

An Assessment of the Costume Design of Yolanda Okereke in Craig Freimond's Blood Sisters

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Abstract: Costume design is a pivotal visual element in a cinematic narrative. It serves as a visual language that communicates character traits, thematic concerns, and cultural nuances to the audience. Thus, costume represents the artistic and visual interpretation of a film. As one of the most noticeable elements on screen, it offers the audience a direct connection to the characters role in a film. To this end, this paper critically examines the costume designs of Yolanda Okereke in Blood Sisters in order to uncover the creative and technical techniques that she used to shape the visual identities of the characters and the themes in the film. This paper adopts a qualitative research method, supported by descriptive and analytical tools. Primary data are drawn from interview with the highlighted costume designer in order to reveal her creative and conceptual techniques in costume design of the aforementioned film. In addition, secondary data are derived from scholarly journals, articles, books and online resources. The theoretical lens of Affective Materialism by Giuliana Burno is also employed to foreground the paper. This findings reveal that, the costume designer of Blood Sisters creatively designed the costumes to reflect the characterisation and cultural heritage of characters to the audience. The costume designer uses her creative inventiveness to manipulate the elements and principles of design to add depth and meaning to the characterisation of the film. It is also discovers that the costume designer used costumes to convey social status and power dynamics among the characters to the audience. This study therefore concludes that the costume designer does not only enhance visual storytelling but also contributes significantly to character development, cultural authenticity and audience engagement in the film. This paper then recommends that costume designers should keep in mind the elements and principles of costume designs in their design concepts in line with global best practices. Also, that, Nollywood film industry, and tertiary institutions where costume designs are taught should organise trainings and workshops for students, costume designers among others, so that they can be properly trained in the art of costume design.

Keywords: Assessment, Costume design, Character creation, Aesthetics, Bloodsister, Film

Introduction

Film is a powerful media for projecting human experiences to the viewers. When combined with well-chosen costumes, they effectively communicate complex character nuances and cultural contexts, making storytelling more immersive. Every garment worn on screen by the actors is considered a costume, and these costumes not only help actors embody their roles but also convey the film's message in alignment with the screen's script. The art of costume design is a pivotal element in the cinematic narrative, serving as a visual language that communicates character traits, thematic concerns, aesthetics and cultural contexts. Shuaibu (2008, p. 1) notes that Costumes are paramount among the elements used in relating human experiences to an audience. Similarly, Eze (2015, p. 22) affirms that costume is an important aspect of a dramatic presentation, as it gives out the interpretative meaning of the physical appearance of a character; therefore, it is highly symbolic and cannot be under emphasized in production process.

From the foregoing, Costume, therefore, plays a critical role in film production, far beyond being mere clothing. It is central to character creation and delineation, because as actors wear, move, and speak in their costumes, they constantly attract audience attention and communicate the film's themes and encoded messages to the audience (Abuku & Odi, 2010). Thus, the role of the costume designer is to transform the screen writer's and director's visions into reality through thoughtful and purposeful costume choices. This highly creative role requires imaginative and interpretative skills, as well as a deep understanding of how to translate character and narrative elements of a film into visual language. Since costume design is one of the most personal aspect of a film's visual storytelling, costume designer must be adept at creating costumes that reflect the tone, style, time, place, and character's identity within the overall production concept (Yin, 2023). Hence, a nuanced understanding of costume design and its application is essential for enhancing the quality of Nigerian films. Yolanda Okereke's costume design in the Netflix series *Blood Sisters* exemplifies this paradigm, by employing a distinct and multifaceted approach that reinforced the film's dramatic tension, character development, visual aesthetics and socio-cultural commentary. To this end, this paper examines the ways in which Okereke's costume designs contribute to the production's artistic and visual communication. Through a close reading of the costumes, this paper elucidates the ways in which Okereke's design choices reinforced or misrepresented the production's thematic concerns, while ultimately shedding light on the role of costume design in shaping the narrative of the film.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework for this paper is Affective Materialism theory propounded by Giuliana Burno an Italian American Professor at Harvard University in (2014). The choice of this theoretical framework is, among other reasons hinged on the fact that the Affective Materialism theory posits that costume in film are not just visual or narrative device but material objects that evokes emotions, sensations and bodily responses, while shaping the viewer's experiences. Thus, this framework views costume as an active participant in the film emotional landscape.

The foregoing assertion was drawn from Burno's work on "Visual Culture and Materiality", when she studied aesthetics, materiality and media. In the essay she explored how material surface (costume) evoked responses in visual media. Burno interrogated how materials surface like fabric and architectural textures carry affective power in the art and film, by engaging viewers on a sensory level. Apart from Burno, Laura Marks, a Canadian media theorist based at Simon Fraser university, in (2021) also worked on Affective Materialism theory by examining the intercultural cinematic use of texture and touch, she focused on how material objects on screen like fabric and accessories evoke the emotion and reaction of the audience to enhance communication. Other scholars like Vivian Sobchack; an American film theorist and pioneer of phenomenological film studies in (2023) also foregrounded the Affective Materialism theory in her essay "Embodiment and Moving Image Culture" where she introduced the concept of "Haptic Visuality and Embodied Viewing" which revealed how films enhanced communication through sight linking material element like costume to embody viewer's responses. Her opinion therefore give credence to the idea that costume in film entrenches pre-conscious feelings of the audience.

In view of the above, it is glaring that the theory Affective Materialism articulates how objects, generates emotions, sensations and bodily responses from the audience in cinematic experiences. This theory will be used to foreground this paper through its major features thus:

- i, Costume as affective agent: costume are not passive symbols or mere decorations, they actively produce emotional and sensory effects through their material properties such as texture, weight and colour which shape how characters feel and how audience respond beyond their narrative function.
 - ii, Materiality devices sensory engagement: The physical qualities of costume roughness, softness, sheen or decay engage the viewer's senses creating a haptic connection mediated by the screen. This sensory link proceeds intellectual interpretation.
 - iii, Affect Precedes Signification: The emotional bodily impact of costume hits the viewers before it's semiotic meaning. The affective response is immediate and pre-conscious, rooted in the costume's material presence rather than it's symbolic decoding.
 - iv, Costume Mediate Embodied: costume bridges the character's physical reality and viewer's emotional perception reflecting the actor's embodied performance while eliciting a mirrored bodily responses in the audience. They are a conduit for shared feeling.
 - v, Dynamic Interplay of Character and Costume: The costume's affective role involves with the character's arc, it's materiality reflecting and amplifying emotional shifts. It is a co-participant in the storytelling not a static backdrop.
- The aforementioned features are employed in this paper to examine the dynamics of costume design of Yolanda Okereke in *Blood Sister* film in order to illuminate and foreground them as pertinent meaning making components of costume communication in film production.

Biography of Yolanda Okereke

Yolanda Okereke Fabura is a female costume designer, wardrobe specialist and fashion stylist in her late thirties from southern part of Nigeria, she was born on October 19, 1985, she is married to Karibi Fabura and blessed with a son. She is known for her amazing contributions to Nollywood industry through her costume designs for film and television productions. She is an award-winning costume designer with many laurels to her name.

Okereke is a graduate of Chemical Engineering but began her career in 2009 as a fashion designer after undergoing extensive training in fashion designing. Yolanda Okereke Fabura started out as a fashion stylist and spent few years styling the outfits of celebrities for red-carpet events. She has designed for celebrities like Kate Henshaw, Rita Dominic, Nse Ikpe-Etim, DJ Jummy Jatt, Desmond Elliott and many more. In the course of styling the costumes of celebrities for red carpet, Okereke was contracted to deliver some outfits to two Nollywood actresses namely; Nse Ikpe-Etim and Kate Henshaw. She took it to them on the set of *The Meeting*; the movie they were working on and the people on set were immediately impressed with the outfits she brought and she was hired on the spot to costume the characters in the film. Thus, Yolanda Okereke's debut project was Rita Dominic's *The Meeting*, a 2012 romantic comedy film that featured stars like Femi Jacobs, Linda Ejiofor, Kehinde Bankole, and Jide Kosoko, among others. She did a good job with the project and contributed to the film's widely-acclaimed success at that time.

Since her debut outing in 2012, Yolanda Okereke has acquired more educational qualifications in costume designing and has grown to be one of the best film costumiers in the Nigerian film industry where she has been able to exhibit her creative ingenuity on both stage and screen. Some of Yolanda's most recent works are *La Femme Anjola* (2021); a popular Nollywood thriller, *Day of Destiny* (2021), and *Blood Sisters* (2022). She has successfully written her name amongst the most important figures in the history of costume design in the Nigerian film industry.

Synopsis of *Blood sisters*

Blood Sisters is a gripping Nigerian crime thriller series of four episodes that centers on two best friends, Sarah and Kemi. The plot in the story begins with the grand engagement of Sarah to her wealthy fiancé, Kola, a seemingly charming man from an influential and wealthy family. However, behind his polished exterior lies a deep mystery, Kola has a controlling and abusive nature. A day after the engagement party, Kola mysteriously goes missing, and shortly afterward, his body is discovered in a shallow grave. This shocking turn of events throws Sarah and Kemi into chaos and their lives take a dark turn as they are accused of the murder. With the police and Kola's powerful family on their trail, the two friends are forced to flee for their lives, navigating danger and betrayal at every turn in their journey for survival. As the story unfolds further, deep secrets are revealed, not only about Kola's dark past but

also about the dysfunction within his family. Each episode peels back the layers of lies, exposing issues of domestic abuse, family rivalry, corruption, and societal expectations. Also, while evading being captured, Sarah and Kemi are also confronted with the consequences of their actions, the test of their friendship, and the difficult choices they must make to survive. *Blood Sisters* is a blend of suspense, emotional tension, and social commentary, offering a powerful narrative that keeps viewers on edge while shedding light on social ills within different families and the Nigerian society at large.

Assessment of the Costume Design Of Yolanda Okereke in *Blood Sisters*

Assessing a costume design involves evaluating how well the design aligns with the themes and other functionalities of costume in a film production. A well designed costume should balance story telling intent, aesthetics, and practicality of a film. In assessing a costume design of a film, all the artistic and aesthetic elements should be examined. To this end, the under-listed headings will be used to examine the costume designs of Yolanda Okereke in *Blood Sisters* film.

Genre of *Blood Sisters* and Costume Design

A film genre is a stylistic or thematic category of motion pictures based on similarities either in the narrative elements, aesthetic approach, or the emotional response to the film (Deguzman, 2024). The genre of *Blood Sisters* is a satire rooted in a crime thriller. It is a satiric film written with the purpose of using humor and irony to criticise and point out societal ills to the audience for corrective purpose and societal reform. In line with the genre of the film, the style of costume designs of Okereke in the visual narrative of the storyline of the film are captured in bright colours in order to project the emotions, mood and motivations of characters in the film to the audience in an immersive manner. A typical example of this is perceived in the striking colours and flamboyant designs of Mrs. Uduak Ademola's costumes in the film. The costume designer costumed her this way to draw viewers' attention to her as the major character whose tyrannical actions are being censored and ridiculed in the film in order to expose the genre of the film to the audience in line with its theme and plot structure.



Fig 1: Mrs Uduak Ademola with her Family at the Wedding Scene in Glamorous Outfits

Source: IMDb

Character Depiction in *Blood Sisters*

Within the plot structure of a film, each character has his or her own distinctive personality and trait which are often expressed through costume. This representation includes the age, personality, status, and occupation of the character, etc. Hence, a costume designer must understand the characteristics of each character and adequately depict it in a film through costume to the audience. In the *Blood Sister*, Okereke's costume design concept was evident in the creative ways she used costume to depict each character in terms of age, personality, occupation, status in the film. For example, the character of Sarah as a young gentle bride in her early twenties with humble disposition is depicted through beautiful ash and black dress garnished with varied colourful accessories at the engagement party to showcase her youthful beauty and grandeur. While the costume for her second appearance is

viewed in a gold flowing gown embellished with gold sequins with gold earrings to articulate her high aesthetic taste and fashion sense.



Fig 2/ Fig 3: Bride (Sarah) on Black Gown (first appearance) and Gold Gown (second appearance) at the engagement party
Source: DTM

Mrs. Uduak Ademola

All through the film, the costume designer used costume to portray the arrogant, sophisticated and wicked nature of Mrs. Uduak Ademola; as a major character and a wealthy business woman in her sixties in the film, She costumed her with embellished ornate capes, flowing dresses, A-shaped gowns and kimonos, to depict her egocentric and authoritative personality. This is seen in a scene where she comes out of a private jet in a flamboyant dress with her cape trailing behind her as a portraiture of her domineering nature. Mrs. Uduak Ademola is also showcased at the mourning scene after the death of her son, in outlandish black flowing gown with net flowing jacket and heavy earrings to emphasise her wicked disposition to life because her costume was abnormal and did not reflect the emotional trauma of a woman mourning her son.



Fig 4/ Fig 5: Mrs. Uduak Ademola in Flowing Dresses and Capes

Source: Zikoko

Kola Ademola

Kola Ademola is an highly educated man in his thirties in the film, he is the groom who disappeared mysteriously on his wedding day. He is another major character whose overbearing nature is ridiculed and highlighted through costume. Kola Ademola has two personalities in the film, to some people he is perceived as a perfect gentleman and role model. While his other personality shows his monstrous nature as an abusive partner who brutalises his fiancée at every given opportunity. The costume designer gave him a blue and black suit with white shirt and black bow tie to draw viewers' attention to him as a gentleman and respectable person in the society. But on the other hand, his tyrannical, arrogance and wicked personality are revealed to the audience through befitting casual costumes in line with the plot structure of the film.

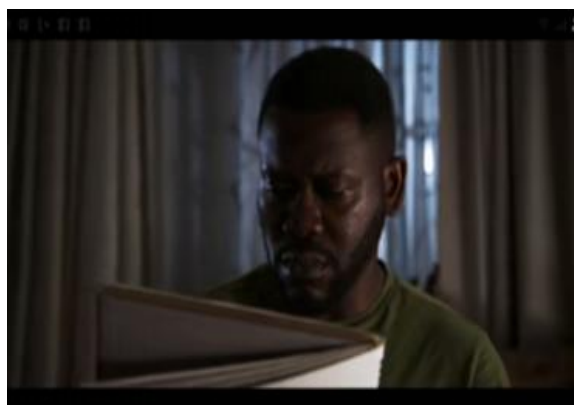


Fig 6/ Fig 7: Kola on Blue and Black, White Suit and Black Bow Tie / Kola on Green Top and Jean

Source: Shop Celeb wear / screenshot from the Movie

Social Status and Costume Design in *Blood Sisters*

Costumes play crucial roles in visually communicating a characters' economic and social status in a film. Through careful selection of fabrics, colours, styles, and attention to details, the costume designer of *Blood Sisters* was able to aptly indicate character's place in the social hierarchy. Hence, she revealed the wealth and social status of characters through fabrics such as silk, satin, velvet, and fine wool. This is because these fabrics often have a luxurious textures and natural sheen that indicate wealth and opulence. For example, the Ademola's family in the film, are very wealthy and influential, they are ranked among the top business owners in Lagos. The costume designer costumed them with luxurious materials to depict their high economic status in the society.



Fig 8: The Ademola's Family at the Wedding Scene in Glamorous Outfits

Source: IMDb

On the other hand, poverty level or low class status of the characters in the film are revealed by the costume designer through cheaper and less attractive fabrics such as coarse cotton, burlap and polyester. These fabrics are used by the costume designer for Sarah Duru's family to depict their low class status in the society. The costume

designer costumed them with ankara fabrics with lesser quality, and cheap accessories, compared to the Ademola's family. This design concept is a deliberate action by the costume designer to show the dichotomy in the social status of the two families.



Fig 9: Duru's family in Ankara Fabric Depicting their lower Class Status in the Society.

Source: Screen shot from *Blood Sister* movie

Aesthetics of Costume Design in *Blood Sisters*

Aesthetics is a core design principle that defines a design's pleasing qualities. In visual terms, aesthetics includes elements such as balance, colour, movement, pattern, scale, shape and visual weight (Apeh & Osumanyi, 2024). In *Blood Sisters*, the costume designer used aesthetics to complement her designs' concepts, by so doing she enhanced the visual appeal and language of the film in order to communicate the message of the film to the audience in an entertaining and aesthetics manner thereby establishing the overall tone and atmosphere of the story to the audience.

The aesthetics in costume design is highlighted at Sarah's traditional wedding in the film. The costume designer costumed her with a purple and white gown made from Georgette fabric, that is garnished with beads and stones to give her gorgeous costume a unique and resplendent outlook, perfect for a bride. More so, It is observed that the costume designer combined the traditional and contemporary fashion styles in her design concept to heightened the aesthetic effect because the contemporary gown style is supported with traditional coral bead headdress, necklace and silver jewelry with a matching silver purse and shoes in an aesthetically pleasing way to reflect the mood of celebration.



Fig 10: Sarah on her Traditional Wedding Attire

Source: Ini Dima Okojie

Furthermore, the aesthetics of the costume design in *Blood Sisters* is also obvious in the appearance of Mrs Uduak at her son's wedding. She was costumed in a beautiful mustard yellow Aso-oke dress with stones appliques and mustard yellow headgear. Her outfit is also accompanied with gold accessories, purse and shoes that showcased her beauty and elegance in the film.



Fig 11: Mrs. Uduak on Mustard Yellow Aso-oke with Gold Accessories at the Wedding Scene.

Source: DMT

Another scene with rich aesthetics appeal in the movie is the party scene. This type of party is usually referred to as Ówánbè in a typical Nigerian party, especially in the city of Lagos among the elites. Ówánbè is Nigeria's flamboyant party culture which is marked by colorful and aesthetically pleasing displays of costumes, lavish food and entertaining music. Consequently, the costume designer of *Blood Sisters* uses different colourful costumes of the party scene to advance the story of the film in an aesthetically pleasing manner. These are seen in varieties of costumes worn by different guests at the wedding scene. For example, the costume of the Efik dancers were visualised in colourful tube-top and wrapper, complemented with beads and wool patches. Also, the costume of the singers, drummers, and ushers are in alignment with the dressing styles from different tribes in Nigeria in consonance with their aesthetics values.



Fig 12: Guests at the Party Scene in Colourful Attires

Source: Screen shot from *Blood Sister* Movie



Fig 13: Cultural Dancers at the Wedding Party

Source: Screenshot from *Blood Sisters* Movie

Cultural Symbolism of Costumes in *Blood Sisters*

Cultural symbolism in costume design involves using fabric, accessories and styles to convey deeper cultural meaning about the themes and the roles of characters in a film (Adedina & Taiwo, 2024). This approach helps to create a rich, immersive experience for the audience, allowing them to understand and connect with the cultural context of the characters and the narrative of a film. Thus, the costumes in *Blood Sisters* are symbolic and culturally inclined, this is expressed through exploration of different fabrics, styles, accessories and even colours in order to reproduce incredible fit through traditional outfits that measure up with the glitz of today's world.

The cultural symbolism of costume in *Blood Sisters* focuses mainly on cultural icons and symbols representing different ethnic groups in Nigeria. They are visible in the pattern, colour and texture of the fabrics and accessories used on the characters in the film by the costume designer. For instance, in the film, cultural diversity is highly highlighted through the costume of the bride and groom despite the fact that they wore the same colour of purple and white on the day of their engagement, the textile and style of their costumes and accessories are culturally different. Sarah is spotted in a purple two-piece Georgette wrapper gown accompanied with coral bead headpiece, necklace and silver accessories which is a traditional style for the Igbo brides from eastern part of Nigeria. While Kola's outfit is made from Aso-oke agbada and cap with coral neck bead which is a representation of Yoruba culture of south western Nigeria. This is because Aso-oke is traditionally an important fabric worn by important people in Yoruba society for special occasions.

Symbolically the choice of purple by the costume designer for the couple, indicated their high social status, while the coral headdress and neck beads on the couple also connoted elegance and luxury. The total appearance of the couple showed how traditional and modern icons were employed by the costume designer to showcase the cultural affiliation of the couple as well as their social standing within the society.



Fig 14: Bride and Groom at the Wedding Party

Source: DMT

Example of other cultural symbolism can also be seen in the colourful costumes worn by members of the Duru's family. The costume designer gave them costumes representing Igbo culture from the eastern part of Nigeria. The male are costumed with Isiagu (lion head) fabric and wrapper, while the women are costumed in blouse and Georgette double wrapper with matching headgear and coral beads on their necks to highlight their culture.



Fig 16: Bride's Family at the Wedding Party

Source: Screenshot from *Blood Sisters* Movie

However, the symbolism of culture through costume was not well represented in the costume of Mrs Uduak Ademola at the wedding scene, the costume given to her by the costumier did not show her cultural affinity with the Yoruba people of south western Nigeria. The costume designer wrongly represented her by costuming her with expensive yellow wrapped dress with an obvious fan sleeve during her son's wedding, which is culturally different from the traditional Iro and Buba style that a typical Yoruba woman in her 60s from south western part of Nigeria normally wears on the day of their children wedding.



Fig 15: Uduak Ademola on Mustard Yellow Wrapped Dress.

Source: Bella Naija

Costume Evolution in *Blood Sisters*

Costume evolution in a film refers to the deliberate changes and developments in characters costumes throughout the narrative of the film. These changes oftentimes reflect character's growth, plot progression, and the shift in themes of the film. For example, the colour, texture and style of costume can be used to convey a character's emotional state such as joy, anger, or sadness (Haun & Husinai, 2024). In *Blood Sisters*, the costume designer used the costumes of Kemi and Sarah in the first scene to reveal their high fashion sense and their peaceful state of mind. This was depicted in purple silk jumpsuit and stylish high-shouldered black and pink jackets with black pant trousers worn by them.



Fig 17: Sarah and Kemi on Pink and Black Jumpsuit Costume Design

Source: Screenshot from *Blood Sisters* Movie

The costume choices of the costumer visually represented their growth and changes throughout the film. The evolution in their character started at the point they became fugitive and wanted by the police after the murder of Kola Ademola. This unexpected twist in the plot structure of the film was also depicted through the costumes the costume designer gave them to show their psychological state and the turbulent situation they were passing through at that time. The ladies were costumed in casual top and wrapper style to show their disoriented state and the aura of danger surrounding them in their bid to escape from the police at all cost before they were caught and tortured by the police.



Fig 18: Sarah and Kemi in Top and Wrapper caught by the Police

Source: Screenshot from *Blood Sisters* Movie

Elements and Principles of Costume Design in *Blood Sisters*

In a film production, a costume designer must put into consideration some specific elements and principles of costume design. These principles and elements of design are important for designers to understand and realistically represent their design concept in films. These elements include the following: colour, balance, harmony, rhythm and emphasis. How the costume designer of *Blood Sisters* explored some of these elements in her costume designs will be explained thus:

i. Colour Selection

Colour is an important aspect of costume design because it conveys symbolic ideas or reveal specific information about the character wearing the costume. To this end, colour can be used to help the audience understand character's personality, mood and identity. In *Blood Sisters*, Okereke explored bright colours in her colour selection for the film. According to her, "colour gives a character a defined stage presence." Hence, colour symbolism is utilised in the film by the costume designer to convey different meanings that are encoded in the plot structure of the film. For example, the costume designer costumed Timeyin in complete red outfit to depict power and anger because of her aggressive and overbearing nature in the film.



Fig 19: Timeyin in Short Red Dress

Source: IMDb

Also, uncle B is costumed with black suit throughout the film. This is to portray to the viewers the nature of the character as a ruthless bodyguard who strictly followed the instruction of his master (Mrs. Uduak Ademola). The choice of colour black by the costume designer is to convey his ruthless emotional depth, authority and wickedness to the audience.



Fig 20: Uncle B in Black Suit

Source: IMDb

Additionally, black is also used by the costume designer at the burial ceremony of Kola Ademola to symbolise the sorrowful state of mind of his family and friends in the visual storytelling of the film. Black represents mourning and loss in Yoruba culture, so the costumer gave the Ademolas' family black colour for their funeral attires to signify grief and solemnity.



Fig 21: Kola's Family and Friends in Black Attire at the Burial Scene

Source: Screenshot from the Movie

However, the choice of vibrant colour of the costumes of Kemi and Sarah when they were arrested by the police did not reflect the mood of the film and the emotional state of mind of the characters. The bright colours of their blouses and wrappers should have been replaced with dull colours to reflect their sober mood. Similarly, since they have been running for their lives for weeks after the death of Kola, their costumes should have undergone some level of degradation and not appear clean as shown in the picture below.



Fig 22: Kemi and Sarah in Colourful Top and Wrapper when caught by the Police

Source: Screenshot from the Movie

ii. Balance

Another important principle of design that is creatively explored by the costume designer of the film is balance. Balance is the visual weight in design. As a central dividing line, balance makes the right and left side of a garment equal (Mantooth & Moulton, 2023)). Balance has the ability to help images feel stable and more aesthetically pleasing, balance is an extremely effective way to instantly enhance audience perception of a costume design. Balance is explored in *Blood Sisters* by the costume designer through symmetrical and asymmetrical designs. An archetypal example of costume balance can be seen in the costume of Uduak Ademola's flowing gowns and capes in *Blood Sisters* the symmetrical balance in the costume was noticed in the V-shape outline of her costumes from left and right design lines. A typical example is seen in the picture below:



Fig 23: Mrs. Uduak Ademola in a Symmetrical V-Shaped Costume Design.

Source: Screenshot from *Blood Sisters* Movie

Asymmetrical balance in costume designs come into play when there is an inequality between the two sides of a costume but the image still looks complete and sensible. A typical example of asymmetrical balance in the costume of characters in *Blood Sisters* is seen in Olayinka's dress at the engagement party, as well as Happy's costume at the wedding scene. The costumes of the two characters explained the asymmetrical balance in costume design because the line on the left is different from the right, yet, the two lines are visually appealing to the audience.



Fig 24/ Fig 25 Olayinka and Happy in an Asymmetric Costume Design.

Source: Screenshot from *Blood Sisters* Movie

iii. Harmony

Harmony in costume design means that the costumes of the characters work together as a cohesive whole, to support the vision and message of the film. Comprehensively, harmony in costume design refers to the cohesive and balanced integration of visual element, colour, texture and style to create a unified look that support the character, story and overall aesthetics of a film(Wolfe, 2011).To this extent, Harmony in costume of characters in *Blood Sisters* is seen in the costumes of the guests at the wedding scene.



Fig 26/ Fig 27 Different Harmonious Costume Designs of the Guests at the Wedding Party

Source: Screenshot from *Blood Sisters* Movie

iv. Rhythm

In costume design, rhythm refers to the repetition of visual patterns. It is a continuity of organised movement and is also called recurrence (Rogers & Przybylek, 2023). Rhythm is utilised to create a sense of excitement in the design. It draws the eye from one element to another. In *Blood Sisters* the costume designer explored rhythmic movement in the designs of the costumes of the film. For instance, in Sarah's dress at the engagement party, there are rhythms in the patterns especially the arrangements of the glassy stones. Apart from that, Sarah's mother's dress for the engagement party also revealed visual element of rhythm which is depicted through the sequential arrangement of the pattern and colour of the dress in order to create a sense of cohesion and connection in the overall design outlook.



Fig 28: Sarah's Mother's Appearance for the Engagement Party

Source: Screenshot from *Blood Sisters* Movie

v. Emphasis

Emphasis in costume design is the deliberate use of visual element to draw attention to a specific aspect of a costume, while highlighting a character's role, personality or narrating their significance in a film. It is also used to create a focal point in costume that guides the viewer's eye to key information about the characters in the film (Bacall, 1964). For example, the capes of Mrs. Uduak Ademola's flowing dress emphasised her power and presence. The costume designer made use of this element to highlight the costume as a storytelling tool that showcase her outstanding presence throughout the film.



Fig 29: Mrs Uduak Ademola on Flowing Dress with Cape

Source: Screenshot from *Blood Sisters* Movie

Also, the costume designer applied the principle of emphasis in the costume of inspector Joe, the costume emphasis is in his hat. He is seen with a white colour hat on suit throughout the film to emphasis his ideology for truth and justice.



Fig 30/ Fig 31: Inspector Joe on White Hat and Suit

Source: Screenshot from *Blood Sisters* Movie

Findings

The findings of this paper revealed that the costume designer of *Blood Sisters* creatively designed the costumes in the film to effectively reflect the characterisation of characters to the audience. Beyond that, it is discovered that the costume designer used costumes to also convey social status and power dynamics among the characters to the audience. Furthermore, the use of colour, texture, rhythm and balance by the costume designer equally added depth and meaning to the characters' emotional depth as well as the plot structure of the film. Apart from few oversight in the area of cultural symbolism and colour selection on the part of the costume designer, overall, the costume designs in *Blood Sisters* are rich with multifaceted visual element of communication, that artistically, aesthetically and culturally aided the narrative of the film by creating a compelling and immersive viewing experience for the audience.

Conclusion

From the findings, this paper concludes that the role of costume designers in film production is both crucial and transformative. Costume design not only enhances visual storytelling but also contributes significantly to character development, cultural authenticity, and audience engagement. Through this assessment, the work of designer Yolanda Okereke stands out as a prime example of costume designers who work tenaciously to craft out visually compelling designs that elevate the artistic quality of films. Her ability to creatively blend traditional and contemporary elements in costume design equally showcases a thoughtful and stylistic approach that resonates with both local and international audiences. Okereke's designs in *Blood Sisters* not only reflect aesthetic value but also support the narrative structure and emotional tone of the film, further proving that costume design is an essential pillar of storytelling in film production.

Recommendations

From the conclusion, the paper recommends that:

- i. Costume designers should leverage on the rudiment of contemporary costume design in order to advance their craft and make their costumes more attractive and communicative in line with world global best practices.
- ii. Costume designers should always explore the principles and elements of design while designing costumes for film production in order to be able to artistically and aesthetically characterise the roles of actors effectively to the audience.
- iii. Costume designers should engage in extensive research on Nigerian culture and traditions in order to produce accurate and authentic designs that reflect Nigerian culture.
- iv. Professional costume designers should be given adequate resources and financial support in the movie industry in order to use their expertise and creative innovation for the sustainable development of the industry.
- v. Educators such as universities and other related institutions should also develop curricular that teach students of costume designs about costume designs and its role in storytelling in a film.

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