
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Visual Aesthetics In Funke Akindele's A Tribe Called Judah

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| ABSTRACT

This paper interrogates visual aesthetics in Funke Akindele's A Tribe Called Judah (2023). The kernel of the discussion lies in the understanding of the psychological responses visual signs elicit in the viewers which leads to the appreciation of the film narrative. Through composition and framings of visual signs, the filmmaker weaves his/her story into aesthetically pleasing narrative that is stunningly arresting to the viewer. The filmmaker does this through the use of stylistic or visual elements that contribute to the overall look and feel of the film narrative. These stylistic elements include colour, lighting, composition, set design, costume design, props, make-up and other special effects. Using social semiotics and aesthetic theories, the discourse centers on how the filmmaker combined the different elements to create an impressive cinematic experience for the viewer. The study employs the descriptive and analytical methods, complimented with materials from books, journals, film texts and internet sources. It is also anchored on social semiotic theory. The findings reveal intricate and methodological use of visual aesthetic elements to render the narrative. The paper concludes that the place of visual aesthetic elements in heightening the aesthetics, theme, characterization and the overall visuals in the narratives is non-negotiable. The paper therefore, recommends that filmmakers invest more and explore new possibilities to ensure steady improvement in areas that concern visual aesthetics in Nollywood.

| KEYWORDS

Aesthetics, Film, Narrative, Nollywood, Visual

Introduction

Visual aesthetics in film are powerful tools for storytelling, influencing how audiences perceive and emotionally respond to a movie. In film art, semiotics and film aesthetics are hinged on the ethnographic realities and differences in film texts. Aesthetics is an age-old principle that hinges on the nature of beauty. Aesthetics apply to all facets of life. In design for instance, aesthetics may include visual terms and factors such as colour, balance, pattern, movement, shape and scale. The designers complement their designs by using these factors to enhance the attractiveness and functionality of their designs. The aesthetics of the film text is a serious determinant of what or how the visual iconographies in the film text are represented. Directors, cinematographers, production designers, and editors carefully craft these elements into visual icons that create memorable and impactful cinematic experiences. Through the use of colour, lighting, composition, costume design, set design, special effects, camera work, and editing, filmmakers can transport audiences to different

worlds, evoke a wide range of emotions, and communicate complex ideas. Understanding these elements and their interplay is essential for appreciating the artistry and craft that goes into creating a visually stunning film.

Visual Elements and Film Aesthetics.

The elements of visual aesthetics include colour, lighting, composition, costume design, set design, special effects, camera work (mechanical), and editing. In fact, a film's visual aesthetics is closely tied to production design in film production. The production designer coordinates all the visual elements of film in a production to achieve the visual aesthetics of the narrative. According to Bature-Uzor (2024),

Production design can simply be referred to as the arts and crafts of (in) film production. It can also be defined as the visual elements that make up a film's reality. Production design is a major contributor to film's ability to tell stories as it supplies the visual icons and symbols that are responsible for creating the narrative space in the narrative world of the story. The overall aesthetics of the film medium and what are termed mise-en-scene are provided by production design. It is the manipulation, creation and organization of the physical world of the narrative (p.157).

The physical and mechanical manipulation of these elements together in film narration ensures a breathtaking and thrilling experience for the viewer. The elements and the aesthetic experience they bring into film narration cannot be isolated from one another for together as an ensemble they are synthesized into one cinematic experience. On this note, L. A. Reid (1954) writing on aesthetics asserts that "investigation in aesthetics, ... is essentially philosophical ... it treats ... problems, not as strictly speaking isolable, but as in relation to one another". It simply means that when we discuss the visual aesthetics of film narratives, we are talking about the entirety of the visual signs as used by the filmmaker to encode the message in the narrative. Hence, we cannot discuss lighting in isolation from composition and colour, costume design in isolation from set design and composition, or camera work in isolation from editing. These elements work in tandem with each other to give each film narrative its extremely impressive and remarkable appeal. The film art institute its meanings by reflecting and even playing on the socially or conventionally established interpretations of situations and objects at its disposal. However, one cannot set limit to the signifying process in film for everything in a film text is designed to signify. All the elements combine in a mesh with the storyline to form one inseparable whole. The images on a film screen are images of objects which can exist ordinarily as in real situations. But when presented on the screen as film images, they not only reflect or reveal a verisimilitude of the situation, they are also

constructed for the purpose of bearing meanings for the viewer. Noting on how images in film are constructed, F. E. Sparshott (1979) observes that “a photograph of an event or happening is most easily made by finding one and photographing it; but scenes may be enacted and scenery constructed for the purpose”. (324) In the case of the later, whatever images that are produced are made for the purpose of whatever that is intended. This process is what David Sterritt called the “physicality” of cinematic narrative; the way in which the physical objects and bodies are arranged to give a sequence a systematic composition (as cited in Bruce, 2008, p.26). This notion of “physicality” is the main feature that distinguishes film narratives from the novel. The physicality coupled with the peculiar technique (motion) of the medium heightens the effect of films on the viewer. A reading of such narrative may consider how objects and technology are used as signs in the scene to construct the intended message. On this note, Bruce (2008) posits thus:

the essential innovation of cinema (...) is the uniqueness of the visual technique to individual filmmaker, as well as a heightened affectivity of the visual image over the written word: A novelist could give us some kind of equivalent for this, could make us react along the same general lines; but he couldn't make us react in this direct, immediate way, as image succeeds image - he couldn't control our actions so precisely in time. (25)

However, the film image is a reflection of basic reality as constructed by the filmmaker for the purpose of signification. This may be said to be in line with Robert Stam's position that film is “an artifact, a construct.” (2000, p.186)

The construction and production of meanings are achieved through the techniques of film which are predominantly visual supporting what Sterritt describes as the “physicality” of the cinematic narrative. Apart from the construction of the images as shots, there are other manipulations which the filmmaker employs in rendering his message to the viewer. These other manipulations, or rather, techniques, that string the images together as one whole narrative are products of the technology and the medium. Yet, there are others which are real objects (usually borrowed from reality) used at the services of the medium to actualize the meaning making process. These include the set pieces, costume, make-up, props, and location among others that are used as part of the narrative. However, though they are part of the real world, they are employed purposefully in the narrative to actualize the story. Above all, they provide the visual aesthetics of the film narrative. These also aid the narrativity of the spectators. Insofar as they are conscripted into the narrative, their usage in a film

follows the conventions of the medium and they also uphold the visual aesthetics of the film narrative by reinforcing the intent and message of the filmmaker.

Generally, a Nollywood film will in its representation show indices of Nigerian society and the cultures. Yet, within the Nigerian society and cultures, there are also sub-cultures that can be identified. Therefore, we can represent through the visual icons and aesthetic elements within Nollywood films sub-cultures and lifestyles identifiable as Nigerian. That Nigerianness as represented in the film narrative is on its own, part of the aesthetics of the film. These may be manifest through ethnic group representations, architecture, mores, values, dress culture, food, and other aspects which constitute the popular culture of the Nigerian society. It is these backgrounds and cultures which the filmmaker is representing that informs the visual aesthetics of the film narrative. Consequently, it also determines the visual iconographies to be used in the framings of signs in the film narrative. The societies and cultures are already replete with aesthetic markers which the filmmakers use in their construction of the narratives. Macebuh (1974) notes that “what we are faced with is not really the question as to whether there is evidence of a traditional aesthetic attitude”. (20) Aesthetics exist in our traditional environment, in our attitudes and our artefacts. For even in our dress cultures, artefacts, architecture and other visual ensembles, we reflect the aesthetics of the terrain where we come from. For example, the type of fabric, size, colour, and our way of adorning the dress is also affected by the aesthetics of the culture being represented. In costuming a film for instance, when the above indices of costume (fabric, colour, size, and attitude) are placed against the backdrop of a particular culture, the meaning of such can then be understood within the context of the film narrative. Meanings therefore, can be grasped through the understanding of the visual signs and aesthetics of the culture being represented. So also, is the understanding of the framing of every visual sign in film narration. Sparshott had earlier noted that

aesthetics of film as of any other art must be descriptive and analytic, giving an account of the relevant variables and their means of variation. And any such account must be rooted in some notion, however imprecise, of what a work of the art in question is. ... acceptable definitions need to specify not only the nature of the work itself but also the means essential to its production and its characteristic effects. (1979, p.321)

Visual Elements as Meaning Markers.

The visual aesthetics in a film narrative is a product of well-orchestrated visual elements as meaning markers to produce meaning. Meaning markers are elements - objects and technologies used as signs

by the filmmaker to produce the narrative text. By virtue of the medium, film constructs its meaning through the manipulation of technology and artistry and purely for aesthetic purpose. There is a myriad of visual elements that a filmmaker can avail oneself of in the production of meaningful narrative. As already stated, these can be in the form of technology or objects from the real world. The visual elements include colour, lighting, composition, set design, costume design, props, make-up and other special effects which are most often products of technologies like camera mechanisms and post-production technologies. Colours have psychological implications on film narratives and psychological impact on the viewers. Filmmakers use colours to create unique aesthetics in films. Colour can help to create nostalgic tone. Different eras can be depicted in film through distinct colour scheme to help the audience navigate the story's timeline. Just as colour palettes can be used to emphasize the coolness or harshness of the environment, weather or even the character(s) in a film narrative. Naturally, colour evoke specific psychological responses from the viewers. Warm colours like red, yellow and orange can evoke the feeling of passion, warmth or intensity, while cool colours like blue, green and purple can elicit a sense of calmness, detachment or sadness in the viewer. So, filmmakers cash in on these and use colours to subtly influence viewers' response to their movies.

Lighting is another visual element which filmmakers utilize to as meaning marker in film narration. Lighting apart from illuminating the environment goes further to function in the meaning-making process of film narration. So far it is to say that visibility is the basic function of lighting in film narratives, but it can go further as meaning marker to suggest and carry other meanings that are integral to the narrative. This can be achieved through maneuverings of light sources, types and the equipment. The light source can be the natural light (day light) or the artificial light (electricity and the different bulbs); the types of lighting here refer to the different techniques of lighting in film production; while the equipment refers to the technologies that are maneuvered to achieve the lighting procedure in a movie. Whether the light source is natural or artificial, the filmmakers use light innovatively to create atmospheres that are visually rich and thematically robust in the films. In the case of lighting type or techniques, filmmakers make use of either high-key lighting or low-key lighting. High-key lighting is characterized by brightness, even-lighting and lack of shadows. It is used to create cheerful atmosphere in movies, while Low-key lighting presents contrasts and shadows that are engrossed by filmmakers to create suspense-full and histrionic movies. Furthermore, lighting equipment here are technologies of lighting and their supports (accessories) that come in different forms and names depending on their function and the manufacturer. Lighting

equipment and accessories play important role in using lighting to communicate to the viewers. They can aid the filmmaker to achieve that tension, suspense, surreal and sense of mystery that the scene requires. The power of lighting to create surreal and sense of mystery can best be seen in horror genres where skillful use of lighting sends shivers on the viewers. In other genres like romance, lighting can heighten the romantic atmosphere in a scene and reinforce the filmmaker's intention.

Furthermore, the way a filmmaker composes his/her shots in the frames influence the visual aesthetics of the narrative. Composition encompasses the placement of objects and subjects in the frame, the harmonious use of other aesthetic elements in the production like costume, set, props and make-up. Composition helps the filmmaker to create a balanced and visually engaging narrative. The kernel of composition is the ability of the filmmaker to bring into focus the important idea in a scene through his composition. Knowing where and when to place an image in film is central to the meaning-making process of film. Similarly, costumes are pivotal in the visual iconography of movies. Costumes are essential in defining character(s), establishing periods, time, social/economic status, age, gender, occupation and enhancing the visual aesthetics in film narratives through the design. Through elements of colour, texture, scale, position, shape, line and space, costumes communicate the intent of the filmmaker. Apart from furnishing more than 60% of the visual tapestry which constitute the aesthetics of film, costumes support the style of the narrative. In the same vein, the importance of set design and art direction in visual aesthetics of film narratives cannot be overemphasized. What set design and art direction does in film narrative is to create believable worlds of the movies thereby aiding in the willing suspension of our beliefs. Set design and art direction are core in creating the physical environments where the stories unfold, the fictional world of the character(s). Like costume and make-up, set design and art direction fabricate the fictional world by establishing period, time of action, location, social/economic status of the character(s), mood of the narrative and the character(s) among others. Through meticulous craftsmanship and attention to details, the filmmaker creates a fictitious world, the world of the narrative which the character(s) inhabit and is immersed in through the duration of the movie.

Another visual aesthetic element which the filmmaker uses as meaning marker to enhance the visual storytelling is technology. Among the technological elements are the Computer-Generated Image (CGI) and the Special Effect (SFX). The use of SFX and CGI have given the filmmaker opportunity to conceptualize narratives which ordinarily would have been impossible to achieve without such technology. With SFX and CGI filmmakers can create worlds, scenes and characters that are out of

this life, yet, believable within the narrative world. Filmmakers also have opportunities of enhancing scenes and scenarios for desired effects through the help of SFX and CGI. Special Effect and Computer-Generated Image have created a new level of storytelling through animated films like cartoons and feature films like James Cameron's *Avatar* (2009). Characters and scenes are created purely with technology portraying a virtual world, a world of the virtual characters in the narrative. Similarly, cinematography, camera techniques and styles play core role in the visual aesthetics of film narratives. Cinematography is the art and technique of motion picture photographing. Cinematography encompasses the language of the camera, techniques and styles engaged by the filmmaker in realizing his/her intent. It encompasses the composition of scenes; lighting of set; choice of cameras, lenses, filters, camera movements and angles; harmonizing the SFX and CGI; and the framing of the images. These are meaning markers that play pivotal role in shaping the meaning and the aesthetic impact of film narratives. Furthermore, the filmmaker uses editing to finally harmonize all the elements in one single whole narration. According to Vsevolod Pudovkin (2009), "the construction of a scene from pieces, a sequence from scenes, and reel from sequences, and so forth, is called editing. Editing is one of the most significant instruments of effect possessed by the film technician and, therefore, by the scenarist also" (p.7). In editing, the filmmaker does his/her final selection and combination of shots to form a single narrative. Through editing the filmmaker can sway the pace and flow of the narrative, and profoundly influence the aesthetic experience of viewers in movies. Consequently, editing is actually a deliberate guide for the thoughts of the viewers

A Tribe Called Judah – Storyline.

A Tribe Called Judah is a story of an extraordinary single-mother, Jedidah (Funke Akindele) and her five sons, from five different fathers. Emeka (Jidekene Achufusi) is the first son, his father was Kalu. Adamu (Uzee Usman), is the second son and his father Bako is from Kano. The third son, Shina (Tobi Makinde), was sired by Lekan, a lesson teacher from Yoruba. Pere (Timini Egbuson) is the fourth child and his father, Boma is Ijaw. Ejiro (Olumide Oworu), is the last and his father is Urhoboh. Jedidah and her family are extraordinary because they lived a life of simplicity and care for humanity, thereby earning the trust of their society. Among the cast are also Ebelle Okaro, Uzor Arukwe, Nse Ikpe Etim, Genoveva Umeh, Faith Williams, Nosa Rex, Greg Ojefua, Ibrahim Yekini and Boma Akpore. Jedidah was disowned by her father, a Reverend gentleman because she got pregnant before wedlock. That was the beginning of series of encounter with men who always ended up leaving her with children without a father-figure in their lives. She works hard to make enough

income for herself and her children by driving the popular Nigerian tricycle called Keke Napep. Jedidah has a generous and caring heart. This generosity can be seen in her treatment of her children and neighbors. Jedidah brought her children up with strong family love and humanity. That love permeates through the struggle of the family even in the face of uncertainty about their mother's health and their fleeing from both the law enforcement agents and the criminal organization headed by Chairman Chigozie Onuoha (Uzor Arukwe), the money launderer with his boys. At the end of the movie, the love shown to Jedidah and her family remains outstanding as the people made sure that they escape successfully from the manhunt instituted by Chief Chigozie Onuoha to recover his money.

Visual Aesthetics in *A Tribe Called Judah*.

Visual aesthetics in film refer to the stylistic elements that contribute to the overall aesthetic look and feel of a movie. Visual aesthetics in film is achieved through the use of specific elements in film narration that influence the viewer's perception of the narrative. These elements may include colour, lighting, composition, costume design, set design, and special effects. As visual aesthetic tools, the elements are powerful storytelling tools that guide how the audience perceive and emotionally respond to a film narrative. Through careful and artistic use of camera movements and techniques, colour, lighting, composition, costume design, set design, special effects and editing, film directors, cinematographers, production designers and film editors communicate complex ideas to the viewer in film narrations. Through these elements, filmmakers transport their viewers to different worlds in each film narrative and evoke wide range of emotions in different scenes and sequences within the narrative. In Funke Akindele's box office hit film, *A Tribe Called Judah*, visual aesthetics played significant role in aiding the overall aesthetic appeal of the film. Distinctive visual aesthetics markers helped to shape the film's storytelling style and the overall visual appeal of the film. By careful use and application of colour, lighting, composition, set design, costume design, editing and special effects to support the narrative theme and character development, the filmmaker was able to achieve a stunning visual metaphor that distinctly carry the story of Jedidah and her five sons, the tribe that is called Judah. The visual choices contribute to the overall aesthetics by capturing and blending the traditional and contemporary Nigerian life and enhancing the narrative's emotional, cultural and aesthetic depth. Though these components of visual aesthetics are discussed individually, it is worthy to note that it is the combination of all the elements that create the visually pleasing narrative seen in *A Tribe Called Judah*. On this note, Sol Worth's assertion that "films are somehow delicate, like roses, and pulling the petals off a rose to study it is often viewed as an act of destruction" (1981, p.36) is pivotal to guide the discussion.

Funke Akindele's use of visual aesthetics markers strongly aided the narrative's impact on the viewers. Colour is one of the aesthetic elements in film and plays a crucial role in terms of the psychological and emotional content of a narrative. Colour palettes are used by filmmakers to create a unique visual aesthetic and influence the responses from the audience depending on the intent of the filmmaker. Therefore, a filmmaker can create different colour schemes to depict different eras and mood in his/her narrative. In *A Tribe Called Judah*, Akindele made use of warm and vibrant colors to convey the energy and spirit of the characters within the narrative environments. The colour palettes often emphasize earthy tones that link back to cultural roots of the characters and the natural feel of everyday life. There is also sporadic use of brighter colors to reflect mood and tension in some scenes. For example, there is cultural and emotional significance of colors which filmmakers leverage on while deciding on the colour palettes to use. Specific colours represent different cultural values and emotions in reality and filmmakers borrow profusely from cultures to authenticate narratives. As such, the use of red and yellow tones may signify vibrancy and warmth, while cooler tones can be used to signify tense moments or reflective scenes.



Image 1



Image 2

Similarly, there is a juxtaposition of urban and rural environments which is blended through colour contrast. In the film, the squalid and overcrowded urban streets of Jedidah's environment is

contrasted with that of Chief Onuoha through colour as can be seen in the images above.



Image 3



Image 4

Here, the multiple colours of neon signs advertising the different businesses in this complex in high-brow area of the city contrasts with the more natural hues of the suburb and overcrowded low-income area of the city. This indicates that filmmakers can use color contrasts to distinguish between urban and rural settings, and can also distinguish within the urban settings through subtle variations in choices of colour tones. In addition, colours can be used by filmmakers to reflect changes in the development of characters or what is referred to as character arc. As characters in movies undergo personal growth or emotional changes, the color palette around them are expected to subtly shift, symbolizing their internal journey or transformation. This is evident in the scenes when Jedidah is already sick and her children are looking for money to fund her treatment.



Image 5



Image 6

Though the difference in the colour tones of the images above may not be outstandingly remarkable, the images show the character arc of Jedidah as she progresses from a boisterous energetic survivor to a sickly and dependent character in the narrative.

Another visual aesthetics marker in *A Tribe Called Judah* is the lighting techniques. Lighting can play more important roles other than illuminating the scenes. Zettl (2003) writing on television lighting states thus:

Lighting means to control light and shadows for three principal reasons: (1) to provide the television camera with adequate illumination so that it can see well, that is, produce technically acceptable pictures; (2) to help the viewer recognize what things and people look like and where they are in relation to one another and to their immediate environment; and (3) to establish a general feeling and mood of the event (p.130).

Though lighting serves the purpose of illumination in reality and in film production, it is also another tool a filmmaker can use effectively to create aesthetics in film production. It does not only expose the shot or scenery; it also combines with other elements in a film to achieve the overall signification intent of the filmmaker. Discussing the signifying function of light, Giannetti (1996) notes that

The illumination of most movies is seldom a casual matter, for lights can be used with pinpoint accuracy. Through the use of spotlights, which are highly selective in their focus and intensity, a director can guide the viewer's eyes to any area of the photographed image (p.17).

However, it is not only through spotlight that a filmmaker can direct the attention of the viewer to specific area or object in film production. A subtle light or lights of different intensities signify different ideas to the viewer. This underscores the fact that lighting for film is an art which the filmmaker employs for aesthetics. Giannetti (1996) notes that

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Lighting therefore, is another important arm of film production. Used first and foremost for illumination, it makes visible everything that is before the camera. Lighting is a major cinematic tool that goes beyond illumination. The basic use is for communication because it exposes the

required information to the viewer. It can convey meanings in film in very subtle and yet significant ways. Furthermore, William H. Phillips (2009) gave an insight on the importance of lighting in film which he drew from the evidence of our daily lives. He asserts thus:

The importance of lighting is evident in our daily lives: on sunny days, people are more likely to be cheerful; on cloudy days, people tend to feel subdued. Studies show that some people in Northern climates are subject to severe depression in winter if they receive too little light. The importance of lighting in film is suggested by the word photography, which means “writing with light”. (p.70)

Natural lighting in film can be used to evoke realism in the narratives. This can aid in reinforcing the authenticity of the story by lending a feeling of reality to certain scenes. The use of natural lighting style can give the story the feel of rawness and unfiltered.

Most exterior daylight scenes set in public spaces in *A Tribe Called Judah* have these characteristics.



Image 7



Image 8

Furthermore, lighting in films can be used symbolically to create conflicting emotions or duality in characters. Filmmakers purposely make use of light and shadow to highlight internal conflicts in characters' lives. They can achieve this through the use of high-key lighting or low-key lighting depending on the theme of the narrative.

Costumes are used as storytelling tools for the purpose of communication in *A Tribe Called Judah* and therefore, an aesthetic marker. Apart from defining the characters and establishing time, period, locale, and occupations of the characters, the costumes played a pivotal role in

enhancing the visual aesthetics of the film narrative. The importance of costume in creating the visual aesthetics of film narratives is best captured in Penny Storm's analogy that "dress has so much meaning that it would be far easier to produce a Shakespearean play a stage without sets than without costumes" (1987, p.112). Consequently, Bature-Uzor (2024) states that "whether a narrative is set in the present, the past, in a distant location, or in an imaginary time and place, costume designers collaborate with directors and other designers to bring to life the characters in the story". (p.176) Costume is the dress an actor wears for the production to play his/her role. It is the "magic" that transforms the actor into the role he is playing. While transforming, costume must aspire to support the theme, concept, and mood of the narrative through style, color, texture, and scale. Costume in film is one of the visual and tangible signs which filmmakers use in signifying intents in film. According to Giannetti, costume and make-up are not just used to enhance illusion in film narrative but plays significant roles. He states that

In the most sensitive films and plays, costume and make-up aren't merely frills added to enhance an illusion, but aspects of character and theme. Their style can reveal class, self-image, even psychological states. Depending on their cut, texture, and bulk, certain costumes can suggest agitation, fastidiousness, delicacy, dignity, and so on. A costume, then, is a medium, especially in the cinema, where a close-up of a fabric can suggest information that's independent even of the wearer. (1996, p.310)

Costume then, is a major tool in the hands of filmmakers for visual aesthetics. For this reason, there are certain characteristics that are expected for costumes in a narrative. Cunningham (1989) had earlier identified such traits thus:

The costume must (1) set the character in time (historical period) and space (geographical or imaginary place), (2) establish the approximate age and gender of a character, (3) establish the rank or social status of the character, (4) establish the personality of the character, and (5) reflect any changes in time, space, age, status, and personality that the character goes through during the play (p.3).

These are possible inferences a viewer can deduct from the images in a film narrative.



Image 9



Image 10

In image 9 above, we could identify each and every one of the characters' lifestyle, personality, social status and occupation through their costumes. Likewise, we could relate to the cultural background of the characters in image 10 to be the Northern part of Nigeria through their costumes. Costume choices are tailored to reflect the characters' backgrounds, personal values, and cultural connections.

Set Design is another visual aesthetics marker used by filmmaker to establish mood, social and economic status, cultural background and tone in movies. The locations of the various scenes—whether homes, workplaces, or community areas—reflect the emotional and thematic tones of the film. Location and set design make the fictional worlds of movies believable and immersive for the audience. For instance, cluttered and overcrowded spaces in Jedidah's home helped in visually expressing the situation of the family more than any dialogue could have done.

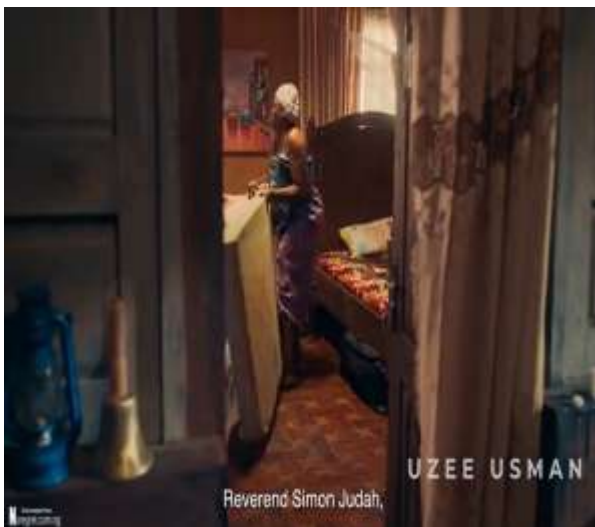


Image 11

Image 12

The claustrophobic and the import of the environment of Jedidah's home as evident in the two images above represent both the mental states and socio-economic status of the characters living house. Likewise, the use of props and other cultural symbols highlight the visual aesthetics of the film. Props and every other cultural symbol in *A Tribe Called Judah* such as jewelries, ornaments, and everyday items carry cultural meaning. They subtly grounded the story in a Nigerian context. Jedidah lived in the Northern part of the country and must have acquired some of the enamel bowls as can be seen in image 13. Similarly, the kerosene lantern, candle, mattress-on-the-floor, and other paraphernalia under the bed and hanging on the wall in image 14 are all part of what created the aesthetics of a hardworking single mother, struggling to survive with her five grown sons who are not educated enough to hold well-paying jobs. Each of the props in these images add layers of meaning to the visual narrative and enhance visual aesthetics of the movie.



Image 13



Image 14

Another aesthetics marker used in Akindele's *A Tribe Called Judah* is the cinematography which is encapsulated through the camera works. Shots are used artistically for aesthetic purposes. Generally, the spectator in film sees through the camera's eye. What we see is only what the camera saw while recording in the production process. The filmmaker chooses what he/she wants the viewer to see in the each shot and also how he/she wants it to be seen. Sparshott (1979) notes that "the plasticity of camera viewpoint is such that films, like novels and unlike plays, can focus one's attention precisely. Only what is irreducibly relevant to the story need to be shown. A raised eye-brow can fill the screen." (p.339) Furthermore, when discussing aesthetics in cinematography, variables like camera

angles, shots, and camera movements come into focus. The camera angle describes the positioning of the camera in relation to the subject in the process of recording an image, while shots describe the framing of the subjects as they are photographed. Similarly, camera movement describes the physical and mechanical manipulations of the camera and its accessories for artistic purposes. A pan, a tilt, a dolly, and a zoom in any film narrative functions in the meaning-making process of the text thereby enriching the visual aesthetics. Akindele used shots and dynamic camera movements to strengthen the aesthetic aura in *A Tribe Called Judah*. For instance, close-up shots allow viewers to connect intimately with the characters and understand their internal struggles, while wide-angle shots are used to emphasize the setting and contextualize the backgrounds. To convey actions and movements, Akindele also used hand-held camera shots (Steady cam) for different emotional scenes. There is also the use of high and low angle shots to represent different perspectives of some scenes. In the two images below (images 15 and 16), high angle shots are used to show different perspectives of the same scene and action in a sequence.



Image 15



Image 16

Pacing in film is an important visual aesthetic marker. Pacing generally refers to the rhythm and speed at which a story is told. Pacing controls the audience emotion and response to the story. Filmmakers use pacing to manipulate timing and tension in narratives. The pacing of a narrative may be fast, slow or moderate depending on the intention of the filmmaker. The pace of a film narrative is mostly determined during the editing process. Editing is vital in the overall visual aesthetics of movies and obligatory in pacing of visual narratives. Combination of shots in editing creates additional ideas and meanings in films. The juxtaposition and placement of the images convey meaning as well as determine the pace of the narrative. Combining camera angles/movements, lighting, shot framing/duration, sound, cultural symbols and a wide array of other elements, the filmmaker reinforce the his/her idea to the audience for clarity of meaning.

This is to say that careless selection of shots in editing can undermine the expected meaning viewers are supposed to derive while seeing a movie. In narratives, fast-pacing creates tension, excitement and urgency, while slow-pacing gives introspective moments, helps to build tension anticipation and creates emotional depth in scenes and narratives. Moderate pacing in the other hand creates a balance and helps to maintain audience engagement with the actions in the scenes. Pacing is achieved in narratives through cutting, camera movement, music and sound, and the tone and delivery of dialogue. The filmmaker's choice of technique such as jump cuts, dissolves, fades and superimpositions help to control the pace of the narrative. Likewise, camera movements such as static shots, dolly and pan shots, music score, sound effects and the tone of dialogue all combine to contribute to the overall pacing of a narrative. In *A Tribe Called Judah*, Akindele employed effective pacing to build tension, evoke empathy and excitement, to reinforce the narrative's theme and atmosphere to guide the audience through the narration.

Conclusion.

In conclusion, visual aesthetic markers played vital role in the shaping Akindele's *A Tribe Called Judah*, reinforcing the overall intent of the movie and representing a believable verisimilitude of the scenes and actions. Through artistic use of stylistic elements like colour, lighting, use of visual aesthetic markers, composition and framing, set design, costume design, props, make-up and other special effects, the filmmaker presents a visually appetizing narrative that is able to hold the viewer's attention in a groundbreaking movie, *A Tribe Called Judah*.

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Filmography

A Tribe Called Judah. 2:14:07; colour, English/Yoruba/Igbo/Hausa; Writers: Funke Akindele Bello/Collins C. Okoh/Akinlabi Ishola; Art Dir: Olalekan Isiaka; Location: Adebayo O. Morayo; Set/Props: Banire D. Zainab; Costume: Funke Akindele Bello; Make-up: FEYZO! Makeup Artistry; Editor: Valentine Chukwuma; Producer: Funke Akindele Bello; Dir: Funke Akindele Bello and Adeoluwa Owu. FAAN/Funke Akindele Network. Nigeria, 2023.