

## **The Good, Beautiful and Sensuous In the Arts: The Aesthetics OFASANTE Arts in Perspective**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study has used a qualitative research approach, relying mainly on observations and interviews, to interpret and analyse the aesthetic and ethical associations with the erotic through the visual and performances in the arts of the Asante with wider implications on African arts within the period before Ghana's independence and after. Sensuality in African cultures seems to be mostly but not always coded to preserve the culture for posterity and create variety. **The good** represents the culturally or socially accepted values imbibed in the arts and aesthetically appreciated. **The beautiful** represents the use of cultural aesthetics acceptable in the Asante ethical ethos especially in the representation thereof in the arts. **The sensuous** also represents the arts that touch on the sexuality of the individual and societal accepted sexual behaviour portrayed in the arts. The results show that the people recognize the sensuality or eroticism in the arts and relate to it as good if it appeals to their aesthetic sense, bad if it goes against their ethics and offers more decoration, entertainment and communication but also educates and encourages creativity in contemporary arts of Asante and worldview.

**KEYWORDS: Sensuality, Asante, aesthetics, ethics, erotic art**

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

In the preceding discussions, remarks have been generally limited to the Asante; but the analysis may have wider implications for the study of creative and performing art -throughout Ghana and possibly Africa.

Singing and dancing form the main ingredients in expressing a cultural tradition which influences all cultures with high inferences. The use of arts, both visual and performances to convey messages of artistic expression is a major motivating factor in aesthetic decisions regarding the production of art. The concept of Asante beauty characteristics are observable for its admiration. Today, art production is purely economic (commercial art and advertising); nothing religious but partially cultural in order for it to be identified within its cultural context. Commercial arts are primarily created for economic gains leaving out or giving little consideration for their religious/ cultural use but purposely for decoration. Therefore, there is ample reason to explore several themes that will attract the buying public and connoisseurs including the erotic arts. The erotic theme in the arts of the Asante has always been seen as 'not good' in the society's eyes due to its privacy incursion, but the usual day to day activities when rendered in the arts rather projects applause and positive appraisal.

The idea of 'good art' is described here to be what is accepted by the society which may / may not be cultural or religious but purely for its aesthetic appreciation. If what is good is deemed as beautiful in term of conceptuality, can the beautiful also always be good? The good signifies the morally accepted behaviours or characteristics of the Asante culture and accepted values of the people whereas the beautiful appraises the aesthetic characteristics associated with the culture and consequently portrayed in the arts. These two qualities found in art, though juxtaposed could also overlap in its use in the cultural milieu.

### **Ethically accepted behaviours in Asante and the arts**

The ethics of a society usually affect the conceptual theme of an art work as well as how a people would view it. In terms of the ethical behaviours of the Asante, what is in the best interest of the society becomes the accepted and adopted in the life-style. Ackah (1988), Gyekye (1995), Sarpong (1974) and Danquah (1944) are few celebrants of the values and culture of the Akan ethical conceptual system.

Appiah-Sekyere (2018) deduced that traditional Akan ethical norms, among other objectives, were aimed primarily at preventing unethical behaviours like unwanted teenage pregnancies and these ethical norms meticulously defended and promoted the sacredness of human life by preventing issues that threaten human life. Adultery, fornication, lustful desires and other social deviations which create sexual perversions are totally unsolicited and the repercussion is quite harsh or brutal. The society's laid-down norms are/were vehemently adhered to and avenues are provisioned through recreational activities, especially, performances to vent out these feelings. Examples of such performances are *Sikyɛ*, *Bosome*, *Ntwiee*, and *Odie* which have been observed as highly erotic but accepted in the society. Personal character then comes into question at a performer since it forms a major trait in determining who is selected to perform (one with character).

When a speaker of the Akan language wants to say, "She/He has no morals", or, "She/He is immoral", or "She/He is unethical", "His/Her conduct is unethical", he would almost invariably say, "She/He has no character" (*Onnisuban*)<sup>ii</sup>. Apart from the Asante, the idea of character seems central to the ethical values of most African ethnic groups, especially the Yuroba (Abiodun 1983; Molefi, Kete and Abarry 1996; Babatunde 1974).

### **The concept of beauty in African cultures and Asante**

Clarke and Arkenberg (2006) suggest that the fact that, in many societies, the words for beautiful and good are the same suggests a strong correspondence between these two ideas. They continued that, the ability of an artifact to work effectively, whether that means connecting with the spiritual realm or imparting a lesson, may also be a standard for determining the 'beauty' of an artifact. In African art aesthetics, there are clearly standards of beauty. These standards are for precise qualities that describe sculpture and indicate what is "good", "bad": resemblance to a human being, luminosity, self-composure, and youthfulness<sup>iii</sup> to mention a few.

There is, however, no compelling proof demonstrating that a measure of active ethnic affiliation is necessarily antithetical to most aspects of modernity. The word Art does not have a concise definition in the Asante linguistic expression also but rather the word 'beautiful' might be a compromise to describe what it is. The urban ethnography of Asante provides numerous accounts of how eroticism has been westernized in meaning, function and significance to ease the individual's transition from the conventional to the contemporary. It may even be possible to endanger sentiments of national identity and mis-education of the youth without compromising ethnic individuality to a higher level. The compromise of adopting both traditional and western norms could be a barrier to constructing the common or stable value systems which will be necessary to build a viable civilized structure for the people.

The traditional Asante visual art forms and themes are more geared towards 'war and conquest', royal and ritual and fertility much more than tackling socialization issues of a sort. Themes for recreational performances, including sensual ones, organized in the evenings are quite endless and unrestricted including when the community (women predominantly) gather to sing praise songs to their men and deserving people after they return from war or long voyages. These songs are sometimes chants for their victory.

The concept of beauty in African philosophy is conceptually related to the culture and has always had a religious and functional purpose within its cultural context as compared to the western philosophical precepts of beauty, associated with physical attractiveness of an art work.

The nature of beauty has become one of the most endearing and controversial themes in African philosophy, since the contemporary arts of Africa does not have the religious element that makes it more conceptual. Some researchers have been inclined to see religious convictions in all traditional African arts, which are in concurrence with Willets' (1971: p.164) accounts that there is 'art for art sake' in Africa; reacting to European maxim of all African arts used for spiritual and ritualistic functions in which case an artifact is only 'seen' when discarded after its use. But knowing the intended purpose or function for which it was created for would definitely not attract any indigene to patronize or recognize it as an art, let alone look further for its beauty characteristics.

Sartwell (2012) asserts that Plato in the Symposium connects beauty to a response of love and desire, but locates beauty of participation in the form. Irrespective of theoretical commitment, every treatment of aesthetic issues involves reference to human experience (Berleant, 1964), be it in the objective or subjective experience. Berleant further states that independent of the ontological status attributed to the art objective, the relation of men to it, in producing, appreciating, appraising it, is an experimental relation. The emotions projected as a result of sensuous activities or performance communicates the moods and ideas vividly to the audience or the viewer according to the emotionalists' viewpoint. These emotions can cause some people to be desirable and delighted; others can also be completely revolted and offended. Davies (2008: p. 3-5) also elucidates three types

of emotional expressiveness: primary, secondary and tertiary. He said, the primary expressions occur unintentionally and unreflectively like sadness, the secondary are behaviours which issue from the emotion felt but which could not be seen as expressive by someone lacking (independent) knowledge of the agent's intentions and/ or circumstances and the tertiary expressions is through their use of conventions and rituals, they permit the audience to become aware of the work, rather than via independent sources. From this statement, it is however the secondary and the tertiary which have close bearing on aesthetics and the ethic of the performances being analyzed.

### **Themes on gender**

The female has always been at the centerstage of beauty and provocation especially in performances. Not only does the form of the body have aesthetically sensuous attraction; the function of its members does as well... free and graceful movement of the body, a beauty which is perhaps bound up with its form. (Berleant, p. 190)

Molding the female body or accentuating erogenous zones are forms of depicting beauty as accepted by a society. De Rachewiltz (1964: p. 125) indicates that grooming of anatomical beauty is characterised by a particular ethnic group. While some cultures as the Hottentots value steatopygia i.e., procuring artificial fat around the buttocks as an aesthetic end, highly considered physically attractive, others like the Masai deem well-built and slim body with lightly rounded forms as beauty characteristic. The issues of beauty modifications vary in cultures. He continues that, young Zande girls pull their breasts downwards with their hands while they sing magic words: 'Oh! Let my breasts droop.' For them beauty lies in the length and size of their bosoms. Beauty to the Asante does not only constitute a round, disc-like head set upon a ringed neck supported by feminine curves with the lower torso or hip protruding than the shoulder but the person's attitude towards others in the society, the values and morals exuded from the person. Visually, a woman can be characterised as beautiful but if she does not possess the necessary 'beauty' qualities or moral attributes it is usually said that 'her bad attitudes overshadows her beauty.' For many, physique and character, artifact and functionality combine to define beauty.

One would have expected to see salacious early rock and cave art (erotic) of the Asante along their migratory route from the North Western Niger river through Egypt, down through modern day Benin and Togo before reaching the Ghanaian coast (Sogoba, 2018, line 22), giving their vibrant and exciting cultural values and conquests or their militia similar to Maquet's (1972) discoveries of numerous paintings and engravings found in the Republic of South Africa. In his illustration, individual human figures were usually monochromatic and silhouette [often nude], accentuating the reproductive organs and minimizing others (p. 35). Probably, much of the history of the Asante people's artistry would be in their original location i.e. north-western Niger River.

### **Perceptions of the nude and sensuality in creative arts of the Asante**

It is assumed in accordance with the Akan social construct, that being naked or partially naked exposing the erogenous zones as commonly fashioned today, was unsolicited in the society. Mild levels of nudity have been a significant facet of the Asante social structure, which is capable of expressing desires and feelings with their art of cloth wearing, but the limited documentation on their representations indicates how the total exposure of the human body in contemporary art is not a preference for social discussions, let alone its representation in the arts especially in realism as the Chokwe and some other African societies do (De Rachiwiltz, 1964).

The human figure, especially the female, has the ability to create a sensual attribute on its own without the inclusion of the male figure, depending on the posture of the body and expression. Dogbe (1977: p. 14) also comments that the execution and function of African nude sculptures are different from all nudes in the history of art, saying:

African nudes are asexual. It does not arouse any sexual urge in the observer; thus it does not function as a 'nude', that is, the realistic, sexually stimulating nude. The sexuality of a nude in general depends upon its treatment... The more distorted or abstracted the nude is the less sexually stimulating it becomes. African nudes suggest awe... it carries special messages that are far from sexual stimulation.

Nonetheless, most women wrap a piece of cloth around their waist and go about their daily chores and may not bother to cover up the breasts even when a visitor is present when very aged but the youth wrap on the chest. Some people might find this offensive, but others see it as a normal way of life. Through the stages of the life of a female, it is after childbirth that most women feel or see a decline in their physical beauty and disregard the 'shame' in nudity. It is the pubertal and nubile stage that there is a high degree of shyness exhibited in the lives of females. Yet, a representation therefore of the bare breasts or the nude human figure, even semi-nude in contemporary arts are observed as uncouth, given that it is for the aesthetic pleasure of an artist and his audience

which is of no benefit to the society. As the early Greek and Roman found in Pompeii and Herculaneum, they did not state clearly the use of these arts other than aesthetic appeal. The Chinese, Japanese and Indians were documented to have used theirs positively to educate their married youth on sex; but on the contrary, the unmarried youth could have come across these and used them.

Sensual expressions are very important in the cultural expression of the Asante, and one would expect to have seen a proliferation of art works of erotic attribute. Relatively, only small groups of coupling figurative gold-weights sparsely exist. These figurative erotic weights may not have enough cultural placements in Asante since it was originally a western influenced idea and an economic giving tradition. This explains why production is solely based on commissions.

Simultaneously, some of the Akan artistic production focuses primarily on decorative art objects (as the western ornamental arts without any spiritual symbolism) and falls into the categories of statues (human and animals), furniture (stools and chairs) and jewellery, of which the entire Ghanaian ethnic population is strongly influenced by the aesthetic traditions of the Asante Bacquart (1998: p. 32). In other words, this writer claims that, the artistic production of the entire Ghanaian ethnic population is strongly influenced by the aesthetic traditions of the Asante people, where close differences will not make categorization easy or possible.

Gerrard (1980) also said that, the best craftsmen in Denkyira out of conquest in 1701, (according to oral traditions which have been passed through generations) taught the Asante how to make brass weights as well as items of state regalia. Gerrard (1980) showed scanty images of human figures in the late period in his publication titled 'Akan weights and the gold trade' but could not relate its use and symbolic meanings to the culture of Asante i.e. if they were made within the cultural context of the Asante, but rather judged these works within the European epistemological frames. But rather, he identified the works and tried to date it. The coupling weights are close in semblance to the ancient Baule bronzes showing ritual intercourse.

## II. METHODOLOGY

In conducting this study, the researchers employed the qualitative research approach to gather in-depth and holistic understanding of eroticism in Asante culture through interviews with traditional leaders, queenmothers, older folks in the communities, dancers, cultural analysts and craftsmen. Observations and participant observations were used during cultural performances, daily and functional activities and ceremonies. Wakesa (2011) posited that participant observation method is distinctive because the researcher approaches participants in their own environment rather than having the participants come to the researcher. This study was based on both primary and secondary sources.

Informal conversation and interaction with members of the Asante society during festivals cultural displays and their words were recorded in the field notes. Data obtained on the field served as a check against participants' subjective reporting of what they believed and experienced. A tour was conducted through the principal streets of craft villages and art centers to catch a glimpse of artifacts borrowing on the sexual themes. This enabled the researcher observe public reactions to sexual themes, interview craftsmen and see its patronage.

The data was analysed by themes, that is, the themes discussed emerged from the data. The analysis and data collection took place simultaneously. Even background reading formed part of the analysis process, especially explaining emerging themes. Data collected was also compared and contrasted and meanings formed. Tapes were transcribed and field notes compiled for the analysis and then organized through use of themes that emerged. The themes were established through units of information consisting of phrases, body language, songs and linguistic or proverbial aphorisms, conceptual subjects or themes.

The interviewees' responses to dialogue were from facts and experiences, both personal and collective. The Manhyia palace in Kumasi was chosen as the center of concentration unless otherwise directed by the palace to the appropriate people or places. Except for analysis, all interviews were conducted in the Twi language as most of the respondents were more comfortable in their mother tongue. The data collected on the research field was subjected to interpretation.

Dance is essentially emotion in motion. In dance, our purpose is to express emotions, communicating physically, allowing those feelings to move through the body, out of the body, and in doing so, to move others. Emotionalism which places emphasis on the expressive qualities of an art and communicates the moods and ideas vividly to the viewer is very much employed by the performers, especially women, to get the message of eroticism across to the men. The purpose of the aesthetic theory here is to render the experiences of art and the aesthetic perception of nature more understandable. Again, both the audience and performers are expressive of their knowledge about the subject of eroticism drawing experiences from within, both subjectively and objectively.

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### **The good, the beautiful and the sensuous**

*'the ability of an art to incite, is not only in the way in which it is portrayed, but the emotions it projects'* (personal comment).

The good art in this study signifies the arts that borrows on the themes of social relevance. The beautiful involves the styles and techniques employed to create the artefact or performance and the sensuous discusses the products or output of the culture that touches on attributes of the Asante which can be characterised as erotic.

#### **Important definitions associated with the erotic in the arts (performances and visual)**

Art evokes several emotional feelings of awe, amazement, joy, even revolt and others that touch on the sensuality of its audience which can be characterised as erotic. To begin a discussion of eroticism by the Asante, definitions are important in order to place the performances into the proper categories. There is not a definite word for the word erotic in the *Twi* language of the Asante but rather translations in the Asante linguistic dialect that can best describe the subject. Different opinions have been expressed by Archbishop Peter Kwasi Sarpong (personal communication, June 19 2008), Prof. Agyekum (personal communication, October 30, 2008) and Nana Baffour Kwaku Amoateng III (personal communication, February 15, 2008) on the appropriate term(s) or meanings to best describe the erotic in *Twi*.

*'Adwaman'* is a term that describes acts of fornication or adultery, which was suggested by interviewees could be used to classify the highly sexualized arts (performances) leading to the obscene. *'Adɔɔdɔɔ'* (wooing or luring), *atwetweɛ* (attraction or luring), *'esɔ'* (desiring or an expression given to a person 'on heat'), and *'adɛfɛdɛfɛ'* (flattery) were suggested for the mildly obscene arts.

The erotic in the Asante linguistic cultural context as some citizens say, could mean *adɔɔdɔɔ* (wooing) or *adɛfɛdɛfɛ* (flattery), but these words would change their meanings based on the context in which they are found and used. Prof. Kofi Agyekum (personal communication, October 30, 2008) in the linguistic Department in University of Ghana (UGA) strongly agrees with the latter, but then flattering can be done without any sexual connotation although moments of flirtation can be identified. Even though *adɔɔdɔɔ* may result in a possible courtship/marriage as the English dictionary definition suggests, it does not really have a bearing on eroticism. Perhaps, it may not be rendered in the plastics but in a performance, certain gestures and facial expressions could suggest so. The erotic deals with sexual connotations unless the final end results in an abstraction of a sexual act. Therefore, in an attempt to discuss the subject of erotic arts (performances) in Asante, it would involve the arts-all forms- that deal with sex or imply it. Although, the word *adwaman* is also another term used to mean the erotic, it quickly veers thoughts into obscenity because this term categorically refers to indecency in the society. These terms *adɛfɛdɛfɛ* and *adɔɔdɔɔ* were suggested to reduce the 'curse' on eroticism, which is seen as being below the standards of decency and though it may be good, it can be abused.

#### **Definition and concept of beauty**

In an attempt to define beauty in the *twi* language, Nketia (1984: p. 10) explains his concept of beauty by finding the appropriate definitions and term of beauty among the Akan. He said,

"Among the Akan of Ghana, for instance, the two key words used in aesthetic descriptions are */fe/* beauty, beautiful, and */de/* sweet, tasty, pleasant. The word for beauty */fe/* is used not only to refer to objects, but also to movement and dance as well as character */suban/* and conduct of behaviour */yobeal/*. Thus, the concept of beauty is also linked to morality, for beauty is something to be admired as well as something to acquire. There are also established ideas of beauty related to shapes and design that Akan craftsmen follow/particularly in relation to the use of circles, squares and triangles. Matters pertaining to beauty are referred to as */afɛfɛfɛsem/*."

The common word to describe beauty in general is *'fe'* which indicates the visual tastes of an art work, but then *'de'* extends to signify sweetness, the sense of taste. Whatever the *raison d'être* is, if the former or the latter, could infringe upon the moral privileges of some members in the society too because one way or the other even if one participates in an exotic erotic performance, the one may face being branded. When the art touches on the erotic sense of its audience, of a member of a particular heritage the one could be heavily dealt with; that is why the Archbishop Peter Sarpong probably says that the Asante society does not encourage eroticism but tolerates it. People do enjoy these performances but always look over their shoulder. On the other hand, the erotic performances come with great aesthetic appeal considering their morals. Observing the display of erotic antics amidst melodies of percussion instruments, the singing automatically joins in with cheering lyrics. The society performs for mere entertainment and it is a beautiful sight to behold.

Nketia's explanation, depending on the intent of an artefact or gathering, whether a performance or an art work can be characterised as erotic, either partially or completely with ethical and aesthetic dimensions. In the discourse of sexuality, the erotic could have wider implications: it could be pornographic and liberal,

because arousing sexual desire with artistic creativity is different from pornography. Garlikov (n.d.) tries to answer a philosophical question: What elements make good erotic art good art and also erotic? He said,

Erotic visual arts, that is, painting, sculpture and performances reflects three different intentions or purposes: to cause sexual arousal, to portray some elements of beauty or to express and communicate something bodily about sexuality, often some insight the artist or performer has about it (Para. 2)

With this justification by Garlikov, it would be sound to say that the erotic arts of the Asante maybe good erotic arts since the arts of which performances dominate are directly or indirectly used to bring prospective couples together. But then such positive notions or gestures can be abused. Through these performances, people can be aroused for the right reasons and consummate. Likewise, the erotic visual arts can also portray Asante conception of beauty: a high oval, flattened head specially achieved by massaging the infant's soft skull with enough hair; moderately protruding lips; a pointed nose; round set eyes; a ringed neck with creases of subcutaneous fat, indicating the good health; a smaller upper torso with round standing breasts set over a bulging buttocks with a narrow waist in betwixt; flexible joints to aid swinging of the arm which moves rhythmically with the backside when in motion; beautifully set straight legs also shaped with beads at infancy; a graceful look on the face; and a dark skin. These concepts have now been 'modernized' due to adaptations and cross-breeding. These concepts of beauty run through the Akan lineage. And if it is well defined; a man can appreciate the woman in Asante by saying "*ah! Obaayi ho yefe*" figuratively meaning, "wow! this woman is beautiful". Do not forget that she would be stringed with waist beads to attain a height to cause sexual arousal. Beads are used to accentuate the body parts from childhood and continuous to be used to beautify the adult female whilst symbolically depicting sexual parts or accentuating it therefore in the visual arts may render the artist uncouth but never seen as a social theme for exploration. Reasons are that they have no cultural purpose and so it is disregarded. In a tour to some craft villages and shops in the Kumasi Metropolis, the subject of eroticism is completely oblivious and took a bit of persistence for some craftsmen to admit they only produce such themes based on commission.

The Asante create individual fertility figures just to portray the essential beauty features accepted by the society in which they reduce the features to geometric shapes and used probably by the women in need of children only. The artist therefore works on demand on an economic large scale which dictates their creativity today. Again, the fertility figures have almost always been feminine excluding the males in reproductive representations, perhaps because it is a masculine society and the woman carries the greater percentage of the stigma associated with childlessness. This has resulted in the figural arts being quite monotonous in representation and material (usually wood) and measures about 25cm high. The seductive figures are the more variant in style representation though in miniature bronzes, about the size of 5cm but not for fertility. There are usually no inscriptions on the figurines since the Asante are not enthusiastic about scarifying, but, these works are portable and can be experimented with, i.e., touch to feel surface and weight. Unfortunately, the emotional response for the *akua'ba* is quite neutral today since it is created for its aesthetic and decorative purpose. Though, the sexually seductive figures trigger the feeling of admiration and humour, seeing human actions represented in miniature figures, the artist's intention is well spelt out.

By observation, the Lobi, fertility figures are coupling imagery in several compromising positions believed to enhance the fertility of the women living in the house (Burkina Faso), unlike the *akua'ba* which is used by individuals for same purpose. Documented by Gerrand (Feb. 1982) in the form of an embrace. The figures have undergone negative transformations over the centuries since Gerrand's publishing a decade ago. In one of his examples, the female figures were depicted with hair styles popularly called 'straight tufts' and beads on the waist to distinguish her from the male figures, but another of his example has the figures with the same hair style, braided. Comparing these characteristics to the approach figures, the heads have been reduced to disc-like shape with no hair style, probably depicting the *dansinkran* iconography with thinner cylindrical body shapes showing less detail of limbs and lacking facial expressions, hair styles not well defined, and sexual positions even look semi-complacent and sacrosanct but the variety of positions and styles are commendable. Since the figures look like joint tubes some of the cylinders are sometimes disjointed which reduces its aesthetic quality because it depicts the horridness and less attention given to its finishing. The Fon erotic brass figurines which are extra ordinarily gymnastic and unimaginatively acrobatic in themes and positions with smooth finishing and for fear of its straightness and stability the figures are sometimes fixed on a pedestal, just like the approach figures.

A woman's waist beads (used to support a loin cloth, and for erotic play) are not secret from other women who bathe with her and help string them for one another, but the only man to see them will usually be her husband or lover. In the current rendition of the *akuaba* fertility dolls, beads are attached to the waist to portray this. Nooter(1993) further explained that if a man touches a married woman's waist beads, he has

symbolically committed adultery with her; if he exposes them he has committed symbolic rape (p. 25). As this may be a sexual offence, the attraction to sin is in the aesthetic beauty projected.

Movement of the body reveals many different things about: emotions, sexuality, age, status, the surroundings, education, affluence etc. The environment in which an action takes place will shape the movement of the artist for the audience to take part in the act of performance and also interpret and get a good understanding of what is being done. The performer then discovers the concepts of the Asante beauty a profound link with the pureness of being. Sensuality stimulates creativity in every sense and also evokes love, passion and the creation of man. This visual value is appealing to both innovatory and intransigent artists. It is with such debates that this research seeks to investigate, but though the Akan are not so keen talking about sex, they talk about it openly when the proper stage is set for it with great frankness. And this could be one of the reasons for the scanty depictions of eroticism in the visual arts may be because such should not be publicly seen but kept private and personal.

The costuming during a performance can be a major form of eroticism, and must give a voice. The social function of clothing to a large extent is to both preserve modesty and to accentuate the wearer's sexual beauty. Have you taken time to watch an African woman's art of walking with a cloth tied on her chest possibly carrying water or any load on the head?, asked Prof. C. Small (personal communication, Sept 1, 2007). The enthusiastic gaze of the man when 'the behind' of the woman moves rhythmically with the breasts and reveal in him the desire of covetousness Though she is not without cloths, a man can be stimulated just by watching her go about her daily chores. This statement extends in saying that, there is no distinct barrier between being clothed and being without clothes where eroticism is concerned. Sometimes the notion of fantasy can be much more overwhelming. Most importantly these arts communicate sexuality through the body language.

These attributes discussed above should have been seen prominently in the visual arts of the Asante with many erotic inferences but rather, the arts that reflect subjects of daily life, that is, the sculptural arts to a great degree favour political warfare and social issues like fertility. Even though arts are currently pursued purposely for their economic gains these 'restrictions' still prevail, artist still loathe the subject of eroticism and where it is made mention of, they are often produced in abstraction.

Asante have been conservative in their semi-nude costuming which seems to be a part of their lives but this feature is rarely represented in the contemporary visual arts over the years. For the women the cloth on the chest places an emphasis on their erogenous zones- arms, buttocks, neck, legs and breast, to a degree of even seeing traces of her bead line if she's stringed. This way the beauty of the girl is observed right from infancy: how her buttocks moves rhythmically with the breast when she walks, her beautiful arms and legs well appreciated. Men are usually in their cloth and at times bare their chest to reveal their muscles.

The women wear no earrings; this being out of the lot all other forms of ornaments are worn. The design of ornaments is based on emblems in the society depending on who is wearing it and for what occasion it is used for. The design could also be proverbial or adinkra designs to be used at all times like *gyenyame* (except God), *nsoroma*(stars) symbols. Apart from the beads that the women string to their waist as an erotic fetish for their partners, Asante are not one of the peoples who usually use beads excessively to adorn themselves though the society can boast of several bead making skills. Perhaps because gold is in abundance in the society and so it stands supreme.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

It is very common to hear the word '**good**' being used to classify arts when it appeals to the cultural dictates of an Asante especially when the theme is centered on the royal activities which is supreme; could be on warfare and conquests, regalia etc., because it represents the culturally or socially accepted values imbibed in the arts and well appreciated for the histories and stories it documents

'**The beautiful arts**' were observed to represent the use of cultural aesthetics acceptable in the Asante ethical ethos especially in the representation thereof in the arts.

Words such as '*eefe*' would totally conclude the thought of many and applaud the artist as knowledgeable and the performer, a high regard and honour to her parents for good home training. The actual concept of beauty in Africa is quite broad, complicated and highly dependent on the ethnicity of an individual although most attribute it to the woman and good morality. To this, Iganga (2017, Pg. 254) said that African conceptualizations of beauty are in feminine terms: and perhaps every usage of the word 'beauty' or 'beautiful' is usually constructed to celebrate woman hood or feminine spirit. Beauty connotes celebration of worth value, quality essence and desirability... and concludes that the functional conception of beauty implies that beauty in an African context must serve to lead to some purpose (p. 259). Where the feminine beauty is concerned there is no 'beauty for beauty sake' but in the arts of Africa there is 'Art for art sake'.

**The sensuous aspects** also represented the arts that touch on the sexuality of the individual and societal accepted sexual behavior portrayed in the arts. The results show that the people recognize the sensuality or eroticism in the arts and relate to it as good if it appeals to their aesthetic sense, bad if it goes against their

ethics. This offers more decoration, entertainment and communication but also educates and encourages creativity in contemporary arts of Asante and world view.

It is recommended that an avenue should be created either for local culture or international tourism for these performances and erotic antics to be publicly and fully participated and enjoyed so people can vent out or be expressive about their desirous sensuality by mimicking sexual acts to create sanity, peace of mind, entertain, educate and heal one another in the course to free the society of social vices.

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