



ARTS & CULTURE

Ghana Artist Finds New Market for Hand-Painted Movie Posters

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There is a long tradition in the African nation of Ghana of local artists painting movie **posters** to advertise films.

But as interest in local movie theaters continues to drop, Daniel Anum Jasper has found success selling his posters in other countries.

Jasper recently spoke with reporters from Reuters from his studio workspace in Accra. He presented one of his current works, showing actor Paul Newman holding a pair of guns in a poster for the 1969 movie *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*.

He also showed unfinished paintings that included actors John Travolta and Bruce Lee.

Jasper was one of the country's first movie poster designers and has been doing the job for 30 years. From the late 1970s through the 1990s, Ghana developed a tradition of advertising films with colorful and descriptive hand-painted posters.

During that period, local movie theaters were extremely popular throughout the country. Artists competed over who could bring in the most people with their imaginative -- and often violent -- designs.

But over the years, the market for Jasper's work has greatly changed. With the rise of the internet, Ghana's independent theaters began to disappear.

"People are no longer interested in going out to watch a movie when it can be watched from the comfort of their phones," Jasper said. "But there is a growing interest in owning these hand-painted posters internationally," he added. "Now they hang them in private rooms or show them in **exhibitions**."

One market where Jasper's work has gained appeal is the United States, where the posters are valued as unusual representations of a specific period in African art.

Westerns and action movies were traditionally popular, as were Bollywood and Chinese films. Many of the posters included **supernatural** elements and extreme violence even if the films had none. And physical details of the actors were often **exaggerated**.

Joseph Oduro-Frimpong is a pop culture expert and professor at Ghana's Ashesi University. He has been collecting movie posters for years and owns several of Jasper's paintings.

He plans to show his posters at the Centre for African Popular Culture when it opens at the university later this year. He said he hopes people will realize the historical importance of the posters.

"Of course there is an **esthetic** value to the posters -- how crazy it is and all of that," Oduro-Frimpong said. "But we use them to have a conversation with students."

"We tell them not to think about what they're seeing now... (but) to think of these art forms as **symbols** of history that can tell their own stories."

I'm Bryan Lynn.

Reuters reported this story. Bryan Lynn adapted the report for VOA Learning English. We want to hear from you. Write to us in the Comments section, and [visit our Facebook page](#).

Words in This Story

poster – *n.* a large printed picture or advertisement that is placed on the wall

exhibition – *n.* an event at which objects such as paintings are shown to the public

supernatural – *adj.* things that cannot be explained by our knowledge of science or nature

exaggerate – *v.* to make something seem larger, better or worse than it actually is

esthetic – *n.* relating to beauty and the way something looks

symbol – *n.* a sign or object that is used to represent something
