



SHADOWS AS AN INSPIRATION FOR THE CREATION OF HIGH PRINT GRAPHIC

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ABSTRACT

Shadows can be used as an interesting element in the creation of high-print graphic art. In the concept carried out in this final report, shadows are not only a visual representation but also a source of inspiration for the author. In the process of creating this artwork, the high print technique is used as the main technique, and a combination of several other media. Humans usually copy the surrounding nature as their aesthetic, which they usually find as experiences and memories. This form of experience is referred to as aesthetic experience or can also be referred to as inspiration. According to Munro, aesthetic experience is the way a stimulus responds to something that exists from outside the self, not just through sensory perception, but also related to psychological processes such as imagination and emotion. Based on this description, shadows can be an object of aesthetic experience for the subject as a spectator and creator in the creation of a work. The shape of the shadow, which changes every time, gives room for exploration and understanding of the shapes produced by shadows, especially shadows from plants. Shadows from plants become the main object because they can be found every day. They become a form of experience that is familiar, aesthetic, and interesting to be used as a source of inspiration for creating high-print graphic art.

1. INTRODUCTION

According to Roy Sorenson in his book "Seeing Dark Things" [1], shadows are a good example of the reality of what exists and what does not exist. Sorenson said that absence can be important in seeing the truth. This absence is also found in the process of a shadow. Based on this opinion, shadows are formed from the lack of light caused by an object that blocks light. The Truth in question is the object that covers the light, which is the original object of the shadow. Meanwhile, to the Kamus Besar Indonesia (KBBI), shadows are spaces that are not exposed to light because they are protected by objects. A shadow can be formed when an object is illuminated by the sun and the object will produce a shadow. A shadow is not a reflection of an object although it often has the same shape as the object.



Shadows are more than just an interesting visual phenomenon to observe. They also have several important functions in the life of human history. One of them is as a timepiece. The ancient Egyptian era was the first to apply the concept of a 24-hour day pegged to sunlight and the position of stars in the sky. They also created sundials, in other ancient nations such as China, Babylon, and Greece. Observing changes in sunlight is the oldest method of marking time changes. In addition, shadows can also be used to determine the direction of the sun or other light sources. By looking at the direction of the shadow cast, we can determine the relative position of the sun, which is useful for example for navigation in nature.

Humans usually copy the surrounding nature as their aesthetic, which they usually find as experience and memory. This form of experience is referred to as aesthetic experience or can also be referred to as inspiration. According to Junaedi [2] Artists can evoke their aesthetic experience from any source; from natural or cultural aesthetic objects, from aesthetic objects in the form of works of art or non-art. The sun and the shadows it cast as a natural aesthetic object, for example, can evoke the aesthetic experience of a painter to be depicted on a canvas. Aesthetic experience is the way a stimulus responds to something that exists from outside the self, not just through sensory perception, but also related to psychological processes such as imagination and emotion. shadows can be an object of aesthetic experience for the subject as a spectator and creator in the creation of a work. The shape of the shadow, which changes every time, gives room for exploration to understand the shapes produced by shadows, especially shadows from plants. Shadows from plants become the main object, because they can be found everyday so that they become a form of experience that is familiar and aesthetic and interesting to be used as a source of inspiration for creating high print graphic art. To strengthen the insight and structure of the work to be created, the author chose the ARMA museum in Ubud, Gianyar as the location/place of independent study for MBKM program.

ARMA Museum is one of the art museums in Bali that holds a wide collection of paintings from renowned painters both from within the country and abroad. ARMA Museum is located on Jl. Raya Pengosekan, Ubud, Gianyar. ARMA's distinctive feature lies in the cluster of buildings that use traditional Balinese ornaments and an environment that is lush with trophic trees. Anak Agung Rai as the owner of the ARMA Museum said, ARMA Museum as a living art that combines management with environmental ecosystems. Examples include artworks that involve plant growth or changes in light, sound, or movement orchestrated by sensors or direct interaction with the audience. In the courtyard of the museum, many plants find their own habitat, meaning they grow naturally without anyone planting them. One of the things that attracted the author to Museum ARMA was the collection of paintings by maestro Walter Spies. Walter Spies was a German artist known for his contribution to art and culture in Bali in the early 20th century. He was a versatile artist who was active in various fields such as painting, performing arts, and music. Many of Walter Spies' paintings depict how shadows are transformed in his concept of creation. Among them are the shadows of trees in paintings that capture the natural beauty of Bali, and the daily life of Balinese people. This strengthens the structure and reasoning of the author in researching and working at ARMA museum during MBKM program independent study.

In addition, Arma Museum is affiliated with many local and foreign artists, both traditional and modern artists. One of them is Japanese artist Kamon Komatsu, who is a woodblock print artist. The Tokyo-born artist makes trees the main object in each of his works. Kamon Komatsu says that his inspiration comes from the spiritual energy he gets, especially from large, old trees. He wants to pass on the meaning and message of this experience to future generations.

The woodblock technique is the earliest graphic art technique, and is the only one traditionally used in East Asia, especially China and Japan. According from the Asian Art Museum [3], the woodblock printing

technique or printing with wood blocks that have been chiseled in such a way, was first discovered in China which is estimated in the 600s AD. This high print or woodcut technique produces images or writings through a printing process using the surface of a wood sheet, or vinyl rubber that is chiseled or carved as a printing reference or plate. Parts that are not images or not printed are then carved out, while parts of the image or that are not carved out will remain parallel to the surface of the plate. Then the plate is treated with paint or dye, after which the plate is printed onto paper by rubbing, with the help of a baren, spoon or press machine tool.

2. METHODS

Hawkins in his book *Creating Through Dance*, translated by RM. Soedarsono [4], mentions that the creation of a good painting always goes through three stages: first, exploration, second, experimentation, and third, forming or composition. In this regard, Hadi [5] translates the method as: exploration, experimentation, and forming.

2.1. Exploration

In general, exploration is a search or exploration process that aims to find something. According to Yudha (2010), exploration is the first step of an artwork creation. This stage includes thinking, imagining, feeling and responding to the object used as a source of creation. These thoughts are always the reason for an artist's inner satisfaction in pouring ideas into artworks. In the scope of fine art, the processing of materials, media, ideas or ideas becomes an exploration activity to get new possibilities. Exploration activities can also lead to unexpected forms, symptoms, or things that can be explored again to get a unique work of art. In an exploration activity, an artist's imagination becomes important in seeing or interpreting an object. Mujiyono [6] reveals, "in intuitive work, although it relies on the power of emotion to achieve it, it requires a fairly intense process of aesthetic or artistic experience". In the process of creating artwork, consideration is also given to the materials and media to be used. This can certainly maximize and bring out the imaginative impression of a work of art created as well as identify explorative artistic activities.

The idea to take shadows as the main concept started from the author's interest in the unique and aesthetic forms of shadows. Every object casts its own shadow through its outer contour alone. Objects that overlap each other usually reflect unique and unrecognizable shadows, so the human brain begins to form other objects that are familiar in their personal lives. This causes ambiguity in the visual of the object. For example, the shadow of an apple is not necessarily an apple. Observing the artworks of other artists is necessary in exploring ideas in the creation of artworks as a source of inspiration. Walter Spies's works collected at ARMA Museum became one of the references for the source of the work, such as the color contrast and the way Walter Spies depicted the shadows of the trees in the painting depicting the Balinese countryside.

2.2. Experimentation

This stage provides the opportunity and space to search for ideas through imagination and a series of experiments conducted through medium experimentation such as materials, techniques and tools to be used, Yudha [7]. Visual exploration is carried out in the form of sketches, and the organization of visual elements that form the aesthetic value of the work. Experimentation using a wide selection of materials is used to produce the discovery of artistic forms that sometimes emerge from the subconscious because in the experimentation stage, there is great freedom.

In this process, wood media was used as the first media to be experimented with. The wood medium used was A5 size made from mahogany wood, which has a thickness of 0.7 millimeters and is soft enough to be carved. The advantage of woodcut is its ability to produce sharp thin and small details, but it requires deeper carving and a more complicated process. The first print experiment used a special black woodblock ink on A4 paper. Pressing was done manually using a baren (traditional Japanese press). This ink produces a dense print on the smooth surface of the paper.

2.3. Formation

The realization stage is a crucial phase in the artistic process, encompassing the execution of various experiments that have been conducted to bring a work of art to fruition. This stage represents the unification of diverse elements that collectively form the artwork, including line, shape, color, composition, space, and texture. It is within this stage that the artist organizes and synthesizes these visual components, ensuring that they interact harmoniously.

The process involves careful consideration of several factors, such as unity, complexity, and intensity. Unity refers to the cohesive quality that binds different elements together, creating a sense of wholeness in the artwork. Complexity introduces layers of interest, inviting viewers to explore the nuances within the piece. Intensity relates to the vibrancy and emotional impact of the colors and forms used, contributing to the overall aesthetic experience.

As artists navigate through the realization stage, they draw upon insights gained from prior experiments, allowing for a more informed and deliberate approach to composition. This stage is not merely about assembling various elements but about creating a balanced and engaging visual narrative. The thoughtful arrangement of lines and shapes, the deliberate choice of colors, and the strategic use of space and texture all come together to create an artwork that resonates with beauty and meaning.

Ultimately, this stage is where the artist's vision is brought to life, transforming abstract ideas and emotional responses into a tangible form. The result is an artwork that not only showcases technical skill but also communicates the artist's intent, inviting viewers to engage with the piece on a deeper level. Through this meticulous process, the realization stage underscores the significance of artistry as a journey of exploration and discovery, culminating in the creation of a work that can be appreciated for its beauty and complexity.

2.4 Tools and Mediums

The primary medium essential for creating this artwork includes a variety of carving tools, which are instrumental in shaping the molds that will form the foundation of the piece. These tools allow for precise and intricate designs to be carved into the wood, providing a textured surface that enhances the overall visual impact. Once the molds are prepared, the coloring process begins, utilizing high-quality acrylic paints and graphic printing inks. These materials offer vibrant hues and allow for smooth application, ensuring that the colors are both rich and durable.

In the finishing stage, various embroidery techniques come into play, employing needles and threads to add intricate details and depth to the piece. This step not only enhances the aesthetic appeal but also introduces a tactile quality that invites viewers to engage more deeply with the work. Additionally, the main media consists of a sturdy wooden board that serves as a reliable mold and a canvas fabric that acts as the medium for transferring graphic prints. Together, these components create a harmonious blend of materials that contribute to the overall artistry and craftsmanship of the final product. Through careful

selection and application of these mediums, the work emerges as a vibrant and dynamic expression of creativity.

3. RESULTS

According to the results of the author's independent study, by studying the woodblock and linoprint techniques that produce the following works

3.1. Concept

Human daily life is inextricably linked to the natural world, as we rely on nature for our very survival and well-being. This deep-rooted attachment to the environment shapes our experiences, often in both conscious and unconscious ways. For artists, the abundance of natural objects serves as an endless wellspring of inspiration, particularly those found in their immediate surroundings. Within this context, the aesthetic experience derived from plants and trees becomes paramount, as the shadows cast by these natural elements create captivating patterns on the ground, walls, and buildings around us.

These shadows can range from delicate, fine line patterns to intricate, organic shapes, each adding a unique aesthetic dimension to their surfaces. They do not merely represent the shapes of the objects that cast them; they embody the sensations and experiences that arise in the moment of their formation. This interplay between light and shadow transforms the environment, inviting the artist to interpret these ephemeral patterns through their own lens. Consequently, the artworks produced become a means of translating the aesthetic experiences felt by the artist into a tangible form, transforming personal sensations into artistic expressions.

The process begins with the artist absorbing the aesthetic qualities of the natural world, allowing these impressions to resonate within them. This internalization leads to the emergence of artistic inspiration, which is then expressed in the creation of a work of art. As the artwork takes shape, it carries with it the essence of the artist's experience, serving as a bridge between the artist and the viewer. When spectators engage with the finished piece, they are invited to experience an aesthetic journey that parallels the artist's own. This shared aesthetic experience arises from the common parameters of aesthetic values that both artist and spectator possess, creating a connection through the artwork.

However, it is crucial to acknowledge that while there may be similarities in aesthetic experience, there is no guarantee that the artist and the spectator will perceive the artwork in the same way. Aesthetic experience is inherently personal and subjective, shaped by individual emotions, memories, and perspectives. Unlike traditional communication, which often relies on a clear and logical message, artistic communication leans heavily on emotional resonance. In fine art, the emotional message conveyed can be profound, sometimes overshadowing any logical interpretation. The power of art lies in its ability to evoke feelings, provoke thought, and inspire reflection, making the emotional message a central component of the artistic experience.

Through this complex interplay between nature, artistic expression, and viewer engagement, the artist not only captures the aesthetic essence of their surroundings but also invites others to partake in a shared journey of perception and emotion. This transformative process underscores the significance of art as a medium that transcends mere representation, allowing for a deeper exploration of the human experience and our intrinsic connection to the natural world.

3.2. The Creation Process

In addition to discussing the mechanics of shadow formation, the author examines the concept of aesthetics, emphasizing how personal experiences and memories shape one's perception of shadows. This subjective interpretation can deeply affect how individuals relate to art, as the emotional resonance of shadows can evoke nostalgia, tranquility, or even unease. The author draws inspiration from the works of notable artists such as Walter Spies and Cameon Komatsu, whose explorations of light and shadow serve as a significant influence. Through their use of color contrast and diverse techniques to depict shadows and natural scenes, these artists provide a rich context for understanding how shadows can enhance artistic expression.

The author delves into the fascinating interplay between light and shadow, exploring how shadows, created when objects block light, can manifest in unique and often ambiguous shapes that significantly influence an individual's visual perception. These shadows are not merely products of obstruction; they are dynamic phenomena that depend on a variety of factors, including the shape of the object casting the shadow and the position and intensity of the light source. This relationship changes throughout the day, with shadows lengthening during the early morning and late evening hours, while they shorten dramatically at noon when the sun is at its zenith. Such variations not only alter the physical appearance of shadows but also evoke different emotional and aesthetic responses from viewers.

The author employs two distinct printmaking techniques in their exploration of shadows and light. The first technique, woodblock printing, utilizes A5 mahogany wood, known for its softness that allows for detailed carving. However, this method requires a meticulous and complex process to achieve the desired results. Once the designs are carved, black woodblock ink is applied to A4 paper using a traditional Japanese baren, resulting in prints that possess solid forms and smooth surfaces. The second technique, lino printing, incorporates softer lino rubber, which is easier to carve and yields cleaner prints. This method allows for greater flexibility in design while maintaining a high level of detail. An experimental approach with acrylic paint on canvas further expands the author's exploration of texture and color blending. While this technique produces unique results, the prints tend to be less dense compared to the woodblock prints on paper, showcasing the varied outcomes of different mediums.

Formation is an intricate process that embodies the realization and execution of numerous experiments, culminating in a cohesive work of art. Throughout this stage, the creation of artworks reflects essential elements of art such as line, shape, color, space, and texture. The journey involves several crucial stages, including sketching, tracing, penciling, and printing, each contributing to the evolution of the piece. The final touch of embroidery adds a layer of detail and texture, serving as a finishing flourish that elevates the artwork and completes the artist's vision. Through this multifaceted approach, the author invites viewers to engage with the complexities of light, shadow, and artistic technique, fostering a deeper appreciation for the interplay of these elements in visual art.

3.3 Artwork Description

In a series of works inspired by the concept of shadow, seven pieces titled *The Journey of Growth* were produced, each deeply rooted in the beauty of the natural world. The primary subjects of these artworks are small plants, vines, and trees, which serve as an aesthetic experience for the artist. These natural forms are not just visual stimuli; they embody the artist's connection to the environment, transforming personal experiences into artistic expression. The process of creating these works allows the artist to translate their aesthetic encounters as a spectator into a compelling artistic experience, capturing the essence of nature's ephemeral beauty.

The techniques employed in this series are woodcut and linocut, both integral parts of high print graphic art. These techniques involve producing images through a printing process that utilizes a chiseled or carved surface—whether it be wood, linoleum, hardboard, or vinyl rubber—as the printing plate. The process begins with the careful carving of the plate, which is then coated with paint or dye. After preparation, the plate is pressed onto the chosen medium, traditionally paper, using a rubbing technique with a spoon or a printing press. However, in this series, the medium diverges from the conventional use of paper. Instead, calico cloth and canvas coated with gesso were chosen, allowing for a unique texture and quality that complements the artworks.

This choice of medium is particularly significant, as it facilitates the incorporation of embroidery techniques into the final pieces. Embroidery, the art of decorating textiles with threads and needles, adds an additional layer of depth and intricacy to the artworks. Various basic embroidery techniques are utilized, including running stitch, back stitch, and straight stitch, each contributing to the overall aesthetic and tactile experience of the work. Color plays a vital role in these artworks, as it is intrinsically linked to mood and emotion. Each color carries its own emotional significance, which can profoundly affect the viewer's experience. Research by Louis B. Wexner in 1945 highlights these connections, revealing that blue is often associated with melancholy but can also promote calmness, alleviating insomnia and anxiety. In contrast, green serves as a balancing color, reminiscent of the harmony found in nature. Meanwhile, orange emerges as a complementary color to blue on the color wheel, creating dynamic contrasts that engage the viewer's emotions and perceptions.

Through *The Journey of Growth*, the artist not only captures the aesthetic essence of nature but also invites viewers to explore the emotional landscapes evoked by color and form. The interplay of shadow, texture, and color enriches the artistic experience, allowing for a deeper connection between the artwork and the spectator. This series stands as a testament to the transformative power of nature in art, celebrating the beauty of growth and the intricate relationships between the artist, their medium, and the audience.

The images below is the sample result of the artwork:



Figure 1. The Journey of Growth
[Source: Ni Nyoman Ayu Suti Aryani, 2024]



Figure 2. The Journey of Growth
[Source: Ni Nyoman Ayu Suti Aryani, 2024]



Figure 3. The Journey of Growth
[Source: Ni Nyoman Ayu Suti Aryani, 2024]



Figure 4. The Journey of Growth
[Source: Ni Nyoman Ayu Suti Aryani, 2024]

Media: Woodblock Print on Canvas

Size: 40x30 cm

Year: 2024

3.4 Aesthetics and Meaning of the Artwork

Aesthetics is everything that has to do with the beauty that exists in one's vision, and how one can see an object, so that the object has its own value in the heart of those who enjoy it [8]. For an artist, natural objects will always be the first source of ideas, especially the surrounding nature. This concept specializes in the plants and trees of the surrounding nature as an aesthetic experience for the painter. Not only taking natural patterns but also things that are felt and experienced when the moment occurs. Therefore, the works created are a form of transferring the aesthetic experience felt by the artist as a spectator into an artistic experience in the process of making his artwork.

Overlapping objects usually reflect unique and unrecognizable shadows, so the human brain starts to form other familiar objects in its personal life. This causes ambiguity in the visuals of the object. Experience and the subconscious are closely tied to the results of human memory capture when looking at objects that have ambiguous shapes. The ambiguous shape of an image can give different perceptions and images to each individual based on experience. Visual imagery is sensing or perception, at once representing the visible and the internal. Humans usually copy the surrounding nature as their aesthetic, which they usually find as experience and memory. This form of experience is referred to as aesthetic experience. Aesthetic experience is emotional; however, aesthetic experience is preceded by cognitive processes and accompanied by certain movements. Some artworks do need to be responded to with action, but aesthetic experience is an emotion of the action and not the action itself.

Every color has a relationship or connection to mood. In other words, every color has an emotional meaning. Louis B. Wexner in 1945 has done research related to this. Research was also conducted by an

American psychologist in 1996, namely Frank H. Mahnke [9]. The use of blue is motivated by the meaning of symbols and feelings received when looking at blue. Although generally synonymous with melancholy, blue is able to provide a professional feel, trust, and a symbol of strength in business. This is because blue is believed to stimulate the ability to communicate and artistic expression. In the medical world, blue can overcome insomnia, anxiety, migraines, and high blood pressure. Furthermore, dark blue is a symbol of calmness, while bright blue tends to symbolize sadness, solitude, reflection, and silence. Then the addition of green is as a color balancer. The green color also has a meaning of emotional balance and openness to communication because green can provide a relaxing effect. In addition, the green color shows the aura of a phlegmatic personality who loves peace and acts as a mediator in differences. Meanwhile, orange is a complementary/contrasting color from blue on the color chart. In symbolic meaning, orange has a message of creativity and a spirit of adventure. The use of orange-colored yarn is also in line with the intended message as a trail of steps and a spirit of adventure.

3.5 Authenticity of the Work

The authenticity of each artist's work is intricately reflected in their distinctive use of lines, color choices, and underlying concepts. These elements serve as hallmarks of their individual artistic identity. Furthermore, the choice of techniques and tools employed by the artist plays a significant role in expressing their unique perspective. In this particular exploration, the combination of woodblock and linocut techniques with canvas, enhanced by stitching, emerges as a defining feature. This innovative fusion exemplifies a creative engagement with various techniques and materials, resulting in a fresh approach to printmaking.

Despite the prevalence of shadows in many artworks, the concept of using shadows as a primary source of inspiration remains relatively rare and underutilized in contemporary art. While shadows often serve as mere decorative elements, this work challenges that notion by elevating shadows to a complex and meaningful visual language. By positioning shadows at the forefront of the artistic narrative, the artist invites viewers to engage in a deeper reflection on the interplay of light and form, encouraging them to seek out the layers of meaning embedded within the artwork.

The creative process is further enriched by the insights gained from various literature on aesthetic experience, as well as the influences of master painter Walter Spies and renowned Japanese woodblock artist Cameon Komatsu. Their works provide a rich context for understanding the role of shadows and their aesthetic potential. Through this experimentation with diverse media and techniques, the artist aims to forge a new impression, aspiring to develop a unique style that reflects their own identity and character.

Ultimately, this endeavor seeks to establish distinctiveness, setting the artist's work apart from those who have inspired them. By exploring the uncharted territory of shadow as a central theme, the artist not only pays homage to their influences but also carves out a space for their own innovative contributions to the art world. This commitment to originality not only enhances the visual experience but also enriches the dialogue surrounding the themes of light, shadow, and perception in contemporary art.

4. CONCLUSION

This research report aims to explore how shadows can serve as a profound source of inspiration for the creation of high-print graphic artworks. Specifically, it focuses on the shadows that emerge from plants under the influence of sunlight. Each shadow cast by a plant exhibits unique variations, shaped by the intensity and angle of the light source. When relying solely on sunlight, the resulting shadows transform throughout the day shadows differ from those in the afternoon and evening, reflecting changes in both

light quality and direction. This dynamic quality of shadows adds a layer of complexity to the artistic process, as the brightness and dimness of the light influence the form and character of the shadows.

The techniques employed in this body of work include woodblock and lino print on canvas, both of which allow textural and visual effects. The primary materials consist of acrylic paint, graphic ink, and a variety of carving tools. These materials are selected for their ability to convey the nuances of the shadows and enhance the overall aesthetic quality of the artworks. The creation process follows the Alma M. Hawkins method, which emphasizes exploration, experimentation, and realization. This structure encourages the artist to deeply into the interplay of light and shadow, fostering a spirit of innovation and discovery.

Importantly, shadows serve not only as natural patterns but also as reflections of the emotions and experiences felt by the artist in the moment. The works produced are thus a means of transferring these aesthetic experiences from the artist's perspective as a spectator into a tangible artistic expression. Through this process, the artist captures the ephemeral beauty of shadows, inviting viewers to engage with the artwork on multiple levels. The resulting pieces are a testament to the transformative power of nature, offering insights into the deeper meanings and emotions that shadows can evoke. Ultimately, this research highlights the rich potential of shadows as both a visual motif and a source of inspiration in the realm of high-print graphic art.

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