



EXPLORING THE AESTHETIC QUALITIES OF TEXTURES IN PAINTING FROM SELECTED TREE BARKS

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ABSTRACT- Man is endowed with physical and mental features that enable him to appreciate the beauty of what he sees and to also interpret such beauty the way he feels like. Artworks have been appreciated by the ancient and modern eras of man and no work of art is considered worthless. As the world turns most activities of man get refined so that they can adapt to the modern world. Paintings of the past are considered priceless in the modern world and such paintings include sculptors and paintings on natural materials such as trees. This paper is designed to examine the aesthetics embedded in paintings on tree barks. The paper will make some reviews on aesthetics and art and will by means of selected pictures examine the beauty of paintings on barks of trees. The types of trees that can be effective in reflecting paintings on their bark will also form a major part of this study. Samples of paintings on tree barks will be analyzed and their beauty revealed.

Keywords: Aesthetics, Arts, Paintings, and Barks of trees.

I. INTRODUCTION

Pictures are expressions of imagination and reality that humans can look at and sometimes feel to get physical and emotional satisfaction. Pictures can be used to record past experiences in a manner that expresses originality, it then serves as a historical record and as a means of entertainment. Commonly, pictures are expressed in photography by means of camera and an industrial process. More recently, pictures can be easily taken by means of camera and it pleases humans when they look at it. However, before the advent of cameras and camera enabled gadgets, humans have records of pictures. The ancient world has a lot of pictures which were painted or drawn by artist and painters.

Archaeological findings have uncovered a lot of pictures or paintings from the ancient world, and people wondered why most of them are indelible. A thorough examination of some of these paintings or pictures indicate that non-perishable materials were used to save these pictures or paintings. There have been paintings from ancient Babylon, Assyria, Greece and Rome. These artistic paintings have undergone serious challenges that should have destroyed them, but they survived because of the materials used to convey the expressions.

In the modern world, painters or artist have invented means of expressing ideas and concepts using natural means. The idea behind this is to amuse people who love paintings while also ensuring that efficient materials are used to safe guard such paint expressions.

Natural materials such as sand, concrete, woods, leaves and tree barks have been used to save paint expressions. Textile materials too have also been used as materials to convey artistic thoughts or expressions. This study then is designed to examine the aesthetic qualities of textures in Painting from selected tree barks. Images of paintings designed with tree barks will be examined to identify its aesthetic features.



These are samples of paintings on the bark of a tree and they evoke awe and are pleasant to look at. In the ancient world, artist carved images on a tree bark and as the tree survives so does the painting. The pictures above are modern art. The artist did not allow the roughness or ruggedness of a tree to limit his artistic talent.

Sometimes too, artist can trim out barks from a tree and then use it as a board or paper to express a concept.

Below are some examples



These pictures indicate that artistic paintings can be imprinted on the bark of a tree. Tree symbolises so much to man. Tree can be used to represent long life, endurance, life giver, shelter and it has so much economic utilities. Based on this, when an artist imprints a picture on the bark or a tree, it adds extra value to that tree and makes the picture significant.

This paper will assess suitable trees that are in use to convey artistic thoughts and concepts.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW FOR TEXTURES IN PAINTINGS FROM SELECTED TREE BARKS

Graham and Meng (2011) describes texture as being universal. They opine that texture is something we encounter daily because we can determine which things are rough, smooth and soft by feeling them or at times sighting them. Texture in arts is defined by the scholars as perception of the surface quality of a work of art.

As it relates to this study the texture of selected tree barks will be determine by means of evaluation from the origin down to the art background.

Aesthetics according to David Huron (2016) Aesthetics is the study of beauty as perceived from an art work. It can also mean the examination of an ugly painting. He mentioned that the issue of aesthetics is not new to the world. As far back as the times of ancient Greece and China. Scholars and artist have been concerned about the beauty or ugliness of artistic impressions.

In simple terms then aesthetics is just the perception an individual or group of people have of a painting or artistic expression.

Aesthetics, is related to philosophy. Beauty and ugliness are two words that classify things. A thing can either be beautiful or ugly. However, the argument now is that what is ugly to Mr. Brown may be beautiful to Mr White. Aesthetics then is that branch of philosophy that examines an artistic expression with the aim of identifying qualities in the painting that can qualify it as beautiful, ugly, extra-ordinary or even ordinary. (Microsoft ® Encarta ® 2009).

Immanuel Kant, quoted in David Huron (2016) disassociated the pleasure derived from aesthetics as different from sensual pleasure derived from food, sex, warmth, companionship and others. He is of the view that aesthetics does not serve any purpose but it can change the mood of someone.

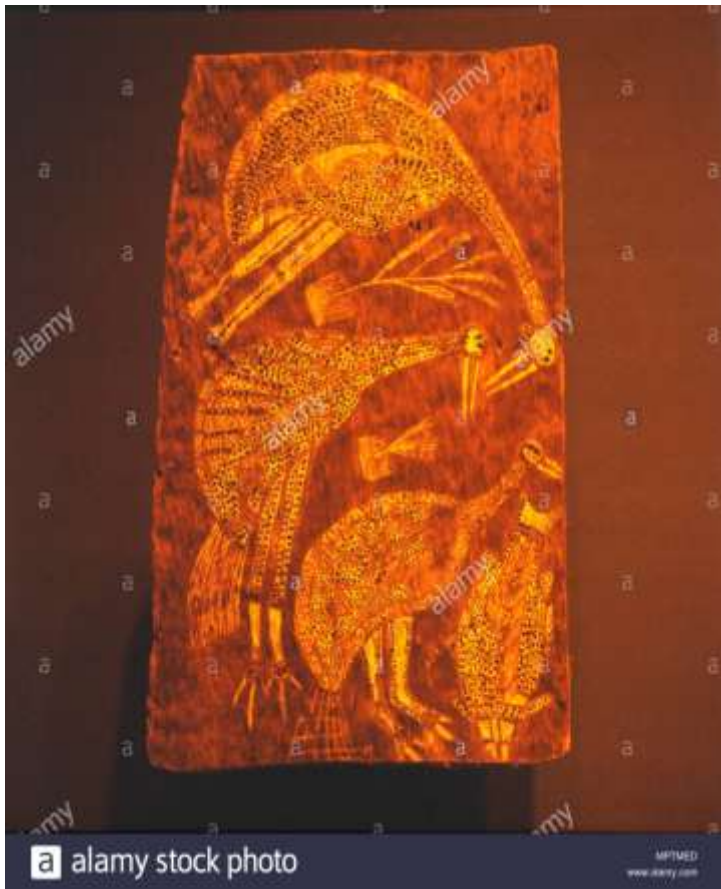
Wundt (1863) is of the opinion that aesthetics arouses an individual or stimulates a person. However, he argues that this can only be achieved if the aesthetic object under review is not too simple or complex.

Gordon Graham (2005) in his book, *Philosophy of The Arts: An introduction to aesthetics Third Edition*, discussed issues of aesthetics in detail. He analysed arts as pleasure, beauty, emotion, understanding, music and sonic arts. He also examined types of arts such as visual arts, literary arts, performing arts, architectural arts, modern arts and the issue of nature and aesthetics.

The issue of photography has been described as an invention that tries to render the artist obsolete as observed by Gombrich (1977) He mentions that painting is was no longer considered as a lucrative venture because of photography. This issue made some to consider artistic painting as trivial. However, as paintings get upgraded and unique in form due to the use of natural materials like fabrics, sand and tree barks, paintings began to occupy a priceless status.

But the aborigines of Australia, for years' value paintings on tree barks. Encarta (2009) relays that the Aborigines of Australia where known for expressing traditional and personal thoughts on the bark of trees. They painted animals, tools and religious ideas. The paintings are not absurd or meaningless. Even though they may not have used modern artistic tools, their craftsmanship is pleasant.

Sample of Aboriginal Art on a Tree bark



Bark is dehydrated matter; it is opaque. Bark is rough on the meso scale and the structure of the roughness can be of a large variety. S. Lefebvre and F. Neyret. (2002) opines that painting on bark is a natural means of portraying natural art. However, he identified surface relief estimation on the bark as a major problem. To prepare a bark which is not originally made as a drawing board is not very easy. The layers both outer and inner have to be taken into consideration before they can be used to reflect an art work.

Concerning aesthetics of nature, Gordon Graham observed that the issue of appreciating nature has been appreciated as far back as the 16th and 17th centuries. He mentioned such names as Immanuel Kant, R. W Hepburn, Francis Hutcheson as scholars who are of the opinion that appreciating natural arts such as landscapes should be done with disinterestedness. The issue of disinterestedness is still being debated but scholars agree on the fact that using natural materials to express paintings is appreciated and invaluable.

Gordon Graham observes that people are concerned about the interpretation artist portray with their paintings but mentions that it is highly appreciated when painting express meaning that goes beyond just an image or picture. The use of such natural materials as tree bark and sand painting have been described as awe inspiring because it can interpreted as bring natural and infinite.

A.-S. Lehmann, S. C. Pont and J.-M. Geusebroek (2005) describes bark as dehydrated is dehydrated substance that is not transparent but is rough and so needs extra care to be used as a portrayal of a picture. The authors describe paintings on tree bark as technical due to the angles the drawing takes. The surface structure is anisotropic while the trunks are most times described as oriented cylinders. This indicates that painting on tree barks need skill and care. When an artist successfully expresses a picture on a tree bark it is highly esteemed. J. Ruskin. (1971) also explains that trees are indeed a representation of nature but that they are extremely complicated with complex textures.

This literature review indicates that to maintain the relevance of artistic paintings, artist should not neglect the use of natural materials such as leaves, sand and even cave walls to express an idea through painting. It can also be deduced that painting on tree barks need skills due to the rough nature of tree

barks. But it may be difficult but not impossible. Archaeological findings and reports from historians such as Immanuel Kant and Leonardo Da Vinci shows that artistic expressions imprinted on natural materials are not new to the human world and that such paintings are considered invaluable.

Barks of Trees That Can Convey Painting Expressions

There are some trees that can be easily used as painting bases. Their texture is such that can receive flashes of painting and carvings. This study identified barks from oak tree, cedar tree, mahogany tree and aspen tree as texturally suitable to portray artistic ideas which can elicit pleasure and be durable.

As have been mentioned painting on the bark of a tree is not easy compared to painting on a fabric or board. To be able to represent an idea that is aesthetic needs a lot of skills.

OAK TREE BARK (*Quercus brantii*)

Looking at a sample of the bark of an oak tree, for many it will seem impossible for one to represent a painted idea on it that would be meaningful and beautiful. The reason for this may be due to the fact that the oak tree has a rough bark. However, for skilled artist it is not impossible.

British Pharmaceutical Codex,(1973) observes that the presence of an Oak tree in an area makes that place to be considered as important. The tree is described as the most important tree species of the Zagros in Iran. P Pithayanukul, P Ruenraroengsak, R Bavovada, N Pakmanee, R Suttisri, S Saen-oon. J. (2005) observes that because of the high presence of tannin in the bark of the Oak tree it is less used for home affairs but is cherished for biological and industrial purposes. The bark unlike some other trees have a long life span when peeled from the tree and when it is industrially treated it can be used for conveying of artistic impression.



Source: www.pinintrest.com

(Figure 1)

The bark of this Oak tree is rough but it is sturdy. This bark can be used to portay any idea. The arstist may need to use some materials such as tar to coat the cracks while he presents a concept or it can be flashed on with paint and be drawn on.



(Figure 2)

This tree is aesthetically patterned to receive any kind of concept from a painter or a sculptor. The texture of the bark is not inimical to painting. This bark can be painted on with brush or spray. A skilful artist will be utilising the protruded part of the tree artistically in creating something extra ordinary.

Most oak trees are like this that is why sculptors and artist source for it. The texture and structure are compatible with artistic paintings.

Texture of the Bark of an Oak Tree

The bark of an Oak tree is rough and the best way to represent an image or painting on it is to use a flash painting spray. For example, if one wants to represent a rainbow on the bark of an oak tree, he needs to first mark out where each colour of the rainbow will appear on and set his boundary. Brushes too can be used with colours to trim lines and dot some areas.

Aesthetic Quality of the Bark of an Oak Tree

The aesthetic quality of using an Oak tree bark to convey an artistic impression is that it will last and moreover can truly depict rough ideas such as wildlife as depicted in the picture below. Bark of an Oak tree can be pained on or drawn on. When an artist develops an idea by skilfully pruning the spot he plans to use and set boundaries for colours and concepts, he would be able to impress an onlooker or critic with a rare feat.



Figure 3

Source: Karen Mc Alister Shimoda

This is a sample of painting on an Oak tree bark. The artist was able to set boundaries for each drawn line and she represented an image that represent wild life in a wild forest.

She did not use just a colour but is able to mix up colours of white and gray skilfully on the tree bark.

The Bark of an Aspen Tree (genus Populus, of the family Salicaceae)

Aspen is an economic tree that can be used to provide variety of domestic and industrial materials. The American Aspen is considered as most familiar., John R. Jones and George A. Schier (1966) observes that the Aspen tree can stay up to 200 years and even more, despite harsh conditions.

Texture of the Bark of an Aspen Tree

The bark of aspen is mostly smooth with a greenish-white. Some others can have yellowish- white, yellowish-grey, or greyish to almost white coloration. When some aspen trees get mature they can become a bit rough in texture and can have fissures.

Bark of an aspen is sometimes smooth due to the persistent periderm as observed by Kaufert (1937) In the West however, Baker (1925) observed that due to the browsing and gnawing of some forest animals such as rodents, the bark can have a rough texture sometimes.

The bark of Aspen tree can be rough for some species and smooth for some others. Barr and Porter (1974) observes that chloroplast in the phelloderm of the trunk and presence of cortical parenchyma enables it to carry on photosynthesis. Shepard (1975) Observes that Photosynthate in the bark of the tree is transported laterally in rays to xylem, phloem, and cambium. This information shows that the bark of the Aspen tree plays a vital role in the sustenance of the tree. This is one of the reasons why most artist reflect their painting on the bark of the tree.

The Aspen tree bark is another material that can be used by artistic painters to portray their thoughts. Its bark can be skilfully trimmed of the tree or the painting can be directly done on the tree. Unlike the Oak tree, there are most Aspen trees that are smooth and also strong.

The aspen tree can be used to make paper and cardboards as observed in many industries.



Figure 4

This is a rough bark of an Aspen tree; it can still be painted on. The texture is rough but its surface can still be smeared or laced with paint.



Figure 5

This is a smooth bark of a white Aspen tree. It can be painted on with bright colours. The black materials on the bark of the tree and the yellow daisy flowers around it shows that a skilful artist can imprint a fascinating painting on its bark.



Figure 6 -Source: www.longmont.com

This is a sample of a painting on an aspen tree, despite its hardness and rough texture a skilful artist was still able to reflect the rawness of nature using colour of vegetation and the dark paths or cracks

The roughness then of any kind of tree bark should not impede an artist from expressing his idea using natural material like the bark.

Bark of a Tropical Cedar Tree (Cedrela Fissilis Vell)

The tropical cedar is a neotropical member of the hardwood family . Its bark is of high quality and the timber is suitable for industrial and domestic usage. Rodanet al.(1992) observes that the tree has been highly exploited by man for more than two centuries.

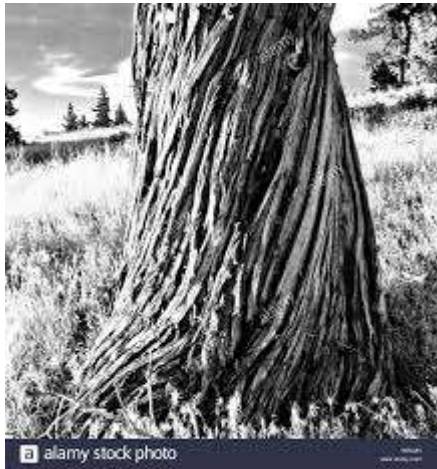


Figure 7

This is a cedar tree bark and it is obvious that it has a hard texture but its twisted nature is on its own pleasant to look at. When a skilled artist flashes or smear painting on this bark it will be best describe as variety or even a portrait of the vicissitudes of life. Despite the twisting life challenges humans with, like the cedar, it still has something pleasant to express.



Figure 8

Source: [www,pininterest.com](http://www.pinterest.com)

This is another cedar tree bark and it is quite different from the image above. However, the texture of these trees is rough and twisted and without being painted on, these barks express aesthetics that is pleasant to the sight, ear and to the sense of touch.

III. CONCLUSION

It is obvious from the pictures, descriptions and references made in the study that painting on the barks of a tree is not an impossible task even if it takes a lot of skills. The advent of smartphones is already

making print photograph trivial but with conceptual paintings such as paintings on tree barks, a modern artist will still have relevance in the world. Painting on tree barks are feasible and lovely to the perceive.

The roughness, ruggedness, location and twisted state of a tree cannot be the reason for an artist to feel limited in imprinting an art work on the bark. As some scholars mentioned in this study, it may be breathtaking but it is worth the effort because aesthetics plays a vital role in the sustenance of man in this stress filled world of our common era.

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