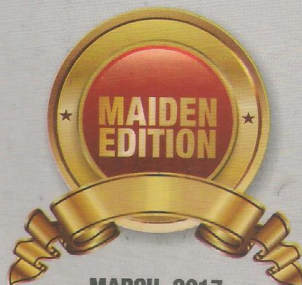
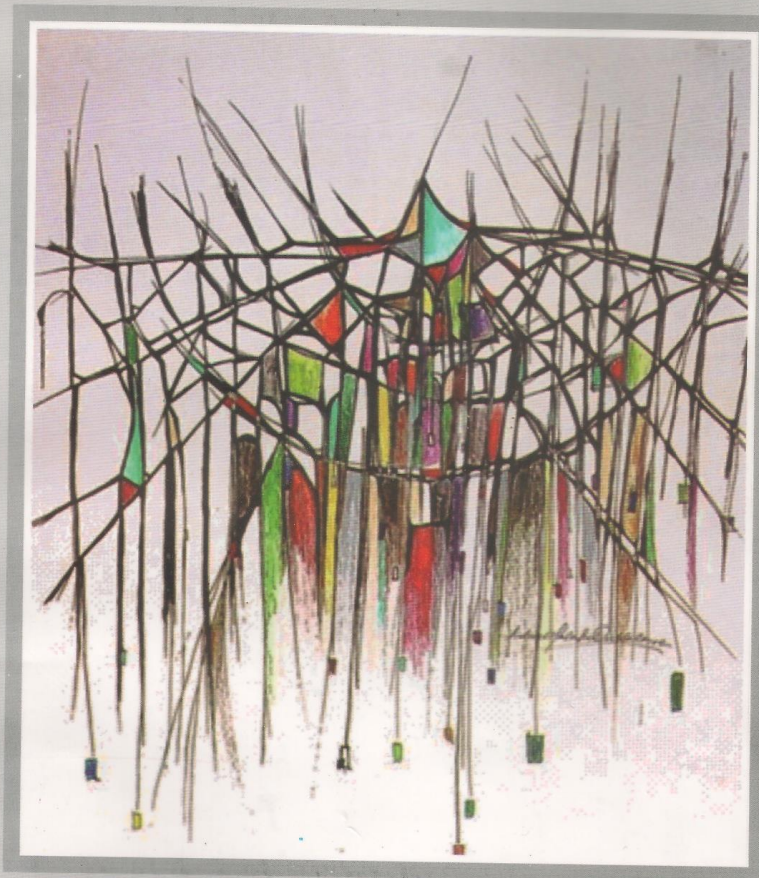


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Department of Visual and Performing Arts,
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A Visual Perspective of Rain on Windscreen in Painting.

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Abstract

Rain is one of the natural elements of the environment. The paper is aimed at exploring the visual artistic possibilities of the rain as seen through the windscreen of a vehicle which is basically designed for protecting against external forces when in the comfort of the vehicle. It discusses the rain and windscreen as a dual subject matter for artistic inspiration and expression. This paper would also, be examining the interplay between the rain droplets and the windscreen with the aim of using the impressions to create paintings on two dimensional surfaces. The paintings created, are based on the visual, aesthetic and appealing amoebic forms observed across the surface of the windscreen. Such works are seen to bear the ephemeral qualities of rain as it affects the visual appreciation of colour and other elements of art. It also considers conceptual interpretations of the works produced through an analysis of Op art.

Key words: Rain, Windscreen, Artist, Op Art

Introduction

Rain is a natural phenomenon that may annoy or inconvenience a lot of people but to some, it may bring a sense of peace, comfort as well as a sense of intrigue especially to the Visual Artist. It is a natural phenomenon that presents an entirely different visual perspective thus, forming the basis for a new means of perceiving the world. Rain when contained within a certain type of visual measurement such as a car windscreen, can present the artist with several elements for suitable visual expression. These elements include, line, colour, texture, and form. These elements, constitute the building blocks or the foundation of the paintings created as a crucial part of this paper's theoretical musings. Other aspects that form the main thrust of this paper include, the conceptual interpretations of the works produced, central problem of the studio exploration as well as the objectives of the paper. The paper, also considers, the central subject matters of expression i.e. effect of rain on windscreen. It provides a descriptive analysis of each in establishes theoretically, a relationship between the two. It looks also, at their differences as a natural entity and as a manmade object. The paintings produced are looked upon as the fruits of such an unlikely visual combination.

Subject matters

Theoretically in art, a subject matter is considered mostly, to be the central theme of the artist's preoccupation. It is the required information whether an object is two or three dimensional in nature, that the artist needs to base his/her visual exercises upon. It could also be described to be the idea or thought that engulfs the creative person and spurs him/her to visual action. Basically, the term subject or subject matter in art refers to the main idea represented in the artwork. The subject in art is basically the essence of the artwork. It combines with other elements to give the artist a voice to adequately communicate what he/she is feeling or the meaning of the created art work.

Ledrick (2013), identifies five different types of subject matter namely: still-life, portraiture, landscape, nature and abstract/non-objective. Works of art may have and do have more than one subject within a defined space. This is however, largely determined by the choice and judgment of the artist. Consequently, the works created to serve as the main thrust for the discussion within the confines of this paper bear more than one subject matter; i.e. rain and windscreen alongside the aforementioned elements of art.

Rain

Stanyer and Rosenberg (1996) say that, rain may be a gentle drizzle or a heavy torrent blown by the wind across the landscape. They further describe the natural phenomena as sometimes having a transparent quality, like a veil descending over the landscape.

Rain is further described as liquid water in the form of droplets that have condensed from atmospheric water vapor and then precipitated - that is, become heavy enough to fall under gravity. Rain is said to be a major component of the world's water cycle and is responsible for depositing most of the fresh water on the earth. It provides suitable conditions for many types of ecosystems, as well as water for hydroelectric power plants and crop irrigation. The major cause of rain production is moisture moving along three-dimensional zones of temperature and moisture contrasts known as weather fronts. Rain

can occur in different forms; smaller drops are called cloud droplets and their shape is spherical, then as a raindrop increases in size, its shape becomes more oblate, with its largest cross section facing the oncoming airflow.



Fig. 1, *Rain Drops On Rose Leaf*, 2014,
Source: wikimedia.com

Windscreen

A windscreen is a thick sheet of glass with one or more sections projecting upwards and across the dashboard of an automobile. It is meant to provide a certain level of protection from natural elements such as the wind, water, sunrays, and other external elements that may occur as a result of human activities. The windscreen also serves as a vital visual element, this is so, because it provides or serves as a viewfinder which allows the artistically inclined person to find or pin point a target or subject of interest.

Following the above exposition on the significant subject matters for this paper, that is rain and the windscreen, it becomes imperative to establish a connection between the two. Though of different origins, one being a natural element and the other a human creation, it is believed that, a systematic juxtaposition of the two can provide a dynamic platform for visual expression in two dimensional forms. This combination of a natural entity (*rain*) and the end product of human endeavor (*windscreen*) have upon observation, provided a unique means of viewing and reinterpreting the cityscape. This combination has provided what may be termed as an obscured image of the city/landscape to a lay man but to a creatively inclined mind, the view through the windscreen of a car while the rain is falling is an enhancement of already existing visually aesthetic scenery.

Conceptual Interpretation

For a work of art to be effective in communication, it is important to establish a sound foundation for its subsequent encounter with its intended audience, thus, the need for a conceptual foundation that the viewer if adequately ingrained in the knowledge of art can use for interpretation as well as understanding. When a satisfactory level of understanding is achieved by the audience, the degree of appreciation is or will be sufficient. Therefore it is imperative for works produced/created to have a succinct attachment to frameworks that subsequent interpretations can take place from. Therefore, the need for these set of works to be tied to the pioneering activities and proponents of Op Art.

In their ambience of visual perceptual art idiom, the proponents of Op art, took expression to the possible limits within the field of representation. Op or Optical Art, employs abstract patterns composed with a stark contrast of the foreground and background often in black and white for maximum contrast to produce effects that confuse and excite the eye. Jasian (1997), aptly says: it is when the man is tricked into seeing that which does not exist because of the physical conditions which are created. It is that type of illusion where the normal processes of seeing are brought in doubt, mainly through the optical phenomena of the work.

The term optical is generally applied to those two and three dimensional art works which explore and exploit the fallibility of the eye. The generalization which is pertinent and observed is that, all Op art works are abstract in nature, essentially formal, exact, and that traces could be seen as to its emerging development out of constructivism (Jasian, 1997). Op art essentially possesses the dynamic quality which provokes illusory images and sensations in the spectator, whether this happens in the actual physical structure of the eye or in the brain itself, is another matter. Thus, one can deduced that Op Art in a way, fundamentally and significantly deals with visual illusion.

The paintings produced for exposition within this paper, bear and draw their ideas and conceptual foundations from the activities and principles of Op art. In their search for optical perception of shapes and colours they revalue the concept of real or simulated movement. It is an exploration of painting in the effects of retinal overstimulation through the calculated confrontations of colours and contrast. It systematically explored the effects of optical sensations in painting. The movement's leading exponents were Victor Vasarely and Bridget Riley who used patterns and colours in their

paintings to achieve a disorientating effect on the viewer. In their use of repetition patterns painted in high contrast colours of black and white created illusions of movement which fooled a viewer's sense of perspective. This study looked at the technique employed in the concept, the idea of movement as it relates to the windshield of a vehicle, the movement of the windshield forms and the wavy and spiral looking patterns in diverse directions. Light travels through the water which in turns refracts images seen through it.

From the aforementioned about Op Art, it can be succinctly deduced that Optical art is a mathematical themed form of abstract art, which uses repetition of forms and colour to create vibrating effects, more patterns, foreground – background confusion, an exaggerated sense of depth, and other visual effects that confuse and fool the eye. It is also, the visual situation whereby both negative and positive spaces in a composition are of equal importance, as Op art kind of works could not be created without both. This is the point where the study has taken its studio explorations further by seeing visual illusion in fluid and amoebic patterns on the windscreen of a moving vehicle while rain falls with carefully chosen elements such as colour, line and shape to achieve a maximum effect. The illusions generated are ephemeral so it doesn't have a definite pattern to follow.

The works

Kramer in Sayre (1989) explains that numbers are neutral. They make people look at a picture for what they are. This is the rationale behind the untitled but numerical identification of the works created, because the title adds to the confusion of understanding and appreciation of an art work.

In the course of creating the paintings, it was observed that the rain on the windscreen was basically dominated by two main physical characters; droplets of rain on the windscreen and the wavy like patterns formed by increased momentum of the rain fall.

Figures 1 and 2 shows the rain droplets on a moving windscreen of a vehicle. Although they were at different momentum of the rain. *Figure I* shows the view through the windscreen with the rain drops at a low capacity, while *Figure II*, depicts a varying view/scenery with the rain drops at a heightened intensity. It would be observed that, though not as expected, some of the droplets are not oval as it would seem but rather flattened and in some way stretched horizontally. This is due to the moving force of the car and the slanting curvy nature of the windscreen.



Figure 1, Title: *No. 1*, Medium: Oil on Canvas, Size: 152cm x 122 cm, Date: 2015

Figure 1 shows the commencement and the interplay of the two key elements in this study. The rain as it falls on the windscreen of a moving vehicle, appears spontaneous and scattered. The windscreen is occupied sparingly, by varied round droplets of rain which are smeared in the middle of the windscreen. The transparent nature of the windscreen, shows a view of moving (rear view) vehicles. On either sides of the road, are slightly blurred, storey buildings. The scene appears deserted without much sign of human life/activity because of the rain except for some human activities shown on the left side beneath one of the storey buildings. Here the artist, represents all aspects of the scenery as seen. There is little or no alterations.



Figure II, Title: *No. 2*, Medium: Oil on Canvas, Size: 152cm x 122cm, Date: 2016

Figure II is a painting of a street scene. The view shows two vehicles on the road at the centre of the composition with one of them facing the viewer's direct line of vision and the other, backing the viewer. There is a plethora of rain droplets scattered on the windscreen in diverse sizes. These are

reflected upon by the vehicles full lights thus, creating a reflective and obscured view of the windscreen of the ongoing vehicle. The reflective nature of the light on the glass, occupies the central area of the picture plane giving the viewer the feeling of being inside the vehicle. This painting bears the qualities of Op art.

Figure III falls in the second category of works created for this paper. This characterises the wavy like patterns created by the heavy down pour of rain water on a windscreen of a moving vehicle. Going by the characteristics of the wavy movement of the water, the colours move arbitrarily and freely on the windscreen with the contour lines of elements being lost into it. This is a result of reverse contrast called the assimilation of colour or the spreading effect (Floyd, 1996). He further explains the phenomenon of brightness of white or darkness of black spread into neighboring regions or other areas of a composition as the case may be. Thus, colours may appear to spread into neighboring areas appearing more alike, rather than to embrace their differences. Here, water is like a chameleon because it has the efficacy to take on the colours around it and become one with it. This gives the illusion of melting colour across the smooth surface of the windscreen.



Figure III, Title: "No 3", Medium: Oil on Canvas, Size: 140cm x 110cm, Date: 2016

Figure III bears visually the intensity of the rain droplets. It shows the viewer, an increased momentum in the downpour of water. The increase in momentum turns the droplets of rain into smears that are arbitrary, and fluid in their formation, moving haphazardly across the concave surface of the windscreen. The contour lines of all elements in the cityscape on the windscreen have become amoebic and fluid in nature. They have dissolved and synthesized into a new paradigm of composition. The sky area, due to the fluid nature of the rain on the windscreen has flown into the vanishing point of the composition downwards into the composition weakening the perspective of the painting. Same can be seen on the buildings, vehicles and on the road itself.

Conclusion

It was discovered that there is a synthesis of forms and colour element which are conspicuously seen in the water movement across the windscreen, as it affects different times of the day. The colours of the atmosphere merged with the flowing water thereby, becoming transient in nature; whilst maintaining its free and fluid movement in tributary forms running haphazardly across the windscreen. The forms and elements are gradually dissolving and merging into one. Dominating colours lose their identity as water which in itself is crystal clear and absorbs such colours into itself. Also depth which is a means of understanding perspective in nature is being impaired. The rain water on the windscreen has created a relationship between the foreground and background of a picture plane. There is the possibility that the convex nature of the rain droplets on the windscreen has/is instrumental to why motorists find it hard to continue driving at some certain level or point in the rain. This is so because the rain droplets are turned outwards reversing the lights despite being flattened on the windscreen. The works produced bear characterizations of Op art. Though the first parts of the works are naturalistic as seen in figure I, subsequent paintings (figure, III) are abstract in nature. They are however, created to, give the viewer the impression of movement, hidden images, flashing and vibrating patterns, or swelling or warping.

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