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Use of Elements and Application of Principles of Art and Design in the Creation of Pictorial Compositions among Fine Art Students at Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya

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In the creation of any work of art, whether in two or three dimension, the use of elements and principles is fundamental. It has been acknowledged across ages that the purpose of the creation of any work of art is to create some form of defined meaning or express some artistic phenomenon. It has also been acknowledged that elements and principles have a symbiotic relationship. In examining the paintings and drawings presented by students, this study seeks to explore the relationship between elements and principles as they are applied in the paintings and drawings to determine the effectiveness of this synchrony in terms of visual enhancement and the eventual creation of meaning. The study features students' work at various levels where they spontaneously created their paintings and drawings with focus on the use of elements and principles. However, their usage and application were spontaneous and not geared towards specific responses, which was necessary for the outcome of the study. From preliminary enquiry, it emerged that although students had received adequate tutorials about the use of elements and principles in the creation of artwork, they did not apply them from an academic perspective but instinctively. It was therefore envisaged that focusing on the quality of their work would ultimately yield better results about their comprehension of the use of elements and principles as featured in their work. This study, therefore, used the execution and analysis of their practical work as testimony to their comprehension. The selection of 35 presentations, including black and white pencil drawings, provided a wide spectrum and depicted how students used and understood the application of both elements and principles and were deemed adequate for the study. The paintings featured the use of colour as an integral element, and the pencil drawings were strong in depicting textural effects and using value. The presentations featured different subject matter which was important for the creative essence of work.

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INTRODUCTION

Any work of art is created by the coordinated use of elements which are often described as tools. As will be discussed later, the concept of elements as 'building blocks' in the creation of a work of art cannot be overemphasized. It must, however, be viewed in the context of the purposeful selection and use of one element and its qualities in relation to the qualities of another which are all woven together in creative synchrony. Elements are, therefore, important because they are the visual ingredients upon which a work of art is constructed, making the outcome recognizable, describable, and ultimately analysable. On this importance, Esaak (2019) notes that, "Knowing these elements will allow you to analyse, appreciate, write and chat about art, as well as being of help should you create art yourself."

In comprehending elements and their usage in creating a work of art, it is equally important to internalize applying principles as 'guiding' factors that help the artist visually organize the elements. Though elements are picked as tools or ingredients, they cannot be placed in composition without a modicum of thoughtful integration or purposeful order, whether in pictorial compositions, reliefs or creations that are fully in the round. Hence, even if elements are identified but the artist does not know how they are integrated and unified into a meaningful composition, these elements will remain static. Any work created without due consideration of the role of principles and their symbiotic relationship with elements in composition, will ultimately be devoid of meaning or expressive discourse since there is not artwork without meaning. On the importance of meaning, Chaban

(2020) observes that "To have a deeper understanding of art, its meaning and creativity, we need to understand that art is more than just a visual expression. It can also represent an idea, experience, imagination, a thought-provoking subject, or even invoke motivation for the viewer."

Students of art must comprehend, as a matter of creative practice, the relationship between elements on one hand and principles on the other. This comprehension not only helps the students to process this creative synergy but also to fathom the subsequent creative possibilities that exist. du Plessis (2022) notes that

"It is important to understand the elements of art if you are an art student, or even if you are an art enthusiast because they act as guidelines or tools to not only compose an artwork but also analyze it. Once the art elements are understood, the possibilities of how they can be applied are seemingly endless."

LITERATURE REVIEW**Definition of Elements**

Elements of art and design are often described as tools or building blocks that artists use to create a work of art. The concept of 'tools' is akin to a carpenter who has to select and pick his tools carefully, one at a time, in order to fulfil a certain objective and, thereby, create a holistic piece of furniture. Likewise, in creating a work of art and formulating an artistic composition, the artist chooses his or her elements systematically to 'construct' his art in accordance with the usefulness and quality of each element chosen as a building block. For instance, in a painting, it can be argued that line and shape are 'foundational'

elements since they are used to lay out the composition and to define objects. On the other hand, texture, colour and value are seen to be ‘enhancing’ elements because by the nature of their qualities, they help to direct and ultimately focus the viewer’s eyes upon the pertinent parts of the painting. These elements are inter-related, bear visual orderliness, and ultimately build up from the base to the point of refinement or what is referred to as ‘form.’ In a real practical sense, however, because of their inherent interrelationships, elements are applied spontaneously and quite often simultaneously; the artist seeks to be more spontaneously creative rather than merely calculative. In the composition of a work of art, elements are applied guided by principles, a symbiotic relationship that students and other artists must well understand. In understanding the connection between elements and principles, du Plessis (2022) notes that,

“A useful way of understanding the art elements is by thinking of them as formal rules that give an artwork definition. There are also art principles that work in tandem with the art elements and are often recognized as “organizing” principles or “principles of design.”

Line

Line is the most basic element of art and design fundamentally because it is foundational; all the beginnings of creative art is based on the line used to provide preliminary sketching and create recognizable shapes, designs and refined or complex line drawings. A line is defined as the enjoinder of dots from one point to another; dots on their own do not define a line until they are enjoined to form a familiar path leading to a recognizable visual entity, whether merely directional or a recognizable shape. One fundamental use of lines is to create shapes that are recognizable as components of subject matter. In this regard du Plexis (2022) notes that, “Shapes are often described in terms of being building blocks; we can start an artwork by first drawing the main shapes that will be needed and expanded on and conversely, we can analyze artwork by determining the dominant shapes that compose

the subject matter.” Lines can be narrow or thick and can be manipulated and controlled to create certain expressions as well as create forms, shapes and figures in specifications that are recognizable. Lines can also be implied and not necessarily visibly present in a painting or drawing. For instance, lines may be defined by edges of shapes and figures, which may suggest perspective and depth that help guide the eye over the nature of composition spontaneously or subconsciously. Lines may also be expressive, particularly in drawings where an artist uses a concentration of lines to express certain emotions; meaning that a certain concentration of hand movement denotes a certain emotion expressed by the lingering emphasis of the hand movement that depict a certain dynamism. Kumar (2021)) notes that “The arrangement of lines can also communicate emotion. A series of tightly packed lines might suggest chaos or confusion, while a series of widely spaced lines might convey serenity or peace.” They may also show motion, particularly in gestural drawings that depict a defined movement and direction of motion even as it is frozen in the pose.

Shape

Lines are transformed into recognizable shapes and when these shapes are used in a composition, they help the artist to express or propagate a certain message or phenomenon. It can be said that the purpose of line in a pictorial composition is fundamentally to define shapes. All physical entities, including objects and all other forms in their entirety as manifested in nature, exist in their respective specific and, therefore, recognizable shapes. The careful study, synchrony, and the myriad of interactions with these shapes in a work of art enable an artist’s ideas and desired expression to resonate with the audience. Shapes are nearly always described by the use of lines whether or not the lines are deliberately inserted in an initial sketch or whether the use of colours, textural effects, or value suggests them. These other elements are used to differentiate shapes by using definable edges. Esaak (2019) observes that, “At its most basic, a shape is created when a line

is enclosed: a line forms the boundary, and the shape is the form circumscribed by that boundary. Line and shape are two elements in art that are nearly always used together.” Art would essentially be indescribable and indefinable without using shapes in composition in whatever artistic dispensation. The artist uses shapes to underscore a creative objective and the viewers, in turn, recognize those shapes and unravel the artist’s intention. An artist may use common *geometric* shapes that are easily recognizable such as circles, squares, rectangles, and triangles among others. However, artists in their creativity regularly use *organic* shapes that inform and enhance their creativity. Organic shapes describe objects as they exist in nature such as trees, stones, pebbles, or any other objects which lack constant defined edges and are created by lines that are freer flowing.

Light and dark –Value

To further develop shapes into artistic forms that bear an illusion of three dimension on an otherwise flat surface, the application of light areas and dark areas is necessary. When objects are well shaded, that is, there is a clear and purposeful application of light areas, dark areas, and shadows, they project an illusion of either solidity or volume (voids) and help to make forms more convincing to the viewer. According to Orme (2024), “When it’s done well, shading can make drawings look three-dimensional with a variety of textures. Shading can also be used to mimic light and shadow within a picture, which will make your subject leap from the page.” With colour, value refers to the lightness or darkness of a given colour which is achieved by the application of light and dark to colour in a tonal range from the very darkest tone to the very lightest tone. This tonal range is created by the addition of measured quantities of black to a given colour to create ‘dark tones and measured quantities of white to create ‘light tones.’ In certain paintings, artists have been able to use the effect of light and dark tones to create desired illuminative effects that become a key part of the description of their paintings including focusing

or directing the viewer’s eye towards the centre of interest. Value also helps to create an illusion of depth, textural effects, and movement. Objects are seen and determined by the presence of light which reflects on the human eye. The human mind can subsequently process these effects of light to rationalize the presence, shape, texture, and general nature of given objects. Therefore, it is important to internalize these effects in the context of value in drawing and painting to create convincing work. Silka (2017) observes that:

“In two-dimensional artworks, the application of value can help give a shape the illusion of mass or volume or give the entire composition a sense of lighting and depth. By playing with effects of shading and of contrast, artists manipulate the public’s eye and attempt to guide it to the focal point of the painting or drawing.”

In a drawing or painting, shadows are also created by depicting dark patches that follow certain distinctive edges that underscore the commensurate presence of perceived solid objects. In a composition, the grounding of objects or how they rest upon a given surface is manifested by the presence their respective shadows. Without definitive shadows, objects tend to float within the picture plane.

Colour

Colour by its nature is the most visibly striking of the elements; all items and all physical aspects of nature exist and are defined by their colours and all their qualities. These qualities are described by their intensity, brilliance, dullness, or even the emotions and moods they permeate. When an artist wishes to create a painting or any other genre of art, colour is always a major consideration whether they choose natural colours or colours that are manipulated to meet desired objectives and respond to certain types of expression. Pan *et al* (2023) note that “For contemporary artists colour is a separate element of pictorial expression and the most important means of expression. Colour not only enriches a painting but also expresses volume, movement and emotion.” Colour emanates when light waves

manifest upon an object and are then reflected on our eyes where each light wave bears a distinct colour. The properties of colour are hue, intensity or saturation and value. In terms of psychological associations, colours associated with reds, yellows and oranges on the colour wheel are often described as hot or warm, denoting their association with heat and permeation of high energy, optimism and excitement. According to colour psychology, red is specifically associated with energy. Ferreira (2024) observes that “Red really grabs your attention. It’s a color full of energy, excitement, and sometimes even a hint of danger.” Colours which are clustered around blues, greens and purples are often described as cold or cool denoting the antithesis of heat and the association with subdued energy, Colour is often used alongside colour tones in order to avoid flatness and instead to create a feeling of depth and solidity. Colour tones are created when colour is mixed with either black, to create dark tones, or with white to create light tones in a wide ranging tonal range from which the artist can choose. In certain sculptural work natural colours of the material in use are incorporated in the composition to take full advantage of their natural beauty. In a painting, the artist uses colors to express various emotions and attract the viewer's attention. Hence colours, can be bright and pure and exude intensity and great energy. Colours can be used against each other to create the necessary contrast in order to address a certain phenomenon. On the essence of the usage of colour in artistic expression, Hussain (2021) observes that,

“In many instances, colour choices are a way to confront and process troubling emotions, by projecting them onto the canvas, embodying them in material form. Such creative use of colour can render tangible obscure and abstract emotions, which in turn facilitates the subject in navigating these mind states and moods.”

Texture

Texture refers to the surface character of any object or natural entity. All surfaces have a textural description whether rough, course, smooth, glassy, scaly, patterned, prickly or sandy.

In three-dimensional art like in sculpture and ceramics, artists use real tangible textures as they exist in nature or try to create certain decorative textures by using a variety of tools and techniques. In two-dimensional art, textures are imitated to resemble the tangible textures by using lines, shapes and shading in either drawing or painting; hence these textures are implied. Farr (2016) notes that

“Real, tangible texture can be created through endless tactile possibilities: cutting, building, tearing, or layering of materials, for example. Implied texture is created using other elements of art, including form, line, shape and colour.”

Textures are very helpful in identifying and describing the nature of forms in a work of art. Artists are, therefore, keen to use implied textures that the viewer can easily visually associate with real objects such as the glassy texture of a wine glass, the patterned and prickly texture of a pineapple, the course texture of a bark of a tree, the texture of a gravel surface, the scaly texture of an animal skin among countless others. In sculptural art, artists use specialized tools to create tangible textures that one can touch and feel in describing the natural texture; in other works, real, natural texture is incorporated in the work of art. Since texture helps to differentiate surface characters, it is very important in describing form; artists use it to delve into the visual intricacies of their expressive work. Texture also contributes to the creation of depth and realism in a drawing or painting. In painting implied textures can bring a painting to life, Deguzman (2023) notes that “Texture is a powerful tool for artists, allowing them to give their artwork more depth and visual interest. By adding different textures to their paintings, artists can create unique effects that engage the viewer and evoke emotion.”

Mass/Space

The concept of mass and space is often always seen alongside each other. A mass is always seen in the context of its corresponding space. In a three-dimensional dispensation, a certain mass, like a tree trunk, exists as a natural entity because

the visual balance of the space around it exists. Any interference with this balance results in a new visual set up. It is this relationship between mass and space that artists use and exploit to create a desired artistic outcome. In sculptural work for instance, when a sculptor uses tools to chip away at the trunk of a tree, what he or she really does is to displace mass with corresponding space, the balance of which describes the kind of sculptural outcome. Mass and space are, therefore, intricately intertwined with the creation of form and the balance between the two is extremely deliberate. In two-dimensional art the concept remains the same but lacks the real-life tangible effect of sculptural art. In a pictorial composition, all forms create the 'mass' and all the spaces in-between and around them that enable the audience to make out the forms as integral aspects of the composition are the 'spaces'.

Form

Form is not a single element in itself but refers to the end product resulting from use of elements in their entirety, often seen as a holistic 'visual organization.' When an artist seeks to represent forms as they exist in nature, they combine all the elements to create an illusion of three dimension on a flat surface such as in drawing and painting. The end result of that quest, which is descriptive of the painting or drawing is referred to as 'form' and is, therefore, associated with the creation of meaning in a work of art. In this regard Anthony (2023) observes that, "Most artists make use of light, shadows, colour, negative space, and defining an object's contours to resurrect "form" on a flat work." Often form is also used in reference to objects represented on flat paper to resemble their real-life referents. This is by the application of light and dark areas, colour, and textures. In this context, this may refer to geometric forms or forms that emanate from geometrically defined shapes and may be used to create an artwork as they manifest. Organic forms lack angular definition and are aligned to real forms as they exist in nature and artist often manipulate these organic forms to express meaning in their work.

Review of Principles

Definition of Principles

If elements are described as building blocks upon which an artist creates his or her artwork, then principles can be described as guidelines that help in that creative process. In this regard, if elements are 'what' the artist uses in the creation of a work of art, then principles are 'how' those elements should be applied. Therefore, there is a symbiotic relationship between elements and principles. It must be emphasized, however, that this relationship is based on the application of 'visual logic' that is spontaneous and beautiful. For instance, in the placement of forms in a pictorial composition, visual logic entails that there should exist visual balance in the composition so that the viewer's eye is led to view the drawing or painting following a certain visual resonance such that the balance is spontaneous, natural, or rhythmical. This balance also applies to the application of colour, textures, light, and shadows. In this context, visual logic exists in the artist's creative mind and is neither mechanical nor overbearing; it is innovative and exciting. Principles, therefore, guide the artist in applying the elements and laying out the composition in a way that is well rationalized. Marder (2018) writes that "The **principles of art** represent *how the artist uses the elements of art* to create an effect and to help convey the artist's intent." This consideration cuts across the usage of all the other principles.

Proportion

Proportion refers to size configuration either within the description of a single object itself or in the description of one object in comparison to another. In describing the relationship between scale and proportion, Esaak (2020) observes that "*Scale* is used in art to describe the size of one object in relation to another, each object is often referred to as a *whole*. *Proportion* has a very similar definition but tends to refer to the relative size of parts within a whole. In this case, the *whole* can be a single object like a person's face or the entire artwork as in a landscape." In this regard, it describes how a shape manifests itself in terms of height, width, and visual

structure within a picture plane or an actual physical space. Proportion manifests itself spontaneously as an artist render their work since size configurations are visually recognizable alongside known shapes. In creating a still-life composition, for instance, the ‘shape’ of a bottle is already known and applied as an element; but it bears certain size configurations that make it recognizable as a bottle and not a calabash. Subsequently, it bears its own proportions that contribute to its recognizable shape. In addition, in the formulation of a still-life composition, if this bottle is placed alongside a basket full of fruits, then the artist must think about the size relationships between the bottle, basket and fruits within this whole; the bottle is bound to be taller (height) while the basket is bound to be wider (width) to accommodate the fruits. The fruits themselves are bound to have their different sizes but must seem to fit within the space of the basket. These size relationships lead to the correct visual occupation of space, leading to good composition whether using geometrical or organic forms. When a viewer, therefore, visually perceives proportions to be correct in a pictorial composition, the level of interaction with elements in that composition is commensurately increased. The distortion of proportion (s) only occurs when there is a deliberate attempt to create abstract work. Proportion is also applicable when considering human and other animal forms that may be featured in a pictorial composition and how they relate in size. DeGuzman (2022) observes that,

“In art, proportion refers to the relationship between the different sized components within one whole composition. Proportion can be used to make a composition appear more realistic or more stylized depending on the type of proportion used.”

Climax, Centre of Interest, Focus

In any artistic composition, there is always a centre of interest; also referred to as the ‘focus,’ ‘focal point,’ or ‘climax.’ These terminologies are used in art to refer to the same visual concept generally. This is perhaps more evident in a pictorial composition in a drawing or painting

than it is in certain sculptural compositions where the whole sculpture placed in a given spatial consideration, is often visually perceived as its own centre of interest. In a pictorial composition, however, a part encompasses the main message, often placed in the middle of the picture plane. Lamp (2020) notes that “*Focal point* refers to an area in the composition that has the most significance, an area that the artist wants to draw attention to as the most important aspect.” This part is rendered prominent not only by the centralized placement of forms, but also by specific emphasis or concentration of elements such as line, colour, and texture; or effects created by the deliberate use of light and dark areas or illumination, which may also help create three dimensional illusions. The main purpose of the centre of interest is to draw the viewer’s eyes and ultimately his or her mind to the essence of the intended message, the core of the subject matter or the compositional plot by concentrating elements into a cluster of visual significance or uniqueness. The centre of interest is subsequently surrounded by other aspects of the composition that comprise the background, which all come together to form the holistic composition. In executing a pictorial composition, particularly in the realm of expressive art, it is unusual for an artist not to consider the focal point of their work as the conduit through which a message is manifested. Hence, this focal point is essentially pre-determined and well-rationalized.

Dominance, Emphasis

Dominance is often closely related to centre of interest or focus and refers to the concentration of selected elements in a way that they are more visible over others and, therefore, tend to ‘dominate’ eye movement upon the picture plane. Although a dominant part of the composition is often also likely to be the focus of the painting because of its visual weight, it is not necessarily always the case. An artist may emphasize certain parts of the painting out of visual necessity, particularly balance. In portrait painting, for example, the artist may wish to emphasize upon the power of the eyes which can be achieved through certain effects of colour. When eyes are

executed in a certain way, they create a gaze which denotes facial character and give poise to the portrait although the focus or centre of interest remains the portrait in its entirety. Certain concentrations of textural effects, like the rugged or patterned nature of African hair or the multi-coloured head wrap of an African woman or even some colourful emphasis on ornaments or jewellery may constitute dominant parts although none of them may be perceived to be the centre of interest since they are only components that construct the entire pictorial composition. Certain dominant parts of a painting spread out deliberately across the picture plane, can contribute to rhythmical patterns. Well placed dominant areas in a composition can be used to create balance in composition. Dominance can be attained by using concentrated lines, textures, intense colours, light and dark areas, arrangement of shapes, manipulation of forms and their sizes relative to each other, and use of perspective. The use of perspective in regard to dominance is that it helps to enhance a sense of realism by creating depth in a composition. Barnes (2023) notes that “It creates the **illusion of depth** to make your work appear more realistic.”

Rhythm, Movement

When the viewer's eyes move upon a given painting composition, they often follow a given visual rhythm precipitated by using selected elements. These elements tend to create a pattern-like flow that, in turn, suggests movement. The nature and appearance of forms, colour applications, textural effects, shadows, brushstrokes, gestural poses and even expressions often suggest movement in a composition. No painting or drawing does not ‘suggest’ or imply some notion of rhythm. Silka (2016) observes that,

“Rhythm refers to the movement or the visual flow within a certain piece. It is sometimes also referred to as a tempo or a beat created that invites the eye to enter into the journey of the artist's soul displayed on the canvas, or to help the eye travel and reach its point of focus.”

The bending angle of a line of trees towards a certain direction in a composition easily suggests movement and direction of the wind; a hazy application of colour with horizontal brushstrokes merged alongside or upon the image of a locomotive or any moving projectile may suggest rapid speed. Even though static, the image of different visual angles of a flock of birds flapping their wings may suggest a synchronized forward flying motion; the effect of painted waves and their reflection may suggest gentle waves or the buoyant effect of water or even turbulent sea. The gestural effect of human forms posed in a certain fashion, with deliberate emphasis of brilliant colours, tones and shadows will often suggest vibrant dance movements. In a pictorial composition where an artist uses organic forms, for instance, there is bound to be the presence of flowing rhythm which is created by undulating lines that suggest a natural sense of movement and dynamism. Therefore, rhythm is identified through the use of swirling or flowing brushstrokes that suggest waves, colour patterns that create a rhythmical resonance or alternating rhythm, and the deliberate placement of elements in such a manner as to suggest directional movement which could be forward or circular (radial). Circular movement is in itself related to the concept of Radial balance. Heyler (2022) notes that, “Radial balance is symmetry or balance in multiple directions and has a clear central focal point that extends outwards toward other elements. It doesn't mean everything has to be perfectly symmetrical, but the piece should feel naturally balanced and harmonized from the center. Radially balanced designs are usually circular but can take on other shapes as well.”

In all these descriptions, types of rhythm can hence be identified as *regular* (pattern-like repetition of elements in a composition with even spaces, shapes and sizes) *flowing*, (when curvy or undulating lines and shapes that are organic and irregular are used to create a sense of movement like the waves in water) *alternating*, (when two or more elements are repeated in alternate resonance) *progressive* (when elements are arranged in a sequence that imply a given

directional tendency, particularly when receding in perspective) and *random* (when elements are repeated in an irregular manner creating a visual randomness like the depiction of fallen boulders). These are all associated with deliberately arranging elements on a picture plane.

Balance

Just like in movement where the eyes scan the composition in a rhythmical type of visual resonance, balance refers to how the eyes view the placement of elements within the confines of the picture plane in terms of visual balance. The concept is simple; the forms must not be placed or elements applied on the picture plane in such a way that the composition appears to be top heavy, side heavy or bottom heavy, that is, none should appear to have more concentration on a given part of the composition at the expense of another part of the composition or one element at the visual expense of another. In art and design there are three types of balance; symmetrical, asymmetrical, and radial which are applied according to the respective visual need. Symmetrical balance refers to the identical placement of forms or elements on either side of the central axis. Asymmetrical balance is the case where the placement of forms or concentration of elements is not identical on either side of the axis. Radial balance refers to the circular manner in which the eyes scan or visually rotate upon the picture plane where trajectory lines diverge from a common centre. Therefore, An artist is compelled to think about how best to present his forms or apply elements in a pictorial composition so that that composition is not disturbing to the eye. Indeed, the concept of top heavy, side heavy or bottom heavy derives from that of a weighing scale when disproportionate weight is applied to one side and therefore tips the scale over.

Harmony

When certain elements are used in similar degrees of emphasis such that they seem to blend or integrate and none is disruptive of the others, those elements are seen to be in harmony. In reference to the integration of elements, Lewis (2023) writes that “Harmony is an essential

principle of art that helps create a sense of visual unity and coherence in any composition. It is achieved when different elements in an artwork work together to create a pleasing and balanced whole.” Harmony often also refers to the application of colours and when colours are used in a way that they visually blend, then they are in harmony. In specific reference to colour, Lewis further observes that “It is the base of every design as well as artwork, using color relationships to create a balanced and harmonious look or feel to a design or space.” This is usually evident in landscape painting when, for instance, colours of the sky need to blend to create softness and an aura of naturalness. In the painting of realistic portraits, the blending of facial colours to achieve a certain even tone, or a certain softness is done by attaining a certain level of tonal harmony. Certain types of paintings are better executed through the use of harmonious colours rather than contrasting colours and therefore it is often determined by the intent of the individual artist.

Contrast

In regular reference to the use of colour, colour tones and the deliberate use of light and dark, contrast refers to the resultant stark visual difference immediately visible. This means that a painting can be made vibrant in its own description, by use of contrasting colours or areas of emphasis that involve light and dark. By creating contrast in pairing various elements, an artist can draw the viewer's attention, enhance a feeling of depth, ensure balance, and often create dramatic visual episodes that suggest or convey direct meaning. Colour contrasts can also create rhythmical effects in a painting or design patterns that manifest a certain dynamism and vitality. The age-old use of dark verses light in chiaroscuro or the entire concept of artistic illumination, whether using artificial or natural light, is based on the need to create starkly contrasting effects that highlight certain visual phenomena or desired centres of interest.

Perspective

Perspective refers to vanishing lines that converge upon a given vanishing point towards the horizon.

In a pictorial composition, perspective gives an invaluable guide to the artist in creating a sense of depth and a visual base upon which all forms rest. The better the application of perspective, the better the illusion of depth. Without the concept of converging lines, the artist would have to contend with parallel lines that continue to run all the way to the edge of the upper edge of the picture plane and it would be impossible to place and depict forms on a floating space that is headed for the sky instead of being grounded towards the horizon. Without perspective, the depiction of all manner of shapes as they are recognized, the placement or arrangement of forms and their proportions and how they inter-relate would be impossible to visually achieve on a picture plane and in the holistic formulation of a composition.

Unity

Unity is often referred to as ‘unity of design’ and is at times interchangeably used with harmony. Unity refers to the tendency of elements to integrate rather than be seen to stand in isolation and is, therefore more encompassing than harmony as used in reference to colour. In the description of Unity, Hummel (2024) writes that “Unity in art refers to the harmonious arrangement of elements and principles that create a cohesive and visually appealing composition. It provides a sense of wholeness and coherence, guiding the viewer’s eye through the artwork while conveying the artist’s intended message.” In a pictorial composition, for instance, an artist chooses elements according to their usefulness in composition but is careful to achieve ‘visual unity’ in how the elements relate or synchronize. Hence lines create shapes or are used to depict emphasis; shapes themselves are used to create meaning in a composition; colours help to highlight the naturalness of the composition and to describe the nature of forms, and are also used to create tones that show the essence of the use of light and shadows; textural effects may be intertwined with lines, colour and tones; a pertinent message may be perceived by deliberately placing certain elements together in a given spatial arrangement. When all these considerations are made, it can be said that the

elements have been organized into a visual whole which constitutes the artist's intent.

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Any work of art will ultimately necessitate the inclusion or application of formal analysis to examine its creative essence. At times referred to as visual analysis, critical or formal visual analysis it is an important technique for organizing visual information and can be divided into four segments: description, analysis, interpretation, and evaluation. Description dwells on the immediate visual uptake of the presence of elements and principles as they are manifested on the drawing or painting. Analysis refers to their subsequent inter-relationships and integration into a viable piece of artwork. In the examination of an artwork, there is always the interaction between what the viewer sees and what the artist intended through the creation of the artwork which ultimately culminates in the derivation of possible meaning. The subsequent interrogation of the work unfolds into interpretation through what the viewer might determine to be pertinent in the symbolism contained in objects and arrangement of elements including the ‘focal point’ of the drawing or painting. Evaluation refers to the informed reaction to the artwork and pinpoints the work's essence and visual impact, including its inspirational qualities.

According to Munsterberg (2009)’

“Formal analysis is a specific type of visual description. Unlike ekphrasis, it is not meant to evoke the work in the reader’s mind. Instead, it is an explanation of visual structure, of the ways in which certain visual elements have been arranged and function within a composition.”

In this regard, formal analysis examines a work of art by describing the use of elements and the application of principles as a strategy to engage the viewer's mind. The selection of work in this study was fundamentally based on the need to identify the effectiveness of the use of elements and application of principles within the compositions, which then signified their visual essence in the creation of each drawing or painting

with the further purpose of depicting subject matter that was of interest to the artist. Formal analysis is hence important in this study because it encompasses a visual description that focuses primarily on applying and arranging formal elements and principles and how they integrate to create the drawings and paintings featured in the study. Formal analysis itself does not often dwell on the intricacies of the content of subject matter, the derivation of meaning, emotive expression, or contextual settings; all these are, however, intricately woven around the resonance and strength contained in the visual structure emanating from the usage of elements and principles. In this regard, apart from description, formal analysis leads to the interpretation of what is visual or what can be visually extracted with a view to derive meaning out of the artwork ultimately. The residual purpose of formal analysis is to come up with some informed evaluation.

ANALYSIS OF WORK

Plate 1: 'Landscape' 2022



Source: Department of Fine Art

In this composition (*Plate 1*), the student studies a landscape setting through painting. The use of elements is evident and skilful. Colour is used to show harmony, particularly in the execution of the sky that blends in with the mountains in the distant horizon. A mild contrast divides the painting into two halves but does not disturb the eye since this is expected in certain natural landscape settings. The green and brown tones darken in the foreground creating the effect of a firm and stable

natural environment. Textural effects appear in the foreground in the details of the green grass and foliage of the immediate environment. The use of light and dark areas shows the effect of light and shadows that help to depict the undulating landscape as well as the nature of the clouds. If one were to strip the painting of colour, textures, and shadows, what would be left is a description of lines and their contours. Landscapes often do not bear a centre of interest basically because they do not fall in the realm of expressive paintings, but they show a good layout of how elements and principles are integrated in a pictorial composition that allow the viewer's eyes to scan the painting in the same way as they would scan a physical landscape.

Plate 2: Landscape' - Musembi Kivindu – Acrylics on canvas - 2022.



Source: Department of Fine Art

In this landscape painting (*Plate 2*), elements are well integrated and arranged to make the flat and simple landscape setting look visually appealing. The use of predominantly natural greens and browns is blended in a variety of tones that describe the trees, patches of grass, dry patches, and bush. Dark tones are also used to depict shadows and lighter tones show areas of shining light; shadows in composition are important in depicting how objects are grounded and seem to rest on solid ground. The sky is done in light blue tones that lighten more towards the horizon. The use of organic shapes and textures is evident. Perspective and the subsequent creation of depth is suggested by the placement of trees in the

foreground and their diminishing effect into the distant horizon. As noted before, landscapes are often all-encompassing compositions that may not necessarily feature any particular focus or centre of interest as the artist seeks to feature various aspects of nature as they manifest themselves in a particular environmental setting.

Plate 3: Plate 3. 'Golden ages' - Kamau Dennis, Acrylics on canvas – 2022

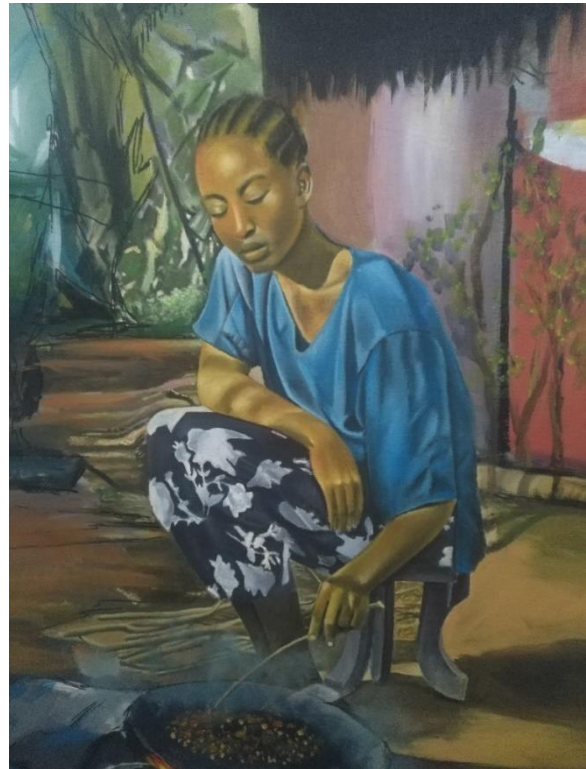


Source: Department of Fine Art

This interesting painting epitomizes the enduring relationship between using elements and applying principles as guides. Elements such as line, colour, shape, light and dark, and texture are all easily identifiable in the painting. The artist displays good grasp of the use of colours across the painting to differentiate between the various aspects of the composition. The corresponding use of colour tones helps to bring out the forms and other objects in their suggestive solidity and create folds and shadows. The composition itself features two schoolgirls as the centre of interest upon whom a well-executed style of painting including well developed facial expressions, folds of the dress, shadows and the presence of familiar objects are evident. The artist focuses on a gestural pose defined by an inquisitive 'stare' on

the faces of the two girls that helps engage and captivate the viewer and perhaps tell a story of their life. The study of the proportions of the human figures at the featured age of the schoolgirls is well considered and helps to draw the viewer's attention to the plight of the girls. The artist also studies the background with an equal sense of detail, making the holistic painting captivating.

Plate 4: 'Flavourful Fusion' - Kamau Dennis, Acrylics on canvas, 2022.



Source: Department of Fine Art

The use of elements and principles creates a holistic painting that is all encompassing. In this painting, the student executes the painting with admirable precision, showing a clear understanding of how elements interlock and interact. The student also clearly understands how principles help guide the creation of the painting. The young woman roasting groundnuts is placed centrally as the centre of interest and hence becomes the focus of the painting. Everything else becomes part of the interactive background. The student shows mastery of the use of colour tones on the face, body and in the creation of folds on the dress. Tones also help to create shadows and the corresponding illuminative effect by

emphasizing very light tones that denote the falling natural light. Study of body proportions shows a good understanding of the human figure and its placement relative to the space around it. The use of perspective helps to create a sense of depth in the painting from the form in the foreground through to the diminishing pathway. The artist effectively uses a carefully thought-out gestural pose, complete with a corresponding facial expression that describes the nature of the action at hand, underscoring the essence of the painting.

Plate 5: 'Meditation' - Kamau Dennis. Acrylics on canvas - 2022



Source: Department of Fine Art

In this detailed study of a young woman, the artist uses elements and principles with due diligence in the creation of the painting. The variety of brown colour tones help to depict the skin tone which itself suggests the body complexion. The tones also indicate shadows that show the direction from which the light shines upon the body in order to create its roundness and solidity. Intricate folds on the dress are also created by the use of brown tones. Textural effects are found in the execution of the hair and the grass patch in which the woman stands. The contrast between the form and the

smooth and hazy blue background helps to enhance the woman as the centre of interest. The artist's special attention to studying facial details and particularly the 'gaze' help to capture the viewer's interest in the probable personality of the woman and what the artist could be expressing through the woman. The location, compositional setting as well as the gestural pose of the woman creates a sense of mystery and melancholy.

Plate 6: 'Happy days' - Kamau Dennis. Acrylics on canvas - 2022



Source: Department of Fine Art

In this painting the artist works towards super-realism and in his execution demonstrates how effectively elements can blend in resonance with principles. The study of the human forms based on the accuracy of the human figure proportions of the mother and child is intricately demonstrated. The application of blue colour upon the water and the sky is purposeful and is used to create the sharp contrast between the water and the woman's body thereby enhancing the mother and child as the holistic focal point of the painting. The blue tones in the foreground depict mild waves and the soft splash caused by the commotion suggested by the rapid motion, which is testimony to how movement is depicted in a painting. The brown

colour tones that describe the African skin tone show how a variety of tones, including shadows can be applied to convincingly portray the nature of body skin and its glittering nature, the roundness of the limbs and the detailing of body limbs. Other details such as the wetness of the bodies of mother and child splashing through the water help to consolidate the essence of the message contained in the painting itself. Paintings of this nature are also often used to depict certain cultural peculiarities such as body ornaments and other cultural paraphernalia. To highlight the mother and child engaged in a run through the shallow waters, the artist places the forms centrally in the picture plane and also takes time to study facial expressions and the static gestural effect that suggests rapid motion.

Plate 7: Painting untitled - Clinton Kobi - 2022



Source: Department of Fine Art

The night scenes depicted in *Plates 7 and 8* show how a creative artist can use a variety of tones in a continuum from very dark to very light to create illumination upon objects. Shapes and colours are also used to enhance the objects (cars) through which we are able to recognize them. The painting technique used effectively creates not only a sense of wetness of the environment but also a sense of the mystery of night by using very sharp tonal contrasts that boldly enhance the feeling of nightly contrast. The impressionist painting bears only the details necessary to recognize the pertinent parts.

Plate 8: Painting untitled - Clinton Kobi - 2022



Source: Department of Fine Art

The mixture of colours and the effect of the use of brushstrokes to create certain very light tones in the midst of a background of very dark tones can be very effective in depicting the illuminative effect of lighting in a painting akin to the glow of light in real life. Illumination in a painting draws immediate visual focus upon an intended part of the painting to emphasize its centrality, its contextual importance in helping propagate an intended message or suggest certain actions or activities occurring in the painting. A night-time scene is always underscored by stark contrasts of light and dark, which create the illuminative effect that reveals the night's mystery.

Elements and principles are often used to create beautiful paintings of nature, including birds. The artist uses the impact of colour to paint a bird as it appears in its environment. The artist shows the creative ability to choose colours correctly and to match them with those that bear the natural appearance of the bird in order to create the realism intended. However, colour is also rendered in the appropriate tones that create shadows that help the bird appear naturalistic and solid. The shape and holistic study of the bird is important in the quest to identify it. The artist makes the bird the centre of focus by illuminating its presence using very light tones in certain places as well as a contrasting dark background. The bird rests on its perch and is prominently placed within the picture plane as the centre of interest.

Plate 9: 'Kingfisher' - Zephania Lukamba – oil on canvas, 2022.



Source: Department of Fine Art

Plate 10: 'Still life composition' 2022.



Source: Department of Fine Art

This composition depicts the simple relationship between sizes of different objects and how

arrangement of these objects is very important in a still-life composition and in fundamental spatial set-ups. The composition itself is simple but shows the basic concept of placement of objects and their proportions. The guitar is obviously the tallest object that occupies space but still remains the most dominant of the objects relative to size and further depicts why the idea of proportion is critical in pictorial composition. The flattest of the objects are the books and are placed in the foreground which also underscores the illusion of flatness and depth. The cup is placed at almost the same horizontal line as the books since it is more or less about the same height as the books. The flower vase and flowers are taller and placed second to the guitar in size, although there is no overlap depicted. The contrast between the very dark background and the objects is deliberate to enhance the composition's holistic nature. In still-life compositions, the entire set of objects interlock into a holistic set to create the centre of interest and are often set against a starkly contrasting background to emerge as a composition.

Plate 11: 'Still life pencil drawing', 2022.



Source: Department of Fine Art

This pencil drawing is testimony of how texture as an element can be dominant in a composition. It also demonstrates why texture is of unique importance in identifying and depicting various items in any pictorial composition. A specific object is easily identified through its unique surface character and hence the effective depiction of that item is always pegged upon the effective depiction of its texture. For example, in the drawing, the pineapple as a fruit is easily

picked out because of the effective way in which its texture has been rendered. The cabbage too is easily identified because its recognizable texture. The artist takes a lot of time to work on the intertwining texture of the open fruit basket upon which the fruits are placed. This shows the beauty and uniqueness of textural detail. Textural effects in this drawing are achieved through shading, particularly the use of varied tones and shadows placed along contour and patterned lines. The use of clear lines and shapes is evident and used effectively.

Plate 12: 'Blind love' - Maigo Keng'ara, pencil drawing, 2023.



Source: Department of Fine Art

In the surreal world, certain depictions denote what often goes on in people's minds. A surrealist drawing or painting may dwell on the absurd or depict distortions of the human body, either partly or holistically, that emphasize issues that affect the rational basis of human thinking. This questioning of human rationality and the logical order of thought and occurrences tends to affect the natural order of things and the way people view themselves, probably suggesting the

existence of other 'quasi-truths' that might as well define their lives. This surrealist tendency is often expressed in drawings and paintings that are very well executed which leave the viewer quite perplexed. For instance, in this drawing, the pencil tones are applied with deliberate smoothness to bear the tonal variation necessary to enhance the human forms that express the absurdity of the surrealism in the image. The intricate study of the forms themselves, helps to underscore the possible emanation of meaning from underlying images that flash through the subconscious mind.

Plate 13: 'Blind love' - Maigo Keng'ara, oil on canvas, 2023.



Source: Department of Fine Art

This painting is a replica of *Plate 12* only that it is a colour rendition with the faces blindfolded denoting new meaning, perhaps 'blind desire' or 'blind love' according to the title. Some additions to a painting can often alter the meaning or give rise to new meaning. The application of colour as an element bears immediate visual significance compared to the use of pencil only. However, the artist uses the same emphasis in the use of tones, varying the brown tones accordingly to underscore various aspects of the intertwined

female and male bodies that create the surrealism. Shadows are also used appropriately in order to help make the human forms rounded and solid. The human forms are also enhanced through the appropriate study of familiar human proportions though the piece itself bears a surrealist approach. This approach in the realm of surrealism is figurative or symbolic. The contrast between the human forms and the background helps to enhance the centre of interest in the composition.

Plate 14: 'Child of the Universe' - Timothy Wanyama: Acrylics on canvas - 2023.



Source: Department of Fine Art

The painting (*Plate 14*) shows the integrated use of elements and how principles are incorporated to help the artist achieve a holistic composition. Lines are used to create figures and other shapes, whether geometric or organic. As has been observed, shapes are important in depicting recognizable forms in a composition, which helps the viewer decipher what the composition is about or the message that the artist wishes to convey. The use of colour and variety of colour tones, shadows, light, dark areas, and textural effects are all evident. This painting, however, predominantly shows why a centre of interest is of importance in a composition. It is evident that all the human forms as depicted *are* the centre of interest by virtue of their placement in the composition and detailed depiction of their traditional attire, which bears a cultural connotation. The forms are prominent and centrally placed in the foreground with all other details comprising the background, including the distant mountains. Paintings of this nature are

often used to create a narrative or to tell a story that is, in this case, embedded in a traditional setting. In the use of proportion, it is interesting to note that the artist enlarged the body proportions of the men and diminished those of the women even though they were set on the same ground level. Such use of inordinate body proportion of related forms set on the same ground level may be deliberate to analogically depict men as dominant in traditional societies. The third tier of the human forms depicted is presumably that of a child presented as very small compared to the other forms.

Plate 15: 'Surrealist piece' 2022.



Source: Department of Fine Art

This drawing features the stark contrast than can be used in pencil shading to show the varying tones that describe the content of the drawing. These tones are used to define the face and its components that create a certain expression. However, the face is engulfed by hands from all directions that underscores its surrealist nature. The use of a very dark background is used deliberately to create a chiaroscuro effect of light and shadows which enhances the face and fingers as the centre of interest since, in such drawings,

the background does not carry any other content. A feminine figure is embedded within the forehead of the face to perhaps suggest the basis of the surrealism; all the tribulations and torment of the man as denoted by the overwhelming tentacles of hands emanate from this source. Textural effects are shown in the execution of the beards and the fingers.

Plate 16: 'Her beautiful strength' - oil on canvas, Maigo Keng'ara, 2023

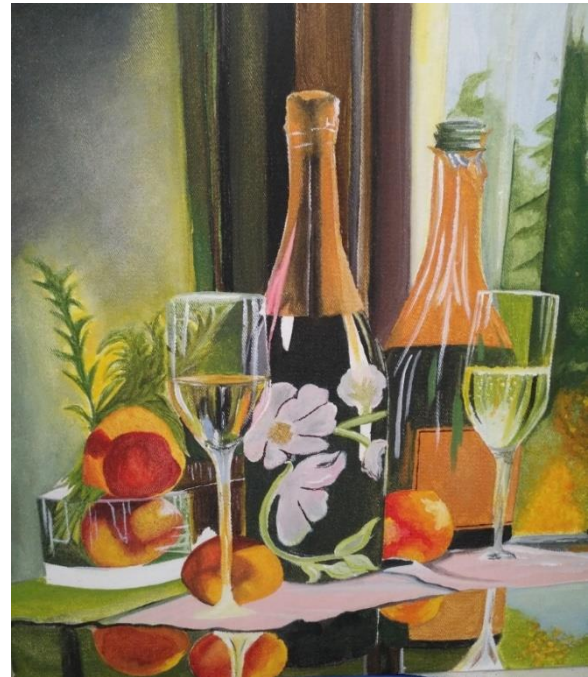


Source: Department of Fine Art

In this painting, influenced by cubism, the artist uses predominant shapes to create the feminine figure and the background. The geometrical shapes are intricately arranged and intertwined with different colour tones to highlight the female figure and create the gestural pose. The use of shadows and contrasting light areas is superimposed onto the shapes to depict solidity of the human form by following the outline of the body and facial structure that the viewer can easily identify. The use of yellow and its colour tones including the very light tones that cause illumination on the cloth is well contrasted with the brown tones of the body making the yellow cloth stand out. The green and yellow tones applied on the background shapes contrast with

the body's brown, highlighting human form as the centre of interest.

Plate 17: 'Still-life composition' - Makena Mwendwa, Acrylics on canvas, 2022.



Source: Department of Fine Art

This still life composition, by the style of its execution, depicts the use of elements and principles in a simple but effective way. There is the obvious use of lines and recognizable shapes through which the artist uses to depict the arrangement of the objects. The use of proportion of one object placed against another helps to enhance the sense of arrangement. Placed on a glass table, perspective is used since some objects are placed behind others. The painting is colourful, and the artist uses colour tones to describe the nature of each object, including the bottles of wine, wine glasses and the fruits. When applied carefully, tonal variation can depict intricate details that describe objects; for instance, the viewer can make out that the wine glasses are half-filled with wine or that the bottles are shiny, or there are floral decorations and even reflections of objects on the glass. Shadows on the wall help to distinguish the outline of the still life composition from the wall itself which forms the background. Light tonal effects are also used to show aspects of light illumination, which suggests

the direction from which the natural light is coming.

Plate 18: 'Portrait of an elderly woman' - Tobiko Rupante, Oils on canvas, 2021.



Source: Department of Fine Art

A portrait of a person is ideally not supposed to be a complex piece of artwork; it is a portrayal of the facial structure and unique facial features of the individual under study that often underscore his or her individuality. Elements and principles are used effectively in a portrait to aid this objective and perhaps even to suggest the personality of the individual under study. The facial features in the painting of an elderly woman (*Plate 18*) are epitomized by the use of brown colour tones that are carefully applied in varying tones in order to create these features. The wrinkles around her eyes are carefully crafted by minute tones that show the folding of the skin. Her prominent cheeks are emphasized by lighter tones that create a shiny fullness seen against the darker tones of the nose area. The holistic use of tones and shadows help to create her facial expression including her smile. The artist uses contrast to differentiate between the brown of the face/neck

and her attire, scurf and background which helps to focus the viewer's attention upon the face itself. Contrast is also used to show the white teeth. Elements and principles are important in portraiture to capture not only the physical facial attributes that describe and identify the individual under study but also in helping to suggest the personality of the individual through facial expression. Certain portraits that depict sad expressions such as sunken or glassy eyes and tight lips may suggest a person who suffers predominantly from melancholy or even depression. Other happier facial expressions, including radiant eyes and smiles, may suggest a much more glowing or accommodating individual.

Plate 19: 'Study of surrealist hands' - Elvis Ramboh, 2021



Source: Department of Fine Art

Plate 19 shows the study of the hands which starts with a sketch using lines to create the shape of the hands as we know them, the accuracy of which makes the hands recognizable as a part of the human body. The more accurate the placement of fingers and their structure, the thumb, the wrist, and the palm, the more the painting stands out as a viable study. The student uses colour and colour

tones, including shadows, to enhance the solidity of the hands and the all-important placement of the different fingers (the index finger, middle finger, ring finger and little finger) and their joints. The gestural pose of the hands is interesting as it is surreal since no two hands of the same individual can interlock that way; hence, very well-executed details can be visually deceptive. This kind of gestural pose can only be achieved by two different individuals and yet no two individuals bear hands that are more or less identical like those of a single individual. Although the background is light in colour, there is enough contrast to enhance the hands as the subject of study.

Plate 20: 'Naturing Mobility' - Tamanda Nhlane. Acrylics, 2023

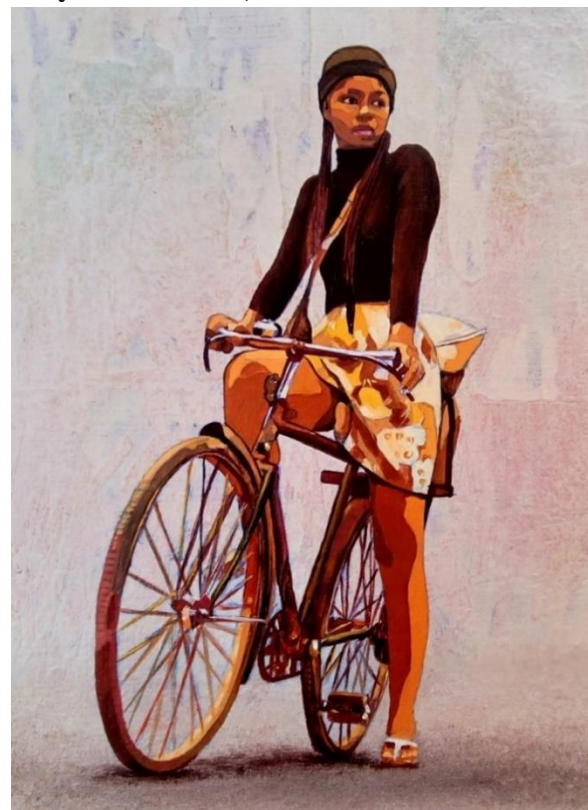


Source: Department of Fine Art

The use of lines and shapes is clear in *Plate 20*. The execution of the mother and child figures as the centre of interest is well rendered with acceptable proportions and adequate details. Subsequently the bicycle as an object constitutes the action or motion on the holistic composition indicating the content of the painting about the struggles of motherhood. The artist uses elements

for the detailed study of the face and depiction of the attire. Colour plays a significant role in this composition together with appropriate tones that help create the folds of the attire. The background green bush's hazy appearance is applied to focus attention on the mother and child; the horizon depicts dawn colours which translate into the slight illumination of the figures which suggests an early morning journey. Paintings can tell a story and elements and principles are often utilized to help narrate this story.

Plate 21: 'Journey on' - Dennis Kamau, Acrylics on canvas, 2023.

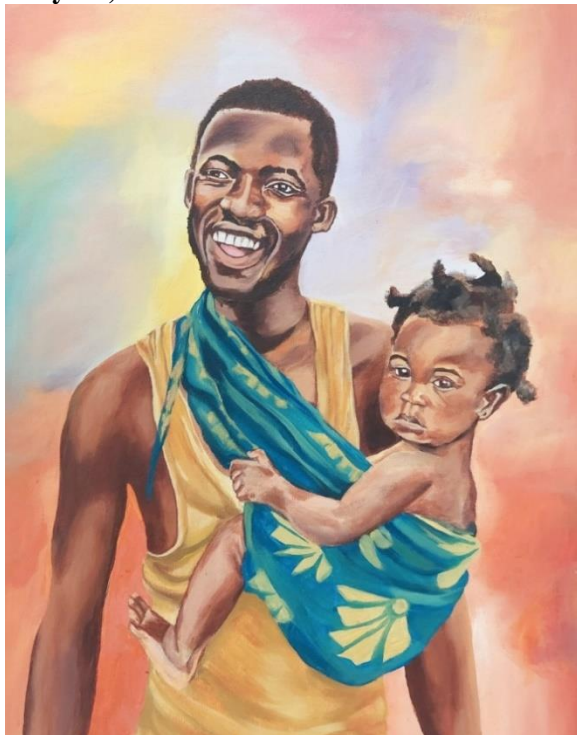


Source: Department of Fine Art

This painting shows how certain elements can be applied to create and highlight the centre of interest in a pictorial composition. The lines are used to create recognizable shapes like that of the bicycle and the human figure, both of which are accurately studied in this painting. The artist chooses brown as the theme colour which makes the painting monochromatic in description; but the use of the colour tones such as depicted on the woman's legs, patterned skirt and dark polo neck sweater are so varied that the woman's form appears 'colourful.' The artist also creates a sharp

contrast between the painted forms and the background, making the composition stand out with clearly defined edges. Shadows are appropriately inserted in places that ultimately describe the roundness of the human form, the solidity of the bicycle and the grounding of the entire composition in a manner that suggests depth. Perspective is seen through the bicycle itself. Some paintings are studies of momentary poses, certain deliberate body postures or interesting spontaneous gestures that facial expressions or gazes may accompany.

Plate 22: 'Bound by love' - Tamanda Nhlane – Acrylics, 2023

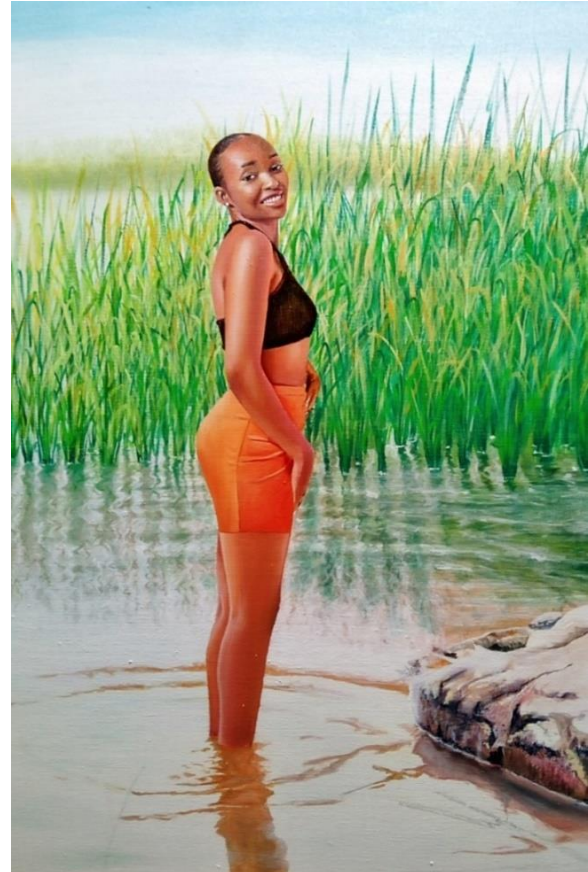


Source: Department of Fine Art

Elements can be used to create all kinds of expressive facial expressions in a composition. In the painting above (*Plate 22*), the artist creates laughter on the man's face and a little indignation on the child's face. In portraiture, the study of an individual can stretch up to half the body; the face is well studied in terms of facial structure using lines that are manifested across the face. The artist then proceeds to apply brown colour, which represents the skin tone and also proceeds to apply a variety of tones that define aspects of the face. The colour tones also suggest the folds on the attires and shadows are used to enhance the

presence of both forms. The darker tones of the human forms create a reasonable contrast against the background making the forms stand out.

Plate 23: 'Empowered' - Dennis Kamau. Acrylics on canvas - 2023



Source: Department of Fine Art

In this painting (*Plate 23*), the human figure is well studied and intricately executed; the form of the young woman is placed prominently in the centre of the picture plane and is in sharp contrast to the background in order to enhance it as the clear focal point of the painting. The use of colour and colour tones is well synchronized to emphasize the centre of interest, and to recede the background including the distant blue sky. The brown tones of the woman's body are smooth and varied to capture the reflection of the natural light shining upon the body, enhancing its roundness. Mild shadows are used to differentiate parts of the body and help enhance facial details that reflect the woman's beauty. The tones of green on the water reeds are also varied, suggesting their holistic textural effect upon the painting. Very light tones of brown depict the large stone

embankment on the river's edge. The mild shadows inserted at the base of the reeds outline the contact point with the water, marking the edge of reflections on the water.

Plate 24: 'Power' - Fridah Ijai, Oils on canvas, 2022.



Source: Department of Fine Art

In *Plate 24*, the study of 'beauty' is testimony to the concerted use of elements and principles. Lines are used to define certain aspects of the composition and the shape that constitutes the female human figure is well defined. The study of proportions and the placement of the form at the centre of the composition defines it as the centre of interest and, therefore, attracts the viewer's attention to the concept of beauty as expressed by the artist. Although the artist chooses to use browns predominantly, she uses well-rendered, very smooth colour tones to describe the face and the body in her definition of youthful beauty. The application of shadows is skilfully crafted to enhance prominent parts of the body. Tones are also used to study the intricate folds of the dress with a beautifully rendered see-through effect. Such paintings (see also *Plate 25*) are created with

intricate details, specific facial demeanour and body posture to suggest a certain phenomenon, perhaps the intricacies or intrigues on youthful beauty and femininity.

Plate 25: 'Bold' - Fridah Ijai, Oils on canvas, 2022.



Source: Department of Fine Art

In *Plate 25*, the artist uses the same style and approach as in *Plate 24* to express the same concept of youthful beauty, only changing the pose and appearance of the young woman. The emphasis on the feminine figure itself and the prominence given to certain parts of the body such as the sharp breasts as well as what is often referred to as the 'gaze' on the face reveals an obsession with this feminine youthfulness and all its implications. The inclusion of youthful paraphernalia such as a beaded necklace, nose ring, bracelets, beaded belt, and make-up underscore this obsession. The artist also uses very light tones against shadows to create illumination on the body, which, in turn, helps to enhance its roundness. Such paintings often tend to spark debate about the essence and implication of youthfulness, in this case feminine youthfulness, perception and interpretation of beauty about the passage of time; that perhaps youthfulness is only a passing window of time

within which all possibilities and opportunities have to be pursued and exploited.

Plate 26: 'Blossom of life' - Timothy Wanyama: Water colour on ivory paper - 2023.



Source: Department of Fine Art

Flowers bear specific shapes that distinguish them from other types; they also bear unique colours that help to easily identify them. Objects too have specific shapes that are unique to their description and may bear certain textures that define them. In a still-life composition, the selected items are first drawn using lines in order to depict their shapes through which they are recognizable. In the still-life composition painting (*Plate 26*), the artist depicts this simple combination of a flower vase composition complete with flowers. The viewer can easily make out the sprouting flowers and their leaves inserted inside a flower vase half-filled with water. The scattered flowers in the foreground and the placement of the flower vase behind them show the usage of perspective, which creates depth and an illusion of a flat surface upon which the composition is placed. The artist then applies colour to the composition distinguishing the flowers from the leaves and indicating that the

flower vase is made of glass through which the inserted green leaves and colour reflections are visible. Colour tones help to enhance the shape and type of flowers and indicate the reflection of light. At times artist chose to have a background that bears colours that are generally in harmony with those of the centre of interest, in this case the still life itself, instead of painting contrasting colours. However, use of shadows and rendering of textural effects help to distinguish between the various aspects of the composition.

Plate 27: 'Night and nightdresses' - Timothy Wanyama, Acrylics on canvas, 2023.



Source: Department of Fine Art

The elongated figure of the woman holding a child does not fit the normal human figure proportions and is therefore stylized. The proportions of the figure of the policewoman are more accurate and so the two figures appear visually incompatible although they are both placed in the foreground as the major components of the compositional plot. Artists often deliberately use distorted proportions to enhance parts of their compositions or emphasize certain actions. The artist creates a clear centre of interest by focusing the viewer's eyes on the two forefront figures that suggest the action of their encounter which forms the main content of the painting. The action depicted appears like an arrest on illicit matters, and the figure in the background and the child are part of the narrative. The artist uses colour, mainly browns, and utilizes a variety of colour tones to describe the nature of attire on the figures and the composition of the background. The colour tones are applied in such a way as to clearly illuminate the night scene by having very dark tones painted

against contrasting light tones to suggest the illumination. Illumination in painting is often used to focus the viewer's attention upon the pertinent action, visual plot, description of the scene such as tragedy or perceived joy. An artist may also use illumination to portray any other perceived centre of interest.

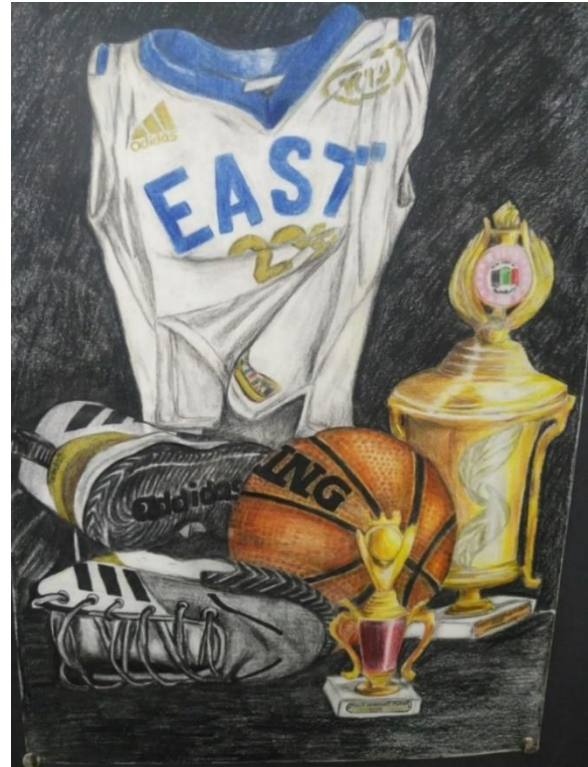
Plate 28: 'Women O' Issues' - Timothy Wanyama - Acrylics on canvas,



Source: Department of Fine Art

The use of proportion as a primary principle may not always be followed to the letter and can be used in other ways as a contributing factor to the content of a painting. The two female protagonists in this painting do not bear conventional proportions of their bodies, but their stylized appearance helps to enhance the action of their acrimonious encounter. The 'ground proportion' in this composition show that the artist was not too concerned about the dictates of proportion in relation to individual figures or each other. For instance, the boy in the foreground is very small relative to the size of the women, the motorbike, the standing spectator, and other aspects of the surroundings. Such deliberate rendition of proportion or any other principle can in retrospect be effectively used to convey a desired message or propagate a point of view. The artist also uses the effect of light and shadows to deliberately 'illuminate' the two women in order to focus viewers' attention upon their action; perhaps to ignite debate on the probable nature of women, their quarrels, and their tendency to resolve their issues right in front of public glare acrimoniously.

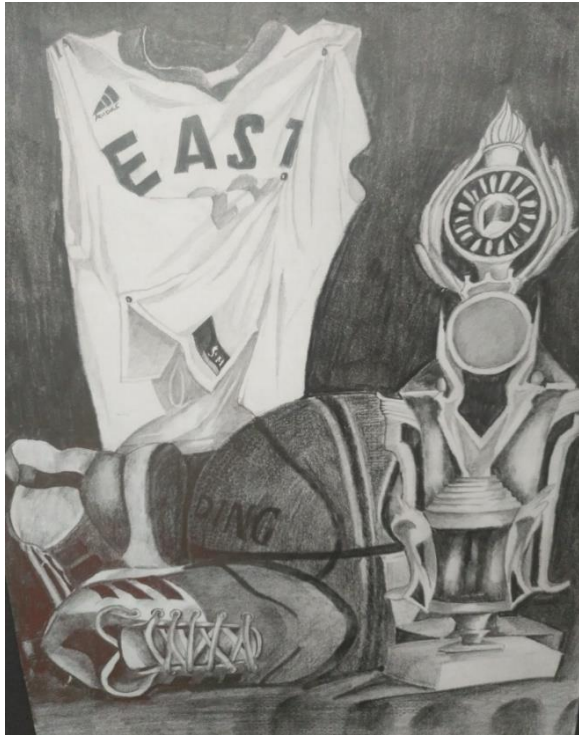
Plate 29: 'Still-life composition', 2023.



Source: Department of Fine Art

This still-life composition shows the integration of all the elements and more specifically, the application of proportion as a principle and how it helps the interaction between the various objects. In the deliberate arrangement of objects and considering their placement in composition, the proportion of each object in terms of its size relative to the other is evident. The artist then builds up the composition ensuring that in this arrangement, all objects are visible yet suggest a feeling of depth in how they overlap. The hanging sports jersey forms the tallest item in the composition and is placed in the background while the small trophy forms the shortest object and is placed in the foreground. All other objects are placed according to size but overlap to suggest depth through perspective. Unlike a black and white pencil shading of the same composition (Plate 30) the introduction of colour in this composition is essential in enhancing the visual appeal of the composition itself and underscoring the nature of each object including textural effects and the use of colour tones.

Plate 30: 'Still-life composition', 2023.



Source: Department of Fine Art

This still-life composition is similar in setting to the one in *Plate 29* but lacks the colour element and is rendered fully in pencil. Pencil shading is effective in depicting the nature of each item through the use of a variety of pencil tones and appropriately inserted shadows. Each item is also identified through the effective use of textural effects and careful study of unique details such as the intertwining shoelaces on the sports shoe, the folds on the pinned-up sports jersey and the insignia on the basketball and the trophy which all underscore the theme of the composition. The artist arranges the various objects in order of size, in consideration of both individual and compositional proportion. In the placement of objects, depth is implied through perspective and overlapping. The use of a dark background creates the necessary contrast that helps to prop up the whole composition as its own centre of interest. The comparison of the two compositions (*Plate 29*) shows the visual effect of the addition of colour and why colour is such an important element in any pictorial composition.

Plate 31: 'Still life composition' 2020.



Source: Department of Fine Art

In this simple but pleasant still-life composition of fruits on a table, it is easy to identify shapes and the use of contour lines that define the objects and outline the edges of the drapery. The choice of the natural colour of apples against a dark brown background and the green colour of the drapery helps to consolidate the nature of the composition. The artist goes further and uses a variety of colour tones to enhance the composition visually. The apples appear rounded and solid because of the use of dark, medium, and light tones with a clear indication of where the natural light impacts the objects. Various tones are also used to create the folds on the drapery showing a clear sense of illumination, use of shadows, angle of folds and suggestion of the edge of the table. Although the apples are placed in an almost straight line, depth in this composition is shown by the suggested edge of the covered table. Beyond this edge, the drapery appears flat as the folds are placed in perspective making the apples appear to rest on a flat surface; the drapery then drops down from the same edge creating the feeling of three dimension.

Plate 32: ‘Revelations of scrutiny’, surrealist piece. 2022.



Source: Department of Fine Art

The student explores the expression of surrealism using various tones of pencil. The drawing itself depicts the perils of a deceitful personality where an innocent looking woman on the outside hides within her the real nature of a dangerous individual when subjected to due scrutiny of a magnifying glass. (Depicted by the exposed canines of a dangerous carnivore.) The student uses the effect of illuminating light against dark tones creating a sense of innocence in the eyes as well as a general understanding of mystery.

The study of the University campanile is a good example of the application of perspective in helping guide a pictorial composition. The student uses a worm's eye view to depict the vanishing point and simultaneously shows intricate details of the building. Such outdoor studies are used to enhance the student's sense of observation and arrangement by using elements such as line, light and shade, texture, and shape as well as details that fall within that arrangement and help to make the composition convincing.

Plate 33: Drawing of the University campanile' 2020.



Source: Department of Fine Art

Plate 34: ‘Perspective of a railway line’ 2020.



Source: Department of Fine Art

In depicting perspective, the student emphasizes the use of textural effects, a variety of tones and shadows to show how the railway line vanishes into the distant horizon, creating an illusion of depth. Pictorial compositions of this nature help to highlight the use of some aspects in order to show the usefulness of such elements. The study of intricate textural effects and use of purposely placed shadows help to consolidate the drawing. The joy of such outdoor drawings is found in

capturing certain peculiar details such as railway sleepers that have been engulfed by creeping overgrowth that make the railway line appear disused. The artist uses contour lines, organic shapes, and patches of different types of textural manipulation of line to form an almost pattern-like effect that defines the landscape. Such effects are practical when working quickly to capture a scenery within a limited space of time.

Plate 35: 'Linear Perspective of a railway line' 2020.



Source: Department of Fine Art

Perspective helps to create a feeling or an illusion of depth through the use of a vanishing point upon a given picture plane, which diminishes towards a horizon. In *Plate 35*, the student creates very good linear perspective that is visually enhanced by certain details such as the arrangement of sleepers that makes them appear to rest on the surface and, therefore, enhance the feeling of depth that slices far into the horizon. Textural effects that depict pebbles in the foreground and grass on the side of the railway line, help to make the composition appear natural and convincing. The use of plainly light areas such as the sky contrasts the dark areas and patches of shadows that enhance the feeling of depth and helps illuminate parts of the

composition making the railway line appear firmly grounded.

OBSERVATIONS AND OVERVIEW

The observations and overview were based on how students explained the development of their work through their synopses, as well as face-to-face interactions with the researcher. It was envisaged from the onset that it was better to engage and let the students 'talk' about their work, their inspirations and derivation of meaning as an avenue of determining how they viewed and comprehended the use of elements and principles. This was deemed to be preferable to pinning them down to whether or not they held an academic comprehension of how the two relate. It was determined that this comprehension can be better manifested through the nature and quality of work rather than direct probing questions that tended only to stifle their specific responses. In art it is always preferable for students to respond to a given artistic phenomenon through the specific description of their work whether in terms of execution, style, or derivation of meaning.

Students Painted a Variety Of Paintings as Befitted their Interest.

Students, just like other artists, featured paintings that were a creation that befitted their interests and responded to their inspirations. In explaining how they created their paintings, the use of elements and the application of principles was not necessarily an integral part of this explanation and was, therefore, seen to be spontaneous. However, some students went ahead to articulate their experience in using certain elements as well as how they perceived the role of principles. It can be observed then that the knowledge about elements and principles was therefore adequately engrained and applied spontaneously and purposefully, and the paintings were holistically well executed as pieces of artwork. The quality of work featured in this paper demonstrates that this engrained knowledge was beneficial and helped the students to refine their work continuously.

How Students Showed the Relationship Between Elements and Principles

As manifested in their work, students displayed adequate understanding of the use of elements as tools in the composition of their work within the given picture plane. Through the way they picked and organized the elements to create a viable composition, it was evident that they also understood the role of principles in this organization. Therefore, the resultant holistic compositions shown in their drawings and paintings were purposeful. In addition, because of these purposeful compositions, the students were also able to draw meaning in their work, whether they intended to study simple landscapes, depict certain social phenomena, feature a still-life composition, or delve into the complexities of surrealism. The success of integrating both elements and principles in creating their work was, therefore, seen in the quality of their work.

Level of Knowledge of Elements and Principles among Students

All the students in this study had been formally taught about the use of elements and principles in creating a work of art and were, therefore, familiar with how to handle and relate the two. It can be observed that the level of understanding of the use of individual elements and how principles are applied to guide the use of these elements varied among individual students and most probably determined the resultant quality of work. Depending on how they are understood, arranged, and rationalized, elements and principles can be used to highlight certain expressions that give meaning to a pictorial composition either covertly or overtly. The ability of a student to use lines, shapes, colour, colour tones and textures may culminate in a detailed depiction of certain human expressions and gestures that are crucial for visual expression and the creation of meaning in a work of art. Since students were not required to explain the usage of any element or principle academically, they went ahead. They featured them holistically in their work which showed due diligence and spontaneity. It can be observed, therefore, that they displayed the prerequisite

knowledge in this undertaking and demonstrated that they could apply the interrelation that exists between elements and principles.

Instinctive Spontaneity

It can be observed that although all the students whose work is featured in this study had prior knowledge of elements and principles as ingredients and guidelines of artistic composition, some students could not explain in precise artistic terms how they understood and subsequently applied both elements and principle in their work, from a point of knowledge. The study took cognizance of the possibility that students could apply these elements instinctively and spontaneously irrespective of the prior knowledge that they had been exposed to since this would then explain their good quality of work. In retrospect, this study, therefore, coined the term ‘instinctive spontaneity’ to describe the possibility that the ability to ‘instinctively’ create a work of art or ‘spontaneously’ use elements and arrange them in some logical manner plays a part in the creation of artwork irrespective of formal training. If in this regard an artist takes interest in his or her environment and observes certain occurrences or internalizes certain phenomena, that interest translates into a plethora of visual images in the mind that form the basis of his or her inspirations and subsequent ‘creativity.’ Therefore, the artist enters into the creative realm of ‘visual cognizance’ where everything observed is placed into perspective for its creative worth. The artist will, therefore, be able to instinctively create a work of art in response to those inspirations even without a structured description or explanation of the role of elements and principles, mainly because they are already interwoven into their instinctive or natural artistic ability. The extent, though, to which this is effective cannot be determined here since this was not within the scope of this study; another comparative study would be essential to examine the work of these two distinctive perspectives.

Individual Talent

It can be observed that talent as a description of outstanding artistic ability plays a complementary role in creating a work of art. This means that a student who has the prerequisite knowledge of the use of elements and application of principles is likely to produce even better work if they are talented in their creative ability. It implies, therefore, that a less talented student is likely to produce less outstanding or captivating work despite adequate knowledge of elements and principles.

Mass/Space

It can be observed that all paintings depicted the concept of masses and their corresponding spaces in a two-dimensional dispensation. Some students may not have been able to articulate it confidently, but it emerged in their paintings all the same. The mass in a given painting was represented by the objects, figures, or items that were representative of actual tangible masses in real life. In *Plate 9* for instance, the bird and the twig upon which it is perched represent the masses in the painting while the background in this case represents the corresponding space within which the two items are seen and visualized. In *Plate 22*, it is clear in this rendition of a human form that the young woman represents the mass as she is indeed representational of a real living person who would bear tangible mass. The human form as depicted in the painting is, therefore, the mass; it is made recognizable by virtue of all the corresponding spaces around it that help visually constitute the human figure as we know it. Other masses within the painting are the rocky outcrop in the foreground, the reeds in the water, and the water itself.

Elements and the Creation of Meaning

When students well understand elements, it is observable that there is commensurate derivation of meaning in instances where the student wishes to express something, particularly where elements are well intertwined.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that elements are still important in how students comprehend and create their artwork and subsequently it may be concluded that students perhaps tend to create better work when exposed to that prerequisite knowledge than otherwise. Principles are critical in the organization of elements as a strategy of creating meaningful artwork and students need to comprehend the creative symbiotic relationship between elements and principles. This study posits that the testimony of the level of knowledge of elements and principles is ultimately evidenced through the quality of artwork created and subsequently the ability of students to describe the content of their work better and explain the genesis of their compositions. This study did not make a conclusive insight into the possibility that some students bear an instinctive ability to create artistic work even though they may not be able to project an artistic understanding, for instance, in their own explanation of how elements and principle inter-weave to create their individual artwork.

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