

DELINEATING THE JOS BURNT MARKET IN COLOURS.**Ephraim Dankyes****Abstract**

This paper aims to explore the vibrant history, significance, and aftermath of the Jos Burnt Market, focusing on the role that colours play in its delineation. The Jos Burnt Market, located in Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria, has been a central hub of commerce and cultural exchange for many years. Tragically, it suffered a devastating fire in February 2002, leading to its devastation and degeneration. Throughout this paper, we will delve into the historical context, cultural significance, and the role of colours in marking the resilience and revival of the Jos Burnt Market.

Keywords: Delineating, Jos Burnt Market, resilience, aesthetics

Introduction

There is a 'beauty' within which challenges the conventional definition of a place of burnt, by exploring the aesthetic qualities that can be found within the destruction of the Jos burnt main market. The beauty in a destruction is an intriguing concept that challenges our conventional definition of beauty. It evokes a paradoxical sense of fascination, as we witness the aesthetic qualities that often emerge from the devastation and ruins left behind. One of such examples is the Jos burnt main market, a place once bustling with activity and commerce, now transformed into a hauntingly "beautiful" scene. The destruction

caused by fire leaves an indelible mark on any structure, often reducing it to charred remains and ashes. Yet, there is a certain allure to the destruction that can be found within these burnt walls. The blackened facade and the traces of soot offer a powerful visual narrative, telling the story of an event that forever altered the landscape.

The Jos market became the hub for the sale of all sorts of commodities, until it was gutted by fire on 12th February, 2002 by unknown cause. Several Administrations in Plateau State have made failed attempts to rebuild the market. Then on 20th May 2014, a twin bomb blast occurred around the market and dragged

the market to its current state of dilapidation. (Daily Trust, 2022). In the aftermath of chaos, amidst the ruins and remnants, there stands a haunting symbol of resilience and destruction of the fallen walls of the Jos burnt market. Like a wounded warrior clawing against the ravages of time, these scorched remnants bear witnesses to the fragility of human endeavours, while whispering tales of loss, despair, and the potential for rebirth. There is also psychological impact of witnessing the destruction of a familiar and essential space such as the Jos main market. A viewer can emotionally connect with the artworks that portray the feelings of loss, desolation and hope in them. This paper is dealing with the burnt market as a disaster that has befallen the market, and has decapitated all existing glory and beauty that the market had. The burnt market now represents the destruction caused by the fire. The fallen walls in a deeper interrogation, symbolize the crumbling of structures and the

breaking down of established systems. This metaphorically represents the loss of livelihood, community and stability of the economy.



Figure 1: The Jos Main Market (Terminus) before it was burnt. **Source;** on google www.facebook.com

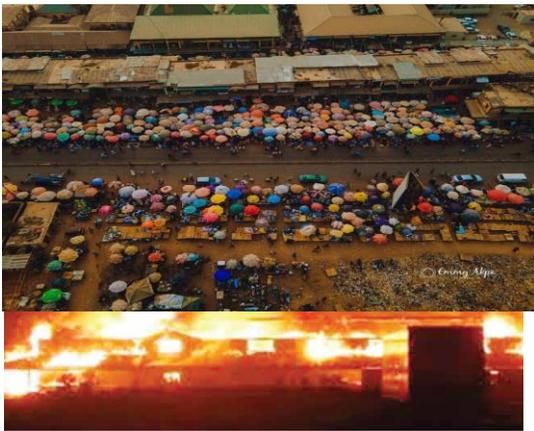
The photographs in figures 1-5, presented the systematic diagrams of the unfortunate journey to the Jos Main Market inferno. In Figure 5, titled, The Jos Main Market, Terminus, the current site, the burnt site presents the artist with plethora of ideas that are inspired from the place of burnt, ruins and relic. In the face of destruction, nature sometimes takes over, reclaiming its space in a captivating display of resilience and rejuvenation. Over time, you may witness the growth of resilient plant life and the emergence of wildflowers in the midst of the

ruins. These splashes of colour and life paint an ethereal picture against the backdrop of charred debris, creating an unexpected harmony between the unnatural and the organic.

Figure 2: Jos Main Market (the aerial view)

before it was burnt **Source:** Emmy Akpe, 2020

Figure 3: Jos Main Market (Terminus) burning. **Source:** found on google from www.facebook.com



The textures that emerge from the destruction inspire contemplation. The interplay between the rough, jagged edges and the delicate, intricate patterns left behind by the flames often mesmerize observers. There is a certain beauty in the contrast between chaos and symmetry, inviting us to question our preconceived notions of aesthetics.



Figure 4: Jos Main Market (Terminus) after it was burnt

Source: found on google from www.facebook.com



Figure 5: Jos Main Market Terminus, the current state. (The Relic and the Ruin)

Source: the researcher. 2020

The Jos burnt main market exemplifies the transient nature of beauty and its ability to emerge even in the face of devastation. Its skeletal structure, now void of purpose, stands as a testament to the impermanence of human achievement and the fragility of our existence.

By exploring these aesthetic qualities within destruction, we challenge the conventional definition of beauty. It compels the artist to seek beauty in unexpected places and to

question whether the notion of beauty is solely confined to the conventional or whether it can encompass the extraordinary. In the Jos burnt main market, the paradoxical beauty within destruction emerges as a reflection of the cycle of life and evolution.

The ruins bear witness to the past, reminding us of the fleeting nature of our achievements. It reminds us to appreciate the present, for it, too, shall fade away and transform into something new. Ultimately, the beauty within destruction challenges us to embrace impermanence and find solace in the ephemeral. It urges us to question our narrow definitions of beauty and seek the extraordinary even in the most unconventional places. The Jos burnt main market becomes a symbol of resilience, reminding us that even in destruction, beauty can flourish.

Discourse on related works

Artists have continued to paint markets from the perspective of their views in terms of

colour, forms and structure. They have also made attempts to paint burnt markets. They paint them from the view of environmental hazards and destruction. Other artists have painted such scenes to provoke political and economic discourse.

Artists like Oyedemi, (b.1966) and Oshinowo, (b.1948) have painted markets from both the figural gestures and abstracted forms. The paper, however is interested in ‘beauty’ that rubbish and ruins can produce, in the place of death and decay. As Gold (2006) observes that “artist have the ability to explore the subjects in the ways that are accessible to everyone. By presenting various visions of a similar subject, artists have the power to change how the past is viewed”. In this same way the artist symbolically attempts to produce and envision a rebirth through painting market scenes. Muted colours in painting have become associated with decay and abandonment. In this paper, the works discussed will be able to make

aesthetic and symbolic commentaries from the ruins of the Jos burnt market site.



Figure.6. "Jos Imagine" Rwang Mark, Oil on Canvas, Size: 91.44 x 182.88.cm, 2015 – 2016.

Source: Mark Rwang.2022

Rwang Mark

“Jos Imagine” was painted by Rwang Mark. He is an Ahmadu Bello University Zaria trained Artist-Painter. The artist had his Diploma from the same University and has also diversified in Graphics and television floor and set design. Mark paints the Jos, Plateau city scape with particular interest in its environmental exploration and market scenes. Gestures and moods dominate his paintings. This is aptly captured in his style of colour rendition which quickly imitates the impressionistic drives of visible brush

strokes, open composition, emphasis on accurate depiction of light in its changing qualities, often accentuating the effects of the passage of time.

"Jos Imagine", as shown in Figure. 6, is Marks's' painting of the Jos main market in its glorious days before it was burnt. The artist employed the dominance of the yellow colour from his palette to encapsulate the market. The brilliance of Mark's palette is seen in the painting as he painted a clear blue-yellowish sky, which gives the environment a feeling of "calm", and yet a cover over a peaceful human activity on the fore-ground. The market has a remarkable trade mark of the "yellow star metal" which is also the identifiable motif of the structure.

Typical of the impressionists' traits, Mark uses predominantly yellow colours and ochres with shades of purple, blues and greens to indicate shadows and darker tones on the fore-ground. The title "Jos Imagine" is a pun, a nostalgic and evoking show of how

the "Jos Main Market" used to be like. At the bottom right of the painting, there appears to be a fire place-like, probably a suggestion of a human activity, of a refuse burning to maintain sanitary and environmental cleanliness. The work is a visual contrast with the current state of the Jos burnt market. It has however captured the story of this study of the market before the burnt, during and the effect on the market after it was burnt. The painting depicts a bustling atmosphere. It captures the bustling activities, and a sense of the market's function as a social and economic hub. The composition includes elements such stalls, vendors and vehicles, capturing the daily life of the market. Rwang paid attention to architectural details, highlighting the diverse structures that house the stalls and businesses. This narrates the story of the Jos burnt market before the fire. In the introductory of this study, the researcher noted that the Jos main market was the 'largest indoor market in West Africa'

and was 'the hub for sales of all sorts of commodities'.



Fig. 7 Market on Canvas (Palace of Oppression) 2012, John Oyedemi, Oil on Canvas 133 x183 cm. Source. Oyedemi, John. (2015).



Fig.8 Market on Canvas11 (Palace of Oppression), 2013 John Oyedemi, 122 x 122 cm. Source. Oyedemi, John. (2015).

“Market on Canvas II” John Oyedemi.

The Paintings are similar to this study. John's exploration of the "Charcoal Market" focuses on the environmental effect on colour value. His painting explores the place of black which is the visual outlook of charcoal, a suggestion of "oppression", a place where other colours are subdued and overwhelmed. John's technique of restricted palette builds up structures in painting. His palette of grey and subdued primary colours produce paintings that evoke sombre mood because of the restriction in palette, the colour scheme becomes "muted".

The 'Market on Canvas', Figs.7 and 8, examine and explore the place of colour "oppression" with circular forms to represent circles of life under oppressive situations. The colours are muted with black delving into possibilities which exist in the colour field. These paintings depict conditions that arise from the subject of oppression. "Lines here are randomly composed to create effect of motion on the overall expression of the

works" (Oyedemi, 2016). Interestingly to the researcher, vertical and horizontal lines indicate the linear walls of the Jos burnt market as they describe the vestiges of the left-over ruins of the market in form of a "skeleton". Oyedemi's muted colours and restricted palette technique are similar with the burnt and the overwhelming suppression of colours at the site of the Jos burnt market. The lost in colours at the charcoal market, from the black of the charcoal is also simulated in the place of burnt of the Jos market. The muted colours and the use of black build up emotional depth in painting a charcoal market as well as a charred environment characterised in this study.



Fig.9. "The Hunt" Jacob Jari, 2012. Fabric, Mixed media on canvas, 88.9 x119.4cm. A collection of the artist.

Jacob Jari .

Jari is aware of the "power of conceptual art in social commentary", hence, "conceptual art stresses process over product and plays down the importance of conventional media". Jari therefore, "drifted into exploration with other media such as discarded cornstalk, fabric offcuts and paper". Jari states that, "things discarded can be reinvested with beauty; a symbolism for how discarded people can still be useful in society". According to Oyedemi, (2016), Jari's work "mimics the society projected through the restoration of the discarded to give them continuity". Fig. 9 is a work titled, The Hunt. His philosophy in this work is based on second chance. The work is created from producing bullet holes-like shapes through the canvas, with a hot metal, moulded in a round pointed shape that is able to punch holes through the canvas when it is heated by fire. Inspiring to this research is Jari's bullet

holes style of painting. Jari burns his canvas by perforating it thereby creating bullet-holes spaces. The burnt holes are semblances of decomposition and ruination. Jari uses discarded or cut off fabrics and the bullet-holes to recreate a painting. His works remind viewers that there is still hope where it appears all hope is gone. Discarded materials in painting have also been explored to suggest wastefulness, recycling, regeneration and restoration. Discarded things mean those things are no longer useful or desirable. Without product waste, discard practices and creative conversion of dormant materials into substances of benefit to end users, the entire society will be susceptible to environmental epidemics emanating from waste and rubbish. This artist explores the artistic symbolism, conceptually too, of the conversion of "waste" to "use" from discarded materials as Jari has explored.

The excitement

Plate I: Puus Jos 2021 Dankyes Ephraim
Acrylic on Canvas 87x 102cm

Once one approached the Jos Terminus Main Market, one was confronted with this monumental edifice with “yellow” star shaped metals. The writer had always found this structure of immense inspiration. The painting shown in Plate I captures one of the hustling sides of the market with umbrellas. The umbrella has become a significant motif of the market. Traders enjoy the shade away from the scorching heat from sun. The umbrellas were rendered in different colours to harmoniously conform to the “yellow star metal” on the market building. The foreground was divided by what appeared to

be like a pathway. It is dividing the traders along their lines of trade; on the left part are the sellers of second hand clothes while the part to the right sells foodstuff. The researcher captured them in the brilliance of yellow, orange to accentuate the distant “yellow star metals”. One major element the artist enjoyed here is shape. Traditional African markets enjoy the aura of peaceful and religious tolerance. The language in the market is always one, ‘businesses’.

This painting, ‘Puus Jos Series’ shown in Plate 1 shows the imposing Jos main (terminus) market on the background in its characteristic yellow channels pronounced plates, of the iconic star shapes which was the symbol of the market’s glory. ‘Puus Jos’ literally means Jos Market Day. This is the literal photo of the Jos Main market before it got gutted by fire. The excitement, the hustle and bustle activity of the market qualified it for a vibrant economic system.

The mid-ground suggests a space for brilliant and colourful umbrellas supported by wooden and metal ribs mounted on plastic poles. They signify “the canopy of the heaven, shelter and protection”. They are symbols of shade to traders in the market. The foreground is rendered in tones of red and ochres, these are activated by the dusty effect of human' busy footsteps



Plate II. Such a Loss, Acrylic on Canvas, 87 x 102 cm, 2022.

In Plate II titled, Such a Loss, the artist has borrowed a leaf from Oyedemi's influence of Piet Mondrian's Neoplasticism. Mondrian eliminated all representational components reducing Paintings to their elements: straight

lines, plane surfaces, rectangles and the primary colours, (red, yellow and blue) combined with neutrals (black, grey and white).

(<https://www.britannica.com/topic/De-styl-art>) Plate 2, is a painting titled, Such a Loss.

It is a semi-abstract work which implies the resilience of the Jos market after it was burnt. Semi-abstract painting here means a style of painting in which the subject remains recognizable, although, the forms are highly stylised in a manner derived from abstract art. The yellow star metal-shaped motif is recognisable amidst the interconnecting lines and other shapes on the painting. It is an indication that a 'stump is left on the ground to bud'.



Plate.III: Wasted Phase II, Acrylic on
Canvas, 91.44 x152.4 cm, 2022

The image in **Plate III** this image here shows that the thick black smoke from the burnt market has gradually dropped and was out of the way and so, part of the walls of the structure can be visually sighted. The composition reveals the dominating and identifiable trademark shapes of the main market. This time the fire has transformed the yellow-shaped metals to a “burnt brownish red” because of the effect of the heat. The inferno was at night. One can note the night represented by black murky yellow, orange and purple. The flames could have been encouraged by the inflammable

items such as, kerosene and petrol used inside the market.

Already, the subsiding inferno reveals the scourges of the fire and adverse effects on victims. The touch of white at the centre of the painting conveys the feelings of intense heat and pain, the surrounding colours inject the sombre and sorrowful state of the once magnificent building. It has become a shadow of its own self. The thick fat brush strokes convey the exhaling vibrant flames and the “energy” with which the depth of this combustion was. The building at this point was becoming a “skeleton” which means “death”. The painting presented in Plate.3 reveals how the market remains burnt but the spirit of the market remains in our memories



Plate IV Ruin and Relic 1, Acrylic on Canvas, 60.90 x 91.44cm, 2022

The ideas in the work, Plate IV, are communicated with colours from a restricted palette to achieve muted colour schemes. The muted colours refer to all colours that have low saturation or chrome. They are subtle and not bright, they have been subdued, dulled or “greyed”. Grey colours in this painting were achieved by colours mixed with black, white and complement of the colour, for example, red was desaturated by mixing it with green. The bottom of the painting was painted in black, cobalt blue and orange to aid the grey as well as white was mixed with it. The surface quality of the painting is rough was achieved through using pallet knife to achieve impasto technique. There are hatched

and cross hatched lines which indicate the environmentally infested space with several piercing objects that range from broken glasses to fragmented metals. Greyish sky towards the top left of the work helps to illuminate the emerging market structure from the inferno. There are vertical and horizontal hues that show a continuous interconnection between the structures. They interweave to create composition in the work despite the unfortunate wreckage on them.



Plate V Sprouting Petal V, Acrylic on Canvas, 87 x 102cm, 2023

Using vibrant colours, the artist incorporated uplifting colours to symbolise renewal and rejuvenation. Bright colours can evoke a sense of hope, optimism and a fresh start. A sprouting plants as shown in Plate VI

signifies a new life and growth emerging from the decay. This is metaphor for the capacity to rebuild and a regeneration from what had fallen. The researcher also focused on light and contrast in the execution of this work. The light and dark areas as seen in the painting Plate VI symbolise the contrast between the past and the future, with light representing new possibilities and bright future.

The greys in the painting symbolise a rise from ashes. The flowers growing in a muddy space or areas convey the idea that out of destruction comes a renewal and the opportunity for a fresh start. There is a place for human resilience as shown in Plate V of the painting titled ‘Sprouting Petals V’. The painting has clustered human figures which are indicated by daubs and shredded slaps of different colours. This seeks to signify the capacity for resilience, adaptation and overcoming challenges. The figures here are

a community working together to rebuild and recreate a new future from the ruin.



Plate VI: Sprouting Petal VI, Acrylic on Canvas, 121 x152cm, 2022

Conclusion

In conclusion, the artist has effectively conveyed a movement from the place of hustle of life, ruins, and to a place of hope and optimism. The paintings have also effectively symbolized and envisioned a rebirth from the place of ruins and decay and the ability to overcome adversity. The paper has given a narrative or representation of a contrasting transition from destruction or decay, desolation to restoration and optimism within the context of colour symbolism, metaphor and aesthetics. It involved portraying both the dilapidation and the potential for renewal or transformation in the artistic composition.

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