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Communicative factors in visual abstraction of a Kithul tree in an 18th century Mural Painting of Sri Lanka

Abstract – The semi stylistic tradition came to a peek in mural paintings of Sri Lanka during the 18th century along with an enormous distribution throughout the central and suburban Kandyan domain. Scholars have explored and interpreted the story lines, its history and elements of paintings for centuries. However, knowledge on communication factor of visual abstraction is comprehended only to a minimal extent. Understanding the communication factor of these elements contribute to the consecutive exposition of historical evidence. This research aims to concentrate on 'kithul tree' which is identified as a unique foliage element in 18th century mural paintings to investigate the communicative factor in visual abstraction by studying the perception of present-day people. A drawing was reconstructed by hand painting, and used as a source to collect data and analyze based upon modern visual design principles. Thereafter the reconstructed drawing was exposed to participants in two different age categories 15-24 and 25-60 in equal ratios of male and female who are residents in Sri Lanka. The findings through interviews and guided questionnaire revealed the effective use of communication factor in the drawing based on the manipulation of supportive socio-economic element; a toddy pot on a kithul tree, rather than restraining it to the original components of the tree; leaves and the crown.

Keywords: Beverage consumption, Drinking vessels, Clay utensils, Culture, Tradition