

Interpretation of Emotions Through Colors and Patterns used in "Red Room I" by Vasiliy Ryabchenko

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Abstract—Neo expressionism was an art movement that dismissed the intellectualized approach to painting and championed the expression of raw human emotion. "Red Room I" is an illustration of the neo-expressionist Vasiliy Ryabchenko with the use of abstract designs and harmony of colours that evokes emotions of fear and anxiety. The deep layers of loneliness and the wheels of alienation rotate amidst the company of their loved ones is deeply felt which turns the person voiceless to express their suppressed phobic feelings is exerted through the painting. Thus, the elucidation of the usage of colours and their symbolism with the significance of the patterns used to analyses the red room within every human being where emotions are bottled up due to distrust in the white lies of the world. This study attempts to subjectively interpret the patterns and significance of colours used by the painter which creates the realization of a red room within every individual, resembling the heart where insecure feelings and scary emotions that haunt the minds are locked in. This painting surely is a self-reflection of the vivid life within every person.

I. INTRODUCTION

Language is a tool of expression, where words play its role in serving a platform to pen down the emotions and feelings of an individual. To what extent can words provide an outlet to emotions that are hard to be expressed through voice? Language is a limited technology. Sylvia Plath was successful in transforming her dark and lonely feelings into words like Virginia Woolf and Charles Dickens. But not all are Plath or Dickens. Therefore, painting lends an alternate form to voice the feelings of an individual, just like music and dance helps people.

Human society constantly creates large changes, which are known as 'paradigm shifts'. Some of these changes consume a long period of time, while small changes are born to maintain an equilibrium. Art remains in tune with the age and it certainly reflects the changes that occur. Abstract painting is a powerful instrument, portraying reality of the phenomenal world by discarding the irrelevant details. It enables an individual to have a closer approach to the complex realities of the world and to understand the essence of the world. Painting is simply an abstraction of the world using colours, lines and shapes.

Expressionism is an art form that followed the abstract form of designs, or what can be called as a violent distortion of colours with the underlying goal to evoke an emotional effect to instill moods or ideas. It originated in Germany in the beginning of the 20th century, with many artists

breaking away from the naked realism and aimed to paint not the physical reality but instead its interior perception. This cultural movement grew within numerous art forms including painting poetry and literature. This movement was definitely based on freedom of self-expression. There were several expressionists such as Edward Munch, Erich Heckel, Emil Nolde, Max Pechstein, Fritz Bleyl painted the innermost feelings in which their own visualization of the world representation that stimulates emotional responses in them are enforced on their canvas. Expressionism is

"the emotional experience in its most intense and concentrated formulation. Their key note was the exploration of man's inner life".

Expressionism was a deliberate manifestation of post-impressionism which focused on the recreation of what the artist saw; the impressionistic paintings were not concerned with the shape and form of what they were painting. Creating the impression of the objects they perceived and not the emotional response. The similar techniques of the impressionists such as the short, shattered brush strokes that scarcely convey forms, pure colours in full strength and an emphasis on the effects of light was adopted by the expressionists. The work of Vincent Van Gogh, "Starry Night" inspired many expressionist painters. Edward Munch, Norwegian artist who was the forerunner of expressionist art work and helped to develop expressionism in Germany and parts of Central Europe. Munch's works were quite violent and disturbing to the minds as they were based on his life experiences. He gained the prestigious fame for his series of paintings called "The Frieze of Life". A particular painting "The Scream" which was originally titled as "The Scream of Nature", in which he illustrates his social foreboding with life and nature as his painting are generally filled with the feeling of despair & terror using vivid deep colours. "The Scream" was an expression of his encounter with the death in his family. Arthur Lubow has described "The Scream" as "an icon of modern art, a Mona Lisa for our time". The paintings have reddish orange sky representing an evening where the sun was setting and the clouds turning blood red. He sensed a scream through the nature.

"I painted this picture, painted the clouds as actual blood, the colour shrieked. This became the scream" (Nice 22 January 1892) [Diary entries]).

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The scene was considered by scholars as the view overlooking Oslo, the Oslo Fjord and the Hovedøya from the hill of Ekeberg, sight of slaughter house or lunatic asylum depicted in the painting may have offered some inspiration. At the time of the painting the work, Laura Catherina who was the manic-depressive sister of Munch was a patient at the asylum, at the foot of Ekeberg.

“ I was walking along the road with two friends – the Sun was setting suddenly the sky turned blood red - I paused feeling exhausted, and leaned on the fence – there was blood and tongues of fire above the blue black fjord and the city – my friends walked on and I stood there trembling with anxiety – and I sensed an infinite scream passing through nature.”

Avant – garde was a group of expressionists, found by the artist Ernst Ludwig Kirchner whose paintings were of the night life and consisted of nudes and figure compositions. This asserted on the aim of breaking man away from the society swiped by industrialization and urbanization in the modern world and revolutionized art imbuing intense inner vision.

There were mainly two new groups of expressionists: “ *Der Blaue Reiter*” (The Blue Rider) and *Die Brücke* “ (The Bridge) who rejected their legacy and turned to nature & the primitive and focused on the spirituality of art. The abstract paintings of expressionists such as Alexei Von Jawlensky were figurative depicting Cubism and Wassily Kandinsky who considered “ Music is the ultimate teacher”, portrayed in his paintings the harmony of colors, purifying the soul, linking a connection between the music and painting such as in “ *The Blaue Reiter*” (1903) and the use of imagination in some of his works also represented childhood memories of fairy tales. Thus, Expressionism was the expression of feelings of the artist not directly but through art and it still inspires many artists.

The revival of expressionism was carried out in the late 70s. It took half a century to lay the foundations of neo expressionism which emerged as a response to the conceptual art and minimalism which were the favored trends of the time. It also referred to as Neo – Fauvism (“*Neue Wilden*” in German) which refers to the dismissal of intellectualized approach of art and championed the expression of raw emotion. Neo expressionism emerged in Germany but spread across United States and also in the countries of Italy; whose Transavanguardia became a prominent neo expressionist group. The visual style is determined by an ideology rather than a recognizable aesthetic guideline with the use of heavy bold colours. Neo expressionism had a great refreshing reach to the peak in the art mark after the sudden boom of expressionism.

“Oorli Express” in Kerala is a art form performed in a bus. What does Oorali mean? Its a character adopted from the ancient ritual art form 'Padayani' who was a prophet who prophesied the injustices of the society. Oorali Express is a group of 10 theatrical artists who convey the oppression and suspension of rights of individuals through drama and music. They started by protesting against the police authorities for the death of Vinayakan, a dalit boy from Thrissur, who was tortured by them for growing long hair. They collected Rs. 1.5 lakh from the crowd while they

performed at different towns and villages of Kerala and donated it to Vinayakan's pained family. They used the language of art to express their protest against the atrocities of the authorities towards faultless victims.

This paper intends to explore the meanings of patterns and abstract designs in Vasiliy Ryabchenko's painting, “*Red Room I*”. Vasiliy Ryabchenko was born on 23 July 1954 in Odessa, was a painter, photographer and Ukrainian postmodernism and “New Ukrainian Wave” representative. He was educated from Grekov Odessa Art school, Saint Petersburg Art and Industry Academy, and K. D. Ushynsky South Ukrainian National Pedagogical University. In 1996, he received the title of “The Best Artist of Ukraine” following the results of the first All-Ukrainian Art Festival “Golden Section” in Kiev.



While focusing upon the title, “ *Red Room I*” which has been attributed to the painting by Vasiliy Ryabchenko; there can be various interpretations but, in this study, it will be confined to a general concept of a red room. What is a red room? According to H G Wells, short gothic story, “ *The Red Room*”, written in 1984, “ *The Red Room*” is a haunted room, where every person fear to enter, as the duke who tried to disprove the haunting of the room was found unconscious, deprived of strength and dead. Red Room is a dark room, where the unnamed narrator tries to use candles to illuminate every inch of the room but they go out and when he tries to light it up again, it extinguishes as if someone had pinched the wick with the fingertips. The narrator says, “ Darkness closed upon me like the shutting of an eye, wrapped about me in a stifling embrace, sealed my vision and crushed the last vestiges of self-possession from my brain. And it was not palpable darkness but intolerable terror”, which gives a horrifying picture of the red room. The Red Room symbolizes the black fear that could be felt in during the bright summer daytime or during the dusk, it will follow one as long as sin endures within the individual.

Charlotte Bronte’s 1847 novel, “ *Jane Eyre*” provides an unforgettable gothic feel. The character Mrs. Reed, who raised the orphan girl, Jane Eyre to the age of ten, punishes her, by locking her in a bed room. Here, the red room is a place of terror where she struggles with the fear of her own

anger. Women who are considered as gentle and submissive creatures who represent the ideal of feminine purity and goodness in early 1800s is magnified in this incident of “*Jane Eyre*”. In her oppressive and inhibited world, she has to face the terrors of her inner nature: her anger and willfulness is mirrored by the terrors of the red room.

Generally, a red room can be considered as the mind of a person where fear and torturous pain reside. The red colour itself is associated with rage, anger, malice and wrath.

“ We are more often frightened than hurt; and we suffer more from imagination than from reality”

-Lucius Annalus Seneca.

There is physical pain but there is also a pain constructed by the mind, where the pain is just an illusion. It is this mirage of pain that is optimized by the red room.

Probing into the colours and patterns of the painting “*Red Room I*”. In the middle, there is an abstract figure which appears to be a naked woman who stands with her head bent represents a woman being submissive in a structure of patriarchy surrounded by the figures which appear like animals and humans. These figures of half human and half animal represents the brutal instincts of man that dominates women. The painting represents the screaming voices for complete freedom in the minds of women. The figure squirming down the wall may also represent the women who are treated like butchered animals hung in the stalls. In post-colonial feminism, which is a form of feminism focusing solely on the experiences of women in Western cultures. Women are not allowed to place their own opinion being criticized for poor intellect and cognition. For example, in the novel “*Surfacing*” by Margaret Atwood, where the unnamed protagonist, discerns herself as a member of the patriarchal society where she is a victim of men use female bodies for the sexual satisfaction and are considered as the main voice creating history and responsible for saving the world, men think they can do it with guns. Here the protagonist is trying to root her identity among the society.

The women like figure is immersed up till her knee in red colour which symbolizes the mind of a women immersed in her own fearful agony. The bulk figure next to the woman like figure holding a rectangular shaped thing can be interpreted as the power and strength of men that is exerted upon the woman, shaming and disrespecting her body, by making her stand naked with crossed arms. It may also represent the domestic violence and sexual harassment which are long lasting and affects the personal and professional lives of women. The women bashing is a serious health threat which causes internalized homophobia and psychological distress. The suppression of the voice of women and the fear instilled in their minds must be terminated by circulating the concept of women, not as a weaker sex but as the "prettier sex".

"Ecriture feminine" was the term coined by Judith Butler in her work *Gender Troubles*. Women created a framework of their narrative writing that contained gaps, puns, inconsistencies and silences, breaking away from the standard discourse of writing followed by men which was linear and authoritative. Similarly, language of painting gives the painter and the perceiver to contemplate the piece of art according to their preferences, making way for less

controversies and more peace of mind. Language, be it in written form or spoken form or even in painted form, it remains powerful and effective than nuclear weapons.

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