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# **A reflection of the aesthetic nature of the environment in selected picturesque landscape paintings of the Shooting Range Zone at Kenyatta University**

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## **Abstract**

*Since the Renaissance period, picturesque landscape paintings have been used to demonstrate the aesthetic nature of the environment. The aesthetic qualities tend to, among other benefits, champion environmental challenges and create a religiously meditative atmosphere, The picturesque landscape paintings also encompass a wide range of artistic movements, styles, intentions, and mediums. Examples of picturesque landscape paintings include Thomas Cole's 1836 painting *The Oxbow* and Jasper Cropsey's 1865 painting *The Valley of Wyoming*. This paper seeks to demonstrate the aesthetic nature of the environment in picturesque landscape painting of the Shooting Range Zone at Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya. The site is historical as it was a shooting range for the colonial British Army. The site has natural and beautiful environmental features such as valleys and paths, a forest of trees and fast-growing grasses. A select artist produced landscape paintings from the Shooting Range that*

*were the primary data of study. Formal analysis was used to descriptively analyze the landscape paintings. The paper presents the analyzed results of the aesthetic nature of the Shooting Range environment as depicted in the picturesque landscape paintings.*

**Key words:** *Environment, Picturesque Landscape painting*

## Introduction

Picturesque landscape paintings are inedible artworks that depict the aesthetic nature of the environment. This have been done since the Renaissance Period to today (Wango 2022). Paden (2015) states that picturesque landscape paintings were used to express the beauty of the environment. Adam (2010), Wango (2022), Paden (2015), Stokstan, and Cothren (2005) affirm and add that the then Renaissance landscape paintings captured the reflection beauty of the natural sunlight. Gersh-Nesic (2019), Faison (2015), and Blumberg (2020) observe that picturesque landscape paintings feature the nature of the environment that includes mountains, valleys, bodies of water, fields, forests, and coasts. Faison (2015) goes ahead to provide examples of picturesque landscape paintings such as Thomas Cole's 1836 The Oxbow and Jasper Cropsey's 1865 painting titled "The Valley of Wyoming" (below).



**Source:** Artvee, **Title :** Wyoming Valley  
**Artist:** Jasper Francis 1865



**Source:** Metropolitan Museum of Art,  
**Title:** Oxbow, **Artist:** Thomas Cole 1836

Scholars have stated that picturesque landscape paintings have the effect of evoking psychological effects and serene calmness to the viewer. They also point out the importance of picturesque landscape paintings in championing environmental challenges, and creating a stimulating atmosphere (Wango, 2022. Richman-Abdou 2017, Carlson 2009, Paden 2015, and Faison 2015). This suggests that picturesque landscaping paintings are good examples of artistic genre of painting that demonstrate the appreciation of the aesthetic nature of the environment. Some scholars like Carlson (2009) and Herzog (2016) however argue against this view. Carlson (2009) for example explains that picturesque landscape paintings are abstract depictions of the aesthetic nature of the environment that actually would prevent appreciation of the nature of the environment.

It is from this standpoints that this paper seeks to verify the indicated standpoints by demonstrating the aesthetic nature of the environment in picturesque landscape paintings. The paper descriptively analyzes picturesque landscape paintings of a select environment, the Shooting Range Zone at Kenyatta University, Nairobi. The Shooting Range Zone is a historical location at Kenyatta University where the colonial British Army used to store their firearms in the Armory and practice their shooting skills. Today, the Zone houses painting studios for students and lecture rooms for literature, theater, and film studies.

A select artist produced landscape paintings from the Shooting Range that were the primary data of study. Formal analysis was used to descriptively analyze the landscape paintings. The paper presents the analyzed results of the aesthetic nature of the Shooting Range environment as depicted in the picturesque landscape paintings. In so doing, the paper answers Muthama (2009) concerns that there was

need for artists to document their landscapes through drawing and painting.

## Literature Review

### Picturesque landscape painting

Paden (2015) explained the term “picturesque” to mean “picture-like.” The term was used in the eighteenth century to describe landscape painting depicting the nature of the environment as it is. Examples of early picturesque landscape painters include Claude Lorrain (1600–1682), and Gaspard Dughet (1615–1675).



**Source:** [Metropolitan Museum of Art](#),  
**Title:** The countryside, **Artist:** Claude Lorrain. 1615-1675



**Source:** [Metropolitan Museum of Art](#), **Title:** Sunset , **Artist:** Claude Lorrain (1600-1682)

Richman-Abdou (2017), Paden (2015) and Faison (2015) note that landscape paintings are an artistic genre that focuses on natural scenery. Wango (2022) and Paden (2015) agree and highlight the observational skills of the scenery, the selection of the preferred medium, and the application of techniques as the critical elements of display in picturesque landscape paintings. They point out that

realism, impressionism, and hyperrealism are bases of stylistic influence of picturesque landscape paintings.

### **The aesthetic nature of the environment**

Picturesque landscape painting not only depicts the aesthetic nature of the environment but also enhances the beautification of the landscape garden (Carlson (2009); Sehgal (2017); and Faison (2015). Mitchell (2014) further highlighted the appreciation of the aesthetic nature of the environment through picturesque landscape painting that features valleys and mountain ranges, prairies and forests, lakes and swamps, seas, and oceans.

Wango (2022) similarly pointed out that the aesthetic nature of the environment is the resource of reference for picturesque landscape painting. He also alluded to the fact that landscape painting invokes awe, curiosity, visual dialogue, and visual interest. Adam (2010), Wango (2022), Stokstan, and Cothren (2005) further acknowledge that picturesque landscape paintings carry a serene composition that convey a mood and feeling used to reflect the history of the scenery.

### **The Shooting Range Zone at Kenyatta University**

Kenyatta University in Kenya has various outstanding scenes, iconic buildings, thick forests, tarmac and dusty roads, and beautiful gardens (Kelvin, 2023). Shooting Range Zone, located in the Department of Fine Art and Design has among other scenes, monumental walls, a life-size sculptural piece, archaic buildings, beautiful gardens, and a forest of trees. Kelvin notes that the shooting range zone was the location of British military barracks in Kahawa garrison, Nairobi, and the archaic buildings were military training areas for the colonial military officers.

Today, the buildings are painting studios for students and lecture rooms for other courses such as literature, theater, and films. The serene nature of the shooting range zone is also a public recreation area used for religious mediation and relaxation by the Kenyatta University community. The area is made up of beautiful natural features of valleys and paths, prairies and forests, old buildings and walls, trees that fade off the flowers, and fast-growing grass.

## **Methodology**

A select artist produced landscape paintings from the Shooting Range that were the primary data of study. Formal analysis was used to descriptively analyze the landscape paintings (Barrett 1994). Wango (2022) and Carlson (2009) confirm that the appreciation of the aesthetic nature of the environment is analyzed in the application of textures, lines, colors, and resultant shapes, patterns, and designs. The paper presents the analyzed results of the aesthetic nature of the Shooting Range environment as depicted in the picturesque landscape paintings.

## **Results**

The section first presents the aesthetic nature of sections of the environment in the Shooting Range Zone at Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya. It then presents results of the formal analysis of the depiction of the selected sites in picturesque landscape paintings by a select artist.



## A Contour hill in the Shooting Range

This was the first site in the Shooting Zone selected for study. It includes a contour hill, a forest of trees, and short bushy grasses. At a glance, army armory houses that were used to store firearms can be spotted. Currently, the houses have been turned into art studios and an Administration Block for the Department of Fine Art and Design. There is a short path through this section that gives access to the students Residential Hostels in Nyayo Block. Along the path, exists a life-size full cement sculpture of a cultured man with a hat and holding a book.

*Artwork 1a* is a scribble with a bold pen on the nature of the environment on a hill in the shooting range.



**Artwork 1a Title: Path to the shooting range, Media: Ball point on cartridge paper. Technique: Scribbling technique Size: A3**

***Artist: Wanyax Arts (Wanyama Ogutu)***

***In Artwork 1a***, scribbling technique has been used to express the forest of trees in the distance together with a scattering of bushy grasses. The Department of Fine Art and Design, at the distance, is

depicted using hatching and cross-hatching techniques. Lines has also been utilized to scribble the cement sculpture showing a man reading. Around the sculpture, there can be seen a bushy path that leads to the administration block of the Department of Fine Art and Design. The scribble of the path is wider in the foreground and narrower as you move toward the administration block.



**Artwork 1b:** Title: Shooting Range Hill, Media: Biro Red faint pen and tea washes cartilage paper

Technique: Scribbling technique, Size: A3

Artist:

**Wanyax Arts (Wanyama Ogutu)**

**Artwork 1b** is another picturesque landscape painting of the contour hill in the Shooting Range done by the same artist in brown ocher on the Manila paper. Brown ocher is used to depict the environment. Brown ocher has also been used to depict the tone variation of the dark brown and light parts of the select site. The choice of media has

enabled the capture of the depth and intensity of a forest of trees and bushy grasses in the Zone.

The below *Artwork 1c* done of the same select site by the same artist, uses a combination of tea, coffee, and charcoal as the painting medium.



***Artwork 1c:*** Title: Shooting Range Hill, Media: coffee, tea washes, and charcoal, Size: A3

***Artist: WanyaX Arts (Wanyama Ogutu)***

The picturesque landscape painting above utilizes media that has been used to create depth and perspective of the forest of trees and bushy grasses in the Zone. The contours and scribbles of the hill of the shooting range are well achieved when the media is combined with washes of tea. Comparison of the achievement of depth and perspective of the forest of trees and bushy grasses using different medium is presented in *Artwork 1d* below:



**Artwork 1d: Title: Shoot range hill, Media: Acrylic on canvas, Size: 80cm by 60cm**

**Artist: Wanyax**

**Arts (Wanyama Ogutu)**

**Artwork 1d is a picturesque landscape painting of the same zone made using acrylic on canvas. It is a color harmony depiction of the nature of the environment. It captures the naturalist color harmonies of the hill of the shooting range during the day. This is represented by the blue sky, green forest of trees, and bushy grasses. The color harmonies display the distance and perspective of the landscape. The color harmonies clearly display the perspective and contour shape of the hill in the shooting range.**

### **A tarmac path to the shooting range**

**This was the second site in the Shooting Zone selected for study. It is a tarmac road leading to lecture rooms and studios at the shooting range. The long side of the route has an arrangement of a linear pattern of trees, shrubs, and flowers. The route also leads to the infamous informal settlement area known as 'KM'. The surrounding area is encompassed by a linear and atmospheric perspective of trees and bushes of grass and hostels. In the distance is an atmospheric perspective of the university games and sports grounds. At some point, moving vehicles can be spotted in a distance.**



**Artwork 2a Title: Path to the Shooting Range, Media: Ball point on cartridge paper, Technique: Scribbling technique Size: A3  
Artist: Wanyax arts (Wanyama Ogutu)**

**Artwork 2a** is a scribble using a bold pen of the study area done on cartridge paper. The scribbles are expressed along the path, along trees, shrubs, flowers, and the Department of Fine Art and Design. The picturesque landscape painting also shows the Administration Block building, a forest of trees, and a scattering of bushy grasses.

The right-side building is depicted by the hatch and cross-hatching technique of drawing. The scribbles of the bold pen had achieved the tarmac foreground and narrowed in the distance as it varnished on university game and sports grounds. The bold pen scribbling emphasize the beauty of the linearity of the tree and shrubs and flowers along the path.



**Artwork 2b Title: Path to the Shooting Range, Media: Watercolor washes on ivory paper Technique: Scribbling technique Size: A3 Artist: Wanyax Arts (Wanyama Ogutu)**

**Artwork 2b is a toned shade of Artwork 2a made using tea, coffee washes, and scribbles. The select media has created a tonal variation of light, shade, and shadow. It has also helped to create tonal variation and a linear and atmospheric perspective of the nature of the environment in the artwork.**



**Artwork 2c Title: Path to the Shooting Range, Media: acrylic on canvas, Size: 80cm by 60cm ,**

**Artist: Wanyax arts (Wanyama Ogutu)**

**Artwork 2c** is a colored painting displaying the realistic nature of the environment. The naturalist nature of the environment is displayed in depth, linear, and atmospheric perspective, like a blue sky, a green forest of trees, and bushy grasses. The color has captured the sunset and is reflecting on the foreground and distant landscape.

## **Shooting Range Studios**

This final site selected for study in the Shooting Range Zone were the Shooting Range studios. Currently, the shooting range studios are used as lecture halls and studios for painting classes. The Shooting range studios are next to a wall fence that forms the boundary of the University.

The select study site is densely covered by a forest of trees, shrubs, and a garden of flowers. The surrounding area is covered by a forest of trees in linear and atmospheric perspective. In the distance is an Armory that was used by the colonial army to store their armaments after a shooting practice. Today, the space around the armory offers a parking lot for vehicles and a recreation center for members of the university community.



**Artwork 3a: Title: Shoot range painting studio, Media: Ball point on cartridge paper, Technique: Scribbling technique Size: A3 Artist: Wanyax Arts (Wanyama Ogutu)**

**Artwork 3a (above)** is a scribble of the select site using a bold pen on cartridge paper, which has been captured from an atmospheric perspective. The scribbles capture the building and its environment, which includes a forest of trees, shrubs, and a garden of flowers. Hatching and cross-hatching techniques have been used to emphasize the forest of trees in a distance together with the scattering of bushy grasses.

**Artwork 3b (below)** is a rendition of the select site made using a bold red pen. It was created using rhythmic patterns made over toned shades of tea, coffee, and washes. The hatching and cross-hatching techniques have been used to emphasize the subject matter. The media has also created the tonal variation of light, shade, and shadow of the environment. It has also helped to create a deep atmospheric perspective on the nature of the environment.



**Artwork 3b Title: Shooting Range painting studio, Media: Ball point, Red bold pen and tea washes cartilage paper, Technique: Scribbling technique, Size: A3**

**Artist: Wanyax arts (Wanyama Ogutu)**



**Artwork 3c displays a subjective impressionist version of the nature of the environment. The artist chose his palette to emphasize the beauty of the trees, shrubs, and flowers. The subject of the color palette has been reflected on the long path of the painting studio and lecturing room. The impressionist nature of the environment has been depicted in depth, linearity, and atmosphere. The color harmonies have captured the subjective reflection of the nature of the environment.**



***Artwork 3c: Title: Shoot range painting studio, Media: Acrylic on canvas, Size: 80cm by 60cm***

***Artist: Wanyax Arts (Wanyama Ogutu)***

## **Conclusion**

**The paper draws inspiration from picturesque landscape paintings of the Renaissance period. Those paintings invoked psychological effects, championed environmental challenges, and created a religiously meditative atmosphere. The Renaissance period landscape**

**paintings featured the aesthetic nature of the environment, such as mountains, valleys, bodies of water, fields, forests, and coasts. Viewers of the artworks, at the time, appreciated the aesthetic nature of the environment as presented in the picturesque landscape paintings.**

**This paper has demonstrated a similar appreciation of the aesthetic nature of the environment using formal analysis instruments on a select selection of picturesque landscape paintings from the Shooting Range Zone at Kenyatta University. The selected artworks have depicted the aesthetic nature of the environment through the manipulation of elements of design textures, lines, colors, and resultant shapes, patterns, and designs. The paper ascertained that the aesthetic nature of any environment can be appreciated through picturesque landscape painting.**

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