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**COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING, DESIGN, ART AND TECHNOLOGY,  
MARGARET TROWELL SCHOOL OF INDUSTRIAL  
AND FINE ARTS**

**A SCULPTURAL CONTEXTUALIZATION OF SELECTED  
LUGBARA ARTIFACTS.**

**BY**

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**A GUIDE BOOK SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL IN  
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT FOR THE AWARD OF THE  
DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN FINE ART OF  
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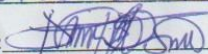
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## **DEDICATION**

This guide book is dedicated to my dear parents Mr. and Mrs. Endreonzi, my brothers Warren Econi, Asianzu Johnson, Lema Jamin Hebron and Dradiku Owen.

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## DEFINITION OF THE OPERATIONAL TERMS.

**Lugbara:** A people living in the plateau area of West Nile with a Sudanic origin.

**Agofe:** The Agofe is the Chief of Chiefs. The council of chiefs with a chief from each clan sit together and select a leader who is then referred to as the chief of chiefs.

**Oni:** This is a *Lugbara* stone used in the surfacing of mud floors in *Lugbara* mud huts. It is used in the application of cow dung to the floor and smoothing it for an even surface.

**Adungu:** The *Adungu* is an arched harp with a wooden body and a curved neck. The body is adorned with decorative patterns and possibly burn marks, enhancing its aesthetic appeal. Multiple strings are attached to the neck, which extends from the body, indicating that the instrument produces sound through string vibration.

**Okelea:** The Okelea is a drinking gourd.

**Achakala:** This is a flat form of *Lugbara* basketry similar to the *Kobi* in terms of use but differing in the materials and form. The Achakala is a flat basket.

**Kobi:** The *Kobi* is a form of *Lugbara* basketry made of sorghum stalk cuttings, it is used in the preparation of food and during harvest.

**Mari:** This is a rare musical instrument used by the *Lugbara*, it is made of a spherical base and a long tube-shaped piece of wood, when hit with a flat object at the top, it produces certain sounds that blend into *Lugbara* music and harmony.

**Adroko:** This is a v shaped wood and iron farm tool that is used in the removal of weeds from the garden before and after planting of crops. The handle is made of wood and the tip is made of iron.

**Envu:** This is a traditional piece of pottery used for cooking, fetching water and storage. The difference in functionality depends on the size of the vessel.

**Gonde and Osu:** This is the *Lugbara* bow and arrow, used in hunting and protection or war.

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## ABSTRACT

The ethnic diversity of Uganda is something of beauty. The *Lugbara* people is one of the groups that have made West Nile their home and have over the years cultivated a rich culture and heritage. *Lugbara* artifacts continue to be in the shadow of many cultural artifacts which have over the years been researched and explored. This research gives the opportunity for *Lugbara* artifacts to come to the fore front and take center stage. The purpose of the study is to contextualize selected *Lugbara* artifacts in sculpture. Sculpture is one of the oldest forms of human creating dating back millennia. The *Lugbara* have especially functional sculpture which has the capacity for daily use but also entails a huge amount of aesthetic content and beauty. Discussions with *Lugbara* people defined this research in many unimaginable ways as they were able to provide a lot in oral literature but also access to some of the scarce artifacts. It should be noted that the scope available from which the artifacts can be selected was vast and narrowing it down came to employing different considerations. These included first and foremost, the appearance of the artifact, the frequency of use among the *Lugbara* and the cultural significance of the artifact. The selected artifacts included the *Envu* which is a *Lugbara* cooking pot made of fired clay. *Kobi* which is a winnowing shovel used in grain and general food preparation, the *Luku*, which for this research might carry the most beautiful story and significance, the *Luku* is a traditional baby cover made by the *Lugbara* to cover infants by a mother as African culture has women putting their children behind their backs. The *Luku* then is used to shield the infant from the elements such as rain and sunshine. *Koyo* and *Mari* are musical instruments used by the *Lugbara* in recreation but also if coupled with drums can be used to sound alarms and send communication. Lastly the *Adungu* which is widely known and is also a musical instrument used in recreation. These artifacts were examined and coupled with the information gathered from interviewing the various *Lugbara* informants, sculptural expressions were created. Creating sculpture is the surface of how important this research is but enforces the fact that art can play a vital role in creating awareness about the loss and disappearance of our culture in society today and encourage us to conserve it as we best possibly can.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This study examines the *Lugbara* material culture, heritage, social norms and how these have been an inspiration for sculptural expressions. *Lugbara* artifacts reveal wisdom and values of the *Lugbara* people. The *Lugbara* have over centuries, harnessed their environment and produced objects that tell us something about their ways of life. What we see are concrete objects, but beneath them, are layers of intangible belief systems that have determined and influenced their physical manifestations.

Over the years, many of the *Lugbara* artifacts have lost their relevance and become outdated. However, this does not relegate them to the fringes -- they are part of our history, and for me as a researcher and one who hails from West Nile, I am indebted to the imaginative and creative spirit of my ancestors. I connect with the artifacts, for, they are inspiring me to generate art that builds and strengthens my identity but also extends the life of these artworks by creating a platform for discourse about them. This research seeks to generate visual representations that will deepen our knowledge, appreciation and understanding of the *Lugbara* ethnic community and its artifacts. The sculptures produced will be an interpretation of the *Lugbara* artifacts using imported materials together with locally available materials found in the Kampala environment.

#### **The *Lugbara*, a historical perspective**

The *Lugbara* is an ethnic community in West Nile, with a rich heritage, that has through internal adjustments over decades, survived the onslaught of Western intrusion. Both colonialism and evangelization have played a role in shaping what we know of the *Lugbara* artifacts. Indeed, *Lugbara* artifacts have been around since time immemorial, and have been an integral part of *Lugbara* social life. It predates colonial rule. For any culture to grow and survive, it has to undergo different series of transformations.

Descending from the Lui and Bari ethnic groups of South Sudan, as an ethnic group, little is known about these highland people. The name “highland people” is drawn from the fact that they occupied areas along the Nile plateau. The *Lugbara* lived in close proximity with the Kakwa who now occupy present day Koboko district. The name *Lugbara* has many narratives related to how it came into existence, some making more sense than others but all trying to demystify the origin of the *Lugbara* people.

One school of thought, forwarded by Lulua Odu (Lulua 1996), argues that the *Lugbara* got that name from the Arabs who invaded the area in the 19th century, how ideally the name was adopted according to this story is still foggy if one is to consider this argument.

As seen, there is no clear indication of how the name *Lugbara* came into existence apart from the notion that the Arab's were the first to start its use

However, the most viable scenario of the name *Lugbara* coming into existence is a story based on an incident during the days of the Belgian occupation of West-Nile. The Belgian occupation to-date remains one of the most gruesome occupation on the face of the African continent, Under the command of King Leopold of Belgium, the invaders made slaves of the natives in the Congo region and the West-Nile a place known as the Lado enclave. At this point in time the *Lugbara* were still known as the Moru-Madi. Human nature is born free and if enslaved there will always be a fight for freedom. The constant mistreatment, punishment and violations that comes with slavery caused the *Lugbara* people who at this point were still being known as the Madi-Moru to start bid to defend themselves. Legend has it that one time a Belgian soldier was killed in a scuffle with a *Lugbara* man. This prompted the forces of the Belgian Calvary to retaliate and a fierce battle ensued. Looking at that power dynamics, the Belgians were stronger as they had guns and tactical training, the *Lugbara* had bows and arrows which are dangerous but no match for a gun wielding slave master.

The *Lugbara* were over powered and fled shouting "*Lugba ra*". Thereafter the neighbors and the *Lugbara* adopted that name from the event as a reminder of the war that took place. The word "*Lugba*" or "*Luba*" means holes have been put through us and "*ra*" is an affirmation of the action. This gave rise to the name that is called to this day. *Lugba- ra* also *Lugbara*. This theory sounds than all the others I have read more viable (Samuel Nyakuni Dradiku,2019)

Another perspective on the *Lugbara* origin comes from John Marchment Francis Middleton, who postulates that the *Lugbara* are a Sudanic speaking people and their linguistic neighbors are *Madi* to the east and *Keliko* and *Logo* to the West. *Lugbara* live along the Nile-Congo divide which is now the boundary between Democratic republic of Congo and Uganda. They are organized in small close family groups that are not open to outsiders (J.M. Middleton, 1965).

John Middleton's findings collude with those of Idha Salim Ahmed who also argues in the same direction. He however adds that, the *Lugbara* are classified as members of the *Madi-Mouru* sub group of a Sudanic people. This is substantive evidence to draw a decisive conclusion that the *Lugbara* are for sure a *Madi-Moru* subgroup of a people of Sudanic origin. (Salim: 95)

Historically, the *Lugbara* belonged to the Madi nation, this earned them the name *Madi Dyang*, this is because they are regarded as the cattle *Madi* because they also looked after some cattle while the *Madi of Okollo* are called the *Madi Dyel* which is goat *Madi*, this is because they looked after goats (Lulua, 1996:25).

During the expeditions of James Augustus Grant and John Hannington Speke the *Lugbara* faced a huge wave of oppression from the Turks (Odu, 1996:29). Even then, they kept having invasions from the *Azande* and also numerous ethnic groups who were superior to them. This explains why the *Lugbara* have not been organized well under a powerful leader a monarch and remain scattered. West Nile was initially a segment of the Lado Enclave, named after the river port of Lado which was in the South Sudan. The enclave consisted of territory which is today recognized as northern Uganda and South Eastern Sudan and was part of the Congo Free State until the 1910's when it reverted to Anglo- Egyptian administration, as per the Anglo-German Treaty signed in 1890. This treaty noted that Belgian King Leopold's hold on to the territory would lapse at the end of his reign. Another treaty signed on August 14, 1894, gave the Lado Enclave to King Leopold II on lease until his death in 1910. During the early fold of the 20th century, the British sought by force to establish total control over southern Sudan and to achieve this end, the Sudan-Uganda border was delimited in 1913 and amended in 1914 when Sudan ceded the southern tip of the Lado Enclave, West Nile, to Uganda Protectorate. A joint Anglo- Belgian Commission in 1912 and 1913 mapped and defined the Belgian Congo and Uganda Protectorate boundary from Lake Albert north-eastward to the Congo and Nile watershed. A Sudanese and Ugandan Commission in 1913 delimited the common boundary on the ground between Bahr al Jabal and the Belgian Congo tripoint, near the present Ariwara, Ariwara being part of the areas being looked at in this research as part of the geographical scope. The new boundaries were officially declared on April 21, 1914 by the British Government.

### **The *Lugbara* Visual Culture**

The *Lugbara* have produced a huge collection of functionally and aesthetically fascinating artifacts. However, there are some major art forms and styles that dominate *Lugbara* art in every sense and have had a huge impact in the lives of the *Lugbara*. These are clearly indicated in the content scope. The focus was on are the Pot *Envu*, the winnowing shovel *Kobi*, drinking gourds *Okelea*, the *Adungu*, the baby cover also known as the *Luku* and the *Osu* which is a bow and arrow. These were studied in further detail and findings from that study galvanized contemporary sculptural expression. The choice of these artifacts is based on an analysis of the different spheres of *Lugbara* culture from food preparation, family life and nurturing of the young, the *Okelea* and

*Adungu* which bring in the concept of ceremonies and music and the *Osu* which looks at protection. In summary, I chose food preparation artifacts, artifacts related to family relations and nurturing, music and protection. This summarizes the greater part of *Lugbara* material culture and is a sufficient sample for the study.

**The Purpose of *Lugbara* artifacts: socio-economic and spiritual attachment.**

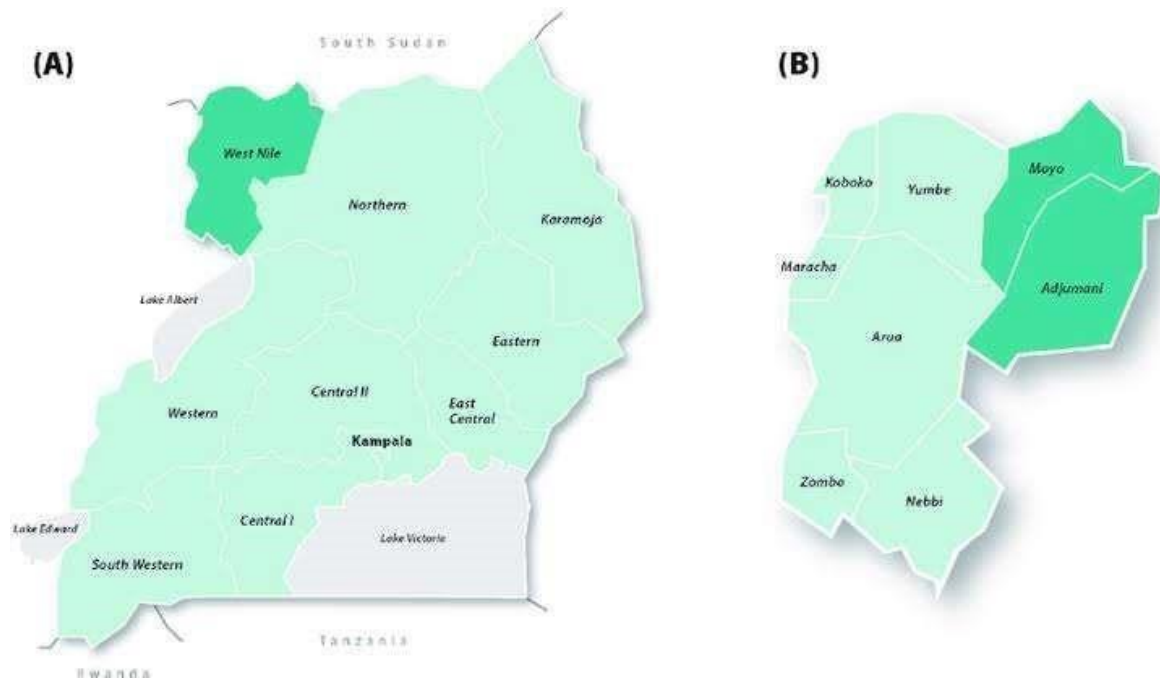
The socio-economic component of *Lugbara* artifacts just as the spiritual aspect is so much visible when looking at the artifacts. These artifacts have seen their way in markets where trade is carried out both as items for sale but also as vessels for transportation of produce and also to the shrines where they are used in the spiritual context. *Lugbara* artifacts serve a fundamental purpose in the daily lives of the *Lugbara*, this spans a wide range of areas from being just used as gardening tools, instruments of musical appeal used in times of joy and times of sorrow, toys used by children in games to deities carved immaculately for shrines and places of worship, all these are in agreement with the fact that *Lugbara* art is enriched with art that is functional in nature.



*Figure 1: (Left): An image of a Lugbara man playing the Adungu. (Courtesy Image)*  
*Figure 2: (Right): A photograph of a Luku adorned with beads of different colors used for special occasions and in shrines. (Courtesy Image)*

## **LOCATION**

The area chosen for this research was potent in terms of providing the researcher with the information needed to fulfil the research objectives. The West-Nile region of Uganda, borders with Eastern Democratic republic of Congo, and South Sudan to the north. West Nile is constituted by the following districts--- Maracha, Terego, Arua, Yumbe, and areas of Ayivu, Vurra, and Madi-Okollo in Uganda. Bar – el – Ghazel area in southern Sudan, and Aru, Ambala Etuu, Ariwara, Ondoliya in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. These areas are selected to be research areas because they either have a history of the *Lugbara*, or are currently being occupied by the *Lugbara*.



**Figure 3: Location of Ugandan Lugbara inhabited areas shown by the dark green on the Map.**  
<http://images.app.goo.gl/D6hSjRME5KT4jPPD9>

On February 3, 1915, these new boundaries were officially recognized by Belgium and Britain, the two colonial powers in the region. The new borders enabled Britain to finally realize her dream to control the waters of the Nile from the source to Cairo, Egypt. The search for the source of the Nile brought to Uganda the explorer John Speke who wrongly claimed that he discovered the source of the Nile in July 1862.

This history of the transfer of West Nile from the Lado enclave to Belgian Congo and also further after several years to the Ugandan protectorate speak multitudes in how different ideologies and administration has affected the *Lugbara* of Uganda. Being part of Belgian Congo meant that the *Lugbara* could tap into the mastery of the Congolese, since they are well known for their creativity and innovation as far as art is concerned. This confirms why many of the crafts done by the Congolese also have found their way into the *Lugbara* culture and art (Harold E Acemah, 2013, The story of West Nile: From DRC to Uganda) This colonization especially shifting from various administrations and governances has also impacted greatly on the material culture in form of major and minor adjustments that are so much visible in not only their social structural organization but also their art culture ( Daily monitor article dated Sunday July 21st 2013).

The *Lugbara* traded with other ethnic groups around them, basically in iron, hoes, food and other iron tools. They have produced a wide range of arts and crafts from winnowing shovels, stools,

baby covers, dolls and toys, exterior house decorations to ceramic items like cooking pots, water pots, eating vessels, and also dressing especially the chief's regalia.

*Lugbara* artifacts for various reasons have the capability to provoke and Ignite creative thinking and imagination, this is because the ethnic group has a rich material culture, rich aesthetically but also in terms of associated emotional and symbolic meanings attached to the artifacts. A majority of *Lugbara* artifacts are made and used by women: as such they have feminine undertones.

### ***Lugbara* Artifacts**

The *Lugbara* artifacts being the main component fueling this research, it is very important to take into account what these artifacts that we have discussed about up until this point are, what they represent in the *Lugbara* community and what tales, riddles or stories accompany them without neglecting their beauty and aesthetic potential.

The artifacts discussed here are just a few of the scope of *Lugbara* artifacts used by the ethnic group but provide us with an understanding of the culture and its way of life. Below is a relatively extensive batch of artifacts that bring together different aspects of *Lugbara* life and way of living. However, in this research, not all of the artifacts talked about here will be used as a springboard for sculptural expression. But because of the inadequacy of facts and pictorial records of the material culture, it is just fitting that the research covered as much as was able.

### **The aesthetic qualities held by *Lugbara* artifacts.**

The aesthetic component of *Lugbara* art is a major and highly integral part of this research, this is because it sparks the first thought of artistic interest, even with a load of conceptual and spiritual attachment, and draws a lot of its appeal from its beauty and aesthetic appearance. This is an area to research and draws the researcher's artistic eye to these artifacts. The use of a wide variety of materials, color, technique and style create an area of interest for a researcher. Below is an image that shows the beauty in simplicity of *Lugbara* artifacts. And a sense of incredible artisanship.



*Figure 4: A photograph of a Luku showing the natural dark color and rich texture (tribalart.com/Lugbara-art)*

## **1.1 ANALYSIS OF LUGBARA ARTIFACTS**

### **Introduction**

*Lugbara* artifacts being the center of this research as an area of inspiration, below are some of the *Lugbara* artifacts. Many of these are included here for purposes of documentation, but not all of them are part of the study or selected artifacts. These include, pottery, stone and Musical instruments. Many of these artifacts are not in active use and therefore their appearance is to show the rationale for the selected ones but also to show the scale and available scope of artifacts from which the selection was made. These particular pieces are museum pieces and are for viewing purposes.



*Figure 5: “Envu” Traditional Lugbara cooking vessel, judging by its size, it’s used for preparation of sauce, this is primarily because of its small and more manageable size. Material: Fired Clay Author: Unknown. Photo by Feni Desmond, March 13, 2019*

This *Envu* is approximately one square foot, made of fired clay. It is under fired hence the black color, the outer area is decorated with diamond patterns rolled on using a stick curved with an imprint. These are in good condition and are classified as pottery. The basic cooking pot is one of the most common pieces of pottery not only among the *Lugbara* but in Africa generally. There is no much difference in terms of shape with other specimens from all over the continent. Simplicity is one of the strongest traits *Lugbara* artifacts possess.

Taking a look at Figure 2, the texture on the pot is not just for aesthetics only but has a deeper functional value. The lip of the vase is smooth, but also outward curving, this enables it to be easily handled. On the other hand, the rough diamond pattern on the body of the pot plays a functional role where it creates friction to enhance stability of the pot when placed on the fire stones. Fire stones are known to wear out overtime and this means that they can cause the pot to slip which could pour the contents. In some situations, certain foods during their preparation need vigorous stirring, one of the most common is the “*OchaO’cha*” which is a mixture of beans and ground nut paste to a thick consistency. This requires stability which later enhances the quality of the final product.

The *Lugbara* artisans who made a pot as shown in Figure 2 would have made it by hand, this gathers them a huge amount of respect in consideration of the conditions and the tools used, creativity is realized.



*Figure 3: A Lugbara Sauce serving dish. Source: Agofe Baba Jason Avutia Material: Fired Clay Photo by Feni Desmond, March 13, 2019*

Figure 3, we see a serving bowl. This bowl features a wide opening, diamond patterns on the outside which serve both functionally for grip but have aesthetic merit. The dish is about one square foot in size. Similar in make and craftsmanship. Looking at the two artifacts it's not difficult to relate the two and conclude that they should have been made either in the same area or even made by the same individual. Even though this serves as a serving bowl, in different situations it can also be used to cook certain foods or even store certain ingredients. Having a set of these in the different sizes would elevate the woman of the house to a pedestal of great respect. In this case wives of the artisans who made them always had an abundance. The early *Lugbara* are not known for using plates as we know and understand them today, many of these serving dishes also played a part in being used as plates. Other small *Kobi* were made and used in place of plates. Food would be served on them and family members would eat communally. Communal eating is a common occurrence among the *Lugbara*.



*Figure 6: Kobi Small size Source: Agofe Baba Jason Avutia Materials: Shredded Sorghum stalk bark. Photo by Feni Desmond, March 13, 2019*





**Figure 7: Kobi Big version Source: Agofe Baba Jason Avutia Materials: Shredded**

*Sorghum stalk bark. Photo by Feni Desmond, March 13, 2019*

The *Kobi* is a form of *Lugbara* basketry made of sorghum stalk cuttings, its used in the preparation of food and during harvest. This one has yellow and blue sisal wrapped decoratively around the edges. It is pale yellow, a natural color, different variations of brown can also be seen through the cross-hatching pattern.

The “*Kobi*” is one of the most widely used of the *Lugbara* artifacts, this is not only because of its cheap to make nature but also the functional importance and significance it has.

The *Kobi* plays a very big role in the day to day running of a home among the *Lugbara* and might arguably be the most important tool in the food preparation process. No house or homestead in the *Lugbara* community according to the elders, can run without the *Kobi* stressing its significance to the household. The organic materials used in the making of the *Kobi* might be make one feel that they are not durable but to the contrary the *Kobi* are very strong and can a long time with good use and storage. This also underlines the basis that the *Lugbara* used to make these artifacts and judging by how most of them were made, durability was one very important factor. They are made in various shapes and sizes to suite a given purpose. The small *Kobi* is meant to be used as a standard of measure when selling grain especially, but in the most recent times the function has shifted to a more decorative role as its used in houses to enhance appearance. The smaller version

*Kobi* also that is used to cover food especially already prepared millet bread commonly known as “*enyasa*”, the shape and material used enables it to keep the food warm for a certain period of time.

We see the most common type of *Kobi*, it's the largest size *Kobi*, this one is generally multipurpose, used in sorting grain from chaff but also it can be used to as a container when cutting vegetables and cooking ingredients.



*Figure 8: “Luku” Baby cover. Materials: Shredded Sorghum stalk bark. Photo by Feni Desmond, March 13, 2019 Source: Rodha Sandru*

The “*Luku*” is one very important *Lugbara* artifact. It is built generally for function but has an appealing aesthetic to it. It magnifies the skill and finesse of African artistry. When discussing iconic *Lugbara* Artifacts, the *Luku* is definitely up there on that list. It is made from strips of Sorghum stalk bark. Over agricultural seasons, when the harvest is done, there would be large numbers of left-over Sorghum stalks, these are also harvested but for the sole purpose of making items such as the *Luku*. The sorghum stalks are then dried further to ensure that there is a very insignificant moisture content, this is very helpful as the final product does not decay. This artifact is used by baby carrying women to shield their babies from the elements like the scorching sun, dusty winds, drizzles of rain. The *Luku* played a very fundamental role in the social life of families in the *Lugbara* community. This came in the sense that especially new women that had just given birth when visited by their friends and relatives were always given items such as the *Luku*, this was in the most favor of the infant who out of love should be shielded from the elements such as rain, sunshine, hard blowing winds, dust among others. Just like the *Kobi* the material used to make the *Luku* is the same, its good against the sun and therefore becomes in fact more efficient than the modern-day umbrella. It also comes with a feminine touch to it since it relates clearly with motherhood and care. Using this *Luku* is a sign of the love and affection in shelter given by a mother to her infant.



*Figure 9: “Oni” Stone (Used in the application of cow dung in mud huts.) Photo by Feni Desmond, March 13, 2019 Source: Deru Holda*

In Figure 7, We have a stone, this referred to as “*Oni*” literally meaning stone in *Lugbara*. But this is no ordinary stone. This particular one is as old as 60 years old according to Deru holder, A

*Lugbara* ender. *Lugbara* architecture is characterized by grass thatched houses that are floored using mud and ant hill soil. This African method of flooring has been used for centuries and is an effective way of keeping a clean-living environment and creating a barrier between the interior of the house and the earth underneath. Dung is collected from kraal by women since this activity of laying the flooring in mud houses is pre-dominantly a female activity among the *Lugbara*. After cows in the kraal have been moved out by the youth, the ladies come and collect the cow dung that is at that point still fresh. After collecting this cow dung, it is then taken back to the houses and mixed with ant hill soil and water to form a thick paste consistency. The mixture is then applied on the floor of the house until all areas are covered. Then when the laid mix turns leather hard, the “*Oni*” displayed in Figure 7 is then used to smoothen the floor and give it a smooth finish that is desirable to the occupants but which also guarantees durability as the particles of the mixture are compacted tightly together.

The *Oni* starts out as almost regular shape, but because of many years of wear, it then gains a distinct shape depending on the user’s application of force. They can also start as big as 6 inches but later make their way up to as small as 3 inches in length; this means that the deficit can be lost in the process of making the perfect *Lugbara* floor over decades. This is one of the artifacts that speaks the stories of generations of women in a particular homestead that have used the same stone over and over again. It breeds unity because even if it looks to be a very cheap object to own, not all women have it and not every stone is capable of serving the purpose therefore it is a highly regarded object. Stones among the *Lugbara* when crafted in different ways can be used for numerous purposes. In this particular case this stone which already is showing signs of usage has been crafted to be used as a tool for compacting cow dung in a grass thatched house. The size and shape of the stone can be made in consideration of the age of the person to use it, meaning children had smaller stones compared to adults and also the contours of someone’s palm are also key to creating the perfect tool in this tool in this stone.



*Figure 10: “Koyo” Lugbara shaker Photo by Feni Desmond, March 13, 2019 Source: Rodha Sandru*

The *Koyo* is a shaker made from a gourd filled with seeds or beads. These make an appealing shaker sound. This one in particular carries a natural brown color and has an off-white sisal thread knitted at the opening used to place the seeds inside.

Music among the *Lugbara* just like any other African ethnic group breeds excitement and life in a community. As people sing and dance there is a sense of unity and togetherness. This brings us to the point of realization of how important music is to the African setting and culture. In Figure 6 is a musical instrument, preferably one of the oldest musical instruments among the *Lugbara*. It also is very similar to many other instruments that serve the same purpose as it does in many

other native African ethnic groups like the Hausa and Yoruba in Nigeria who refer to it as the “Shekere”.

The “*Koyo*” called in *Lugbara* (the word “*Lugbara*” can be used interchangeably to mean the language spoken but also the ethnic group) is usually made of a gourd, to which a hole is made and stones, seeds or beads are placed inside. When moved vigorously, the elements inside create a sound. The sound made can be dictated by the weight of the stones, the thickness of the gourd, but also the amount of material placed inside. The heavier the material the heavier the sound and the reverse is true. It takes a very skilled craftsman to make the correct judgement on how to incorporate all those variables in order to get the perfect sound. Even though the craftsman achieves the perfect instrument there comes the question of the musician, to create the sound the musician too has to be in good understanding of the instrument in order to apply a reasonable amount of finesse so as to achieve good sound. The *Koyo* has worked for the *Lugbara* in many different scenarios, from summoning the ancestral spirits in shrines, something that the modern generation has demonized in favor of being used in churches for worship. However, festivals and small village dances never saw less of this simple but yet musically satisfying instrument where girls and boys would use it in unison with other instruments to create moments of musical joy.



*Figure 9: “Mari” Photo by Feni Desmond, March 13, 2019 Source: Atia Grace*

Mari is a musical instrument used by the *Lugbara*. Many of the *Lugbara* artifacts that are related with music have a very huge similarity with other African ethnic music instruments but the Mari is one of those that don't have any particular resemblance with other African instruments. It's a wind instrument that has two compartments. One is the base that is made from a gourd, one that is really large enough just as shown in Plate 7, then the second part is the elongated section that protrudes from the base upwards. This instrument is played by using a leather pad to strike the top areas (end of the protruding or second section of the instrument) this gives birth to a sound full of bass. It complements well other instruments used in *Lugbara* songs and dances. The production of this instrument is not very difficult according to Baba Jason Avutia, the *Lugbara* chief of chiefs (Interview carried out in Arua, 20<sup>th</sup> December 2019) But however mastering the art of playing it to tune is very difficult in comparison with other *Lugbara* musical instruments. This instrument is not at the brink of being washed of the face of *Lugbara* culture as more people are favoring more modern musical instruments over the pure and natural organic sound that the Mari produces.

The disappearance of this artifact continues to stress the viability of doing this research so as to keep a record and preserve such artifacts for they are the identity of an ethnic group and a cultural heritage of a given people.



*Figure 11: “Adroko” Materials: Wood and Iron. Photo by Feni Desmond, March 13, 2019  
Source: Tia Grace*

An “Adroko” is a farm tool that is used mostly by women in weeding and getting the garden rid of chaff, this is during preparation for planting. It’s carved from an elbow shaped tree branch and topped with an iron tip which is used to pierce the ground. Even though this tool is not so far dated, it has come to create a sense of farming culture and identity. The fact that this tool is not so old is in relation to the two components of the tool. It has the iron tip that for a very long time the *Lugbara* have always smelted and used for making other items like arrow tips and jewelry. Before the integration of the wooden handle and the iron tip, the wooden handle was being used independently; however, its independent usage was not as efficient as the combination of both the wooden handle and the iron tip. The *Adroko* is seen by women as an absolute necessity and women without this tool would be regarded as lazy and unfit to be married off. The *Adroko* is arguably regarded as one of the most durable of all the artifacts. This is also partly due to the fact that it does not get used so much and only works in the early parts of the planting seasons. The creation process of the *Adroko* is quite simple but it takes experience and knowledge of the plant life in the area to identify the suitable tree branch to use, the branches used are very particular to the shape of the *Adroko*.

The branch has to be in a “Y” shape, but then later the lower branch is then cut off and one is left with a “V” shape, however this “V” shape has one side stronger and bigger than the other. The stronger and bigger side is used as the handle area while the smaller side is used as the tip onto which the iron component is fixed. This definite unison creates proper balance on the tool and makes it easier to use. This tool is just one example that has been singled out, however there are several other *Lugbara* artifacts that have the same combination of a wooden part and an iron part on such tool is the “Ngule” which is used in clearing the fields before digging can begin, a quick similarity description would be the “*Lugbara* slasher”.



*Figure 11: Gonde and Osu. Lugbara Bow and Arrow Photo by Feni Desmond, March 13, 2019  
Source: S.N Dradiku*

Gonde and Osu translates as Bow and arrow. Just as many different African cultures, the *Lugbara* have bows and arrows as a way of protecting themselves from danger or even for hunting. The

Bow is made of relatively simple materials that when put together create a ton of force that can propel an arrow quite impressively. Just like the “*Adroko* that we had seen earlier, the Bow need very much attention as far as choice of the branch used is concerned. This is because not all branches from any shrub available can be able to have the high flexibility yet retain the structural integrity as required. The maker has to consider the choice of branch very carefully so as to get a good quality and efficient bow. The same applies to the sisal twine that is used to make the string. The sisal has to be chosen carefully and twisted well, this gives raise a strong string that will be durable. Coming to the arrows, *Lugbara* arrows are made of a dried young Bamboo shoot which is the Arrow shaft, an iron head, and sometimes a feather fletching is also used to boost the efficiency of the arrow. There are different types of arrow heads that are used for various purposes, from hunting, to war. These might be very difficult to find in theses present times because hunting and war has been considerably not present therefore one type of arrow that can be used to protect homesteads is the one that is commonly available.





*Figure 12: Adungu. Photo by Feni Desmond, March 13, 2019 Source: S.N Dradiku*

The *Adungu*, as shown in the provided image, is an arched harp with a wooden body and a curved neck. The body is adorned with decorative patterns and possibly burn marks, enhancing its aesthetic appeal. Multiple strings are attached to the neck, which extends from the body, indicating that the instrument produces sound through string vibration. The *Adungu* rests on a blue fabric, highlighting its craftsmanship and traditional design. The *Adungu* is typically made from locally sourced materials. The body is carved from wood, and the base is often covered with animal hide to enhance sound resonance. The strings, traditionally made from animal gut, are now sometimes replaced with modern materials like nylon. The number of strings can vary, but it generally ranges from seven to ten, each producing different pitches to create a harmonious sound.

### **Selected *Lugbara* artifacts.**

The word “artifact” is derived from Latin, combining “arte” meaning “by or using art” and “factrum” which means something made (Oxford dictionaries, nd) An artifact, in the broadest sense is any object modified by human hands. However, this term is mainly used to describe items with cultural or even historical significance, but it can also be used to refer to by-products of scientific research or any man-made object. Artifacts encompass a broad spectrum of items, these can include art, tools, clothing, pottery among others.

Four artifacts were chosen for the execution of this research. The criteria is based on three major factors. One, the unique and aesthetic appearance of the artifact. Two, the degree and frequency of use among the *Lugbara*, Lastly the degree of available information about these particular artworks and how exposed they are to the outside world. The *Envu*, The *Kobi*, The *Mari* and *Adungu* are the artifacts chosen for the purpose of this research. They carry a huge amount of beauty even in their simplicity, not many of them have been written and researched about, but they all play a very robust and life sustaining role in the *Lugbara* community.

## **UNDERSTANDING SCULPTURE: FORMS, SIGNIFICANCE AND AFRICAN PERSPECTIVES.**

Sculpture, a three-dimensional art form, has been a vital part of human expression throughout history. From ancient civilizations to contemporary artists, sculpture has played a significant role in conveying cultural, social, and political messages. This section delves into the world of sculpture, exploring its various forms, significance, and the importance of African sculpture, with a focus on *Lugbara* artifacts and material culture as an inspiration for contemporary sculpture.

Sculpture encompasses a wide range of forms, including figurative, abstract, relief, and installation art. Figurative sculpture depicts recognizable subjects, such as humans, animals, or objects, while abstract sculpture explores non-representational forms and shapes. Relief sculpture combines two-dimensional and three-dimensional elements, often used in monumental and architectural contexts. Installation art, a more recent development, transforms spaces through interactive and immersive experiences. *Lugbara* artifacts, such as the *Luku*, *Oni*, *Adungu*, *Mari*, *Gonde* and *Osu*, have inspired contemporary sculptors to explore new forms and meanings. African sculpture holds a vital place in the history of art, with a rich and diverse heritage spanning thousands of years. African sculptors have created works that not only reflect their cultural and spiritual beliefs but also showcase exceptional craftsmanship and innovation. From the terracotta figures of Nok to the bronze castings of Benin, African sculpture has played a significant role in shaping global art history. *Lugbara* artifacts, in particular, offer a unique perspective on African sculpture, with their intricate designs and symbolic meanings.

### **Modern and Contemporary Sculpture**

Modern and contemporary sculpture have pushed the boundaries of traditional forms, experimenting with new materials, techniques, and concepts. Artists such as Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth, and Alberto Giacometti pioneered modern sculpture, exploring abstract forms and spatial relationships. Contemporary sculptors like Anish Kapoor, Ai Weiwei, and El Anatsui

continue to expand the medium, incorporating diverse materials and themes. This research takes a path that integrates those elements and produces a body of work with a hybrid of ideas.

Material culture, encompassing objects and artifacts from everyday life, has become a significant inspiration for contemporary sculptors. *Lugbara* artifacts, in particular, offer a rich source of inspiration, with their simple designs, symbolic meanings, and cultural significance. Contemporary sculpture is drawing upon *Lugbara* material culture to create works that engage with themes such as identity, community, and cultural heritage.

## **Conclusion**

This section has provided an in-depth exploration of sculpture, its various forms, and significance, with a focus on African sculpture and *Lugbara* artifacts as an inspiration for contemporary sculpture. The importance of material culture, particularly *Lugbara* artifacts, has been emphasized as a source of inspiration for sculptors, allowing them to explore new ideas, forms, and meanings. In conclusion, the *Lugbara* artifacts presented are not only aesthetically appealing, but also hold significant cultural value. Their simple designs, shapes, and meanings offer a wealth of inspiration for sculptors and artists seeking to explore African material culture. Moreover, by cataloguing and documenting these artifacts, we have created a vital pool of information about *Lugbara* material culture, which can serve as a valuable resource for future research and cultural preservation. This catalogue provides a tangible connection to the past, present, and future of *Lugbara* culture, allowing us to appreciate the richness and diversity of their artistic expression. In continued research we appreciate these artifacts and may uncover new meanings, interpretations, and inspirations, ensuring the legacy of *Lugbara* material culture endures. By celebrating these artifacts, we honor the creativity, skill, and stories of the *Lugbara* people, and contribute to a deeper understanding of human creativity and expression.

## **Researchers Positionality**

As an insider to the *Lugbara* community, my positionality granted me distinctive access to cultural custodians. For instance, Agofe Baba Jason Avutia shared deeper narratives on *Lugbara* material culture and some of the different artifacts because of our shared heritage. (Personal communication, June 15, 2020). To minimize bias, methodological triangulation was used, cross-referencing oral stories from multiple elders such as Rodha Sandru and Can. Samuel N. Dradiku with scholarly literature to guarantee that my artistic interpretations were well grounded in authenticated cultural understanding.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

With consideration of the fact that the Lugbara people have been the subject of major anthropological and sociological inquiry, with most of the foundational works concentrating on religion, social and political organization. (Middleton, 1965; Dalfovo 1988), a critical void exists in the study of Lugbara material culture especially with an artistic perspective.

Broad surveys of Ugandan tribal crafts such as the seminal work by Trowell and Wachsmann (1953), provide valuable catalogues but class Lugbara artifacts within a much more national context lacking the concentrated analysis of their aesthetic merit as a springboard for the creation of sculptural forms. This gap is indicative of the wider issue in African history, where certain artifacts of certain groups are documented but are rarely engaged with as a source of inspiration for artistic expression.

This research addresses this gap. It moves beyond documentation to sculptural contextualization which is the translation of an artifact's historical narratives, aesthetic merit into sculptural forms that generate new discourse and facilitate cultural continuity. Therefore, the problem is not merely the fact that Lugbara artifacts have been under-researched but also the fact that they haven't been used as a source of inspiration for sculptural expression.

### **1.2.1 Positionality**

My positionality in this research is that of an 'inside researcher. As a Lugbara elite from Arua, I am not an external observer but a stakeholder in the material cultural heritage being studied. This status shaped the research process as it facilitated a degree of trust and access that could perhaps be unavailable to an outsider, this enabled deeper engagement. For instance, the late Agofe Baba Jason Avutia shared exclusive knowledge about the spiritual significance of the *Mari*, prefacing his remarks with, "As a son of the soil, I will share this with you ..." (J. Avutia, personal communication, June 15, 2020) Likewise, elder Samuel N. Dradiku provided detailed narratives linking different artifacts to specific clan histories, information often reserved. (S. N. Dradiku, personal communication, October 3, 2020).

However, there is need to appreciate the fact that this insider status also bears the risk of inherent bias which could potentially lead to uncritical glorification of culture and or overlooking elements that an outsider would question more critically. To mitigate this, I used reflexivity throughout the research consciously cross-referencing oral histories from multiple sources like comparing the

accounts of the different participants such as Rodha Sandru and Deru Holder on the making of the Luku and triangulated the oral data with the scholarly literature available.

### **1.3 Purpose of the study**

The purpose of the study was to create sculptural forms with *Lugbara* artifacts being the source of inspiration. African artifacts have a very unimaginable potential as far as being a springboard for artistic imagination is concerned. Therefore, it is important that the research was geared towards understanding this potential and using it in sculptural expression. In the Long term create a pool of knowledge that can be used by future researchers and also other people interested in *Lugbara* art.

### **1.4 Specific Objectives**

- i. To explore the history of selected *Lugbara* artifacts. *Lugbara* artifacts have a history, origin and also stories that come from them, many of which have been described in the analysis of the artifacts which were selected for this research.
- ii. To analyze the function of *Lugbara* artifacts in terms of social, political and economic areas of the *Lugbara* society.
- iii) To develop contemporary sculpture that draw from the *Lugbara* artifacts (their aesthetic singularity as well as their formal content). The sculpture so developed will deepen our understanding and appreciation of the *Lugbara* artifacts.

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### **1.5 Research Questions**

There are several research questions that were generated at the start of this research, these were to create a guide which would enable the researcher collect necessary information to facilitate the execution of the underlined objectives.

1. Who are the *Lugbara*?

Discussing *Lugbara* artifacts means that there is need to first and foremost understand the ethnic group as a whole therefore the questions of their origin and who they are come into play. Where they settle, what their culture and practice is, is as well very important.

2. What aesthetic qualities to *Lugbara* artifacts possess, can these inspire contemporary sculptural expression?

As discussed earlier, the aesthetics of *Lugbara* artifacts are the basis on which this entire research hinges, therefore this research question was very important because this is the lifeline of this research and therefore had to be answered with utmost scrutiny and exhaustion.

3. What is the function of the selected *Lugbara* artifacts?

Since there is consensus that the artifacts talked about do not occur in singularity and that they occur with different functions which are primarily attached onto them, its important that the function of these artifacts be looked at with more detail.

4. What narratives exist among the *Lugbara* community about how these selected *Lugbara* artifacts?

Similar to looking at the functions of *Lugbara* artifacts, there are existing fables and narratives that move hand in hand with these pieces of material culture, and understanding them was to be a major stepping stone in shaping the available understanding of *Lugbara* artifacts and also enriching the source of inspiration for the sculptures to be produced.

### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

The art and crafts of *Lugbara* of Uganda, have been under researched, in comparison to other ethnic groups in the country. The significance of this study lies in its contribution to the understanding of *Lugbara* material culture, a previously under researched area of study. Despite the richness and diversity of *Lugbara* culture, existing research has primarily focused on other aspects of their culture such as marriage, spirituality among others, leaving a significant gap in our understanding of their material culture.

This study aims to address this knowledge gap by exploring the significance of *Lugbara* material culture, including its history, development, and role in the community. By examining the material culture of the *Lugbara* people, this research will provide valuable insights into their beliefs, values, and practices, which will help to deepen our understanding of their culture as a whole.

Furthermore, this study will contribute to the broader field of material culture studies, which has been dominated by research on Western cultures. By exploring the material culture of an African society, this research will help to decolonize the field and provide a more nuanced understanding of the diversity of material cultures across the globe. Many Europeans have given an account of *Lugbara* artifacts and material culture however their perspective is blurred by the colonial

superiority complex hence skewing the true meaning of *Lugbara* artifacts presented and their meaning.

Additionally, this study has practical implications for the preservation and promotion of *Lugbara* cultural heritage. By documenting and analyzing *Lugbara* material culture, this research will provide a valuable resource for cultural preservation efforts and will help to raise awareness about the importance of preserving cultural heritage.

The end objective of this study was to create modern sculpture, this means that the life of *Lugbara* artifacts will be extended and a clear understanding of them and their meaning to the *Lugbara* people will be stored in a form relatable to the times we currently live in. Overall, this study is significant because it will address a significant knowledge gap in our understanding of *Lugbara* material culture, contribute to the broader field of material culture studies, provide practical implications for cultural preservation and promotion, decolonize the field of material culture studies

This research created a new pool of knowledge that will be of great importance for future researchers. This is in terms of writing literature about the artifacts themselves and also creating contemporary sculpture that will speak to the generation of today and the future.

Understanding of *Lugbara* artifacts and material culture creates a platform for future discourse on the importance of cultural preservation and appreciation.

Research about the *Lugbara* exposes the modern-day society to a culture many people know little about. This is in contrast with other ethnic groups in the country like the Baganda, Basoga and the greater Bantu group. This gives them the opportunity to not only consume art inspired by other areas of the country but also use this knowledge to appreciate different cultures across the country. This is because human nature has a tendency to demonize what they do not clearly understand or appreciate.

### **1.7 Scope of the study**

In this research, I decided to focus of the *Lugbara* people first me being a native of the *Lugbara* ethnic group and have a competent understanding of the *Lugbara* after years of living in the *Lugbara* community. Secondly is the selected *Lugbara* artifacts, who they belong to, what is their use and how they are made. Answers to these questions are unique to each culture and that is where my focus is channeled. Furthermore, I focused on the integration between *Lugbara* material culture and how it creates a platform for and inspires sculptural expression.

## **1.8 Justification**

The justification for cultural research lies in its ability to deepen our understanding of the diverse ways in which human societies operate and interact. There is adequate justification for the research of *Lugbara* cultural artifacts. Below are some of the reasons why this research was justified. This research has helped in the creating of an environment for the understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity. This is because many different cultural enthusiasts and researchers will have the opportunity to understand the *Lugbara* community and also have a clear understanding of the artifacts and culture.

Secondly, this research has changed and challenged my understanding of the different stereotypes and biases that existed because of the insufficient knowledge about the *Lugbara* and their artifacts. There is a popular misconception that artifacts and culture from northern Uganda is not as appealing as other cultures across the country. Therefore, it's important to have other cultures researched so as to kill the bias and provide sufficient knowledge and a perspective of appreciation.

In a very fast evolving and dynamic society, globalization is taking over and the rate at which culture is disappearing is unseen. This research however plays a very fundamental role in preservation of cultural heritage and tradition which are very important components for the identity and continuity of a given society.

Cultural research is justified as it adds to our collective knowledge and solutions in various fields, and it is conducted to fill gaps identified through comprehensive literature searches and analyses. It's also a way to ensure that research reflects the reality of our diverse human experience and contributes to the betterment of societies.

## **1.9 Theoretical Framework**

Material Culture as a Source of Inspiration for Sculpture Production.

Material culture, the physical objects and artifacts that surround us, is a rich source of inspiration for a sculptor. The theoretical framework I am engaging explores the significance of material culture in shaping the creative process and production of sculpture. Material culture studies have highlighted the importance of material objects in shaping cultural meaning and significance (Miller, 2010; Tilley, 2012). Besides that, there are several concepts employed to create a comprehensive framework to guide this research.

Materiality which caters for the physical properties and characteristics of materials and objects and their influence on the creative process (Miller, 2010). Cultural Significance looking at the meanings and associations attached to materials and objects and their role in shaping cultural identity and context (Tilley, 2012). Inspiration and Creativity where Ways in which material culture sparks creativity can be explored and the role of appropriation, reinterpretation, and innovation comes together in perfect unison (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Langer, 1989). In this study, I looked at the creative currency that material culture has and the fact that it can be appropriated for sculptural expression.

Contextualization where the role of material culture in shaping the sculptor's perspective and influence on the creative process and production of sculpture (Greenberg, 1967).

The above ideas are a guide and affirmation in the creative process and provide the understanding of how the physical properties of the selected *Lugbara* artifacts were used to create modern sculpture.

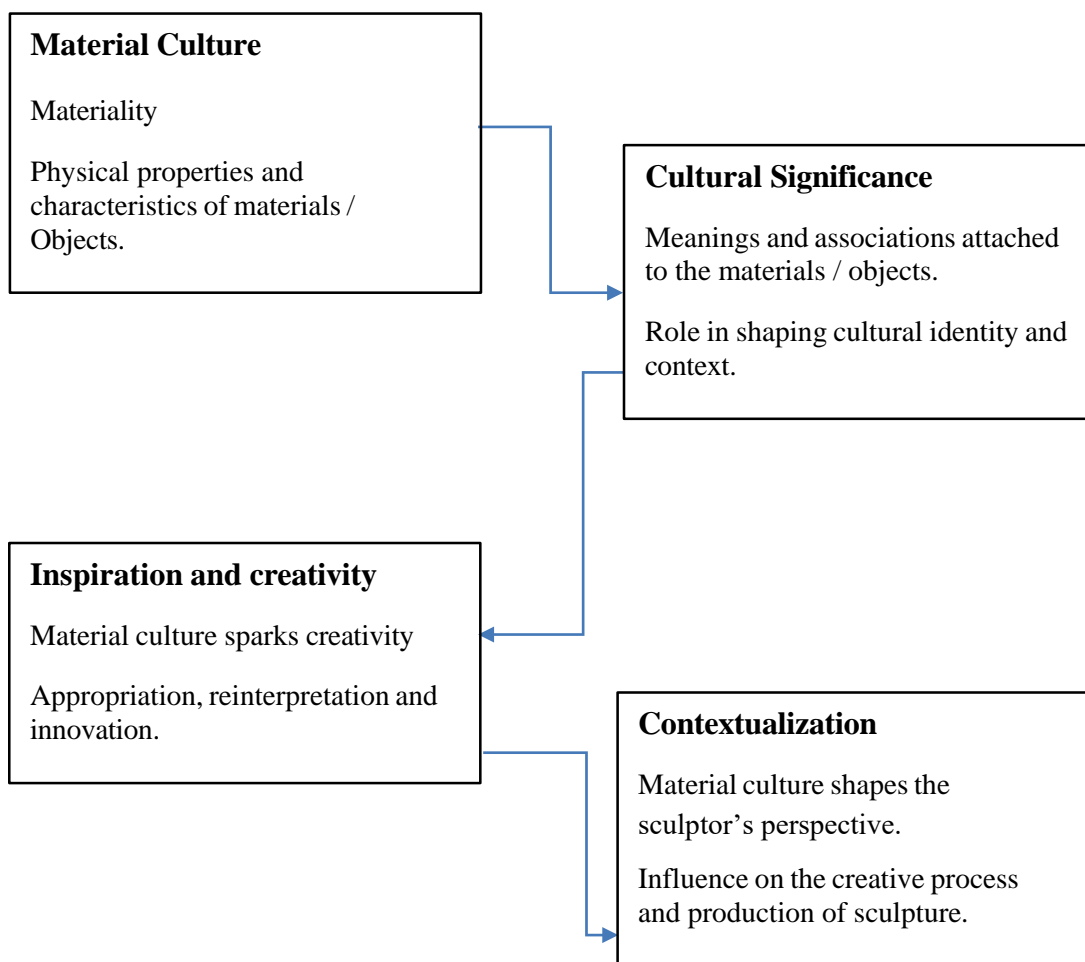


Figure 13: A diagram representation of the theoretical framework.

This diagram illustrates the relationships between material culture and sculpture, with a focus on the inspirations and creative processes involved. Material Culture is the core concept, branching out into three main categories, materiality: here I explore the physical properties and characteristics of materials and objects, as well as their influence on the creative process. Cultural Significance delves into the meanings and associations attached to materials and objects, and how they shape cultural identity and context. Inspiration and Creativity highlights how material culture sparks creativity, leads to appropriation, reinterpretation, and innovation, and ultimately influences the production of sculpture. The diagram also shows how material culture shapes my perspective and context as a sculptor, creating a dynamic interplay between the artist, their materials, and the cultural significance of those materials. This diagram provides a concise visual representation of the complex relationships between material culture, creativity, and sculpture, making it easier to understand and analyze these connections.

### **1.10 Contextualization**

For the purpose of this research, sculptural contextualization is the core methodological concept. It is the process of re-situating an artifact from its original and utility context into a new context to create critical discourse (Hall, 1997). It is not a mere replication but an interpretive act that uses the artifacts form and narrative as inspiration for the creation of sculptural forms. This aligns with Appiah's (2006) assertion that 'context is not just a backdrop for the work of art; it is part of the work itself' (p.134)

Aesthetic richness of Lugbara artifacts refers to the characteristic visual properties that make the Lugbara artifacts sources of artistic inspiration. It includes their materiality which can be the physical presence of fired clay, woven sorghum stalk or carved wood, their form and their symbolic patina which is the wear and tear that educates us about a history of use. This understanding of aesthetics moved further than mere beauty to encompass the artifact's entire being (Tilley, 2012).

The understanding that knowledge and appreciation about *Lugbara* artifacts is getting lost in an era of globalization, there is need to allow a gradual evolution of culture without total extinction. It is under this context that the conversation about the life of *Lugbara* artifacts and their aesthetic merit needs to be extended.

As argued by Clifford (1988), cultural artifacts are not mere objects, but rather "cultural artefacts that are always already contextualized" (p. 228). Therefore, it is essential to consider the cultural, social, and historical contexts in which *Lugbara* artifacts were created and used. This creates a

pathway that links the original context for which the object was made, and the context which the sculpture created for this study holds. This includes examining the role of these artifacts in *Lugbara* culture, their symbolic meanings, and their relationship to the community.

In the context of sculptural inspiration, contextualization is vital in ensuring that the cultural significance and meaning of *Lugbara* artifacts are respected and accurately represented. As noted by Appiah (2006), "context is not just a backdrop for the work of art; it is part of the work itself" (p. 134). Therefore, artists and scholars must engage with the cultural context of *Lugbara* artifacts to create meaningful and respectful sculptural works.

One of the key challenges in contextualizing *Lugbara* artifacts is the lack of documentation and research on the subject. Much of the existing literature on *Lugbara* culture and artifacts is outdated and limited, making it difficult to gain a comprehensive understanding of their cultural significance. Furthermore, the cultural and historical contexts in which these artifacts were created are complex and multifaceted, requiring a nuanced and detailed approach to contextualization.

To address these challenges, it is essential to adopt a multidisciplinary approach to contextualization, incorporating insights from anthropology, art history, and cultural studies. This approach will enable a deeper understanding of the cultural, social, and historical contexts in which *Lugbara* artifacts were created and used.

While creating artwork, collaboration with *Lugbara* communities and experts is crucial in ensuring that the cultural significance and meaning of these artifacts are accurately represented. This collaboration will provide valuable insights into the cultural context of *Lugbara* artifacts and ensure that their use as inspiration for sculptural works is respectful and meaningful.

In conclusion, contextualization is a critical aspect of understanding the significance and meaning of *Lugbara* artifacts in the context of sculptural inspiration. By adopting a multidisciplinary approach and collaborating with *Lugbara* communities and experts, artists and scholars can create meaningful and respectful sculptural works that accurately represent the cultural significance of these artifacts.

## 1.11 Limitations

Limited information concerning the art of the *Lugbara* was a major bottleneck. Although there is some information about the *Lugbara* most of it is anthropological and that leaves the art area inadequately stocked in terms of information. This available information also has a wide array of gaps and deficiencies. The predominantly youthful age in the West Nile means that there are a few elderly people with the kind of information that the researcher seeks about the artifacts most of which are now no longer in active community usage, this means the sample size will be limited. The geographical location is far from Kampala, this means that there will be a cost implication attached as far as traveling is concerned, but also the fact that the other areas covered in the geographical scope of this research in Southern Sudan and Eastern Congo DRC where some of the *Lugbara* stay are difficult to reach and also have traces of criminal activity and insecurity.

On the other hand, the main use of paper mache in this project also came with differed limitations which hindered the smooth progress of this research. These include the long drying times, paper mache can especially when used with flour-based adhesives have lengthy drying times which require patience and extended periods before the artwork can be completed or finished. It comes with a messy application and vulnerability to moisture especially outdoor use which hinders many from taking part in its use.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this research has explored the significance of *Lugbara* artifacts as a source of inspiration for contemporary sculpture production. Through a comprehensive theoretical framework, I have examined the importance of material culture in shaping cultural meaning and significance. The selected *Lugbara* artifacts - *Envu*, *Kobi*, *Mari*, and *Adungu* - embody aesthetic qualities that have the potential to inspire sculptural expression.

This study has addressed the gaps in existing research on *Lugbara* art and culture, providing a deeper understanding of the history, function, and narratives surrounding these artifacts. By analyzing their materiality, cultural significance, and contextualization, we have demonstrated the value of *Lugbara* artifacts as a source of inspiration for contemporary sculpture.

The findings of this research contribute to a broader understanding of African art and culture, challenging stereotypes and biases that have historically marginalized the *Lugbara* community. This study has also highlighted the importance of preserving cultural heritage and tradition in the face of globalization. Ultimately, this research has demonstrated the potential of *Lugbara* artifacts

to inspire contemporary sculptural expression, promoting cross-cultural understanding and appreciation. By exploring the aesthetic qualities and cultural significance of these artifacts, we have unlocked a wealth of creative possibilities for sculptors and artists.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Who the *Lugbara* are**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This study is was set out to create an understanding of the merits of *Lugbara* material culture as a source of inspiration for sculptural expression. Many researchers and scholars have in their own right tackled elements of material culture and in this way informed this research as follows in this literature review chapter.

#### **2.2 Material culture and significance**

Robertson (2014) offers a critical examination of the cultural significance of bark cloth in Uganda, challenging traditional notions of material culture. Through an analysis of bark cloth's production, use, and meaning, Robertson highlights the complex relationships between materiality, identity, and power. Robertson's work contributes to the field of material culture studies by emphasizing the importance of considering the social, political, and economic contexts in which objects are created and used. The author's ethnographic approach provides a rich understanding of the cultural values and beliefs associated with bark cloth, as well as its role in shaping identity and community. This reinforces the fact that material culture is an important source of inspiration and has the potential to create discourse around identity and cultural preservation as contexts for sculptural expression.

Kabiito's (2010) dissertation, "Meaning-making in Visual Culture: The Case of Integrating Ganda Indigenous Knowledge with Contemporary Art Practice in Uganda," presents a critical

examination of the intersection between Ganda indigenous knowledge and contemporary art practice in Uganda. This research contributes to the field of visual culture studies by investigating how meaning is constructed and negotiated through visual culture, with a specific focus on the integration of indigenous knowledge systems.

Kabiito's work employs a case study approach, incorporating interviews and visual analysis, to explore the complex dynamics between traditional Ganda art practices and contemporary art in Uganda. The study highlights the significance of indigenous knowledge systems in informing and enriching contemporary art practice, while also challenging dominant Western art historical narratives. His research engages with debates about art education and cultural studies but also puts emphasis on the post-colonial theory in relation to the decolonization of art and design education. This is fundamental to research about the *Lugbara* as many narratives fronted by colonial leaning sources provide a skewed representation that doesn't objectively represent the material culture of the *Lugbara*.

While Kabiito's research provides valuable insights into the integration of Ganda indigenous knowledge and contemporary art practice, some limitations are evident. The study's focus on a specific indigenous group and geographical context may limit its generalizability to other contexts.

Arnold and Hardin (1996) present a comprehensive collection of essays that explore the significance of material culture in African societies. The editors bring together a diverse group of scholars to examine the complex relationships between material objects, cultural practices, and social meanings. This contributes to the field of material culture studies by highlighting the importance of considering the cultural and historical contexts in which objects are created, used, and interpreted. The essays cover a range of topics, including the role of material culture in ritual and religious practices, the impact of colonialism on African material culture, and the ways in which material objects are used to construct identity and social relationships. One of the strengths exhibited in their writing is its emphasis on the agency of objects and their capacity to shape social relations and cultural meanings. The editors and contributors also highlight the importance of considering the diversity of African material culture, challenging stereotypes and generalizations about African societies.

Overall, their writing is a significant contribution to the field, offering insights into the complex dynamics of material culture in African societies. The book's emphasis on cultural and historical contexts, agency of objects, and diversity of African material culture makes it a valuable resource.

***Lugbara* artifacts: Inspiration and creativity.**

Abiti (2021) examines the Uganda Museum's representation of tribal cultures, highlighting the colonial legacy and its impact on community reconciliation. This thought-provoking article contributes to the field of cultural heritage, and the postcolonial theory.

Abiti argues that the museum's tribal exhibits perpetuate colonial-era stereotypes, reinforcing harmful notions of tribal difference and perpetuating historical injustices. The author contends that the museum's representation of tribal cultures is rooted in colonial repositories, which were designed to justify and maintain colonial power dynamics. There is need for community reconciliation and redress, emphasizing the importance of collaborative curatorial practices that center community voices and perspectives. Abiti's research resonates with broader this research's inherent debate on decolonization, museum reform and representing material culture through the unbiased lens of the indigenous researchers and scholars. While the article provides valuable insights into the Uganda Museum's tribal representation, some limitations are evident. For example, the focus on a single museum may not represent the broader landscape of museums and cultural centers in Uganda. Additionally, the article's emphasis on colonial legacy may overlook other factors shaping museum representation.

The article *Drawing Inspiration from Traditional Arts for Skill Development in Modern Nigerian Art and Craft* by Bella (year not specified) explores the significance of traditional arts in skill development for modern Nigerian art and craft. This study contributes to this research by highlighting the importance of drawing inspiration from traditional arts in developing skills for modern artistic practices. The author argues that traditional arts provide a rich source of inspiration for modern artists, offering unique techniques, forms, and aesthetics that can enhance skill development and creativity. Bella emphasizes the need for artists to engage with traditional arts to develop their skills, rather than solely relying on modern techniques and sources of inspiration. Bella also highlights the relevance of traditional arts in contemporary art practices, challenging the notion that traditional arts are outdated or irrelevant. Bella's research resonates with this research on the importance of cultural heritage and traditional knowledge in art spaces. While the article provides valuable insights into the role of traditional arts in skill development, some limitations are evident. For example, the focus on Nigerian art and craft may limit the generalizability of the findings to other cultural contexts. Additionally, the article's emphasis on skill development may overlook other important aspects of art such as critical thinking and creativity.

Adeloye et al. (2023) explore the role of art entrepreneurship in conserving African craft, using the Kente craft as a case study. This research contributes to the field of art conservation, an

inherent objective of this research. By using *Lugbara* artifacts as a source of inspiration for sculpture, the life of the artifacts is automatically extended and immortalized. The authors argue that African crafts are an integral part of the continent's cultural heritage, but face threats due to globalization and modernization. They contend that art entrepreneurship can play a crucial role in conserving these crafts by providing economic benefits to artisans, promoting cultural sustainability, and preserving traditional techniques. The case study of Kente craft in Ghana demonstrates the effectiveness of art entrepreneurship in conserving traditional crafts. The authors highlight the importance of community engagement, innovation, and marketing in promoting Kente craft and ensuring its sustainability. The article's emphasis on economic benefits may overlook other important aspects of cultural heritage conservation, such as cultural significance and community ownership. The authors converge at one final stop, the need to conserve cultural heritage though they choose a path of entrepreneurship and prioritize economic benefits.

Oguda (2019) explores the potential of leather crafts as a source of artistic inspiration for enhancing ambience. This writing, is important to my study because it highlights the significance of cultural heritage in shaping artistic expression. The author argues that leather crafts offer a rich source of inspiration for artists seeking to create unique and culturally relevant works. Oguda examines the techniques, patterns, and symbolism embedded in leather crafts, demonstrating their potential to enhance ambience in various settings. There is emphasis on the importance of cultural sensitivity and understanding in appropriating leather crafts as artistic inspiration. Oguda emphasizes the need for artists to engage with the cultural context and significance of leather crafts, rather than merely appropriating their aesthetic qualities.

### **Sculptural contextualization**

Hashim (2011) explores the creative potential of comic book paper as a medium for sculpture, pushing the boundaries of traditional paper crafting techniques. This research contributes to the field of fine arts, specifically in the areas of paper sculpture and mixed media art. This is critically important as this research zeroed down to use paper as the primary material in the production of sculpture. The author investigates the properties and possibilities of comic book paper as a sculptural material, experimenting with various techniques such as folding, cutting, and layering. Hashim's research demonstrates the versatility and expressiveness of comic book paper, highlighting its potential for creating intricate and complex forms.

Hashim also examines the conceptual and thematic possibilities of using comic book paper in sculpture, including themes of popular culture, nostalgia, and the intersection of high and low art.

Hashim's work challenges traditional notions of sculpture and paper crafting, expanding the possibilities for creative expression and innovation. This research in the same way challenges the traditional notions and employs an amalgamation of paper and different materials like sisal and metal (nails). "Comic Book Paper Sculpture" is a significant contribution to the field of fine arts, showcasing the innovative potential of paper sculpture and mixed media art. Hashim's research opens up new possibilities for artists and researchers exploring the intersection of materiality, technique, and creative expression.

Byomugabe (2019) explores the creative potential of waste paper as a medium for sculpture, drawing inspiration from the *Kikiga* traditional dance. This research greatly contributes to the art space, specifically in the areas of sculpture and environmental art. Furthermore, it combines two major variables of my research, culture as an inspiration and paper sculpture. The author investigates the techniques and processes involved in transforming waste paper into sculptural forms, experimenting with various methods such as folding, cutting, and layering. Byomugabe's research demonstrates the versatility and expressiveness of waste paper as a sculptural material, highlighting its potential for creating intricate and complex forms.

Byomugabe also examines the cultural significance of the *Kikiga* traditional dance and its inspiration for the sculptural works. Byomugabe's research showcases the importance of preserving cultural heritage and traditional practices through contemporary art forms. This highlights the innovative potential of waste paper sculpture and its cultural significance. Byomugabe's research opens up new possibilities for artists and researchers exploring the intersection of materiality, culture, and creativity.

Murigi and Maina (2020) explore the use of sustainable non-contemporary materials by East African multi-disciplinary artists, highlighting the work of Sanaa Gateja, Evans Ngure, and Samson Ssenkaaba. This research contributes to the field of art and sustainability, specifically in the context of East African art practices. The authors examine the innovative use of non-traditional materials by these artists, including waste paper, metal scraps, and natural fibers. Murigi and Maina's research demonstrates the artists' commitment to sustainability and environmental consciousness, as well as their ability to create aesthetically striking and thought-provoking works. The article also discusses the cultural significance of these materials and their use in East African art, highlighting the importance of preserving traditional practices while embracing innovation and sustainability. Murigi and Maina's research showcases the potential for art to drive environmental awareness and sustainability in East Africa. This shows that art can be used as a

medium to create discourse on a given cause just as I have chosen to with *Lugbara* artifacts, the need to preserve their existence and narratives.

Jeffus and Aramini (2008) present a unique approach to teaching geography through art, showcasing international art projects for children. This book contributes to the field of geography education, highlighting the potential of art to engage young learners and promote cross-cultural understanding.

The authors provide a range of art projects inspired by diverse cultures and geographical regions, from African masks to Japanese woodblock prints. Jeffus and Aramini's approach emphasizes the importance of exploring geographical concepts through creative expression, encouraging children to think critically and globally. *Geography Through Art* is a valuable resource for integration of art in promoting creativity, cultural awareness, and global understanding among young learners. In list of research about the *Lugbara* material culture, this concept helps shine light on and create a clear understanding of *Lugbara* culture so as to encourage cross-cultural understanding which at a future time would have an influence on how different cultures across the world and Uganda perceive *Lugbara* material culture and their narratives.

### **Material Culture and Significance: The *Lugbara***

According to J. Middleton, the *Lugbara* are a Sudanic speaking people. Their linguistic neighbors being the Madi to the east and Keliko and Logo to the West. They live along the Nile-Congo divide which is now the boundary between Democratic republic of Congo and Uganda. They are organized in small close family groups that are not open to outsiders. (John Marchment Middleton, 1965, *The Lugbara of Uganda*.) John Middleton's findings collude with those of Idha Salim Ahmed who also argues in the same direction though adds that the *Lugbara* are classified as members of the Moru-Madi sub group of a Sudanic people (Idha Salim Ahmed, 1928: 95).

Historically, the *Lugbara* belonged to the Madi nation, this earned them the name Madi Dyang, this is because they are regarded as the cattle Madi because they also looked after some cattle while the Madi of Okollo are called the Madi Dyel which is goat Madi, this is because they looked after goats (Lulua Odu, 1996:25).

During the expeditions of James Augustus Grant and John Hannington Speke the *Lugbara* faced a huge wave of oppression from the Turks (Odu Lulua, 1996 *A short history of the Lugbara (Madi)*:29), Even then, they kept having invasions from the Azande and also numerous ethnic groups who were superior to them, this explains why the *Lugbara* have not been organized well

under a powerful leader and remain disorganized, contrary to various assertions that the *Lugbara* didn't have the intellectual ability to create an organized monarchy. The *Lugbara* traded with other ethnic groups around them, basically in iron, food and other iron tools. The *Lugbara* make a wide range of arts and crafts from winnowing shovels, stools, baby covers, dolls and toys, exterior house decorations to ceramic items like cooking pots, water pots, eating vessels, and also dressing especially the chief's regalia.

### **Art Done by the *Lugbara***

*Lugbara* artifacts fall under a wide variety of art forms, they are numerous, and the *Lugbara* have managed to impose their creativity on materials in many ways. Margaret Trowell on her expeditions made a relative assessment especially drawings of many of these artifacts among the *Lugbara*, among those she talks about include agriculture implements, gourd vessels, wooden vessels, pottery, smoking pipes, stools, basketry, shields, bows and arrows.

Her drawings depict true African creativity and ingenuity. (Margaret Trowell, K.P.

Wachsmann, 1953, Tribal crafts of Uganda). However, despite of Trowell's endeavor to create a catalogue of the crafts in Uganda, there is no detailed investigation of many of the works that she shows with high regard to the *Lugbara* of Uganda, or perhaps that wasn't her intention. There is also a degree of generalization of her work, meaning that specificity which would be key with looking at each ethnic group independently is compromised.

Margret Trowell's assessment leads the understanding that African art has different forms but also a rich aesthetic composition which needs proper documentation and cataloguing. She notes that the use of color is bold and restrained, with a emphasis on earth tones and subtle contrasts" (Trowel, 1953, p. 20). The patterns and designs used are often geometric and stylized, reflecting the tribal artist's love of symmetry and balance" (Trowel, 1953, p. 25) and the textures and materials used are often varied and subtle, with a emphasis on natural fibers and materials" (Trowel, 1953, p. 30).

There are other forms of art that the *Lugbara* also did, these include, house paintings, these until today are still being vividly done, here newly built houses especially would have some designs with significant meanings inscribed on their walls, and these had meanings. For example, when a new baby was born, the *Lugbara* would repair the house with cow dung in the inside and charcoal mixed with water on the outside, then later they would make a mixture of ash and water which would then be used to design the house using beautiful African motifs especially referring to the new born.

The Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo has had a huge impact art wise on the *Lugbara*, this is because of the trade that happens between the two, traders carry goods and trek long distances from the Ugandan *Lugbara* plateau to the forests of the democratic Republic of Congo, with them are Ugandan items which they tend to trade for Congolese art and goods, the Congolese apart from the illegal trade in wildlife and minerals also trade in beautiful batiks and fabrics commonly known as "elamba" in Lingala or Kitenge in Uganda. This process over time led the *Lugbara* to learning how these Congolese masters produced their work and then later started producing it during their days in Belgian Congo. With this exchange of Knowledge came various art forms and crafts.<sup>6</sup>

The eastern Democratic republic of Congo is dominated by ethnic groups whose artistic prowess and magnificent work cannot be overlooked. The ethnic groups living in the eastern area include the Azande and Mongbetu, Mongo. These are ethnic groups well known in the Congo basin for their vast variety of art, from sculpture to painting, wood carving fabric making and decoration.

The similarity between the *Lugbara* and the Congolese is significant enough to draw attention. The nature of sculpture that the eastern Congolese did, through many ways was transferred to the *Lugbara* and also the ethnic groups which were in close proximity with them (M B Visona elt: 412,414,416). Some of the ways that this art found its way among the *Lugbara* is the endless raids that were carried out by the Azande on the area of the Nile inhabited by the *Lugbara* people after the Azande migration from the Northern Savannah's to develop chiefdom's and Kingdoms in the lush Congolese forest belt (A history of African art, 2001: 412).

Trade between the *Lugbara* and these ethnic groups around them could have been yet another way that influenced art among the *Lugbara* since the Congolese where by far the better ones as far as art and crafts are concerned. They traded in crafts like carved wood stools and carved walking sticks, pigments used in painting houses among others.<sup>7</sup>

The sculpture that the Congolese did there after that trade, sees its rebirth in the art made by the *Lugbara* community. Since the *Lugbara* had little interest for big size sculpture, they zeroed on the smaller types like carvings on walking sticks. Those over the years saw a great development, in subject matter carved but also the size and degree of detail.

The forms used by Congolese in their work also found its way into *Lugbara* art. A perfect example is the MBOKO (Figure with a Bowl, Master of Mulong, American Museum of Natural History, New York, A history of African art: 417)

The bowl in the ladies' hand to the greatest extent bares a great resemblance to those produced by the *Lugbara* community. The Ekibondo village, Uele, Congo also shows the structure of the mud huts built in similar fashion to those constructed by the *Lugbara* and furthermore also painted in similar style, this further emphasizes the existence of strong influence of the Congolese on the *Lugbara* (A history of African Art:433). The signs and symbols used by the *Lugbara* in their work are strikingly similar to those of the west African ethnic groups like the Igbo, Ozo (A history of African Art: 280,281,282), these west-African ethnic groups have a strong historical connection with the neighbors of the *Lugbara* which include the Azande and Mongbetu, this is because originally the Azande and Mongbetu came from the northern Savannah's (A history of African Art: 412).

The common decorative techniques among the Mongbetu are dominantly used by the *Lugbara* (A history of African art: 434). All these similarities lead us to one point, that the Congolese as one example of the *Lugbara* neighbors had and still have a strong influence artistically on the *Lugbara*, this influence is translated into their work

The idea that art and society in African art is a subject that cannot be over looked because of its significance in the context of African-ism. This is because art and society are deeply married. Spirituality is also a huge component of African societies though the aspect is being ripped off by the effects of colonialism and Neo-colonialism at that. This takes us to the point of understanding that art and spirituality in African context cannot be separated. The *Lugbara* also as Africans are no exception to this fact.

Robert Brain emphasizes that African art was religious and that was a big percentage of its purpose. (Robert Brain, 1933, 187). I cannot less agree with him, putting into consideration the huge amount of *Lugbara* art that is greatly inclined onto religious beliefs and tradition. This art is centered on depiction of the ancestors, a supreme being, the various gods, the creation among other subjects.

Most of these art works earned their places in shrines and traditional places of worship (Robert Brain: 198), some were taken by people who especially believed in their possession of a higher power able to do things out of the physical realm like protecting their families, providing fertility to their women, giving rains in times of drought, helping them win battles in times of wars, this describes the dolls made by the *Lugbara*. Dolls were used because the ethnic groups believed that if the spiritual property was with children then the gods would have more compassion on them because of the innocence of the child. Some art was inform of masks and costumes, these where

used at ceremonies, rituals. Robert Brain sites examples from Mali (Robert Brain, 190,175) however these are not far from the collective African similarities that also the *Lugbara* possess.

The spirituality in *Lugbara* art is a part of them, most of the works are misunderstood by many as symbolic only but they are actually part of the *Lugbara* and are a significant definition of who they are. To them these artifacts are inhabited by spirits, to them the difference between real and supernatural is non-existent (Angella Fisher, 1984, *Africa Adorned*: 108).

As far as African art is concerned, even among the *Lugbara*, the artist is of very little significance (Robert Brain:261), the African artist was not made as a result of passion or inclination of a certain kind, in most cases it would be by birth (Robert Brain:262), this was because children took up jobs that their families did. If one was a sculptor, then his children are most likely to follow in the footsteps of their father. In cases where girls are in the same family, they could do similar jobs like pottery.

The craftsman and leadership went in unison. This is because Kings and Chiefs had their Regalia, homestead and jewelry designed by these craftsmen. This emphasizes their role is inscribed from birth; the first role in an African society is to serve your King or Chief. Therefore, artists had a huge significance in the traditional African society.

### **2.3 Sculptural contextualization**

Sculptural contextualization refers to the practice of considering the cultural, historical, and spatial context in which a sculpture is created, displayed, and interpreted. This approach recognizes that sculpture is not a solitary object, but rather a dynamic entity that engages with its environment and audience. According to sculptor and art historian, Rosalind Krauss, "sculpture is not just an object, but a field of relations" (Krauss, 1986, p. 12). This perspective emphasizes the importance of understanding the social, political, and cultural contexts that shape the meaning and significance of a sculpture. Andrew McClellan and Andrew Leighton emphasize the significance of contextualization in sculpture studies, stating that "context is not just a backdrop for the work of art, but an integral part of its meaning" (McClellan & Leighton, 2006, p. 3). Sculptural contextualization also involves considering the spatial relationships between the sculpture, the viewer, and the surrounding environment. As art historian, Miwon Kwon, notes, "the spatial context of a sculpture is not just a physical location, but a social and cultural construct" (Kwon, 2002, p. 15). Sculptural contextualization is a critical approach that recognizes the complex interplay between sculpture, context, and meaning. By considering the cultural, and spatial context

of a sculpture, I am able to attach an understanding due to every piece of art created from this research.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

In conclusion, this literature review has explored the significance of *Lugbara* artifacts and their cultural importance. The *Lugbara* people, a Sudanic speaking community, have a rich cultural heritage that is reflected in their art and crafts. Their artifacts, including winnowing shovels, stools, baby covers, dolls, and ceramic items, demonstrate a high level of creativity and ingenuity. The review has also highlighted the influence of neighboring ethnic groups, particularly the Congolese, on *Lugbara* art. The trade and raids between these groups have led to the exchange of artistic ideas and techniques, resulting in similarities between their art forms.

Furthermore, the review has emphasized the importance of spirituality in *Lugbara* art, which is deeply connected to their religious beliefs and traditions. The artifacts are not just symbolic but are believed to be inhabited by spirits, highlighting the significance of spirituality in their culture. Finally, the review has noted the role of artists in traditional African society, including the *Lugbara*, where artists are not driven by passion or inclination but are rather born into their roles. The significance of artists in serving their communities and leaders is emphasized, highlighting the importance of art in African culture. Overall, this literature review has demonstrated the richness and diversity of *Lugbara* art and culture, highlighting the importance of preserving and appreciating this cultural heritage.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

The study employed a qualitative single-case study design. According to Yin (2018) a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a phenomenon within its real-life context especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not evident. This research design was selected because the phenomenon under investigation, is an intricate process linked to its real-life context, the oral history and living culture of the Lugbara people. It allows for an in-depth exploration of the case through different data sources, these include interviews, observation and studio practice which is ideal for practice-based research such as this. (Sullivan, 2010).

The unit of analysis for this case study is the process of translating selected Lugbara artifacts into sculptural forms. The embedded units of analysis include the artifacts themselves, the narratives within and the artworks generated.

#### **3.2 Study Population**

The study employed a qualitative single-case study design. According to Yin (2018) a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a phenomenon within its real-life context especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not evident. This research design was selected because the phenomenon under investigation, is an intricate process linked to its real-life context, the oral history and living culture of the Lugbara people. It allows for an in-depth exploration of the case through different data sources, these include interviews, observation and studio practice which is ideal for practice-based research such as this. (Sullivan, 2010).

The unit of analysis for this case study is the process of translating selected Lugbara artifacts into sculptural forms. The embedded units of analysis include the artifacts themselves, the narratives within and the artworks generated.

#### **3.3 Population and Sampling.**

A purposive sampling strategy was employed to select participants who could provide the richest information relevant to the research objectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018). However, the population was stratified into three major categories to encourage a multi-generational perspective.

1. Elders (n=6). This category included individuals over 60 years old, these were selected for their deep understanding of historical matters and also the fact that they had experience in making and using many of the selected Lugbara artifacts for example Agofe Baba Jason Avutia the Lugbara Chief of Chiefs.
2. Cultural custodians (n=2). This category is in leadership roles with overarching cultural knowledge such the Lugbara Prime minister Ismail Tuku.
3. Youth (5). The youth section consists of individuals below 35 years, these were selected to provide insight into the contemporary perception and usage of these artifacts.

The sample size was determined to achieve the best data saturation for the specific selected artifacts, meaning that new interviews ceased to yield new insights relevant to the study's scope (Fugard and Potts, 2015). The sample size was not intended to be a statistical representation of the entire Lugbara population but is informationally representative of the key perspectives required to understand Lugbara Material culture.

### 3.2 Data collection methods

This research employed more than one method of data collection. The amalgamation of methods of data collection was to ensure that the quality of the research is enhanced since using more than one method of data collection may translate in getting more information.

#### **3.3.1 Observation**

Using observation, I was able to have a clear understanding of the *Lugbara* artifacts, their aesthetic merit and also understanding and appreciate the circumstance surrounding their use. The *Lugbara* artifacts have a rich aesthetic merit attached to them. From the forms, colors and materials used, the finishing applied and how the materials in their different forms are brought together in unity to create functional works.

Secondly, the use of these artifacts and interaction with them best example being the use of the *Adungu* and *Kobi*. This helps to inform the contextualization later on when it comes to creation of modern sculptures.

### **3.3.2 Interviews**

Elders and other users of *Lugbara* artifacts were interviewed. This method turned out to be the most effective in this research. This is because there is a wide gap in the information not only about the selected *Lugbara* artifacts but also many concepts surrounding the *Lugbara* people. This ranges from the origin of the *Lugbara*, their movement, their art, techniques that they used in making these art works, what their intentions to create these artifacts are.

Looking at this gap, there is need to create more knowledge about the *Lugbara* and as this research seeks to do that through one of the important sources of information which is the elders. Getting this information in the detail that the research requires needs the interview method of data collection to be applied. This will enable the locals give information to the aid of the researcher especially in their local language; this will imply more reliable and comprehensive information.

The sample size in relation to artifacts was small, to allow for a more detailed study, this is also because the *Lugbara* artifacts are many and not all can be exhausted during this research. The research will therefore cover the Musical Instrument the “*Adungu*”, drinking gourds called “*Okelea*” Pots of different types called “*Envu*”, winnowing shovels called “*Kobi*”, “*Luku*” which is a baby cover. The sample size in population terms will be wide and centred along the older generations, this is because when it comes to issues of cultural importance, the older generation show more interest in them, and rightly so because they have the right information about these artifacts.

The time scope is two years during which time the researcher should be able to acquire the necessary information about the artifacts that have been selected and also use them as an inspiration to create contemporary works of sculpture.

### **3.4 Studio exploration**

In the execution of a body of work about *Lugbara* artifacts, sketches were made using each of the selected artifacts as a source of inspiration and a context accompanied with it.

The process of sketching brings to life the elements of the researchers understanding of the particular artifacts but also the opportunity to continue the creative journey.

The dominant material in this research is paper and other natural materials. Below is an in-depth look at paper as a material for sculpture and also the paper artists that inspired this research body of artwork.

### **3.4.1 Materials**

The most dominant material used by African artists and craftsmen is wood, this is because of its abundance in the different species on the African continent, but also clay, bronze, gold, fabrics, fibers and beads are also used (Robert Brian: 1933). The *Lugbara* however put emphasis on the usage of wood, clay, beads, papyrus and also farm remains like sorghum stalks as materials for the production of their works. The researcher chose to employ paper as the major medium of expression. This is because of several reasons.

#### **Easy application**

Paper is one of the easiest materials to manipulate and to some degree guarantees a vast array of creative freedom. Despite the challenges that come with it, the beauty of expression supersedes the cons that come with it.

#### **Affordability**

Paper is one of the most affordable and easily accessible materials, this is one of the main points for its choice for this research looking at the fact that the research was carried out on a tight budget. Newspapers which account for over 80% of the material used in making the work is very easy to find since they are mass produced on a daily basis and also become obsolete a day after.

#### **Paper Mache**

This research initially considered different materials from the start, however considering factors like cost of the material, ease with which it can be manipulated and accessibility, the researcher zeroed on paper Mache. Paper Mache ticks all the boxes as far as a good material for sculpture is concerned. This is majorly because of its light weight and strong “after drying” structure.

Even though I have managed a few hints above about paper Mache, its only prudent that we understand paper Mache into details since it’s the main material that the researcher used throughout the research. Even though the researcher used paper Mache extensively, it was not in total singularity as other materials were also used on a smaller scale to act as compliments to the paper Mache.

At this point we ask the question, what is Paper Mache? The oxford English learners dictionary would tell us that paper Mache is a substance made of pulped paper or paper pulp mixed with glue and other materials or of layers of paper glued and pressed together, molded when moist to form various articles, and becoming hard and strong when dry. The articles in this case are the artworks

or any other objects made for a particular purpose. However, the history of paper Mache is very elaborate and detailed. Dates back centuries, despite its sounding French, Paper Mache actually originated in China. Paper Mache was actually not produced in France until the mid-17<sup>th</sup> Century. But this doesn't take away the fact that France was the first country in the whole of Europe to start the usage and mastery of Paper Mache, but china were the original inventors of the craft. Examples have been found dating back to the Han Dynasty (BC 202 – AD 220). (Jackie Hall, 2002, The origins, popularity and “oh” those ingredients).

After its establishment and mastery in China, the paper Mache Craft then spread to the neighboring areas such as Japan who are well known till today for their beautiful paper work and Persia where paper Mache works of art especially masks were used festivities like the New Year celebrations and other public festivals. In the mid-17<sup>th</sup> Century, there was a heavy influx of paper Mache in Europe after the Europeans getting a sniff of the majesty of Chinese, Persian and Japanese paper Mache works of art. This in turn led France to start making its own wares, and England followed suit in the 1670s. There was only a halfhearted interest until the late 1700s and into the 1800s, when its usage became broad and substantial. This little black lacquer pot in **Plate 1a** is typical of the many oriental imported paper Mache items. It has three turned up feet and a lid. The decoration is painted on in gold.



*Figure 12: Little black lacquer pot, Ornamented with golden painting. Photo by: Jackie Hall: 2002.*

Papier mâché as written in French is a literal translation of chewed paper. The perception came about from the before and after looks of the paper. Literally, papers went in whole, but came out in small bits having been shredded. Hence getting the name chewed paper.

The people behind the manufacture and production of paper mache in France actually didn't mind because on the funny side of the story it gave them mileage on the market as people kept on talking about the chewing myths but also kept the truth about the recipes, production techniques from the lime light this has left gaps in the knowledge about paper mache even until this present day. However, in the 1740's, one manufacturer called John Berskerville, who was so known for his production of high-quality fine books started to imitate the lacquered works that were brought in from Japan. This led to a paper mache term called Japaning. Later after some time had gone by and the business of John Berskerville got successful, his assistant Henry Clay invented a style of producing paper mache to the extent that it would compete with wood as far as structural integrity is concerned. It involved the gluing of specially prepared paper under heat to form tough resistant and durable panels which could be used for a variety of purposes as desired by the owner.

### **3.5 Forms of Paper Mache**

Paper mache can manifest in two major ways. Which if with a good amount of finesse can be applied together accordingly. First is the paper strip method. Here strips of paper are cut, sometimes soaked in water for a few hours then either singularly or collectively, a binder is added to the paper strips and then they are applied to a sculpture armature. This method in most cases requires an armature because the wet paper strips cannot support themselves through the drying process and therefore need some support. Despite this method producing very strong bonds between the strips and a strong final piece of work, it takes a tedious amount of time to go through the process successfully enough to create a work of true beauty. The second method is the true definition of paper mache, here paper is soaked in water. Depending on how fast the artist wants to use it, he might decide to soak it in hot water so as to use it quickly or cold water over a longer period of time. When the paper mache gets soaked then its crushed or rather blended just as the researcher did in this research. When blended, the paper is reduced to smaller particles which when a binder is added to them forms a clay consistency mixture depending on the degree of blending. The more blending done, the finer the clay, the less blending done, the rougher the clay. It is from this type of paper mache that the word paper clay is derived. The binders in both cases can be cassava starch or glue. However, the researcher used cassava starch, glue and then the combination

of both. Cassava starch alone provides a very smooth mixture but not a strong bond between the paper fibers. Wood glue however grants the advantage of a very tight bond between the paper fibers but not as smooth which deprives the artist of the possibility of smoothening the work. For this research, concentrating on the studio element, the researcher used a combination of both, a 1:3-part ratio of cassava starch to wood glue, this meant that the wood glue would provide the tough bond required to create a strong sculpture but yet maintain the smoothness that comes with adding cassava starch to the mix. This came about after the researcher experimented with the two combinations respectively hence coming up with the third.

The third combination proved very able to provide all the structural advantages as well as the aesthetic components.

### **3.6 Paper Mache Preparation**

Looking at it in the most basic terms, paper Mache doesn't exceed the intellectual combination of paper fiber and a binding agent. However, over the years of its development, paper Mache has seen the incorporation of peculiar ingredients which have been able to act either as compliments to the already existing combinations or replacements to the later.

For this particular research, the artist put emphasis in experimenting with tree ingredients to come up with the ultimate paper Mache recipe. This is not singularly the artist's idea but depends a lot on ideas developed on paper Mache over the last century. This involved five materials, three of which are the ones primarily involved in the experiment while the other two have specific purposes which can be replaced. Paper which is the primary material, Wood glue and Cassava starch which act as binders, Vinegar and salt which act as preservatives.

First, the researcher added 1-part cassava starch in 5 parts of paper Mache with  $\frac{1}{2}$  a part of salt and 1-part vinegar. This gave rise to a paper Mache that was slippery but not as strong. The resultant paper Mache material was flaky and relatively weak. But on the upside, it was very smooth and malleable almost like a clay.

Second experiment comprised of the Paper, wood glue, salt and Vinegar. The measurements were just the same as in the first experiment. The wood glue replacing the cassava starch. This gave rise to a very strong material which dried faster compared to the first Cassava starch mix. But was not as smooth.

The final experiment included mixing 1 portion of Cassava starch and 5 parts of paper Mache with  $1 \frac{1}{2}$  parts wood glue. The outcome of this combination gave rise to a structurally stable

composition that would make good sculpture but also provide if treated well, the aesthetic beauty which can then be appreciated.

Using salt and vinegar helped preserve the material for a period of up to 3 months. Two buckets of paper Mache was prepared, one with the final mixture of Paper Mache, Cassava starch, Wood glue, Salt and Vinegar. The second bucket had Paper Mache, wood glue, Cassava starch but lacked both the vinegar and the Salt. After a period of three months, the Bucket A, which had an inclusion of Vinegar and Salt remained just as it was placed, the paper Mache was still intact without any rot or smell. On the other hand the other Bucket B had completely spoilt and the paper had decomposed. This experiment further strengthens the argument as to why salt and Vinegar should be added into the paper Mache.

In conclusion, while practical considerations of cost and accessibility informed the initial selection of paper mache, the medium engages in a material dialogue with the Lugbara artifacts it seeks to contextualize. Just like the sorghum stalks are woven into a Kobi, paper is fibrous and also an organic material. This materiality creates a formal link between the Lugbara material culture and the sculptural forms. But ever so significantly, the properties of paper mache serve as a powerful metaphor for the state of the material culture and heritage. In its initial wet and pulpy stage, it exhibits fragility and malleability. This mirrors the vulnerability of oral traditions and material culture when coming face to face with globalization. However on the other hand when dried, it exhibits considerable strength and resilience. This symbolizes the potential for cultural preservation and renewal through engagement and also reinterpretation. This made it an ideal medium to execute the core purpose of this research. The use of recycled newspaper further more infuses the sculptural forms with a new layer of meaning.

### **3.7 Data Analysis**

Through a rigorous and systematic analysis, the research aimed to unravel the hidden meanings, symbolism, and cultural significance embedded in these artifacts. By employing a multi-faceted approach, combining visual, contextual, iconographic, and ethnographic analysis, I uncovered the intricate web of relationships between the artifacts, the people who created them, and the cultural context in which they were used. This section presents the results of my data analysis, revealing the themes, patterns, and insights that emerged from my investigation. As I dug deeper into the data, I discovered the stories that these artifacts hold about the *Lugbara* people, their beliefs, practices, and ways of life. By deciphering the language of these artifacts, I gained a deeper

understanding of the cultural dynamics that shape human expression and identity among the *Lugbara*.

### **3.7.1 Visual Analysis**

Using visual analysis, I examined the artifacts' physical properties: material, shape, size, color, texture, and patterns, note any visible symbols, motifs, or imagery, Observe the artifacts' condition, age, and wear, document the artifacts through photographs, drawings. This visual analysis was able to help me have a clear understanding of these artifacts and then create a source of information from which the creativity can be expressed because a lot of aesthetic merit was realized through visually analyzing these artifacts.

### **3.7.2 Contextual Analysis**

This research used contextual analysis to have a clear understanding of the environment in which these artifacts operated and how they were used, narratives following them and facilitate the creation of art work at the conclusion on of the research which was the major purpose of this research. This contextual analysis has been instrumental in my research, as it has allowed me to understand the cultural significance of *Lugbara* artifacts and their material properties, develop a deeper appreciation for the craftsmanship and techniques used in traditional *Lugbara* art, draw inspiration from the symbolic language and visual motifs used in *Lugbara* artifacts. By examining the material culture of the *Lugbara*, I have gained a richer understanding of their cultural values, beliefs, and practices, which has inspired my artwork and allowed me to engage with their cultural heritage in a meaningful way.

### **3.7.3 Interpretation**

Provide in-depth explanations of the findings, Relate the findings to broader cultural and theoretical contexts, consider multiple interpretations and perspectives, draw conclusions about the significance and meaning of the artifacts within *Lugbara* culture. The *Lugbara* people's artifacts and material culture offer a wealth of information about their cultural values, beliefs, and practices (Olsen, 2018, p. 12). Through a contextual and visual analysis of their artifacts, we can gain a deeper understanding of the significance and meaning behind these objects (Marcus & Myers, 1995, p. 23).

Contextually, the *Lugbara* artifacts exist within a specific social, historical, and political context that shapes their meaning and significance (Harrison & Johnson, 2015, p. 145). The use of natural materials, symbolic designs, and attention to detail in craftsmanship all convey cultural values and

beliefs (Dewey, 2011, p. 34). For instance, the use of wood in artifacts may represent ancestral connections (*Lugbara Cultural Association*, n.d., para. 3), while geometric patterns may symbolize the connection between heaven and earth (Tilley, 1999, p. 56).

Visually, the artifacts display a range of designs, patterns, and motifs that hold cultural significance (Giddens, 2013, p. 78). The curved lines, geometric shapes, and symbolic motifs all convey meaning and tell stories about *Lugbara* beliefs, values, and history (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 123). By examining these visual elements, we can gain insight into the *Lugbara* worldview and the importance of these artifacts in their daily lives (Pink, 2013, p. 156).

### **3.7.4 Ethics and Integrity**

Ethical guidelines for cultural research are designed to ensure the respect, integrity, and protection of the participants and the communities involved. This research considered some of the principles in accordance with ethics.

Firstly, Voluntary Participation, here Participants should engage in research voluntarily, without any coercion or undue influence. This was very easy to achieve since the target respondents were from the *Lugbara* ethnic group and were very willing to participate in the research, this was an enormous sign of love for and pride in the *Lugbara* tribe. I ensured that participants voluntarily engaged in the research by clearly explaining the study's purpose, risks, and benefits. This principle helped build trust and encouraged honest responses (Merriam, 2015). Merit: Increased participant engagement and validity. Challenge: Ensuring no coercion or undue influence.

Secondly, Informed Consent, Researchers must provide all the necessary information about the study, ensuring that participants understand the research and its potential risks and benefits before agreeing to take part. This enables them to make decisions that are well informed as whether to participate in the research or otherwise. I provided detailed information about the study, and participants signed consent forms. This ensured they understood the research and made informed decisions (Sieber & Stanley, 1988). Merit: Respected participants' autonomy and dignity. Challenge: Ensuring comprehension and addressing questions.

Anonymity and Confidentiality is also very important where the identity of participants should be protected, and the information they provide should be kept confidential unless explicit consent has been given. I protected participants' identities and kept their information confidential unless explicit consent was given. This principle-built trust and encouraged candid responses (Ponterotto

& Grieger, 2007). By applying these ethical principles, I prioritized participants' well-being, privacy, and dignity, ultimately strengthening the validity and reliability of my research findings.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### ARTWORKS DEVELOPED FROM THE LUGBARA ARTIFACTS

#### 4.1 Introduction

In the heart of Africa, the *Lugbara* people have a cherished rich cultural heritage, expressed through artifacts that tell stories of their history, beliefs, and traditions. These artifacts, imbued with symbolic meaning and aesthetic beauty, have inspired generations of artists, collectors, and enthusiasts. Here, I present art works that resulted from studio explorations, art works inspired by and referencing selected *Lugbara* artifacts

As an artist, I have always been fascinated by the *Lugbara* people's ability to convey complex ideas and emotions through their artifacts. Their figures, and decorative items are more than mere objects - they are vessels of cultural significance, carrying the weight of tradition and community. My artistic journey began with a deep respect for these artifacts and a desire to understand their context, symbolism, and significance. Second came the sketching and final execution. Through rigorous research, collaboration with *Lugbara* communities, I have sought to capture the essence of these artifacts while pushing the boundaries of contemporary art. Each artwork is a testament to the power of cultural heritage to inspire and transform.

The artworks featured are not replicas or interpretations of *Lugbara* artifacts but rather a creative response to their cultural significance. I have employed mainly paper mache as the primary medium and used different techniques to reimagine these artifacts, from sculpture to mixed media and installation. By doing so, I aim to not only honor the cultural heritage of the *Lugbara* people but also engage with contemporary themes and issues.

I see this chapter as more than a showcase of artworks but a celebration of cultural exchange, creativity, and the human spirit. It is a testament to the enduring power of art to bridge cultures, generations, and communities.

The artworks presented are a tribute to the *Lugbara* people's cultural resilience and creativity, as well as a reflection of my own artistic journey. In the realm of sustainable art where creativity intersects with a sense of environmental consciousness, we are challenged to rethink the conventional notions of beauty and purpose.

#### **4.1.1 Thematics of protection and Nature**

Analysis of interviews revealed that artifacts such as the Luku and Envu are deeply intertwined in a cultural logic of protection. Elder Rodha Sandru articulated this, stating,

*‘A mother uses the Luku not just to cover the baby, but to create a whole new world for the baby on her back, safe and out of the sun, rain and even evil people. It is their first house we give our children’*

(R. Sandru, personal communication, October 3, 2019). This narrative directly informed the conceptual core of the artwork ‘Bright Future’.

#### **4.1.2 Thematics of Utility and social cohesion**

The Khobi took its place within the Lugbara setting not just as a tool but as a central object in the social and economic life of the homestead.

*‘Without a Khobi, a home is not a home. Its used for harvesting, to serving food. It measures grain in the market and also portions for cooking at home. It’s a woman’s most important tool and its quality and condition speaks a lot about her and her skills’.* (J. Avutia, Personal communication, June 15, 2020). This duality of function became a critical theme explored in installations such as Pile of Elders and Broken Culture.

#### **4.1.3 Thematics of Cultural Erosion**

A glaring contrast surfaced between generations. As elders mourned the decline in the use of Lugbara artifacts, Ayikobua Denilson confirmed it, noting ‘Those things (artifacts) are there, we have seen them in our grandparents’ homes, they are okay but we use metal trays and plastic buckets because they are easier to clean, use and also last longer’. (D. Ayikobua, Personal communication, June 30, 2020). This intergenerational detachment regarding the value and most importantly the utility of these artifacts gave a base of tension that the sculptural forms seek to visualize.

#### **Inability and un-stability of Adungu**

In a society where *Lugbara* artifacts are taking the backstage, the discourse about what is happening and the disappearance of these artifacts is an issue to discuss deeply. The *Adungu* has been part of *Lugbara* culture and life for centuries. However, the recent decades have placed the *Adungu* in a very difficult situation where the power to influence the lives in a way for which it

was made has been taken away. This is because of the evolvement of the *Lugbara* but also globalization as a whole has played a very crucial role to its detriment. New forms of musical instruments and also electronics that are able to store and replay music at will have made it very difficult for the *Adungu* to continue making a mark in our society. It is a common occurrence in this day and age of technology to see *Lugbara* purchase radios, speakers and public address systems that facilitate the process of music creation, storage and dissemination. Looking at this, there is a need to protect the *Adungu* from the potential disappearance looming but also to make it familiar to the young generation who can then enjoy the melodies and acoustic beauty the *Adungu* gifts. However, it is very possible to extend the life of the *Adungu* through creating awareness in research such as this. Despite all these areas of concern, we should also acknowledge that artifacts evolve and their functionality and purpose can also change with time. However, this artwork rides towards the point that we are here to extend the life and understanding of these artifacts and their relevance to our society today in light of traditions past.





*Figure 13: Inability Materials: Paper, Yarn, Tack Nails . Photo by Feni Desmond, July 30,2024*

Inability and un-stability of *Adungu* is a piece with different elements of communication embedded within. In the normal setting, the *Adungu* sits flat on the ground for large sized ones whilst smaller ones can be hand held. However, the large *Adungu*'s provide the bass which ties into the rhythm and overall melody of the music being played. The failure of the bass to sound efficiently means the whole performance is unenjoyable. Inability is unstable and hence needs a support at the base, this is testament to how unstable our culture is at this moment in time because of the limited effort placed into the propagation through the younger generation but also a very aggressive takeover by globalization.

Secondly, there are nails on the top connected by yarn in a random pattern, this is representative of the usage of cultural artifacts which is no longer steadfast but used as and when wished. This devalues the artifacts and gives lee-way for alternatives. As clearly sighted in earlier chapters, the *Adungu* is a stringed musical instrument. This means that there is a very high dependence on the efficiency and tuning on the strings, not forgetting the type of strings used. This has a very high impact on the sounds produced. Inability shows a bundled group of strings which cannot be used in grouping as each string makes its sound independently. Here, this is a representation of how material culture is now bundled up into a small set which means it doesn't have the coverage and freedom to create the impact in our society as it used to in the days when use and appreciation was much higher.

The sculpture's shape mirrors that of the *Adungu*, with its curved body and extended strings. However, it becomes evident that the strings lack the necessary tension to function as a musical instrument. The deliberate absence of functionality speaks to the central theme: "Inability and un-stability of *Adungu*." The sculpture embodies the paradox of form without purpose, inviting viewers to contemplate the interplay between design and practicality.

The predominantly black color holds significant symbolism. Black often represents elegance, strength, and resilience. In this context, it stands for African beauty, celebrating the richness and diversity of African cultures. By choosing black, the I underscore the sculpture's connection to African heritage.

The tension between design and utility raises questions about the purpose of art. Can beauty exist independently of function? The *Adungu*'s influence connects the sculpture to the *Lugbara* people. It becomes a vessel for cultural memory and identity. Just as the sculpture lacks functionality, life itself is fleeting. The impermanence of both art and existence underscores the need to appreciate beauty in the moment.

Inability and un-stability of *Adungu* is a metaphor for unfulfilled potential or also in many cases the limitations in the execution of our daily activities or expectations. The sculpture invites empathy perhaps we all carry unrealized dreams or untapped abilities. In summary, “Inability and un-stability of *Adungu*” transcends its physical form, inviting us to explore the delicate balance between aesthetics, purpose, and cultural significance. Through its silent eloquence, it celebrates African beauty while acknowledging the limitations inherent in all things.

This sculpture is a response to the *Adungu* especially the narrative it has as an instrument of communal unity and how this is coming under threat or being endangered. Elders such as Agofe Baba Jason Avutia described its role in bringing people together and fostering unity in the community (Personal communication, June 30, 2020). The artwork translates the iconic curved neck but also distorts its function. The sleek musical strings are replaced by a web of yarn unable to produce sound and the instrument also cant rest in a stable pose. Conceptually, this visualizes the ‘inability’ of its future. The choice of black painted paper mache reinforces the theme of a fading legacy. The inclusion of nails piercing the form symbolizes the painful pressures of modernity on material culture.

### **Pile of Elders**

The art installation titled “Pile of Elders” invites us into a contemplative space where tradition, symbolism, and materiality converge. Crafted from paper and strings, this sculpture pays homage to the *Kobi*, a utilitarian tool used by the *Lugbara* people in their daily kitchen work. As we delve into its intricacies, we unravel layers of meaning that transcend mere aesthetics. The *Kobi*, akin to a winnowing shovel, embodies functionality. Its curved shape and sturdy construction have lived for generations. The *Kobi* is arguably one of the most used *Lugbara* artifacts and has a special place in this research.

Each particular *Kobi* takes the simplistic shape of the original artifact however with a small twist. This variation from *Kobi* to *Kobi* is to show the fact that no any two can be exactly the same. Meaning the interaction with any of them is a non-replicable experience and should be appreciated in its own right. However, each *Kobi* has strings attached at the front.

These strings are symbolic in the sense that they limit the usability of the artifact rendering it useless. There is a firm reason as to why the piece is referred to as pile of Elders. This is because in light of the introduction of alternatives like metal trays, the *Kobi* has been relegated to an old man’s status, full of wisdom but brushed to the side in many communities. In different homes, when due to the improvement of the standard of living people manage to afford modern

alternatives to the *Kobi*, the *Kobi* are left. In this sculpture they are useless and heaped to one side. But here lies the paradox: beauty coexists with inability. The *Kobi*, once functional, now rest silently, awaiting liberation. Their “uselessness” speaks not of irrelevance but of preservation. We must untangle their stories, lest they fade into oblivion.

The repeated form of the *Kobi* reinforces its significance. Unity emerges from multiplicity. Strings connect, forming a visual rhythm. Black against white the eternal dance of opposites. The white cloth cradles the *Kobi*, emphasizing their weight.

“Pile of Elders” transcends its physicality. It beckons us to honor the past, untangle threads of heritage, and find beauty in stillness. As we observe, we become custodians of memory, weaving tradition into our present. In this quiet corner of art, the *Kobi* whisper: “We are more than relics; we are resilience.” This installation, engages with the narrative that as the essential, multi-purpose tool of the Lugbara homestead as described by Deru Holder (D. Holder, personal communication, June 15, 2020) Pile of Elders replicates the *Khobi*’s woven shovel like structure however the uniform black color and identical stacked appearance takes them away from being functional objects and relegates them to memorial objects. The artifacts are rendered useless by the fact that they are bound shut representing sidelining in the current age.



The creation of this installation was very relating for the *Lugbara* participants and their view of the Kobi and how it is being used in this very present day. The women especially had a number of reservations about the modern-day food preparation asserting that the Kobi is still the best way to prepare food and therefore it must retain its place in the *Lugbara* community and they are still going to champion its use and appreciation. There are two major elements in this installation, the paper representation of the Kobi and the strings that hold shut the opening and hence making the representation of the artifact unusable.

The studio process entailed first getting a Kobi, this was the mold that was used to create the paper base. Layers of paper saturated with cassava starch covering the entire interior of the Kobi which was then placed in the sun to dry. However, since no release agent was used, the paper had to be removed before it was completely sealed to the Kobi but had gained just enough strength to hold its shape.

This also was intentional because the process was repetitive and to avoid the outcome looking monotonous that was necessary. This is because each Kobi has a different character and personality.

After the pieces were dry, a light sanding was done and a mat black coat of color was applied. When the paint dried, The strings were laced through pre-drilled holes on the sides, completing the singular piece which would then come to life in a group where all the pieces are stacked on top of each other to complete the installation.



*Figure 14: Pile of Elders Materials: Paper, Yarn. Photo by Feni Desmond, July 30,2024*

### **Stacked**

Stacked is yet another representation of a beauty without functionality. The installation comprises several pot-like vases, each handcrafted from recycled paper. Their rounded forms echo the traditional vessels of *Lugbara* pottery. *Lugbara* artifacts command a sense

of simplicity and repetitiveness. This can be seen when taking a closer look at the artifacts. Many of the pots look alike however there are subtle variations in function, others being used in cooking while others being used in water collection or storage especially older ones.

Unlike many artifacts that make up *Lugbara* material culture, the pot also referred to as *Envu* has a very dominant presence in *Lugbara* society despite aggressive competition from modern alternatives like saucepans and pressure cookers. This is especially due to the fact that certain foods such as “*Ocha Ocha*” which is a delicately balance combination of beans and ground nut paste with oil which is attained from the ground nut paste through a laborious process which is ever so difficult to achieve with modern cooking utensils. The vases are meticulously painted black, a color laden with symbolism. Black represents African beauty, celebrating the richness and resilience of *Lugbara* culture.

Even with pressure coming from the effects of globalization, the status of the *Envu* has remained and it still takes center stage in many homes and families among the *Lugbara* community.

But even in that dominant space occupied by the *Envu*, there are some challenges, “stacked” shows an uneven surface with dents and cracks, this symbolizes the differences occurrent from pot to pot since no two pots can look exactly the same.

The installation has two pots visually different from the rest. One with two holes, and another giving a representation of something pouring out of the pot. This drives the point that even with the rest being in representation of normality, these represent a difference where in one case there are damaged pots which continue to be used in an improvised way.





*Figure 15: Stacked, Materials: Paper, Photo by Feni Desmond, July 30,2024*

The creation of this artwork is a true representation of its inspirational artifact. It takes the shape of the *Envu* a pot used in food preparation among the *Lugbara*. To achieve the spherical shape, I used a balloon. Several balloons had air blown into them. Newspaper was saturated with cassava starch and placed on the balloons. After several layers of paper, the shape is achieved and the balloon can then be popped and a shape similar to the *Envu* is attained. The pots as known to the *Lugbara* are of different sizes and heights, this is displayed also in the variation of the sizes. Two pieces which have symbolic meanings were crafted. One having two holes through it and the other having a representation of something pouring out from inside. The pieces were then painted with black paint and then left to dry. When dry they were stacked on top of each other to complete the installation.

Stacked draws from the *Envu* (cooking pot) an artifact that is very central to the daily operation of the *Lugbara* homestead. It replicates the spherical volume of different pots in varying sizes celebrating their beauty in simplicity as noted during the visual analysis. However, in the conceptual leap, there is an introduction of deliberate imperfections and dents that symbolize the wear of culture over a given period of time. The choice to stack them creates a column of history where each pot is a representation of a generation or tradition. The black color references fired clay of the original while unifying the pieces under one aesthetic of African beauty.

## **With Life, Yet Chained**

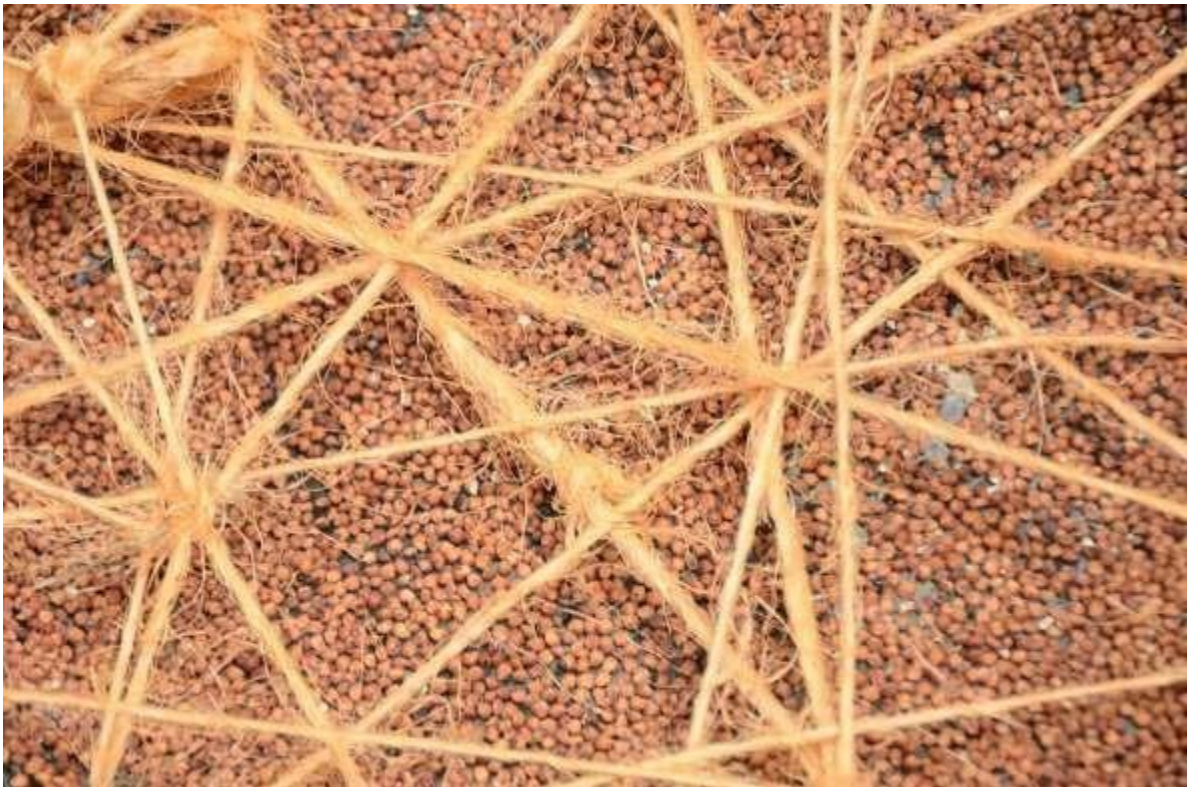
Based on the Achakala (flat basket), this sculpture engages with its narrative as a vessel for sustenance, used especially in food preparation. It replicates the flat, woven platter form. Conceptually, the baskets, which should hold grain (here represented by sorghum), are bound shut with sisal rope, rendering them incapable of performing their primary function. This represents the paradox of cultural artifacts that are still recognized (with life) but are restricted in their use by modern alternatives and changing lifestyles (yet chained). The choice of paper mache, a material that can be molded but is fragile, echoes the fragile state of such traditional knowledge. The suspended installation suggests a state of limbo, caught between past utility and an uncertain future.

Basketry is a very important part of *Lugbara* culture and the larger African culture. The uses are numerous and new ones always seem to find their way into the general usage as users use them to solve homestead food preparation challenges. The achakala, once an essential tool in *Lugbara* kitchens, embodied functionality. Its flat, woven structure cradled grains and vegetables. In this sculpture, paper mache breathes life into the *achakala's* memory. Four baskets, suspended like whispers. Each basket holds sorghum, a grain representing sustenance, continuity, and life. Yet, these grains remain untouched. The baskets, once vessels of nourishment, now hang inert. Strings, taut and binding cross over each basket. They symbolize confinement, rendering the achakala useless.

Trays, sleek and modern, have replaced the achakala as Practicality bows to aesthetics. The sculpture mourns this transition. Sisal rope, wound around the baskets, speaks of binding. It is both material and metaphor. Much of *Lugbara* material culture is under such binding and even with the brilliance of functionality and life represented by the sorghum, the artifact is rendered useless. The baskets, once utilitarian, now evoke contemplation, a bridge between generations.

This sculpture in the deepest way invites us to honor the legacy of the “Achakala” and reminds us that beauty transcends mere function and the risks that continue to dance with transformation.

As we gaze upon these suspended baskets, we become custodians of memory.





*Figure 16: With Life, Yet Chained, Materials: Paper, Photo by Feni Desmond, July 30,2024*

The creation of “With life Yet Chained” was a telling experience for me as an artist but also for the community that provided the information and understanding of the *achakala*. The use of this basket is predominantly for food preparation and measurement of food items. The input from the elders zeroed down on the fact that they are witnessing the disappearance of these baskets as people are opting for more durable and modern alternatives like plastic buckets and saucepans. The process of creating this work of art started with the real basket. A sheet of plastic wrap placed over the basket and lowered to take-up the shape of the basket. Paper mache was then added onto the basket and pressed to form the shape of the basket. After that, it was allowed to dry out in the sun. This took several days because of the thickness of the paper mache and the amount of cassava starch added in generous amounts to ensure that the outcome is strong enough. When dry I applied one layer of newspaper to create an even surface. A total of four pieces were made. When all dried up, a layer of black paint was added. Holes were drilled to thread through the sisal ropes. The ropes were threaded through is individual piece and the four were later tied to each other to complete the installation of the art work.

## **Broken Culture**

This piece synthesizes two key artifacts: the Kobi and the Envu. It is informed by narratives of resilience, such as elder Deru Holder's explanation that a cracked pot could be repurposed, not discarded (personal communication, June 21, 2020). It combines the shallow bowl shape of the Kobi with the spherical fragments of a broken Envu. It visualizes cultural fragmentation, the "broken" pieces, while suggesting preservation by containing them within a larger, vessel-like form. The use of yarn to bind the pieces is critical; it represents the act of holding culture together, a deliberate, if fragile, act of repair. The black paper mache unifies the disparate elements, stating that even in a fractured state, the culture retains its core identity and coherence.

The "Broken Culture" sculpture stands as a definite testament to the resilience and preservation efforts of the *Lugbara* people, a community whose cultural fabric has weathered storms of change and fragmentation. At first glance, the sculpture appears to be a fusion of two distinct elements: the *Kobi* (a woven basketry) and the *Envu* (a pot). These artifacts carry profound symbolism. The *Kobi*, with its intricate patterns, represents the interconnectedness of *Lugbara* culture, a tapestry woven by generations represented here by the yarn. Meanwhile, the *Envu*, a vessel for sustenance, embodies the materiality of existence. The broken pieces within the container evoke the fractures and pressures that threaten this cultural legacy.

The fusion of the *Kobi* and *Envu* symbolizes resilience. Just as the broken pieces find refuge within the container, *Lugbara* culture endures through collective efforts. Clan elders, custodians of ancestral knowledge, navigate the pitfalls and contradictions of human existence, ensuring continuity. Traditional practices, once questioned, now emerge as valuable tools for sustainable development.

In "Broken Culture," we witness the *Lugbara* commitment to conservation. The sculpture invites us to reflect on our own fractured world, where cultural heritage faces immense pressure. As we celebrate the fusion of past and present, let us recognize that preservation lies not in isolation but in collective action. The broken pieces, once scattered, find purpose within the container, a testament to the enduring spirit of *Lugbara* culture.



*Figure 17: Broken culture, Materials: Paper, Yarn, Photo by Feni Desmond, July 30,2024*

The creation of broken culture starts with the joining of two Kobi at the bottom using masking tape. The inside of the two Khobi is layered with newspaper saturated with cassava starch. The newspaper is layered in a way to maintain the shapes of the joined Kobi. Several layers are placed on top of each other to ensure that a thick body that can maintain its shape is achieved, the entire piece is then set out to dry. Two pieces that are representative of the brokenness within the culture are also made. The first one is made from the half of the Kobi and goes through the same

process whereby a Kobi is layered with a plastic bag and layers of newspaper saturated with cassava starch are placed only halfway to create the idea of a broken Kobi. This piece is also placed in the sun to dry. The second broken piece is part of a bigger *Envu* where a pot was covered with a plastic bag and layers of paper are placed over one side of it. This is also to create the impression of something broken. After several layers are placed and the body is thick enough it is placed under the sun to dry. When all the pieces had dried, they were painted with a black paint which stands for the Africanness within the work. After which, the broken pieces are placed in the bigger piece and then a string is wrapped around them through pre-drilled holes to tie everything up and complete the concept.

### **Togetherness**

Inspired by the *Adungu*, this installation focuses on its social function of fostering unity. It abstracts the instrument, reducing it to its core components of body and neck, and reorienting it vertically, a posture of defiance and presence. It leaps from a single instrument to a group, bound together by sisal ropes. This represents the collective action needed for cultural preservation. The single, thick sisal “string” on each piece is non-functional, symbolizing the last, tenuous connection to the artifacts original purpose. The use of identical black forms underscores the theme of unity, while the binding ropes visualize the strength found in solidarity. The work argues that the future of such heritage depends not on solitary artifacts, but on a communal effort to uphold them.

Togetherness is a descriptive piece inspired by the *Adungu*, a string instrument which has a wooden body covered with animal skin and a neck made of a cylindrical piece of wood and the body and neck are joined together with strings. When tension is applied to the strings, they create different pitches of sound depending on the length of the string. The *Adungu* has come to become a representation of *Lugbara* social relaxation and enjoyment. Many masters have learnt the art of creating the *Adungu*. But in the latest age, just like many of the other artifacts, we run into a stone wall of globalization and the introduction of new technologies meaning music can be stored on different devices making the need for the *Adungu* not as strong as it used to be.

Togetherness has the following components. Five individual representations of the *Adungu*, with a body, neck and string. The string is represented by a sisal rope tied. The string used in this case is symbolic because the original *Adungu* has a variety of up to six strings which vary in weight but are still very small in weight and tightly stretched. In his case the Representation of the *Adungu* is not laying down as it’s supposed to be, in a position where many *Adungu*’s are played

from. Their standing up posture is a gesture of *Lugbara* cultural actors who are making efforts to try and save the material culture especially which is on the verge of disappearance.

The sisal representing the strings brings to light a very open detail running through all the works, inability for function where the artifacts are no longer as useful as they used to be, in this case this is caused by the effects of globalization and in introduction of modern musical instruments and also music replay devices.

They are bound together with two sets of sisal in the mid-section. Those are cords representative of togetherness and unity to the cause of protection, promotion and conservation of the material culture especially.

Black color is a theme adopted for this research because it breeds a sense of simplicity and “Africanness” of these artworks and is beautiful in its own light.

In conclusion, there is need for togetherness in the fight against the disappearance of *Lugbara* artifacts and material culture of any kind as culture should be protected in all possible ways because it is important in influencing the development of a given society.





*Figure 18: Togetherness, Materials: Paper, Sisal, Photo by Feni Desmond, July 30,2024*

Togetherness is one of the more prominent works of this research, its creation brought about a close and intimate encounter with *Lugbara* artifacts especially the *Adungu*, a musical instrument that the *Lugbara* have been using for Generations. I started by sketching parts of the *Adungu* and understanding it better, I eliminated the different strings and left one string for each other this is

because a single string is a representation of the last line of defense against the loss and disappearance of our culture. I started with bottles that acted as the shape of the *Adungu* base and I added to it a long tube, this tube acted as the neck of the *Adungu*, I covered the outer part of the piece with newspaper saturated with customer starch, when the layer of newspapers was able to maintain structural integrity, I then took the pieces that were five in number outside to dry. When the pieces were dry, a black coat of paint was applied on to them. This still puts into perspective the Africanness of this piece. Strings of sisal were then added in a symbolic manner one string was placed on each of the pieces and they roll of sisal was rolled at the extreme tip. After each piece had the size of string placed onto it, the five pieces were bound together and created a complete installation called togetherness.

### **All of Us**

This relief work is a combination, inspired by the collective selection of artifacts (*Envu*, *Luku*, *Okelea*, *Oni*, *Adungu*, *Kobi*) that constitute a functional *Lugbara* homestead. It integrates the specific narrative that these objects, predominantly used by women, form the material backbone of daily life and family sustenance. It collages recognizable silhouettes and textures of these artifacts into a cohesive, if crowded, tableau. It leaps from individual functions to a statement on holistic cultural identity. The “all” in the title insists that preservation efforts must be inclusive, not selective. The damaged, peeling sections of the paper-on-board medium are not flaws but intentional metaphors for the wear and erosion this holistic culture faces, making the vulnerability of the material part of the message.

All of us is a highbred of all the selected artworks for this study. Artifacts in a given society do not operate independently but in unity with each other is where they make a united homestead. The artifacts featured include the *Envu* (Ceramic pot), the *Luku* (which is a baby cover), the *Okelea* (drinking gourd), the *Oni* (House cow dung resurfacing stone), the *Adungu* (Stringed musical instrument) and the *Kobi* (which is a winnowing shovel).

To have a properly functional homestead among the *Lugbara*, the unity must be in having these. Many of them are so biased towards the feminine gender because most of the work done in the *Lugbara* community is done by women.

Looking closely one can identify a pot on fire, a *Luku* with a face inside representing a child. The neck of an *Adungu* on the extreme left. A pot with fire under it. This speaks to the existence of life because where there is food there is life. On the right hand side we can see the stone used for house resurfacing with cow dung. The last artifact represented is the drinking gourd.

All these artifacts represent a given aspect of *Lugbara* society and should be equally protected yet there is a tendency to choose and pick which ones will be given attention leaving others to disappear.

The artwork shows damages at the bottom. The artist intentionally left these to display the limitations and challenges that come with using these kinds of materials. Paper on board to create a relief sculpture.





*Figure 19: All of Us, Materials: Painted Paper on board, Photo by Feni Desmond, July 30, 2024*

### **Sinking in Division**

This triptych is inspired by the Luku and the Adungu, artifacts representing nurture and community. The left panel abstracts the Luku's protective curve, the right panel depicts a fractured Adungu neck with a broken string, and the central panel is a void. Conceptually, it visualizes the "division" caused by cultural erosion. The sinking forms symbolize disappearance, while the empty central panel physically represents the growing gap in cultural transmission between generations. The monochromatic black palette creates a unified field of mourning. The use of low-relief paper mache on board gives the artifacts a ghostly, bas-relief quality, as if they are becoming flat historical inscriptions rather than living, three-dimensional presences.

The artwork titled "Sinking in Division" presents a narrative through its three relief sculptures. Each piece symbolizes a facet of African culture, weaving together themes of heritage, separation, and loss.

The *Luku*, a woven *Lugbara* artifact, holds deep cultural meaning. It serves as a protective covering for babies, shielding them from rain and harsh sunlight. The mother's act of placing the

baby on her back and enveloping them with the *Luku* signifies care, connection, and tradition. This affirms the fact that many people among the *Lugbara* community have the love for these artifacts.

However, the leftmost relief sculpture portrays the *Luku* abstractly. Its form suggests fragmentation, perhaps echoing the fading relevance of this artifact. The *Luku*, once integral to *Lugbara* life, now faces the threat of disappearance.

The *Adungu*, a stringed musical instrument, resonates with communal gatherings, storytelling, and celebration. Its melodic tones evoke memories of shared experiences and cultural continuity.

The rightmost relief sculpture hints at the *Adungu*'s presence. Yet, like the *Luku*, the *Adungu* grapples with division and fading resonance. The string on the *Adungu* is only one, and even that one is broken in half meaning there is no functionality for it at all.

The central piece, intentionally left empty, represents separation. The gap between the *Luku* and *Adungu* sculptures mirrors the widening chasm between cultural artifacts and contemporary realities. And if the community doesn't wake up to bridge that gap then there is an expectation that in the coming years, many of these artifacts will disappear.

*Sinking in Division*, relates to sense of urgency. The message transcends the physical sculptures, it speaks to the impermanence of cultural legacies. We must bridge the gap, reweave the threads of tradition, and honor all artifacts and situate them rightfully in their space in the community.

In conclusion, *Sinking in Division* serves as a reminder: Our heritage is not static; it evolves, adapts, and sometimes slips away. Let us cherish and safeguard these artifacts, weaving them into our present and future narratives.





*Figure 20: Sinking in Division, Materials: Paper on board, Photo by Feni Desmond, July 30,2024*

Sinking in division is a simple and yet precise piece that speaks a lot about African heritage and *Lugbara* culture in this context right now. It is important to note that this piece is so dear to me as an artist, and its creation was simple, just like *Lugbara* artifacts, but also just like all the artifacts that have featured within this research. This piece starts with three boards, and two of them are of the same size. One is a bit smaller, and it is in the middle. And this one in the middle is there to show division because it is clearly a rectangular piece much longer than the other two on either side, and it is dividing both of them. So I started with three pieces, and each of them had a pepper mache mixture placed onto them and formulated to get the shapes on the right-hand the *Adungu* and on the left-hand side of the *Envu*. The middle piece is simply a divider to show how two concepts are true.

One is that the *Adungu* and other artifacts among the *Lugbara* community are disappearing. On the right-hand side is the *Adungu*, which in itself is represented with a deficiency because the string is broken, and the *Adungu* itself is not full, and it shows it is sinking. On the left-hand side, there is the *Luku*, and the *Kobi*, you can also see that they are barely appearing from under. That shows that our culture is disappearing, and we need to do as much as we can to conserve it, to extend its life, because culture has a significant position in the development of our communities.

After applying the pepper mache on these boards, they were left to dry, and once they were already dry, a coat of black paint was applied onto them, and the installation at work was complete."

### **Understanding Myself**

Derived from the *Adungu*, this sculpture engages with the need for introspection in cultural preservation. It isolates and reconfigures the instrument's two parts. The body becomes a base, and the neck curves back inward to penetrate its own form. It leaps from an outward-facing instrument of communal music to an inward-facing metaphor for self-reflection. The thick, wound sisal that envelops the neck represents the complex, tangled process of understanding one's own cultural identity. The choice of paper mache, which requires building from the inside out on an armature, mirrors the internal process of constructing self-knowledge.

Understanding myself is a simple piece inspired by the *Adungu*. Two elements of the *Adungu* - the base of the *Adungu* and the neck of the *Adungu*. And it starts off with a base that is covered with paper that has been saturated with cassava starch. And once this base is covered, it was set out to dry under the sun, and once it was dry, a coat of black paint was applied onto it. After the application of this paint, metallic rods were placed a quarter from the top and bent inwards towards the bottom. These metal rods were covered with a generous amount of sisal, which is representative of the strings that are always connected to the neck of the *Adungu*, and were wound into a thick cord.

This, of course, is representative of the fact that we as people in society need to look inwards into ourselves for solutions to problems that come in place as far as our culture is concerned. This can be the disappearance and the substitution of our culture for different cultures. And the fact that our culture is important to us, but also carries aesthetic merit, it is important that we ourselves find solutions for our challenges as far as culture is concerned.



*Figure 21: Understanding Myself, Materials: Paper and Sisal, Photo by Feni Desmond, July 30,2024*

Understanding myself is an artwork that is inspired by the *Adungu*. In the deepest stretch of the imagination, it's hard to say that one has complete understanding of anything or in this case an artifact or group of artifacts. Every single day, there is an understanding that is newly generated.

“Understanding myself” consists of a sculpture that is made of two parts, the body and the neck as seen on the *Adungu*. However, in this case the neck is curved back into the body. This symbolizes inward looking for solutions and ways towards material cultural promotion and conservation.

The neck, is wrapped with sisal rope in a thick and repetitive way. Even though this refers to earlier understanding that it makes the instrument unplayable, it also means there is a lot that still needs to be discovered and understood.

The piece also takes an upright posture this is characteristic of firmness and strength, traits that *Lugbara* material culture takes to detail.

### **Tied but Rising**

This work takes the Okelea (drinking gourd) as its source of inspiration, an artifact linked to sustenance and journey. Formally, it emphasizes the gourd's elongated neck, stretching it vertically to signify aspiration and growth. Conceptually, it captures the paradox of contemporary cultural existence. The form “rises” with ambition and potential, yet it is tightly “tied” and constrained by the sisal ropes of globalization, modernization, and neglect. The relief format, with the form emerging from the board, suggests a struggle for emergence. The black paper mache signifies a rooted African identity, while the binding sisal represents the external and internal forces that simultaneously anchor and stifle cultural expression and evolution.

Tied but rising is yet another relief sculpture created in this research, and it is inspired by the drinking gourd of the *Lugbara* people. It starts off as a long piece of board, which I decided to create a relief sculpture from, and is made up of three parts, in this case. One is the board, second is the paper mache, and the sisal rope that is holding everything together. So, after getting my board, I got paper mache mixture with cassava starch and applied it onto the board to get the shape of a gourd, which in this instance is elongated because that is significant - it shows ambition, it shows reach.

After creating the shape using the paper mache on the board, it was allowed to dry. When it dried, a coat of black paint was applied onto it and also left to dry. After it dried, I wound sisal around the piece to complete the concept about constraints and challenges that are caused by globalization

and industrialization towards *Lugbara* artifacts exist, and it is up to us to protect culture and heritage with the ambition and reach that we have in understanding the use of these artifacts.



*Figure 22: Tied but Rising, Materials: Paper on Board and Sisal, Photo by Feni Desmond, July 30,2024*

The artwork “*Tied but Rising*” features a *Lugbara* drinking gourd, emerging from the ground yet bound by sisal ropes. While globalization and industrialization present challenges, the elongated neck of the gourd symbolizes growth and resilience. Material artifacts reflect their history, beliefs, and interactions with the environment. The “Tied but Rising” artwork encapsulates these elements, inviting us to explore its deeper meanings.

The central focus of the artwork is a drinking gourd a vessel traditionally used for carrying water, milk, or other liquids. The gourd appears to rise from the ground, defying gravity. However, it remains tethered by sisal ropes wound around its body. The elongated neck of the gourd extends upward, emphasizing growth and aspiration.

The rising gourd symbolizes emergence the *Lugbara* culture’s ability to persist and adapt despite external pressures.

The sisal ropes represent constraints, challenges posed by globalization and industrialization. These forces threaten traditional practices and values.

The elongated neck signifies reach and ambition. It suggests that material culture can transcend boundaries and connect across different spaces. Despite being tied down, the gourd’s upward stretch embodies resilience and the desire for growth.

Material culture encompasses tangible artifacts, rituals, and practices. It reflects a community’s collective memory and identity. Globalization introduces new influences, technologies, and consumer goods. The sisal ropes represent these external forces binding the *Lugbara* culture. The gourd artifact connects the *Lugbara* community across generations. It serves as a tangible link to their past.

The tension between emergence and constraint resonates with mental health struggles. Individuals face external pressures while striving for growth. The gourd becomes a metaphor for resilience and coping mechanisms. The “*Tied but Rising*” artwork invites to contemplate the delicate balance between tradition and progress. As we analyze its symbolism, we recognize the *Lugbara* people’s determination to rise above challenges.

## **Protection**

Inspired by the Osu (arrow), this piece engages with the artifact’s primary narrative of defense and hunting. It abandons the arrow’s sleek, aerodynamic efficiency for warped, blunted, and bulky forms. The arrows, meant to protect, are themselves deformed and ineffective, symbolizing

the failure of traditional mechanisms to safeguard culture in the modern era. The sesame seeds scattered on the board represent the “livelihood” and community these arrows were meant to protect, now exposed and vulnerable. The use of paper mache for the arrowheads highlights their impotence as they are symbols of protection made from a substance associated with fragility.

The artwork 'Protection' is inspired by the *Lugbara* bow and arrow, but mostly the arrow. The arrow stands a lot for protection and hunting, but in this case, I chose to take the path of protection. And in the context of *Lugbara* artifacts, there is consensus that there is a need to protect *Lugbara* artifacts and cultural heritage generally. This piece starts off with sketches of arrows, different types of arrows for protection, for hunting, however, the concept here is that we have failed to protect our cultural heritage enough, hence its destruction and its disappearance. In this case, the arrows are warped, they are in different shapes, shapes that are far from the true nature and form of the arrows as we know them. And this piece starts with five pieces of board, it being a relief sculpture, and on the five pieces of board are different shapes of the warped and deformed arrowheads in their different formats. And these arrowheads are supposed to be protecting the livelihood and the culture and heritage of the *Lugbara* people. Below on the boards themselves, is Millet, which is representative of the food and livelihood of the *Lugbara* people.

The piece started by cutting these boards into shape and creating the arrow deformed shapes with paper mache. Once these shapes were dry, they pieces were painted black, and with a generous application of wood glue onto the board area that was left, Simsim seeds were scattered generously to ensure that the entire board is covered, hence completing the installation.





*Figure 23: Protection, Materials: Paper on Board and Sesame Seeds, Photo by Feni Desmond, July 30, 2024*

The artwork “*Protection*” serves as a powerful metaphor for cultural preservation within the context of the *Lugbara* tribe. Inspired by traditional hunting arrows, the piece defies convention by emphasizing bulkiness over streamlined forms. The black arrowheads, once symbols of defense, now stand as reminders of African beauty and resilience. Sesame seeds, representing livelihood, surround the arrows, underscoring their purpose. The artwork “*Protection*” encapsulates the essence of material culture and the urgency to safeguard it. By reimagining traditional *Lugbara* hunting arrows, the artist invites us to explore themes of heritage, resilience, and the delicate balance between preservation and adaptation.

**Streamlined vs. Bulky:** Traditionally, *Lugbara* arrows were sleek and efficient. In “*Protection*,” the arrowheads appear bulkier and deformed, emphasizing their inability to fulfill their original purpose. This distortion mirrors the challenges faced by cultural artifacts in a changing world.

Despite their altered form, the black arrowheads exude beauty. The choice of color celebrates African aesthetics. Just as the arrows endure, so does the cultural identity they represent.

Sesame seeds, randomly scattered around the arrowheads, symbolize livelihood. They evoke sustenance, growth, and interconnectedness. The arrows were once protectors of livelihood, now, they themselves need protection. Sesame seeds are staples in African cuisine. Their presence reinforces the idea that cultural heritage sustains communities. Like seeds, traditions must be

nurtured to thrive. “*Protection*” underscores the tangible aspect of culture. Material artifacts carry stories, memories, and identity. We continue to challenge ourselves to recognize their fragility and value. “*Protection*” transcends its physical form. It invites us to protect not only artifacts but also the intangible threads that bind us to our past.

### **Bondage**

Based on basketry forms like the Achakala and Kobi, this installation responds to the narrative of these artifacts as vessels of everyday life now being replaced. It replicates the woven basket shape but unifies them through a monochrome black finish and physical binding. It visualizes the “bondage” of tradition and how cultural artifacts can be perceived as constraints in a modernizing world, and how they are literally bound together in a shared fate of redundancy. The tough sisal lock and the missing segment of one basket emphasize the permanence and loss associated with this state. The paper mache medium, shaped from a mold of an actual basket, creates an accurate yet hollow replica, speaking to the preservation of form without the original function.

The sculpture “Bondage” intricately weaves together the past and the present, drawing from the basketry traditions of the *Lugbara* culture. Through three black paper baskets ensnared by a sisal rope, there is a confrontation of the complexities of material culture. “Bondage” stands at the crossroads of tradition and modernity. By juxtaposing ancient basketry techniques with contemporary materials, we explore the tensions surrounding cultural preservation and adaptation.

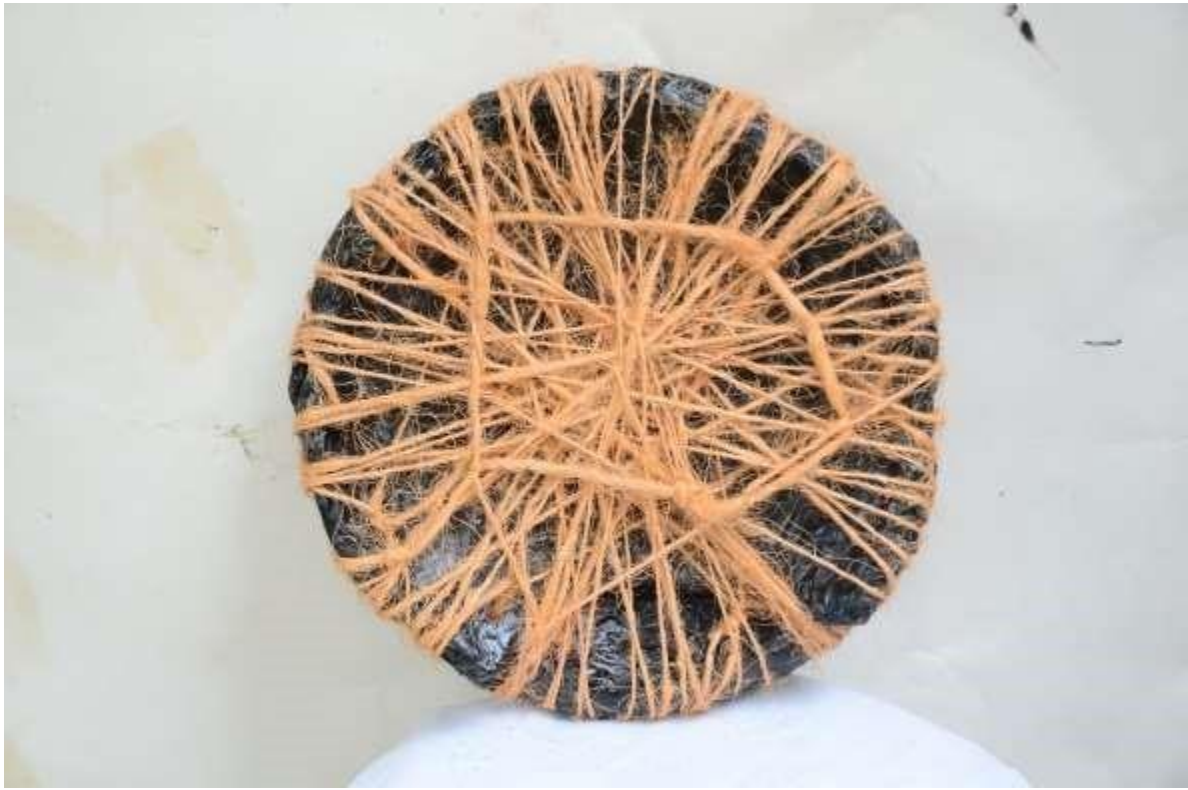
The transition from natural fibers to paper reflects societal shifts. The sisal rope, once organic, now binds the paper baskets, an allegory for the struggle between heritage and progress.

Past: Each basket represents a different era, the ancestral, the colonial, and the contemporary. Their entanglement signifies the interwoven threads of time. Present: The black paint symbolizes both resilience and fading memory. The baskets, once functional, now serve as artifacts frozen in time. Future: The tough lock hints at the challenges faced by cultural preservationists. The sisal rope, tightly wound, restricts movement. It mirrors societal pressures that hinder the promotion of traditional practices. The tension between the rope and the fragile paper baskets embodies the struggle to balance heritage with innovation.

Stagnation: The demonization lies in stagnation, the perception that clinging to tradition impedes progress. As people seek modern alternatives, traditional crafts face marginalization. The demonization affects their visibility and survival. Advocacy for material culture involves storytelling, education, and exhibitions. “Bondage” itself becomes a promotional tool and a

conversation starter. Cultural centers, and community engagement play vital roles. The tough lock reminds us of the urgency to conserve before it rusts shut.

*“Bondage”* challenges us to untangle the threads of heritage, acknowledging both demons and defenders. As we navigate the delicate balance, let us honor the past while embracing the future.





*Figure 24: Bondage, Materials: Paper on Board and Sisal rope, Photo by Feni Desmond, July 30,2024*

The artwork *Bondage* started with baskets that were lined with plastic wrap, and inside the plastic wrap was a paper mache mixture which was pressed to create the shape of a basket. This piece featured four pieces, and all of them were done at the same time. One of the pieces had part of it taken out to signify the difference and also the wear and tear between the different artifacts and in their use amongst the *Lugbara* people. When the paper mache dried, it was treated to a coat of black paint. After the paint dried, the four pieces of basket replicas were bound together and tied with a generous amount of sisal rope. This signifies a level and degree of bondage. This means that we, the people that understand the importance of culture and heritage to the development of our society, need to take the front line in the preservation and extension of our culture and our heritage.

## **Bright Future**

This sculpture re-interprets the *Luku* (baby cover), engaging with its core narrative of protection and nurture for the next generation, as described by Rodha Sandru (personal communication, October 3, 2019). It deconstructs the *Luku*'s woven, shield-like form into an open that suggests both shelter and a vessel. The leap is one of hopeful transformation, from a cover that protects from the elements to an open vessel that nurtures new growth within it, symbolized by the cluster of flowers. The use of a metal armature and paper mache combines strength and fragility, mirroring the hopeful yet precarious task of fostering cultural renewal. The flowers blooming from the hole represent the potential for a vibrant future if culture is actively cultivated as a living entity.

“Bright Future” is a captivating representation of cultural resilience and protection, drawing inspiration from the *Luku*, an essential artifact in *Lugbara* tradition. The *Luku*, a cherished artifact among the *Lugbara* people, serves a practical purpose: shielding children from the elements. When mothers carry their infants on their backs, the *Luku* provides shelter from rain and harsh sunlight. This simple yet vital object embodies maternal care, safeguarding the vulnerable.

“Bright Future” takes the *Luku* as its muse. The artist deconstructs the original form, breaking it down into its essential elements. The result is a sculpture that retains the essence of protection while inviting reinterpretation. The reconstructed object hints at the *Luku*'s original purpose, but it also emphasizes its utilitarian function. The most poignant aspect of “Bright Future” lies within the hole: a cluster of delicate multi-colored flowers. These blossoms emerge from the sculpture's core, defying confinement. They represent resilience, growth, and cultural continuity. Despite challenges posed by modernization and globalization, *Lugbara* material culture persists, ready to bloom anew.





*Figure 25: Bright Future, Materials: Paper, Metal Armature, Photo by Feni Desmond, July 30,2024*

"Bright Future" is an artwork inspired by the *Luku* of the *Lugbara* people, and it starts off with an armature made from steel and chicken wire. This armature comes from sketches developed to add

the components of a Luku, which is shelter and covering, together, and when the panels of the Luku are disassembled and put together, you come up with the shape as shown in "Bright Future".

And after the armature is made, I added layers of newspaper saturated with cassava starch to create one whole object, and a hole was left into this artwork where flowers are going to be placed. After the piece dried under the sun for a couple of days, it was painted, and when the paint was dry, the artwork was complete, only waiting for flowers to be placed at the hole, signifying a new birth and a bright future that is going to blossom just as these flowers have done.

### **Unity, The Final Push**

Drawing from the Adungu, this installation focuses on its potential as a symbol of collective, last-ditch effort. Formally, it creates a battalion of upright, simplified Adungu forms, their necks straightened into assertive verticals. It moves from a single musical instrument to a mobilized assembly, bound together for a common cause, the "final push" for preservation. The sisal ropes that bind them are not restraints but unifying ligaments, representing unified action. The use of found bottles as armatures inside the paper mache connects the work to contemporary waste and resourcefulness, grounding the cultural argument in the present-day reality of the community.

"*Unity, The Final Push*" emerges from the rich cultural heritage of the *Lugbara*, drawing inspiration from the *Adungu*, a traditional stringed instrument. The *Adungu*, an arched harp, resonates with the soul of *Lugbara* culture. Crafted from a hollowed wooden slab and covered in leather, it produces harmonious melodies. Its strings, attached to a curved neck, evoke both tradition and creativity. The tuning pegs ensure each note is in perfect harmony, a metaphor for unity. "*Unity, The Final Push*" deconstructs the *Adungu*, reshaping its form while retaining its essence. The straight neck symbolizes a departure from the curved tradition. It signifies a critical juncture, an urgent call to reevaluate our understanding of *Lugbara* material culture.

The artwork comprises ten interconnected pieces. Which represents a collective responsibility, the shared duty to safeguard our heritage. Just as the *Adungu*'s strings resonate together, we must unite to protect our culture from fading into oblivion.

At the artwork's core lies a cluster of flowers. These blossoms signify growth, resilience, and an age of cultural bloom. Despite adversity, our traditions can flourish if nurtured. The flowers remind us that even desperate times can yield renewal. Wrapped around the necks of the artwork, sisal twine conveys urgency. The *Adungu*, once played with ease, now faces disruption.

Globalization encroaches, threatening our cultural fabric. We must act decisively, giving culture a fighting chance.



*Figure 26: Unity, the Final Push, Materials: Paper, Used Bottles, Sisal Rope. Photo by Feni Desmond, July 30, 2024*

"Unity to the Final Push" is an artwork that completes the body of work produced for the purpose of this research, and it is inspired by the *Adungu*, a stringed *Lugbara* musical instrument. To create this artwork, I started with a bottle as the base and pipes that were fastened onto these bottles with tape, and a layer of cassava starch saturated newspaper was added onto these pieces. When the newspaper addition was sufficient, they were put into the sun to dry. When dry, a layer of black paint was applied onto them, and strings were laced at the top of these pieces. The base

and the neck are representative of the base and neck of the *Adungu* musical instrument. In this case, the *Adungu* always lies flat down onto the ground, but here I chose to make it upright because in the context of the final push, there is a need for us and for the community to stand upright and tackle the issue of cultural erosion and disappearance of material artifacts.

After lacing the strings at the top, all the pieces were bound together to complete an installation of the artwork.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Conclusion

This research set out to explore the inspirational merit of *Lugbara* artifacts and how these can be exploited for sculptural expression. It has highlighted their cultural significance and the stories they tell about identity and heritage. From the outset, the goal was to delve into the rich material culture of the *Lugbara* people, examining how this culture has been inherited and transformed over time, particularly in the face of modernization and globalization and how it can inspire the creation of sculpture that extends the life and narratives surrounding *Lugbara* artifacts.

The *Lugbara* people possess a wealth of cultural material that has been both preserved and altered by the forces of modernity. Despite these changes, many have shown remarkable resilience. These artifacts, originally designed and constructed as utilitarian objects, have transcended their functional purposes to become significant art forms in their own right. They serve as motifs for the production of modern art that is not only aesthetically pleasing but also communicative, reflective, and contemplative. Through this research, it has become evident that *Lugbara* artifacts offer a unique visual vocabulary that resonates with contemporary concerns. These works address issues of unity and division, reflecting the struggles and aspirations of the present generation. In a world where Africans often face challenges in gaining recognition, these artifacts celebrate African beauty and fortitude. The emphasis on black as a color in these artworks serves as a powerful reminder of beauty and identity, countering the pervasive narratives that have led some to bleach their skins in an attempt to conform to different standards of beauty.

The artworks inspired by *Lugbara* artifacts help us reflect on our history and inheritance. They provide a means to engage with the past while addressing contemporary issues. For instance, pieces that highlight themes of unity and resilience offer a visual commentary on the importance of cultural pride and solidarity. These works not only celebrate the diversity of *Lugbara* culture but also underscore its role as a unifier of communities and a source of wisdom. Moreover, this research underscores the dynamic nature of culture. It demonstrates that culture cannot remain static; it must evolve and adapt to changing circumstances. Even rural communities are not immune to the influences of modernity. *Lugbara* artifacts, therefore, cannot remain impervious to modern developments. The challenge lies in ensuring that these cultural treasures are not overshadowed or diminished by the overwhelming dominance of external influences.

In conclusion, this research has shown that the stories and traditions of the *Lugbara* people, as expressed through their artifacts, continue to hold relevance and significance today. By engaging

with these artifacts and the culture they represent, we gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of human experience and the importance of preserving cultural diversity for future generations. The evolution of *Lugbara* artifacts into contemporary art forms is a testament to the adaptability and resilience of culture. It highlights the need to celebrate and acknowledge the rich cultural heritage of the *Lugbara* people as a source of pride, unity, and wisdom. This research is a call to preserve and promote cultural heritage, ensuring that it continues to inspire and inform future artistic expressions.

## **5.2 Recommendations**

This study of *Lugbara* artifacts has revealed their profound ability to inspire sculptural expression, serving not only as artistic representations but also as vital cultural symbols. Based on the findings of this research, three key recommendations are proposed: the establishment of a cultural centre, the expansion of research on additional artifacts, and an investigation into the interaction of these artifacts with the community and their sustainability.

### **5.2.1 Establishment of a Cultural Centre**

The creation of a dedicated cultural centre focused on *Lugbara* artifacts is essential. This centre would serve multiple purposes: acting as a repository for artifacts, providing a space for public exhibitions, and facilitating educational programs about *Lugbara* culture. A systematic catalogue and thorough documentation of these artifacts should be a priority. Proper documentation allows for better preservation and accessibility for both researchers and the public. Additionally, the cultural centre could host workshops and collaborative projects that encourage local artists to draw inspiration from traditional forms. This approach would foster a vibrant cultural exchange that honours the past while nurturing contemporary artistic practices.

### **5.2.2 Expanding Research on *Lugbara* Artifacts**

Secondly, it is crucial to conduct further research on other *Lugbara* artifacts that were not covered in this study. The richness of *Lugbara* culture is vast, and exploring additional artifacts could yield insights into their artistic, historical, and social significance. This expanded research could involve collaborations with local historians, artisans, and anthropologists, creating a more comprehensive understanding of how these artifacts have evolved over time. Engaging local communities in this research will provide valuable perspectives and ensure that the documentation process respects and reflects their heritage.

### **5.2.3 Investigating Community Interaction and Sustainability**

Lastly, future researchers should focus on the interaction between *Lugbara* artifacts and the community. Understanding how these artifacts are integrated into daily life and their role in contemporary cultural practices is crucial for assessing their relevance and sustainability. Furthermore, examining the current impact of these artifacts on the lives of the *Lugbara* people can provide insights into their socio-economic and cultural significance. This knowledge will not only enrich academic discourse but also inform policy-making aimed at preserving and promoting *Lugbara* culture in a sustainable manner.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Interview Guide

What is the origin of the *Lugbara*?

What are the artifacts used in the *Lugbara* community?

Do the artifacts have any underlying stories and tales about them?

How are they made?

What tools are used in the process of their production?

What is the specific use of the artifacts mentioned?

Are they still being widely used?

### Appendix B: List of Respondents

<b>Name</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Place of Interview</b>
Agofe Baba Jason Avutia	15 <sup>th</sup> June 2020	Mvara, Arua District
Samuel N Dradiku	3 <sup>rd</sup> October 2019	Ambala Village Arua District.
Obiale Godfrey	2 <sup>nd</sup> January 2020	Kyaliwajjala, Kampala District.
Rodha Sandru	3 <sup>rd</sup> October 2019	Ambala Village, Arua District.
Richard Candia	10 <sup>th</sup> May 2022	Ambala Village, Arua District.
Malembe Alfred	21 <sup>st</sup> June 2020	Ondoliya, Opima, Democratic Republic of Congo.
Deru Holder	21 <sup>st</sup> June 2020	Ambala Village, Arua District.
Philiam Cema	30 <sup>th</sup> June 2020	Katrini, Terego District.