



Minimalism in Interior Wall Decorations: Window Blinds

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Abstract

Minimalism which is a simple lifestyle of living has caused most home owners and estate developers to keep rooms simple devoid of many unnecessary artefacts and also with the current trend of contemporary architecture at play which also have a greater influence in interior decorations and designs of rooms and offices. Blinds have taken the place of curtains to reduce clutter in interior wall decoration. Murals or wall plaques are gradually reducing due to the replacement of concrete walls with glass façades. Most of our murals and wall plaques are therefore being taken out to suit minimalism concept. Therefore, all of these pictures can be consolidated in blinds reducing or giving room for much surface area in line with minimalism concept. Research methods adopted for the study were exploration, descriptive and studio-based research method. The population for this study encompassed wall plaques that have been done in the Art Faculty in KNUST for a period of 2014 to 2019. It was found that adhesives on stickers that were left on the metallic sheets after cutting out the negatives areas to be etched slowed the etching process. Also, materials such as glasses, pebbles, tiles etc. used in collage and mosaic art are quite heavier and may cause malfunction of the window blinds.

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1. Introduction

Building styles have gradually changed, paving way for modern and contemporary architecture that is geared towards making use of the least available space. Contemporary architecture, now the vogue in architectural designs, has influenced interior designs and decorations. Interior decoration is considered to be the art of decorating the inside of buildings in order to realize a pleasing design for an inhabitant (Whiton, 2013) ^[33]; serving as a safe haven for the inhabitant. Rapid globalization has influenced the interior design of rooms due to adoption of various cultures from around the world. For instance, the Zen style of the Japanese has been widely adopted by people all over the world due to their great use of minimalism (Masuda, 2017) ^[17]. Minimalism simply means, living a simple life devoid of clutter. It includes making certain artefacts into a unified piece in order to enjoy their beautification effects. Minimalism led to the adoption of high-rise buildings that is largely used in many developed countries presently. However, in this study, minimalism takes the form of combining window blinds and pictography to bring beauty to both homes and offices.

Although, blinds have taken the place of curtains to reduce clutter in interior wall decoration, they are often not made to possess pictorial or floral beauty like certain curtains. Window blinds can therefore be improved aesthetically by adding pictures. Paintings (pictures) add beauty to a space. Nonetheless, such beautification effect in architecture and interior designing are being taken out to suit minimalism. We aim to incorporate work of art (pictures) in window blinds in this study while specifically exploring art working techniques which would be favourable for this initiative. Additionally, metal working techniques (preferably the Kissism technique) would be used to design and fabricate pictorial effects on blinds.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Framework

Production, which is very important in furniture according to the production theory of Csanády *et al.* (2019)^[9], is defined as an economic process in which inputs are transformed into outputs using resources to create goods or services suitable for exchange. Koskela (2000)^[16] adds that inputs or resources used in the production process are called factors of production by economists. The many possible inputs are generally grouped into six categories which are; raw materials, machinery, labor services, capital goods, land, and contractor. Rostow (2013)^[24] explains that knowledge about what is permanent and normal in industrial production is called production theory and adds that traditionally this knowledge was accumulated in a silent form in the professional skills of industrial managers and craftsmen, but today scientists are documenting it more and more in writing. This theory was used to make furniture from recycled waste in the Kumasi Metropolitan area.

2.2. Minimalism

Minimalism includes the intentional promotion of things which are mostly valued with removal of everything which distracts individuals from it. It is one which ensures that intentionality is forced. Improvements are forced in almost every aspect of people's life (Harren, 2016)^[13]. Architecture provides a relevant setting in every facet of life (Berg and Kreiner, 2017)^[6]. According to Castello (2016)^[7], architecture must inspire. Since it is considered a personal, necessary and enjoyable experience, it is expected to be understood and experienced. Merleau-Ponty rightly stated, 'architecture is expected to make recognizable the extent to which the world touches us' (Norberg-Schulz, 2019)^[19]. All humans have the ability to sense architecture but not every human comprehend the extent to which architecture can be powerful or even the extent to which it can influence daily life. The Dutch architect and Benedictine monk Dom Hans van der Laan (1904–1991) is known for his legacy of architectural writings and realizations arising from his search for the fundamental principles of architecture. According to Dom Hans, architecture that is meaningful is known to have far reaching roots as compared to the rules of style through the ages (Sanoff, 2016)^[26]. There is much interest in researching the relationship between users and their environment. Often times, a house is used is represented by a film or photos (Sanoff, 2016)^[26].

Minimalism have also been implemented in interior design aside its implementation in architecture. Such minimalist interior design is evident in paintings and sculpture works. According to Tautkute *et al.* (2019)^[30], minimalism was first used by David Burlyuk in 1929. This was done in the catalogue of the exhibition that was carried out in New York, Dudensighn Gallery. The idea of minimal interior design emerged from Russian Activists like Malevich, Rodchenko and Tatlin through works of painters who belonged to the De Stijle group like Mondrian in pop art (Hou, 2016)^[14]. All these ideas have accumulated and have been a source of inspiration for artists until 1960. This movement emerged in the first place among American painters and sculptors and

then it spread in Europe (Becker, 2018)^[5]. Kazimir Malevich who put a black square on white ground in 1915 is the pioneer of an art conception finding its meaning in itself by demolishing the old conception of painting originating from the old perception that a painting shows and represents objects (Whytock, 2018)^[34]. When the black square of Malevich was put on exhibition, something appreciated by people and critics disappeared and were transformed into nothing. An extremely simple and striking square was an incomprehensible and dangerous form for them. The black square is intuition and the white ground is the emptiness beyond it (Jaffe, 2018)^[15].

2.3. Contemporary architecture

Contemporary Architecture was borne through the rejection of typical architectural trends like the Ornamental Victorian Homes which were dominant in the nineteenth century. This birthed a completely new way to think about functionality and making good use of space (Xiaofang and Zhehua, 2017)^[35]. In present-day architecture, a single style is not dominant as architects in the field of contemporary architecture work to portray various styles, post-modernity and high-tech designs. The only commonality between such designs is that of highly advanced technology like tube structure which makes it possible to construct very tall buildings which are stronger but lighter in effect than the buildings designed in the twentieth century (Wendl, 2017)^[32]. There is also a commonality which is the use of new technologies in computer aided designs that make it possible for buildings to be modeled and designed on computers in terms of three dimensions. There is great variation in contemporary buildings and styles (Crimson, 2017)^[8]. Some of the styles feature concrete structures which are wrapped in aluminium or glass screens while others are shown in asymmetric facades which hang over the street. Facades are made to change colour or shimmer at various times of the day (Crimson, 2017)^[8]. Contemporary architecture has been viewed as a global development in terms of architectural work. Countries that are more into contemporary architecture are Dubai, China, USA and the Arab States of the Persian Gulf (Ramadan, 2020)^[22]. For instance, the world's tallest building is situated in Dubai with the second tallest in China. Fielding *et al.* (2017)^[12] stated that, many contemporary architecture works were designed by architects like Jean Nouvel, Ieoh Ming Pei, Mario Botta, Renzo Piano and Frank Gehry in the twentieth century.

2.4. Contemporary architecture in relation to minimalism

Minimalism in contemporary architecture often shows how the architect thinks or views things, his lifestyle or aesthetic style in architecture. Approach to contemporary architecture provides achievement to future needs while breaking connections with rules and regulations of the past which limit development and productivity. In view of this, minimalism cannot be associated with a particular time as done with contemporary architecture (Fan, 2019)^[11]. This phenomenon tends to adjust newly established circumstances to be in service of life, but not the other way around, life to be in service of artistic style direction. Simple elegance of clean

surfaces follows minimalist compositions, but judging by complexity of tasks, this effect is not simple to achieve (Al Qudwa, 2017)^[2].

3. Methods

The research employed the qualitative research design. For the purpose of this study, the research methods adopted included exploration research method, descriptive and studio-based research method. In exploratory research, there is the need to delve more into the questions asked and explore on the processes in the study in order to provide possible solutions to them. It does not necessarily call for inference on final and conclusive solutions (Van Dun *et al.*, 2017). Descriptive research was adopted because of the quest to provide a finished detail of the process and strategies adopted during experimentation and fabrication. The entire work was executed in the studio using the studio-based research due to the technicality of the study. All techniques such as doming, annealing and colouring were carried out at the studio. The present study is therefore regarded as a studio-based one which was dependent on observational technique. The research tools used were interviews, observation and photographs. Some local craftsmen and resource persons who are knowledgeable in the field were interviewed at their workshop and offices. Some of the resource centres with researchers were visited during the study includes the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science Technology main library, and College of Art Library. The population for this study encompassed art wall plaques that have been done in the Art Faculty in KNUST for a period of 2016 to 2019. Accessible population for this research was 50 art wall plaques from the Faculty of Art. Due to the plenty of wall plaques in the Art faculty, sampling of wall plaques was done by using a 50% representation for the population of the study as asserted by Cohen and Manion (1985). The sampling techniques adopted under non-probability sampling approaches include purposive and convenient sampling techniques (Matua and

Van Der Wal, 2015). Among the various sampling techniques, purposive sampling was therefore employed in the selection of the population and accessible population in the execution of the work. The sample size for the research were 25 art wall plaques fabricated in the Art Faculty with an estimated population of the wall plaques from the Metal Section of the Department of Industrial Art. There are other wall plaques that have been done in chasing and repousse, etching, enameling etc. but a concentration was laid on the pointillism or dome technique. Data collected were analysed using content analysis. The data was audio-recorded, transcribed and analyzed using the procedural steps in Stemler's (2000) content analysis^[28].

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Pre-Production Stage

Image Printing Window Blind

A systematic description of observations coupled with studio based and exploratory techniques were adopted to facilitate production of the artefact – window blinds with work of art for beautification. Aluminium was used to make the blades of the blinds because of its light weight, 3.0 grams, as compared to the available copper (8.0 grams) and brass (9.0 grams). Art working techniques like image printing, etching and an adoption of a devised technique, Kissism derived from the pointillism or doming technique were employed to realize a finished product.

In image printing, a 2D rendition of the KNUST logo illustrated in Figure 1 was designed with indication of parts of the image on strips of 2.5cm length each and 46cm width (46cm width by 104cm length for the whole image). The image was printed out on a sticker paper. Sections of the images in strips were cut out shown in Figure 2. The aluminium blades were removed and the cutout strips were pasted on the blades to form the desired image depicted in Figure 3.



Fig 1: A 2D Rendition of the KNUST Logo



Source: (Studio Work, 2024)



Source: (Studio Work, 2024)

Fig 2: Cutting the stickers into the desired strips.

Fig 3: Cutout strips of stickers pasted on blades of window blinds.

The blades were then arranged back on the strands and threads of the window blinds (Figure 4).



Source: (Studio Work, 2024)

Fig 4: Arranging blades back onto the strands and threads of the window blinds.

The KNUST logo is the resulting image produced when the window blinds is closed and yet operates or functions same as the window blinds to provide privacy and shades for the user shown in Figure 5.



Source: (Studio Work, 2024)

Fig 5: Finished product at display.

With the etching technique, the image of the President of Ghana, H.E Nana Akuffo-Addo was selected (Figure 6). A 2D rendition of the image was designed in a monotonous colour (indicated parts of the image on strips of 2.5cm length and 46 cm width), the image was printed (Figure 7) out on a sticker paper and pasted on the cutout aluminum sheet. A mixture of Hydrochloric acid and water is prepared with a ratio of 1:3 respectively in a setup made of large wooden box with a leather cloth laid inside. The work was placed inside for approximately 10 minutes for the process to etch (Figure 8).

After the said time, it is taken out and the sticker is taken off from the metal sheet. Acids are washed away with running

water and thinner is also used to clean off other residues (Figure 9). A tracing tool and a cutting tool were used to mark and cut the oval shaped at the far ends of the blades and filed to smoothen it. Strips of 2.5cm length were marked out from the etched metal sheet. Already marked areas with the metal cutter were cutout into strips or blades. The surfaces of the blades were treated by spraying clear on them. This is to prevent the surface from tarnishing. The lengths of the blades were then trimmed and given curved edges with the blind trimming cutter. The blades or slats of the venetian blinds that was purchased were then replaced with the strips produced (Figure 10 to 11).



Source: (Studio Work, 2024)

Fig 6: Selected Image of H.E Nana Akuffo-Addo



Source: (Studio Work, 2024)

Fig 7: A 2D rendition of the selected image



Source: (Studio Work, 2024)

Fig 8: Pouring Acid solution into the prepared setup.



Source: (Studio Work, 2024)

Fig 9: The Etching process set in motion.



Source: (Studio Work, 2024)

Fig 10: Image of the etched effect and creation of oval-shaped holes on the metal sheet.



Source: (Studio Work, 2024)

Fig 11: Image of the Finished Work

Test Sample of Kissism technique

The pointillism technique was explored to see improved ways in which it can be incorporated into the window blinds to produce a pictorial effect or artworks on them. Through this research, the researcher came out with a technique called Kissism where tiny balls or domes are hit on metal sheets directly from the reverse by shaped concrete nails. In the Kissism technique, domes are hit on the metal sheet directly from the reverse by shaped concrete nails. First a test was done on the Kissism technique to see how it would come out. A 2D rendering of an image of Mr. Kissi Samuel Baah, a lecturer at KNUST is done by Coral draw and Photoshop, and

later printed unto an A3 sized paper (Figure 12& 13). The A3 sized paper is then put on the aluminium sheet (annealed and polished). It is later put onto the prepared asphaltum pitch by heating the pitch surface. The dots created in the printed design were gradually hit with the punching tool according to the size of the dots which creates a relief at the back of the sheet (Figure 14 to 17). After all the dots were hit, the metal sheet was taken out of the pitch and then annealed. This same process is carried out until a desired dome shapes and heights are achieved. White glue was used to apply a shade of colour on the finished domed product (Figure 18).



Source: (Studio Work, 2024)

Fig 14: Metal work fixed into the Pitch.



Source: (Studio Work, 2024)

Fig 12: Selected image of Mr. Kissi Samuel Baah.



Source: (Studio Work, 2024)

Fig 13: A 2D Rendition of Selected Image



Source: (Studio Work, 2024)

Fig 15: Annealing the metal work



Source: (Studio Work, 2024)

Fig 16: Redefining dots by doming.



Source: (Studio Work, 2024)

Fig 17: Product of Kissism Technique without Colour application.



Source: (Studio Work, 2024)

Fig 18: Finished work with colour application.

The Kissism technique after it was explored and tested for the fabrication of a pictorial effect or image was noted to be conductive and thus used in the fabrication of a window blind.

4.2. Production Stage

Artefact production

Before commencement of the project, a 2D rendition of the image to be used for doming was done with coral draw and

Photoshop. The main purpose of carrying out this technique was to make pointillism or doming easy. The 2D rendition is shown in Figure 19 so as with the 3D rendition in Figure 20 and 21.



Source: (Studio Work, 2024)

Fig 19: 2D Rendered Image



Source: (Studio Work, 2024)

Fig 20: 3D Rendered Image

A pitch was prepared by using a wooden box of volume 147 cm by 138 cm with a block of bitumen cut into pieces, melted and mixed with Plaster of Paris (POP). Plaster of Paris (POP) was used to harden the molten material upon cooling. Prepared media was poured onto the wooden box to create the canvas or pitch for the doming process. Aluminium sheet was cut out to the size of 140cm by 110cm and annealed to soften it. Annealing of the aluminum was also done to make it easy to work with. After annealing, the aluminium sheet was fastened with wooden bars and nails at its four corners to straighten it and to ensure firmness. The 2D rendered image was pasted on the aluminum sheet and placed on the pitch. The doming process then began where each of the dots or

rounded circles forming the shapes of the portraits were hit to create reliefs at the back of the aluminium sheet. After hitting all them, the pasted image was removed together with the wooden bars and the aluminium sheet annealed. The hitting process was repeated to give to perfect the domes created on the aluminium sheet. The parts where domes were not created were covered with masking tapes and a solution of white glue applied to the domed area after which the work was heated to give a brownish to black colour effect. The work after the colour application was straightened to remove warps on the metal sheet. These processes are visually shown in Figure 21 to Figure 24.



Source: (Studio Work, 2024)

Fig 21: Softening Bitumen and Preparation of Pitch



Source: (Studio Work, 2024)

Fig 22: Annealing Aluminum Material



Source: (Studio Work, 2024)

Fig 23: Straightening Aluminum



Source: (Studio Work, 2024)

Fig 24: Annealed Aluminum

After annealing, the rendered design is pasted on the aluminium. The dark spots are domed and repeated for the other dark areas using the same technique. Application of

masking tape on plain areas and application of white glue to domed areas for the black colour to show the effect of the dark side of the design (Figure 25 to 28).



Source: (Studio Work, 2024)

Fig 25: Sticking the printed Design on Aluminum sheet



Source: (Studio Work, 2024)

Fig 26: A result of the Doming effect.



Source: (Studio Work, 2024)

Fig 27: Application of Masking tape on undomed areas and application of white glue to domed areas.

Window Blinds Production

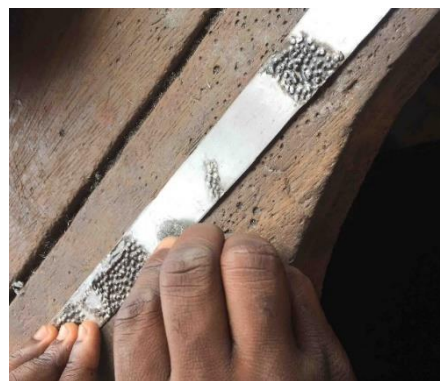
Lines were marked and a 2.5cm strips were cut out from the work. A tracing tool and a cutting tool were used to mark and cut the oval shaped at the far ends of the blades (as shown in Plate 2.41). These areas as well as the edges of the blades were filed to smoothen it. The surface of the blades was treated by spraying clear on them. This is to prevent the

surface from tarnishing. The lengths of the blades or slats were trimmed into curved edges with the blind trimming cutter. The blades or slats of the venetian blinds purchased were replaced with the strips produced, which is the finished product of the study. These processes are all gathered and indicated in Figure 29 to 33.



Source: (Studio Work, 2024)

Fig 29: Cutting aluminum with domed image



Source: (Studio Work, 2024)

Fig 30: Marking and cutting oval-shaped holes for assemblage



Source: (Studio Work, 2024)

Fig 31: Polishing of Aluminum Blades



Source: (Studio Work, 2024)

Fig 32: Window Blinds design (closed)



Source: (Studio Work, 2024)

Fig 33: Window Blinds design (opened)

4.3. Post Production Stage

Findings on Kissim Technique

Several art working techniques like mosaic, collage, rendering, metal piercing, pointillism and etching were explored in this work. The Kissim technique was however much preferred since it helped improve the doming effect of the artworks etched into the blinds. Basic findings in this study are as listed below:

1. It was found that adhesives on stickers that were left on the metallic sheets after cutting out the negatives areas to be etched slowed the etching process.
2. It was found that materials such as glasses, pebbles and

tiles used in collage and mosaic art are quite heavier and may cause malfunction of the window blinds.

3. Piercing process may hinder privacy of a room as holes or openings created may cause viewers to see the inside of the room.
4. Liquids such as thinner and turpentine easily clean designs printed on sticker papers or materials.
5. It was found that the contrast in etching was quite minimal, as an image from afar was not vivid.
6. The doming or pointillism technique added weight to the blades of the blinds as cut out domes was adhered to the blades of the blinds.



Source: (Studio Work, 2024)

Fig 34: Result of the Kissim Technique

In the fabrication process, it was identified that, the aluminum sheet helped with easy cutting of the domed image into strips. This also made it easy to assemble them on a horizontal line with strands passed through to complete the window blinds. It is worth noting that, low melting point of aluminium resulted in aluminium sheet melting when fixing them onto the pitch (with surface melted to accommodate the metal sheet). The aluminium sheet is often stretched due to the melting coupled with continuous hitting and annealing. Annealing was an essential process throughout the fabrication stage. White glue was the preferred colouring agent as it gave a pleasing colour and could stick onto the

metallic material for a longer period compared to other materials that were explored. The available aluminium sheet was not flexible as that of the metal material used for blades of window blinds.

In respect to the trending minimal approach and contemporary architecture with which buildings are built with glass façades, portraits of the President of Ghana (Figure 35 & 36), the KNUST logo (Figure 37 & 38) and the window blind of historical important personalities (Figure 39 & 40) can be incorporated on window blinds in honour of their heroism. The finished products of the study are shown below.

Window Blind project 1 (Obrempon)



Source: (Studio Work, 2024)

Fig 35: Project 1 (closed)



Source: (Studio Work, 2024)

Fig 36: Project 1 (opened)

Window Blind project 2 (Nimdee Yε Tumi) Project 2 (Nimdee Yε Tumi)



Source: (Studio Work, 2024)

Fig 37: Project 2 (closed)



Source: (Studio Work, 2024)

Fig 38: Project 2 (opened)

Window Blind project 3 (Ben Me Ansa...)*Source:* (Studio Work, 2024)**Fig 39:** Project 3 (closed)*Source:* (Studio Work, 2024)**Fig 40:** Project 3 (opened)**Decoration Styles in Ghana**

It is imperative to note that most of the architecture found in Ghana before and during colonial times were made from wattle daub material. Cite. Only few buildings were made of stones. Over time, a lot of foreign influence affected the use and habitation and structure of these wattle daub architecture popularly called atakpame. These buildings were functional for the inhabitants because of the hot weather found in the tropics for that matter Africa. Also, most of these buildings were used for shrines which were functional for the people.

These mud houses though served their purpose, fell from grace during rainy seasons, because, the rain somehow washed the mud off the palm branch sticks used as the skeletal framework which the red mud was used to fill the crossed palm branch sticks. In later years before some of these mud houses begun to be replaced by fired red bricks. This style did not however last for a long time as people did not embrace it that much because of cost.

Globalization and commerce through Christian religion and Islamic religion which spread across the continent through force and persuasion also affected the kind of architectural buildings that begun to exist during the colonial era till today in Ghana.

The reason was the fact that most of these wattle daub style buildings were used for shrines and since these foreign religions came into Ghana most people who made sure of putting up such shrines stopped building them. Building and interior decorations which reflected these new religion types when introduced into Ghana affected the use of wattle daub for buildings. The colonialists and the religious movements brought their style of architecture which influenced the use of red mud for building.

Another thing that affected the look or architecture in Ghana was also the wealth that was generated through raw materials like cocoa and timber and the likes which made wealthy Ghanaian merchants or gold dealers and farmers, shift to building expensive and more durable houses, something they saw in foreign lands. Using cement became a symbol of wealth which also made everyone want to have such type of buildings.

The decoration on the buildings of the wattle daub type of architecture was graced with intricate shapes and symbols which were meaningfully to the inhabitants. Globalization indeed has been a major influence in the wide spread architectural styles and decoration styles found in most cities in Ghana. Exposure to the outside world through the media and trade exposed many Ghanaians to different types of architectural styles which most often focused on luxury and gaining of respect and so many other reasons for putting up certain types of buildings.

In time some of the major things about traditional buildings which had decorations and symbolisms begun to fade away. Either now Christianized or Muslim Ghanaians begun to see these Ghanaian symbols as pagan and thus whatever decorations on these buildings begun to fade away. This is because so many architectural styles burrowed from other cultures removed these designs and decorations in their buildings. But as a people, as Africans, as Ghanaians, one of the major things we cannot do without is our symbolisms and art as a people.

Our traditional designs are symbolic to us. Therefore, in as much as we may abandon certain traditional practices which are outmoded or archaic, we may bring back what makes us Africans and Ghanaians by going back to pick what makes us Ghanaians, our heritage and put them back into our buildings. Because a people who have lost their traditions are as good as dead.

5. Conclusion

Over the years, metal art techniques like soft varnishing, engraving, chasing and repousse, dapping, welding and doming (pointillism) have been adopted to fabricate functional and elegant works of art. Exploration of the identified techniques have not been explored to incorporate pictorial effects on window blinds. Kissism technique which is a combination of rendering and doming (pointillism) was realized in this study. Findings show that, the Kissism technique is the most appropriate studio-based technique when incorporating pictorial effect onto a surface – window blinds.

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