

Masters of Hand-Painted Movie Posters- Jasper

Directed and released by videographer Michael Ansah in 2023, 'Masters of Hand-Painted Movie Posters' is an insightful and culturally relevant documentary of the work and life of Daniel Anum Jasper, a Ghanaian artist and one of the pioneers of the popular original hand-painted movie posters. These hand-painted posters, developed initially in the 1980s as a marketing tool for the vibrant cinema culture within the country, were displayed at local movie theaters. In this 8-minute documentary, Jasper recounts his experience as an artist in Ghana and the volatile nature of the craft, highlighting significant challenges he overcame through his years as an artist and emphasizing the importance of resilience and passion in finding fulfilment in art and cementing a legacy.

Jasper's journey into art began with talent and determination, a consistent factor he attributes his success to as an artist. With the support of his family, he learnt art while still in school, the shift system enabling him to be a student both in the formal school system and as informal art apprentice. He pioneered the development of larger movie posters as opposed to the smaller versions that were being made at the time, renting them out to be shown in the theatres. With the decline of the cinema culture and closure of local theatres, Jasper focused on other art forms, from portraits to signboards, and barbershop posters, and even training other artists including his brother (referred to as Stoga).

In the documentary, the uncertainty of working as an artist in Ghana is highlighted. Due to inflation and constant price increments in the country, the income of working artists is always unstable. Jasper addresses this challenge by gradual pricing increases, understanding the difficulty his customers may have in adjusting to the increments. The quote 'although you work daily, you

don't earn money daily, so you always have to create something that attracts people to buy' speaks to the instability of their work and how that drives innovation and creativity.

The appreciation of Ghanaian art by non-Ghanaians is another key revelation in the documentary. According to Jasper, despite the decline in demand for the hand-painted movie posters for local theatres, customers from foreign countries including the United States and the United Kingdom still commission the production of these custom posters. It is important to note that the reason for which Ghanaians do not patronize these poster creations is not explicitly stated and could be attributed to the high costs of living or general disinterest in the art form as well. However, Jasper still acknowledges the patronization from his customers regardless of their location.

'A legacy and money to not starve is all I want'. In the documentary, high significance is placed on legacy and fame. This highlights a value that is not uncommon for artists; even though the nature of their work is very unstable and does not have high financial benefits, artists like Jasper find fulfillment in knowing they are cementing a legacy with their work and greatly value the appreciation of their art by their customers. Jasper also acknowledges the importance of 'creating something with your hands', highlighting how informal skills like art and carpentry are timeless and beneficial.

Jasper's 8-minute documentary explores his Ghanaian artist journey, highlighting challenges and resilience, emphasizing the importance of passion and dedication in achieving artistic fulfillment and leaving a lasting legacy.

