CHAPTER 5:
EXPLORING NEGATIVE-POSITIVE DRAWING: AN EXPERIMENT

Contributed by
Chibuzor Asogwa and Chidiebere Onwuekwe
https://orcid.org/0009-0008-2300-5628

Introduction

Drawing as a form of art does not cease in the use of lines to make a picture on a two-dimensional surface, but also includes the use of colours, tone and other elements, added with lines to make representation on a flat surface. In fact, throughout the history of visual representation, humans explored various unconventional materials in creating drawings on various surfaces. Palaeolithic drawings between 10,000 to 25,000 B.C. were discovered on cave walls and roofs in Nothern Africa and Southern European Countries such as in Lascaux, Dordogne and Chauvet Cave in Ardeche Valley both in France. "The famous wall paintings at Lascaux, in Dordogne include a wide range of animal species and a few human stick figures painted with earth-coloured pigments – brown, black, yellow and red. They are ground from ocher, hematite and manganese and applied to the natural white limestone surfaces of the walls. The Lascaux artists created their Figures by drawing an outline and filling it with pigment (Adams, 2000 p. 25). Those images were assumed to be their day-to-day experiences.

Many civilizations utilised drawing in bringing various art projects into reality. Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Dark Age Artists, Rennaissance, Pop and modern artists employed drawing with miscellaneous materials in expressing their styles. Over the

years, so many materials have been put to use in drawing. From a preliminary study carried out via interviews and observation, the student artists of the Department of Fine and Applied Arts of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria, have exhausted the use of common materials such as pencils, oil and chalk pastels, crayons, ink and brush, in creating drawings. Thus there is a need to explore unconventional materials in making drawings. Among such drawing effects is inverted drawing. Inverted drawing involves making a visual representation on a black surface with white material, creating a sharp contrast to the dark background in lines. Example of such type of drawing is Scrapeboard and Silverpoint techniques. Such techniques are less prevalent in some departments and art schools in Nigeria because of a lack of materials. Correction pen is a prospective material for drawing because of its ability to make continuous markings. In making corrections to writing errors, correction pens are a handy and simple instrument. These pens have an ink, marker, or mistake-covering fluid that dries quickly, enabling a seamless repair of errors on paper.

This research hereby explores experimental drawing, with materials such as black cardboard papers and correction pen and ink to create various genres of drawings such as portrait, landscape, still life, scenes and the human figure. Again, the research will deploy the Photoshop application as a tool to invert the outcome of the research into positive replicas, thereby attaining varieties in materials.

Purpose of the Study

The study aims to achieve the following:

- To experiment with unconventional materials as media for delineations on paper

- To explore Photoshop filter effects to achieve a contrasting look on the finished drawings

- To experiment with further effects in Photoshop, to achieve unique visual textures on the scanned drawings

- To prove through explorations that artists can employ materials other than pencil, pen, charcoal, and others, as media for drawing.

Literature Review: Trends in Drawing in the Twenty-first Century

Digital Drawing is an example of an emerging trend in the art of drawing, following the advent and advancement of the personal computer (PC). Digital drawing refers to the use of digital tools and software to create artwork. Unlike traditional drawing, which typically involves using physical materials such as pencils, charcoal, or ink, digital drawing relies on digital devices such as tablets, styluses, and computer programs. With the increasing availability of digital tools and software, many artists have started exploring the potential of digital drawing. According to Bozalek, et al. (2018), digital drawing tools enable artists to create complex and intricate designs with ease, and also provide new opportunities for collaboration and sharing. Digital drawing has become increasingly popular in recent years, particularly among artists who work in illustration, animation, and graphic design.

Urban sketching is another recent trend in artistic delineations. It is a form of drawing and painting that involves creating sketches and artworks of urban environments such as streets, buildings, and people. It typically involves drawing on location, rather than in a studio and often involves capturing the scene quickly and with a loose, expressive style. According to Larkins (2021), urban sketching allows artists to capture the unique character and atmosphere of urban environments and also provides opportunities for social interaction and community

building. Urban sketching has gained popularity in recent years, particularly with the growth of social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook, where artists can share their work and connect with other artists from around the world.

Experimental Drawing is not exclusive to the recent happenings in drawing. Many contemporary artists are pushing the boundaries of traditional drawing techniques by experimenting with unconventional materials and methods. According to Atkinson and Campbell (2018), experimental drawing can involve anything from using found objects as drawing tools to creating works that incorporate performance or installation elements. This is the main concern of this work as it tries to explore ground-breaking possibilities in the art of drawing.

Last, but not least is collaborative drawing. It involves multiple artists working together on a single artwork, which has become increasingly popular in recent years. According to Jones and Strickland (2019), collaborative drawing can lead to the creation of complex and dynamic artworks that reflect the perspectives and experiences of multiple artists.

Theoretical Framework

The theory adopted for this study was “Materiality theory”. Materiality theory is a theoretical framework in art history and criticism that emphasizes the importance of materials and material processes in the creation and interpretation of art. This theory posits that the physical properties of materials and the ways in which they are manipulated by artists have a profound impact on the meaning and significance of the artworks they create.

One influential proponent of materiality theory is the art historian and critic, James Elkins. In his book, "The Object Stares Back: On the Nature of Seeing," Elkins argues that the material properties of artworks are an essential aspect of their meaning and

value and that our experience of art is deeply connected to the sensory and tactile qualities of the materials used.

Another influential figure in materiality theory is the philosopher and cultural critic, Bruno Latour. In his book, "We Have Never Been Modern," Latour argues that the modernist view of the world as divided between human subjects and inanimate objects is deeply flawed and that the material world is in fact an active participant in the creation and interpretation of culture.

In recent years, materiality theory has gained increasing attention in art historical and critical discourse. For example, in the article "Materiality and the Practice of Contemporary Sculpture" (2016), art historian Jenni Sorkin explores the ways in which contemporary sculptors are using unconventional materials and fabrication techniques to challenge traditional ideas about sculpture and its relationship to the physical world.

Materials

The materials required for the drawing experiment are as follows:

- Photographs of human model
- Photographs of objects and scenes
- pencil
- Correction pen
- Eraser
- 160 GSM black cardboard paper
- A flatbed scanner,
- DI Printer

Methods

Step A: Negative Drawing

Making reference to photographs of human models, landscapes, and still life compositions, sketches are made with the lead pencil on black paper. The details of the sketches are later

traced out using a correction pen. It is important to shake the pen appropriately before reuse, to ensure an easy flow of fluid from the nib of the pen. Line drawing is the most applicable to this technique. It is pertinent to avoid shading because it is almost impossible to achieve using this technique, except for a few thin strokes or cross-hatching techniques.

Plate 1: Sample Picture, posed by Nancy Ugwumba, 2013. Photo Credit: Ade Ogunbiyi

After tracing the drawing the artist erased the pencil marks. In case there is a need for correction in the drawings, it is usually done with a black permanent marker or black ink with a brush, as the case may be. This abruptly covers unwanted lines or strokes in the drawing, creating a quick illusion of erasure in a given space. The appropriate shading techniques for negative drawing are cross-hatching and strokes. They will make the drawings retain their linear characteristics and picturesque effects.

Plate 2: Drawing rendered with correction pen on black paper
© Chidi Onwuekwe, 2013

Step B: Positive Duplicate

The drawing is scanned onto Adobe Photoshop Layout when it is completed. "Photoshop is a programme powered by Adobe Incorporated, an American Software Producing Company" (Onwuekwe 2012 p. 224). Otaka (2008) describes Photoshop and its possibilities thus:

> It is a professional image editing application. Adobe Photoshop delivers a comprehensive environment for professional image editing. With its integrated web application, Adobe Photoshop delivers a comprehensive environment for professional designers and graphics producers to create sophisticated images for print, web, wireless devices and other media (p.22).

There are so many artistic effects that can be applied to drawings scanned onto Photoshop layout. After saving a copy of the scanned drawing, the artist converted the drawing to grayscale and selected 'levels' and 'curve' properties to adjust the contrast between the dark and light tones of the image. Using the 'invert' property, the artist converts the white portions of the image to black and vice versa.

Plate 3: Drawing scanned onto Photoshop layout and edited with 'Auto Level' effect, thus defining sharp contrast between tints and shades. © Chidi Onwuekwe, 2013

The invert property allows colours to turn into their complementary counterpart as seen on the colour wheel. Once the "Ctrl + I" button is pressed, highlight areas of pictures turn shade, the darkest areas of a picture turn white, including the eyeballs, various tones of red turn to various tones of green, dark blue turns to orangs while lemon and yellow turn into various degrees of violet. Usually, the human skin which is brown in colour turns to various tones of tinted and shaded blue.

Plate 4: Drawing with colours reversed with "ctrl + I" as the keyboard shortcut to 'invert' effect on Adobe Photoshop. © Chidi Onwuekwe, 2013

Once the 'invert' key is activated on Photoshop, the negative drawing appears like a regular pen and ink drawing on white paper. The artist prints the drawings and places them beside the negative. Both of them seem like negative films and processed prints in photography.

Plate 5: Negative and positive of the same drawing showing contrast.
© Chidi Onwuekwe, 2013

Findings

Despite the realization in the research, some problems were stumbled upon. First, the use of a correction pen in drawing was rigid and constrained, unlike pencil and ink. Next, the flow of ink from the nib of the pen was usually difficult to control. Consequently, the achievement of thin lines on distant objects, human eyes and other factors that require detail in drawing, was

obstinate. Shading was limited to cross-hatching and strokes only, hence the achievement of the smudgy mid-tone shading effect in the inverted drawing is impossible. Moreover, the achievement of realism was awkward because the job was done negatively. In this aspect, abstraction or semi-naturalistic expression would pose a great success. While working, the artist would be unsure of the semblance of his drawing to the original picture because drawing with white on black surfaces creates a false visual illusion. For instance, while sketching the eye, the lens and iris are white while the ball of the eye is enclosed in a black space. These factors restrained the artist's freedom of expression with lines and other elements of art.

Conclusion

A sample portrait was made using white correction pen on 160 grammage black textured cardboard paper. The finished drawing was scanned onto a Photoshop layout and inverted to create a positive duplicate of the drawings. When the positive was printed, it resulted to duplicate of the original negative drawing, which entails one art piece with two visual effects. These drawings can serve various purposes. They can be exhibited in art shows, used for reference, or published as illustrations accompanying texts in children's book, and so on. to the use as rough descriptions of a prospective art piece.

Questions

Explain the step-by step approaches of attaining the two results of this study

Using still life drawing as a niche, deploy the following processes explained in this work, with a view to achieving the same result

REFERENCES

Adams, L. S. (2000) *A History of Western Art*. Chicago: McGraw-Hill Higher Education.

Atkinson, D., & Campbell, D. (2018). Experimental drawing: Drawing performance, installation, and site-specificity. Journal of Drawing Research and Creativity Studies, 3(1), 1-14.

Bozalek, V., et al. (2018). Drawing in the digital age: Exploring the impact of digital technologies on drawing practices in higher education. Arts and Humanities in Higher Education, 17(4), 371-385.

Elkins, J. (1996). The Object Stares Back: On the Nature of Seeing. Harvest Books.

Jones, J., & Strickland, R. (2019). Collaborative drawing as a social practice. Drawing: Research, Theory, Practice, 4(2), 219-235.

Larkins, E. (2021). Urban sketching: Empathy, creativity and community. Journal of Urban Design, 26(3), 314-327.

Latour, B. (1993). We Have Never Been Modern. Harvard University Press.

Onwuekwe, C. O (2012). A Digital Draw and Paint Approach to Illustration with Adobe Photoshop. *Awka Journal of Research in Music and the Arts (AJRMA).* (8) 220-231

Otaka, J. (2008). Graphic Design Software Application in Nigerian Print Media. First Degree Project. Department of Fine and Applied Art, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Sorkin, J. (2016). Materiality and the Practice of Contemporary Sculpture. Art Journal, 75(3), 38-54. doi:10.1080/00043249.2016.1214670