

The Concept of Image in Contemporary Culture and its Application to the Products of Students of Fine Arts

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Abstract

Contemporary literature has addressed new concepts necessitated by changes, cognitive explosions, and globalization. Image culture stands at the forefront of these concepts. The image, as the foremost visual art, is a language that has captured human energies to create an era. This study aims to explore the concept of the image in contemporary culture and its applications in the products of students of fine arts. The researcher utilized the descriptive-analytical method, concluding that visual culture and its social and spatial references have a clear impact on cultivating aesthetic taste among learners.

Keywords: Image Concept, Image Culture, Contemporary Culture, Fine Arts.

INTRODUCTION

Chapter One

THE METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE RESEARCH

Firstly: The Research Problem

The image is the intersection of arts and the threshold upon which the receiver stands to perceive the unseen world through a new language that captivates the visual energy of the receiver. It arrests their imagination and perception, interacting invisibly to produce concepts that contribute to enriching cultural, cognitive, and aesthetic activities, transforming image culture into a highly expressive force. As the image works to reshape reality anew, diagnosing and presenting it with an aesthetic model according to the material that forms it, it formulates an aesthetic representation of the phenomenon or idea. This is evidence of the supremacy and dominance of the image in our current era, making it one of the important cultural and cognitive tools for communication among humans. This becomes evident as we receive and construct our mental perceptions from countless mental and visual images, thereby forming a vessel for the culture and civilization of the receiver, and giving cultures their frameworks, characteristics, and enriching them with latent energies, whether conceptual, linked to an idea, or materialistic, tangible. Through the concept and sensation, the essence of the image is defined. Modern life is filled with images and their embodiments, interactions, and invasions of times, places, manifestations, types, and expressions. The modernity of the era cannot be imagined without images because we belong to a civilization of images. The receiver can receive and enjoy the image without the need for a linguistic background for understanding or enjoyment. Image culture is based on the foundation of change and blending between the formats of arts to express emotional forms. It reveals to us the contents of the world in a symbolic expressive language that influences our cultural and intellectual lives. Furthermore, the information and technology revolution has changed the vocabulary of artistic work, which relies primarily on the image as a means of communication. This has brought about a change in the production of image culture, making it a powerful force in influencing the receiver. Here, the image has taken on a new artistic role transcending generations, surpassing a prominent place in our daily lives. Therefore, the concept of the image in contemporary culture has become a cultural quest and a visionary approach that influences the understanding of human societal practices in general, and the practice of artistic discourse in its various fields in particular. Therefore, the concept of the image in contemporary culture has become a cultural inquiry and a metaphorical vision that impacts the understanding of human societal practices in general, and the practice of artistic discourse in its various fields in particular. Educational studies have indicated that engaging the senses in guided

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artistic experiences for learners in artistic educational settings helps retain that experience. It involves multiple sources that contribute to the process of perception, expanding and detailing the experience. The most influential stimuli on learners are visual stimuli. Given the importance of the image, understanding its nature, perceiving its purpose, and understanding its influential role in educational settings and acquiring skillful and cognitive experience in the field of fine arts, as well as its contribution to providing learners with aesthetic and artistic concepts and the ability to interpret visual images, which are one of the important areas of culture and knowledge.

The current research problem can be established through the following question: **What Are the Sources and Dimensions of the Image in Contemporary Culture that Distinguish the Students of the Institute of Fine Arts in their Artistic Productions?**

Secondly: The Importance of the Research and its Necessity

The importance of the research and its necessity is manifested in the following:

The learner in the field of fine arts needs a visual culture that suits the concepts and ideas encountered in the artistic educational context, which is skill-oriented, such as planning, designing, and imaging.

Artistic image culture deepens artistic culture by understanding the objectives of the image and its effects on the receiver, as it shapes and conveys emotions into an artistic form that influences the receiver.

The concept of the image, from a cultural perspective, represents a reservoir of symbols and a highly impactful communication tool, both aesthetically and cognitively, rich in meanings, and densely present in the cognitive, cultural, and daily scene in the era of globalization.

Image culture is inherently significant for what it carries in terms of implications for learners in the field of fine arts, as it can be linked to the learner's ability in the artistic field to accomplish their artistic discourse.

The image contributes to the formation of visual awareness and cultural literacy through its semiotics for the learner, helping them organize their skillful activity to make optimal use of their capabilities in accomplishing artistic works.

Thirdly: The Research Objective

The Current Research Aims to: Identify the concept of the image in contemporary culture and its applications in the products of students of fine arts at the Institute of Fine Arts/Al-Kadhimiya.

Fourthly: Research Scope

The current research is limited to:

Objective Limit: The concept of the image in contemporary culture.

Time Limit: Academic year 2021-2022.

Spatial Limit: Institute of Fine Arts/Al-Kadhimiya for Male Students

Fifthly: Terminology Definition

First: Image

A set of signs conveyed within a specific medium from a sender to a receiver following a code or set of codes. The receiver of these sets of relationships interprets them according to the codes available to them. (Robert Schultz, 1994, p. 251)

Procedural Definition

It is the system perceived by the senses of the receiver (art student) that carries symbolic and referential meanings and influences their behavior, concepts, and aesthetic taste, reflecting on their artistic and visual output.

Second: Contemporary Culture

The collection of visual competencies possessed by an individual through vision, integrating and synthesizing other sensory experiences. Developing these competencies is considered a fundamental aspect of human learning that enables individuals to distinguish and interpret events, visual symbols, and elements through the creative use of these competencies. (Moore, 2007: p. 20)

Procedural Definition

It is the interaction of a set of interconnected and harmonious elements to form a structure and organization of cognitive structures for the art student, represented by their aesthetic taste and awareness of beauty.

Chapter Two

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

An Introduction to Understanding Images

Since the beginning of human history, people have sought a means to express and communicate with their environment and fellow beings. While these means have varied over time, the result has been the development of language, whether written or iconic. This has opened the door for humans to express their feelings, thoughts, and environment. Images have conveyed knowledge that largely reflects the culture of a society. They are one of the standalone arts that reflect intellectual contents containing many connotations and meanings, characterized by traits linked to societal philosophy, transporting the eye and mind to an imaginary or realistic scene that possesses impact and persuasion. Thus, the image has become a modern language with the most significant and widespread impact in shaping the most important components of contemporary culture. It is based on the rapid technological and informational evolution, and is considered one of the important means of expressing human concepts, ideas, and feelings, surpassing the power of words. It is a product of technology and communication technology. The current era is the era of the image, due to its power of suggestion, expression, and influence. The system of human communication and expression is considered crucial due to its connection to imagination, beliefs, and human rituals that have accompanied the continuous development of economic and social thought. It is increasingly linked to control and influence with technological advancements, leading to a digital revolution. This has opened the doors to the evolution of images, breaking barriers and resulting in a transformation in the course of human consciousness, intellectual system, and creativity by transforming them into a visual space and altering their perception of the world and each other. The image is a language that attracts receivers belonging to different cultures and societies. Its immediate and effective impact and fascination can overshadow the reality of written words. In the present era, the image has shaped cultural, political, economic, and even aesthetic awareness. "The dominance of the image over cognitive and cultural worlds has the most significant impact and direction. It is the parallel language to the written language" (Aliya, 2016: p. 26).

Thus, it has become a comprehensive human culture that directs aesthetic tastes, political trends, and economic objectives. Each has its own goals and objectives for which it employs the image, utilizing contemporary technologies. The image has even become the epithet of the era and its title

Today, if constructed and employed skillfully, the image has become a potent force and a source of power due to its nature as an open text to the world and its diverse languages, allowing for multiple interpretations. The choice of design principles and elements makes the image more effective, in addition to its purpose and the message it carries within its folds. This helps in understanding artistic visual discourses and consequently appreciating them. The art student blends their culture with others and reflects what is happening in their society, balancing the visual elements, drawing inspiration from their mind, and then defining what they want from the viewers as a result of their reception of the visual image.

The Communicative and Aesthetic Dimension of Contemporary Image Culture

The proliferation of technological advancements, both visually and auditorily, has led to the assertion that we are now in the era of the image. It addresses all social levels, as it is a language with the ability to penetrate and

influence different layers of society. It has become part of the framework of all human cultures, thus occupying all human and vital areas. It is difficult to limit the implications of the concept of the image and to distinguish its boundaries and features. Clifford sees that humans are connected to a fabric of meanings that guide them to their fellow humans and then to the world, and the framework of meanings is culture. It is the task of humans to understand the meanings behind cultural actions. (Abu Kreisha, 2001: p. 38)

Here, a kind of conflict begins to emerge between two contrasting cultures: the culture of the image, representing popular culture and an extension of visual perception, and the culture of the word, representing intellectual culture with its analytical methods. The image became the most influential language among the masses because written or spoken words belong to symbols that require interpretation and operate on the mechanisms of the abstract mind. In contrast, the image does not require that effort in reception; its message is inherently powerful. The image, through its strong impact, has managed to occupy the first position in communication media through modern technological means. In the language of technology in our era, the image, with its manifestations and various forms, feeds the collective imagination and establishes a language distinct from public discourse. This transformation raises philosophical issues about its status in contemporary culture. The transition of the image from the mental to the visual phase has opened the door to various debates. The image now employs itself as a sign and language, meaning that it signifies and conveys meaning simultaneously. It is the sought-after message, exercising its charm in influence due to its communicative and effective nature. It has become a language that transcends temporal and spatial boundaries, making the language of technology with its contemporary and interactive techniques. What enhances the value and dominance of the image in contemporary culture is its relationship with reality and the extension of imagination from the mind to the visible reality. This relationship makes the reality surpass the current reality, as the image reflects a mental or imaginary model from an abstract world to a visual, tangible world. This reflection has an impact on reality through interaction and influence, making the image exceptionally communicative as a language in the age of technology. "The concept of reality has changed to the point that when we are faced with an image, we do not see reality but rather a reflected reality." (Mazouz 2014: p. 146)

This reflection represents the philosophy of the age, a world that is reshaping itself, reflecting a new pattern of being, of presence and absence. Thus, contemporary thought has been formed, and the image has become a moment of manifestation, a language that transcends places and the richness of interpretation and marketing, a means of expression, interaction, and communication. Stollnitz suggests that "the image has meanings, and to achieve this, it must have elements that come together to bring pleasure and reflect an ability to address emotions." (Stollnitz 1981: p. 239)

The relationship between the different aspects of an image, whether sensory, intellectual, creative, or cognitive, is a direct and precise reflection of the relationship between the individual and society in every age. The reality of life and our interactions imply a deep scientific theory that testifies that human actions are directly related to aesthetic issues, and that the first moments of awareness involve the aesthetic comprehension and perception of our surroundings. Here, the researcher finds that visual culture has different, interconnected, intertwined, and flexible meanings that resist definition. The development in culture, images, and arts in general does not negate the old but coexists and progresses with it. Due to the importance of visual culture and its impact on the educational context and the acquisition of skillful and cognitive experience, especially in various fields of fine arts, involving more than one sense in recognizing and understanding them, and the message they aim to convey. Therefore, learners, especially in the field of fine arts, need skills in reading images, symbols, and forms contained within them to select images and form their visual impressions and to accomplish their artistic works, which are part of the requirements of the practical aspect. Visual culture is a vessel for an individual's experience in general and the artist-learner in particular, which can be developed through various skillful and cognitive means that the artist-learner receives through the fields of arts in colleges and art institutes.

The Image within the Cultural Variations

The image is a communicative civilizational language that transcends all languages and dominates fields of knowledge and science, carrying within its folds symbols, meanings, and various connotations. It is an effective communication tool in the revolution of social, cultural, and economic transformations. The image is no longer

just a beauty framework representing a frozen moment in time; it is a means of creating cultural awareness. It has succeeded in spreading a unified global culture imbued with the ideology of its creators and dominators, through technology that is characterized by an open technological horizon, fulfilling an effective communicative, aesthetic, and civilizational role. It has transitioned from being merely aesthetic as one of the arts that artists are concerned with in composition and form, to a functional art concerned with shaping the social and cultural values of societies and future generations. Today, the world is inundated with a flood of images, allowing individuals, regardless of their differences, to "experience the visual manifestations of modern technologies in a way that has never happened before in human history" (Abdelhamid, 2005: p. 11).

The culture of the image today is a language that introduces a new alphabet of images and senses, known as the "culture of penetration," which globalization promotes as an alternative to ideological conflict, seeking to flatten awareness to entrench a specific type of knowledge (Abed, 1998: p. 18). The image possesses an influential symbolic authority on the cultural perception, which is why globalization focuses on the culture of the image, as the visual system is the strongest source for producing values and shaping awareness. It is the key to the cultural system, which is considered the awareness production system. The internet has established a new culture, known as post-text culture, or the culture of the image. It has brought about transformations in the fabric of human culture, affecting genders and classes, impacting cultural trends. The image has become an effective means of communication, shaping cultural and artistic transformations, playing a convincing, aesthetic, and civilizational role. It penetrates the recipient's perception, creating its own language that stimulates the recipient's awareness, imagination, and creates meanings. Thus, the culture of the image has become one of the contemporary phenomena of globalization. Today, it reproduces the world according to the will of its creator, possessing the ability to evoke the absent, obscure the present, dominate contemporary life, and flatten reality. Therefore, the occupation of culture in human reception processes has made the image the cognitive origin, while reality has become a mere reflection of the image, issuing from it rather than being the mimetic basis (Abdullah, 2005: p. 15).

Therefore, the researcher suggests that the learner interested in the artistic aspect should be equipped with a set of cognitive tools that enable them to uncover the hidden connotations of images, leading to ideological patterns, cultural convergence, and diverse cultural backgrounds.

The Culture of Imagery in the Realm of Arts

The culture of imagery serves as a means of communication and a conveyor of knowledge, being an integrated system that carries forms, symbols, and content embodying the experiences and characteristics of peoples. It is renewable and dynamic, contributing to the creation of new aspects of societal beauty and aspirations. It extracts meaning from what it sees and is capable of conveying meaning through the images it creates, as it is a form that carries a cultural heritage and ideas within its folds.

Visual culture is a vessel that incorporates the learner's artistic experience, practical practices, behavior, and mental characteristics to produce an artistic work that carries thought and values. The artistic image that an art student seeks to achieve confirms culture through the study of art, meaning that skills, values, and orientations are integrated in harmony, giving the art student a unique character. "The artistic culture that the study of art seeks to acquire has a comprehensive impact on the learner, affecting his emotions and mind in various aspects of life, making the outcome of the artistic work a reflection of how the artist perceives, feels, tastes, interprets, and resonates with the surrounding world in his life." (Al-Basiouni, 1985: p.34)

The art student, upon understanding the surrealist school, which focuses on imagination, the unconscious, hidden symbols, and ideas that have no outlet for realization, looks at this visual artistic achievement and is able to decipher its symbols and complexities through visual culture, which enables him to interpret this or that artistic achievement consciously, sensually, and culturally. Without possessing that cultural arsenal, he looks superficially. Artistic culture enables him to understand simplified and clear concepts. Given the above, the researcher finds that visual artistic culture, through the study of art in the artistic educational setting, enables the art student to interpret symbols and forms based on aesthetic, artistic, and knowledgeable foundations, aware of artistic rules and traditions. This places the components of culture as part of the artistic vision, which

becomes an integral part of the artist's entity, as the artistic achievement is a tool of artistic culture. Visual culture is the result of interactions and inputs that individuals live by and pass on to future generations through intentional and unintentional education, societal ideology, educational systems, and life philosophies. It is an intellectual process, as individuals acquire perceptions, experiences, and information in their lives and social interactions. It serves as an indicator of the level and breadth of artistic taste, refining visual perceptions, developing mental characteristics, ideas, behaviors, and practices, shaping lifestyles, and is part of the global general culture. What enriches visual culture and elevates it is based on several sources that contribute to the learner's expertise. These include incoming cultures that lead to opening new horizons, especially in the field of arts, in addition to the assets of civilizations, such as contemporary civilization, global changes, cultural movements, artistic and intellectual accumulations, and heritage. Its importance lies in being one of the cultural changes associated with roots, identity, and heritage, and it is beginning to take its place within societies. This means that communication aligns with the values produced by culture. "We live in a civilization of the image" (Bart, 2001, p. 41).

One of the objectives of the image is that it is a culture that imposes on us, by our will, the change of our ideas. It has a special spatial and temporal design, creating a new culture that directs the patterns of societies according to the culture it contains. The art student harnesses the material and techniques, using the harmonies and rhythms that embody his insights. He takes from the world of colors direct sources of value and cares about the dominant aesthetic and sensory values. When the viewer contemplates the artistic achievement, he feels these values and the shaping of lines, surfaces, and shapes. Here, he is not content with formal analysis but delves into symbols, metaphors, and cultural and social connotations. Art and imagery have religious, utilitarian, and aesthetic functions.

Here we realize the importance of learning and linking knowledge to perception, as it deepens perception through knowledge. The best principles that nature has endowed individuals with are the inclination to choose simple assumptions in order to understand visual reality. Delving into vision and contemplating the perception of the relationships that govern the image in its construction is an approach to aesthetic appreciation and enriching values and aesthetic concepts. The images that individuals see exist in their consciousness with their symbols and codes. In thought, there is a fixed pattern of images and ideas, organizing new images in a hierarchical pattern of images. Reading these images is established in the system of visual equations. "Thinking in images goes beyond reality to evoke the past and live it" (Al-Yafi, 2007, p. 25).

The literature of the image indicates that individuals' sensory perceptions are 90% visual inputs, and understanding the nature of these inputs through the process of perception, which seeks meaning. Images are essentially from visual experience that is processed in coordination with images stored in our memory. Michel refers to "a family of images, including verbal, mental, perceptual, visual, and imaginative images, where all types of images are central to the importance of discourse related to knowledge" (Belkiz, 1997, p. 228).

The image has transformed the role of society and the family, causing changes in social and cultural behaviors practiced by groups. It has penetrated the barriers placed to intervene in the mental and psychological formation of society. Dealing with images requires a special type of reading, as the interaction with them is done in a civilized manner. Given the above, we find that the image has contributed to a transition in the sign between education and culture, as the culture of the image has replaced the word. There is a difference between contemporary images and past images. In the current era, the image precedes reality, and the image is the basis. It no longer mimics reality, but reality resembles a simulation of the image. Semiotics confirms that individuals construct meanings for the images they see based on their cultural and social backgrounds. Therefore, it is important to focus on the visual ability of the learner in the cultural context, as images have an impact on the learner's thinking. Studying semiotics as a strategy in reading images helps develop symbolic and creative meanings.

The Indicators of the Theoretical Framework

The propositions of beauty in artistic production interweave through various sources, including scientific and technical transformations and technological advancements.

Artistic production necessitates a formal, chromatic, and textural foundation within the space to achieve an actual perception of the essence of beauty.

Artistic production is linked to the visual culture acquired by the art student, carrying visions and connotations that interact with the structural organization of the elements of the artwork.

The concept of the image in contemporary culture enables the art student to transform familiar environmental elements into imaginative incubators, where the culture of the image serves both idea and form to establish a structure for artistic production that blends beauty and function.

The culture of the image forms a conceptual visual field as a relationship of connection and communication.

Cultural heritage, civilizational legacy, social reference, and social, political, and religious dimensions are foundational factors for the culture of the image in artistic production.

Chapter Three

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

Research Methodology

The researcher adopted the descriptive-analytical method as it suits the procedures of the current research.

Research Population

The research population was defined by the artistic outputs of fifth-grade students at the Institute of Fine Arts / Department of Visual Arts for the academic year 2021-2022, totaling (5) works.

Research Sample

The research population was chosen as the sample, consisting of (5) visual art works by fifth-grade students at the Institute of Fine Arts / Kadhimiya.

Research Instrument

To achieve the objective of the current research, which is to identify the concept of the image in contemporary culture within the outputs of fine arts students, the researcher developed a tool (artwork analysis form). Through this tool, the sample was analyzed based on the cultural reference of the image, the cultural image borrowed through its symbols, and the manifestation of the image in the artwork.

Instrument Validity

To determine the validity of the research instrument, the analysis form was presented to a group of experts in the fields of visual arts and art education. After making modifications to the form and considering the experts' feedback, the researcher used the Pearson correlation coefficient to determine the agreement rate among the experts.

Instrument Reliability

To measure the reliability of the analysis form, the researcher relied on two instructors in the field of visual arts to analyze the sample models to assess its suitability in achieving the research objectives. The reliability was calculated using the Pearson correlation coefficient, and it was found that the average reliability value for the sample models was 0.87, indicating a good level of reliability.

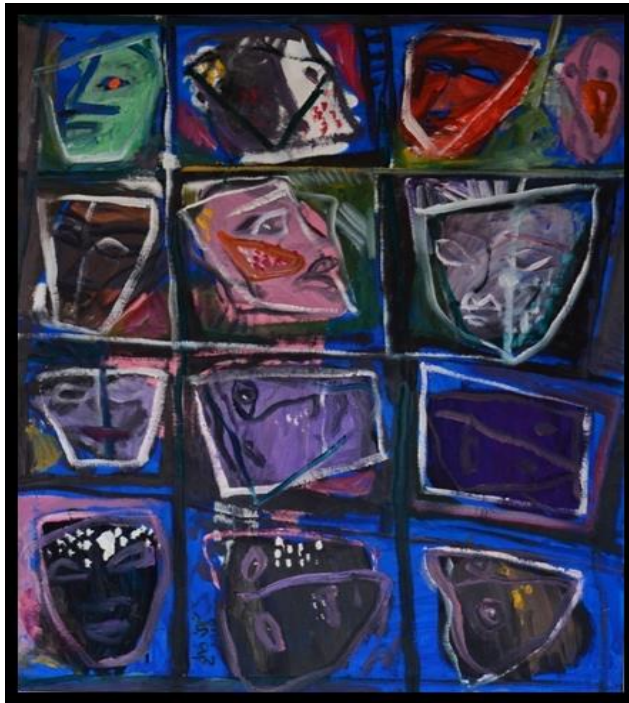
Sample Analysis



(Sample 1)

Description and Analysis

The visual formation is represented by an image of a girl's head with realistic features, including wide, closed eyes that depict an objective reality (human), with a social pictorial reference expressing womanhood. The artistic composition is distributed across the visual surface of the canvas, creating a harmonious and consistent color rhythm with earthy tones, purple, and red. Upon contemplation of the image through its lines and color treatment, one can discern a composition of symbolic formal patterns relying on reduction and omission to create a rhetorical image that embodies the mental conception of feminine beauty. The girl's face, in a state of expressive silence, conveys her spirit and perspective. Through the graceful movement of her face, the work suggests a connection between the present and the past, crystallizing cultural symbols and images. The art student's reliance on contemporary cultural references, which have become constants in the changing and extended time, is indicative of authentic artistic creativity. The student assimilated its foundations, including the solidity and balance of the composition, adding analytical focus in curved lines that express softness and tranquility. The features of Iraqi identity are evident in the rounded curves and smooth flow of lines, simplifying the mass. This can be observed through the borrowed shape that refers to the image of a girl's head. The art student has drawn upon and displaced the visual accomplishment without altering its essence, thereby creating a new text that embodies the attributes and techniques of modern art. The symbolic and pictorial openness is a kind of displacement of meaning in favor of another image, carrying expressive connotations representing the strength of femininity. The student has depicted it formally, breaking its iconic rigidity to reveal its new symbolic meanings, adding a touch of beauty and creativity.



(Sample 2)

Description and Analysis

The visual formation portrays an expressive symbolic style akin to Cubism, with human faces distributed across a dark blue visual surface, balanced on the canvas. The image revolves around an existential reality of an explosion that occurred in the country, experienced by the community members, giving a pictorial implication of the aftermath and its potential impacts. The representation of the human face within barriers by the student symbolizes the shape, concealing behind it connotations that unfold into multiple images, interpretations, and readings. The image's representations with faces signify a part of human existence, transforming it into a symbolic pictorial discourse with a political reference, reflecting the violence experienced by society members. The image representations in the artwork rely on the reduction of idea and form, leading to the depths of interpretation. The formation's references are political due to the accumulation of images depicting the deterioration of the political situation, emerging from the social reality experienced by the Iraqi society during the period of terrorism. This led to the development of an intellectual reference marked by renewal in the aesthetic taste of images and contemporary culture. The essence of the visual formation symbolized the events occurring at the moment of the bloody incidents. Contemplating the culture of the image reveals the strangeness of the scene and the value of the lived event. The art student sufficed with the mental image embodying the harsh reality, making color expressive of the transformation and becoming of the concept of terrorism. The connection between the individual's culture and environment with their mental and pictorial perception is evident, marked by the symbolic displacement leaning towards expressiveness through the sample. This artistic expression serves a visual and communicative function through its material presence. The visual formation reflects the student's intellectual and psychological content, which finds expression only through this visual accomplishment. This accomplishment bears symbolic connotations and repressed emotions, requiring an understanding based on prior knowledge of the subject matter and the memory's reserves. It is similar to metaphorical connotation, fundamentally transcending literal meaning, as the student utilized the expressive potential inherent in the text.



(Sample 3)

Description and Analysis

This visual composition features men lined up closely on the visual surface of the canvas, approaching abstraction as they lack facial features. The art student utilized various dark colors with touches of yellow, red, and blue in a semi-open space, achieving color balance and invoking the memory's cultural images in a modernist manner. The treatment of form and the abstraction of details, along with the manipulation of features using distortion techniques, imbue the shapes with symbolic connotations (strength and social harmony) that the student aimed to express in their visual text. This indicates the individual's pride in their cultural heritage and the effort to revive and breathe new life into it to prevent it from fading into obscurity. It is an intellectual and cultural image deeply ingrained in the student's mind, reinforced by the social role of heritage, which bestows it with a sense of idealism. Here, we find the image's references to the social aspect. The art student has reinterpreted the inherited formation according to contemporary demands, successfully emulating the inherited shapes in alignment with Sumerian symbols, both in form and substance (the stance of the worshippers and the intertextuality of ideas), lending the visual text a distinct aesthetic quality. The traditional shapes borrowed in the artwork create a dialectic between the old and the new, with lines and colors harmonizing to reveal the desired text. The student attempted to recreate the cultural image, returning to the concept of reviving and modernizing ancient heritage. The difference in materials and techniques used to achieve this visual text added a touch of genuine artistic beauty and creativity to the work.



(Sample 4)

Description and Analysis

The visual composition consists of human figures (paper cutouts) used by the art student to embody a conceptual and mental visual structure that overlapped and juxtaposed in a harmonious composition. The icons were spontaneously collected based on experimentation rather than imbuing the composition with specific meanings, engaging the viewer in a dialogue that carries multiple interpretive implications. The method of composition for each icon and their assembly gave the work a characteristic of diversity and multiplicity of images through the overlay and interplay of visual elements.

The execution of the work relied on multiple expressive mediums, including the diversity of materials used, such as paper cutouts treated on the pictorial surface using the collage technique. This visual accomplishment belongs to social and psychological references and structures. The visual expression of human existence and objects symbolically represented psychological connotations, conveying intellectual implications that have a psychological impact, wandering in the mind of the art student with a new artistic vision. The culture of the image for visual composition carried a unique visual language specific to the art student, addressing the viewer and engaging with the visual lexicon of their memories in a language carrying realistic and intertwined icons with color and line surfaces that transformed through the dynamism of the mind into a reflective mirror of life in the past. In this visual composition, the artist aimed to formulate their mental concept through overlapping and intertwining these visual icons and their suggestive cognitive connotations to achieve expressive power. This liberated vision from traditional relationships within the collage style, open to the inner world of the art student, achieves a language of communication that allows the art student to activate internal emotions through materialized images and a visual perspective. The value of line and color is based on the art student's personal experience, with each element attracting others in a relationship or within its integrated context. The art student created a conceptual image through visual patterns by invoking the forms of existence in all their aspects and details, integrating them into the context of artistic expression, pushing thought to envision aspects of the body to weave another pattern, making memory a tangible entity within specific social images that indicate this perception.

This visual composition embodies iconic and realistic images that appear as narrative texts, making the body the center around which relationships pertaining to events and actions revolve, as if transitioning between life stages in search of an expressive image that gives a visual suggestion of intellectual stations from transitory situations experienced by the individual. The composition is like incomplete narratives, and between them lies the aesthetic characteristic. The art student seeks to fill the gaps of reality with what is deemed appropriate from the elements of composition. Through these images, the viewer is led to interact and follow parts of the visual accomplishment and its symbols, according to their arrangement and convergence within themselves.



(Sample 5)

Description and Analysis

The images in this work are represented by traditional popular symbols (such as "shanasheel," the crescent, and geometric shapes represented by the triangle and circle), which are expressive and formal values that generate a moment connected to an uninterrupted heritage in the course between the past and the present. The aim of drawing inspiration from images and symbols of heritage is to interact with it due to its inherent traditions and customs, producing individual interactions in their social relationships, as they have a mental, material, and spiritual connection to society. It is evident from this visual composition the presence of traditional and social visual references that the artist interacted with, pushing them to borrow from them due to their connection to the social environment of the art student. The culture of the image here is a companion to the sensibility of the artist, as it is a mental image based on a cultural and social heritage in an attempt to connect the present with the past, as cultural heritage is derived from social culture and experiences of society members. The visual discourse carries symbolic connotations of a popular societal nature, embodying a cognitive heritage that directs the viewer to the horizon of imagination and blending with a genuine vision of reality through the inspiration of a social condition embodied by the visual composition of old Baghdad houses ("shanasheel"). Here, the art student attempts to create interaction between the viewer and the visual composition to reveal the intellectual and aesthetic aspects of heritage through color and line treatments that express the realistic context in the artwork, loading it with provocative meanings for the viewer. Awareness of the past and its components is a creative endeavor that calls for drawing on the spirit of culture. When contemplating the visual pattern with a cultural concept for the concept of heritage, which represents customs in the popular culture of Iraqi society as an entry point for expressing the concept of popular heritage, it takes meanings and connotations. The past extends into the body of the present, but through displacement to reach the collective unconscious narrative of vocabulary, it does not select a repeated model but rather shapes a new language that distinguishes it and employs heritage to modify it to reach the viewer with the depth of direct interaction and a renewed vision of symbols and expressive language that embody heritage in a way that reflects social life and folklore, evoking the art student the traditional symbols and employing them indirectly to embody the heritage landmarks and their revival, as they are related to the individual's present and future, giving this visual text interpretive possibilities in further directions of other topics, whether directly or indirectly related. It is an invocation of what his visual culture contains of ancient Iraqi forms saturated with by the art student, and employed them in a modern formula to affirm identity, intellectual communication, and civilization, in addition to its aesthetics employed in this work. It must be noted here that the palm tree shape that recalls our memory to our visual culture represented by Sumerian sculptures that accompany the viewer, carrying with it a metaphysical dimension, which is one of the ancient Iraqi symbols that carry multiple meanings such as fertility, growth, and giving. The art student has juxtaposed the image of the visual accomplishment content-wise and visually, to give his visual text distinctive individual stylistic features in his new visual discourse.

RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

The images in the sample varied between embodying the concept of violence and crime experienced by Iraqi society and the religious culture according to the place and religious affiliation, due to the strength of social pressure and borrowing from the heritage and cultural image that makes the viewer contemplate the beautiful meanings of visual composition.

The artistic works relied on social, political, religious references, and mental images.

The culture of the image and its transformations had a profound impact on the behavior of the art student in particular and society in general, with its direct impact on the learner and the viewer.

Linking art to social reality by presenting works that relate to and express the place and social reality experienced by the learner in a new vision.

The culture of the image in general works on shaping ideas and conveying them in an influential form that reaches the depths of the viewer. The image presented by the art student is a comprehensive visual representation of the idea.

Attempting to interrogate empirical reality with assumed reality in visual discourse.

There is a clear influence of the social environment in artistic works, especially the religious and social reference.

Recommendations

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations can be formulated:

The visual system of the visual accomplishment relied on explicit or indirect symbols, thus creating an interpretation that enhances its impact on the viewer's mind along with the other elements in those artistic works.

The necessity of introducing the culture of the image into the curricula of students in institutes of fine arts.

The experiences practiced by fine arts students with material objects in shaping the artistic accomplishment have become a source of awareness of the image and culture, considering the events, feelings, and ideas as entities and materials.

Raising awareness among fine arts students about the importance of engaging in artistic activities in their free time in diverse environments, which contributes to the development of their visual cultures, exposure to other cultures, and forming a scientific background for other arts.

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