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Exploring the Solar Window Film: the Making of Landscape Compositions

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Abstract

Art as a creative Endeavour has experienced diverse usage of media; Styles and Forms. These media are so manipulated for artistic expressions in two dimensional (2D), and in three dimensional (3D) art forms. This paper will address exploring an alternative material as a medium in executing artistic expressions in 2D. The Solar Window film is a 2ply celluloid clear and coloured material used for tinting solid plain surfaced glass(especially for car window glasses) for either decoration as in personal vehicles or as obscurity as in Ambulance vehicles against public viewing. This paper also emphasizes that its use is limited to only flat colour rendering. This is more restrictive compared with the flexible uses in flat or full colour half tone

rendering of artistic expression in 2D common with other mediums like pencil, water-colour, Acrylic, Oil paint etc. A composition shall be referred as case study. In this paper the Solar window film will be termed as “tint” and are in many colours and their tones.

Keywords: Tint, Medium Two-dimension, Colour, Materials.

Introduction

Making of artistic composition both in 2D and 3D art representations involve the use of suitable materials or medium that can be manipulated accordingly. The history of art is as old as man. Since the time or period when man started using available materials that are suitable for these two different art forms the fluidic(liquid to viscous) materials are suitable for mostly 2D art representations, while solid materials like stone, wood, and solid viscous as clay etc are suitable for 3D art representations mostly called Sculpture and Ceramics respectively. Before the colonial era in Africa these 2D materials mentioned above at the inception of formal art practices were naturally obtained from organic materials like wood barks, leaves, fruits and flower petals; different colours were extracted from them, and also from some mineral deposits like Marble, Charcoal, kaolin, Lime stone, Granite etc. all these were explored and experimented by the “pioneer” traditional artists who went the extra mile to discovering these materials for artistic expressions in Africa mostly for religious and cultural purposes.

With the coming of the Western cultural and their attendant influence on Africa, most of our original materials were discarded for these new “manufactured for art” materials. Art materials that were manufactured for artistic purposes are like Acrylic, Oil paint, water colours, Pastels, Crayon, and Pencil etc. To a great extent as much as Art experienced a face-lift its mode of execution was hitherto restricted to the use of these specifically manufactured medium to be recognized as an acclaimed artist. The traditional materials are now being made obsolete and “primitive” eroding the original concept, mode and purpose. However, as mentioned above creativity has no limit and as such the world of art has advanced into the flexible use of items and available materials deemed suitable to satisfy ones creative urges; hence both the manufactured and organic materials which are far from being mediums for artistic expression are now being explored effectively. These materials have proven to be very effective and have given rise to new dimensions of artistic expressions like the Mixed media, Installation and Digital art. Creative persons have now broken barriers into a new knowledge

of using other items especially wastes from even electrical gadgets to recyclable materials of paper and plastic origins used interchangeably for artistic expressions. Peculiar to this paper is the use of a manufactured material called the Solar Window film, originally meant to tint car windows.

The Medium: Solar Window Film

It's a roll of very light 2ply transparent celluloid of about 120 inches by 20 inches. This film is sold mostly in automobile decoration items shops in Nigeria, and will in this paper be referred to as "tint". It's a combination of two very thin light transparent celluloid materials; one is clear and the other coloured. They are manufactured in different colours, like shades of blue, brown, black, gold and silver and in fact all colors. When ready to use the two films are separated. The clear side is discarded while the coloured side is used. The discarded side only acts as a protective covering to the gummy side of the coloured tint used to obscure transparent objects especially car windows.

As transparent as the coloured tints are to see through, some are very dark tones that obscure visibility of the car interior. As stated in the manufacturers literature for this product "this product protects vehicle, home and commercial interiors against excess heat factors, resulting in a more comfortable and economical environment". Solar Window Film substantially reduces interior glare and fading problems caused by sunlight and provides occupants with improved daytime privacy".

Though presently posing problems with security operatives it has against the law become a fashion to motorists in Nigeria. Lighter tones have always impressed aesthetic qualities of cars against the very dark tones that project images of secrecy and criminal tendencies. Ambulances are among the most common users of the dark tones that really obscure visibility most probably for the purpose of disallowing the public from viewing their interiors.

Design Concepts: - Experimentation and Findings

For over fifteen years, this tint has undergone experimentation even till now in search for better and easier methods for executing artistic concepts in 2D art. As discussed earlier, since the tint is used on glass it therefore implies further uses on similar flat, smooth and non-greasy surfaces. As cautioned by the manufacturers; it should not be used on any type of plastic surface or on thermal double-glazed glass.

Since the tint could understandably be applied on only acceptable surface like glass (not patterned) and cardboard paper of any thickness the only concept to be addressed in this paper will only be design concept on colourless clear glass.

Designs on glass are executed opposite side, from right to left since the final design will be viewed from the other side of the glass left to right. Unlike the glass, designs on the cardboard (not transparent) are placed directly left to right as in direct application and normal presentation of the original artwork. Most preferably also on white cardboard as under-board paper which reduces interference of any background colour from this under-board paper if coloured cardboard was used.

To make a design on glass is more flexible in terms of handling the tint since it involves using soapy water, which enables the designer to move the cut – out shapes around to required position before rubbing down with a squeegee to mop-up all water to rub off bubbles between tint and glass.

Designing on cardboard with tint requires extra care, water is avoided and totally eliminated, hence any careless placement of tint on paper results to re-doing the whole work as the tint will gum permanently to the paper.

Executing design concepts on glass or cardboard must be from initial finished visual sketches especially for beginners, to avoid mistakes. With designing on glass, tint could be removed from or trimmed on glass to replace or make necessary corrections respectively, but if the tint is mistakenly placed on cardboard it will result to either changing the design concepts or condemning the design for a fresh start as stated above. The nature of the tint does not permit designs with half tone. Instead such effects are achieved by using thin stripes of lines at different spacing between lines or different sizes of line stripes on equal spacing. Otherwise all designs appear in flat colours with defined edges.

Getting Started: Tools and Equipment

Getting started involves some fundamental procedures which must be followed in the use of some tools in order to achieve desired goals. There are tools and methods common to designing on glass and designing on cardboard paper. These tools and equipment range from drawing table, drawing board, and craft knife with very sharp blades, paper-gum-tape, squeegee and a clean handkerchief. Clean water and soap is peculiar only when working on glass,

other tools peculiar to designing on only glass include circle cutter, French curves and steel rule.

Procedure

There shall be only one composition explained in this paper to substantiate the use of this material in making landscape composition on plain glass.

Procedure when making composition on plain glass

Compositions on glass are executed opposite side, from right to left since the final design will be viewed from the other side of the glass left to right looking like the originally sketched composition; unless the artist is not concerned about how the original composition looks like. However, wherever an alphabet or a number is indicated in the original composition the arrangement of right to left placement will become compulsory. A careful look at figure 1 will reveal to us that apart from the large areas that will be occupied by one colour details of the other elements in the composition are composed from strips of the intended colour. Another feature that is common in this type of composition is the laying of double layers of tint to achieve darker tones.

The strips mentioned above are cut according to the required width for the desired area in the composition for easy handling. When compared to some other materials like the straw length, Enenajor (2009) observed that they have restricted features due to their nature. The tint has enough width to manipulate curves of any kind. To be ready for application the strip is cut at one end and opened using two little pieces of adhesive tape in separating the two ply tint. The clear portion is discarded while the coloured part is used (Place tint on the wet glass surface and moved to the required position before rubbing down with a squeegee to mop-up all water to rub off bubbles between tint and glass. It is worth mentioning here that the two phases of this art style comprises of the wet (initial) stage and the second; the dry stage where details are made using the tiny strips cut in very small pieces. As mentioned in this paper half tones are impossible and hence these very small pieces when properly handled gives an illusion of tonal shades. In some cases more details are made by cutting excess and unwanted portions out from the glass using sharp blade. The reason for the dry second phase is that the pieces for making details will be too small to move around the wet surface and will seem impossible for the squeegee to press down.



Fig.1: Impressionistic Display f Tint

The work above fig. 1 clearly shows and impressionistic display of tint for nature as described earlier. One could see the over-lays of a particular colour to derive shades of same colour in creating depth, there by showing some form of perspective. This is a typical landscape composition common in the Niger Delta area of Nigeria. The very white areas are portion where sharp blade was used to create high lights. The surface in view is quite smooth while the back is where the whole arrangement of the tints is made.

According to Gilbert (1998) there are no special art materials for all forms of art. The essence of this study is to open-up and add to the repertoire of artistic materials for expressive purposes. It is also of interest to note that very many manufactured items could be used more effectively than the purpose for which they were manufactured; this solar window film is one. It is also of interest to observe that art is not restrictive as to which material fit its suitability to exhibit aesthetic values.

Related Art forms

Other forms of art that are related to this form of art are the Collage, Mural Painting and Appliqué. The only major differences between these art forms

mentioned above and the tint is that the tint is transparent while these ones are opaque. This quality of transparency allows for a lot of differences; like colour tones overlapping and giving the resultant colours; for example; where yellow tint overlaps a blue color tint the resultant colour of green appears. This is also expected in the whole composition where colour overlap can be more than two colours. At the end there will be fewer colours with fewer overlays resulting in many colours and tones.

Collage

This form of art involves the pasting of pieces of paper of different colours, shapes and sizes to make a composition. Unlike in using the tint which is transparent; the pieces of paper used in a collage work is opaque and not transparent.

Mural Painting

The relationship between this form of art and using the tint is in the area of flat colour presentation with definite edges; where half tones are deliberately avoided. The type of paint used in Mural Painting is also opaque, though transparent paints exists they are very hard to come by, hence only opaque Paints are commonly used. Where an original colour is needed inside a background colour it is require that a cut-out is made to the base and replaced by the needed colour or tone. While in Mural Painting where the colours are opaque the second colour covers the first painted colour completely where applicable.

Appliqué

Applique is mostly associated with fabric. Fabrics of different designs and colours are stitched to form a composition on a background fabric. It could be hand-stitched or machine stitched at the edges.

Recommendation / Conclusion

Glass is a very delicate material, so in working on it the table should always be padded to avoid breakages. From experience it is recommended that no intricate designs or works are recommended. Even in making a landscape composition the features and elements should be mostly large and simple.

The size of the elements used to make the compositions is advised to be large in other to satisfy one of the advantages of the tint. This is the safety advantage of using the tint. In case of sudden damage of breakages it does

not chatter and scatter, but instead the tint will hold the pieces together. For this reason, apart from the aesthetic value of this form of art on glass, it is recommended for use on passage sliding doors in big lobbies as where there has been no notice of their presence had caused real hazards to passers-by who walk into clear glass doors unknowingly. For this reason ninety percent of the total area of the glass should be covered with tint. It is also recommended for every glassy portion of the building.

Definition of Terms

1. Materials - Used also as medium
- 2, Mixed media - Work of art containing more than one medium
3. Only-pencil - Enlarged line sketch of original work in pencil
4. Other materials - Any other material not manufactured specifically for artistic expression.
5. Paper-gum-tape - A manufactured product use for affixation
6. Squeegee - Any rubber / plastic material used to rub-on any flat surface to mop-up soapy water from between the tint and glass.
7. 2D - Two dimensional
8. 3D - Three dimensional

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