

Original Research

## **Practical Demonstration and Documentation of Selected Decorative Techniques In Leatherwork for Teaching and Learning In Senior High Schools**

**Gideon Larbi, Kwabena<sup>1\*</sup>, Asubonteng<sup>3</sup>, Eric Appau Asante<sup>2</sup>, Kwame Owusu Fordjour<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Department of Creative Arts, Presbyterian College of Education, Akropong-Akuapem, Ghana.

<sup>2</sup> Department of Educational Innovations, Faculty of Arts, CABE, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana.

<sup>3</sup> Department of Indigenous Art and Technology, Faculty of Art, CABE, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana.

Correspondence should be addressed to Gideon Larbi, Kwabena: [Gidlab1985@gmail.com](mailto:Gidlab1985@gmail.com)

**Article No:** 020 | **Accepted:** 26 June 2026 | **Published:** 10 July 2026

**Abstract:** The study sought to practically demonstrate and document the production processes involved in the execution of selected decorative techniques requisite for teaching and learning Leatherwork in Senior High Schools (SHS). It has been observed that due to inadequate teaching and learning resources, such as demonstrational books, tools/equipment, both teachers and students find challenges in executing decorative techniques relevant in leather artifact production. Visits to some Senior High Schools ascertain that there is a lack of confidence on the part of both instructors and learners in delivering some common key techniques which facilitate practical pedagogies in the study of Leatherwork in most Visual Art Departments in Ghanaian schools, and this makes both students and teachers struggle in acquisition of some imparted knowledge and skills. This study, therefore, set out to take action to avert the situation. Studio-based research approaches were employed to practically demonstrate selected Leatherwork techniques to guide students in practical studies. With pictorial support, the step-by-step procedures in executing each technique were documented as a pedagogical resource. The study achieved its aim successfully and concluded that to attain better desirable design patterns and aesthetic value, the execution of decorative techniques should be performed on carefully selected leathers with surfaces devoid of defects and distortions. Therefore, full-grain leathers with bright surfaces are recommended as the best choice for rendering decorative techniques. Again, the researchers recommend and encourage both teachers and students to adopt the documented decorative techniques to support practical pedagogy in their Senior High Schools.

**Keywords:** Documentation, Decorative Techniques, Practical Teaching and Learning, Leatherwork

---

## 1. 1 INTRODUCTION

Leatherwork is a Visual Art subject encompassing all artistic activities that culminate in the fabrication of two-dimensional (2D) and three-dimensional (3D) forms at the Senior High School level in Ghana (Teaching syllabus, 2010 edition). Nemett (1992) reveals that, two-dimensional (2D) art form is concerned with work which is done mainly on flat surfaces; it has length and breadth but not depth. Three-dimensional (3D) on the other hand is used in relation to work which is in the round and has height, length, and width. As stated in the Ministry of Education Teaching Syllabus (2008 edition), Leatherwork is classified as Three-dimensional (3D) art form, and the main goal of studying Leatherwork is to build good manipulation abilities when using tools and materials to produce diverse creative artifacts. As a result, Leatherwork encourages students to be creative. The practical content of the Leatherwork subject is expected to equip students with the practical skills that they will need to become practitioners, according to the Teaching Syllabus (2008 edition). The information and technical skills they gain from the course is intended to assist students in working as self-employed professionals or entrepreneurs in the field of art if they are unable to continue their studies beyond SHS. Studies have shown that most Leatherwork beginners at various stages or classes in Senior High School cannot exhibit most of the decorative techniques in the subject which should have been the introductory point of acquiring practical skills and competencies in executing basics to complex leather artifacts.

Again, empirical studies reveal that many graduates of SHS Visual Art programs, including Leatherwork, find it difficult to perform a lot of the basic techniques emphasized in the curriculum, Boadi (2002). The problem, according to Boahin (2008), stems from the lack of books and documented practical information for both students and teachers to read and be guided to meet the basic curricular requirements of studio activities for skills development. The situation is affecting students in their confidence building process in the practice of Leatherwork, and consequently impeding their performance in both school and West African Senior Secondary School Certificate Examinations. Observations of the students' practical sessions have showed that they lack the requisite expertise in the execution of some key decorative techniques in Leatherwork. The researchers also observed that although these techniques are extensive, and are often used in the production of leather artifacts, there is relatively little documentations which practically demonstrate to students in a step-step manner for pedagogical purpose of knowledge and skills acquisition (Asubonteng, 2010). This study has therefore made frantic effort to document practical demonstration of the procedures involved in executing various decorative techniques in Leatherwork to support teaching and learning in the subject in schools.

## **1.2. Purpose for the Introduction of Leatherwork Education in Ghana**

A society's significance is determined by its Visual Arts creation. Art works can also be used to identify societies. To foster pride and patriotism among Ghana's youth, it is critical that their education include opportunities for them to learn about the socio-economic, cultural and aesthetic values of indigenous Leatherwork, which is part of the school curriculum. As a result, the SHS Leatherwork Curriculum was created with the goal of diversifying the local leather industry so that students studying the subject can contribute to the reduction of poverty in the country by acquiring the right competencies leading to self-employment. According to the Teaching Syllabus (2010 edition), the SHS Leatherwork Program was intended to promote students' creative and problem-solving abilities so that they can contribute their fair share to national growth. The premise is that doing Leatherwork activities allows students to think, act, and feel creatively while manipulating various art materials. Visual Art which Leatherwork is an aspect was introduced into the Ghanaian School Curriculum to provide students with adequate basic knowledge and skills for further education, as well as to prepare them for self-employment or apprenticeship for students who were unable to continue their education at the SHS (Evans-Solomon & Opoku-Asare, 2011). Leatherwork has helped several countries to better their socio-economic standings and people's quality of life (NaCCA, 2010). The combined abilities of Leatherwork, Science, and Technology, according to the syllabus, strengthens Ghana's survival through socio-economic progress as a country.

In order to contribute effectively to industry, social well-being, and knowledge of Ghana's culture and history, it is vital to support young people in developing their creative talents and capacities through the proper educational process. According to Edusei (2004), the basic understanding of incorporating Leatherwork into the school curriculum is for an integrative effect on the personalities of those who study the subjects, owing to the subject's unique learning processes, which include avenues for exercises that aid the students' mental, spiritual, and physical faculties' development. He further postulates that art in general foster individual' intuitive and subjective thinking abilities, which are highly relevant and essential skills in this age of automation and computerization. Art can also be used as a form of therapy to aid in the treatment of psychological issues that children face.

## **1.2 Concept of Decorative Techniques in Leatherwork Studies**

Decoration, in its broadest sense, refers to the process of making something more appealing, as well as the items that are used to make something more aesthetically pleasing. Decoration refers to the 'dressing' of a room or interior space in the construction sector. It is also known as 'interior decoration' or 'decor,' and it refers to the aesthetics of a place, including its furniture, furnishings, surface finishes, lighting, and other elements. It usually excludes the space's geometry, wall placement, and other factors. The purpose of decoration is to make the place more visually beautiful and functionally beneficial for the occupants, but it can also take into account larger contextual factors like fashion. In Leatherwork the term decoration is the means or process through which the appearance of an artwork is enhanced or made more attractive (Adom, 2016). Decorative techniques are ornaments or

designs that are made on leather products to enhance their beauty (Madakena, 2015). They are purposely made to add beauty to leather products. They come in various styles and may be made on the leather before assemblage or after. Kabutey (2013) opines those decorative techniques are creative ideas mainly executed on the surfaces of leather or leather artifacts purposely for aesthetics and joining. According to the Leatherwork Syllabus (2010), the techniques in Leatherwork decorations includes Incision, Dyeing, Painting, Appliqué, Tooling, Embossing, Under-laying, Braiding, Scorching, Patch work etc. Adom (2016), postulates that, there are several ways of decorating leather items. Some of the decorative techniques usually used for leather items include: Tooling: outline, Dyeing (dyes/ink, local dyes), Marbling-Tie and Dye, Printing, Dabbing, Carving, Embossing, Weaving, Thonging, Under-laying, Over-laying, Stamping, Scorching, Painting and Patchwork.

**Tooling:** This is a decorative technique which involves the creation of fine outlined pattern on leather items (Adom, 2016). The leather material is moistened or cased. The outlined pattern is created with pencil onto the leather items. A round sharp-edged tool which can be heated is made to go through the outlines to create the pattern on the leather item. In tooling, the image is always sunken as compared to embossing. Adom (2016) opines the following as steps in creating outline tooling:

- Select and transfer design.
- Check the design to make certain it has been completely transferred and that no lines are missing.
- The leather should be placed on a slab of marble or hard surface.
- Press the design lines deeper until the lines are visible when viewed from the flesh side.

**Dyeing:** This is a decorative technique that involves the application of dyes or inks on a leather material to create interesting designs (Adom, 2016). It is one of the best ways of enhancing the surface quality of leather products by using coloured dye to create decorative patterns on them. Dyeing is the process of permanently changing the colour of leather by the use of a liquid colorant.

**Embossing:** This is the creation of a raised effect on a leather material. This can be done by cutting out the design from strawboard. Damp leather is laid on it after which the edges of the cut-out template are defined with the fingers or any appropriate tool to create a raised effect.

**Weaving:** This is the creation of an interlaced design or pattern with different coloured strip of leather on a leather item. It involves the interlacing of vertical and horizontal strips of leather into basket-like forms. The strips may be of different colours and sizes depending on the type of design to be made or the weaver's choice (Madakena, 2015).

**Thonging:** This is the creation of decorative stitches by the passing of thinly cut strips of leather of equal measurement through the carefully punched holes at the ends of a leather

item. It involves the use of thongs to create decorative designs on the surface of the leather or for joining two pieces of leather together by sewing.

**Under-laying:** This decorative technique involves the cutting out of a drawn design and placing a new coloured leather piece under the cut-out design. The in-laid leather piece is maintained in position either by stitching, sewing or gluing.

**Over-laying:** This decorative technique is the exact opposite of the Under-laying decorative technique. In this technique, the design is cut from different coloured leather and either sewn, stitched or embroidered on the leather item. This is the same as appliqué.

**Stamping:** This is the creation of designs onto the leather material using heated stamps of varying design. Before the heated stamps are stamped on the leather material, the surface is moistened or cased to assist in creating well defined designs.

**Scorching:** This technique is applied on leather by first sketching or tracing patterns, motifs, drawing etc. on leather then a metal rod or soldering iron is heated and in the hot state used to burn along the lines traced onto the leather. This will leave a permanent burn or scar on the leather as a decoration.

**Painting:** This is the method of decorating leather on the grain side with paints or other coloring media. The layout of the design is made on paper and it is transferred onto the grain side of the leather by the aid of tracing paper. The design is then painted with colours. It is then allowed to dry.

**Patchwork:** This is the process of joining and decorating two or more pieces of leather together as one. This is a traditional craft that is joining of different shapes together to create a design. This is usually done by sewing machine or by hand. The shapes are often cut by die cutter or laser cutter. The leather can be different colours or one colour. The edges of all the leathers to be joined must be well trimmed. Thong or lace is created after the thonging holes have been created at the edges of the cut pattern to be patched. The thonging or lacing is done to join the patterns together.

**Appliqué:** Appliqué is a French word that means "to apply." The method as pertains to fashion involves fixing one material on top of another. In terms of decorating leather, it is essentially the act of cutting pieces of leather of various shapes, sizes, textures, or colours and fixing them onto another surfaces with leather glue or sewing them permanently.

**Printing:** This is the process of creating images that may be transferred to other surfaces. It can be used to generate repeating patterns on papers, leather, and fabrics, or to make one or more identical images. Printing techniques includes,

**Screen printing:** This is achieved by creating a thin mesh screen with parts of the screen obstructed, allowing ink to pass through only in select areas. T-shirts to complete rolls of fabric can be printed on screens that vary in size depending on what you are printing. Because it can print in numerous colors and detail, this is the best printing method. Each color is represented by a distinct screen. Roller screen printing is used for very big industrial printing jobs.

### **Reasons for Decorating Leather Items:**

According to the Leatherwork Syllabus (2010) and Adom (2016), the reasons for adorning leather products encompasses the following:

- **To Enhance the Value of the Leather Products:** Adding decoration to leather objects improves their aesthetic appeal and makes them more appealing.
- **To Attract High Price:** Leather decoration increases the market value of the leather product. It increases the value and price of the item. As a result, the leather craftsman makes a lot of money.
- **To Meet the Standards for Export:** Well-decorated leather items are expected to meet exportation requirements. They can be sold to gain foreign currency in other countries.
- **It Helps the Leather Craftsman to Have a Sustained Market:** A leather craftsman whose leather items are well decorated continues to enjoy a prolonged market. Also, the leather craftsman gets a large pool of clients to work with due to his well decorated leather items.

## **2.0 MATERIALS AND METHODS**

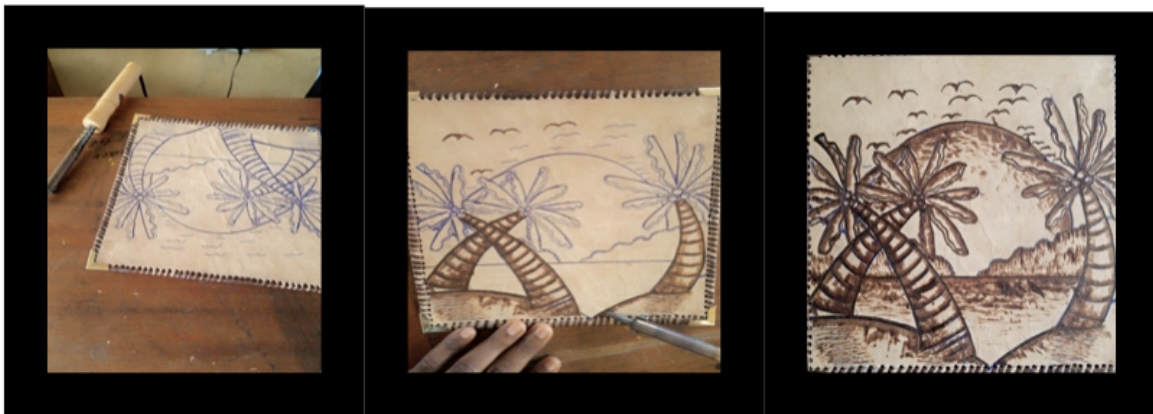
The research approach adopted for the study was the studio based, using descriptive research method to provide accurate description of tools, materials and practical processes involved in the production of the various decorative techniques in Leatherwork. The researchers explored the demonstration and documentation of some selected decorative techniques mostly taught in Senior High Schools as an introductory point of acquiring practical skills and competencies in leatherwork educations in Ghana. With the research adopting the studio-based research design, thirteen (13) key decorative techniques were systematically executed with recommended tools whereas the step-by-step procedures and processes followed were well recorded using descriptive research method to provide accurate description of tools, materials and practical processes involved in the production of the various decorative techniques in Leatherwork. The distinctiveness of each technique requires different approaches, procedures, varied skills sets and technical knowledge in applying different tools and the manipulation of the Ghanaian indigenous vegetable tanned leather to achieve desirable results. The documentation of the step-by-step procedures required to be followed when executing each of the 13 decorative techniques selected for demonstration is as follows:

### **2.1 Scorching/Pyrography Technique**

This involves the creation of design on the grain side of the leather using a soldering iron or hot metal tool to burn out the designs showing all the necessary tones. To achieve better tones effect of designs, this technique is best suited to be done or rendered on cream or Khaki leather surfaces with maximum control.

### Production Process

- Draw the design on a cardboard.
- Cut out the design to get the template.
- Transfer the cut -out design on the grain side of the leather and traced out.
- Use the hot metal tool or the heated soldering iron to trace over the design drawn.
- Shade to bring out all the necessary tones.
- Allow the hot metal tool or heated soldering iron to cool down when not in use.



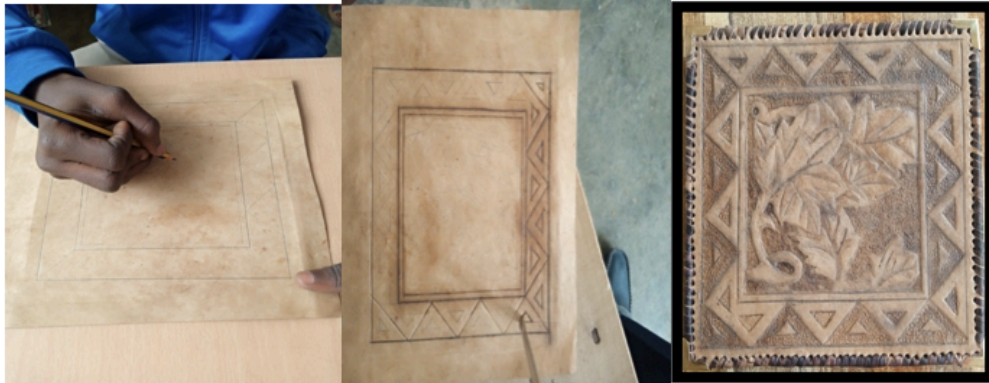
**Plate 1:** Scene drawn on leather, creating tones with hot soldering iron using the scorching technique to decorate leather surface.

### 2.2 Carving Technique

This is the process of creating designs on the grain side of leather either to give a raised or sunken effect. By cutting and stamping the surface of a leather craft or piece of art, it gives it a three-dimensional effect. This can also be described as the process of forming intricate patterns on the leather surface by a series of cuts or incision.

### Production Process

- Draw the design on a cardboard.
- Cut out the design to get the template.
- Transfer the design onto the grain side of the leather.
- Case or damp the grain side of the leather.
- Undercut the grain side of the leather and determine the raised and sunken effect.
- Allow cased leather to dry.



**Plates 2:** Transferring design and employing carving tools to create decorative impressions on the leather surface  
(Source: Researchers, 2024)

### 2.3 Embossing Technique

This technique deals with the creation of relief features on the grain side of the leather from the underside or the flesh side with the help of a strawboard or a reinforcing material. It is the process of creating a design or pattern to stand out from the surface of the leather.

#### Production Process

- Draw the design on the strawboard or any reinforcing material.
- Cut out the design from the strawboard.
- Case or damp the leather
- Apply adhesive at the flesh side and onto the cut- out design from the strawboard.
- Attach the cut-out design onto the flesh side of the leather.
- Use the bone folder to pick out the details.
- Allow the leather to air-dry when design has fully appeared on the grain side.



**Plate 5:** Floral motif reinforced with strawboard and traced on the flesh side of the leather  
(Source: Researchers, 2024)



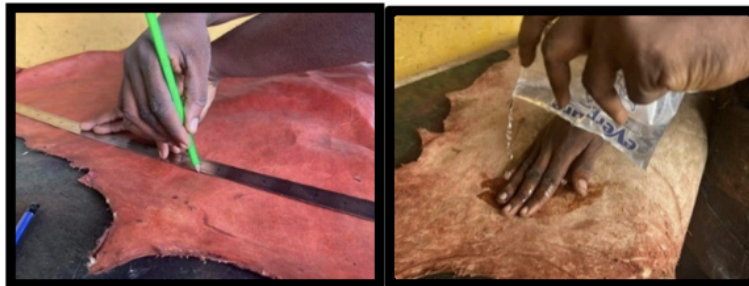
**Plate 6:** Casing and picking details of the designs to create a relief effect  
(Source: Researchers, 2024)

## 2.4 Tooling Technique

This technique involves marking and tracing outline of designs with blunt tool or stylus or empty ball pen to create sunken impression on the grain side of the leather. It is a process where tools are used to create lines, patterns or stamped leather as a form of decoration. It compresses the leather and darkens it or increase the strength of design and depth of lines.

### Production Process

- Draw a suitable design at the grain side of the leather with a pencil.
- Case the flesh side of the leather with water.
- With the help of a swivel knife or stylus cut around the outside edge of the design until a sunken impression or a raised border is achieved.
- Allow leather to dry at room temperature.



**Plate 7:** Transferring designs on leather and casing the flesh side of the leather prior to tooling



**Plate 8:** Tooling on cased leather and the completed tooled leather surface

### 2.5 Thonging Technique

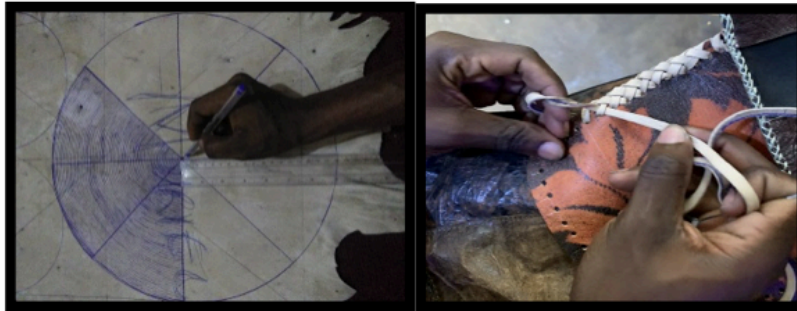
This is when thinly cut out strips of leather (thong) of similar dimension are passed through carefully punched holes at the margins of a leather artifact to either join or adorn the leather. It can also be described as the joining of pieces of leather together using strips of leather to produce stitches.

#### Production Process

- Measure and mark holes to be punched using ruler and pencil.
- Carefully punch the marked holes with drive punch or rotary punch.
- Create a spiral design at the flesh side of the leather.
- Cut out the design with the help of scissors to get the thong.
- Start thonging by passing the thinly cut out strips of leather (thong) through the carefully punched holes.
- Continue with the process until all the edges are thonged.



**Plate 9:** Marking and creation of holes with the drive punch



**Plate 10:** Marking and employing the basket

## 2.6 Painting Technique

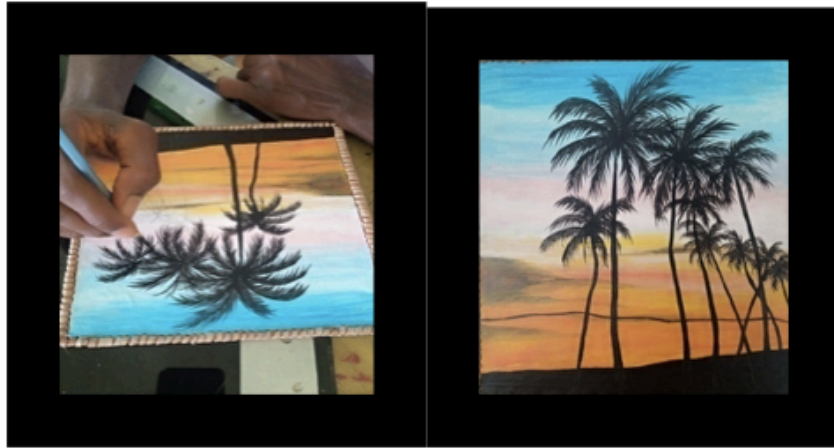
This involves the application of pigment or colour or paint on the grain side of the leather by using brush or foam for aesthetic purpose. Painting is the process of applying paint on a surface such as a canvas (acrylic, oil, watercolor, etc.). In leatherwork, it is the application of special leather paints, colored dyes, and inks to leather surfaces.

### Production Process

- Prepare a layout for the design in a sketch pad.
- Transfer the design onto the grain side of the leather with a tracing paper.
- Mix the paint to be used with water.
- Apply the paint with the help of brush or foam showing the tones.
- Allow it to air dry.



**Plate 11:** Painting of foreground and drawing of a palm tree



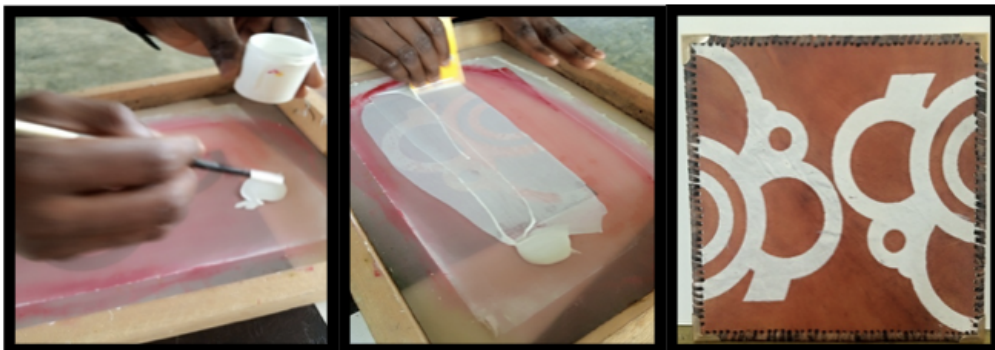
**Plate 12:** Painting of Palm Tree and final Painting scene

## 2.7 Printing Technique

This is the process of using screens, relief blocks, or stencils to transfer an inked image onto a leather surface. Printing is the process of using ink, a screen, a relief block, or stencils to transfer an image from one surface to another. Printing designs into leather materials is done with oil-based paints and permanent inks. There are four basic methods for printing these includes relief, intaglio, lithography and screen printing.

### Production Process

- Put the leather on a working table.
- Place the screen onto the leather.
- Pour the printing paste at the ink well.
- With the help of the squeegee, force the printing paste through the screen onto the leather.
- Take off the screen from the leather and wash the screen.
- Allow the printed leather to air dry in a cool dry place.



**Plate 13:** Pouring the paste at the reservoir and spreading it with the squeegee to register the design on the leather.

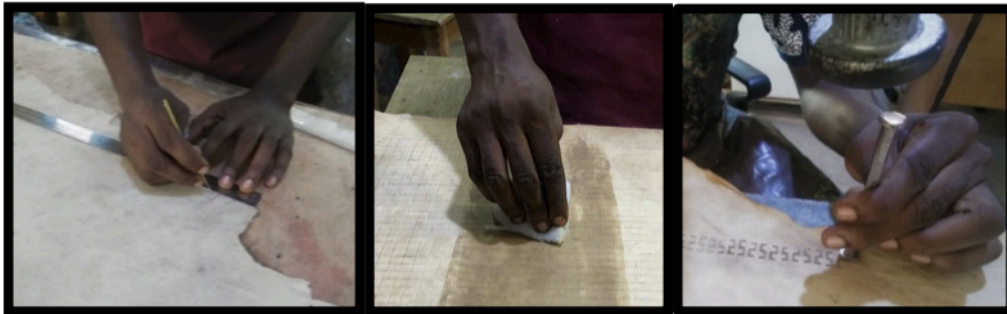
(Source: Researchers, 2024)

## 2.8 Stamping Technique

This technique involves imprinting designs on the grain surface of cased or damped leather with decorative metal stamps and a mallet to create a sunken or raised impression.

### Production Process

- Select the preferred stamps and prepare sheet of leather
- Case or damp the surface of the leather and rule lines where necessary.
- Position the stamping tool on the leather and with the help of a maul or hammer, create the impressions or imprints on the leather surface as desired.
- Repeat process till the entire surface of the leather is stamped.



**Plate 14:** Marking, casing and making of an imprint with the stamps on the leather surface

## 2.9 Patch Work/Patching Technique

This is a technique which involves the joining of various pieces of leather edge-to-edge into one piece. The pieces of leather can be of different sizes, shapes and colours and it can be joined by either stitching or thonging.

### Production Process

- Design and make templates with the cardboard.
- Transfer the templates onto the leather by tracing with a pen or pencil at the flesh side of the leather.
- Cut out the designs from the leather using a pair of scissors.
- Assemble the cut-out leather designs together and secure it with masking tape at the flesh side.
- Mark and create thonging or stitching holes with the help of the rotary punch or drive punch.
- Create thongs from the leather using the spiral method for thonging or secure thread for stitching.
- Join the assembled pieces of leathers together using thonging or stitching.

- Peel off the masking tape from the flesh side of the leather.
- Cover the flesh side of the patchwork with lining (leatherette).



**Plate 15:** Arranging patch leathers, marking and punching of Thonging Holes  
(Source: Researchers, 2024)



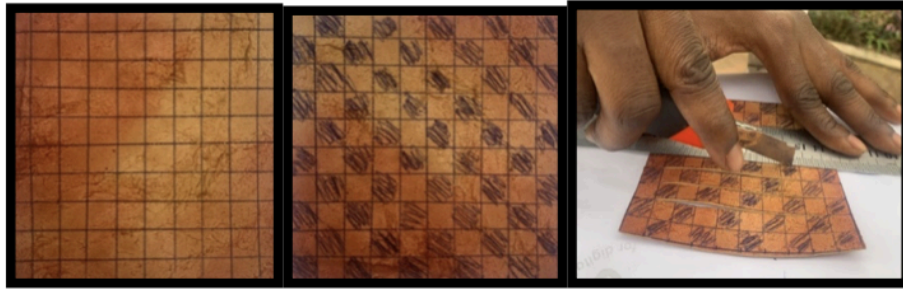
**Plate 16:** Punched holes and joined Pieces of patch leather to form the Patching Technique  
(Source: Researchers, 2024)

### 2.10 Weaving Technique (Plain weave technique)

- This involves the interlacing of vertical and horizontal strips of different colored leathers at right angle to form a definite pattern. Twill, plain, basket and satin designs are the basic weave one can attain.

#### Production Process

- Measure and mark vertical and horizontal lines of 1cm intervals at the flesh side of the leather.
- Shade the boxes Depending on the type of weaving technique to be done.
- With the cutter knife and ruler cut the vertical lines of the shaded boxes
- Measure and cut 1cm strips of leathers (weft).
- On the first row of boxes, pass leather (weft) horizontally over one shaded box and under one unshaded box. Repeat the sequence to complete the first row.
- Repeat the process for the subsequent rows till the entire surface of the leather as be woven



**Plate 17:** Vertical and horizontal lines drawn at the flesh side, shaded and cutting in the plain weave pattern.



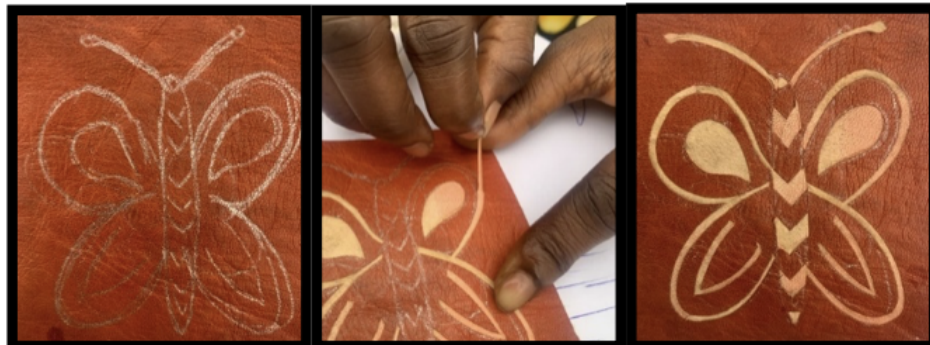
**Plate 18:** Interlacing of the leather strips (weft) in plain weave pattern

### 2.11 Incision Technique

This technique deals with the undercutting and peeling off the epidermis to reveal the corium layer underneath, after a design has been drawn on the leather.

#### Production Process

- Transfer the design onto the grain side of the leather.
- With the help of a sharp cutter, gently cut along the outline of the design only on the epidermis layer. Avoid cutting through the dermis layer
- Peel off the cut design gently, from the epidermis layer to reveal the corium layer.



**Plate 19:** Transferred design on the leather surface and peeling the incised epidermis layer to reveal the corium layer.

## 2.12 Dyeing Technique

This is a process in which colors are applied to the grain side of the leather to make it more beautiful and appealing.

### Production Process

- Mix two spoons of dye with water, add a spoon of caustic soda and two spoons of hydrous.
- Pour the mixture into a rubber basin containing a reasonable amount of water and stir.
- Wet the leather, fold it as you desire and secure it with a thread.
- Immerse the leather into the dye bath or apply the dye onto the folded leather and leave it for about 10 to 30 minutes.
- Remove and allow the dye to oxidize before opening and rinsing.
- Dry the dyed leather under a shade.



**Plate 20:** Pounding and Crumpling of leather



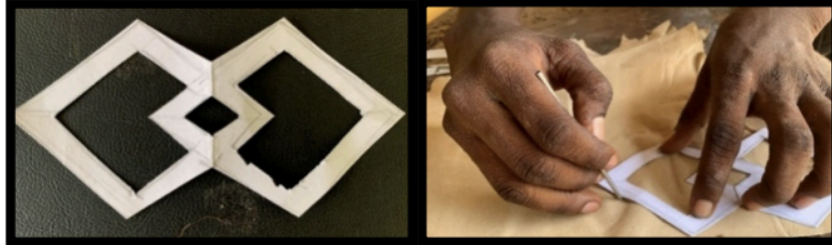
**Plate 21:** Preparing and pouring dye bath on the crumpled Leather

## 2.13 Appliqué Technique (Over-Lay Approach)

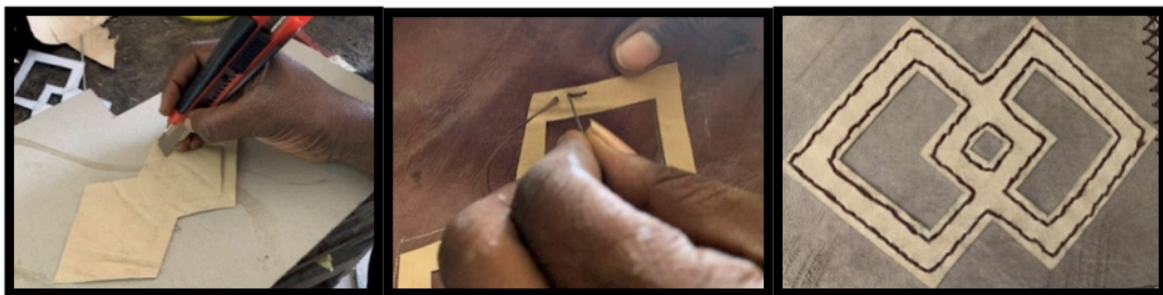
### Production Process

- Draw the motif onto the cardboard.
- Cut out the motif from the cardboard to get the template.
- Transfer the motif onto the leather.

- Draw and cut out the motif on the pieces of leather.
- Arrange the motifs properly and attach them with glue onto the bigger leather.
- Sew the pieces permanently onto the background leather.



**Plate 22:** Transferring of motif on a cream leather surface



**Plate 23:** Cutting the negative parts and stitching the motif on another leather surface  
(Source: Researchers, 2024)

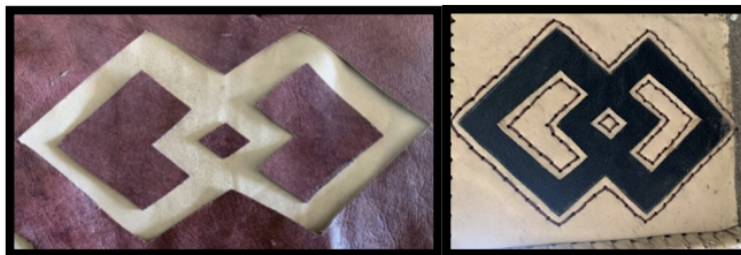
## 2.14 Appliqué Technique (In-Lay Approach)

### Production Process

- Draw a design on a cardboard.
- Cut out the design from the cardboard to create a template.
- Transfer the template on the leather and trace out the design.
- Cut out the design from the leather with the help of a cutter.
- Cut a piece of contrasting colour of Leather, a little bigger than the cut-out piece.
- Secure the back of the design (flesh side) with the contrasting colour of leather with the help of adhesive.
- Secure it permanently by thonging or stitching.



**Plate 24:** Motif drawn on a leather surface, and after cutting out from the leather surface  
(Source: Researchers, 2024)



**Plate 25:** Cut out design on contrasting leather    **Plate 26:** under-laying Technique  
(Source: Researchers, 2024)

### 3.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The main objective of the study was to identify the various decorative techniques in Leatherwork in order to demonstrate the practical steps of execution, and document the tools, materials and the production processes to facilitate teaching and learning in the Senior High Schools. The unique properties imbued in leathers through the use of specific tanning methods according to Asubonteng (2010) are to serve certain intended purposes during its utility. Vegetable tanning process used by the local tanners renders some important properties favorable to support the execution of most decorative techniques (Asubonteng 2010). In the processes, the researchers observed that due to the varied properties of the Ghanaian vegetable tanned leathers such as malleability, softness, pliability, good tensile strength etc., different methods, procedures and tools could be engaged easily when performing some decorative techniques on the leather. The respond of the leather revealed that it has the ability to maintain impressions when cased due to its strong pliability and good water absorption capacities. The techniques that responded well due to casing included stamping, carving and outline tooling. These decorative techniques are employed on leather surfaces to create designs, patterns and impressions in relief and sunken forms with specialized tools like stamps, swivel knives, mauls etc.

Kite and Tomson (2006) state that the knowledge about the structure and the interwoven networks of fibers of hides and skins must be well understood in order to determine the type of dye and pigment that can best be used on leather surface without distorting its surface value. Dyeing as a decorative technique on leather was executed successfully through the application of vat dyes and its corresponding auxochromes

(sodium hydroxide and sodium hydrosulphite) in their right proportions as stated by Boahin and Asubonteng (2011). As a result, decorative designs and patterns were created on the local vegetable tanned leather surfaces through systematic crumpling, folding in different styles and tying in regular patterns before immersion in dye bath pouring the dyes on the leather (Plates 20 to 21). The decorative patterns created on the leather surface consequently enhanced its aesthetic value.

The use of painting as a decorative technique for rendering colour on leather surface was also achieved successfully. Designs, scenes, symbols and patterns created on leather surfaces with brush and pigment really decorated the surface of the local leathers, and artifacts by enhancing the aesthetic appearance. The use of acrylic paints, known to be water soluble, accurately worked, as the bristle and sable brush strokes employed made the entire painting process smoothly executed on the leather surface. Also, in the screen-printing technique, the researchers used the same acrylic paints in printing patterns on the vegetable tanned leather to decorate it. The technique was carefully performed to ensure that design motifs on a developed screen (frame and mesh) were smoothly transferred onto the leather surface by the use of squeegee to press the acrylic pigment through the screen to register designs without distortions.

In the scorching/pyrography technique, the designs (motifs or scenes) created could only work on the grain side of the leather surface. Although wood burning pen could have been used, the researchers employed the hot tip of the soldering iron as the main tool to register the decorative patterns. It required careful control and maximum regulation of the temperature to foil over burnings and creation of undesirable effects on the leather. This technique can be used to make designs or decorations on bags, saddles, wallets, pennants etc. On large leather surfaces, ornamental designs, compositions of sceneries and still-life events can be scorched and framed to serve as decorative wall hanging piece.

According to Boahin (2008), incision as a decorative technique deals with slightly cutting through the epidermis layer and peeling it off to reveal the corium layer underneath, after a design has been drawn on the leather. In order words, it is the technique of carefully peeling or removing the top layer of the grain side of leather to reveal an underlying fibrous layer of leather to form a design. The decorative designs rendered on the surfaces of the local vegetable tanned leather made good use of contrast as a strategy to project the patterns created. Research has shown that with incision techniques, simple to intricate designs can be made depending on the level of skills and mastery of the executor or artist. The most important thing noted during the process of incising the surface of the leather is the ability to control the depth required to cut by the sharp knife in the process. This is to avoid cutting beyond the recommended grain layer, than cutting through the entire corium and subcutaneous layers of the leather. In application, Boahin (2008) recommend that incision can be used for abstract works, portraits, still-life compositions. The technique can also be used to decorate bags, wallets, folders, wall hangings etc.

Appliqué in leather is a technique used for surface decoration by cutting and applying pieces of well measured or designed patterns of another coloured leather and

laying/fixing on top of a layer of leather permanently through sewing or embroidery around the edges. There are two types of applique techniques employed successfully in the study, thus, the over-lay and under-lay. The main difference between over-lay and under-lay is that in case of the former, the intended design is laid on the grain side of leather whilst the later requires that the design is cut out from the main leather and then be placed beneath the out design. Both techniques demand that the outlines be secured either by machine sewing, embroidery or /and hand stitching to ensure permanence. For designs to project, well contrasting colours of leathers were strategically used. Applique when skillfully done with proper arrangement of contrasting leather colours can be used to depict realistic and abstract scenes. In the execution process, leather patterns were intentionally arranged either in a regular or irregular formation depending on the shapes, sizes, colours, and textures of the leathers available. Unlike over-lay applique where pieces of leathers are intentionally laid on leather surface with an intended design or composition, patchworks are mostly done to depict or portray abstract idea or concept. Patchwork technique helps students to learn how to make good use of leather off-cuts by making something useful such as wall hangings, bags etc.

The interlacing of strips of leathers known as weaving is one of the techniques demonstrated to create patterns on leather and leather artifacts for decoration. The various types of weaving strategies employed included, plain, twill, satin and basket, which have their own unique patterns and aesthetics created on leather surfaces. The most commonly used weaving techniques are the plain and basket weaving techniques where weft strips of leather are threaded through warp strips of leathers in a sequence of ‘over one under one ‘which was employed for the study. Weft and warp strips of leather prior to weaving were made of two contrasting colours with same measurements in width to help project the weave patterns. This technique is mostly employed in the production of bags, straps of wrist watches, fancy belts, shoes and flower vases etc.

Thonging, although a joining technique in Leatherwork, it was also adopted as a decorative technique in this study. Strips of leather for thonging must be of 0.5mm -0.8mm in width to ensure neat and uniformity of thongs. The most appropriate sizes of punches for creating holes prior to thonging are the 2mm, 2.5mm, 3mm,3.5mm. for decorating the edges of leather artifacts such as purses, bags etc., the recommended thonging techniques to employ are the basket weave, the cordovers (single, double, triple), whip, back and cross stitches and the round braid stitches. For a thonging technique to be well executed to enhance the look or appearance of a leather artifact, equal intervals of holes must be ensured. Thongs must be measured and cut in spiral form to guarantee a straight long continuous strip of thongs with equal width.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The study achieved its aim successfully, and has been able to document the step-by-step production processes of the selected decorative techniques in Leatherwork selected for demonstration to support pedagogical procedures for teaching and learning in Senior High Schools. From critical observations made during the demonstration of the

techniques, it is concluded that to attain better desirable design patterns and aesthetic value, the execution of decorative techniques should be performed on carefully selected full grain leather surfaces devoid of defects and distortions. Also, since the decorative techniques are in their own forms and characters, each one requires specific skills sets and particular tools to execute them accurately, both teachers and students will need to follow during practical lessons to facilitate knowledge acquisition and skills development.

## RECOMMENDATION

To avert the typical challenge of lack of teaching and learning resources in practical demonstration of the Leatherwork techniques in schools, the study has painstakingly documented the procedures in a chronological order with pictorial support for easy assimilation and understanding of the subject matter. The outcome of this study therefore has the tendency to facilitate practical teaching and learning by making it more interactive, easy to comprehend and independent. The researchers recommend and encourage both teachers and students to adopt the documented decorative techniques to support practical pedagogy in their Senior High Schools.

---

## References

1. Adom D. (2010). *Leatherwork for senior high schools*. Adom Series Publication
2. Adom D. (2016). *The Rationale for Studying Leatherwork*, EzineArticle.com, Retrieved 25th August, 2021.
3. Adu-Agyem, J. (1998), *Documentation as a process of Art Education in contemporary Ghana* (PhD Thesis), Department of Art Education, K.NU.S. T Kumasi-Ghana.
4. Adu-Agyem, J. and Osei-Poku, P. (2012). *Quality Education in Ghana: The way forward*. *International Journal of Innovative Research and Development (IJIRD)*, 1(9), 164-177.
5. Agbenatoo, W.G. (2011). *Improving the Quality of Teaching and Learning of General Knowledge in Art using Multiple Intelligences Lesson Plan*. Master's Thesis. Department of General Art Studies, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana.
6. Amenuke, S. K. (1995). *Notes on General Knowledge in Art and Vocational Skills for Senior Secondary Schools and Teacher Training Colleges*. Kumasi: KNUST Press.
7. Amenuke, S. K., Dogbe B. K., Asare F. D. K., Ayiku R. K. & Baffoe A (1991) *General Knowledge in Art*. Ministry of Education. London: Evans Brothers Ltd.
8. Anang, J. M. (2011, January). *Curriculum Implementation, Assessment and Institutional Implications in Achieving Quality in Visual Arts Education*, Ghana Art Teachers' Association (GATA) Communiqué. KNUST Kumasi, 3-6 January, 2011.
9. Asubonteng K. (2010). *Improving the Quality of Ghanaian Indigenous Leatherwork: Alternative Strategies*. KNUST, Kumasi: Ph.D. Dissertation, Dept. of General Art Studies.
10. Boadi, E. A. (2002). *Evaluation of the Final Senior Secondary School Visual Art Project/Practical Works: A Case Study of Some Schools in Ashanti Region*. Master's Thesis. Department of General Art Studies, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana.

11. Boahin, J. O. B. (1994). *Leatherwork Techniques for Senior High Schools*. KNUST, Kumasi: Unpublished MPhil. Thesis, Department of Art Education.
12. Boahin, J. O. B. (2005). *Leatherwork Techniques and Principles for Senior Secondary Schools and Colleges*. KNUST, Kumasi: University Printing Press.
13. Boahin, J. O. B. (2008). *Technical Problems and Solutions in the Indigenous Leather Industry: Implications for Art Education in Ghana*. KNUST, Kumasi: Unpublished Ph. D Dissertation, Dept. of General Art Studies.
14. Brako-Hiapa, G. (2011). *Documentation of artifacts in selected Ghanaian Senior High Schools (Doctoral dissertation)*.
15. Curriculum Research and Development Division of Ghana Education Service (2010). *Teaching Syllabus for Leatherwork in Senior High Schools*. Accra: Ministry of Education.
16. Curriculum Research and Development Division of Ghana Education Service (2008). *Teaching Syllabus for Leatherwork in Senior High Schools*. Accra: Ministry of Education.
17. Edusei, K. (1991). *Significant Ghanaian Educational Innovations and Landmarks and their Socio-cultural Impact*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana.
18. Edusei, K. (2004). An Overview of Visual Art Education in Ghanaian Schools *Journal of Science and Technology*, 24(2), 116-120.
19. Evans-Solomon, F. & Opoku-Asare, N.A. (2011). Girls' motivation, participation and preference for visual arts subjects in four Senior High Schools in Central Region, Ghana. *Journal of Science and Technology*, 31(3), 118-128.
20. Leedy, P. D. and Ormrod, J.E. (2005). *Practical Research: Planning and Design* (8th. Ed). New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall.3
21. MacWilliam, K (n. d). *Decorative leather techniques*, Retrieved May 19, 2021 from <https://favoredleather.com/decorative-leather-techniques/>
22. Madakena K. T (2015). *Leatherwork for beginners*. Kumasi
23. Nemett, B. (1992). *Images, objects, and ideas: Viewing the visual arts*. Harcourt Brace College Publishers.
24. Opoku-Asare, N.A., Agbenatoo, W.G., & deGraft-Johnson, K.G. (2014). Instructional Strategies, Institutional Support and Student Achievement in General Knowledge in Art: Implications for Visual Arts Education in Ghana. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 5(21), 121.
25. Yount, R. (2006). *Population and Sampling*. Retrieved January 12, 2021 from [http://www.napce.org/documents/research-design-yount/07\\_Sampling\\_4th.pdf](http://www.napce.org/documents/research-design-yount/07_Sampling_4th.pdf)



© 2026 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>).