IDEALOGY
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**MUHAMAD ABDUL AZIZ AB GANI, ISHAK RAMLI
MOHAMMAD HAFIZ YAHAYA, NURUL SHIMA TAHARUDDIN
HASLINDA MD NAZRI, MUHAMMAD REDZA ROSMAN
NIZAR NAZRIN**

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INTRODUCTION

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EDITORIAL AND REVIEWER TEAM

The Psychology of Grey in Painting Backgrounds

Aimi Atikah Roslan[1], *Nurul Shima Taharuddin[2], Nizar Nazrin[3]
[1,2,3] Universiti Teknologi MARA
Perak Branch, Seri Iskandar Campus, Seri Iskandar, 32610 Perak, MALAYSIA
Institutional e-mail: nurul026@uitm.edu.my[2]
*Corresponding author

ABSTRACT

This writing is about a study of the psychology of the colour grey used on the painting backgrounds. The study concerns how the colour grey affects the behaviour of artists and has an impact on the production of works of art. A descriptive research using qualitative research method through surveys and observations as instrument was carried out. The artist uses the colour grey as his guide in producing works to give a sense of emotional strength, feelings of melancholy, passion and so on. Each colour has a different psychological and emotional effect.

1. INTRODUCTION

The sense of colour is triggered in brain by light waves that promote the perception of various hues throughout the colour spectrum. In general, the majority of people acknowledge that colour impacts emotions. Colour psychology is fundamentally based on human emotions and physiology. Individuals might be drawn to specific colours for a variety of reasons, and there are also colour stereotypes.

Colour psychology is the study of colour as a determinant of behaviour and describes how colour affects us. Artists use colour psychology to drive their colour choices and whether they want to evoke strong emotions, melancholy, passion and so on. Cool colours, warm colours and neutral colours each have different psychological effects. The different hues in each colour can give meaning and evoke certain emotions.

1.1 Objective

This research examines the impact of grey colour plays in representing the artist's emotions throughout the creation of art, as well as how can grey becomes the artist's preferred hue. This research aims to investigate the psychological implications of using grey in the creation of art.

1.2 Problem Statement

This research is based on the psychology of colour and focuses on the usage of the colour grey in art. Consequently, the issue arises: How can grey colour represent the emotions of artist? What psychological implications of using grey gives in creation of art? This is because it is often believed that grey is not the preferred hue and cannot positively stimulate human emotions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to an extract from the book "The Truth Is Always Grey: A History of Modernist Painting," the renowned artist Van Gogh favoured the colour grey. He views grey as a colour. It is a stimulating hue with the power to inspire warmth, enjoyment, and originality. Nor was Van Gogh the first historical figure to appreciate the artistic value of grey. Charlies Baudelaire praised Delacroix's grey painting in the Salon of 1845, stating, "The picture is grey...grey as nature, grey as the summer air when the sunset sunlight falls trembling on every object." The grey tones of Delacroix's palette, according to Baudelaire, allow for the delicacy and ethereal quality of the air in his exhibited paintings. According to Baudelaire, Delacroix is one of the greatest painters, on par with Leonardo and Michelangelo, and his works are at the forefront between Renaissance and contemporary art. After the Salon of 1845, several works continued to inspire Van Gogh's grey elation and Baudelaire's joy in Delacroix's grey palette: "The fundamental grey which differentiates the masters, expresses them and is the soul of all colour" (Odilon Redon, French symbolist painter, 1840-1916).

2.1 Colour in a Work of Art

There are three categories of colours in art: cold colours, warm colours, and neutral colours. Cool hues (green, blue, and purple) are often associated with a sense of serenity and harmony, yet they may also trigger sad thoughts and despair. Because it is connected with natural elements such as water and the sky, blue is often seen as a tranquil hue. However, it may also evoke a sense of sorrow or seclusion, as in the works of Pablo Picasso created between 1901 and 1904, which reveal the artist's inner melancholy via the use of blue and blue-green monochromatic hues.

Figure 1. The Old Guitar, Pablo Picasso (1903)

Warm colours are recognised for their ability to enhance excitement and happiness. These vibrant hues include yellow, red, and orange. Most of the logos of well-known corporations, notably fast-food chains like KFC, McDonald's, and Pizza Hut, use this fiery hue to stimulate hunger and promote energy and aggression. Takishi Murakami is one of the painters who uses warm colours to create a pleasant and joyful mood.

| Brown | Black | Grey | White |
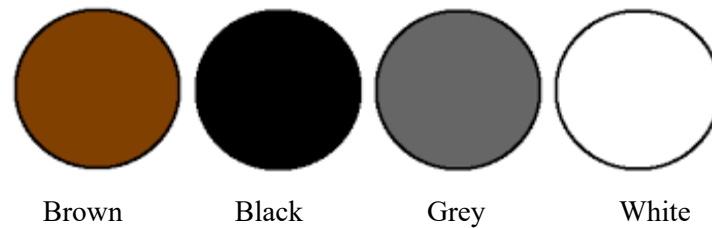
Figure 2. Warm Colours (2022)

A neutral colour is most precisely described as one that seems to have no colour that is not generally seen on the colour wheel and serves as a support for the main and secondary colours. Black, white, brown, and grey are the most popular neutral hues. According to Ocvirk (2006), not all pigments have visible colour. Some, such as black, white, and grey, do not resemble any of the spectrum's hues. This hue is sometimes referred to as neutral. This neutral really represents the total of the many colour wavelengths in light beams.

Since neutral hues look colourless, they are aesthetically pleasing. This hue has grown popular as a backdrop in home design and also enhances other colours when arranging furniture. This makes it more comfortable for the eyes to see. Grey is considered a neutral hue in interior design since it compliments and accentuates other colours in the space.

When matched with a brighter hue, a neutral hue will make the shade seem livelier. The human eye is naturally drawn to these hues. If a piece of artwork has an excessive number of vivid hues, our eyes will likely get confused, resulting in an unpleasant aesthetic. Neutral hues may improve visual variation and harmony while drawing attention to the work's primary point. This is backed by a 2010 comment by James Gurney: "Grey is often associated with drabness or monotony, yet it is truly the artist's closest buddy." Many paintings fail because there are too many vivid hues in comparison to grey."

When paired with colours and tones, neutrals may have a great deal of visual impact since they serve to produce a realistic image. For instance, the use of neutrals may alter the depth of an artwork. All neutral hues are easily discernible and stand for tranquilly and comfort. This hue also evokes feelings of tranquilly, death, melancholy, misery, nature, darkness, and mystery.

2.2 Colour Psychology

Angela Wright created a unified theory of colour psychology and colour harmony in the 1970s to investigate how colour impacts our emotions, ideas, and behaviour. This is the foundation of colour psychology applications. By combining the science of colour harmony with the study of human psychology, it is possible to influence behaviour. Karen Hailer discovered in an extract from her book "*The Little Book of Colour: How to Use the Psychology of Colour to Transform Your Life*" that there are three primary ways in which we react to colour: "Personal colour associations," "Cultural meaning and symbolism," and "Psychological Meaning." According to Karen's interpretation of "psychological meaning," when we see colour, we comprehend the information communicated, the majority of which is influenced by the subconscious. Colour communicates with us in a language we understand intuitively, the language of emotions, and it consciously influences our conduct.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research employs a descriptive methodology. This strategy is used to describe the phenomena or particular qualities of a person, scenario, or group in depth. The primary objective is to comprehend

a given issue and describe the present occurrence or circumstance. This study likewise employs a qualitative methodology; therefore, the relevant data consists of interview transcripts, field data recordings, images, personal papers, and other notes. Typically, qualitative research employs interview techniques, observation, prior writing, and observation as its methodology. This is utilised to comprehend the underlying reasoning, viewpoints, and motives.

4. FINDING

4.1 The Psychology of Grey Colour in Painting

The colour grey is created by combining primary and secondary colours or opposing colours on the colour wheel, resulting in a tertiary colour (third colour) or natural colour. He believes that grey is a colour, according to Frances Guerin (2018). Grey has varied temperatures, tones, rhythms, and meanings, as do all colours. He stated that grey is adaptable, pliable, and may be reshaped into surprising new materials and connotations. It reflects and absorbs light and expands the spectrum between black and white, between the colour extremes of all other hues.

As a result of its black-to-white tonal range, this grey's symbolic significance is variable. Grey that is darker seems mysterious, dramatic, strong, and unified. The colour light grey seems relaxing and soothing. Metallic grey like silver appears sleek, stylish and sophisticated. The colour grey is often linked with ageless, branded, classic, corporate, and balanced qualities. They symbolise duty, justice, loyalty, wisdom, pragmatism, sadness, and loss.
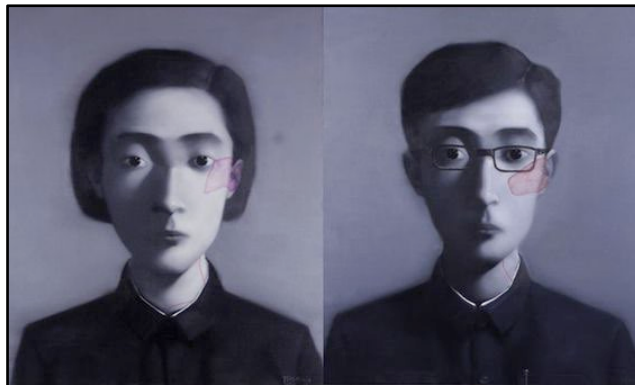
Figure 3. Comrade, Oil on canvas 130 x 220 cm (diptych), Xiaogang (2005)

In the "Bloodline" series of paintings by Zhang Xiaogang, the notion of 'family', which is entrenched in Chinese culture, has been transformed into a more personal 'collective' version. This "Bloodline" series was primarily influenced by the discovery of an intriguing vintage photograph of Zhang's mother when she was young. Personal medium-sized family photographs were shot between 1950 and 1960 according to a formula that satisfied the official sense of public aesthetics, till he showed an idealised society model. Zhang Xiaogang reinterpreted ancient family photographs from the cultural revolution in his series of huge family paintings, which debuted in 1993.

Zhang noted, in reference to his "Bloodline" series of paintings, that old photographs have a specific visual language and added, "I am attempting to create the appearance of 'false images' in order to repaint the past and life that has been 'painted'. On the surface, the features in this photograph seem as placid as still water, yet there is intense inner turmoil behind. In this condition of strife, the future is murky and uncertain from one generation to the next. Regarding the effect of Chinese political upheaval on his paintings, Zhang said that the cultural revolution was more of a psychological condition than a historical

event. It has a tight relationship to his upbringing. Zhang believes that there are several similarities between the psychology of the Chinese now and the psychology of the Chinese at that period.

Based on an extract from the book "The Revolution Continues: New Art from China," numerous unexpected red lines crawl across the picture, uniting the nameless and emotionless figures wholly defined by the force of collectivization. A pair of photos from 2005's "Comrade" series give a "common identity"1 rather than revealing any particularity. There are patches of colour on the face, similar to the effects of stage lighting or birthmarks. It offers the impression of a recall from the past since antique photographs are often colourless or grey. The structure of Zhang's portraits is to present images of individuals who already have a certain degree of formality. He just imitates images, but enhances their formality.

The Notion of Collective Identity was developed for a touring exhibition of contemporary Chinese art at the Chinese Art Centre, Manchester, and the University of Hong Kong Museum and Art Gallery, Hong Kong, curated by the author in 2007

Figure 4. Francis Bacon, Study of Self-Portrait, Oil paint on canvas (1976)

In the 1976 series of self-portraits by Francis Bacon, a solitary human figure in a room with one leg crossed represents himself at that time. In the preceding years, a number of Bacon's close friends had passed away, leaving him with a feeling of loss. The loss of a loved one is evident in his art, the grey backdrop of which conveys the gloomy and sour mood he had at the time.

Bacon lost several acquaintances, including his boyfriend George Dyer, throughout the 1970s. Bacon said in an interview with Sylvester in the early 1980s, "Friends have perished around me like flies, and I have no one but myself to paint." Because I have nothing better to do, I have created self-portraits even though I detest my own appearance. 1976's Study of Self-Portrait features Bacon naked save for a white collar. His upper torso is wrinkly, and his left leg is elongated and deformed, with internal organs projecting forward. This is the artist's sole self-portrait sans clothing. In contrast to the majority of Bacon's early works, the self-portrait of Francis Bacon has a consistent backdrop and is spatially basic. The backdrop of the piece, which depicts a gloomy chamber, alludes to the idea of his emotions' stillness.

Figure 5. Sometimes by Closing Your Eyes You Will See More Clearly after Andrew
Wyeth, Acrylic and Oil on Canvas, 244 x 198.5 cm (2019)

Grey is also often seen as a "colourless" hue since it is not the favoured hue for evoking emotions, particularly joyous ones. The majority of Hazri's paintings have a combination of hues, notably in the backdrop. Hazri uses grey to portray memories of the past, bygone personalities, and melancholy. The two homes on the hill in the backdrop of his translation of Andrew Wyeth's art recalled recollections from his childhood. Because the backdrop directs the feelings of the people in his artwork, the grey in the background has the greatest influence. For him, memories of the past are as hazy as fog, dust, and puffs of smoke, as if we were searching for a weak light.

This hue is often associated with colours such as smoke, dust, dust, cement, concrete, overcast skies, roads, and buildings, among others. This colour is quite prevalent in our everyday lives, despite being regarded a filthy or unsightly hue. Because it may generate a calming and contemplative environment, grey can offer a composition a feeling of openness and scale. As shown in Hazri's picture, grey is not a single hue but rather contains numerous minor variations that may be detected with close attention. Grey is not a 'colour' category for Hazri, but every smudge of it calms his spirit in comparison to fiery hues such as red, yellow, and orange.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

From a psychological perspective, grey is an inactive colour. It is an unrestricted, natural, impartial, and indeterminate hue. Individuals who like the colour grey are those who want to shield themselves from the outside world. This demonstrates that these people want a balanced and secure lifestyle. In controlling their emotions to prevent experiencing emotional anguish, these individuals do not want to harm their feelings. This is shown by comparing three works by artists from the West (Francis Bacon), the East (Zhang Xiaogang), and Southeast Asia (Hazri) that have a major commonality, namely the colour grey. The concept and narrative focus upon personal concerns and old recollections, which influence the grey hue of the piece. These three painters stress backdrop simplicity, such as monochromatic hues. Because this colour is neither black nor white, it is simple to blend with all other hues. It also induces a sensation of chill, relaxing the spirit from the chaos of the outside world, yet it is neither refreshing nor revitalising.

When the artist starts to paint on the canvas, this grey hue has already begun the creation of an artwork. It is the emotional consequence of semi-conscious activities' self-psychology. Colour is a

manifestation of the artist's essence or particular feeling. Consequently, visible colour is a physical conduit to psychological and emotional importance for both the artist and the art appreciator. According to Goethe's colour theory, "grey unifies all other hues"; yet, until "the artist surrenders himself to his impulses," grey is colourless and devoid of passion. Therefore, grey is colourless, or non-existent to the human sight. Grey is never present. Grey may also give the human body a mundane and ordinary appearance. Grey also seems plain, tiring, monotonous, and depressing. However, it also seems lovely and official, but not endearing. This hue is also connected with maturity and greying hair as individuals age.

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Aimi Atikah Roslan as the main author played a role in collecting data, planning research tree and delegate task for research member, while Nurul Shima Taharuddin as the corresponding author produced an analysis based on data and literature, and Nizar Nazrin conducted literature review and methodology.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There are no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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