



Black and White Power and their Important Role in Visual Art

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Abstract

Visual art is one of the seven arts it includes drawing or painting which involve making a relationship on a surface, painting in general consists of shapes, lines, and colors, the varies differ according to the type and school of art, in painting and visual art but they depend mainly on the light values- called tint that we get by using the white color and the dark values- called shade that we obtain by using the dark or the black color. These two colors, Black and White, even if some studies not classify them among colors but the dark and light also have many symbolic philosophical, religious and psychological values. This paper is concerned with studying those values that gave the black and white colors that power inherent in all aspects of life, including visual art and painting.

Keywords:

Color-colors, visual art, drawing, value, Tint, Shade, hue, Chiaroscuro and tenebrism.

Introduction

The universe consist of the value, lightness and darkness, that we find in every shape in the existence and without light we can't see anything or any color

In fact the color does not exist but is created in our brains. In order to see color we need light, an object and our eyes. Color arises in the presence of light. Whenever light falls on an object, Light reflects off of objects and the remainder is absorbed and the part that is reflected, determines its color enters the eye where it is channeled to the retina and perceived as colors and shapes, but if all the light rays are absorbed, we get black, and when all the light rays are reflected, we see white. Thus, a black object absorbs all colors with more heat and is therefore sometimes described as colorless, so White is pure light and black is the absence of light. And this contradiction is the basis of the universe, as shadow, light, black and white and night and day and we find that in all objects also, so that every object in the universe has a dark side and a bright side, without that we would not see a three-dimensional shape. Likewise, in visual art and painting because they reflect the real world, they consist of dark and light, to get tones and dark or light we use black or white colors, so the most important colors in Visual art are the black and white.

And it is not just shapes and colors, but has deep meanings and characteristics which increase its value and help the artist express what is around and also they have deeper meanings and many symbolic philosophical, religious and psychological values which give them the power and which contributes to expressing the philosophical and aesthetic goals in plastic art.

Statement of the problem

What are the roles of the black and white colors in visual art? What are the values of black and white? How did they affect the formation of the aesthetic art? And why the black and white colors are the most important colors in visual art?

Purpose

The purpose with this project is to determine the plastic, aesthetic and philosophical symbolism values of the black and white colors, their power and their important role in painting and visual art which made them more important and influential than other colors.

Research importance

In order to using the correct path in reading and making the artwork, its elements must be understood, and because drawing depends mainly on shadow-black and light-white, so studying black and white colors and determining their characteristics and symbols allow more accurate understanding of the artwork and their proper use in drawing.

Method

This study relies on the descriptive analytical approach. However, the study showed the historical background in addition to the theoretical framework and it was divided into three parts to answer the problem formula:

- * Symbolic values
- * Religious values
- * Psychological values

Historical Background

Chiaroscuro theory

In art, chiaroscuro is the use of strong contrasts between light and dark, usually bold contrasts affecting a whole composition.

Apollodorus Skiagraphos, (flourished 5th century BC) a Greek painter

Thought to have been the first to gradate light and color, that is, to shade his paintings, he used hatched shadows to suggest volume. None of Skiagraphos' works survived, but examples of his skiagraphia or "shadow-painting" technique can be seen in other Hellenistic artworks such as the "Stag Hunt," a 4th century BCE carpet mosaic from a wealthy Macedonian home



Gnosis Stag Hunt Mosaic circa 300 BCE (Fig.01)

Gradually into the 17th century, light became a subject in itself. That artists used to define their subject matters, delineate them and bring out a certain sense of realism in the picture. Their works explore the contrasts between light and darkness, and remain clearly defined within sharp boundaries. Light contributes not only to illumination but also to the clarity of the subject matter and the detailing of it.

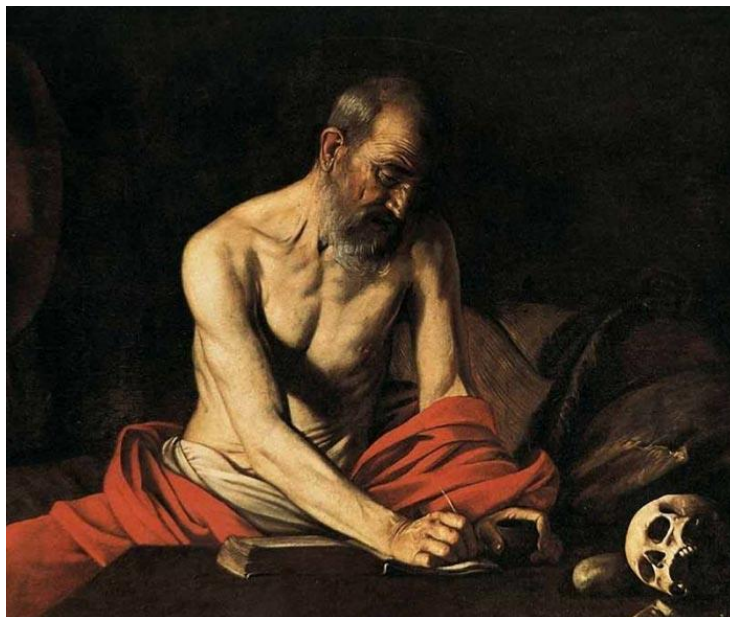
The Renaissance artists came up with the term Chiaroscuro which was first used to describe a type of drawing on medium-dark paper where the artist created darker areas with black ink and lighter areas with white paint so it refers to the use of light and dark to create the illusion of three-dimensional volume on a flat surface. The term translates to "light and dark"; *chia* means light or bright and *scuro* comes from the word obscure/dark. The term is also used in a more narrow sense to describe artworks which display an extreme contrast between light and dark and it's a compositional technique where large areas of the paintings are immersed in darkness, sometimes an absolute black, to plunge certain parts of the image into obscurity, leaving only one or more points of illumination.

Leonardo Da Vinci (1452-1519) he was the first Renaissance artist to develop current shading techniques. Da Vinci used shadow and light in his work, starting with dark colors on colored paper, then moving towards lighter colors, and finally adding highlights, usually with white gouache or chalk. He used white chalk to highlight areas of importance, such as the child and the other subjects' faces.



Leonardo Da Vinci, Virgin and Child with Ss Anne and John the Baptist circa 1500 CE (Fig.02)

Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1571-1610) Italian painter, he took chiaroscuro to the extreme, often blacking out large portions of the background and brightly illuminating large foreground subjects.



Michelangelo Merisi De Caravaggi, Saint Jerome Writing, 1607 (Fig.03)

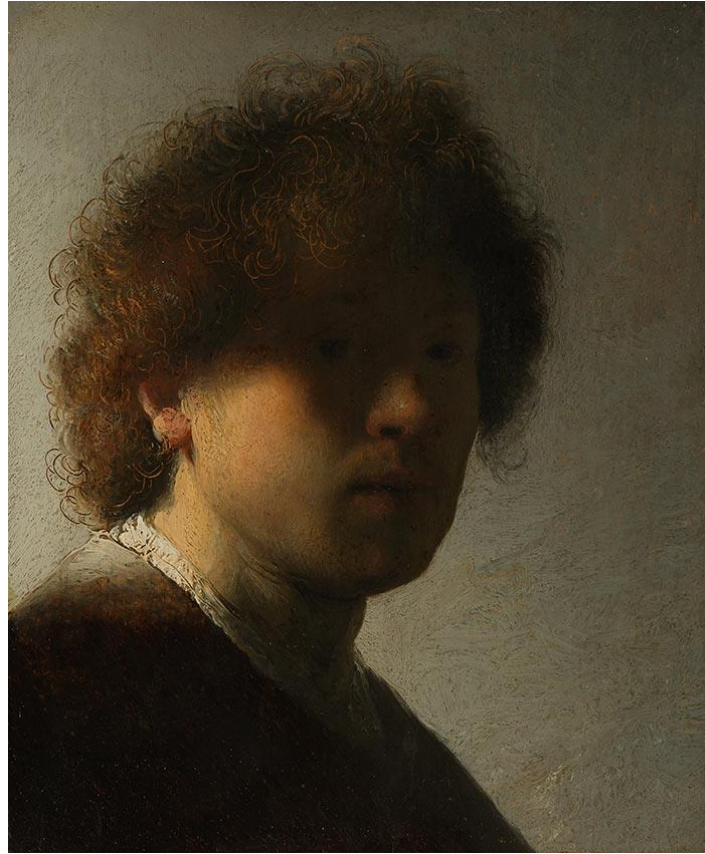
One of the beauties of light in drawing is also its role in highlighting certain elements of the composition to allow it to tell a story and focuses the viewer attention on the subject. As well as in the painting below the light focuses your attention on the subject seated at the table. Another term for this style of chiaroscuro is tenebrism, which comes from the Italian term tenebroso, meaning dark, gloomy or mysterious.

Among the Baroque other artists most strongly associated with Chiaroscuro technique are the **Georges de La Tour** (1593-1652), French painter, He is one of the most strongly artists associated with Chiaroscuro technique. Among La Tour's most impressive candlelit scenes are The Newborn, St. Joseph the Carpenter, and The Lamentation over St. Sebastian.



“St. Joseph the Carpenter”, oil on canvas
by Georges de La Tour, c. 1645; in the Louvre, Paris. (Fig.04)

Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669) Dutch painter, He is renowned for his subtle handling of the chiaroscuro technique. In his self-portrait below, Rembrandt used painterly brushwork to explore the relationship between light and shadow.



Self Portrait as a Young Man, by Rembrandt, 1628. (Fig.05)

Theoretical framework

Symbolic values

Symbolism is the use of imagery to emphasize deeper meanings and emotions. Colors have their own symbolism in cultures, religions history and art and there are two common symbols used in literature and visual art and they have metaphorical or symbolic meanings, they are darkness and lightness or black and white.

Darkness or black is often used to convey negativity: evil, death, fear, wealth, elegance, power, mystery or the unknown. Light or white is used to convey something positive: goodness, peace, purity, life or hope.

The correlation between LIGHT and GOOD and DARK and BAD pervades not only language, but also visual art. Light and dark, black and white, day and night could symbolize good or evil and Arnheim believes it “probably goes as far back as the history of man” (1969, p. 313), governing not just Western, but also Chinese and Persian culture, and concludes: “Day and night become the visual image of the conflict between good and evil.



A girl With A Hoop, Pierre Auguste Renoir, 1885. (Fig.06).

A girl appears in light, and in immaculate white clothes, and thus seems to be completely good ...



David with the head of Goliath by Caravaggio, 1610. (Fig.07)

This painting is dark and that seems to be bad or mysterious (Unknown is dark or black).

Religious values

The methods of guidance, miracles and religious miracles varied, and many do not realize that color also has connotations and symbols that confirm that it is a divine miracle too. Colors have different meanings across cultures and religions and the black and white as well. The ways in which different religions use the symbols of light and darkness and black and white differ. In their celebrations, rituals, worship, and ways of talking about God and their thoughts about goodness and evil, truth and falsehood and spiritual awakening.

The importance of light and darkness in different religions:

In **Islam**,

Among the wonders of the Quran is that God Almighty spoke about the beginnings of creation and He created darkness and light on the first day due to their importance in existence and mentioned the darkness before the light! God Almighty says: **"Praise is to God, who created the heavens and the earth, and made darkness and light, yet the disbelievers set up equals to their Lord" [Surah Anaam]**. If we follow all the verses of the Quran that speak of the beginning of creation, we will notice that God Almighty always mentions the darkness before the light.

One of the colors selected by the Prophet PBUH for its sign of purity and cleanliness is white. The Prophet PBUH said: "Wear white clothing because it is cleaner and also clothe your dead in it."¹⁴

In the same hadith, the Prophet PBUH highlighted that white cloth is to be used after death. Ibn Abbas says that Rasulullah PBUH once said: "Choose white clothing, as it is the best clothing. White clothing should be worn whilst living and the dead should be buried in white."¹⁵ This color becomes a common color of the cloth used to bury a dead body with, not only in Islam but also in other religions. It will not be accepted if other colors are used in showing respect to the dead.

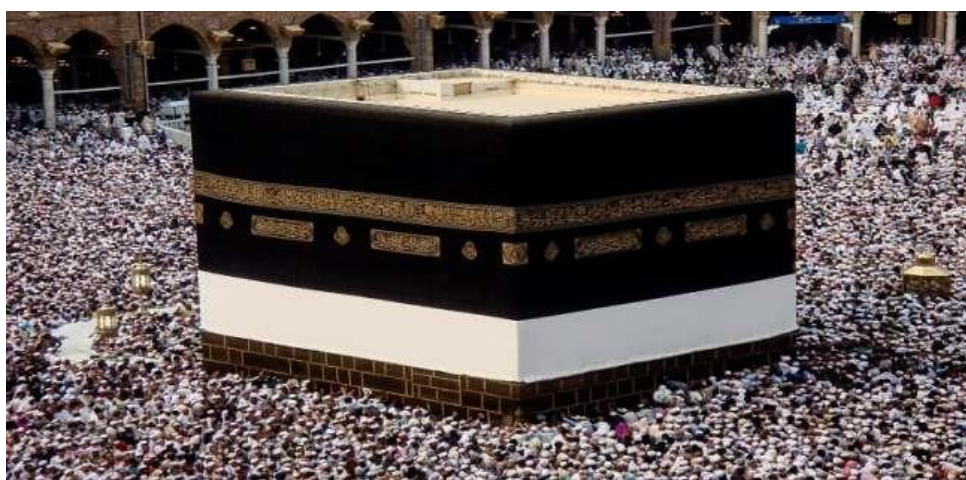
And for the color black, there is a hadith proving that wearing black is indeed permissible. For example, the Prophet PBUH had no objection towards the black Khamisa given to Umm Khalid,²⁰ and he himself wore a black turban during his lifetime. Ja'far ibn 'Amr narrated from his father: "I saw the Prophet PBUH on the pulpit wearing a black turban with the extremity loosened between his shoulder-blades."²¹

In Islam, there are ninety-nine names for God in the Koran, regarded as the Beautiful Names (asmā' al-husnā). The Koran says "and to God belong the Beautiful Names, so invoke Him by them." (7:180) one of the Beautiful Names used to denote the Divine is Light – white or al-Nur.

From the verses we noticed that God is the light and all the creations are the darkness so this is why in many verses the term light "Nur" is singular but the term darkness is used in plural form "zulumat" because there are several types of darkness but only one true and real light:

"He brings them out of darkness into light." (Quran 2:257)

"God is the Light of the heavens and the earth."(Quran 24:35)



Kaaba. (Fig.08)

Christian thinking, Jesus is „the light of the world“ and it is God who says „let there be light“ to create the Earth. Light-white symbolizes goodness in many festivals, acts of worship

and rituals, from the candles of baptism and advent to tree lights at Christmas or the star of Bethlehem.

The Bible associates light with God, truth, and virtue; darkness is associated with sin and the Devil. Painters such as Rembrandt portrayed divine light illuminating an otherwise dark world. [1]

"We go through the darkness of sinfulness and learn that Christ the Light is our Redeemer. We travel through the darkness of doubt and learn that the Holy Spirit is the source of truth and faith. We struggle through the darkness of crisis and problems to learn that Christ is our protector and deliverer. We face the darkness of death and learn that God grants eternal life. We may weep in the dark ... but joy comes in the morning. We go through the darkness of sin, testing and temptation ... but Jesus Christ brings us to the Light of Salvation" The Rev. Victor "Ken" Cadette.

The Genesis creation narrative has God "separate light from darkness" on the First Day.

"The History of Creation 1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 The earth was without form, and void; and darkness [a]was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. 3 Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. 4 And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness. 5 God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. [b]So the evening .and the morning were the first day." (Genesis 1).

Hindu practice celebrates light over darkness, good over evil, especially at the festival of Diwali, which is a festival of lights. The Diwali festival is symbolized as victory over evil. Light is symbol of victory and the darkness is symbol of evil.

Judaism, the festival of Hanukkah retells the story of miraculous light from the time of the Maccabees. God gives a miracle of light to his people. In the synagogue, the Ner Tamid, eternal light, symbolises the presence of the Almighty and the value of the Torah. Among people who are spiritual, but not religious, the symbolism of light is often found in the seasons of the year, the turn of the earth every 24 hours and the metaphors we use to describe learning.

In the experience of religion and the church, darkness is the opposite of light, has come to mean all that separates us from God, because God is light and light can't be understood without knowing or seeing the dark.

And light is the symbol of spiritual, salvation growth and discernment. But we can only understand it when we compare it to the darkness.

Light represents God, and darkness represents the universe and creatures, and because the creatures are from the Spirit of God and his light, they are divided into two parts, a dark part and another part shining with the light of God.

Psychological values

Color psychology is the study of colors in relation to human behavior. It aims to determine how color affects our feelings emotions and behaviors.

Art and colors assume pivotal roles to reduce the negative effects. The artwork can be used as a springboard for reawakening memories and telling stories that may reveal messages and beliefs from the unconscious mind. Therefore, recent research on visual art has shown that visual art interventions have stabilizing effects on the individual's psychology by reducing distress, increasing self reflection, and self awareness.

And according to color psychology, color-related emotion is highly dependent on the individual personal preference and past experiences with that particular color, the colors black or white are the same.

Therefore, the meaning of the color in psychology in addition to the previous experience of the individual with it will affect him, whether when he paint by it or just seeing it in the painting.

The importance of the Black color in psychology:

- . In fact our bodies need darkness to make our immune systems work. Also, in the dark, our bodies produce the hormone called melatonin, which helps fights psychological and also physical diseases, such as breast and prostate cancer.
- . Black relates to protection against emotional stress.
- . It provides comfort while it protects its feelings and hides its vulnerability; people use it to hide their weight or to hide emotions, fear and insecurity.
- . The color black can also be used to absorb negative energy.
- . It provides a restful feeling of emptiness and Opens the door to mystery and prepares you for the unknown.

Individual reactions to the color black can vary widely. According to German scientist Hermann von Helmholtz, "Black is real sensation, even if it is produced by the entire absence of light. The sensation of black is distinctly different from the lack of all sensation

The importance of the White color in psychology:

- . It offers a sense of peace and tranquility, comfort and hope.
- . And it helps to relieve emotional disturbances.
- . And it is a great help if you need to clean up your life.
- . The color white offers an inner cleansing and purification of your thoughts, feelings and ultimately, your spirit.
- . It is refreshing and strengthens your entire energy system.

Discussion and conclusion

Any color in life has a meaning and symbol that affects what is around it and also the black and white colors are from them. This paper discussed the importance of black-dark and white-light in visual art.

The results showed that the black and white colors are the most important colors in the existence and in visual art as well. There is no shape in the universe that does not consist of shadow and light and thus means that the black and white colors are the basis of formation in the universe, as well as in drawing and visual art and we see that in art through trying to get light –tint we use the white color and the black color for dark-shade. This paper showed how visual artists realized the values of the black and white colors and their affect in the aesthetic of visual art and this explained by their use of them in their artworks, either directly or indirectly, In addition to their impact on the meaning of the art work by understanding the symbolic meaning of them. Furthermore, this paper showed the symbolic philosophical, religious and psychological values of the Black and White colors.

Results

- . Art is not only a means of creativity, but it is also a product of the idea of integrating art and colors with philosophical and bio ideas within an artistic and aesthetic framework.

- . Colors play an important role in making visual art and the most important of them are the black and white colors.
- . The black and white colors are the basis for making the value, the shade and the light, or tint on which visual art depends on them in particular, which made them more important and influential than other colors.
- . In art, the use of strong contrasts between light and dark is called chiaroscuro.
- . The black and white colors contain many symbolic philosophical, religious and psychological values.
- . Darkness or black is often used to convey negativity and light-white is used to convey something positive.
- . God is the light and all the creations are the darkness.

- . In the first day of the creation God created the dark and light due to the importance of them in the universe and he started from the dark to light.
- . Visual art or drawing is the reflection of the real world so the most important element of it is the value (shadow and light).
- . The colors black and white have a power in healing and positivity.
- . The colors black and white whether direct use or not, play an important role in the aesthetic of the artwork.

Recommendations

The research recommends making more studies about the importance of shadow, light, black and white in drawing and visual art, not only through artistic and academic rules, but also by studying their connotations and symbols and their impact on the artwork.

Resources

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