Showcase of Undergraduate Research and
Creative Endeavors (SOURCE)

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A Guide to African Princesses

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African Princesses and Queens

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What is my creative project?

My creative project is to develop a guide of African princesses and queens. The guide consists of African figures who made important contributions to their societies.

My research includes, but is not limited to, Internet sources, documentaries, online image collections, and word of mouth storytelling--an important element of African culture.

Overall, I wanted to create this guide for the younger version of myself--the girl who did not know her people came from royalty.

Below, you will see the progress of this ongoing endeavor.

Step 1 - Deciding Who Will Be A Part Of The Guide

Deciding who will be a part of the guide was an important step in my project. As I stated before, I wanted this guide to be for my younger self - the girl who did not know her people came from royalty. I wanted to choose women I did not know anything about and are not continuously portrayed in Hollywood.

Therefore, I have chosen the following women who have inspired me:

Queen of Sheba - The first figure mention in the Hebrew Bible.

Princess Yennenga - The mother of the Mossi people.

Queen Amina of Zazzau - A Hausa warrior queen.

Kandake Empress of Ethiopia - "A eunuch of great authority"

Queen Yaa Asantewaa - The Queen mother of Ejisu of the Ashanti Empire.

Step 2 - 'Phonetic' Transcription

It would not have made much sense to continue developing this project if I did not know how to pronounce the names of these girls and women until the very end of the work.

What is phonetic transcription?

Phonetic transcription is the visual representation of how words should sound.

How did I achieve this?

By taking each name of my five African princesses and constantly repeating them and finding the appropriate breaks.

I was able to achieve this through constant repetition to find the appropriate breaks of each name.

I continued to go over the transcriptions with people who were not familiar with my project, one of whom was an English teacher.

Note: Certain names have multiple transcriptions (see image to the right).
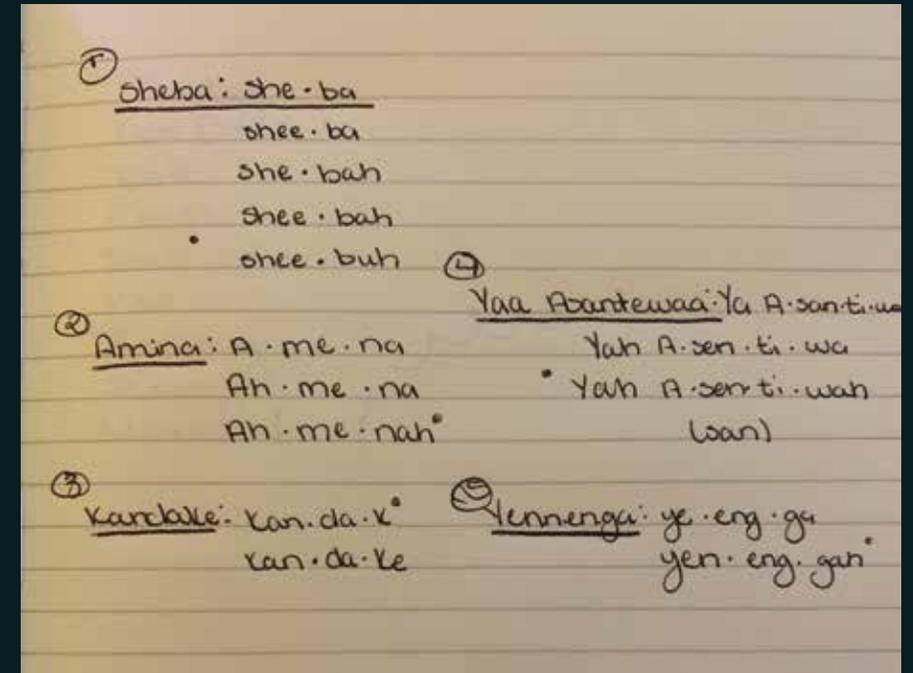
As you see in the image above each princess has multiple versions of their phonetic transcriptions. Based on how the names are pronounced and going over it with people who are not familiar with my project, *I believe the transcriptions ending in 'h' is the best choice.* Adding an 'h' at the end makes a difference in how people pronounce their names.

Step 3 - Collecting Visuals

To help with creating visuals for my project I have done extensive research to help develop the visual images for my project.

I have searched for my images through Pinterest, Google Images, and free image stock website such as Pexels and Unsplash.

Out of the four sites I have listed above to help guide my project, most of my images have come from Pinterest. I will give credit as to where the images have come from.

Why did I choose these images?

Skin tone, lighting, contrast, beauty.
As you see in the images I have provided above each woman is beautiful in their own way. I thought it would be best to choose women of a darker complexion to represent the princesses.

As you can see each woman has a head piece. Based off my research and meetings it was not uncommon for women to have their hair out of their faces. I thought this would have been an important factor to keep in mind and implement into my work.

Actual representation of women in each country
Here I have stated 'actual' because I want you all to know I didn't just look up "African princess" or "Black princess" and randomly select the images I came across. Like I have previously stated I wanted women of darker complexions, the lighting and contrast of the images, if they were wearing head pieces or not. To go further when searching for these images I made sure to type in' Ghanaian', 'Nigerian', and 'Ethiopian' women.
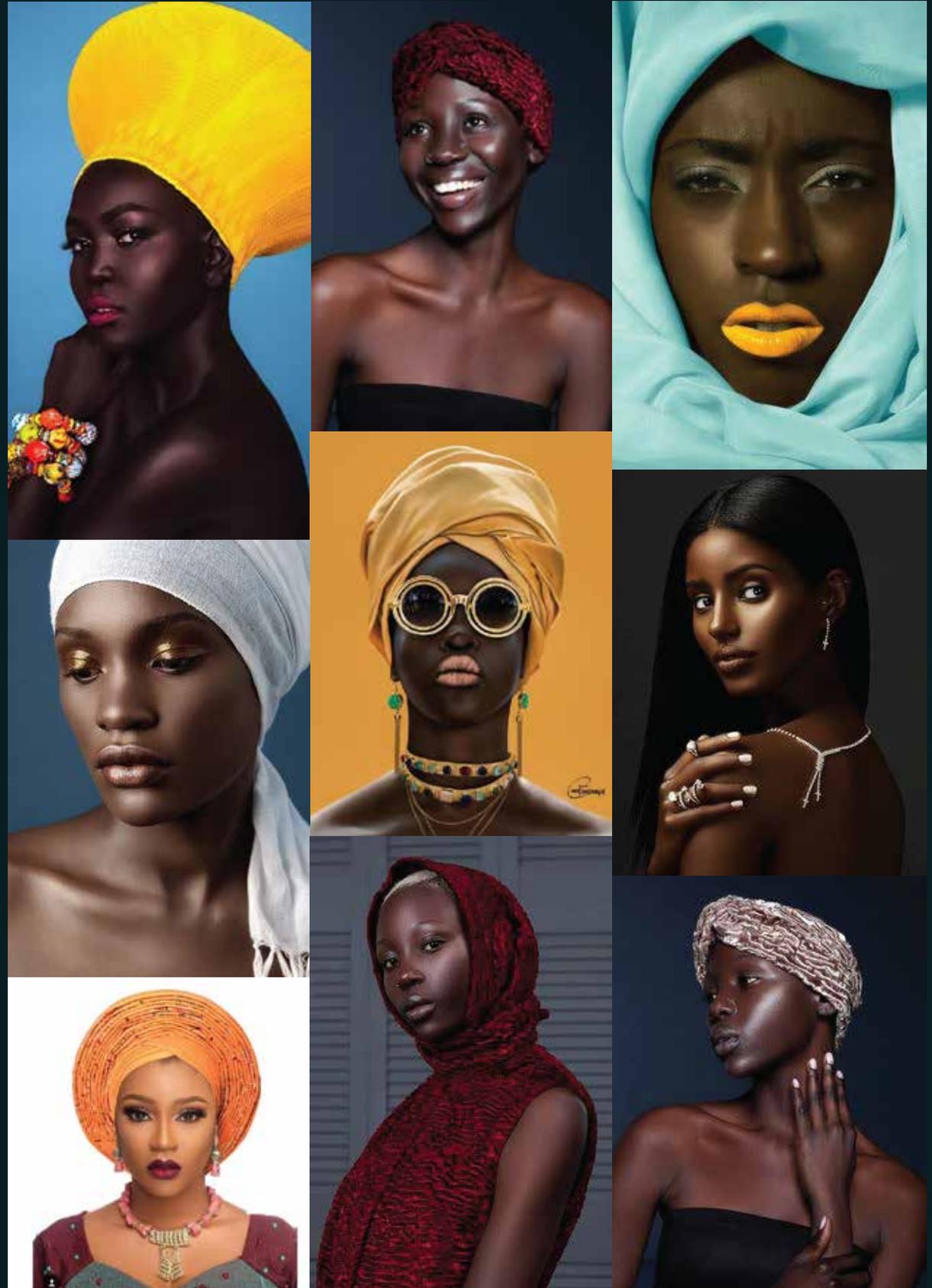
Step 4 - Creating the Visuals

Comparing the photos to my artwork

As I have stated above I found picture of women to represent the princesses. On the left you will see the original image and on the right you will see my first attempt to recreate the image (see images below).

With an images such as this I wanted to concentrate on the lights and shadows of her face; however, as you in the next image it didn't work out that well.

With an image such as this I wanted to concentrate on the lights and shadows of her face. However, as demonstrated in the image to the right, this proved to be really difficult.

I went through trying to layer the artwork with lines or only using lines to make the image more detailed or abstract (see images below).

Because I felt as though the images above weren't different enough compared to their original photo I decided to make all of them line work and layered to background to make it seem as though it was a cutout (see images below).

I tried making them into line drawings.

Other visuals I created.

This could include other styles I was thinking about/attempted.

Before I was able to find women to represent the princesses I thought using tribal masks from each country would be ok; however, as you see above I went in another direction.
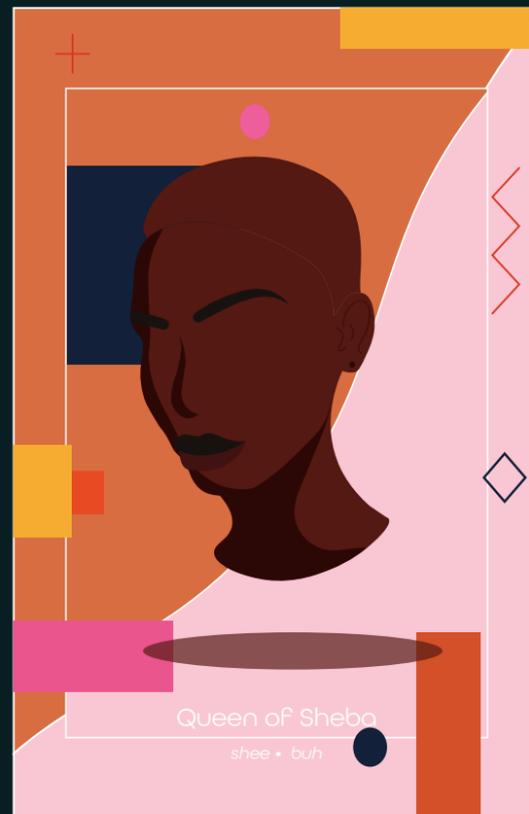
What is next?

The next process for my creative project is questioning myself: How can you further develop the artwork? Is it through the use of color, shapes, decorative elements, or getting rid of the linework completely? Which is it?
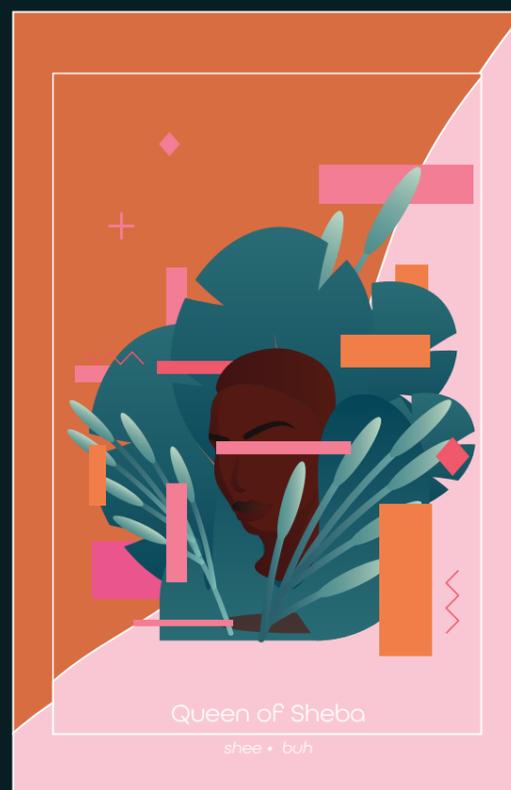
All of the above.

Below you will see my first draft of me developing my work.

Below you will see another draft of me developing my work. How could I further develop this project?

I decided to have a bit more fun with my project. I decided to use brighter colors for the background to give the project 'life'. I rearranged the decorative elements: diamonds, rectangles, zig-zags, and the plus signs closer to the women. Plants elements and gradients were added to help the artwork not appear to be flat

Queen of Sheba

shee • buh

Queen Amina

ah • me • nah

Kandake Empress of Ethiopia

kan • da • k

Princess Yennenga

yen • eng • gah

Text on the guide is 'All Round Gothic'.

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Feedback/Comments/Concerns?