

Building an Installation Artwork: Casting Light to Transform the Shapes of Printed Silk Screen to Be Part of the Space

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ABSTRACT

Printmaking often includes a two-dimensional frame whether it was printed out on paper or canvas. In the time when most artist strive to create new forms of art whether it was in sculpting, drawing, painting so on and so forth, printmaking is still considered a traditional form of art limited to its frame. In an attempt to make a quantum leap in the concept of artistic works' dimensions this research aimed to investigate a method which aids extracting the work of art from its limited frame. where lighting helps to free the shapes of the artwork and make them part of the surrounding atmosphere, a part of space. This was achieved by three artworks which were printed on plates of hardened glass; thus, each artwork is a set of layers that when merged together would create the final form of the artwork. Also, a paper copy of each artwork was made. Light was added to these artworks allowing the receivers to walk through the artwork instead of rotating around it, thus, participating into the artwork itself.

Keywords- Installation Art, Silk Screen, Printmaking.

I. INTRODUCTION

Printmaking often includes a two-dimensional frame whether it was printed out on paper or canvas. In the time when most artist strive to create new forms of art whether it was in sculpting, drawing, painting so on and so forth, printmaking is still considered a traditional form of art limited to its frame. In an attempt to make a quantum leap in the concept of artistic works' dimensions this research aimed to investigate a method which aids extracting the work of art from its limited frame.

The lighting in the artwork of the American Artist Robert Rauschenberg (1925-2008) "shades" allows browsing the figures and realizing its shapes, which appear -As a result of the transparency of its forms- as if they were shadows. But the aim in these artworks that are about to be explained throughout the research, lighting helps to free the shapes of the artwork and make them part of the surrounding atmosphere, a part of space.

Research Keywords Definitions:

Printmaking: A fine print that was treated in one of the artistic methods of printing: be it engraving, Collagraphy, Linocut, Lithography, screen printing and other various forms of printmaking techniques that are still being created and modified nowadays. Each of these methods has its own distinguishing techniques which moves the artist from the line to the material to the medium to the final work. The goal of these methods in general is to be able to replicate the work of art for a number of times and as a result many would be able to obtain a copy of the artwork unlike paintings which stay fixed in one place only.

Installation Art: A postmodernist form of art in which the artist can create and install his artwork in the space where it will be shown, this allows the recipient to be a part of the artwork through one's physical movement.

II. METHODOLOGY

The experimental Methodology was adopted in this research, based on exploring the technical use of silk

screen printmaking in order to produce the artwork, then the technical benefit of using light in order to place the recipient inside the artwork and between its shadows cast in the space in which the artwork is presented.

In order to reach scientific and objective results, a variety of artwork tools were used, including computer programs and technical printmaking materials.

III. PRIOR APPROACH

There were various schools and trends in fine arts the emergence of classic art, the arts of the middle-ages followed by the renaissance then romanticism and realism all of which emerged in successive centuries. Later onwards started the 21st century which included a huge number of various artistic quantum leaps such as impressionism, cubism, futurism, fauvism, impressionism, primitivism and many others. Another form of art later emerged named postmodernist art. Alongside postmodernism came many artistic trends like the observer's shock, land art, conceptual art and many others.

An example of artworks that used the light art in postmodernism are the works of the German artist Siegfried Albrecht, his artwork is represented through casting types of coloured shadows on a wall using coloured light sources. He managed to create an interaction between shadows which differ depending on the position of the viewer by using cut-outs for the letters of the alphabet that were placed between the wall and the light source. Many of Albrecht's work took the shape of a box with a screen which mainly depended on white or coloured lights to produce coloured shapes and shadows according to the shapes of the items situated in between them. The constant movement in these works depended on electromechanical engines [3] the most important feature of postmodernist art is that it moved the work of art out of its frame to place it in a space allowing the viewer to be inside the artwork instead of viewing it from an eagle eye view.

The question in the mind of the researcher while studying some of the postmodernist artworks was that will printmaking be limited to the artwork's frame or is it possible to set it free from this restriction just like other works? and what are the limitations that artists face when trying to take a similar path in creating prints in a space or displaying them incorporation with the motion of light? Looking back at the 20th centuries some attempts could be traced for artists who tried to create a third dimension for printmaking like Lucio Fontana (1899-1968) who tried to incorporate silkscreens in his artwork and later print it on canvas and throughout the process he used to insert some hole and tear some parts which would match the art's aesthetic formation. In his own perspective this was able to add a new dimension to the artwork. The tendencies of the artist (Lucio Fontana) can be known from what came in the statement he made in (1946) for the movement "*Spazialista*" that was called the White Manifesto

"*Manifiesto Blanco*": "Colour is the element of space, sound is the element of time, and movement extends in time and space, and they are the main forces of the new art, which embraces the four dimensions of existential space." [1]

In other attempts some artists used to print their artwork without colours (embossing) thus, the terrain effect left behind by the process board on papers when printing would be considered a third dimension for the artwork just like the artist Giorgio Bompadre (1929) this defiantly enriched the texture of printmaking with special graphic effects but yet it was still limited to a two-dimensional surface.

The American artist Robert Rauschenberg (1925-2008) made in 1964 an impressive artwork that he named "Shades" that fore him was a book, this book was a six panels of plexiglass blocks that held the lithography prints, one permanently fixed and five moving alternately in an aluminum frame, and illuminated by an intermittent flashlight. [2] The lighting here allows browsing the book and realizing its shapes, which appear as a set of shadows.

IV. THE EXPERIMENT

The question remains, is it possible to fully detach printmaking from the borders of the frame? From this point the researcher sought a way for a method that would help view the artwork within a separate group of layers, which would be really similar to what could be seen in a computer software which allow one to control the layers of the graphic work being processed. As if every layer will be printed on a plastic board and later merged together within the picture's frame but in this case the artwork would still be attached to a two-dimensional surface. Another approach was to print each layer of the artwork on a piece of cardboard and then make holes or tears in some of them and put them all together thus the viewer would see the layers through the tears that were made. This approach required a lot of editing and studying to give a fully aesthetic form.

At this point the works of the Venezuelan artist Jesus Rafael Soto (1923-2005) were studied. His works mainly feature boards made of (Plexiglass) and the inner layer which will lean to the wall is made of wood, thus, the view can walk around the artwork and take part in forming it throughout the changes in the formations that occur depending on the viewer's position in relation to the artwork since the layers intersect depending on which layers are visible from a given angle. In this research a group of layers were printed, each of them was on a hardened glass board. Glass was chosen because of its flexibility when it comes to erasing and retrying without the need to refine it. Also, because the boards should be as transparent as possible in order to be able to see through them. The technique of printing of silk screens was used to make the artwork because it is easy to process them then print them on glass boards without damaging the glass.

The first step was to prepare the original draft which was to be used on the silk screen. Some sketches were made by using Flame Painter Pro 3 software as in (Figure 1). At that point the brush type, size and colour were chosen and a number of drawings were made accordingly. later, those shapes were processed using Photoshop to control the size of the artwork alongside its resolution. The images were transformed into halftones as in (Figure 2), some were dotted, the others were striped. This division was made in order to fit with the imprints on the silk screens and to make those shapes preserve the existence of every dot in the artwork's space. Next, we processed each of the drawings by exposing the screen, which was coated with a sensitive substance, to light.



Figure 1. sketch made by using Flame Painter Pro 3 software.

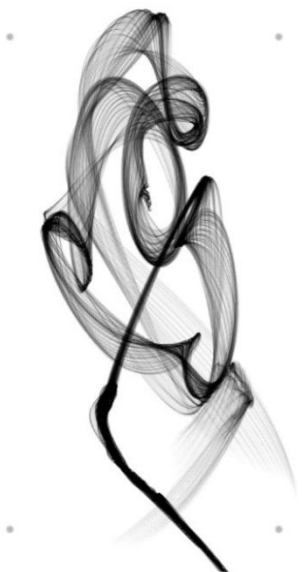


Figure 2. The transformed sketch into halftones.

One of the difficulties while printing was choosing the type of inks that would leave a trace on glass boards and in this same time when exposed to light, they would block it from passing through which allows the shape to be clear when projected. The colours of the transparent silk screen, as the name indicates, were not enough to block the light. When the experiment was repeated acrylic colours were tried and the result was great because they fulfilled the aforementioned requirements. When the layers were done, the glass boards were fixed together using a metal rail that was prepared to join the boards in a way that leaves an equal space between every board and the other which was around 20cms as in (Figure 3).



Figure 3. the glass boards fixed together using a metal rail.

The second step was to make a copy of each artwork, since the goal of printing is supposed to be making a number of copies that are easy to obtain. So, the layers were printed again on papers for the two smaller artworks as in (Figure 4) and the larger artwork was printed on glossy paper, a problem with the process of drying the colours was encounter in this stage thus, a fixator was sprayed onto the papers after a week from printing. This stage could be skipped if the right size of papers was available but the dimensions were (130x70cm) as in (Figure 5).



Figure 4. A paper copy of The artwork (B).



Figure 5. A paper copy of The artwork (A).

The third step was to transform the artwork from one that the viewer moves around into one that the viewer takes part in the process of combinational formations, in other words making the viewer part of the artwork. This was achieved by placing the artwork in a dark room and casting a light upon it, in a way that it produces endless combinational formations through casting the shadows of the printed shapes on a wall and the intersections of the shadows as well (video attached). In this way the viewer is fully surrounded by the artwork depending on the lights' directions and the positions of the casted shadows.



Figure 8. The artwork (B). coloured silk screen print on hardened glass. of two layers (70x40cm).

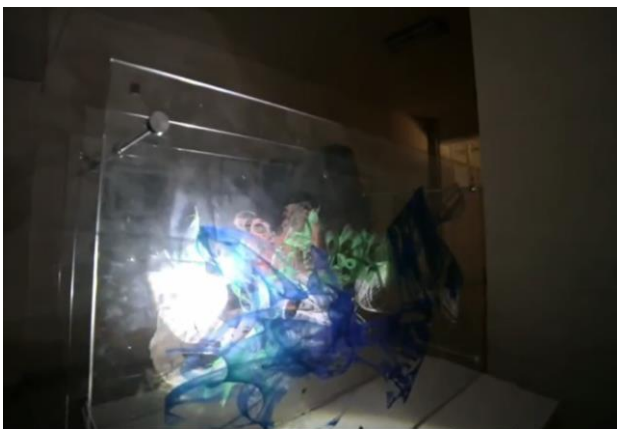


Figure 6. The artwork (A). coloured silk screen print on hardened glass of three layers. (130x70cm).



Figure 9. picture of casting a light upon the artwork (B)



Figure 7. picture of casting a light upon the artwork (A)



Figure 10. The artwork (C). coloured silk screen print on hardened glass of three layers. The first one is round and fixed from the middle. (50x50cm).



Figure 11. pictures of casting a light upon the artwork (C)

V. RESEARCH RESULTS

The method of deconstructing the artwork into its constituent layers and reforming them via the eyes of the viewer was based on two parts: first, through the physical display of the artwork that interact with the presence of the viewer that supported the Idea of reforming the printed artwork in a new vision. The second, was through the reflections of the shadows of the printed artistic combinations on the surrounding walls of the artwork itself whereby transformed its shapes to be part of the compounded space.

The lighting in Rauschenberg's "*shades*" allows browsing the book and realizing its shapes, which appear -As a result of the transparency of its forms- as if they were shadows. But in this artwork that was explained throughout the research, lighting helps to free the shapes of the artwork and make them part of the surrounding atmosphere, a part of space.

In the time being, there is a try to make without the artist's movement by casting the lights on the work which consists from glass boards by using moving lights to facilitate the display without having the need of the artist's intervention.

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