing the Fabric

After the development of the screens, the next stage is the printing of the developed designs on the cloth [14]. The selection of the fabric and printing paste was critical because the product (fabric) will be converted into costumes that will need to withstand the stress of performance and withstand a lot of perspiration. The researchers used the water-based plastisol printing paste. This paste has a strong bonding property with cotton and synthetic fibres. This paste has the ability to withstand crocking even under constant abrasion. The nature of the application of the final product requires the researchers to follow a best practice regime of the hand printing technique **Figures 16(a)-(c)** that will result in a final product that has good washing and perspiration fastness. Final simulations of prints inspired by Millionaires costume were generated as shown in **Figures 17-19**. The following were the steps used for the printing of the fabric:

- 1) Preparation of the print paste,
- 2) Setting the fabric on the printing table,

- 3) Printing the fabric,
- 4) Drying the printed fabric,
- 5) Fixation of the printing paste into the fabric.

Design One (Inspired by the Millionaires masquerade Club costume)



Figure 16. (a)-(c): Printing processes.



Figure 17. Final designs. Simulation of prints inspired by Millionaires costume.

Design two (Inspired by the Supreme masquerade club costume)

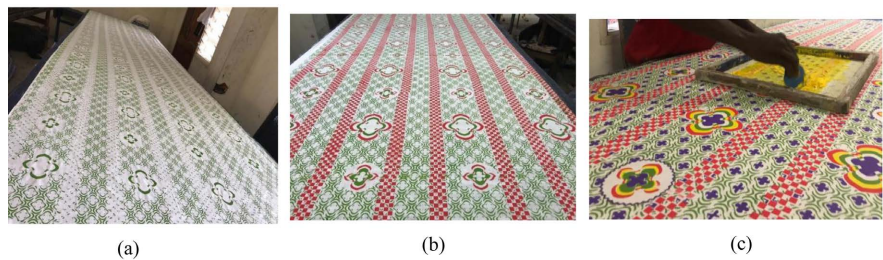


Figure 18. (a)-(c): Printing processes.



Figure 19. Final designs. Simulation of prints inspired by supreme costume.

3.3. Implications for Textile Designs

According to [14], influential textile design themes in the commercial design sector rely on a few well-established themes like florals, geometrics, conversational (pictorial) and ethnic. He stresses that in researching and sourcing inspiration for textile design or surface design, common themes in commercial trends are reinterpreting historical design styles and using influences from ethnic culture. As found in designing stage [15], textile design stresses the importance of a textile designer to research and accumulate ideas from the world around them to create new textile design concepts. Through research and innovation, the structural elements of old masquerade costume designs are subjected to innovative approaches and creative processes for the generation of masquerade costume-inspired textile designs, and these designs result in new textile designs. These costumes are culturally nested in an ethnic culture that radiates artistic manifestation. From artistic manifestation [15], it can be stated that Sekondi-Takoradi masquerade costumes and their inspiration stem from an ethnic culture and can be used as a rich and undiluted source of inspiration for textile design in the domain of creating textures and motifs.

4. Conclusion

The masquerade culture of the Sekondi-Takoradi presents the people's emotions, artistic expressions, folkloric identities, and material culture. Through the display of the costumes, they manifest their cultural ingenuity of creations over a period of try and error and have finally resulted in an apex of perfection. The importance of costume inspiration for artistic energy cannot be overstated. The costumes present an array of carefully synthesised design concepts by the use of the elements of design and accompanying principles, whether knowingly or unknowingly, but to the best of the costume makers' creative prowess. Preliminary studies indicated that most inspirations for textile designs were from conventional sources and themes like florals, geometrics, conversational (pictorial) and ethnic. The novelty in this research uses the adaptation of design elements from masquerade costumes to generate textile designs and prints. The textile designs and prints will serve as an alternative avenue of inspiration apart from the conventionally established ones. The research further simulated prints to depict the manually decorated foundation fabrics for the costume fabrication. The research also provided the possibility of creating the foundation fabric for the costume by hand screen printing, which in turn facilitated the production processes. The adaptation design processes adopted for this research made it possible to maintain inspiration sample resemblance. The frame of reference sourced as inspiration for designs still bore a resemblance to the original source. From the designs created, it could be inferred that Sekondi-Takoradi masquerade costumes should be an unadulterated inspiration for the development of varied textile designs, ranging from simple to complex design concepts, to augment the current state of the Ghanaian Textile Industry in the domain of design creation.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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