

A Craft-Design Collaboration Between Women Paper beaders and Mtsifa Jewelry Design Students to Unearth new Design Opportunities.

**PRINCIPAL RESEARCHER/
Kasozi Dorah. N**

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College of Engineering Design Art and Technology-Makerere University/Uganda.

Research was carried out under the
Department of Industrial Art and Applied Design.
Margaret Trowell School of Industrial Art and Applied Design.
Makerere University
and
Ajuna African Styles-Lweza (Kampala).

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This monitored craft-design collaboration project was carried out between Mtsifa Jewelry Design students of Makerere University and artisans of Ajuna African Styles to create opportunities that would shape new jewelry design ideas. This research presentation depicts the journey, conversations, visualization processes and practical executions and interventions that took place during the timeline of the project. Using co-creation approach, the project undertook a participatory open learning format where design students and artisans came together to work, exchange ideas and share experiences, knowledge and jewelry making skills to generate new ideas for the contemporary jewelry market.

It became apparent that the concept of craft -design collaborations is a mutual learning space. It is an embodied practice of combining what is desirable in the arts/crafts knowledge with what is possible and practical through design exchange and collaboration. Through such partnership, collaborations between academia and the local artisan practice can empower communities to further their innovations. This platform not only created meaningful learning and knowledge exchange opportunities between academia and the communities to relate academic material to real world experiences, both students and artisans become agents of change in society.

I would like to extend my sincere appreciation for the support and funding from the SIDA Small grants funding-CEDAT that enabled the project to take place. Appreciation also goes out to Daniel and Jalia Matovu-founders of Ajuna African Styles, the entire artisan team, Mtsifa staff and the Jewelry students who participated in the project.



Background of the project

The art of paper beads making was first introduced in Uganda in the late 1980s by a prominent Uganda artist Gateja Sanaa. He aligned his paper beads project with structural adjustment programs in Uganda as part of the recovery plan to revive the Ugandan economy due to its political history. The idea: was to create an economic source of livelihood for women. Examples-Beadforlife, Project have hope, Paper to pearls, 31 bits, Wawotto Kacel etc

Paper beads jewelry is a current trending statement that has penetrated the local and global market. The jewelry has wide eco-chic appeal as products made from mainly organic paper materials, using low cost resources and tools. This project have offered employments opportunities for a large section of women In Uganda. Made from mainly paper: manillas, news print, craft paper and used magazine spreads. Of late there are experimentations with fabrics, fibers and synthetics etc

Mode of working included: Collaborative engagement between Jewelry students of MTSIFA/CEDAT-Makerere University and Artisans of Ajuna African Styles-Uganda. *Methods used:* Plotting, cutting paper strips into triangular or rectangular long strips, hand rolling the strips over a metallic skew, securing the end tips with glue. Pioneering new patterns, Colour application and vanishing with non toxic lacquers and later strung to make accessories such as jewelry, decorations etc. *Highlights:* Generated new perspectives and voices - visual art/design practice, survival, income earning, autonomous power, active livelihoods and expressions of resistance and conform to conventional norms. *Observed that:* Paper beads is mobilizing creativity, *ie* shaping curriculums where contemporary Ugandan artists are exploring paper beads as media for their art practices. However market demand constraints, consumerist fast moving trends as well as stiff competition among the producers who make the beads on a large scale have created a challenge where the market and demand for these beads is becoming very competitive.

This created an opportunity for this project. Here selected Mtsifa Jewelry students of Mtsifa-Makerere University collaboratively teamed with Ajuna African styles paper beader's group to co-creatively work together to unearth new design possibilities that could create mutual knowledge sharing and transfer platforms and in the end realise a range of jewelry ideas to revive this market.

This project was guided by the following procedures:

- **Craft-Design acquaintance phase:** Product identification, Techniques presentation and giving direction.
- **Co-creation phase:** Techniques and skills assessment.
- **Co-prototyping** for problem identification and solving.
- **Feed back stage.** Presentations, exhibition

Outcomes:

- Students worked together with the artisans to generate new jewelry ideas.
- The project created meaningful sites for learning, sharing and exchange opportunities especially for students where they created useful links, networks, learnt new skills and applied their academic materials to real life scenarios.
- Artisans were able to speak to their real life experiences and to identify and appreciate the opportunities present in academic knowledge
- A cross disciplinary inclusive participatory approach that speaks to people's interconnectedness was realized.

**The team of Jewelry Design students of Margaret Trowell School of Industrial and Fine Arts
Makerere University-Uganda.**

In center is Ms. Jalia Matovu the founder of Ajuna African Styles women's Group-Lweza.



The Jewelry Design team of students of Margaret Trowell School of Industrial and Fine Arts Makerere University and the artisan paper beading group of Ajuna African Styles.

Extreme upper left is Mr Daniel Matovu the co-founder of Ajuna African Styles women's Group-Lweza. Extreme right is Ms Kasozi Dorah-Principal researcher of the project.



This project was premised on the notion that a craft and design collaboration approach is a promising strategy for generating and reinventing new ideas where academic knowledge can be applied to community initiatives in ways that broaden learning spaces and stimulate new innovations in society. Hence, engaging jewelry design students to collaborate with crafts persons was not only meaningful for the revival of crafts practices, but it also allowed both academics and the artisans to capitalize on their differing skills and identities to obtain new shared learning experiences which could broaden their creative horizons. In the visuals below, the researcher is preparing the Jewelry design students on how to use their Jewelry skills to engage in co-creation approaches during the collaboration projects with artisans.



- Students engage in the design conception stage of sketching: Ideas can come from anywhere in the environment. Drawing and sketching for jewelry making provides a platform for visualizing, documentation and registering and creating a record of conceived ideas. Sketches can also be used to spark a discussion.



A jewelry student sketching to visualize her ideas on paper.
In jewelry making, in visually presenting an idea, the sketches serve as an effective tool for documenting, communicating, conceptualizing and creating a starting point in discussing concepts.



More training sessions in basic Jewelry design techniques: how to brainstorm and generate concepts of jewelry design ideas. The exploration of knowledge through experimentation and practice allows students to elicit reflection on their working processes and devise plans on how to utilize their ideas while gaining new insights of making jewelry.



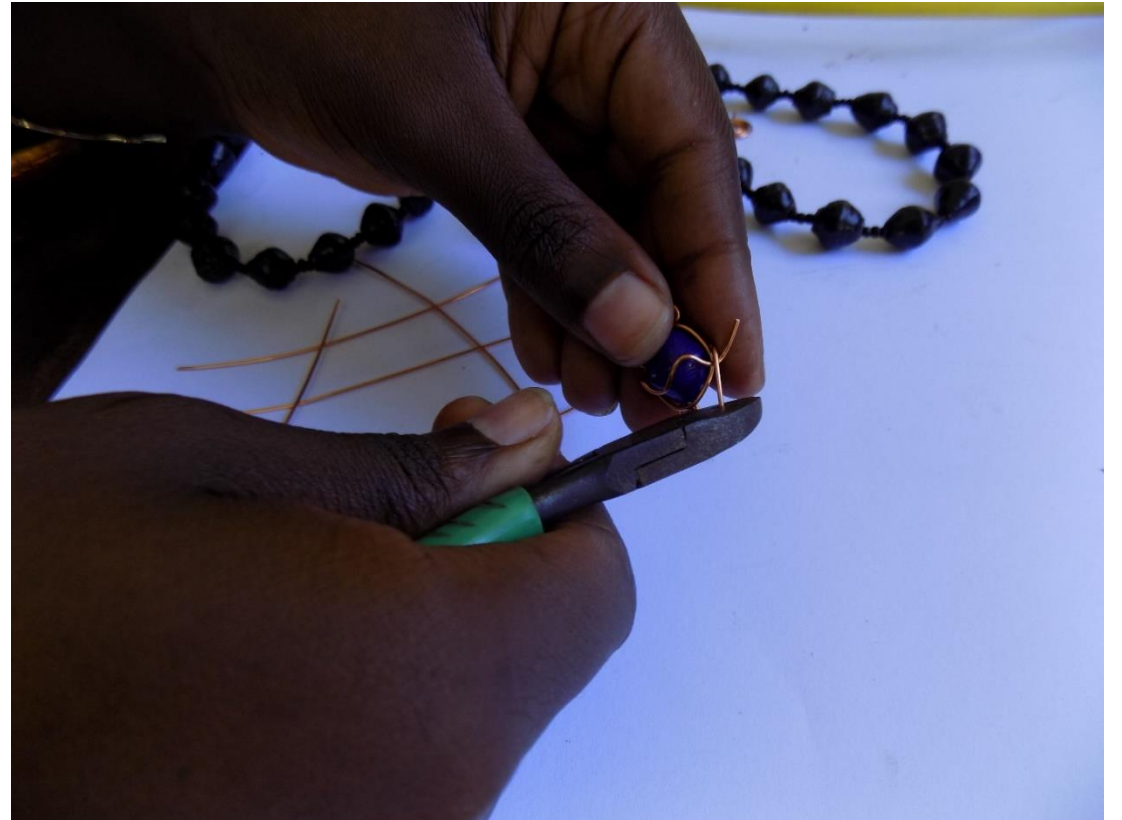
Assorted samples of paper beads in different colours shapes and sizes.

Designers are called upon to bridge the gap between idea and practice, and to link artistic and creative elements with practical and realizable outcomes
(Dodgson, Gann, & Salter, 2005)



Preparation of materials:

Part of the proceeding of the collaboration involved the use of improvised media, using hand held tools; to manipulate wire stock for jewelry. Acquiring the necessary technical skills of jewelry making is also an effective approach to liberating a student's individual creative ability and platform for learning new skills for the artisans.



Collaborations require innovations.

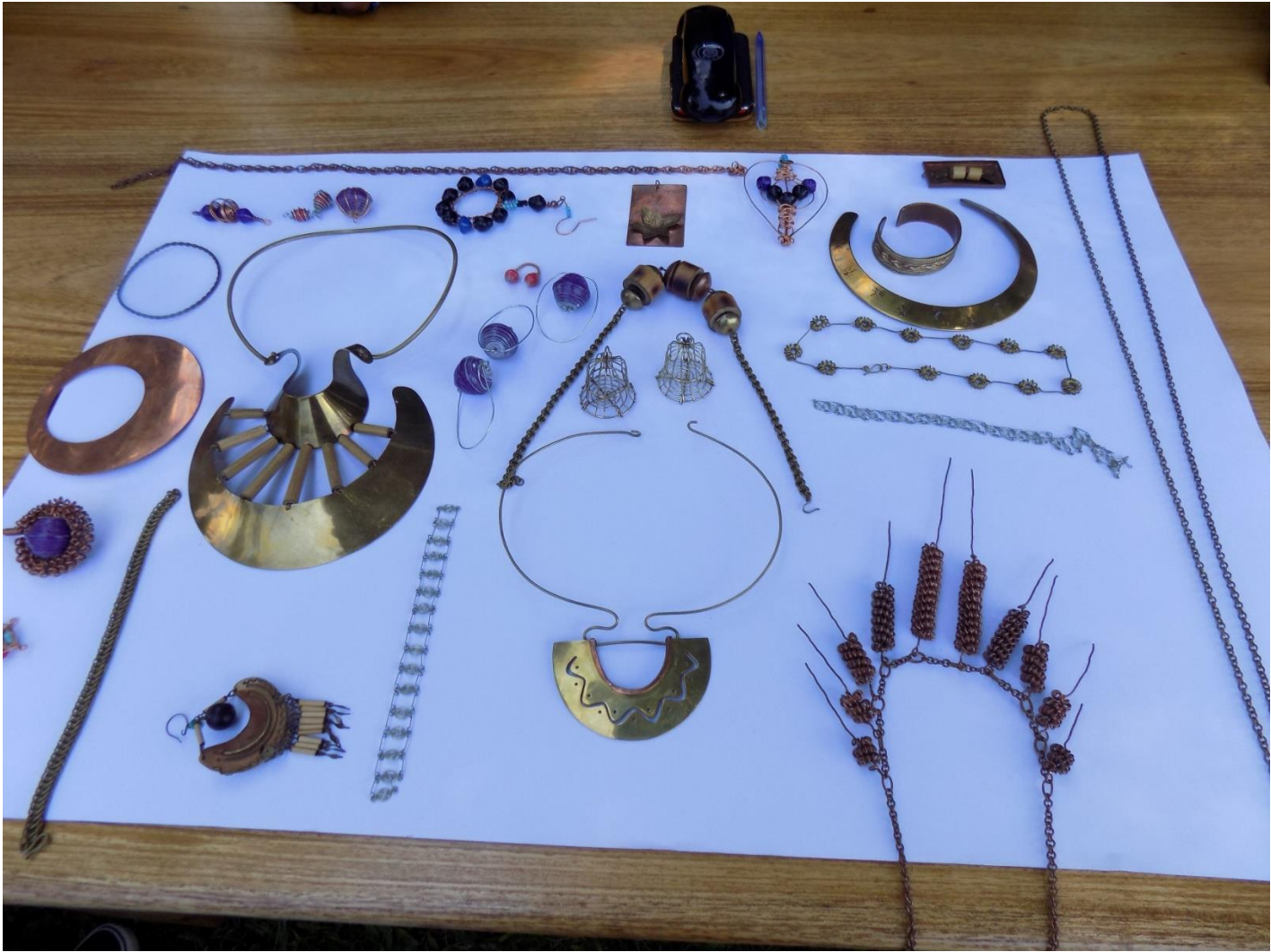
Innovation relies on reusing existing knowledge or recombining existing knowledge in new and innovative ways (Pannozzo, 2007, p. 19). Below students are innovating with copper wire stock to develop strips, shapes and different forms for jewelry.



The use of modern digital technology is key in visualizing and streamlining jewelry production processes. Below, a design lecturer is demonstrating how to illustrate ideas for jewelry and how to digitally render them into workable ideas ready for production..



A showcase of assorted jewelry items using customized organic and inorganic materials.
By jewelry making design students-Mtsifa.



Arrival at Ajuna African Styles: Ajuna Styles artisans making self introductions to the students .



At Ajuna African Styles: To create affinity in the team, it was important for all participants to introduce themselves and the researcher to brief the group about the collaboration project activities and team working dynamics.



At the onset of the project, students and the artisan group were encouraged to work together in the very early stages.

At first there were many divergent ideas to explore, and the goal of exploration was to identify the various opportunities and gaps that helped to determine an approach to follow in the group dynamic. There was need to set a clear strategy on how to generate joint ideas. This was done through brainstorming, open discussions to generate the concepts for further development and execution.



Jewelry making techniques of wire stripping and wire forming.
Hands on skills and practical execution of ideas were handy during the exercise of realizing prototype products.



In the project it was important for the artisans to visualize their ideas. A short training on how to express an ideas through drawing was organized for the artisans to learn how to visualize their ideas on paper as seen in the 1st image.

The 2nd image shows a lady getting grips with the jewelry pliers to understand how they function.



A lady wearing her first sample of a choker she made from wire coils. The artisans had so much pride in the jewelry they had created.



In collaborations, knowledge can also be shared through peer learning and apprentice mode of sharing.



Knowledge is inherent in the process of demonstrating how jewelry is made, In collaborations, skills can be shared by collaboratively engaging in and reflecting on activities that involve brainstorming, designing and practical processes that guide the execution.



Team work to generate collective jewelry ideas.

Discussing ideas together involves adapting features from the diverse unique backgrounds of each participant student or artisan. Working together allowed for creation of jewelry that reflected the different ideas and practical experiences of each participant.



A lady shows her jewelry idea that she generated during the collaboration. Such ideas fill a unique niche and can build new identities.



A sketch and a sample of jewelry that shows an integration of copper wire and beads is showcased by a woman artisan.

Developing (Jewelry)products using an integration of other local resources can invigorate a product by diversifying its design.



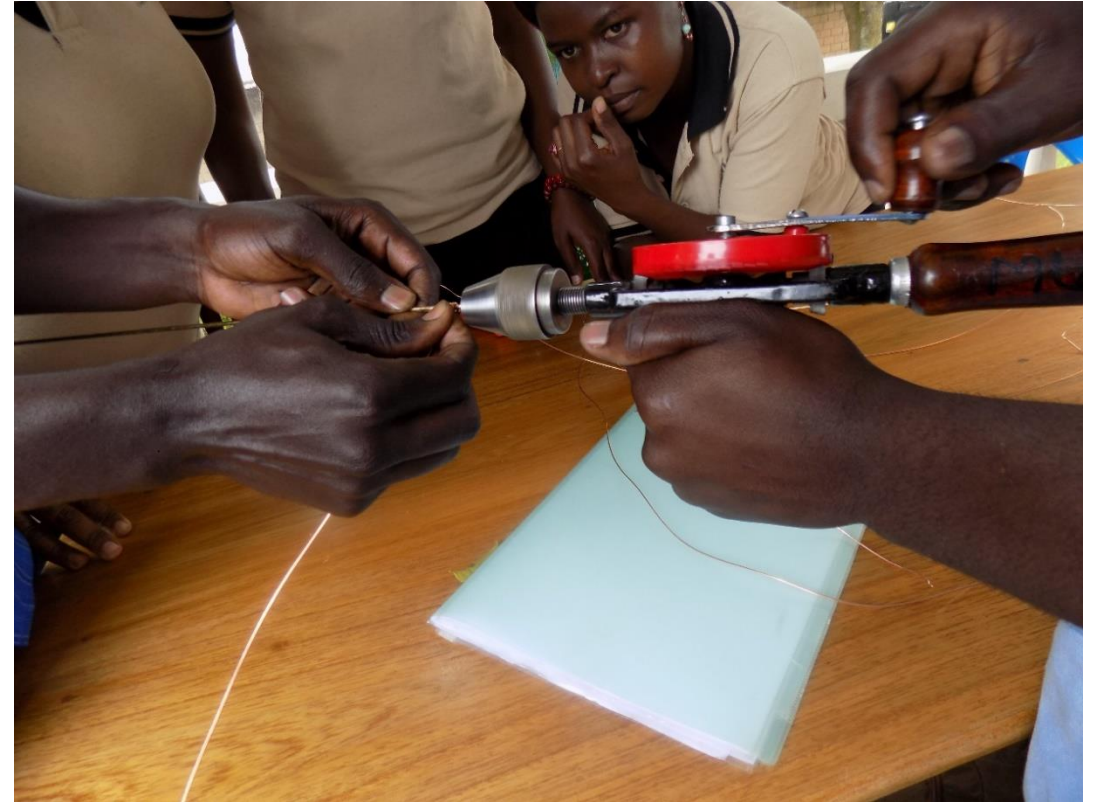
The women wearing their jewelry samples. Collaborations between designers and artisans can empower artisans to further their own innovations. Such approaches have promising prospects for revival of the arts/crafts industry in Uganda and beyond.



Co-creation and skills sharing: Students demonstrating to artisans how to use jewelry manual tools to manipulate wire stock. It is possible for Jewelry design students to assist local artisan communities to develop and learn new techniques and to create new levels of aesthetic quality in products.



Teamwork and knowledge exchange: mutual learning takes place, where both students and artisans exchange knowledge and skills to each enhance their capabilities. Working in teams is an effective approach to liberating a learners' individual creative ability and stimulating a curious mindset.



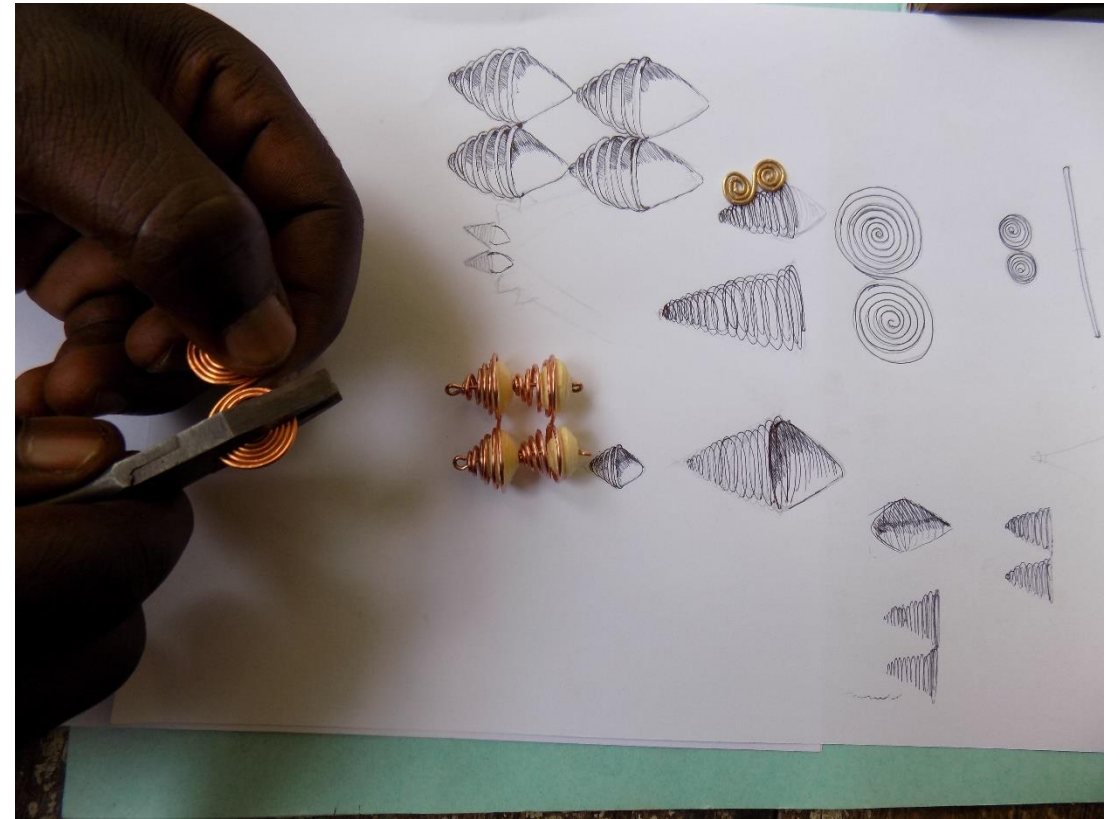
In the project Jewelry design students embraced their social responsibility by understanding the influence they can have on engaging with local communities or craft industries in Uganda.



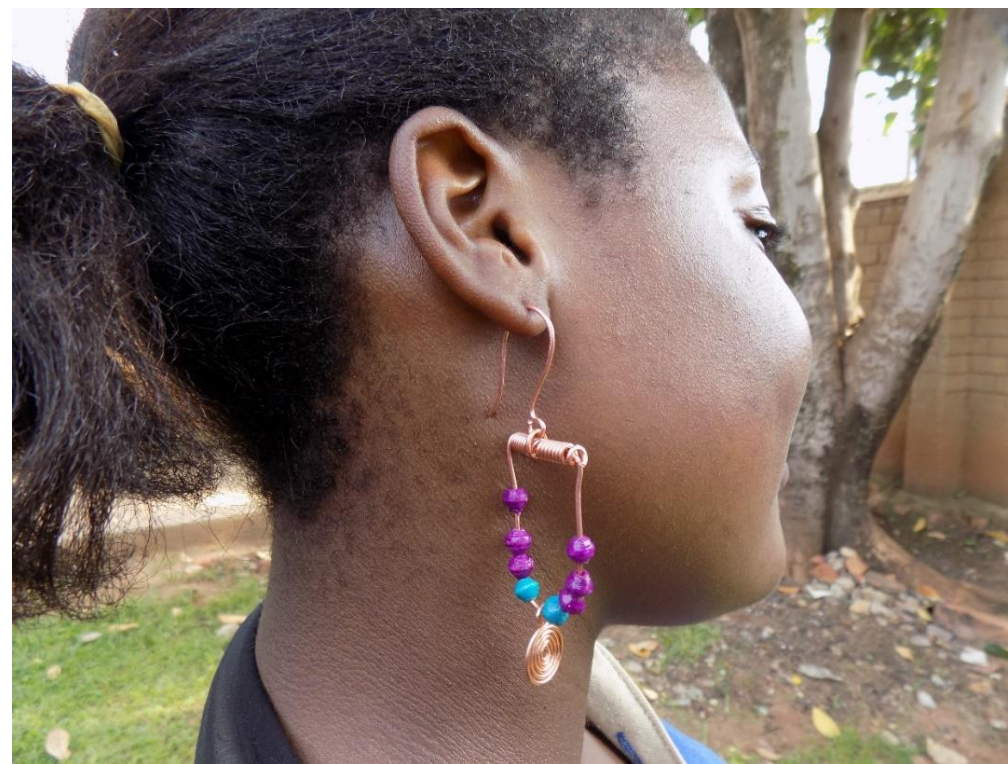
Practice-led and sharing skills approaches to learning. A student sharing the skill of how to spiral wire using a manual drill.



Practical execution in the collaboration led to new jewelry ideas. It also involved documenting the process of execution. These processes combined allowed the students and artisans to reflect on their skills and practice and to look out for those that they could gain from the exchange.



Jewelry can be functional as well.



Shared ideas during collaborations can lead to creation of new identities in each individual participant in the group.



New ideas: The developed prototypes speak to people's interconnectedness.



Jewelry is not static, when explored with a human touch, it is capable of continuous progression, transformation and adaption to modern society moving forward.



Creative opportunities also reside in understanding material characteristics specifically exploring materials including metal using specific advanced jewelry techniques such as soldering, doming, piercing, riveting etc.



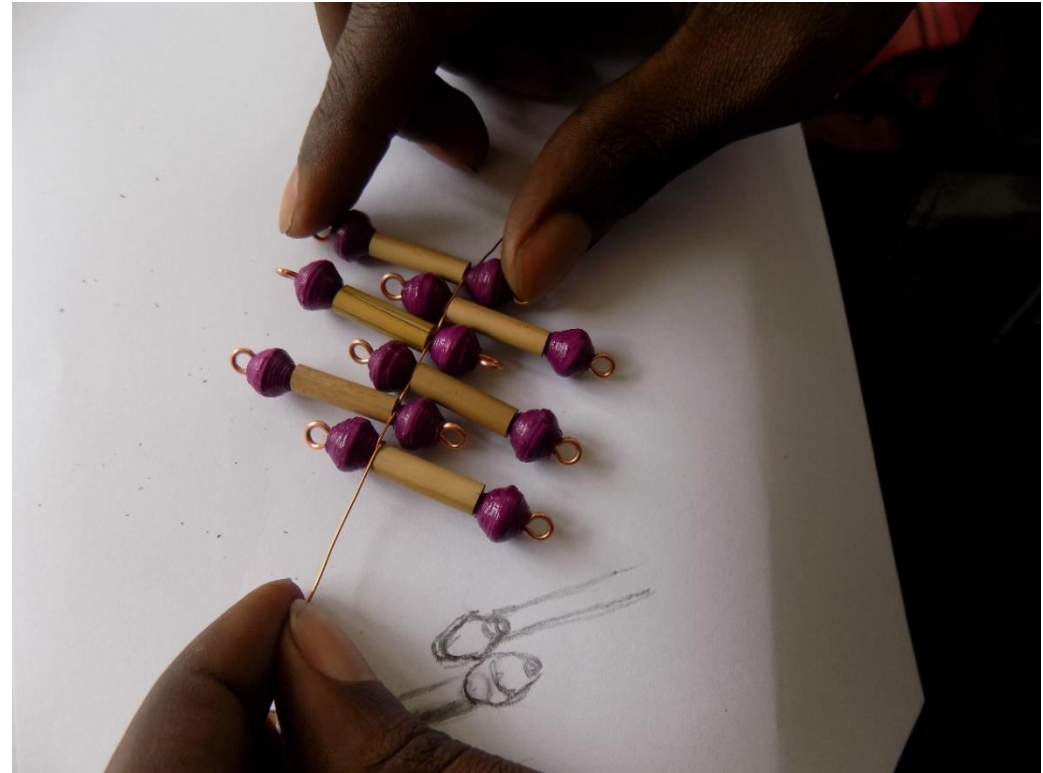
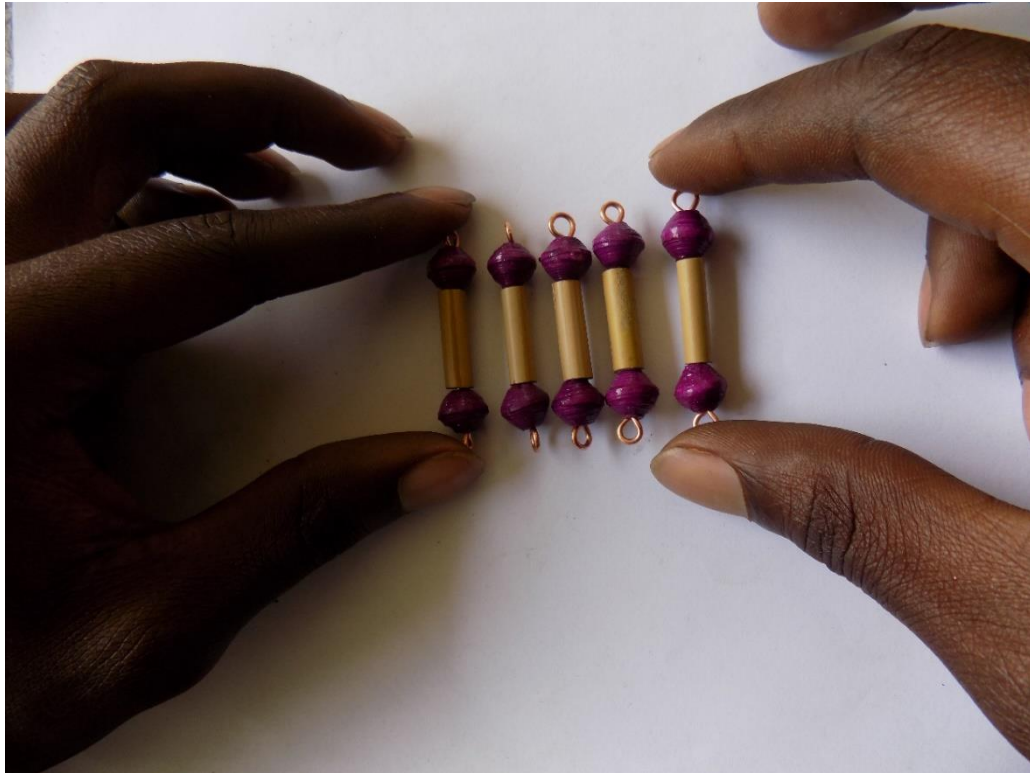
Creative opportunities in Jewelry making also reside in exploring a wider material base as alternatives for expression.



The versatility of bamboo as a medium for experimentation to produce jewelry ideas.



Creativity and innovation using alternatives through blending different materials.



The use of locally inspired themes as inspirations is an added advantage that allows the manifestation of location-specific identity.

THE LYRE

“The project enabled me to open up and network with the various local paper beaders. I learnt a lot of skills from them.”

The Lyre

Instrumental ensemble

14. Elhoo's player

Dahomey Women Dance

The lyre is made of wood that is the same way as the... the strings are tied to a piece of wood and inserted in a hole which shear the two arms of the Lyre's neck. The Lyre's Resonator has "Esi-dohga" in Jamsa was used during the traditional manages in the community and also play in the free times by thomen. This was also adopt to other tribes like baganda and basoga who saw it from the samia and luyg elans.

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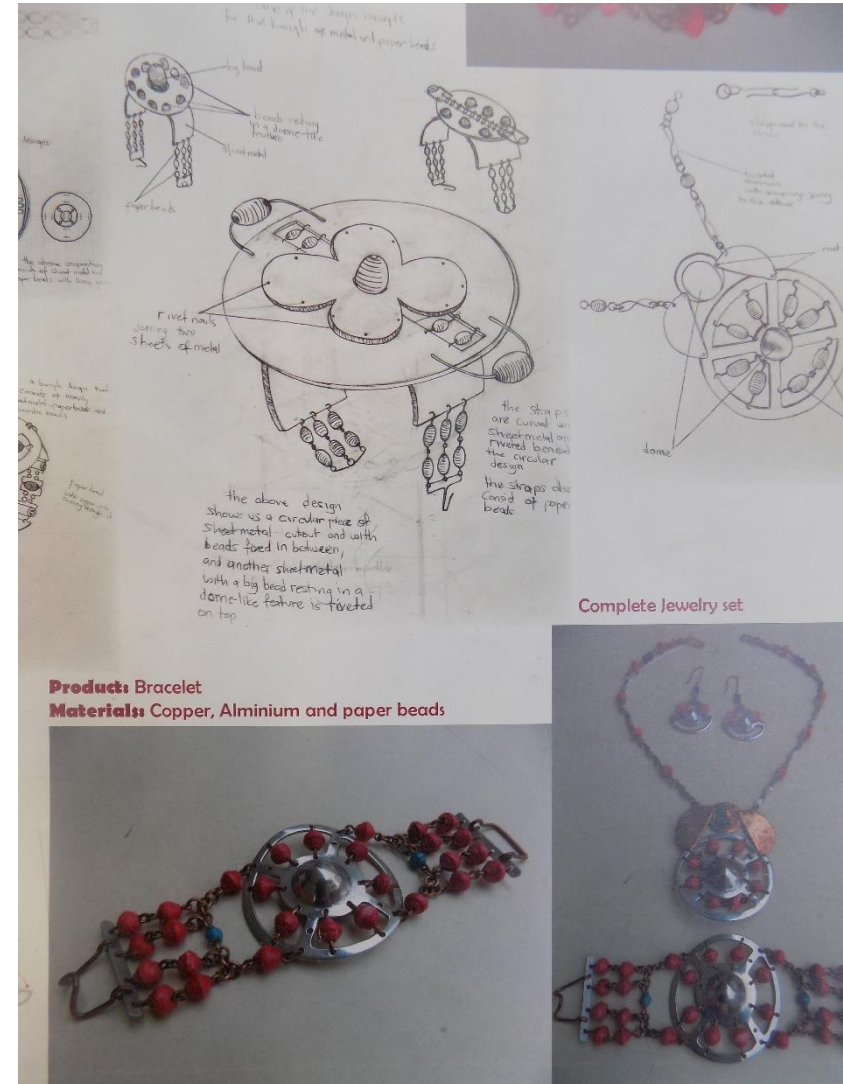
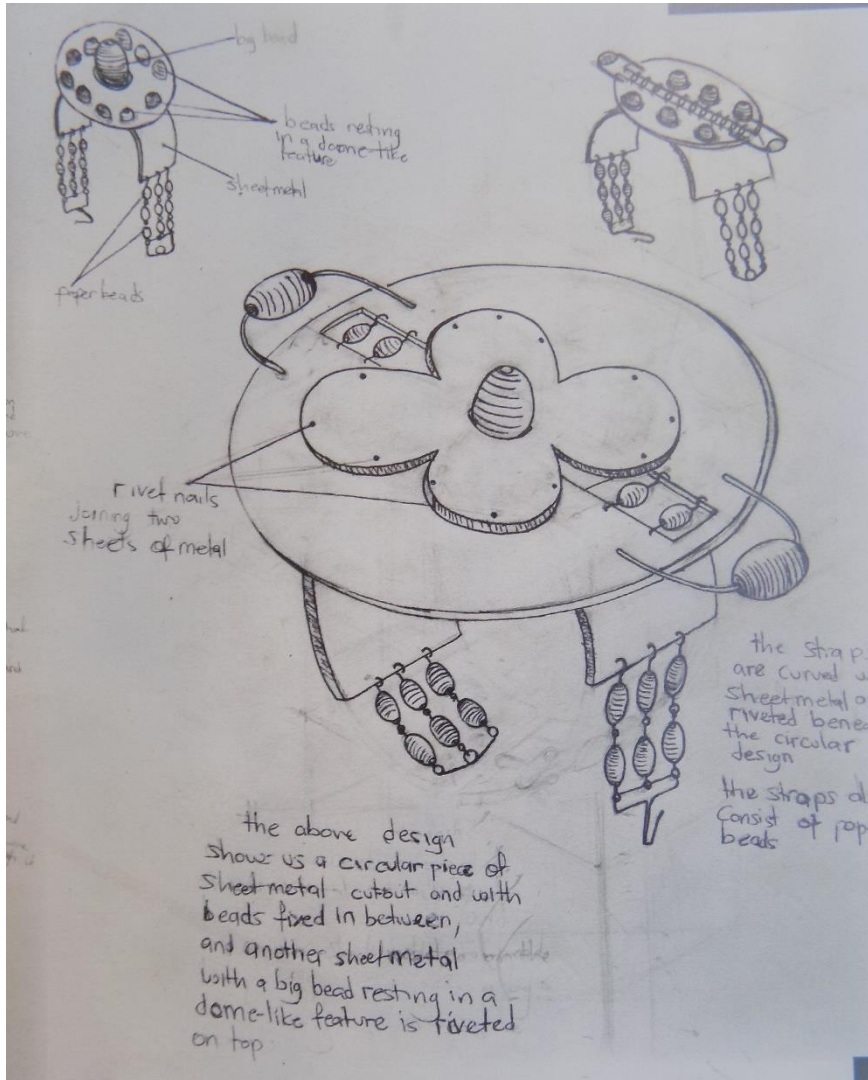
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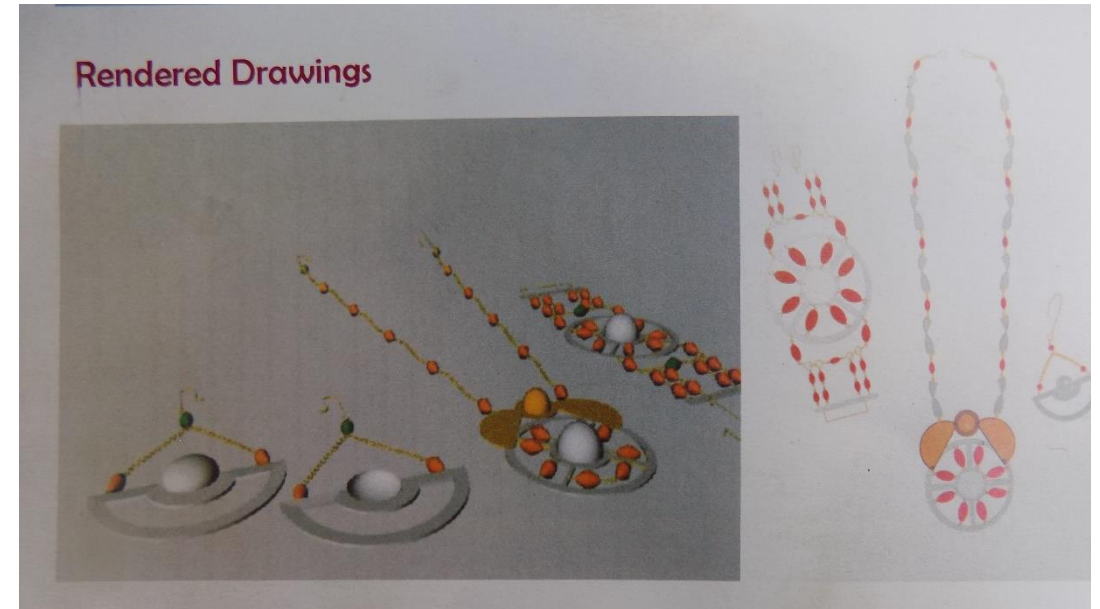
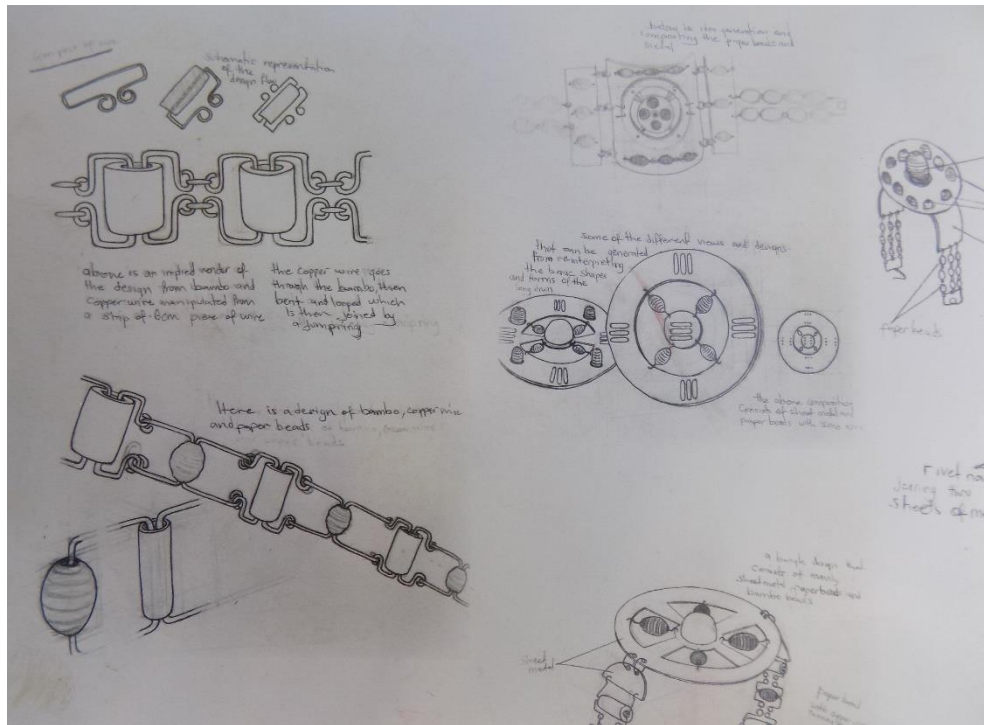
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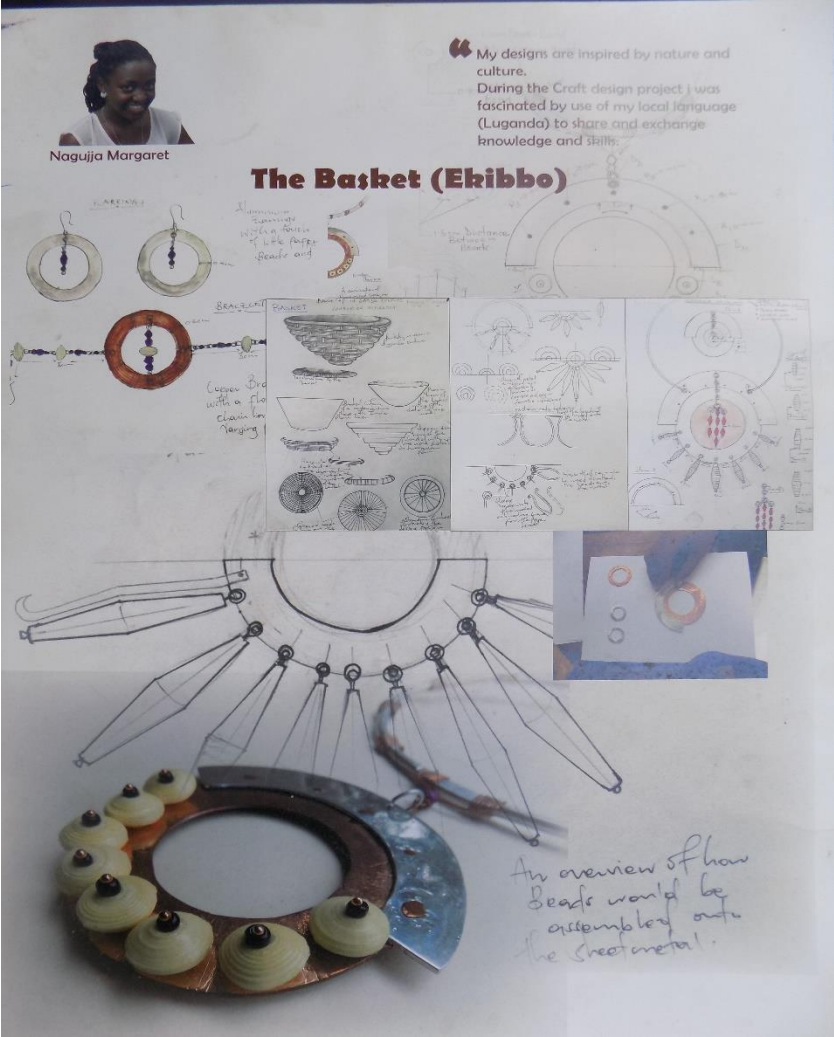
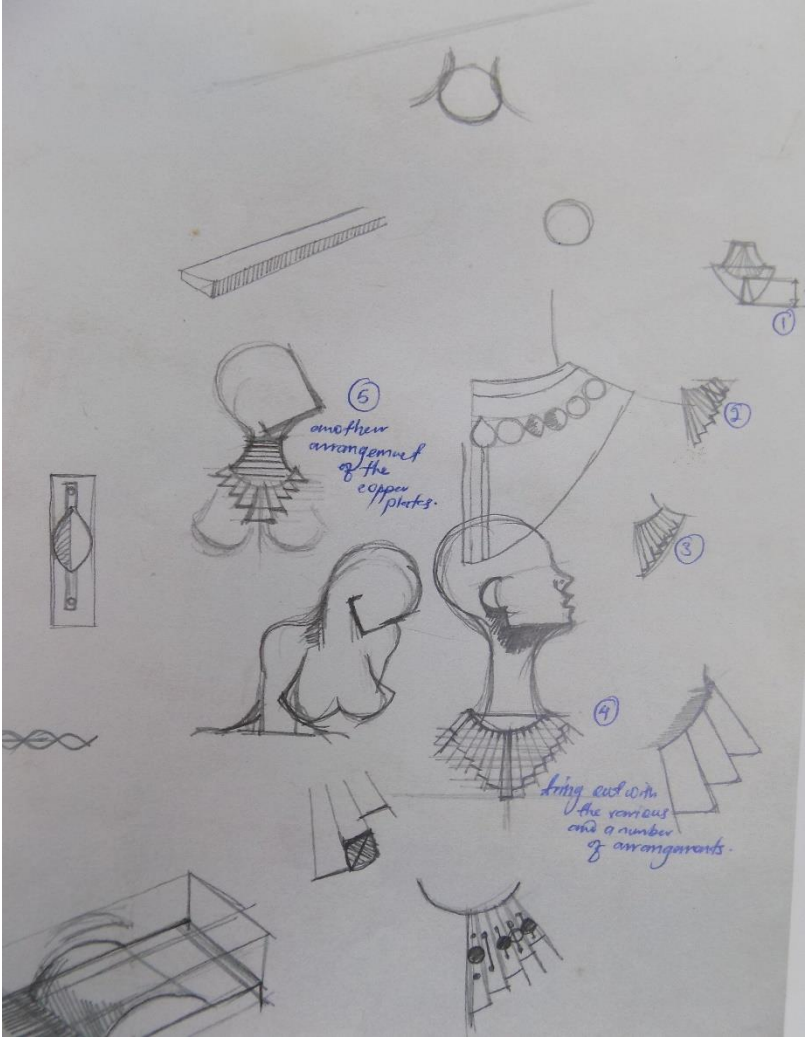
Capitalizing on ideas that enhance the distinctive features of paper beads can reinvent new products that have their own niche and unique identity.



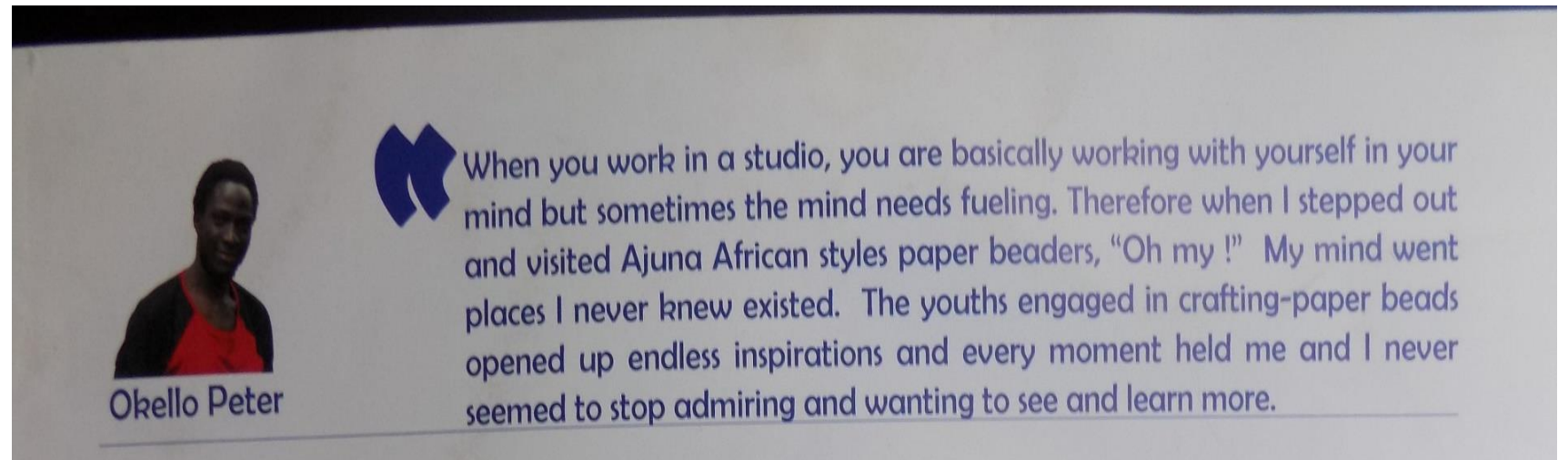
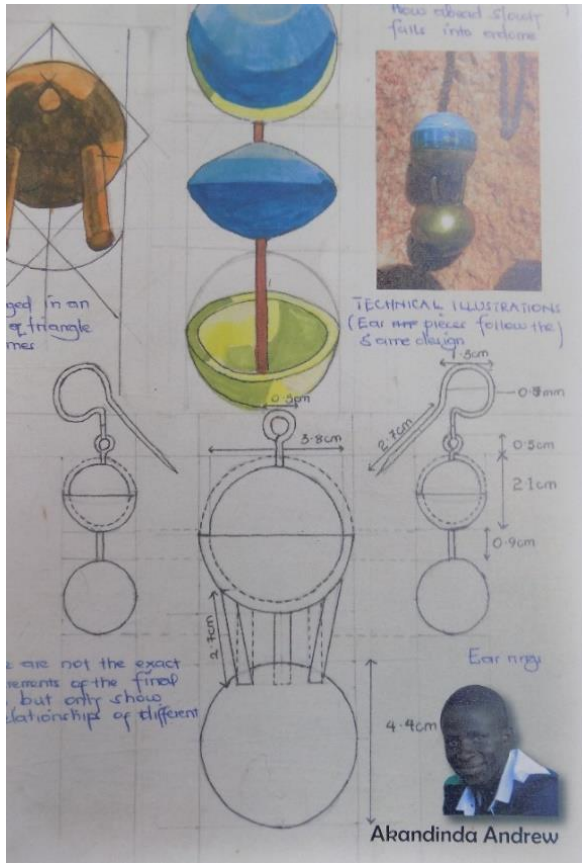
Innovative ways to visualize and maximize the production value of products should be encouraged in craft design collaborations.



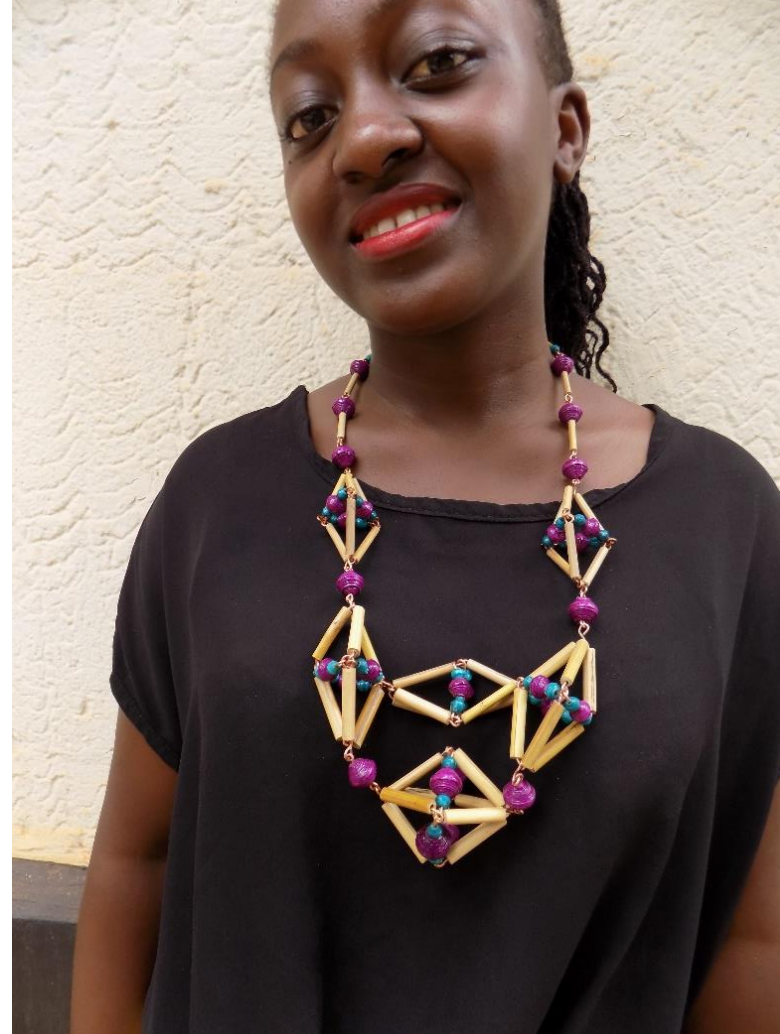
Students with a design background therefore become social resources that can enhance artisanal practice. Their creative skills, knowledge and experiences can be resourceful to engage and address real-life issues to become agents of change in society.



The potential for jewelry designers and craft practitioners working collaboratively as careers in the modern world is promising!!.



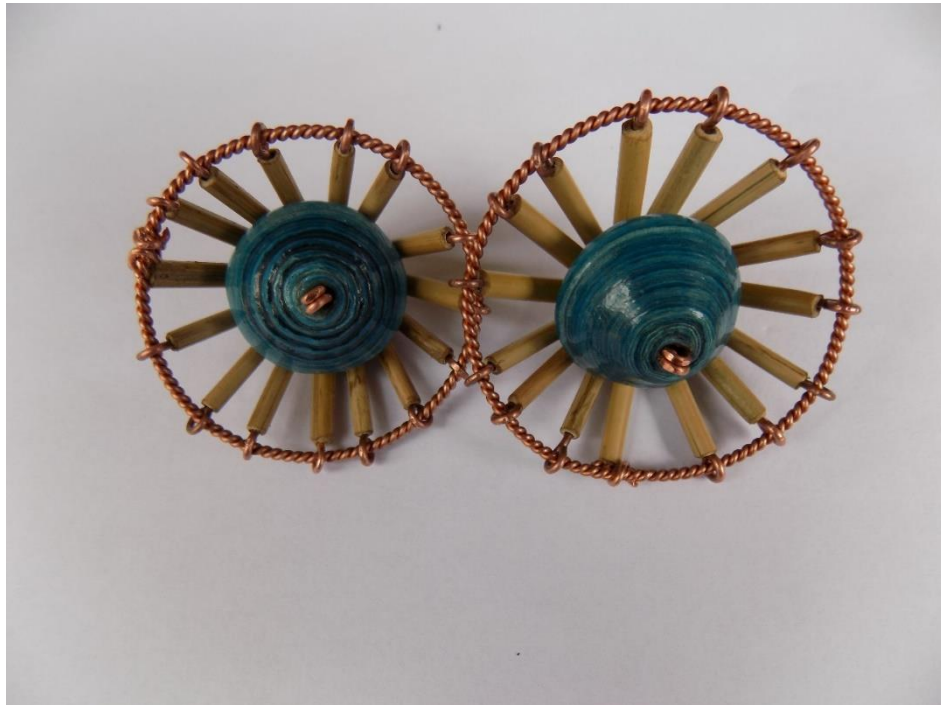
New Jewelry collections : This collaborative project, rather than to confine creativity, was put together to empower artisans and students to work together in order to further their own innovations and stimulate creative ideas.



In this image the material aesthetic, social value of these materials and their tactile qualities were explored during the collaboration to produce jewelry that can appeal to the modern market.



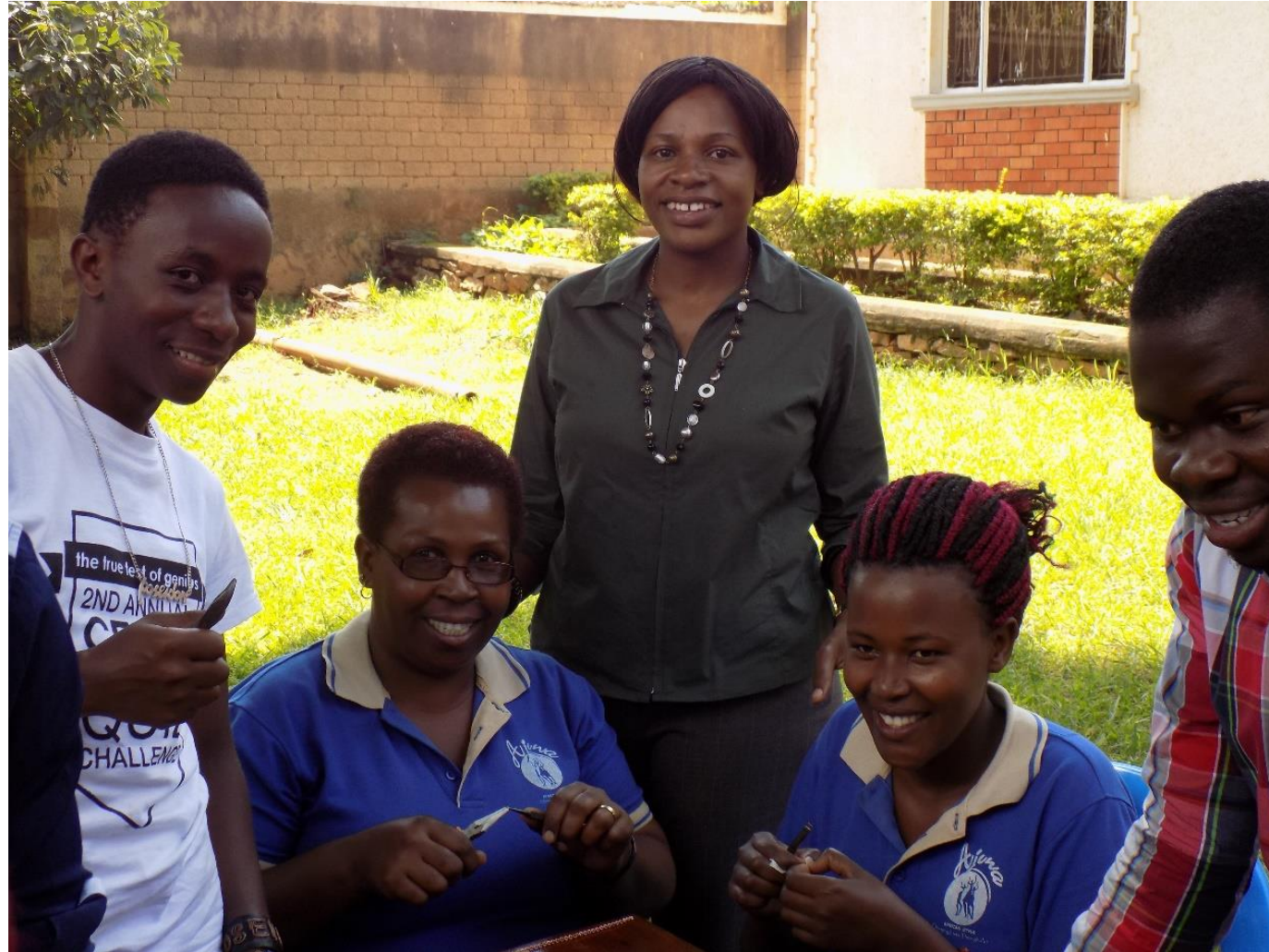
...this collaboration allowed for an exploration of emotive qualities inherent in craft materials, which in turn, aims to increase the materials' practicability.



A customized jewelry collection.



A happy moment!!



THANK YOU!!

