


Composition's aesthetics in Jihad Al Ameri's solo exhibition "Field"

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Abstract

This study explores the aesthetic compositions employed by Jihad Al-Ameri in his solo exhibition "Field." It examines his depiction of landscapes using an expressive, abstract style, capturing the essence of fields and the intrinsic properties of soil. Al-Ameri incorporated colors such as yellow and blue to symbolically express earthy themes, with black featuring prominently across his works. The paper highlights the formation of abstract blocks within the paintings, which include elements like houses, trees, rocks, and water—each reflecting the Jordanian environment, particularly the Jordan Valley. This approach allowed viewers to resonate with the artwork, appreciating the authenticity and harmony in the composition of lines and shapes. The study addresses how Al-Ameri's aesthetic decisions in composition serve his graphic works, questioning whether the varied techniques he employed contribute to creating innovative and distinctive compositions. It also considers if these artistic choices effectively convey the thematic intent of the "Field" exhibition.

Keywords: composition, lithography, balance, Jihad Al-Ameri.

جماليات التكوين في أعمال الفنان جهاد العامري في معرض (حقل)

محمد خالد النديبات، قسم الفنون البصرية، كلية الفنون والتصميم، الجامعة الأردنية، الأردن

الملخص

يهدف هذا البحث إلى مناقشة مجموعة من التكوينات الفنية التي استخدمها الفنان جهاد العامري في معرضه الشخصي (حقل)، وكيفية تمكنه من رسم ذلك الحقل بأسلوب تجريدي تعبيرى لعناصر الحقل ومكونات الأرض، واستخدامه، أيضاً، لبعض الألوان كالأصفر والأزرق في دلالة تعبيرية عن الأرض إلى جانب اللون الأسود بشكل أساسي في جل أعماله الفنية. وتكمن أهمية هذا البحث في كيفية صياغة مكونات اللوحة بكتل تجريدية تحتوي عدة عناصر من بينها البيوت والأشجار والصخور والماء التي عكست المشهد الذي أراده الفنان من البيئة الأردنية (غور الأردن)، حيث استطاع الفنان أن يشعر المتلقي بالتواصل مع الأعمال الفنية من خلال صدق التعبير وانسجام الخطوط والكتل المستخدمة في أعماله الفنية في المعرض. ويحاول الباحث إيجاد إجابات حول أسئلة البحث التي هدفت إلى إبراز جمالية التكوين لخدمة العمل الجرافيكي عند الفنان العامري. وتبرز أسئلة مهمة؛ هل ساهمت التقنيات المتعددة التي استخدمها الفنان ضمن طبعاته الجرافيكية في خلق تكوينات مختلفة ومبتكرة؟ وهل التكوينات التي لجأ إليها الفنان ساهمت في عرض فكرة معرض الفنان (حقل)؟ وتتلخص أهم النتائج التي توصل لها البحث بضرورة البحث في أهم التجارب الجرافيكية (اللوحة المطبوعة) لأهم الفنانين العرب والأردنيين، مع التركيز على الجانب التقني في فن الحفر والطباعة إلى جانب الموضوع لأهميته في الهوية الثقافية في فن الجرافيك المعاصر.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التكوين، الطباعة الحجرية، التوازن، الفنان جهاد العامري.

Introduction:

Composition is a fundamental aspect of creating an artwork. From the moment an artist forms his artistic vision, he meticulously arranges and distributes the elements of his artwork in various ways that enhance the clarity of his visual expression, elevate the aesthetic quality of the piece, and support its thematic content.

In this study, the researcher explores the aesthetics of composition in the artworks of Jordanian artist Jihad Al-Ameri, as presented in his solo exhibition titled Field, held at the Orfali Gallery in Amman in 2006. The exhibition features printmaking artworks created using the lithography technique, which significantly enriched the artwork.

Al-Amri employed diverse methods in producing his printmaking works, including drawing

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directly on stone with greasy crayons to create specific lines or shapes and using a liquid material called tusche, which produces color fields when printed. The artist then utilized a lithographic press to print the stone. This technique allowed him to draw freely and spontaneously with tusche on the stone, enabling the production of an unlimited number of prints from a single stone. Many artists have embraced this method, making it one of the most important printmaking techniques of the 19th and 20th centuries. (Penelope, &more. 2010)

Theoretical Framework

This research paper discusses the compositions used by artist Jehad Al-Ameri in his exhibition *Field*, which drew its theme from the Jordan Valley (Al-Ghor) region of Jordan, Al-Ameri's birthplace, located in the northern part of the country. The selection of this exhibition is significant because it was Al-Ameri's first solo show, in which he demonstrated his prolific ability to produce printmaking artworks, showcasing over thirty pieces. This exhibition marked Al-Ameri's debut personal experience in the art world and highlighted how he employed these compositions to shape his theme. He primarily used black and white in his artworks to express the earth, fields, and atmospheric elements such as air and sky, as well as the ground's natural features like soil and stones. Al-Ameri achieved a remarkable balance between mass and space in his artwork, maintaining equal proportions between the two while using monochrome to craft the overall scene, immersing the viewer in a rich agricultural environment reflective of his surroundings.

We also observe Al-Ameri's extensive and clear use of line, complemented by the presence of solid forms in his work, which reflects his background in drawing and painting. Building on this, the researcher sheds light on the compositions the artist employed to construct the overall scene in an innovative manner, conveying the thoughts and emotions Al-Ameri wished to express. He placed the viewer before a large field filled with intricate details and elements, through masses that symbolized land, sky, water, and soil.

Al-Ameri successfully mastered the lithographic technique, using it to create unique compositions that established a synchronized relationship between the natural landscape and the depicted scene, which was the field he chose as his central theme. (Abdul Karim. 2014)

Research Problem

The research problem is centered around the following questions:

What compositional forms did the artist rely on in his experience to highlight the theme of the exhibition?

In what ways did the artist employ formal elements such as trees, rocks, and water to serve his visual composition?

Did the use of multiple printmaking techniques contribute to creating compositions that enhance the artwork? If so, how?

Research Hypothesis

This research hypothesizes that the artistic compositions and forms used by the artist, along with his arrangement of the field's elements within the framework of the painting, embody various aesthetic forms. These forms were enhanced through the use of lithographic printing techniques, which contributed to creating a visual scene that served the theme of the artwork.

Research Aim

This research aims to shed light on the compositions used by artist Jehad Al-Ameri in his artworks from the *Field* exhibition by analyzing and interpreting the symbols he employed. It also seeks to explore how the tools and elements he used contributed to expressing the artist's identity and his thoughts about that specific place, with a focus on how the field was crafted within the graphic artwork.

Research Significance

The significance of this research lies in analyzing how the artist evokes the place (the field) within his artwork, as he perceives it, through his use of compositions that combine the elements and features of the field with his local culture. This is achieved by analyzing a selection of his artworks that were part of the aforementioned exhibition.

Research Methodology

This study employs a descriptive-analytical methodology, which is well-suited to its objectives of examining the aesthetic composition of the graphic artwork and the use of elements and features drawn from the field. The methodology is divided into two phases: the first phase involves a detailed description and analysis of the visual elements within the artwork, while the second phase focuses on a deeper analysis of the symbolic content and its underlying meanings.

Research Scope

Four printmaking artworks by Jehad Al-Ameri were intentionally selected for this research, as they align with its objectives and are characterized by the strength and beauty of their compositions. These works were chosen from his solo exhibition *Field*, which was the first to be executed using the lithography technique and was held at the Orfali Gallery in Amman, Jordan, in 2006. The artist employed a variety of compositions in these works, including horizontal arrangements with large color blocks, vertical compositions, and, in some pieces, random arrangements. In these random compositions, the elements of the field were distributed harmoniously. The research will focus on analyzing these compositions and their symbolic meanings as presented in the majority of his artworks.

Key Concepts and Terms of the Research

Original prints vs. Reproduction

Not all printed artworks (prints) are reproductions of another artwork. Prints that are created as independent artistic works are called original prints, while those that reproduce another artwork are known as reproductions. Original prints are typically signed by the artist at the bottom of the work, which gives them greater value compared to unsigned works. A collection of signed prints by the artist is called an edition, where each edition contains a series of prints made from the same plate or matrix.

There are also prints that are not limited by numbering, meaning an indefinite number of copies can be produced. Numbered prints usually range from two prints up to the number the artist chooses, depending on the technique used. Additionally, the print may be marked as A/P (Artist Proof), which refers to a test print the artist produces once or more, according to their preference. Limited editions often hold greater value due to their rarity.

Once the artist completes the design and prepares the matrix for printing, they create a print called B.A.T, a French term that stands for *bon à tirer*, meaning "ready to print." The complete edition is then printed and compared to the first print made earlier. The term E.A (*épreuve d'artiste*), or Artist's Proof, refers to a print taken during the printing process to check and review the state of the artwork. (Jovic, M. 2018)

Negative Space

Negative space is a general term for the empty areas of a page, such as the spaces left between words, letters, or lines. White space is also referred to as negative space, and its strategic use can create visually appealing patterns. (Nordquist, R.2020).

Composition

Composition is a term used to describe the arrangement of visual elements within an artwork, and how artistic elements such as shape, color, texture, and space are organized on the canvas. These elements are often arranged according to the principles of art and design, such as contrast, balance, rhythm, unity, and movement, to provide structure to the artwork and convey the artist's intent and emotions. (Evans, B.2019).

Operational Definition

This study explores the compositional formulas and combinations of elements in the graphic prints of artist Jehad Al-Ameri. Composition in art varies from one subject to another and serves as the central element in constructing the artwork. A successful composition captures the viewer's eye and guides it across the entire canvas, ultimately resting on the main subject of the painting.

For Henri Matisse, "composition is the art of arranging diverse elements according to the painter's direction to express his emotions in a decorative manner". (Evans, B.2019).

Additionally, Rodolph Wieg conducted a study on compositional forms, identifying the following types:

- A. Distributive Compositions In these compositions, the units are distributed homogeneously and evenly, without a focal point or center of emphasis. This style can be seen in the works of Bruegel or in detailed and intricate Persian miniatures.
- B. Rhythmic Compositions These compositions feature a spatial rhythm or a proportional rhythm in the distribution of spaces, with a hierarchy of focal points. Wieg divided this type into:
 1. Axial Compositions: In these, elements are arranged around a central axis belonging to the main figure or group of main figures, which rest on several axes.
 2. Centralized Compositions: In this type, the components radiate from, or are connected to, a central point of focus.
 3. Polar Compositions: These consist of two opposing shapes or groups of shapes that maintain a dynamic relationship between them. (Abdel Hamid, 1978)

Elements of Composition

The elements of composition are used in artwork to arrange or organize the components within the piece. They help provide a structural framework for the artwork and guide the viewer's eye through the details of the painting, eventually leading back to the focal point. In general, the elements of composition in a work of art are as follows:

Unity: All parts or elements of the artwork are integrated and harmoniously aligned.

Balance: The artwork is balanced and visually correct, not heavier on one side. Symmetrical arrangements add a sense of calm, while asymmetry creates a more dynamic feeling in the artwork. An imbalanced composition can create a sense of discomfort for the viewer.

Movement: There are various ways to convey movement in artwork, such as the arrangement of objects, the placement of shapes, and the use of lines to direct the viewer's eye around the artwork and draw attention to different areas.

Focus: The viewer's eye is drawn to the most important part or the focal point of the artwork.

Contrast: This is evident in works with high contrast and strong differences between light and dark. Contrast can also appear in shapes, colors, sizes, and other elements.

Pattern: The regular repetition of lines, shapes, or values within the composition.

Proportion: This refers to how objects relate to one another in terms of size and scale, whether large or small, near or far. (Evans, b.2019)

Analysis:



Artwork No. 1
Technique: lithography
Year of production: 2006
Dimensions: 20 x 20 cm

In this piece, Al-Ameri utilized a distributive composition, focusing on the relationship between black and white to express the connection between the earth's elements and the atmospheric components, such as air. In his compositions, Al-Ameri left large empty spaces on the canvas, allowing the colors to move freely, resulting in a sense of spontaneity and intensity. The painting presents two distinct layers in different colors. The first layer, seen in the background, features a grey tone with spontaneous shapes of varying sizes. Al-Ameri left significant space in the background, which is filled with a mix of black and white shapes covered by a white veil, giving the appearance of a transparent grey tone behind which the details of another artwork are visible.

In the painting's primary scene, Al-Ameri intentionally uses black to present different directions and dynamic movement in the lines, alongside bold experimentation aimed at revealing the beauty of the earth through a monochromatic palette.

In this work, Al-Ameri relied on random, elongated brushstrokes using tusche, applied freely to achieve unexpected forms, representing the details of the field. At times, the lines appear continuous, while at other times they break up, forming the shapes of leaves and drops of water, creating a rhythmic visual pattern within the same space. At the top of the painting, the artist intentionally placed random black masses, symbolizing the clouds in the sky over the land.



Artwork No. 2
Technique: lithography
Year of production: 2006
Dimensions: 67 x 57 cm

This lithographic artwork consists of four colors: black, yellow, red, and white, which the artist used in varying proportions to unify the color, shape, and space. The composition is primarily

horizontal, with a black mass (the focal point) dominating the upper part of the painting. The artist provided the viewer with suggestions and impressions through his manipulation of colors and shapes across the overall scene.

Al-Ameri used a variety of tools to express the undulations of natural landscapes that he experienced and loved, focusing on the beauty of nature in an abstract style that gives it strong expression. In this work, the artist employed yellow in the background to represent the color of the fields and earth during the summer season. He disrupted this color harmony at the edges of the artwork with geometric white shapes in the lower-right corner, balanced by another dark red geometric shape on the opposite side, achieving equilibrium in the composition with aesthetic harmony.

The upper part of the artwork is the dominant feature, with the darkness of the black color and the contrast between its shades and the expressive shapes. This section showcases various shades of tusche, ranging from deep black to grey. Through these balanced and harmonious masses, the artist created a misty atmosphere, as if depicting clouds raining down on the field.



Artwork No. 3
Technique: lithography
Year of production: 2006
Dimensions: 67 x 57 cm

This emotionally charged artwork, composed of three colors in a horizontal composition, features a variety of elements and hues: black, grey, and white. The different shades of grey dominate the entire background. At the top, the grey appears as clouds in a randomly balanced harmony, while at the bottom, it resembles winds during an autumnal atmosphere, masterfully depicted by the artist with touches of white representing water droplets.

The black forms represent symbols and shapes through which the artist expresses what is happening in the field. We can observe a spring of water irrigating the field and a sickle harvesting the wheat, along with plowing lines in various directions. Al-Ameri intentionally drew these lines from his rich visual memory of the place, filled with details. He employed printmaking and engraving techniques to convey the essence of the field. Through the use of tools left in the field and the reduction to three colors, the artist successfully captured the entire scene, immersing us in the natural environment of the field.



Artwork No. 4
Technique: lithography
Year of production: 2006
Dimensions: 67 x 57 cm

In this piece, the artist used a square form with a rhythmic composition to construct the shape of the field. The masses along the sides of the painting created a harmonious balance and provided tonal variations to the composition. Al-Ameri depicted a field scene, reducing details and replacing them with a surface that conveys a complete yet simplified and rich scene at the same time. He used flowing lines, achievable only through lithography, accompanied by Collé, a technique popular in Chinese graphic art. Collé involves adhering thin, delicate paper onto the printing paper, thereby achieving balance in every photographic image of the scene.

In this artwork, Al-Ameri immersed us in a field scene filled with trees, springs, and wheat stalks, which he intentionally simplified with calculated spontaneity, showcasing his boldness and experimental approach in revealing the secrets of the field and the land from which he originated.

This piece is characterized by the dominance of black, with its expressive forms and shapes

occupying the foreground and sides of the painting, symbolizing elements of the earth. Behind these forms, a grey background creates a misty atmosphere, as if clouds were hanging over the land in balanced color masses, rich with details.

Findings

The artist focused on the compositional structure and spontaneity of the lines within the canvas, using rhythmic movements to shape the artwork. Through the use of techniques, the artist emphasized both the expressive and aesthetic aspects of the work. He effectively controlled the elements of the field by framing them within the painting. The artist utilized this technique powerfully and expressively by building the composition with spontaneous lines and masses, arranging them in various formations across the canvas. He employed lithography, which is a technique within printmaking, known for involving the carving or processing of wood, metal, or other materials to create print surfaces and achieve different artistic effects when printed. In general, this technique can be referred to as the art of printmaking (Hussein, 2020).

After analyzing the visual results stemming from the artist's interest in his father's field and its influence on him, the researcher identified several key findings:

- 1-The diversity in mass and space within the structure of the graphic artwork was evident through the shapes drawn by the artist.
- 2-The artist employed various compositional approaches in his graphic works, including square, rectangular, and other shapes. He primarily used a limited palette of black, grey, and white to achieve a contemporary visual scene.
- 3-There was a notable variation in form within the graphic artwork, characterized by an abstract, contemporary, and seemingly random style.
- 4-The artist used symbols, such as a sickle and the wheels of a tractor, to express his theme and highlight the impact of these tools on the land.
- 5-Al-Ameri distinguished himself by using the Collé technique in most of his works, through which he aimed to create a misty atmosphere and convey what memory holds behind the main scene of the artwork.
- 6-The artistic elements employed contributed to the creation of compositions with aesthetic formulations that enhanced the overall artwork.

Recommendations

Based on this study, the researcher recommends further investigation into significant graphic art (printmaking) experiments by prominent Arab and Jordanian artists, with a focus on the technical aspects of printmaking. This is important for understanding the cultural identity embedded in contemporary printmaking art.

Artist Biography: Jihad Al-Ameri

Jihad Al-Ameri was born in northern Jordan in 1977. He obtained a bachelor's degree in drawing and painting from the University of Baghdad in 2002, followed by a master's degree from Yarmouk University in Fine Arts, and later a Ph.D. from the University of Granada in Spain. He is currently an associate professor at the School of Arts and Design at the University of Jordan. Al-Ameri has held nine solo exhibitions and participated in numerous group exhibitions in the Middle East and around the world. His works have been acquired by various cultural institutions in Amman, Italy, Switzerland, and Spain, and he has received multiple awards. The artist excelled in printmaking, alongside his other artworks, and became a skilled graphic artist known for his expertise in various printmaking techniques, including woodcut, zinc engraving, and lithography. He developed a unique style, even incorporating printmaking techniques into his oil paintings.

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