

Diversity of Popular Expressions in Arab Maghreb Drawings

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Abstract

The current research addresses the study of the diversity of popular expressions in the drawings of the Arab Maghreb which can be employed in formative formulations that are consistent with the concepts of modernity in art, as the heritage expressions was associated with the authentic civilizational concepts and with the myths and folkloric stories that have an active presence in the memory of the Arab consciousness. The current research included four sections, the first contained the theoretical framework of the research. It identified the research problem which was summarized in the following question: What is the diversity in the popular expressions in the Arab Maghreb? In addition to its inclusion of the importance of the research and the need for it, and the research objective represented by (identifying the popular expressions in the Arab Maghreb), and it also included the research limits, including the objective that was determined by studying the representations of popular expressions in drawings of the Arab Maghreb executed with acrylic, watercolor and oil paints within the time limits confined between (1955_2018) and the spatial limits in the countries of the Arab Maghreb (Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria), reaching the definition of the terms mentioned in the research. The study analyzed a sample of 4 models from the works of artists from each of the countries of the Arab. Th results showed that the Moroccan artist sought to enrich his artistic experience with subjects related to the local and folkloric richness in the diversity of popular expressions, as in all the sample models of the research. The research concluded with proposals, in which it was suggested to conduct a comparative study between popular symbols in the countries of the Maghreb and the Arab Gulf countries.

Keywords: Diversity, Popular Expressions, Arab Maghreb, Drawings.

INTRODUCTION

Research Problem

Art is intricately linked to the aesthetics of popular heritage. it is one of the fundamental forms of human activity. Its significance lies in being a crucial factor that shapes the various cultures, which in turn work to alter and transform nature to fulfill the evolving and changing needs of human societies, based on their social conditions and development. Art is closely connected to the diverse active forces that drive the historical progression of society. It is inseparable from the broader set of social relations. As such, art serves as a formative model that elucidates the existing relationships between the world and humanity (Ragheb, 2003). The popular heritage of any nation serves as the historical roots for the emergence and development of human consciousness. It is a continuous cultural accumulation through the past, connected to the present and the future. Humans add to and develop these experiences, creating artistic works. The expressions of popular life can be used to highlight the national and ethnic identity of peoples, revealing their features through various elements of folk art. We find the presence of these elements in contemporary Arab art in general, and in the art of the Arab Maghreb in particular. In the majority of contemporary painting experiences in the Arab Maghreb (Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria), we find that they have celebrated the popular expressions , making it a diverse record that describes the social reality imbued with heritage, using an artistic style laden with tales, heroic stories, and historical events, in order to reinforce national identity. From the above, the research problem can be summarized in the following questions: What is the diversity of popular expressions in the drawings of the Arab Maghreb?

Research Significance

The importance of the research was evident in shedding light on the contemporary works of painters from the Arab Maghreb which were inspired by the expressions associated with popular heritage and its use in

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contemporary composition. Through this importance, the research will meet some needs, the most important of which is that it will help encourage more researchers working in artistic and cultural institutions to conduct studies on the drawings of artists in the Arab Maghreb and benefit art students and those interested in studying contemporary fine art in the Arab world.

Research Objective

This research aims to identify the diversity of popular expressions in contemporary drawings of the Arab Maghreb.

Research Limit

The research was limited in its scope to the objective of studying the diversity of popular expressions and its representations in contemporary drawings from the Arab Maghreb region. The drawings examined were executed using acrylic and oil painting techniques on canvas, and were created within the temporal scope of 1955 to 2018. Geographically, the study was confined to the countries of the Arab Maghreb, specifically Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Diversity is something contrary to uniformity, implying the multiplicity of visual elements and the difference in their attributes (Riyad, 1974). It is defined as what distinguishes the thing in itself, i.e., its inherent nature, which cannot be reduced to other types and categories (Saliba, 1385 AH). Diversity is a visual structure composed of formal elements governed by the means of organization in design, and linked by structural relationships (extension, symmetry, confrontation, division, perforation, harmony, symmetry, filling the space), which are based on aesthetic and intellectual foundations (Salih & Abd al-Amir, 2001). Procedurally, diversity refers to the process of variation in the symbols, shapes, beliefs, customs, and myths employed in the drawings of the Arab Maghreb, leading to the manifestation of different characteristics in terms of their outward appearances.

Expression is the partial image that forms an objective equivalent to signify a specific meaning within the structure of contemporary drawing in the Arab Maghreb.

The term "popular" means: the ancestor of the tribes to whom they ascribe, i.e., it gathers them and marks them.

Operationally, the diversity of popular expressions is the variation in connotations or symbols, shapes, beliefs, and writings in drawing, linked by organized units. The popular component takes on diverse formal changes and meanings among different peoples, according to their cultural factors and specific environment.

The Conceptual Dimensions of Popular Expressions

The task of drawing inspiration from popular expressions in the art of drawing is, in essence, a process of rebuilding them with an objective connotation that highlights and manifests their artistic value and the essence of their core meaning. Folk arts are replete with heritage elements and expressions that have the potential to form a distinctive artistic genre, capable of communicating and integrating with the spirit of the age and its ideas. Some of the most important of these elements are: tattooing and its tools, Arabic calligraphy and its forms, folk games, the shape of buildings and palaces, and certain animal figures such as camels and horses. All of these elements and symbols, along with techniques and materials, have an intimate relationship with the human being (Qansu, 1995).

The popular forms were produced by the cultural accumulation in the public imagination (the society) over a long temporal extension of many centuries, and others closer to us towards a cultural heritage produced by the successive succession in the development of society and its continuous transition from the countryside to the city, and from one cultural and cognitive era to another. The popular heritage in all its literary, artistic, and intellectual branches belongs to (imagination), or a kind of social imagination.

The creative works of artists within the bounds of the popular heritage represent the product of the interaction with the temporal succession upon it. These creative works are produced from the regular interaction between the creator's sensibilities and imagination on one hand, and the causes and influences of those interactions on the other hand. From this, the reasons for stimulating their innovative and creative thinking are formed. The art that draws its ideas and forms from the popular heritage, like its creator, is an art that springs from a human sentiment that awakens the feelings of others (Rasul, 1987).

The environment is considered one of the important and influential references in art, and it shapes it according to its needs. This is because the environment has an impact that goes beyond just providing forms and visuals - it is also capable of providing ideas to support the production processes. The environment is also a set of factors and circumstances surrounding the human being and a source of inspiration for experiences. There are factors that directly affect art from the environment, such as the surrounding and social factors that include customs and traditions, as well as the cultural factor and folk art. Also, the political, economic, and religious factors. Among the most important popular expressions that have emerged in the Arab world are:

Folk Tales and Myths

These are narrative accounts of the actions of social characters performing certain tasks, which can be circumstantial or factual. These tales are narrated to subsequent generations for the purpose of wisdom, advice, or entertainment, and to cite their connotations (Yunus, 1980).

Decorative Elements

The artist relied on popular traditional elements, including decorations, in the production of his paintings, so that they added splendor and beauty to the artwork (Qansu, 1978), such as: Bismillah, the (testimony) Shahada, prayers upon prophet Muhammad and his family, O Allah, Protector of Allah, Muhammad Ali, there is no sword but Dhul-Fiqar, the seal of Solomon peace be upon him, victory from Allah and a clear conquest, I have relied on Allah, Allah is beautiful and loves beauty, this is from the Grace of my Lord,... You also see that some of the decorations are inspired by carpets, rugs, and traditional architecture such as columns, domes, and arches, as well as lotus flowers.

There have also appeared in Islamic art various types of decorations executed on different materials and using different techniques, the most important of which are:

Vegetal elements: Their vocabulary is derived from nature after reformulating them by abstracting the natural elements (Mitchnell, 1987).

Geometric elements: They consist of lines, squares, triangles, circles, hexagonal and octagonal shapes, and star-shaped forms (Alshahabi, 1996).

Calligraphic elements: Through the employment of Arabic script and calligraphy (Al-Sa'id, 1988).

Traditional Costumes

Traditional costumes are considered one of the basic components of the cultural heritage of every people, due to their close connection with the history of this people in terms of their way of life and culture (Qansu, 1978, 1995).

Jewelry and Ornaments

The jewelry industry is considered one of the oldest activities practiced by humans since ancient times, and its types and forms can be considered a form of decoration and embellishment for the one who wears it (Contentau, 1966).

Tattoos

A group of human peoples have known the phenomenon of bodily tattooing as a magical, medical, ritual, ceremonial, and religious treatment; and tattooing was known to the Chinese, Indians, ancient Iraqis, Chaldeans, Persians, ancient Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans (Abbasi, 2011).

Folk Symbols

These include plant symbols (the palm tree as a symbol of fertility) and animal forms, such as the lion as a symbol of strength and courage. The peacock, inspired by Indian arts, was used in Islamic textiles as a symbol signifying happiness. The fish is a symbol of reproduction and expanding sustenance, while the camel is a symbol of the desert environment, and the dove is a symbol of peace (Alshammari, 2015).

Cosmic forms: These include the sun as the center of life and a symbol of power, the moon and the crescent, and their meanings of love, desire, and femininity. The crescent also symbolizes physical protection from envy (Chwalkowski, 2016), and the door is a symbol of passage to the afterlife.

Diversity of Popular Expressions in the Arab Maghreb Countries

The art flourished across the diverse regions of the Islamic world, particularly in the countries of the Maghreb. The various Islamic artistic styles were manifested in the distinctive features and characteristics observed in an array of architectural structures and artistic products. Among the important fields that Muslims engaged in were painting and portraiture, which they utilized to decorate walls, adorn and beautify manuscripts, and design their pages and covers. Furthermore, distinct Islamic schools of painting emerged, comprising four main ones: the Arab school, the Iranian school, the Mughal Indian school, and the Ottoman Turkish school. The Muslim artist gravitated towards the realm of abstraction (George, 2010). Islamic decoration developed its own unique characteristics that significantly contributed to showcasing the civilizational prominence and aesthetic value of the Muslim renaissance (Salman et al., 1982).

Morocco

The Moroccans have been associated with a series of ancient civilizations that flowed into the region from Europe, Africa, and the Arab East throughout the course of history, resulting in a treasury of customs, traditions, and arts. This has formed an important aesthetic, intellectual, and referential wealth for them. Tattoos, carpets, rugs, jewelry, inscriptions, decorations, plaster carving, woodwork, and stonework, as well as handicrafts - all these activities have been intertwined with Moroccan social consciousness, civilizational progress, and cultural advancement, forming what is known as the "Islamic arts." This art has been rooted in what was already present and established in the Phoenician, Roman, and Vandal civilizations that preceded Islam. However, the Islamic art was able to acquire a strong personality in a short period of time, which enabled it to parallel other civilizations, whether in Europe or Africa, with many distinctive features (Al-Salawi, 1982).

Moroccan civilization draws from a rich tapestry of influences, including the Eastern Arab, Amazigh, Andalusian, African, and contemporary Western sources. These diverse cultural currents have left an indelible mark on Moroccan visual art, endowing it with a unique identity distinct from other Arab regions. Moroccan art is distinguished by its profound authenticity, its reverence for local heritage, its reflection of Moroccan ethos, and its fusion of Andalusian, Arab, and Amazigh legacies. Among the prevalent Islamic arts in the Arab Maghreb is vibrant ornamentation, as well as the art of painting on stained glass and adorning textiles with colorful avian motifs. Muslim artisans in the Arab Maghreb have demonstrated exceptional skill in crafting and coloring these adornments, employing a palette that includes the primary blue of the sky, the verdant green of trees and fields, and the earthy brown tones of the land (Burckhardt, 2009).

Popular elements and expressions of Moroccan art include engravings, jewelry, wooden and metal tools, utensils, and lanterns, all adorned with pictorial scenes. Moroccan art is also evident in the vibrant colors and intricate geometric designs of ceramic, known locally as "zellige," * often seen in star-shaped dishes rarely found elsewhere. Moroccan artisans demonstrate exceptional skill in gypsum carving, embellishing both interior and exterior walls and ceilings with Quranic verses, proverbs, or prayers (Al-Arousi, 2015), as depicted in Figure 1).

The drawings inspired by folk heritage were initially confined to palaces and temples but later spread due to the use of modern printing presses. These drawings encompass various themes influenced by the artistic motifs of the Christian Middle Ages, interwoven with the tales and myths told by storytellers. Among them, one can find

illustrations from "Arabian Nights" and depictions of Prophet Solomon and his army of jinn. They also portray the heroic deeds of Antar ibn Shaddad al-Absi, along with images of Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib (peace be upon him) with his two sons, Imam Hassan and Imam Hussain (peace be upon them), as well as stories of the primordial creation and images of Adam and Eve. Many contemporary Moroccan artists have drawn inspiration from these drawings, reinterpreting them in a modern context. Some, like Abbas Saladi, have reused them, while others have integrated them into modern artworks, Figures 2 and 3 (Hamdawi, 2020).

Moroccan folk tales are anonymous texts, typical of narratives originating from oral tradition. They were crafted by a collective of authors who took turns narrating and documenting events. With each retelling, new details were added, causing the tales to expand and evolve according to the collective imagination. One such common folk tale in Morocco is the story of "Aisha Al-Qudsiyah," known colloquially as "Aisha Qandisha" or "Moulat Al-Marja," meaning the Lady of Blessings, as she is believed to reside at the bottom of rivers. This tale originated from a true story about a remarkably beautiful woman. When her family was killed by Portuguese colonizers, she sought revenge by seducing and killing the soldiers. Moroccan folk tales are rich with symbolic and allegorical meanings, serving as inspiration for Moroccan artists in their work, Figures 4 and 5 (Alshammari, 2015). Another popular source of inspiration is the tattoos and symbols drawn from body art and ancient engravings on Moroccan carpets. Tattoos, for men, signify bravery, authenticity, tribal belonging, and environmental ties (Qansu, 1995). They often include writings in Arabic and Amazigh languages, as well as drawings of women from the Tuareg tribes of the desert, who excel in henna painting on their hands or applying kohl to their eyes (Al-Arousi, 2015).

The aspects of identity, anthropology, civilization, and culture have become increasingly prominent among young people through the art of tattooing, Figures 6 and 7). Additionally, the craft of making "Zarabi" or carpets, considered one of the most important traditional industries in the Kingdom of Morocco, has gained significance. These carpets are reflected in the drawings made by women on their hands and feet using henna or kohl. Historians and anthropologists suggest that these symbols are influenced by "Tifnagh" writing, the ancient Amazigh script still used by Tuareg women to inscribe love poems on rocks in the vast Sahara Desert (Aljaṭṭārī, 2000), Figures 8 and 9.

In the realm of Islamic architectural heritage, we are captivated by the artistic expressions of Hassan Al-Alawi, Mohamed Al-Sarghini, Mohamed Jreid, Mohamed Al-Hamri, Mustafa Bouabid, and Mariam Maziane (from the first generation). Their works stand out not only for their vibrant colors but also for their exceptional craftsmanship. Many of these works exhibit a cohesive architectural unity, where each element seamlessly connects to the next, creating a harmony reminiscent of targeted cultural and aesthetic geometry (Al-Salawi, 2017), Figure 10.

Turning to environmental heritage, particularly in its markets and urban spaces, we are equally impressed by the creative depictions associated with horses and horsemanship. Artists such as Hassan Al-Klaoui, Mohamed Attoumi, Abdelatif Al-Zein, and Arabi Belqadi portray horses, symbolizing authenticity and representing a deep connection with national heritage. These artists, along with many others, aim to showcase the virtues of horsemanship, long emblematic of the Moroccan environment. They draw inspiration from their readings of both ancient and contemporary Arabic and Amazigh poetry, which eloquently describe horses and horsemanship with remarkable creativity (Al-Salawi, 2017), Figure 11.

From within the depths of the Moroccan environment itself, we are impressed by numerous creative works that document, alongside horses and horsemanship, the "Tebourida" festivals, which are part of a series of Moroccan folk traditions. These festivals include, in addition to the interaction of horses and knights with gunfire, chants, and Ahidous dances, forming an important celebratory event that has contributed to enriching the concepts of folk arts and their development at cognitive and artistic levels. One Western researcher described Amazigh dance as suggestive of "waves of ears of grain, sand dunes in the desert, or mountain ranges on the horizon." It is noteworthy that Amazigh dance often takes on a collective character, featuring geometric shapes that intersect, face each other, are parallel, circular, or semicircular (Mimi, 2014).

Moroccan doors are characterized by their designs, featuring arches, domes, bold colors, intricate geometric patterns, and Islamic motifs. The blue doors are widespread in all countries around the Mediterranean Sea and

North Africa. There are two common reasons for using this color. Firstly, because it resembles the color of the sea, and secondly, because it is believed to ward off envy and keep evil away from homes, as is the case in Arab culture, Figures 13 and 14 (<https://ar.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/>).

Tunisia

Following Tunisia's cultural and national liberation and its independence from French colonization, several artists sought to redefine Tunisian identity by drawing inspiration from folk and literary heritage. The origins of modern Tunisian art were notably evident in the works of first-generation artists like Abdelaziz Ben Aissa, Ammar Farhat, Ali Ben Salem, Abdelaziz Ferjani, and Ibrahim Adh-Dhahak. Through their distinctive styles, they aimed to create a new artistic identity (Alshammari, 2015). The early phase of painting in Tunisia was largely driven by amateur artists. They utilized miniature and mural paintings to portray elements of daily life, social customs, and national traditions with a sincere and documentary approach (Jawdi, 2007).

One of the most significant Tunisian heritage arts from the mid-19th to the early 20th century is glass painting, while printmaking gained prominence from the mid-20th century onwards. Ottoman calligraphy, including scripts like Thuluth and Tughra, also holds a prominent place (Gouia, 2018). Among contemporary artists who have excelled in this art form is Ali Ben Salem, Figures 15 and 16.

The imagery inspired by the history of Arab-African conquests, the stories recounting the jihad of Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib (peace be upon him), and the lives of his two sons, Imam Hassan and Imam Hussain (peace be upon them), as well as the narratives of saints and righteous individuals, constitutes an essential element of this art. Moreover, recurring thematic motifs like birds, animals, knights, and horses have evolved into a shared and predefined visual language. Popular artists employ these motifs to craft innovative compositions (Al-Lawātī, 1996), Figure 17.

Another significant aspect of Tunisian folk art is carpet weaving, which reflects a modern trend within the contemporary artistic movement in Tunisia. The choice of textiles and carpet weaving signifies a departure from dependence on Western aesthetics in terms of vision and accomplishment, as commonly seen in supported painting. This trend emerged from the necessity to break free from such dependence. Advocates of this movement, who are often associated with a tendency to root themselves in local traditions, believe that by choosing textiles and carpets, they open up a new field of research that initially connects them with the vitality of contemporary trends. Simultaneously, they establish a connection with local traditions by working with indigenous materials such as wool. Themes depicted on these carpets include trees, animals, birds, folk tales, and scenes from daily life, in addition to portraits. Safiya Farhat is considered the pioneer of this trend (Al-Lawātī, 1996), Figures 18 and 19.

Traditional Tunisian clothing includes the "Bakhnoug," a garment crafted from white wool, dyed black, while the decorative elements, made of white cotton threads, maintain their natural color. These decorations typically feature various geometric patterns arranged at the center and along the edges of the rectangular piece. When worn by married women, the Bakhnoug covers the upper body, while in some tribes, it envelops the entire body, depending on the style of wearing. These decorative elements or symbols have various local names such as "Foul," "Hilal," "Musht," "Hout," and "Khamsa, (Aljayzarāwī, 2016).

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Another significant traditional garment is the "Makdoul," a small shawl draped over the shoulders and fastened at chest level with two crescent-shaped patterns. Made of wool dyed red, the Makdoul is adorned with embroidered motifs, often resembling fish or scorpions. Its edges are fringed, and the color and embroidered symbols of this garment hold multiple meanings. Red symbolizes joy, happiness, and love, particularly during

wedding celebrations, which are among life's most joyful occasions. Therefore, people often choose vibrant colors like red to enhance their appearance with a sense of joy, Figure 20. Moreover, Tunisians pay meticulous attention to henna dyeing, as depicted in Figure 22.

Algeria

The visual arts in Algeria have been diverse, drawing from various sources. Some are linked to Algerian identity and the meanings it carries, such as language, culture, customs, and traditions practiced by the earliest inhabitants of Algeria. These include the vast, varied terrains and environments with their distinctive geographical locations. Algerian art has also been shaped by other sources throughout its historical epochs. Starting from the Phoenician, Berber, and Roman influences, through Islamic conquests, French colonization, and the artistic styles and cultures brought by these civilizations, Algerian art has been influenced by a variety of historical periods.

These diverse cultural influences merged with Algeria's rich local culture, which has ancient ties to prehistoric civilizations. Evidence of this can be found on the walls and in the caves of the Tassili Mountains, adorned with thousands of varied rock paintings and engravings depicting human and animal figures. These artworks continue to serve as an endless source of inspiration for Algerian artists. Following the spread of Islam in the 7th century AD, in regions like the Levant and North Africa, including Algeria, the lifestyle of the predominantly nomadic Berber population underwent changes and developments influenced by Islamic principles and their interactions with Arab migrants from the East (Almīlī, 1976). Algerian artists have effectively depicted the social landscape of Algeria, capturing its allure, authenticity, and rich heritage. They have established a profound connection with the geometric patterns and intricate designs characteristic of Islamic arts. Drawing inspiration from Algerian folk tales, artists have found abundant themes. Furthermore, they promote an openness to modern experiences and European techniques. This distinct approach remains evident in the Algerian art movement to this day. Despite the modernization of their art, Algerian artists strive to blend contemporary styles with the preservation of both Arab and Algerian identities. They are dedicated to maintaining authenticity, heritage, and cultural roots (Alshammari, 2015), Figure 22.

One of the historical sources of Islamic Arab art in Algeria is Miniature Art. Also known as illuminated manuscript art or illuminations this art form has flourished in Algeria, often standing out for its focus compared to other Arab countries. The origins of Miniature Art trace back to Islamic art, and much credit for reviving this Islamic heritage goes to the prominent artist Mohammed Racim, considered the dean of Algerian artists (Jawdī, 2007). With the emergence of a new generation, there has been a call to select the essentials of Arab-Islamic heritage and support the trend towards miniature art. This style is seen as a reference to Arab-Islamic features in art, carrying a hint of local national specificity. Mohammed Racim aimed to incorporate his nationalistic ideas into some of his miniatures, igniting the feelings of Algerians against French colonization, indirectly aligning them with the line of popular resistance. In historical circumstances that gave significance to artists of miniatures, they secured their place in the people's memory (Shawkat, 2002), Figure 23.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK INDICATORS

Folk heritage is a heritage of inherited social, cultural, literary, artistic, mythical, and craft traditions that a people or nation has passed down since ancient times.

Folk heritage constitutes an important aspect of the human culture of peoples. It is a complementary part of their civilization and forms the basis of their cultural and future structural framework. It encapsulates the history of any nation.

Every nation has its own vocabulary, through which each people expresses their own identity.

The environment plays a significant role in expressing authentic and traditional forms. It is the main source of inspiration for folk art, representing customs, traditions, religious beliefs, landscapes, and popular culture.

Folk tales, myths, Islamic decorations, literary elements, music, tattoos, shapes, and popular symbols are among the most important expressions in Arab culture, particularly in the Arab Maghreb region.

Diversity of Popular Expressions in Arab Maghreb Drawings

Among the references of folk arts used by Arab artists are symbols such as the fish, the hand of Fatima (Khamsa), the crescent, and the moon, which are inherited popular symbols passed down through generations.

Popular forms are a definition of societal customs and behaviors, serving as an alternative to verbal communication.

The Arab Maghreb region is one of the Arab countries most closely associated with Islamic civilization and heritage, given its manuscripts, architectural structures, and geometric shapes.

It is evident that ornamentation in the Maghreb region is primarily based on geometric shapes, much like in Islamic art. Muslim artists often used geometric, animal, and calligraphic forms. Maghrebi decorations are characterized by their multiple bilateral or trilateral surfaces.

Contemporary Moroccan artists have drawn inspiration from Arab folk tales such as "Arabian Nights," storytellers, and images of Imam Ali, as well as his sons Hassan and Hussein, integrating them into modern artworks.

Tunisia has excelled in traditional drawings on glass, as well as in home and shop decorations. Tunis is among the first Arab countries to be renowned for this art form.

Folk costumes in the countries of the Maghreb vary from one country to another and from one city to another. In each city, there is a unique folk costume often adorned with symbols that carry specific meanings, including the crescent, the five-pointed star, the fish, and the scorpion.

Carpet painting and weaving are among the most important sources of heritage in which Moroccan women have played a significant role.

Algeria stands out among the countries of the Maghreb for its high adoption of Islamic heritage vocabulary, including miniature art, Islamic ornamentation, and Arabic calligraphy.

Previous Studies

The two researchers conducted a survey of the current research landscape on the topic of popular expressions in the Arab Maghreb. They discovered that there were no previous studies directly addressing their research topic. Despite reviewing various Arabic sources, including general and specific heritage materials in electronic libraries, public libraries, fine arts colleges, as well as theses, dissertations, and international internet networks, social media platforms, and scientific encyclopedias, they found no studies on the same topic.

METHODS

Research Design

The researchers adopted the descriptive approach in analyzing the research sample, as it is one of the most appropriate scientific methods for the current research.

Research Community

The research sample for this study comprises 60 artworks executed in oil, acrylic, watercolor, and various other media. The researchers obtained these artworks as visual references from relevant art sources, such as books, magazines, and the online galleries of the artists themselves. The researchers then utilized these artworks in a manner that aligns with the objectives of their research.

Sample

The researchers purposefully selected a research sample consisting of 6 artistic panels. The selection criteria included the presence of popular expressions in the drawings from the Arab Maghreb countries and ensuring diversity in these expressions, as determined by experts attached in Appendix A.

Instrument

The researchers relied on the cognitive indicators that emerged from the theoretical framework as criteria for analysis.

Sample Analysis

Model (1)

Artist: Mohamed Rasem

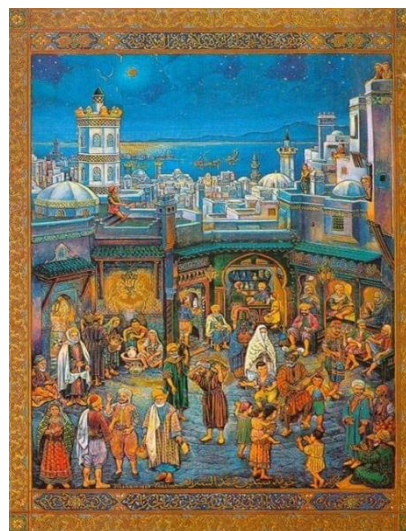
Painting title: The night of the middle of Ramadan

Material: gouache on paper

Size: 25 * 30 cm

Completion date: 1955

Country: Algeria



The analysis: The overall composition of the painting features rich decorative friezes adorning the right and left sides of the frame. The upper part of the frame contains two rectangular sections with Arabic calligraphy written in the Thuluth script. The upper rectangle displays the text "Ancient Islamic Algeria", while the lower rectangle reads "Huma Sidi Al-Sharif", which is the name of a historic neighborhood in Algiers that is depicted in the artwork. While the bottom rectangle of the painting frame includes the phrase (Night of the middle of Ramadan in Algeria). The painting is divided into three distinct sections. The first section represents a courtyard scene, populated by a diverse group of people of varying shapes, ages, and attire. The second section depicts the architectural elements, including mosques, houses, and shops. The third section showcases a natural landscape, comprising the moon, stars, the sea, mountains, and a port with a lighthouse and ships.

The miniature painting has captured the customs and traditions of Algeria during the celebration of the 15th of Ramadan night. It also depicts the everyday life, costumes, and architectural heritage of Algeria during the French colonial era, making it a historical document that represents that time period. The painting is distinguished by its meticulous attention to detail in a realistic style, in addition to the decorative Islamic floral and geometric patterns that adorn the frame. The artwork highlights various scenes, such as a vegetable vendor on the right, with two people nearby, all of whom appear joyful. In front of them, children are dancing merrily around a musician, which reflects the celebratory spirit of the mid-Ramadan night, an occasion of great significance in Algerian Islamic heritage. Next to the musician, a café worker is carrying a hookah to a customer, and the painting also shows men drinking coffee. In the center of the courtyard, a woman is accompanied by her maid carrying a bucket, and a bathhouse and a shop are also visible, with two people making a purchase. This suggests that the people are moving about safely at night to go about their daily lives and errands in their local, traditional environment.

The elements, including the colors, appear diverse, harmonious, and rich in their value and intensity. We observe the prominent presence of yellow, green, blue, purple, brown, and orange-pink hues in most components of the miniature. The color blue, in its various shades, is used in the courtyard's ground, the mosque walls, and the shop fronts. The artist has employed green in the clothing, shop entrances, and walls, alongside white and different shades of purple to highlight the clothing, mosque walls, and minarets. Red has been used for the women's attire and the men's hats. The artist has skillfully utilized the primary and secondary

colors, as well as their gradations, which has given the painting a pure, vibrant quality reminiscent of Islamic-Arab miniatures. Regarding the lines, the artwork is composed of horizontal, vertical, diagonal, and curved lines, which are visible in the meeting of the mountains and the sea, the folds of the clothing, the clouds, and the mountains, as well as the straight horizontal and vertical lines in the painting's frame. Overall, the painting embodies the Algerian folk environment, particularly the Arab-Islamic heritage, through its diverse motifs and elements.

Model (2)

Artist: Ammar Farhat

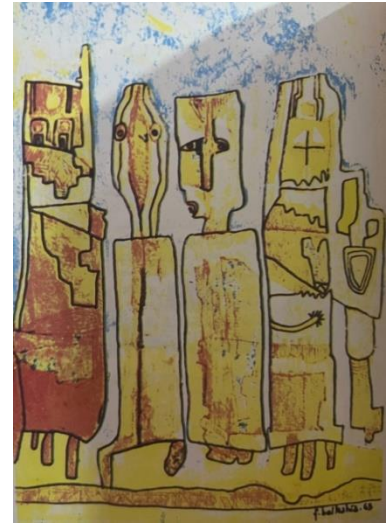
Painting title: Negro Wedding

Material: oil on paper

Size: 80*60 cm

Date of work: 1973

Country: Tunisia



The analysis: The artist has depicted a scene from everyday Tunisian life, showing a group of people gathered in a circular formation, as if in a folk wedding celebration. They are holding various musical instruments and wearing diverse traditional attire, including women, men, and children. The artwork highlights the active presence of the folk heritage through the artist's embodiment of the popular theme of a wedding celebration. We observe scenes of dancing, singing, drumming, and celebration, which are part of the folk traditions that the Moroccan artist has captured, relying on the gestures and expressions conveyed by the figures to represent the elements of the scene. Amar Farhat has painted the subject of the wedding, revealing the hidden aspects of the celebration, while also focusing on the figure of the child who is connected to art as an image and a means of livelihood. Farhat's popular musicians, who roam the streets, were a source of inspiration for his idea of art that is sold without the ability to truly captivate. Farhat's fascination with musicians is evident, as there is an element of music in all of his paintings, with his smooth, flowing, and dynamic lines suggesting a sense of merriment. The artist has carefully organized the placement of the figures, maintaining a balance in their sizes and distances, demonstrating his skill. Amar Farhat has sought to activate the folk expressions when he wanted to celebrate the universalities represented by the themes of joy, peace, and wedding, rather than literal depiction and dissection.



Model (3)

Artist: Fatima Hassan Al-Farouj

Painting title: Celebration

Material: Oil on canvas

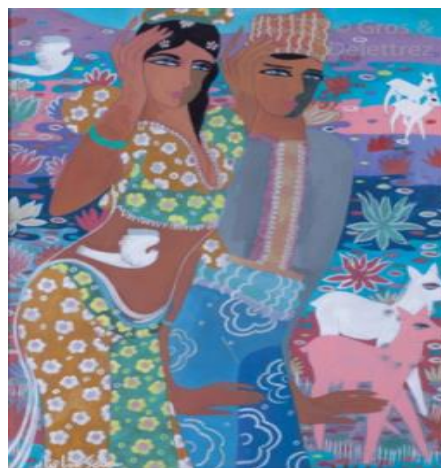
Size: 110*53 cm

Completion date: 1976

Country: Morocco

The analysis: The female artist has depicted a scene from the social life in Morocco, representing a group of women in folkloric attire with diverse and intricate patterns. The long dresses and decorated headdresses, along with the varied facial features and some women having forehead tattoos, suggest a collective dance performance accompanied by music and drums. The overall scene captures one of the popular celebrations, where a group of women are engaged in a traditional Saharan Amazigh dance called "Al-Kadra," which emphasizes hand and finger movements. The vibrant colors used in the painting, such as pink, blue, purple, orange, yellow, and red, create a celebratory and joyful atmosphere.

While the female artist aims to present the subject with a documentary spirit, capturing the details of reality, she also inclines towards a sense of freedom in the execution of the forms and colors, arranging them according to her own preferences. In terms of the overall composition, the artist employs a direct observational approach, placing the viewer in the center of the unfolding events, akin to a narrative style. This narrative approach allows the artist to incorporate all the knowledge she has about the subject, according to a temporal and spatial sequence, which is expressed through the ascending compositional levels of the artwork. The female artist takes on the role of a narrator, arranging the various times, places, and events to encompass the entirety of the scene. The female artist also benefits from the ability to divide the visual spaces into distinct color areas, even within a single form, allowing her to construct a unified color system despite the fragmentation into smaller spaces.



Model (4)

Artist name: Ali bin Salem

Painting title: Outdoor wedding

Material: gouache on paper

Size: 50 * 68 cm

Completion date: 2001

Country: Tunisia

The analysis: The artist has depicted a scene featuring a couple, with a group of gazelles on the right side of the painting and a flock of doves in the center and upper part, creating a mythical and recurring scene. The female figure is wearing a highly ornamented, floral-patterned garment that emphasizes her femininity, and she is adorned with jewelry and has henna applied. The overall scene is celebrated through harmonious and repetitive linear and color rhythms, which have contributed to revealing the diversity of the folk expressions achieved by the compositional relationships on the pictorial surface. These relationships indicate the true existence of the subject, meaning, and the connection between the apparent form that reveals the true nature of sensory objects, and the imagined inner form that unveils the spiritual significance behind the image. These values are represented in the artist's emphasis on the expressive, dynamic representation of the scenes and the derivation of a symbolic, pictorial equivalent for the imagined beings. The artist has skillfully integrated the various elements - the couple, the gazelles, and the doves - into a cohesive and harmonious composition, where the repetitive patterns and rhythms serve to unify the overall visual experience.

In addition, the artist has attempted to free himself from meticulous precision and has treated the constituent elements of the scene in a simple manner that conveys a sense of spontaneity. The researchers note that the artist has neglected the third dimension of the painting in order to give the artwork greater symbolism, moving away from realistic three-dimensionality. This is also evident in the artist's rendering of the decorative patterns in the background, which fill the canvas. This suggests the artist's influence by Islamic arts and their treatment of space, where the avoidance of empty space is a characteristic. The artist's spatial compositions can be referred to as "paradisiacal" in nature in which the artist Ben Salem preserved his human forms, most of which were

women. The artist, Ben Salem, has approached the female body as the vessel that holds the symbolic meaning produced by the imagination. The recurring gazelle motif, a popular symbol, represents peace, joy, and happiness, and is depicted with a remarkable diversity that makes the viewer aware of a vast world of forms that vary, differ, move, and yet remain constant.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The Moroccan artist sought to enrich his artistic experience with subjects related to the local and folkloric richness in the diversity of popular expressions, as in all the sample models of the research.

The Moroccan artist drew inspiration for his subjects and expressions from the surrounding social environment, as well as from the myths and popular heritage represented by the popular customs, traditions, religious, political, and social beliefs, as in all the sample models.

Popular symbols appeared effectively in the drawings of the artists of the Arab Maghreb, the aesthetics of diversity in the formation of visual scenes depend on the techniques and performance of modernity, within the processes of composition, reduction and simplification, as in most of the sample models.

Popular symbols appeared effectively in the drawings of the artists of the Arab Maghreb. The aesthetics of diversity in the formation of visual scenes depend on the techniques and performance of modernity, within the processes of composition, reduction and simplification, as in most of the sample models.

The Moroccan artist showed a clear influence of references related to Islamic heritage and its arts, which was clearly reflected in the experience, investing in popular expressions as in the models (1, 2, 4).

The experiences confirm the human value in social life, as in the models (1, 3).

The style of the artists of the Arab Maghreb appeared towards imaginative data that draw mental images taken from the heritage of the Middle Ages and the Islamic era, and their representation of stories and myths such as the Arabian nights as in model 4.

The Moroccan artist used popular symbols with folkloric and cultural connotations (the moon, the blue color, the dove, the minaret) and other intellectual and aesthetic dimensions, as in the model.

Some works appeared to express the human feelings represented by the theme of women and their role in social life, which are rich in inherited calligraphy, ideas, and mythological beliefs, as in model (4).

The Moroccan artist employed Arabic calligraphy in his paintings, as Arabic scripts are characterized by the presence of some sentences and abbreviated phrases from proverbs and quotes within the painting. In addition to giving it the aesthetic value of tradition, it is considered a textual aesthetic element related to the parts of the painting, as in model (1).

CONCLUSIONS

1_ Popular expressions are considered a fundamental source in the composition of the artwork, despite the stylistic diversity of the artists of the Arab Maghreb.

The environment influenced the Moroccan, Tunisian, and Algerian artists psychologically and culturally, and provided them with diverse visual choices that contributed to enriching their artistic experiences.

The concept of identity and adherence to authenticity formed a common denominator for most artists in the Arab Maghreb, which came as a reaction to the previous occupations.

The woman played a major role in shaping the culture of Arab artists in general and the Arab Maghreb in particular. She contributed to the transmission of inherited experiences from generation to generation and preserved the popular culture through her presence within the society.

Most of the experiences of Moroccan, Tunisian, and Algerian artists celebrated the popular expressions to be a diverse record that describes the social reality deeply rooted in heritage, in an artistic style that utilizes the memory of heritage and the extent of their inspiration of ideas in their artistic experiences with a heritage character.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of this study, it is recommended to:

Focus on studying folk arts and heritage, as it plays a crucial role in linking the past to the present and working on its modernization, with more concepts, ideas, and data.

Benefit from the propositions mentioned in the theoretical framework, in a way that reinforces the reasons for researching the theme of this study, the diversity in popular expressions.

Suggestion For Future Research

The researchers proposed conducting a comparison between popular symbols in the Maghreb countries and the Arab Gulf countries.

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Appendix A

Expert committees

Expert	Department	University
1 Prof. Dr. Safaa Al-Saadoun	Department of Fine Arts, Drawing	University of Babylon
2 Prof. Dr. Mohsen Al-Qazwini	Department of Fine Arts, Drawing	University of Babylon
3 Prof. Dr. Ali Hussein, phone	Department of Fine Arts, Drawing	University of Babylon

Appendix B



Figure 1. Moroccan Zellij



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4. The legend of the fairy Aisha.



Figure 5. The legend of Aisha in the imagination of a Moroccan painter.



Figure 7.



Figure 6.



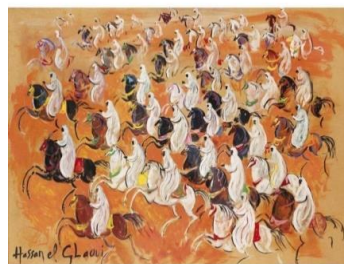
Figure 8. A corral from Chishawa, Morocco.



Figure 9. A corral from Tazakhat, Morocco.



الشكل (10) لوحة محمد الحمري



الشكل (11) لوحة حسن الكلاوي



الشكل (12) الرقص الشعبي



Figure 13.



Figure 14.

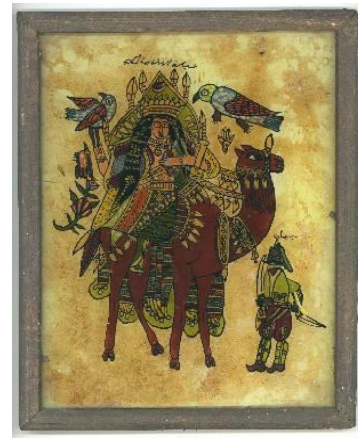


Figure 15.



Figure 16.

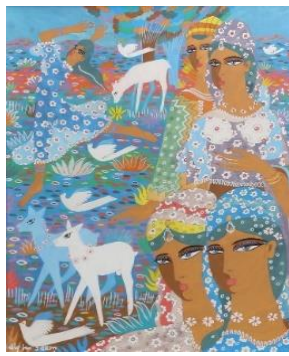


Figure 17.



Figure 18.



Figure 19. Safia Farhat's carpets.



Figure 20.



Figure 21.



Figure 22. Painting by artist Baya.

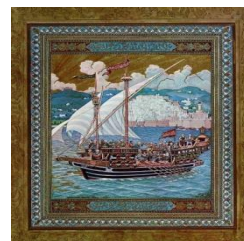


Figure 23. A plotter's INTERN/miniature.