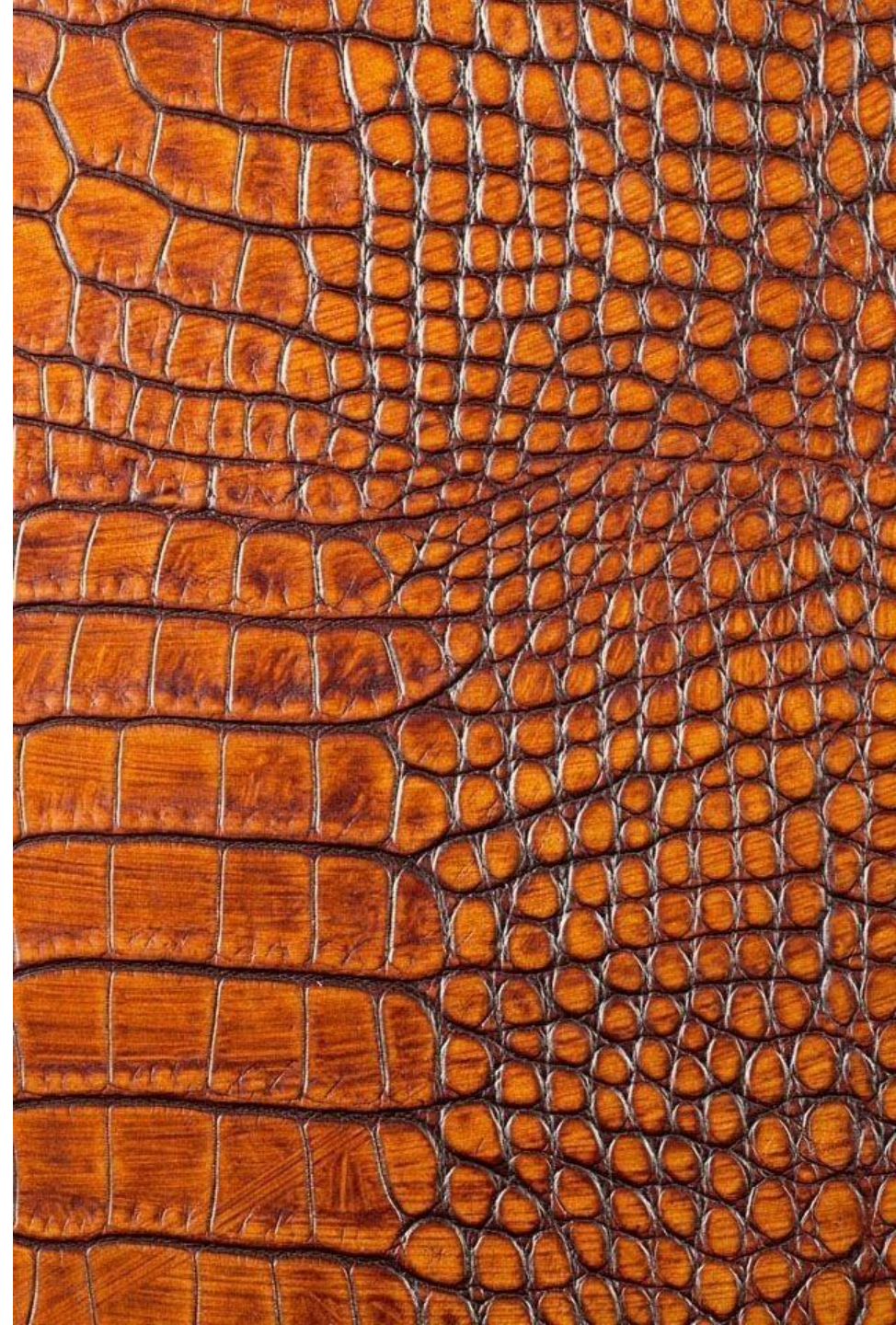


REAL LEATHER STAY DIFFERENT

AFRICA TALENT LEATHER DESIGN SHOWCASE  
2025

FRANCISCA ODUNDO

KENYA, EAST AFRICA



# Summary of the boots project

## Shoes mmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm

Black shoes, white shoes, preparing for my flight shoes,  
High shoes, low shoes ,beautiful peep toe shoes,  
Business shoes, pleasure shoes, too perfect to measure shoes,  
Wedding shoes, funeral shoes, running road and tunnel shoes,  
Strappy shoes, ahh, \*\*\*\*\* shoes, annoying clippy-clappy shoes,  
We really do need all of these,  
While planning our life's route,  
But don't complain too much dear men,  
I haven't started on my boots!

Eileen McGreevy Feb 2010

[https://hellopoetry.com/words/shoes/#google\\_vignette](https://hellopoetry.com/words/shoes/#google_vignette)

I am a Kenyan designer, with an interest in Shoe design.

This project, delves into shoe design from the African perspective. I am inspired by a variety of elements and philosophies.

Joy Adamson's paintings. She was a Kenyan pre-independence female artist. The skirts worn by the Himba women of the Kunene Region in the northern parts of Namibia. Valentino Garavani Fashion Collections and the Incwadi Yothando beaded love letters of the Zulu of Southern Africans. They all embrace the use of flaps of various fabrics and beads as a medium of technology to create garments. Joy Adamson and the Himba used leather cut into strips to fashion layered skirts. Valentino too, made a skirt using fabric cut into strips. The authors of the Zulu love letters fashioned their layered flap skirt from beads.

The designer was inspired by two of the creators use of the flap surface as a medium on which visual elements could be displayed. While Valentino chose to simply display geometrical forms, the Zulu love letters use semiotics that convey messages. These messages are coded communications that may carry common insignia, or symbols whose meaning is a secret known only to a couple.

The designer choose to use the Ghanaian Akan ethnic communities semiotics known as Adinkira to convey the messages on the boots designed as they where deemed most appropriate for the message at hand.

All of the elements described are pulled together to design the boots presented in the project. The visuals, captions and the explanations in the literature below will lead you through the design journey.



## FLAP INSPIRATION



Joy Adamson's paintings

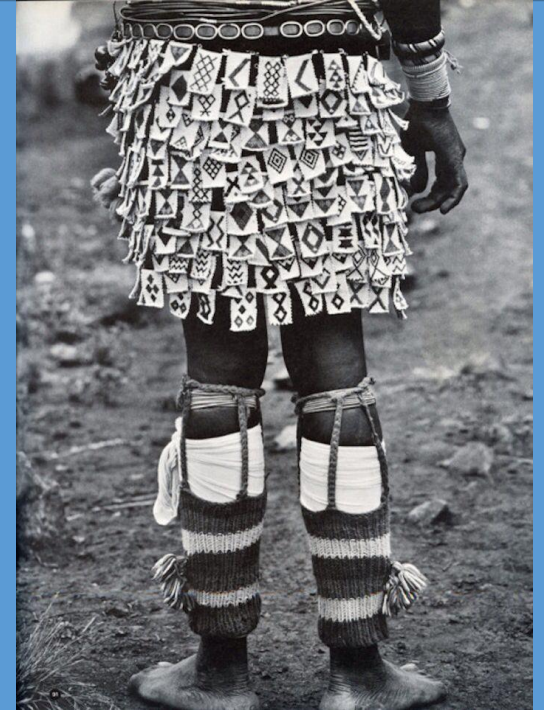


Himba Women

Garments have been used through millennia as technology to keep the wearer warm and safe from physical and psychological harm. These garments are fashioned in a variety of ways. Here, they are made using strips of leather, fabric and beads. This expertise is borrowed to create the flaps that festoon the sides of the boots.



Valentino Garavani Fashion Collections For Women



South African, Early 1970s Love Letter skirt

The flaps were also used as a medium of communication. This is still done in contemporary times as is witnessed with the modern day T-shirts. Traditionally, various semiotics were used to convey messages. Here, we see this with Valentino geometric graphics that carry only aesthetic appeal and the Zulu love letter that carries a specific communication. This idea is carried onto the boots to ensure that they are both aesthetically pleasing and carry the message the Dwennimmen Adinkra symbol message. It is a symbol from the Akan ethnic community of Ghana. It means "ram's horns," and embodies the concept of strength tempered with humility.





### **Formation of the flaps for the boots using Nappa Goat Leather**

The leather is cut into strips and then sprayed lightly with water and ironed at a low heat.

The Dwennimmen Adinkra symbol will be painted onto the surface of this leather with leather paint.



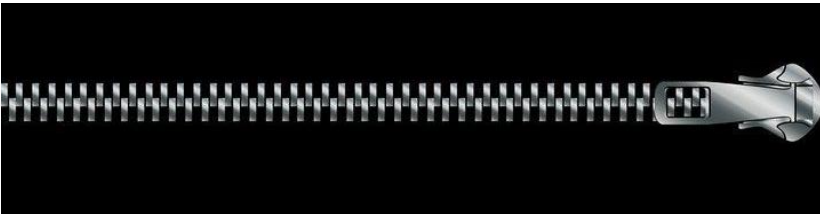


## Materials used to make the Boots

Bovine 'Crocodile emboss finish' leather for the uppers



The boot Zip will be will be a Medium weight, Closed-top and bottom end, metal teeth, with a pull tab and will run the length of the back height of the boots.



Black Goat Nappa Leather







First design realization sketch with an amalgamation of design elements and physical samples of the boot's box pleated festoons and the upper bovine leather with a 'crocodile' emboss finish.





Making of first prototype elements







## Prototype boot

This is a partial prototype of the boot to see if the concept works. The design had envisaged at least five rows of box pleated festoons. The prototype has three. These worked better and had a greater sense of visual presence than the five rows when tested. The block heels are not included in this prototype. However, the leather materials used for the uppers are close to the proposed materials for the final product in black.

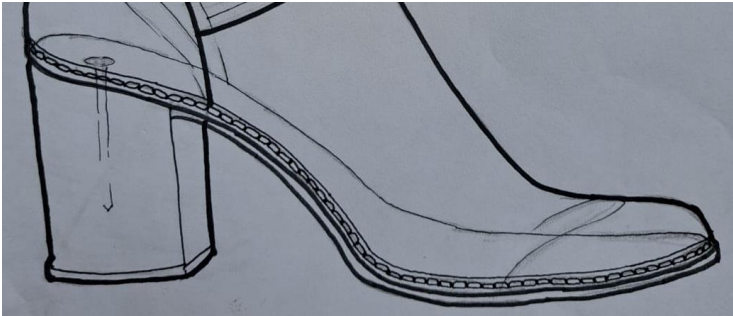




## Boot Heel Inspiration and design

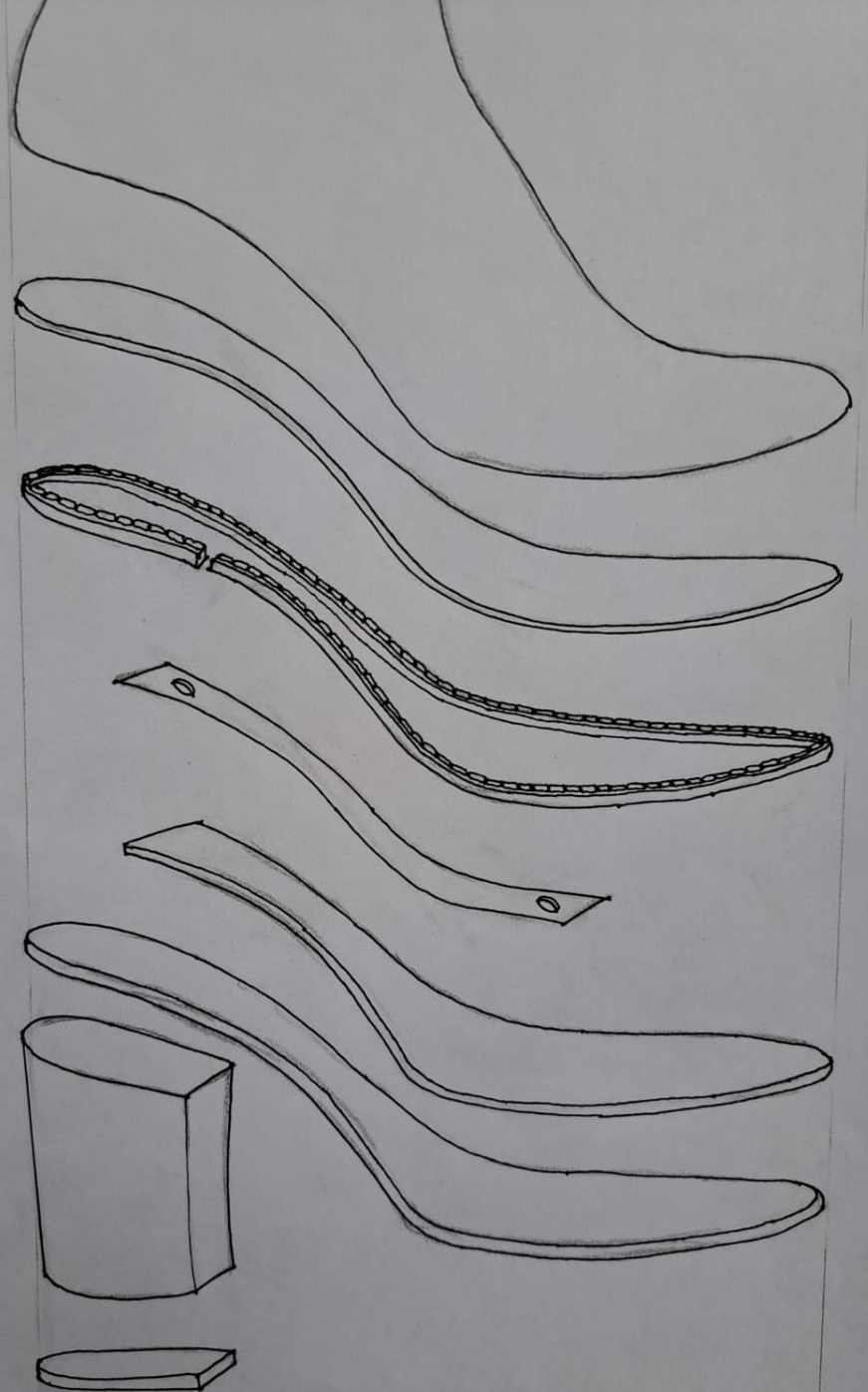


False Welt for Shoemaking



## The heel of the boot

The sketches here were drawn using a boot heel template and show the final heel design. To the right you can see the blow out of the elements of the boot heel. Starting at the top, the drawing has 8 elements, These are the upper, insole, false welt (Randing), shank, midsole, outsole, block heel and the heel outsole.





## Why use the The Dwennimmen Adinkra symbol to decorate the shoes?

The Dwennimmen Adinkra symbol is a symbol from the Akan ethnic community of Ghana. It literally translates to mean "ram's horns," and embodies the concept of strength tempered with humility.

The symbol visually depicts two rams butting heads from a bird's eye view.

Rams are known for their formidable physical strength, their ability to fight fiercely, as well as their strong will. Their horns are a primary tool for defence and combat. This helps portray the concept of the ram's physical and mental fortitude. It evokes their ability to endure challenges, overcome obstacles, and possess inner resilience. In an individual and a community, it can be employed to represent leadership and determination. The strength to lead, to be a catalyst for progress, and to fiercely pursue goals. It can evoke the spirit of courage and bravery to confront adversaries and defend one's interests.

Dwennimmen tempers strength with humility. Though a ram be powerful, they also exhibit a significant degree of humility. An adage related with Dwennimmen proffers that a ram though capable of fiercely fighting an antagonist, will equally submit to slaughter if need be. This demonstrates that even the strong must recognize their limitations, be open to guidance, and understand the cyclical nature of life. Humility, embraces the willingness to yield. It accepts compromise, and has the wisdom to know that a situation that is beyond one's control and that one should hold back. A humble person is open to learning and gaining wisdom, recognizing that true strength comes not just from brute force, but also from knowledge and understanding.

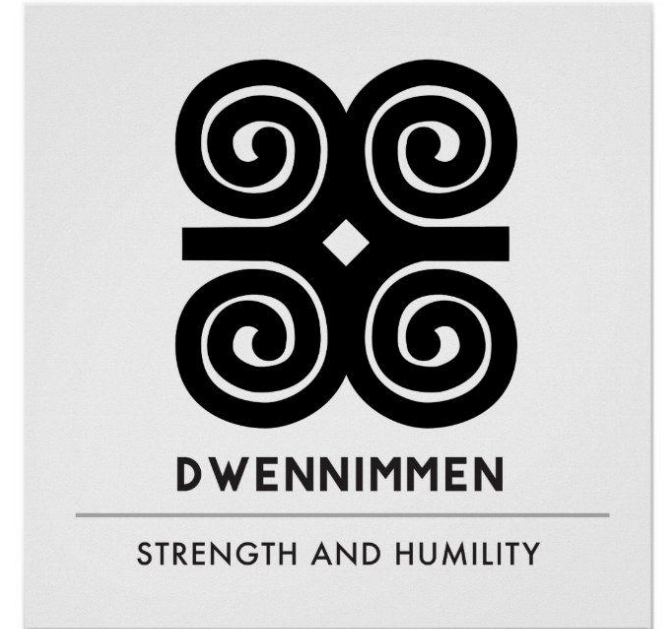
The beauty of Dwennimmen lies in its depiction of the necessary balance between two seemingly opposing qualities. It teaches that true strength is not arrogant or oppressive, but is rather guided by humility, wisdom, and a recognition of one's place within a larger context. It encourages the idea that one can be both powerful and gentle, fierce when defending what is right, yet humble in disposition and open to correction.

Dwennimmen is often used in the context of character and character development. I ask, can it be employed to serve as a design philosophy in product design? In this day and age where we are promoting the concepts of sustainability. Does strength and humility in product design have a place? Strength in products. Produce that which lasts and is not easily destroyed and disposed of. Humility represents human centred design. Can a designer and product yield to that which is beneficial to a user and the community as a whole?

I believe that if distilled to its very essence, the Dwennimmen symbol is a profound concept that can and should be incorporated into product design.

The shoes designed should be strong and yet yield to needs of a community and sustainability proffered through providing employment for artisans who make the shoes. The shoe should yield to the requirement of the user's foot and life and become the content of the form, not remain the form of the content and dictate the shape that the foot will take. The shoes aesthetics should preserve and also evolve and evolve with culture so that it speaks to and grows a community. The shoe should use materials that are locally sourced in as much as it possible to cut down on air miles and stimulate local economies.

**The shoe should give dignity to a user and local communities. Portray strength and humility in product qualities and in social values through community visual language using semiotics.**

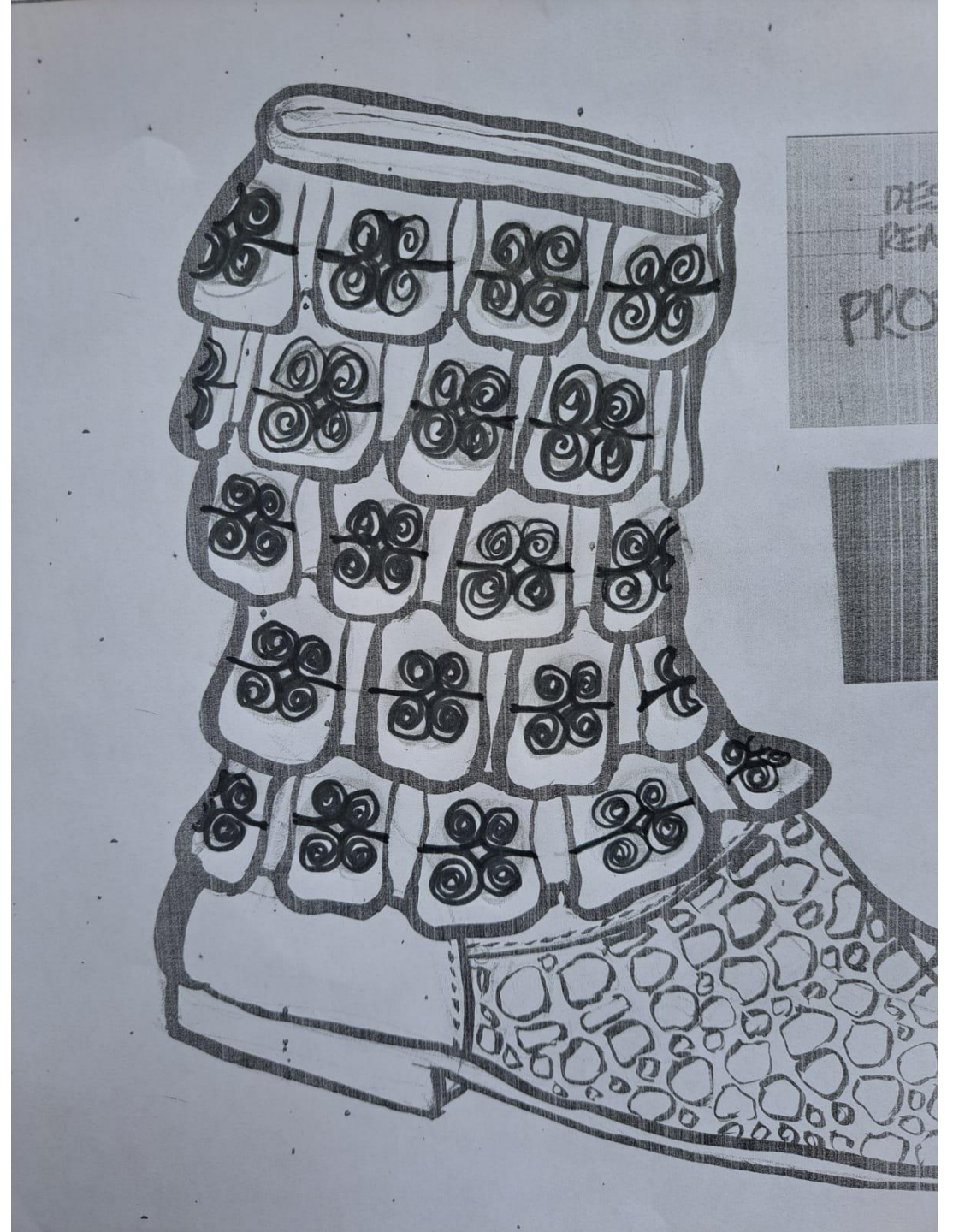




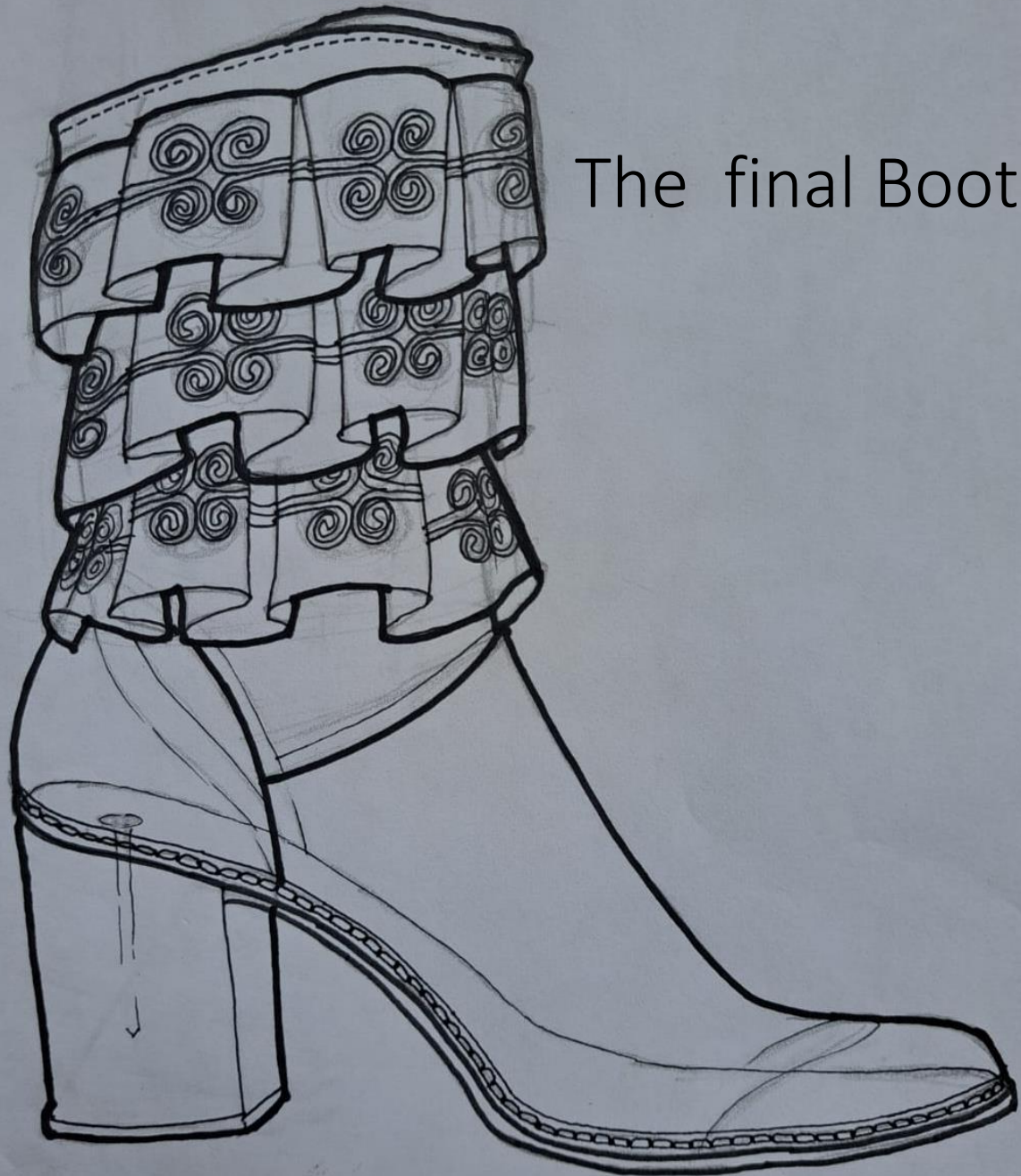


## The Dwennimmen Adinkra symbol trials

The sketches on this page are the different visual trials on the application of the The Dwennimmen Adinkra symbol to decorate the shoes.



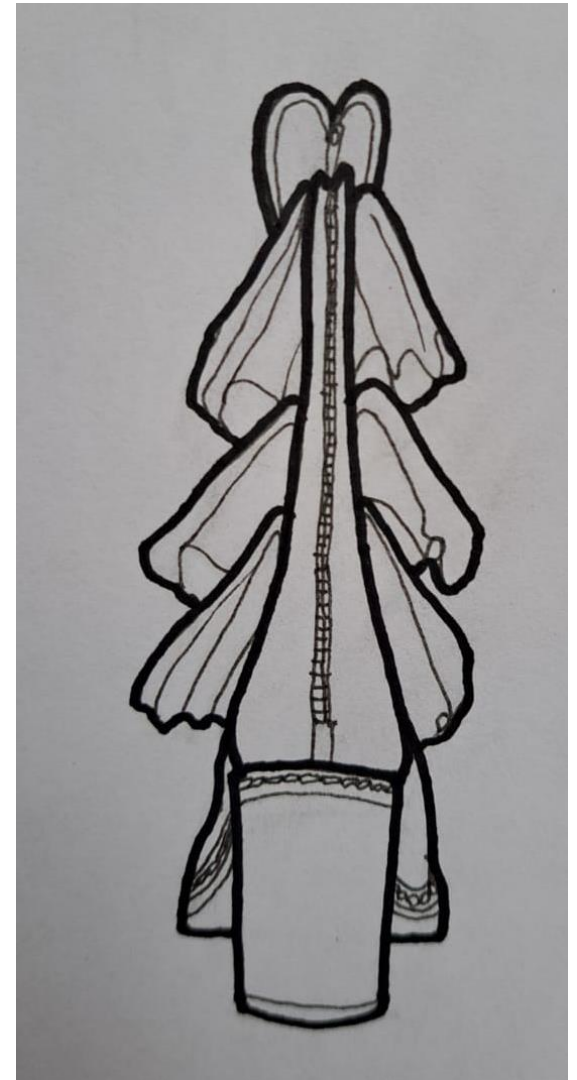




FRONT VIEW



BACK VIEW





The boot in black with the Dwennimmen Adinkra symbol in white



The boot in brown with the Dwennimmen Adinkra symbol in gold. Gold is the colour of choice here as it represents the Akan gold reserves and wealth.





# List of Supplies required for making the Boots

- Bovine 'Crocodile emboss finish' leather for the uppers in black and/or brown
- Goat Nappa leather for the lining
- 1/2" Shoemaking nails
- Rubber cement
- Universal contact cement
- White and Gold Acrylic paint
- Metal Shank
- Midsole - Texon Board
- Outsole - TPR (Thermoplastic Rubber) or PU (Polyurethane)
- Insole - Memory foam
- Randing – False Welt
- Wooden Block Heel
- Heel Outsole - TPR (Thermoplastic Rubber) or PU (Polyurethane)
- Bonded Nylon Sewing Thread
- Thermoplastic Stiffeners
- Insole Sock
- Heel Tip
- Toe Puff
- Shoe Cream
- Black Edge Coat
- Brown Edge Coat