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Employing The Visual Illusion in British Contemporary pottery

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Abstract

The art of pottery has been able to break free from its prevailing utilitarian value and functional boundaries, towards new directions that keep up with other art forms through its openness to intellectual and expressive developments. Therefore, it is necessary to define and document one of its important contemporary directions, which is the "illusion in visual art". This direction serves as an ally between visual arts and the science with its dimensions based on sports and physics, through the dialectical relationship between form and theories of light and color. Based on this perspective, the first chapter of the research includes the methodological framework, which contains the research problem focused on the following question: Did the British potter succeed in achieving the artistic and aesthetic goals of pottery according to contemporary artistic trends (specifically the direction of visual illusion), as is the case with other art form? The aim of this research was to explore the visual illusions in pottery models created by a selected group of British potters. The significance of this research lies in shedding light on Optical art in the field of visual arts in general, and contemporary pottery in particular. The current research is limited geographically to contemporary pottery works in Britain, within the time frame of (2000-2020). The researchers will also discuss the key conceptual terms mentioned in the research title in (the second chapter), which includes the theoretical framework of the research. This framework is based on two axes: the first focuses on the use of visual illusions in the visual arts, while the second axis examines the technique of visual illusions in contemporary pottery art) The third chapter) includes the analysis of (3) research samples, using a descriptive method of analysis. (The fourth chapter) presents the research findings, followed by the conclusions, references, and sources.

Keywords: *Visual Illusions, Pottery Art, British Potters, Visual Arts.*

Chapter One

Research Problem

(Visual art) emerged in the 1950s as part of various artistic movements in the (postmodern era), bringing with it techniques, methods, and physical and psychological phenomena that aim to create visual illusions in the formal structure of artworks. These illusions create a deceptive impression, which is a sensory perception that does not resemble the subject in reality (Fathi, 1988, p. 58). These techniques and methods have been embodied in the works of contemporary artists such as (Victor Vasarely and Bridget Riley).

potters are deeply engaged in the visual arts due to their ability to captivate the observer through the various styles and techniques they employ in creating visual illusions. This is particularly evident among British potters who have kept pace with contemporary stylistic and technical developments in both form and content. They have been influenced by the intellectual shifts that occurred after the two world wars, contributing to the emergence of diverse styles and techniques. Consequently, this diversity has manifested in the aesthetics, techniques, and production of pottery art, aligning it with the modern scientific revolution. The research problem can be defined by the following question: Did British potters

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manage to achieve their artistic and aesthetic objectives by working in accordance with the principles of visual art in the field of potters, similar to other forms of visual arts?

Research Importance

The significance of this research lies in shedding light on the methods and techniques of Optical Art in contemporary British potters.

Research Objective: Delimitation Research:

To understand the use of optical illusions in the selected pottery works by British potters who worked within this artistic direction.

Delimitation Research

The Research delimitation ia as follows

1. Time Delimitation: (2000 - 2020).
2. Geographical Delimitation: United Kingdom.
3. Subject Delimitation: The intellectual dimensions of visual illusion in contemporary pottery art.

Defining Terminology

Linguistic Illusion

Linguistic illusion refers to the act of imagining and representing something, whether it exists or not. It involves the perception of something with a single meaning. It can also mean overlooking or failing to notice something. For instance, one might say, "I imagined the thing and considered it," using "imagined" to convey the idea of focusing on something. It can also mean making a mistake or error in judgment (Ibn Manzur, 1290, p. 49).

Illusion in Terms of Art:

In the context of art, illusion refers to an impression or perception that does not align with reality. It can lead the perceiver, who is under the illusion, to believe in the intermediary of symbols. Illusion results in the creation of imaginative worlds and can sometimes establish a credibility stronger than reality itself (Alosh, 1285, p. 136).

Procedural Definition of Visual Illusion

Visual illusion involves creating shaded visual sensations for the eye by employing visual deception. This is achieved through variations in mass, measurements, color deception, refraction, reflection, motion, and the arrangement of formal and kinetic elements. It results in the emergence of a third dimension, born from the interplay of shapes, lines, and colors within the structure of contemporary pottery art. The aim is to produce visual works that express the spirit of the era. In contemporary visual art, the visual image represents a communicative structure conveying semantic, expressive, and mechanical meanings, engaging and addressing the viewer) Ell-Hayani, 2022, p. 26).

Chapter Two

Visual Illusion in Visual Art

"Art has become a space open to stylistic, structural, and technical evolution, incorporating diverse vocabulary, images, and patterns" (Jasim, 2009, p. 195). Optical art, or Op Art, is considered one of the

creative expressions that emphasize the fusion of art and science into a single entity. It aims to achieve visual marvels based on mathematical coordinates from the field of perspective and the science of light. The dialectical interconnection between these fields sheds light on the relationship between the essence of the artistic work, the various means of its execution, and the artist's creative pursuit across ages, aiming to craft a cohesive, skillfully made, and purposeful unity. This, in turn, creates a visual experience that becomes the subject matter for the viewer's response (Knobler, 1979, p. 16). Early works in the realm of visual illusion art primarily relied on black and white colors because these two colors offer distinct visual advantages. The contrast between lines reaches its maximum potential through the utilization of these two colors, giving rise to intertwined visual effects. In essence, it can be described as a visual presentation composed of lines and areas in black and white, interweaved in such a way that the viewer perceives lengths and sizes unrealistically (Al-Janabi, 2009, p. 9). It becomes evident that visual illusion art entails perceiving an image differently from its actual reality. This form of art is relatively modern and is employed by many visual artists to convey specific ideas. They utilize intermingling colors and diverse geometric shapes to captivate attention and stimulate the visual excitement factor when one gazes at the image or form. This notion aligns with what the Visual Art Exploration Group highlighted in its statement on "Proposals Regarding the Movement," emphasizing the enduring relationship between the visual object and the human eye. It explores a constant connection that links the image, movement, and the element of time (Amhaz, 1981, p. 244). Victor Vasarely is considered the founder and primary source of this movement, emphasizing kinetic effects through the use of black and white in drawing lines of visual illusion, thereby stimulating the viewer's vision. His kinetic structures, beginning in 1952 with black and white, involved layering lines on transparent materials. However, the true essence of what later became known as "Op-Art" Optical Art was not fully realized until color was introduced (Amhaz, 1981, p. 243). Visual art didn't remain confined to the creations of Victor Vasarely alone; it encompassed a group of artists within this artistic movement. Notable among them is the English painter, Bridget Riley. She not only utilized black and white in her paintings but also incorporated colors, contributing to the creation of a series of stunning, colorful images. These shimmering-colored points result from the impressionistic movements over the artwork (Weed, 1988, p. 105). This style emerged in the 1950s, drawing from the fields of kinetics and optics. Its concepts influenced various fields of visual arts, such as painting, sculpture, and pottery. Artists employed different visual phenomena that occur continuously in our daily perception. "The liberation brought about by modernity and its subsequent transformations and changes in styles enabled the artist to transcend classical standards. They departed not only from sensory phenomena but also from the new reality and the experience of modern art. This experiment led them to deductions and to reaching artistic counterparts capable of expression" (Amhaz, 1996, p. 21) By the end of the 1950s, visual illusion art had become a defined movement and style. It gained widespread recognition when an American journalist coined the term "Op-Art" (Optical Art) after some artists exhibited under the title "Responsive Eyes." Since then, visual illusion has represented one of the modern artistic trends. "The process of building the artwork is the result of the fusion of the idea with the material and the technique, combining symmetry with meaning, and the form with the subject into a unitary artistic whole that makes it a subject of illusory beauty, characterized by creativity and strangeness in execution" (Al-Husseini, 2002, p. 117) One of the most significant characteristics of contemporary art is its capacity to hold tension and contradiction deep within it. It doesn't merely depict the details of reality, but it possesses a structured and expressive form that reflects the artist's freedom and level of performance" (Fisher, 6319, p. 16). "Visual illusion" is one of the abstract art trends or styles in which the artist deliberately employs this technique to achieve excitement and captivate the viewer or observer, following a general context and pattern of visual stimuli. Scholars suggest that this context can be divided into two types. The first type represents a set of stimuli surrounding the targeted stimulus, which influences an individual's perception of that stimulus. The second type of context involves the individual's prior experience with this context. In other words, prior

experience with the context leads the individual to interpret the shapes within that context based on their previous experience (Ahmed, 2001, p. 69). Visual illusion art has a profound impact on visual amazement and visual pleasure by employing various images and forms of visual illusions. This paved the way for creative artistic visions and the innovation of modern visual aesthetics using technology and modern techniques. "This is associated with contemporary Western thought, which initially centered around the artist, then shifted to focus on the artwork, and subsequently turned its attention to the viewer or receiver" (Hassan, 1994, p. 135). Furthermore, the technological advancements that have swept the world have significantly contributed to the development of visual illusion art, especially with the use of computers, modern devices, and electronic programs specific to visual illusion art. "The movement holds great importance for visual illusion, especially in the field that leverages visual effects inherent in the viewer's eye and mind" (Smith, 1995, p. 150).

Visual Illusion in Contemporary British potters

The influence of progress, technological advancements, and evolving means of communication has brought about a transformation in the culture and concepts of Western society. It has shifted towards a culture characterized by wonder and amazement (Beattie, 1984, p. 79). This transformation is a result of profound changes in intellectual and social aspects within Europe, driven by a series of phenomena and events that reshaped the world, such as the World Wars, which completely altered the course of humanity. These changes have significantly impacted contemporary artistic perspectives, leading to shifts and transformations in artistic systems and motivating underlying principles (Al-Bayati, 2014, p. 174). These transformations gave rise to artistic revolutions, movements, and art forms that restructured the foundations of what came before. Consequently, pottery artists began to explore, seek, and create new expressive and aesthetic systems. The modernization of potters, like other art forms, broke free from the confinement of a specific aesthetic defined by a particular historical period (Al-Bayati, 2009, p. 154). Potters ventured into uncharted territories, exploring adjacent fields of form and expression. This endeavor and its outcomes formed the solid foundation on which contemporary potters built its principles, characteristics, and identity. It aligned itself with contemporary intellectual visions and directions. Contemporary potters distinguished itself by surpassing the traditional structure of pottery forms and departing from the conventional (Rizk, 1982, p. 25). It embraced new and advanced concepts and introduced various techniques that clearly influenced pottery art and its achievements. This transformation was a collaborative effort between form and material, as form could not be separated from material, and both relied on execution techniques and means of achieving artistic outcomes (Barthélemy, 1970, p. 195). Material took on a new role, both intellectually and expressively, thanks to the substantial role played by techniques (Kobler, 1965, p. 92). This allowed artists to reveal and create new aesthetic and expressive dimensions for the material. Pottery artists became researchers and experimenters in techniques, systems, and new structures. This led to significant changes and achievements, resulting in fresh and distinct artistic and aesthetic forms for global contemporary potters (Ramzi, 1992, p. 37). The post-World War I era and beyond can be considered the true starting point for what we refer to as "contemporary potters in Britain." Much credit for this transformation goes to a group of potters, most notably Bernard Leach and William Murray, who introduced substantial and transformative changes in British potters. Leach, in particular, bridged the gap between Japanese Eastern culture and British European culture, profoundly influencing generations of European and Eastern artists (Leach, 1976, p. 15). Bernard Leach's role and influence in British potters extended beyond the borders of Britain, particularly impacting American potters. Laura Anderson, a pioneer in American potters, describes this influence through Leach's visits and lectures in the United States. Furthermore, many American potters sought to train at Leach's pottery in St. Ives, Cornwall. During this period, the renowned Japanese artist Shoji Hamada also worked alongside them.

Over time, this pottery studio transformed into a large institution and a school for potters from Britain and around the world. Bernard Leach can be described as one of the pillars of the concept of pottery art that rejects inherited traditions and imitation of traditional pottery structures prevalent in Britain and Europe at that time.

William Murray also made significant contributions to establishing a distinctive identity for pottery art, characterized by harmonious surfaces that were familiar in their general form (Dena, 2022, p. 9805). They introduced a creative art that aligned with modern ideas and concepts, merging with contemporary artistic trends that emerged in the 20th century. They achieved a transformation in pottery structural composition by elevating the concept of the artist's individuality. Murray can be considered a true innovator, as contemporary art opened new and inventive horizons. It contributed to the development of new expressive styles distinct from what prevailed in preceding eras (Hamid, 2009, p. 208).

What distinguishes modernity and post-modernity is continuous innovation and an endless movement to break away from familiar patterns. It has become associated with concepts of transformation, renewal, and progress. Contemporary arts encompass a wide spectrum, including minimalistic art, the austerity of form, performance art, and kinetic art (Mohammed, 2023, p. 2591). This transformation has significantly impacted the arts in general and pottery art specifically. Pottery art has gained a prominent position, with potters shifting their focus away from the functional aspect of pottery. Instead, they innovate specific forms that present novel and innovative ideas rich in aesthetic values, carrying messages that emphasize the essence of pottery work. The changes brought by the modernist movement to potters were closely tied to broader philosophical and social transformations. These developments played a pivotal role in shaping the identity of contemporary potters and positioning ceramics as a cultural and artistic symbol, aligned with the general modernization movement (Al-Rubaie, 2004, p. 51). Aesthetics in contemporary thought reaches the surface of pottery pieces and their surface variations (Nabeel, 2021, p. 2409). By the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, significant developments occurred in British potters. It was influenced by abstract tendencies and the post-modern movement. These transformations continued for decades, resulting in complete shifts and changes in the structure of potters. This was facilitated by cultural openness, the exchange of ideas, and adherence to modern conditions. Since pottery art deals more with three-dimensional shapes than painting, it is closer to graphic art and its design implications (Rasha, 2023, p. 263). The idea of introducing modernity into pottery art quickly became a prevalent trend. It expanded the scope of semiotic influence of an art that previously operated within certain bounds but opened up to contain elements of mystery, signs, and symbols within the structure of the pottery work. Furthermore, symbolic and visual language played a significant role in the contemporary pottery art language through its iconic implications imposed on surfaces and the formations employed in the entire artistic spectrum of line, color, and shadow. It follows the cues of technology and the language of modernity in art to embody this feature, which is clearly observed within the contemporary pottery composition (Al-Bayati, 2009, p. 92). Pottery art can be rich in rhythm, movement, and imagination. When it breaks free from the conventional, it achieves dynamic harmony and lively movement, liberated from any desire for imitation and replication (Reed, 1986, p. 56). Potters possess distinctive aesthetic characteristics, and the evolution of pottery shapes has led pottery artists to incorporate artistic touches during their creation. This can be achieved through the use of colors or specific types of glazes, imparting a sense of beauty to the pottery work. The variations in movement hold a powerful attraction and invite reactions, whether sensory or emotional (Scott, 1980, p. 470). The artistic composition of potters carries an intellectual beauty through sensory perception of the artwork. Sometimes, potters intentionally create a sensory illusion, intertwining sensory experiences with cognitive processes, providing us with a captivating visual experience (Coren, 1978, p. 3). The pottery composition creates a distinct sense related to the nature of the material itself, merely by looking at it. Our experiences and previous knowledge govern it. The surface texture and the tactile feel can be

authentic, a result of the material's nature, or artificially crafted through the artist's efforts to make it unique. The surface texture in potters is a blend of tactile and visual perceptions (Riyadh, 1987, p. 228). pottery surfaces can be smooth, glossy, or rough and textured, depending on the ceramist's vision and the requirements of the intended composition. The world of pottery composition is vast and uniquely distinct from other fields of visual art. Through its dynamic properties, it can achieve fluctuating shapes and images, evoking a sense of movement in the viewer (Al-Bassiouny, 1983, p. 264).

pottery art heavily relies on technical aspects, allowing pottery artists to create uniqueness through the type and nature of the surface. They can achieve a certain technical and aesthetic harmony. With their rich imagination and mastery of tools, ceramists can add distinctive characteristics to the surface of pottery compositions. For instance, uneven layers and quantities of glaze applied to the pottery body can create greater aesthetic and expressive value in the work (Chappell, 1977, p. 93).

The surface texture is a blend of tactile sensations and visual perceptions, and the process of implying texture is significant. It can result from the nature of the materials used in the composition or from the movement of lines and their directions (Riyadh, 1987, p. 228).

The importance of potters as an art form lies in its multidimensional or multi-surface nature (two or three-dimensional). This provides pottery artists with more space and freedom to showcase details and enrich the pottery composition from all angles. Artists can present a vision that expresses new ideas by utilizing compositional elements in their artwork with intricate shapes, colors, and geometric forms, drawing from the principles of Cubism (Ghanem, 2020, p. 103). In potters, the surfaces hold significant importance as they reveal the effort and expertise of the pottery in creating a unique surface that has a clear and direct impact on visual perception. Implying the surface texture is highly significant and can result from the nature of the materials used in the composition or from the movement of lines and their directions (Reid, 1986, p. 228). Consequently, many potters have been influenced by the phenomenon of optical illusion in their artistic works. The illusion serves as a means of communication, stripping the image of its realistic, tangible presence and transforming it into a concept (Khadir, 2005, p. 51). This development was a response to contemporary intellectual trends and an attempt to achieve novelty, capture the viewer's attention, and evoke astonishment. pottery artists found in these concepts innovative avenues to reveal the unfamiliar in their artistic expressions. Their works and designs acquired aesthetic and compositional variations (Elizabeth Fritsch, a British pottery, once said that visually deceptive pottery works can transform the darkness and rigidity of clay into a musical state (Birks, 1976, p. 49). Ceramists drew from scientific studies and theories that focused on visual phenomena and illusions, influencing sensory perception through the organization of elements. They played with shape interactions with the background, proximity, and distance between units, or introduced disruptions in a fixed system. They relied on dynamic rhythmic aspects, turning them into a focal point of aesthetic movement. potters, as a visual art form, evolved with technical and artisanal capabilities, driven by advancements in technology, culture, and society. pottery artists had a solid foundation and favorable social and cultural conditions that played an active role in the emergence of their artistic works with unique formal characteristics, compositions, and symbolic meanings (Al-Hajwal, 2006, p. 58).The proportionality between the elements of the artistic composition creates specific rhythms for the viewer. The relationship between length, width, lines with each other, blocks, volumes, and spaces within the confines of a single space, as well as the relationship of these elements with the void, has an impact on the viewer (Hussein, 1987, p. 56). pottery art is equally significant in terms of artistic performance and the ability to shape ideas within the artist living in the era of modernity and its contradictions. British potters excelled in producing pottery works that belong to the same expressive spirit that stirred emotions and sensations, similar to paintings' surfaces. Optical illusions were associated with geometry, as they were in many other arts like architecture. This linkage created a proportional relationship between

the blocks and their parts, expressing both aesthetic and functional connections between them, which affected these optical experiments (Al-Husseini, 2002, p. 39).

Indicators Resulting from the Theoretical Framework

1. Artists found in "visual illusion" a novel style through which they achieved artistic and technical treatments associated with technological advancements.
2. They harnessed the "visual illusion" style to create perceptual illusions for the viewer, provoking their awareness using contrasting colors, repetitions of elements, and geometric shapes.
3. The "visual illusion" style contributed to proposing a mechanism in art by engaging the viewer physically and mentally with the structural components of the artistic composition.

Chapter Three

Research Community

The research community under consideration encompasses pottery works published in the media and art exhibitions, created by British potters during the period (2000-2020). This period is notable for witnessing significant movements, including the Visual Inspiration Movement, and its significant role on both technical and stylistic levels.

Research Sample

The research sample comprised (3) specimens, meticulously selected to serve the current study's objectives, with each specimen representing the work of a single potter.

Research Methodology (Analysis)

The researcher relied on a descriptive methodology for analyzing the research sample.

Sample Analysis

Sample (1)



Potter's Name: Jonathan Middlemiss

Artwork Title: "Turning Towards Dimensions"

Dimensions: 27 × 34 cm

Date of Artwork Production: 2017

A harmonious, oval-shaped pottery composition with a symphony of colors on its front surface.

Physiological phenomena played a fundamental role in achieving visual illusions in this model through the refraction of shapes, specifically triangular forms at the top of the pottery composition's front, creating visual illusions that stimulate the sensory perceptions of the viewer. The visual illusions in this model extended beyond physiological phenomena, delving into illusions created through graduated color dimensions. The potter, Jonathan, employed triangles that appear to carry refractions, achieved by the interplay and convergence of colors within the structural form of the pottery work. Flowing movements on the surface of the work contribute to the visual illusion resulting from color harmony, with the potter embodying triangles on the edge of the composition to break monotony and rigidity. The potter achieved color value that helped establish a perspective depth, making the surface of the work appear three-dimensional to the observer.

Model (2)



Potter's Name: Matthew Chambers
Artwork Title: "Helical"
Dimensions: Height 41 cm
Date of Artwork Production: 2017

Matthew's influence and inspiration for his pottery composition encompass geometric and visual shapes while preserving abstract and rhythmic aesthetic expression in his pottery composition style. In this work, the potter focuses on the movement of circular lines filled with color contrast, essential for expressing the idea of visual illusion through the principles of symmetry, convergence, continuity, similarity, and dynamic repetition of circular lines. These circular lines serve as the foundation for organizing the pottery work, causing a noticeable and powerful change in the viewer's perception, drawing their gaze towards them to create visual attraction. The interconnected curved circular lines extend the illusion into the depth of the pottery composition, making it explicit and clear. Matthew intentionally utilizes color contrast through the juxtaposition of curved lines and the colors he employs, primarily black and blue, to induce subtle visual disturbances for the eye, reinforcing the aim of visual illusion. Additionally, it evokes pleasure and the desired aesthetics in the viewer.

Model (3)



Potter's Name: Ilona Sulikova

Artwork Title: "Vase"

Dimensions: 38 × 36 cm

Date of Artwork Production: 2007

An oval-shaped pottery artwork (vase) adorned with geometric patterns, specifically a collection of black and white triangles, giving it a semblance of oscillating movements. The visual illusion in this model relies on two crucial axes: color contrast and size variation within the pottery composition. Through this, the potter managed to induce subtle visual disturbances for the eye. The interplay and color contrast between the black and white triangles created a strong sensation of these lines moving in specific directions, contributing to the formation of a visual illusion that captivates the viewer. Using this performance style, the potter Ilona was able to create visual disruptions that distort the viewer's visual perspective. Within this presentation, the search for illusions that may encounter the viewer here and there remains. The desired objective of this text is to achieve emotional engagement with the viewer and positively influence their visual perceptions.

Chapter Four

Results

1. British potters aimed to provoke and astonish, pushing pottery art beyond its traditional form and boundaries through manipulation and transformation of pottery composition structures. This is evident in all research samples.
2. The potters in the research sample deliberately manipulated the surfaces of pottery shapes to generate an illusion of movement as an additional factor in pottery form.
3. The potters in the research sample harnessed the diversity of multiple colors and shades within their palette to establish effective visual illusions.
4. Geometric shapes, with their various deceptive elements, expressive dimensions, and movements, played a significant role in achieving the effectiveness of visual illusions.
5. The mechanism of the relationship between adjacent and intersecting lines had a crucial role in altering the trajectory of perception, dispersing sensory perceptions, creating dynamic contrasting surfaces, and emphasizing and consolidating visual illusions.

Conclusions

1. Artistic compositions that incorporate visual illusions have the capacity to sustain a creative process that extends beyond the artist or the artwork itself. It reaches out to the viewer, connecting visual art more closely with society.
2. The emergence of formal and technical influences in visual illusion works, in art in general and potters in particular, is derived from scientific, technological, and industrial advancements brought about by the industrial, scientific, and technological revolution.
3. The phenomenon of visual illusion in pottery works primarily aims to simulate aesthetic and expressive values by utilizing elements and principles that enhance the perceptual interaction of the viewer.

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