



## **A Conceptual Analysis Of Liner Forms In Painting**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper is moored on a conceptual rendition of linear forms in art. Liner implies pertaining to the usage of lines where an artist adopts patterns emanating from lines to create an illusion of perspective in two dimensional artworks like a surface design, drawing or painting. Lines play a major role in every artistic expression as one of the element of art; it is described as a point moving in space where its length is greater than its width. This paper projects the exploration and perception of this visual art element 'line' and its intriguing renditions. Lines can be two or three dimensional, implied or abstract. The different types of lines include vertical, horizontal broken and spiral, to mention but a few. The amalgamation of these aforementioned among others generate a visual understanding of textural effects, shapes, sizes and an appealing pattern formation in a piece of art work. Anon (2013) adds that the analysis of geometric forms on a support or surface was a form of art which was inspired by lines (cubism) resulting in paintings that appear fragmented and abstracted. The analytical cubism which ran from 1908-12 look more severe and are made up of an interweaving of planes and lines in muted tones of blacks, grey and ochres. The paper reviews work which are basically on linear renditions, of artist among which is Yusuf Grillo and his linear reeditions. The paper concludes that; lines are definitive elements that projects creative thought.

**Keywords:** Conceptual, line, perception, linear, cubism

### **INTRODUCTION**

Painting can be classified in numerous ways, sometimes concerning form or content. Linear painting is based around line and boundary; the artist sees in clear shapes and the outline of forms. In the same vein, the name 'cubism' which is an example of works emanating from an exploration of such was derived from a comment made by the critic Louis Vauxcelles who by seeing some of Georges Braque's paintings exhibited in Paris in 1908, described them as reducing everything to 'geometric outlines, to cubes' in line with this, Pablo Picasso was inspired by African tribal masks which are highly stylized, non-naturalistic, but nevertheless present a vivid human image...another example of a fantastically linear painter is Sandro Botticelli, the Birth of Venus among others.

#### **Concept and Ideas**

Every work of art begins as an idea in the mind of the artist, who gives the idea a form. In support of this view, the theory of conceptual art by Luise (1983) articulates that art is idea based rather than the object. Luise (1983) observed that, conceptual theory is divided into two main categories: those relating to the nature of art and those which center on the purpose of art. It states that generally, conceptual artists have centered on two questions: "what is the nature of art?" and "what is the function or usefulness of art? In respect to the first question, conceptualists claim that art lies not in the object itself but in the artist's idea of how to form it. Having relying on Luise's ideas, the researcher adheres to the first assertion which states; "art lies not on the object itself but in the artist idea of how to form it" as executed in this paper where the researcher analyzes linear forms as the artist's idea behind the study.

### **Conceptual Art**

When a conceptual work is completed, it arouses the imagination of the viewer hence the term “image”. The researcher’s subjective thought, drawings executed in this paper reveal a novel form in art; this is based on the researcher’s idea behind linen forms. Thus definitions of what is art have changed over time as perceptions and values evolve. Brancusi (1957) has been quoted as saying that “when we cease to be children we are dead”. He stresses further that “whether or not we like the way an image looks, expresses ideas” this assertion reminiscent the theory of conceptual art which states that art lies not on the object but on the artist idea of how to form it. This also reflects one of the researcher’s perception of the pawpaw tree as a woman’s world. Similarly, the French artist Duchamp paved way for the conceptualists, providing them with examples of prototypically conceptual works the readymade, for instance. Duchamp's relevance and theoretical importance for future "conceptualists" was later acknowledged by US artist Joseph Kosuth in his 1969 essay, "Art after Philosophy," when he wrote: "All art (after Duchamp) is conceptual (in nature) because art only exists conceptually “to stress further, Buhari in Sani (2014) observed that “on our artists’ shore, a new cargo has arrived not really so new, though it is called conceptual art” .He added that this form of art is an “art that is not confined to space, medium or time, it is physically bound” he laments that it is an “art of spirit”. Similarly, Sani (2014) postulates that “today, conceptual art expressions have opened a new vacuum for unlimited opportunities in creativity”. Works analyzed in this paper encapsulates this views.

### **Perception of Line**

Lines communicates ideas emanating from a creative mind...there are numerous types of lines, all characterized by their length being greater than their width. They are neither still nor dynamic depending on how the artist chooses to explore them. It is a constructive element of composition and it is one of the basic elements of visual art. Each line and its relationship with other lines in the artistic work, despite the visual effect that challenge the viewer, they influence the viewer and stand to cause a certain mood or something associated for with. For example: right line-peace, rest corrugated-tenderness, motion, zig-zag line-power and masculinity. What is important is that “that doesn’t exist only one line which define the beauty of art work and whose application entails unconditional aesthetic effect” Vasic, (1982, 48). In visual art education, development of perception of the visual element and learning line begins with obtaining knowledge for types of lines, her relationships, functions, character etc. line can be perceived only if we develop capacity for the perception, which from one side is developed through physiological maturation, and part through process of teaching. Lines determines the movement, illusionistic impressions, direction and energy in a piece of art work. Lines are natural phenomenon which are visible and interwoven around us as perceived in our daily lives; when an image of a lightning storm is viewed, we perceive varied fascinating lines endowed in nature, created by God. Certainly the jagged, meandering lines of the lightning itself dominates the image and scene. This is also followed by the straight lines of the skyline structures and the coast line. There are subtler lines too, like the lights along buildings lines are implied and the reflections of the water.

### **The Importance of Line Art**

Line art is the simplest and basic form of art. It is the constructive element of a composition. Many of us have the necessary ability to create art with lines. However, it requires a lot of practice, skills, and creativity to turn lines into an artistic creation. Artist usually create line art on solid colour backgrounds so that the design itself can stand out better. Using solid colours such as black and white as seen on works analyzed in this paper can elevates the art to a whole new level, giving the art work a hint of classiness.

### **The Liner Renditions**

In this kind of exploration Artists use elements of design to create works of art, while the principles of design such as rhythm unity proportion balance, emphasis are what gives rise to the elements as they are arranged. A Point generates line, thus a line is a mark left by a moving point. A point is the smallest elementary form, Kattchee and Ndubisi in Awoh (2015) sees a point as “collision of tools with the material plane, and so it can occupy an area like a ‘blob’. Qualitatively, it is the ultimate and most singular union of silence and speech”. It is obvious that in geometry, lines have no width, but in Grillo’s paintings lines may be light and slender on dark and thick. However, is observed that points may imply stillness and repose while line connotes movement. Anon (1998) points the view thus:

“lines imply action because they are created by action...lines may be seen as delicate, tentative, elegant, assertive, forceful, or even brutal”.

### **Lines In Grillos Paintings**

In the same vein, anon (2015) asserted that Grillo’s lines angles and shapes might not be accurate, but consistent with the connotation his art works project. A detailed study of his work shows they are centered on geometry, which emanated from lines. On this Buhari in Dike and Oyelola (2006) writes: “the constructive/cubist nature of his composition on the two-dimensional surface are evidence of his love for a complex interface of planes and angles...lines and planes become the definitive elements with which probes both the figure and the ground”. The perception of this will guide us as we proceed with the study of his application of elements of design in his work via geometry as observed by Awoh and Ndubisi (2015).Grillo uses lines as point of departure to carefully create a non-representational composition with the figures reduced as vertical lines. He also represented solid mass with lines as shown in between the masquerades and drapery of their regalia. In addition, Grillo also uses tick lines to create shadows and for a shape to be achieved, close lines are the boundaries of shape thus the earlier discussion on line touches on shapes. Shapes are achieved with lines, for example, a colour area on a painting or a three dimensional form of a sculptor cannot be reputable without lines. In most cases shapes created by an artist could be through imagination or a nature. “The shapes that artists construct has many sources: some are taken directly from nature; while others reflect the marks of the tools used by them”. It is therefore noteworthy that Grillo communicate with his paintings in a number of ways as evident in his works like the ‘drummers’. Where the rendition of lines, shapes makes one wonder his destination as shapes are communicated through colours and illusion of textures. Grillos execution of works from minimal palette gives a clear insight to the influence the Zaria art school graduates Eroka (2020).

Just as points signify silence and rest, line signifies movement, which makes it suitable in the execution of works incorporated in this paper and by Yusuf Grillo. Fichner Rathus (1998) asserts thus: “lines imply action...lines connote delicate, tentative, elegant, assertive, forceful, or even brutal”. The work entitled “Eyo” painting by Grillo, portrays obvious lines as an element of art that is alive with possibilities. In his paintings, of the ‘Eyo’ series, he used lines to outline some areas, as well as using it to show the movements of the five masquerades represented. The artist employ lines as point of departure to carefully create a non-representational composition with the figures reduced as vertical lines. He also represented solid mass with lines as shown in between the masquerades and the drapery of their regalia. At the base of the painting, Grillo explored thick lines these are perceptibly evident on his paintings Ndubuisi and Awoh (2015). It is notable that mostly angles are formed when two straight lines convene at a point. Grillo also adopted series of lines to create angles in most of his works.



**Fig. 1. Yusuf Grillos painting/Photo (2020) Arthouse contemporary 149x84cm, source the Guardian Life-the guardian**

It is observed that Grillos paintings are usually dominated by hues of greens, violet, blues and ochres this is evident on this painting as each colour fuses into each of the geometric shapes derived in the painting. The analytical components which are the major elements of design make it more of an analytical rendition. It also gives a feeling of a cubist approach in painting, this is also noted by Ndubisi and Awoh (2015) that Grillo thus believe that his art and geometry express complementary aspects of life and culture; and they both share a fundamental unity on a deeper level. The painting encapsulates the intent of this paper on the linear forms in painting and their philosophical analyses. It is discovered that most publications on Grillo, discussed the works and life of Grillo with prominence on his adoption of the geometry in art also regarded as non-representational style. It can be seen that his geometry explorations are vigorous towards non-representational style, which shows his emotions and understanding of art and mathematics. Ndubisi and Awoh also added that Grillo uses geometry to represent his spiritual life, particularly in his stained glass church projects, which through a sensitive composition of lines and angles are able to direct the worshiper's attention to a particular direction and increasing spirituality. Anon stresses that Kandisky in Galenson (2006) affirm "that the life of the spirit may be graphically represented as a large acute-angled triangle"



**Fig 111, Title: *Can it be true* Medium: Oil on board Year:1985—992 Size 122x 91.5 cm( 48x 36 in the collection of Mr and Mrs Joe Obiago source: IGI ARABA**

In in the world of lines, Grillo’s super structure painting is in his compositional design as clearly envisioned, this aspect of his painting can be associated with his brilliance in mathematical calculation, Ndubuisi(2015) associated his works with geometrical brilliancy. She further maintained that all his painting composition seems to have an element of scientific scheming in thinking and bears some level of geometrical rudiments in the overall surface design in the approach of painting studies. His composition elucidates the Fibonacci sequence mathematics. Each number in the sequence is the sum of the two numbers that precede it. So, the sequence goes: *0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, and so on*. Grillo explains the mysteries of creation through mathematical philosophy in his paintings, but in the other way, focus more on the philosophical text of the subject matter in the Yoruba social consciousness rather than the structural design of the paintings. The sequent in the numbers is represented by the rectangular cubism visible in the artistic composition, his paintings are a suggestive of two opposing forces within the body of works, first the wish to philosophies the subject matter and the critical dialectic of the universal force Fibonacci sequence concept he tries to explain without much success in his paintings. His painting rejects photographic intent to subjective analysis in reconstructing the status of the female figure away from his immediate culture to embody female status and his subject matter as signifying of beauty, love and procreation away from the *Cindy Sherman* feeling of women as an exotic tool in the hand of the society. He derives his colour schemes primarily from blue, purple and green and merely accentuates contrast by selecting the correlates in the colour wheel. Grillo valorizes purple even in its imbued royalty and makes mauves more sensitive to our affective domain. Any observer of Yoruba culture will immediately notice the tonal affinities of Grillo’s pigment with the indigo dyes and its derivative shades of purples and green.



**Sandro Botticelli, The Birth of Venus**  
(detail), c. 1486, tempera on Canvas, 172.5x278.9cm, galleria degli Uffizi, Florence. source

Sandro Botticelli is an example of a liner painter; the proof can be seen in the close-up of the birth of Venus. This painting in dominant shades of ochre in different gradations over a tinted blue background. Botticelli is known for the way he outlines in dark tones; notice how he outlines in dark tones; as well as how the hairs on the head of Venus are individually depicted. There is movement in the breeze through her hair, this is clearly suggestive of lines and its rendition on an art piece. Although there is no real movement of paint; as the form is still and secure. In contrast, this painterly style focuses on the interactions of masses using shadows and merging to create movement and fluidity. The artist executed varied lines as evident on the painting, some of which are the weaving lines, the thick lines, spiral lines. The broken lines as also a type of line are also embedded on the painting in achieving the hairy effect of the figure. A clear analysis of the painting when subjected to scrutiny is an entangled world of lines and its arrangement which has resulted to a woman's face as this paper seeks to review.



**Othon Friesz, The Regatta at Antwerp, 1906, Oil on Canvas, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Source**

This is an extreme example of painterly style where details are created in varied lines as the entire painting is the focus, rather than specific pieces. The eye circulates across the surface of the support, following the ebbs and flows of colour change, this also creates an endless movement throughout. Just as some paintings seem to have features of both styles, though maybe more of one than the other. Othon Friesz's "The Regatta at Antwerp" could fall under this category. The boats are very linear in depiction, as they clearly outlined and show how separate forms are achieved by lines. But the sky is painterly in that forms are created with colours, not with line. The sea is even harder this justifies that the mass is sectioned but the movement is undeniable. The painting when perceived is in varied lines as forming geometric shapes of a cone as well as varieties of triangle in an upright shape. This can also be interpreted as yacht sailing on the sea. On the painting also, is a cross like shape of a crucifix as painterly executed by the artist. This painting in terms of colour rendition are mostly in strokes depicting waves over a cloudy sky, as threatening to rain. Numerous shades of colours are interwoven on the painting giving a harmonized effect when viewed.



**Plate 1. Artist: Suzan Dingba Anthony: Hope. Medium: Ink on paper, Size: 6cm x 6cm**

This is an exploration emanating from varied lines which reminiscence the interest of the paper. The art piece encapsulates the display of lines in different manner over a plane background of white. It projects a minimal rendition of hues such as orange, yellow, blues, red and green in a subdued manner. The artist through constant exploration in the world of liner art pieces discovered mediums like pencil colours, charcoal ink and pencil are suitable for explorations of this nature. This is because it aids in achieving the desired sharp edges of varied lines, it also gives a feeling of a graphical design as it also projects a digital rendition of a design. This is evident that a pleasant arrangement of varied lines produces an appealing aesthetical surface that can be well appreciated.



**Plate. 2. Artist: Dingba Suzan Anthony, medium: Pencil on paper, Title: the bride**

The piece entitled bride is a conceptual representation of lines which suggests a bride and her friends being accompanied to her matrimonial home. It is commonly done by most cultures especially here in Nigeria, when a girl is being given out for marriage. In another way, it depicts the ceremonious nature of women well dressed during such occasions. The traditional marriage is usually the day set aside for such celebration. It is usually done before the white wedding, Where the bride apperas in her traditional attire with the groom. This intiutively reminiscences the researchers postulations on lines and communication. The imageries are represented in a joyous posture along with the bride gorgeously dressed. This forms were discovered from explorations with varied lines as they communicate ideas to us. The researcher discovered that every object or form is an entangle of varied lines such as the vertical, horizontal, spiral lines and broken lines commonly known in the textile world as crackles. This represents an example of a conceptual art and the theory of conceptual art, propounded by Luise (1983) which states that art is idea base than the object depicted.



**Plate. 2 Artist: Dingba Suzan Anthony, Title “Embrace II ”(2020) medium: Pencil on paper**

Embrace is another rendition of a conceptual drawing inspired broken lines. It is yet another representation varied lines in an abstracted manner. The was derived from the star llike nature of a leaf which formed an image of a person with an opened hands about to embrace as ususally displayed between two people in our immediate environment. This is a purposeful attempt to explore the world of lines to derive a form, looking at the possibility of creating design, imageries and female forms. This image is acheieved from a researchers subjective thought where a figure has been formed. This work is titled from the posture which the figure displays. It is simplified and executed in a minimal approach where by the harpharzard discovery of form as a result of exploration.



**Plate. 3. Artist: Dingba Suzan Anthony, medium: Pencil on paper**

This is another conceptual depictions derived from broken lines, executed in varied dimensions sizes and types. It portrays an abstracted female form in a motion as seen in beauty contest which is mostly staggd by women. This was derivd from the researchers intent on explorations basically with lines to communicate or presents ideas. Lines generally portrays sign, signal and messages in varied ways. It serve as the major element exploration or a successful execution of an art piece endowed with varied multiple veins which the researcher reepresented as lines. This lines include the broken lines the vertical lines, the horizontal lines and the circle.it is evident that nature is endowed with varied images, imageries and interesting forms which can be explored in art.

## CONCLUSION

Lines whether used concolusely or unconsiouely speakes the state of mind this is common in doodles and a doodler... lines as doodling, gives an emotional outlet. If you have trouble communicating or putting emotions into words, doodling can help you express your feelings, even calm you down if your're frustrated anxious or depressed. Lines enhances a creative thought...the mental state of doodling is between awareness and daydreaming, which makes it great for new, creative ideas. It relaxes you just enough that something in the back of your mind can come to fruition naturally. But most importantly: doodling gives you rare insights into your own psyche...The best way to learn about art is to look closely at images and think about how you react to them and what they might mean. Consider what ideas might be connected with a paticular work, which of your sences it might appeal to, and whether it expresses something significant (Adams 2009). Lines can convey, especially in the rendition of human features.We all draw at some point in our lives, the author stressed further that some of us doodle while talking on the telephone or when listening to boring lecture, and some of us make grafiti on subway walls, lamps post, on sidewalks. Before the invention of photography, people took visual notes by drawings of things they wanted to remember. In all such cases, people make marks on a surface (called ground), which is the essence of drawing. The conceptual drawings analysed within the context of this paper were intuitively discovered by the artist from close-up study and through constant explorations. Duniya (2011) adds that conceptual art may be seen by some scholars as a trend that was introduced by western artist. He notes that it is only true, to the extent that, if one views it from their own perspective, of it being an idea that one person has and another executes. Consequently, artists in Nigeria have continuously evolved, as their society and with new approaches to art, that connect with the new realities. It is within this context that conceptual art should be practiced and is being practiced by some modern Nigerian artist, bearing in mind the realities of their environment.

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