

PRACTICAL INVESTIGATIONS WITH A VISUAL STUDY OF LIGHT AND DARK BASED ON TENEBRISM AND CHIAROSCURO THEORY

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Abstract

In this paper, the researcher describe the function and representation of light and dark in his paintings and try to make a systematic and comparative analysis of selected paintings within the tradition of chiaroscuro and tenebrism theory. Based on the analysis and comparison, several new findings related to chiaroscuro and tenebrism have been identified. The discussion focused on the production of personal studio-based works with the objective of looking at the differences and development of the techniques that has been practised. This paper will discuss few approaches in order to identify particular elements in the selected works with regards the academic canon view especially concerning their composition, space, mood and other technical aspects.

Keywords: Deconstruction, Tenebrism, Chiaroscuro, Practice Based Research.

1. Introduction

A painting is not limited only to practice and skill but it is also something which combines knowledge, skill, creativity, desire and curiosity. Before undertaking this study, the question is how the art of painting can be developed through practice based research and analysis? It often evaluated from the aesthetic point of view and the researcher was interested in looking at it from the sensibilities of a maker in a way which might contribute to the development of art and intellect. Through this paper, it is hoped that this will be an example of how the art of painting can be understood through visual and practice research.

The discussion was focused on the production of personal works and the production process starting from the beginning of the research with the objective of looking at the differences and development of the techniques which has been practised. The researcher could see the understanding especially that related to the light and dark technique in tenebrism¹ had changed and he had described each of the stages in this section.

On the whole, the objective of this paper is to study the relationship between chiaroscuro² and tenebrism and to look at the techniques behind works which used these approaches. The main question that has been explored was how the use of light and dark are utilized effectively in paintings and how individual developed their

understanding and techniques in using light and dark in their work.

2. Methodology and Analysis

The researcher's work has been primarily a comparative study through studio-based research. A method through drawing which has enabled the researcher to deconstruct a few of Caravaggio, Georges de la Tour and Rembrandt's painting which was named as *deconstruction*³. This *deconstruction* process was to record and understand the techniques used by master artists in applying light and dark in their works (figure 2.0.1).

Figure 2.0.1: Details from 'deconstruction' drawing of Rembrandt Self-Portrait, 1657



Through this process, a comparison was carried out and a conclusion could be made to explain

¹ Tenebrism, from the Italian *tenebroso* (murky) is a style of painting using very pronounced chiaroscuro, where there are violent contrasts of light and dark, and darkness becomes a dominating feature of the image.

² Chiaroscuro, from Italian for light-dark. It is characterized by strong contrasts between light and dark, usually bold contrasts affecting a whole composition. It is also a technical term used by artists and art historians for using contrasts of light to achieve a sense of volume in modeling three-dimensional objects.

³ 'Deconstruction' is a practice-based analysis distinct from copying or transcription. Images are 'deconstructed' by analyzing them in relation to formal properties that inform their pictorial order. More details about *deconstruction* can be referred to Mohd Rafee, Y. (2011). 'Light and Dark: A Comparative Analysis of Selected Painters Based on Tenebrism and Chiaroscuro Theory.' Ph.D diss., University of the West of England. p.96-109.