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Cultural Desensitization; A Study based on Donald ‘Jackie’ Hinkson’s “Plain to See” Exhibition

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature Review</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter One: Line and Form</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Two: Use of Color</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Three: Manipulation of Light</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABSTRACT

“I am convinced that abstract form, imagery, color, texture and material convey meaning equal to or greater than words.”

-Katherine McCoy, Graphic designer and Director of Cranbrook School of Design.

Art dwells in the realm of creative activity which is the expression and application of human creative skill and imagination. Art is proof of the existence of man and in itself is necessary for the longevity of humankind, yet still conditioning has made us refute branches of the form, such as its content, context, conception and creation. Art has serious application to the world it captures and context, consequently making the invisible visible and carries a burden that is more than mere arbitrary surface representation.

This research topic was born from an appreciation of Donald ‘Jackie’ Hinkson’s body of work entitled ‘Plain to See’. This body of work deals with on an intellectual level, the cultural-desensitization of the Trinidad inhabitants to; social, cultural and environmental issues. In the process of viewing and critiquing artworks, the unfolding of complex theories behind the intentions of the artist based on principles and elements of design becomes a refreshing and informative experience. The researcher used an in depth interview with Hinkson, reviews on his works, visual arts and design texts as well as texts in philosophy, psychology and sociology.

In uncovering the meaning and knowledge behind the creation of work, as well as their context, it brings to the realization that artists are one breed of the most intellectual beings on the
planet. Artists create by manipulation of techniques and mediums while considering the gaze of the viewer, their context and also the overall aesthetic and what they themselves want to achieve. Alongside this painting in particular capture aspects of the social, cultural and environmental context of a space and without words create a narrative that transcends language, a universal language in itself.

This means in essence that the artists’ role, plainly put, is to show the side of reality that people cannot see or do not acknowledge. The artist must observe and help open the eyes of their audience to subject matter that they believe are closed to. According to Prof. Dan Eastmond, “During revolutions artists are the first to go to jail” which speaks to the power and artist holds in communicating messages about their times.

Keywords: Donald ‘Jackie’ Hinkson, art, artist, Caribbean, Trinidad, line and form, color, light, society, culture, environment, picturesque, issues.
INTRODUCTION

Title of Thesis:

Cultural Desensitization; A study based on Donald ‘Jackie’ Hinkson’s “Plain to See” exhibition.

“Jackie, we can’t afford to be painting pictures of boats and beaches. That’s just wrong!”

“Why is that wrong?”

“Because we have too many serious social issues in the Caribbean! People are being exploited by the system. Neo-colonialism is alive and well. Poverty is rampant. Racism is rampant. It is the duty of the Caribbean artist to confront these issues. You are evading them with these pretty drawings of broken–down houses and sailing boats and people strolling on beaches!”

I smiled, “This is the way I see my world. Maybe it isn’t your way. You’re interested in themes inspired by ethnicity and in a high level of abstraction and so on. That’s valid for you, but I see Trinidad and Tobago through a different vision.”

-Extracted from Jackie Hinkson’s ‘What Things Are True: A Memoir of Becoming an Artist’, page 303

Based on previous research on Donald ‘Jackie’ Hinkson’s work, there is considerable discussion on the artist’s use of medium and expression of subject matter, such as; the strong
presence of billboards in society, the play on gender roles and also the relationship between people and the environment. Despite previous research it does not delve into how the artist addresses social and cultural issues by his manipulation of elements and principles of design. Donald ‘Jackie’ Hinkson discusses his first solo in Trinidad in 1974. It was an exhibition of watercolors, he says “I hoped I had introduced into the work, however subconsciously, subtler levels of emotion and meaning... The overall response was positive. But again, there were objections.” Hinkson’s work in its own way addresses issues the artist himself sees, and is aware of. Jackie’s work embraces a picturesque that alludes themes in a very real way, capturing the lives of objects and people. On the 6th-20th, September 2014 Donald ‘Jackie’ Hinkson exhibited a body of work entitled ‘Plain to See’, at 101 Art Gallery, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. This body of work comprised of ‘picturesque’ scenes of objects, people, places and events captured that are plain to see, yet, carry more intellectual weight than the conscious mind can ‘see’. George Mandler states, “social situations modify basic human characteristics,” characteristics that when captured can be analyzed and understood. These works in particular; Headlines Loud Explosion 1, Headlines Loud Explosion 2, Headlines Family Wants Answers 3 and Beetham Mix, are renditions of the reality of Trinidadian Life, which speak louder than the surface representation and capture human action and reaction to stimuli. This body of work comments subtly on cultural blindness; the simplicities of change and stagnancies that we fail to realize or understand, and cultural de-sensitization; the diminished emotional responsiveness to a negative, aversive or positive stimulus after repeated exposure to it. Donald ‘Jackie’ Hinkson’s figurative carry a strong symbolic application to society and culture; his works are not just an arbitrary surface representation of ‘Trinidadian life’.
Culture can be defined as a manifestation of human intellectual achievements, the arts, music, literature and philosophy, more so the ideas, customs and social behavior of a particular people or society (Merriam-Webster, 2016). In ‘Plain to See’ the rendering of how culture is perceived brings to the forefront things that the populous have grown accustomed to. Cultural blindness, according to writers (Bonilla-Silva, 1998; Leeca, et al, 1998) “may parallel institutional and/or cultural racism”. Leeca, et al (1998) goes on to explain that being culturally blind means that one ignores cultural strengths, and blames victims for their problems and encourages assimilation. Dr. E. Beverly Young regards cultural blindness as a systematic anti theocentric disregard (S.A.D), and how this may influence how we provide services. Sapir Handelman discusses the simplicity of the human psyche and how easily it can be manipulated. Handelman makes note that by the use of environmental and mental stimuli, the mind can be made to do, or think what is shown is correct, for example significant changes in the environment that go unacknowledged. For context, Hinkson was interviewed and it can be understood that he derives from simpler times of Trinidad, seeing the inevitability of change along the course of time. Hinkson has experienced cultural change firsthand, and now (2018) he sees it as neither negative nor positive, but this is the reality of the circumstance.

Hinkson’s collection of works hold content significance to Trinidadian society, of these works he is best known for his expression in watercolor pigments, but also spans across a spectrum of mediums that no other local artist has achieved in such quantity. Hinkson in personal interview with the researcher states that he analyzes critically his surroundings and objects and recreates this, not merely capturing the image, but etching the reality in which we live in the works. In making his art he questions whether or not people within the society even needs to think these simplicities through to understand the ever-changing circumstances around them.
Hinkson in his process gives “focus on how we are rather than what we are” (Heidegger, 1985). His conclusion to his speculation is that these are the realities in our society and these are subject that one necessarily does not need to look at. With relevance to his artwork Hinkson discloses himself as an artist into subtlety, nuance, and suggestion, his works reflect this in the ways he addresses social issues, culture, and the environment.

Hinkson makes it absolutely clear in saying, “I don’t put down anything unless it’s working compositionally” and stresses heavily on this. Pieces carry their weight through the “iconic” forms, lines, color contrast and lighting work simultaneously. Ironically, Hinkson talks about things working together but also makes reference to how difficult it is to maintain a sense of sanity and stability from a place where “we are surrounded”, as he says, by things that will bother even the most stable of minds. He makes it evident that “under there somewhere”, it will affect individuals, whether they accept it or not, it exists even if we do not see it, and it is completely up to the viewer to decide if it is negative or not.

Hinkson dives into how he approaches his paintings and decides what he emphasizes and suppresses as the piece grows. “I see art as more emotional than intellectual” was a comment that resonated during this part of the discussion, as he expands on his perspective of how views are made, and as correctly stated, “vision is imprecise”. In such subject matter, there is realistically too many things to claim in one perspective, and he struggles with “How do you work that down?” something that his works are a statement of, the stateless. Hinkson admits to himself that he is working with a vision that can never truly be, and because it is as such he makes it something that best resembles his interpretation of his nuance, his subtlety, and his suggestion. Hinkson’s pieces shed a sense of newness on the subject matter, creating a sense of “here look at this” yet that it is not what he is saying, he simply gives a suggestion into what he sees, although
accepting the fact that “vision is imprecise” and showing this is difficult. This body of work, ‘Plain to See’ is supported heavily by; Form and Line, Use of Color and Manipulation of Light. These aspects aid in carrying the subtle messages what Hinkson hints towards, and which shows his experience in techniques, principles and elements of design alongside intellectual and emotional comprehension of society and culture.
LITERATURE REVIEW

In entering the research, Francis Jeanson critically analyzing in “SARTRE and the Problem of Morality”, Jean-Paul Sartre’s existentialism philosophy, was a crucial landmark in understanding the context in which human’s function in society. Jeanson delves into the comprehension of the actions of man and why man has developed the way they have in relationship to culture and the society. Relating this to the study, this has in turn shown the subjectivity of each individual to understanding and reacting to the stimuli they observe and experience. In using Sartre in “Existentialism and Humanism” alongside Francis Jeanson, the links of human morals are broken due to the selfishness of humanity, and the need to find a space and reason to exist. Sartre expands on the need for humans to find reason to exist within a space and add to that space. Poppy Evans and Mark Thomas, in “Exploring the Elements of Design,” have brought forward an approach to stabilize research, theory and application of this alongside the relevance of industrial psychology in daily life, and how these correlate with audiences. Evans and Thomas has aided the study in opening a door that brings into perspective, the understanding of psychological manipulation in art forms that guide and identify with audiences, as well as emphasize and suppress what the creator desires. Sapir Handelman in “Thought Manipulation: The Use and Abuse of Psychological Trickery” has discussed the fragility of the human mind to specific stimuli. These stimuli can cause individuals to make decisions that they believe are right, for instance the provocation of billboards to ‘need’ certain goods and services. In tying these theories and philosophy together, George Mandler in “Human Nature Explored” has brought to the discussion the reasoning behind actions of man, actions driven by carnal and selfish desires that are stored as representational units in the structure called the human mind.
This explains in turn the reason for human interaction within spaces and also with their social and cultural relationship. Dr. E Beverly Young focuses on spiritual, intellectual, and emotional dimensions of humankind in “Social Change through Training and Education: Volume Iii- The ‘Clothing’ for Effective Policing: Cultural Competency, Spirituality and Ethics”. This study has aided in the understanding of aspects of human relationships, their values within society and how they differ. This study highlights the way in which Hinkson leaves room for interpretation, by taking into context the ideology of different perspectives.

Hinkson himself joins the conversation in text with “What Things Are True: A Memoir of Becoming an Artist” in which Hinkson discusses his endeavors as an emerging artist, and how his concerns with his works and situations has led to his changes. In discussing changes, the extract starting the introduction was a pivotal point in Hinkson’s exploration as an artist who critically analyzes his social, cultural and environmental surroundings and renders them in a manner that can best be understood universally. Tim Samara in his text “Design Elements: A Graphic Style Manual: Understanding the Rules and Knowing When to Break them”, the author discusses how design elements can be manipulated and understood to gain the best audience reaction. In understanding this content it becomes more evident, reasoning behind Hinkson’s rendering of works and why they have been done in such a manner. In conjunction with this, Kendall Buster and Paula Crawford in “The Critique Handbook, A Sourcebook and Survival Guide”, the discussion of works, considering their relevance, and how to critique them giving fair analysis on how to understand, what one does not yet understand about an artwork. John Fiske adds to the critical analysis method in “UNDERSTANDING POPULAR CULTURE” and brings forth the context of the factors influencing popular culture, and how individuals deal with it and its changes. Fiske discusses artifacts found in modern day society and how it affects the
life of individuals through the messages and meanings it carries, altering people through manipulation. An example is the mass production of vehicles and homes, this subconsciously sets a standard that, this is what one needs to feel comfortable and be accepted.

As Marguerite Helmers enters the research in “The Elements of Visual Analysis- The elements of Composition Series”, Helmers opens the doors of how the use and abuse of design has influenced understanding and perception of art as well as objects in society. Helmers has addressed art critically, and within context that explains the dynamics of interpretation and application of this knowledge. With the application of this knowledge, and Dr. Marsha Pearce’s review in her article “In Our Light: Hinkson shows new works in Plain to See”, the understanding of context and the artist comes into perspective as she discusses the significance of the work in its entirety to the Trinidadian context. Dr. Pearce talks about the exhibition and unveils the relevance of considering aspects of the works, questioning if there is more to the subject matter than the ‘picturesque’. In discussing the exhibition, Dr. Pearce has highlighted the importance of the communication of local content to its audience as well as for audience to look beyond the ‘surface’ and understand a deeper meaning. In a thesis “An Analysis of the Work of Donald ‘Jackie’ Hinkson”, put forth by Dr. Shalini Singh, Singh raises the dedication and diligence of an experienced artist who has captured an evolving physical and social landscape. Singh has discussed the accomplishments of Hinkson, as well as an in depth critical analysis of his collection in relation to his compatriots, in the local, regional and international, past and present. Dr. Singh, in her study has explored Hinkson as an artist who has clearly made advancements in the art world through his manipulation of medium and subject matter. Dr. Singh has made considerable research, however there is still room for expansion on how Hinkson uses principles and elements of design to discuss the social and cultural state of Trinidad. In closing,
Elizabeth Grosz in “Chaos, Territory, Art-Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth” reinforces the psychological strength of artists, and their ability to tap into “something excessive, unpredictable, and lowly.” Grosz has underlined art as the medium in which the ‘natural and social worlds function’ (Pp.78), and how these are addressed in artworks are completely subjective and context driven. Grosz in this research, has renowned Landscape as having visionary character as it makes the invisible visible, which can be used in adding further intellectual value to the body of works in Hinkson’s “Plain to See” exhibition.
METHODOLOGY

This research is a case study methodology on the body of work exhibited by Donald ‘Jackie’ Hinkson entitled ‘Plain to See’. Through an intensive analysis of the artist’s craft, personal interview alongside data collection of documents and texts, this has shown that the artist’s works carry significant application to the society and culture of Trinidad. The study is an exploration of the series Donald ‘Jackie Hinkson presented; “Plain to See” on the 6th-20th September, 2014 at 101 Art Gallery, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago.

The works presented are scenes captured at locations locally to the artist, possessing critical orientation of content and identifiable cultural reference. Hinkson exhibited the body of work rendering his ‘vision’ of the reality in which we live, one that goes beyond the surface representation of what seems to be the ‘picturesque’ of island life. The research aims to expand on the genuine intellect of an artist whose works goes deeper than painting what is observed. This body of work shows the influential aspects that guide, and subconsciously govern the minds of those in society. Hinkson highlights social issues that are relevant and overlooked as the irony of things that are plain to see, are the subjects hardest to identify.

The thesis required careful critical analysis of a selection of pieces that carries the strongest message of things ‘Plain to See’, that are directly linked to cultural blindness. Cultural blindness is the lack of awareness to objects in society that has influenced or conditioned thinking paradigms. Hinkson talked extensively in a personal interview about himself and his body of work, regarding it as his way of suggestion, to say ‘look at these things’, not as a commentator but rather the subtle voice that beckons to consider what is seen. Hinkson’s rich
past is immensely linked to his decision in subject matter, his works imply the inevitable journey of time and change. As a young artist to now (2018), Hinkson has had the privilege of travelling the world and experiencing various cultures and environments. From this, he has made careful respect to the atmosphere of Caribbean light. Hinkson’s palette has taken into consideration ‘Caribbean light’, and its beauty. He expresses this through his years of experience with mediums to achieve a uniqueness of character and manipulation of canvas. Hinkson addresses light in his works with reverence as it acts as the driving force that complements his work. In his works Hinkson’s use of line and form have given weight to his subject matter, a steady deliberation of content. Hinkson creates a mix of line and form that create simple yet strong rendering of detail in his pieces. Alongside this, use of color has played into the emphasis and suppression of his subject matter. Hinkson’s skillful use of these factors have been vital into highlighting the issues behind the ‘picturesque’. Hinkson has brought himself to the understanding that there are too many things to claim in one perspective, and that vision is imprecise. He works to create a mediator, an entity that bridges that disconnect in what he perceives and the perception of others, yet admits that this is a vision that can never truly be.

Interviews were a crucial resource in formulating proper analysis of the art pieces. Information derived from texts regarding visual analysis, art, critiquing art and thesis projects was incorporated to ensure stable understanding of context and to also solidify the direction of the thesis.
“Man has to make his existence at every single moment”

- José Ortega y Gasset, “SARTRE and the Problem of Morality”.

Ortega y Gasset’s sentiment alludes to human need to be seen, accepted and understood which can be juxtaposed against the use of line and form in every work of art. Every marking has its own meaning and value that progresses to the overall composition. In art line is an element of design that contours, outlines, and defines shape with its use of weight, be it thick, think, straight, curvy, or sharp. Form is another element of design that describes a two dimensional space generated by use of line. Line and form work simultaneously to create artwork, then is aided by the other elements of design. Hinkson in his rendering of the subject matter, uses lead and charcoal to lay down the orientation of his piece before using his pigments. Although he layers and paints in washes, his lead and charcoal lines remain ever present in his work. These lines and forms are manipulated to suppress and emphasize aspects of the piece. Hinkson's versatility with line and form, highlights and hints to question representation behind the subject matter that is ‘visible’. Hinkson has used line and form skillfully to render societal and cultural issues that fit subtly into everyday spectacle.
Figure 1.1 ‘HEADLINES- Loud Explosion 1’

In Figure 1.1 ‘HEADLINES- Loud Explosion 1’, Hinkson has used lines and linear forms heavily in this piece, which contrasts very powerfully against the radial focal points in the sky, as well as the vegetation in the foreground and background. Horizontal and vertical lines and linear forms add a beautiful and simplistic balance to the nightscape. The arithmetical use of these lines and forms adds to a sense of order that is present in the environment that gives way to the idea that it is peaceful. These lines and forms are used to convey order, in turn also highlights the
billboard and the aesthetic of the male body. Hinkson arouses the mind with questioning amidst this serenity, what it means to be a ‘man’ and also why is such subject matter in this context? Figure 2.1 uses clearly defined lines in the aesthetic of the male body to insinuate that ‘this is what we are shown is acceptable’, and such content has also taken root near the living quarters of individuals. In the use of lines, the artist also raises the question, where do the steps lead alongside the use of the billboard? Does the artist suggest within the space there is male dominance? Or is there something which being at the top are representations of masculinity? George Mandler explains that humans build upon already existing knowledge, and our actions and reactions to stimuli are subjective to personal experience. Relating this to Figure 1.1, the connection with seeing clearly defined lines make it easier for individuals to grasp a concept and also they tend to gravitate to the norms and values when it is seen often. The contrast between the horizontal, vertical, radial, curvilinear and straight lines and forms creates a narrative that stretches beyond a mere nightscape.
With its dominant use of organic forms and curvilinear lines, Figure 1.2 evokes a naturalness and eases the eye into a narrative, yet still incorporating the linear lines and forms that create the manmade environment. The free flow of organic line and form in figure 1.2 adds to the ‘picturesque’ which is an ironic twist to the subject matter. The strong use of directorial horizontal and vertical lines in the background creates the underlying idea of order, which is suppressed by the heavy concentration of organic matter. Figure 1.2 highlights the loss of order that these strong linear lines and forms covey when curvilinear lines and forms are brought into
the foreground. This piece with its use of line and form, has shown the loss of order in a perceived environment of serenity due to the influence of ‘man’, the entity which was given meaning in Figure 1.1. Figure 1.2 being the second commentary in this three part series, builds upon the notion that the influence of man is necessary within the ordered society. But what exactly is this role ‘man’ is to fulfill? Who sets this standard and why? Hinkson uses form and line to hint to the subtle aspects in the eyes of the public that alter human understanding and perception.

“If there are monsters in our organized society, it is because there are ‘monster-mongers’, peddlers of thought who cling to the deformities or, if necessary, fabricate them, in order to feed the industry of sensationalism and fakery which is their livelihood.”

- Francis Jeanson, ‘SARTRE and the Problem of Morality’

From this quote, the contrast between heavy curvilinear and organic lines and forms (humans), has overpowered and suppressed the order that the linear horizontal and vertical lines (societal order) has been trying to maintain.
Heavily influenced by graphics, Figure 1.3 uses linear and organic line and form to create a narrative and bold definite text. Hinkson repeats a cropped version of lines and forms in the background, whilst incorporating strong organic lines and forms in the foreground that masks the order and serene background. These bold texts, tells the narrative as well as, gives context to Figures 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3; an ongoing contrast of lines and forms that are symbolic of order within the society, chaos, people within the space. With reference to Francis Jeanson’s quote,
explaining the ideology that those causing turmoil, is as a direct result of an intentional stimuli by those exploiting weaknesses. This is directly enforced by the use of text and its context explaining the circumstance in Figures 1.1 and 1.2. In using semi abstracted organic lines and forms to depict authorities, the issue of corruption is brought into the conversation. According to Marguerite Helmers (1961) “Each visual image or each object that we respond to visually uses certain elements of design to convey its message”. These entities suppress the dynamically portrayed individuals in the environment, whose form is still somewhat defined. However, when analyzing the figures in uniforms, despite being composed of these abstracted lines and forms they align themselves with the vertical axis of the piece. This orientation scheme implies they represent the order that the background objects imply about the context. The use of line and form in Figure 1.3 explores the contrast between those who exist within the ordered society with those that are to keep the order within it and the relationship they share within the space.
“Art is not a self-contained activity in the sense that it is disconnected from the ways in which the natural and social worlds function”

- Elizabeth Grosz, “Chaos, Territory, Art-deleuze and the framing of the earth” (1893)
Figure 1.4 houses a mass of linear lines and forms that create a bordered and stratified background environment. Lines and forms within the backdrop of this figurative give a sense of being bordered off, that these straight lines, solid linear forms and defined texts keep an ‘order’ and the organisms within the space relate accordingly. When considering the use of linear lines and forms, symbolic of order we see the figure riding a bike, strong lines and geometric form that hints to the idea that only when using what can border, can one truly move freely. According to Prof. Dan Eastmond, “We all live at the entwined boundary of the natural and artificial”, a quote that supports the understanding of the lives of the individuals who dwell within a heavily artificial space. In Figure 1.4 the similarities between the female form in the foreground in the red top and that of the female in the yellow top in the billboard suggests the heavy influence of billboards in the space. From Figure 1.4 it implies that living among these visuals influence choice, especially in that of bodily image and representation among women and their objectification. In the rendering of the piece, Hinkson clearly highlights the use of the headphones by strong curvilinear lines on the lady in red and makes another reference to the advertising and that listening to music creates better moments in life that are more fun, fulfilling and influential.
CHAPTER TWO

USE OF COLOR

“As an element, color heightens the practical, cultural, psychological and expressive dimensions of any visual image.”

-Poppy Evans and Mark A. Thomas, ‘Exploring the Elements of DESIGN’

Poppy Evans and Mark Thomas terms color as the intrinsic hues found in light and pigment, expanding on this concept they state that it communicates meaning immediately without the use of words. In physics, color is described as a property that produces sensations on the eye as a result of the reflection or emission of light. Kendal Buster alongside Paula Crawford bring forward the notion that color acts not only as a formal element, but also as content, emotion, symbolic and as index (2007). Color is a complicated element of design in art that is complicated to understand, without understanding the science behind how color is perceived and its three main elements: hue, value and intensity. The name of a pure color is known as hue, the relative lightness or darkness it is known as value and intensity is the dullness or brightness if the color.

Hinkson’s color palette is carefully blended and considered in relation to the rendering of his pieces, each piece is given its own signature in terms of its color palette. Color is employed so that it works compositionally with the subject matter be it representationally as well as non-representationally. Color works regardless, in ways that evoke emotion to viewers, acts as
symbols that meaning is ascribed and also being indexed which is given context (Buster and Crawford, 2007).

Color interpretation, although subjective, carries visual weight in painting. Hinkson makes use of his colors so as to convey subliminal meaning but also add to the ‘picturesque’ of the scene. Hinkson uses color to emphasize as well as suppress aspects of a piece that will best convey the subject matter.
Figure 2.1 ‘HEADLINES- Loud Explosion 1’

Figure 2.1 is a composition that uses intense hues of yellow bursts against a purple tinted deep blue sky, representational of an impending nightfall on a hillside community. Figure 2.1 on its far right uses deep browns and metallic blues that shows a galvanized wall that is directly opposite to a sand colored steps leading to a fuchsia color building. These colors in contrast to the grays within the road and deep greens in the foliage suggest that these simple objects contain a great deal of content to the composition. Alongside the use of contrasting colors within the billboard that lay in front of the murky greenery highlights the issue of what a man looks like,
also that they ‘man up’. In highlighting the use of billboard and the artist brings up the use of skin color as a means of being masculine, a tone that can also means to say that the male of that skin tone needs to ‘man up’. In use of color the manipulation of the headlights of the car raise the issue of, why is there a vehicle under the instigation to ‘man up’? Is there a correlation between owning a vehicle and masculinity? The artist also even means to suggest also that questioning the location of such a sign, why is it located in that area? Why is it close to residents? All these are subtle inquiries into the context of the social environment. Hinkson closely incorporates Heidegger’s (1985) belief in the studying of how humans are rather than what they are in the context of the representation of communities and advertisements that take the attention of those who reside there. With reference to this, according to Marguerite Helmers (1961) “At a very broad level, then, we can say that images are uses to express attitudes towards subjects in the world” which leaves room for the understandings of color of these object in the hindsight of the audience.
This work employs the use of similar colors in Figure 2.1, specifically the steps, sky, greenery and galvanized wall. This use of repetition is suggestive of a continuing of a narrative that started in Figure 2.1. The symbolism behind the statements of these colors within an environment that has to reuse old galvanized sheeting and steps unbarred leading to simplistic houses atop a hillside. In continuing the conversation it can be noted that use of shades of brown is engaged in representation of the skin tone in all individuals which speaks to the afro-Caribbean individual who lay lifeless on the floor. In making note of this, looking back at Figure
2.1 we see a connection with the billboard and the portrayal of masculinity and being a ‘man’ is something seen every day in this community. Figure 2.2 highlights the two figures in white and shows their importance in handling the situation, they stand as authoritative figures who hold a sense of purity and cleanliness in handling the matter as if they partake in an ‘honest’ work. Ironically these figures in white stand nonchalantly as the body lay lifeless amidst the crowd relates to Francis Jeanson’s commentary on “the nothingness of human life” in his study of morality. Another connection with color that can be made is the similarity to the figure being the figure in white who holds a gun and his color is somewhat identical to the inside of the vehicle in which the dead body appears to be going in to. This rendition leaves an atmosphere of mystery as to the turmoil going on and the concern for what has happened by the way the area was quarantined by the use of heavy yellow lining. Also the casual colors of clothing on the spectators and the individual on the roadway as if they have just exited their homes, gives room to question the relationship to the individuals to the space and how they are connected to this man in the pool of blood.
Figure 2.3 ‘HEADLINES- Family wants Answers 3’

Figure 2.3 makes use of graphic design style as it incorporated boldly printed text identifiable to the Trinidadian context as the “Trinidad Express Newspaper”. Ironically enough this bold use of color, the white on black and red on white tells more of the piece than the painting depicting the riot to the bottom left. The spectacle to the bottom left is a scene familiar to Figures 2.1 and 2.2 as it continues the narrative within the community, more so with added law enforcement in blacks and greys as well as an army officer in camouflage print. From the pieces before there is a consistency with skin tone all alluding to billboard seen in Figure 2.1,
and addressing the idea of the male bravado. This also brings to question the women who are always in the background as if the male species are the center of the fray and have something to prove or display. The use of the black police uniform that is a symbol of peace and order is closely related to the black and grey tyres as if to hint lighting them on fire is as to rebel against the forces meant to enforce law. Ironically enough black in this sense is seen as a power holder as opposed to a peacekeeper, even in that of the army officer, the colors are murky and distorted as if to imply mischievousness.

With reference to the piece the most striking feature can be understood as the text which literally speak louder than the image presented. This use of color also highlights the fact that there is priority for the story over the actual spectacle, even as the bold orange beverage against the pale green in the top right corner attracts our gaze. This use of color hints to the strong influence of advertisements in the society and a culture that sees social issues secondary as is evident on the front page of the newspaper. In the words of Elizabeth Grosz (1853) “Painting addresses problems about the relations between the body and the earth, between corporeal and terrestrial forces”. Figure 2.3 utilizes color to fully show the problems that lie not only in society but those responsible for helping the society address it and know what is affecting the environment and their culture.
With reference to Elizabeth Grosz (1853) in Figure 1.4, she states that; “Art is not a self-contained activity in the sense that it is disconnected from the ways in which the natural and social worlds function.” In accordance with this the artist subtlety utilizes color to show the individuals on the foreground are closely related in color scheme to the galvanized walls and houses. This color versatility highlights the issue that these people could be deeply rooted to their environment as if immovable. The color tones in the built environment also appears murky and
aged, as if barely able to protect. Juxtaposed against the built environment we see the bright sand like floor, evidence of consistent heat and thoroughfare as well as the bright blue sky resident clouds and the bright green tree in the back. The artist contrasts between the skin tones in the billboard to those in reality, as if implying those lighter make it into the literally ‘higher’ strata of society and enjoy the benefits. Another aspect of color usage is also in the manner in which the artist uses a palette to marry the stand for the billboard to the environment and how it is deeply woven into the fabric of the houses and social space. Figure 3.4 is titled ‘Beetham Mix’, locally known to Trinidad as an area where poverty and those who reside are categorized into the less appealing side of the nation. This use of color aptly relates to the environmental and social conditions as well as a representational approach to the underlying environmental and social issues that lay in the context of the subject matter of this piece.
"Moral propositions have scarcely any common meaning from one human being to another. The meaning we give others acts- his work for example- testifies more about us than about him. His essential attitude may remain unknown to us forever”

-Jean-Paul Sartre, ‘SARTRE and the Problem of Morality’.

From this we are brought to understand that the perception of things observed are held in subjectivity to each individual, based on experiences. Hinkson in this series incorporates beautiful manipulation of light in his artworks with relevance to serious issues in a commentary of social, cultural and environmental subject matter. Hinkson paints utilizing the white of his canvas to create the aesthetic of this Caribbean lighting that a Trinidadian or Caribbean individual does not realize till one physically experiences foreign environments. Hinkson ironically uses light to bring to the forefront things in the physical light that are not given acknowledgement. This use of light when not understood by the Trinidadian or Caribbean spectator, creates a subconscious identification between individual and artwork. Tim Samara conveys the idea that the concentration of extreme light and extreme dark in separate areas will create an explosion of luminosity and undercurrents of darkness. Samara concludes that countering this with subtler values will inevitably make the distinctions between light and dark features more noticeable. This rendering of materials comes from years of experience with rendering ones materials and also ones observations. The use of light in his capturing of vision
evokes the representational essence of literal and metaphorical, a technique that speaks silently in relationship to the entire piece. Hinkson skillfully conveys what he observes in a setting that is lit, how does one represent such subject matter in such a context? This process is grown from exposure to the environment, creating a lighting that shows the reality of the space, he shows that this is the reality in which is lived in the Trinidadian context. With reference to a selection of pieces from Hinkson’s ‘Plain to See’ exhibition, the manipulation of light gives allusion to a ‘picturesque’.
Dr. Marsha Pearce in her review of Hinkson’s ‘Plain to See’ exhibition discusses it as a plea for the viewer to look beyond the ‘surface’, and stop the dismissal of decorative as symbolism carries the brunt of ‘decorative’ images. Figure 3.1 has a subject matter that is addressed by the use of light in the nighttime alluding to a dark issue that the artist wishes to bring into the ‘light’. The artist manipulates his medium in a way that establishes a sense of ‘light’ in the Trinidadian atmosphere identifiable to the artist’s local context. Hinkson uses light specifically to subtly address a subject matter within the ‘picturesque’, something that is see yet hidden to the viewer.
unless inspected critically. “Images communicate: they motivate, persuade or warn” (Helmers, 1961) and in its own right Figure 3.1 has communicated such a claim with its use of ‘light’ in a dark setting. Figure 3.1 has brought light into a physically dark context about an issue that is never brought to the foreground, the ideology to ‘man up’, a recurring across the chapters under the use of line and form and color contrast. Light has also taken shape into the ideology of skin tone and questions also why has a light brown skin tone has been employed. The artist uses the light source to give an image deep into the background recognition as well as a hillside community questioning connections to masculinity. Within such an environment it raises the question also; why is this space dark and needs to be lit within this context? Manipulation of light has raised an issue within the dark in a very real manner, more so within a ‘picturesque’ of Trinidadian space.
Continuing a conversation of the space within Figure 3.1, 3.2 has altered the angle and light within the context adding a twilight mix into a lit street. With reference to the influence of light there lay two significant sources; on the hill as well as a gentle glow on the opposing left side directly on the tree. This use of light on the housing leaves a questioning as to the significance of this house, why such an architectural style and what lies at the top of those steps. The usage of light on the left has aided in emphasizing the presence of the figures in all white while the women in the back and police officer are secondary almost married to the environment. The
The artist has manipulated light in such a way that the body on the floor is a matter ‘in the dark’ and those handling the situation should be seen, but why? The artist distributes light only on the figures in the foreground and to the house in the background, symbolic of a relationship to a hidden matter and a relationship not yet explored within the figurative. This lighting is identifiable to those whom experience the late into early Caribbean hours or even early waking hours. The use of this lighting alongside what is lit shows a disconnection within the space between the individuals and also a tension of those in the ‘dark’. In addressing the use of light it can be understood that the artist suggests that these aspects are subject matter that need to be seen in the relation to the whole and now what is merely captured in the context of the artwork.
In dealing with Figure 3.3 it must be broken down into its two components; graphic design and fine art, before being understood as a whole entity. In terms of Figure 3.3’s fine art aspect, the image on the bottom right is devoid of text, also in contrast to Figure 3.2 there is no concentration of light source on specific areas. Figure 3.3 has been undertaken using an approach which creates a sense of daytime lighting alluding to everything coming into the light as all figures within the narrative can be seen clearly. As opposed to Figure 3.1 which was a darkened nightscape and Figure 3.2 with its twilight atmosphere, Figure 3.3 in its entirety evokes the
suggestion that everything has been made clear and details have been given. Figure 3.3 conveys the social message that alongside its previous pieces, it takes a critical eye and analysis to comprehend the inner workings of the space in which the social cultural and environmental zones meet.

In considering the graphic design aspect of Figure 3.3 it can be understood that clear and bold manipulation of light in an advertisement is necessary. The artist ensures alongside the fully lit or focused image within the design border the design itself conveys the same message that there is a plain and fully open narrative behind the darkness of Figures 3.1 and 3.2. In the rendering of light within this piece there is a gradual change that suggests the revelation of issues by the artist’s hand and how deeply these are interwoven into the society, culture and the environment.
Figure 3.4 ‘Beetham Mix’

Figure 3.4 achieves a midday lighting which is evident in its tone and the manner that responds to the eye. This scene taken from the Trinidad Beetham, an area prone to sunlight due to its lack of foliage and low lying structures, the tallest objects found are its billboards. In the context of the piece, upon the space the light shines down heavily raising the true skin tones and colors of the space. In the manipulation of light, it raises the question, why are these people
being brought into the foreground and what drives the artist to convey a blistering heat in this particular social, cultural and environmental context.

In Figure 3.4 the intensity of light and rendering of skin tones gives allusion to an issue of ethnicity and classism, a suggestion of why is is this skin color lay below that of the lighter tone with the billboard? “Realism actually involves reasonably enough, a need to portray the figures in landscape at work” (Helmers, 1961). In bringing this subject matter into light the understanding of social, cultural and environmental issues are left open to suggestion considering the manner in which the artist addresses the content.
CONCLUSION

Donald ‘Jackie’ Hinkson in ‘Plain to See’ has brought forth a standard of painting that has been aesthetically pleasing to the eyes and also contains rich content in relation to the Trinidad context. Issues such as; masculinity, corruption, classism, colorism, gender stereotypes, culture and the environment in relation to humankind are addressed by the use of line and form, color and manipulation of light. Hinkson’s work is influential in its rendering of how it suggests ‘consider why this is the way it is’ and not just an arbitrary surface representation of the ‘picturesque.’ The artist goes beyond to show the multitude of problems this ‘picturesque’ contains. In exhibiting his works the artist has gone under scrutiny for his aversion to the issues behind the Trinidad space. However, in his own way he has in fact addressed issues regarding the social and cultural climate of Trinidad.

Hinkson has skillfully employed the use of manipulation of medium and technique to in his own way, speak to the reality that is not seen or even not acknowledged but exist. In highlighting the reality it speaks to a level of cultural-desensitization within the space that this artist wishes to show. Cultural-desensitization is the factor that stops societies from fixing underlying problems that can drastically affect its following generations. The less sensitized one is about social, cultural or environmental topics the more likely it is that this subject will go on unaddressed and affect someone or a larger group. The way Hinkson has brought up issues that are directly in the line of sight of the society who do not understand and notice goes to show that irony of how well these subject matters have integrated themselves into the space. This research
has brought to the table a new understanding of a body of work local to Trinidad with their very own Donald ‘Jackie’ Hinkson.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


APPENDIX

Questions used in interview with Donald ‘Jackie’ Hinkson;

● What influences your choice in subject matter?
● Why do you choose to focus on this?
● Are you telling your audience a narrative?
● If not a narrative then what? What is your stance?
● What is it you want to capture within this space?
● Where does this passion for capturing aspects of Trinidad come from?
● What do you see in the society and culture of Trinidad?
● How has art for you changed over the course of your career?
● How has this change influenced your work and you?
● With reference with your ‘Plain to See’ exhibition what can you say you wanted to capture?
● What was your intentions behind such a body of work?
● Is there messages you wished for your audiences to receive?
● What issues did you inquire into when analyzing your subject matter?
● What is your art making process?
● How married is your process to your rendering of subject matter
• What was your expectations of this collection?

• Are you pleased with what people received from this?

• What peaks your interest in the subject matter that the audience has not grasped?

• Do you believe it is a positive or negative that exists within the context of the space?

• Moving forward with all the critical mass you have received, what are your thoughts on the exhibition and its relevance to Trinidad?

• Do you feel comfortable with your finished pieces? If no, why not?