

## Implications of the Node of Loss in Contemporary Arab Art

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### Abstract

This study examines the contemporary artistic work and sheds light on the most important implications of the node of loss of the Arab artist after the Arab Spring. In this period, the artist attempted to use new color techniques and methods to cope with the loss and deprivation of the Arab community, and it falls within the context of chaos and insecurity, which has created new grants in contemporary Arab art, on all aspects and aesthetic and technical levels, and even in the emotional and impressionistic aspects of the artistic product.

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### Introduction

Art<sup>1</sup> has been generally associated with useful industrial activity, along with poetry, literature, sculpture and music, since art is "a clever, conscious treatment of a mediator in order to achieve a goal", this is what we see in the arts trends after the First and Second World Wars. These reflections included instances of expression of the experiences of loss, deprivation and death of the Arab artist as a result of revolutions and wars.

### Statement of the Problem

Although contemporary art has received wide attention from the research in terms of studying the painting technically and its color, but we find in these studies a lack of the philosophical, emotional and emotional content, Which led to the studies that face the accumulation of dust on the shelves of libraries, form, mass, vacuum and color also are not necessarily what the artist seeks, but it is that spirit that dwells, and if we want to return this soul to that body, we must look for the original seeds that produced these paintings, and may be the philosophical study of the concepts of loss and other philosophical concepts set us in the clarification of this deep soul of the artist, perhaps this will add a little to studies on the subject in Arabic, hoping that this will give a new and serious dimension to critical studies of art.

### The importance of the study

The importance of the study stems from the fact that the monetary movement of the Arab art did not examine the philosophical and cognitive influences of the artist in his artistic production, this research focuses on exploring important philosophical concepts in this field, especially the concept of death and the concept of loss, and how these concepts affect the originality of the work of art, in addition, the importance of this research stems from the application of these concepts to the analysis of the paintings of contemporary Arab art in the era of the "Arab Spring".

### Objectives of the study

This research draws attention to the contemporary Arabic painting, and the impact of the reflection of the philosophy of loss in many respects, as follows:

1. Search for the concept of loss in philosophy.
2. Focus on the concept of death and the concept of loss at "Heidegger" and how to reflect it in his vision of the work of art.
3. The application of this methodology to the contemporary Arabic plastic art, which was presented after the "Arab spring" stage.
4. Elucidation and exploring the influences that contributed to contemporary Arab art, and how to analyze these influences from a philosophical point of view.

### Philosophy of Loss in Art

The study has always been looking at the Arabic painting visually, technically and in terms of colors. These studies have always been limited to the exploration and excavation of the main nerve and the main influence of the process of building work of art, where these studies were limited to looking at the formalities and external

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<sup>1</sup> Hegel defines art as "a process of mindset that is sequential in its degrees and levels. There are two types of art (progressive art and descending art), because of the level of consciousness and the level of mind. Art is a mental process by recognizing the laws of controversy and the highest stage of art is creativity. see Hassan, Saad, et al. (2005) Introduction to aesthetics, p. 66, N. I, Amman, Jordan.

manifestations, and here the researcher asks why the philosophy of loss has not received the necessary attention in the work of researchers on the essence of things and their association with philosophy and aesthetics? This is a major question in this research that leads us to a series of questions on the subject as follows:

1. What does the concept of loss mean philosophically?
2. How did Heidegger address the concept of death and loss, and how did his philosophy reflect his vision of art?
3. Did the reversal of the knot of loss have an effect of the Arab artists on their visual product after the Arab spring era, and if yes, did it have an effect on the shape of the painting artistically and aesthetically?
4. What influences have contributed to the change of Arab artworks, and how do we analyze these works philosophically?

Loss is considered one of important concepts in many domains on the humanitarian level, which is therefore an important topic of philosophical research; it has received attention in many philosophical views, one of the most important philosophies focused on the issue of loss is existential philosophy and phenomenology.

Heidegger is considered one of the most important phenomenologists who have been interested in the cause of philosophical loss. He considers that man always goes to his death, although he has not experienced death, but he tests the death of others as the loss that forms in man, and the most important of his words in the loss: "The" lost "who is different from the deceased, having been taken from the survivors, is the subject that concerns in the form of funeral or bury the rituals of the grave<sup>2</sup>. It is the subject that concerns the neighborhoods.

The philosophy of death was associated with the Dasein (the Thinker of his existence) as Heidegger implies, and the Dasein was associated with "Being", and the "Being" for him is linked to the human psyche, the combination of these relations and their association with human psychology refers us directly to this concept and what it requires, Freud's words can be referred to here to the psychological implications of man, where he says that the subconscious mind is a set of suppressed desires, impulses and experiences that affect the life of the individual in the future, and thus in society, so criticism here may be one of those experiences that may reflect themselves and affect the artist and what he produces, and that there are several functions of art as is known, including purely aesthetic functions, or provocative functions, including psychological and therapeutic (compensatory) and the latter often expresses the internal suppression of the human, which is referred to by Freud in the reflections of our lives through color and dealing with it on the surface of the painting, and here lies the aim of art and "the introspection of the sense of life and its embodiment and vital participation, which is an emotional appeal and interaction with the vital image.<sup>3</sup>

Although most of the previous studies went in their directions to look for shapes and landscapes, and to portray the facades and manifestations of external things only, without looking at the value of conscience and the idea, and without paying attention to the beating heart of that spirit, where there is a lot of talk about color and artistic composition and the elements of the work of art, in the criticism and aesthetic studies.

Some studies have tended to judge that the hold on the past is doomed to failure from the beginning, in order to reconstruct the past. The researcher tried to present some previous studies, each of which touches one or some of the parties to this research, which is as follows:

- Heather Love considered that the main contradiction of any critical analysis is that the reform of the future lies in a long history of suffering, wounds and violence. Opposing criticism is not only about the value and meaning of producing a stronger current structure, and even the history that give it this value and that meaning, and that as much the past motivates us to lose and give meaning to our current experiences, we are bound to remember it, and we will never forget it, but at the same time we are obliged to overcome the past and get rid of that heritage. For a group associated with the wounds of the past, the ability to interact with the past without being destroyed by that past can be investigated. Sometimes it is better to proceed, and leave everything, Heather Love is based on the words of Marx: "The deceased buries the died person, but it is the destructive factor of the past that tends to stay with us, and the desire to forget becomes a manifestation of persecution. The dead man still buries the deceased all day but to no avail.
- On the other hand, art is the basis on which artistic awareness and artistic culture are based, the development of artistic taste and aesthetic awareness, It thus embodies the concepts of art through the artistic work expressed in its cognitive and performance and in its final composition, to reflect on the recipient symbols and visions have social associations, as well as a reflection of the artist's cultural and artistic identity. It thus constituted a turning point in the artist's life, such as the concept of revolution, influence, civilization, beauty, culture and creativity<sup>4</sup>, as an important part of

<sup>2</sup> Heidegger, Martin, 2012, Being and Time, New Book House, Beirut, p. 434

<sup>3</sup> Abu Rayan, Muhammad (1989), Philosophy of Beauty and the Origin of Fine Arts, Alexandria, The House of University Knowledge . P. 3

<sup>4</sup> Belkheir, Hussein (2014-2015), Fine art and its educational impact on Arab society, Master of Fine Arts, University of Abu Bakr Belqiaer, p. H,I,J

the movement of society and cannot be separated from one another.

- That art is an expression and a cultural and social message, through which we can understand societies and study their development. In his view, art is an unusual expression, It is a remarkable and exciting production of the emotions, minds and perceptions of humanity, and also notes that "art promotes positive values in society, And works to improve the thought and taste of man and the liberation of souls and modify behaviors and unleash human energies away from intolerance"<sup>5</sup>. The artist is associated with the society and the psychological situations in which he is exposed within his society, in which the concept of loss falls within the framework of social construction in all its manifestations, in the sense that the artist influences and is influenced by the reality in which he lives.

Nevertheless, it is clear that the artist expresses in many places situations that are different from the optimistic view, and the loss may often have negative factors, but it is also supposed to have positive factors under new circumstances in a new society. "Marxist aesthetics demand dialectic to achieve the difficult but even impossible unity between temporal and eternal, between historical value and absolute value, between relative truth and total truth"<sup>6</sup>, here we note that the study refers to philosophical thinking in aesthetic idealism in this context.

Henry Arvon asserts that Hegel's aesthetics focus on detail analysis and refers to a connection between society and artistic forms, and here he emphasizes what Marxist aesthetics specifically wanted.

Arvon says that if we want to define the choice between form and content in Marxist aesthetics, it is natural and certain that we recognize the primacy of content away from form. "We do not always see him staring at new techniques that he puts in the service of a man who wants to subject nature to himself"<sup>7</sup> in the sense that "we define the artistic reflection, not according to the purpose of the necessity of a historical substance, but according to a timeless imagination, the danger of directing aesthetics towards some kind of abstraction from reality"<sup>8</sup>.

And in terms of time and its relationship with the artist, it represents the container that embraces the nation "in this time laden with victims, missing and killed and burned, refugees and the hungry, which we live may not accept representation and imagination, so it belongs to the aesthetics of the terrible, what form of aesthetic thinking suits us? And because we are the indigenous people of the areas of the promotion of the industry of destruction, perhaps we should make the idea of destruction itself a coherent concept of the possibility of establishing our own Arab aesthetics"<sup>9</sup>.

The book also discusses the issue of Arab artistic identity and the influences that have been reflected on it, especially after the so-called Arab Spring, which is sometimes called the Arab Autumn. It depicts the Arab reality as a transit stage in the desert, creating between the lines a glimmer of hope to find the opportunity of the new after this Painful Arab reality.

Muskini has been subjected to many philosophical aspects that simulate our study specifically, especially in the field of contemporary Arab art after the so-called Arab Spring and the issue of loss and migration after these revolutions.

### **Loss in contemporary Arab art**

The essence of the basic art is absent from the perception of the artist as a producer of the work of art and on the recipient, namely, freedom as the art in relation to the Western vision is fully based on the concept of freedom and originality and lack of or imbalance in one of these central principles indisputably produce a big problem in the concept and the role of art and artist. The Arab artist is besieged in despotic societies; the authority is not the only despot, but the school, the house, the street, the clan, etc. Does this mean that the Arab artistic production now has no aesthetic value, of course not, because here I am talking about the gap between art and the recipient rather than individuals or a group of artists. The need for art comes after satisfying the main needs, such as eating, drinking and housing, a decent natural life, and this is not always a natural part of Arab societies. There is still backwardness, ignorance, illiteracy, harsh social conditions, religion, sinners, etc. Therefore, there is no aesthetic theory of modern Arab art.

The concept of art has also changed so that the relationship and the difference between the culture of consumption and art are almost gone, because art exists everywhere and enters into every detail of daily life. There is alienation in the visual vision of art because of the great influence of Western art, the most of the Arab institutional artists studied in Europe and conveyed the visions of artistic aesthetic art directly and literally and sometimes other indirectly.

<sup>5</sup> Belkheir, Hussein (2014-2015), Fine Arts and its Educational Impact on Arab Society, Master of Fine Arts, University of Abu Bakr Belqaier, p. 59.

<sup>6</sup> Arvon, Henry (1982), The Marxist Aesthetic, Vol. 2, Beirut, Paris, Uydad Publications, p. 6

<sup>7</sup> Armon, Henry (1982), The Marxist Aesthetic, Vol. 2, Uydad Publications, Beirut, Paris, p. 68.

<sup>8</sup> Armon, Henry (1982), The Marxist Aesthetic, Vol. 2, Oydad Publications, Beirut, Paris, p. 69.

<sup>9</sup> Muskini, Umm al-Zein ibn Sheikha, (2016), Art in the Time of Terror, Vol.1, Dafaf Publications, Beirut, p.135

This means that the origin of this vision is from outside the Arab region geographically, mentally and spiritually. As the philosophers of Muslims in many decades have recognized Greek philosophy, the Arab artists tried to Arabize Western and European artistic and Western artistic production, as is now the case in some Gulf countries, where modern means of life were updated and "international exhibitions" were created without being influenced by the mind that works on this modernization and on these means. This Westernization and the West's coming from cultural, economic, artistic, political, religious, moral, and scientific development have nothing to do with the intellectual components of the Arab individual.

In order to reduce this contradiction, even if something simple, the Arab societies need academic research and many studies in this area to take advantage of the Western art production properly and constructively and in accordance with their communities.

### **Freedom of artistic production**

Under the concept of loss in the contemporary Arab artist, the dialectic of freedom and equality in the balance of Arab Renaissance thought and how artists deal with it and the nature of the relationship and how it affects the future image of the Arab experience. The contemporary Arab artist derived his legitimacy from the awareness that the meaning of freedom cannot be represented outside the affiliation of the individual to a group, or a certain geographical nature, despite the controversy between the artist and society at the level of the individual's relationship with the group, however, the issue of loss in all its forms captured the mind of the Arab artist and placed him in a new mold in a continuous interaction with the reality he is going through.

On the margin of this loss, the idea of freedom and expands the questions of the idea of freedom and its implications in the context of a wide field of related topics have been rooted in the Arab artist, this is accompanied by many sociopolitical and social transformations, as well as the emergence of an emancipatory spirit to emerge from the families of tyranny and inertia in Arab societies. In this sense, these traditional rights were at the top of the priorities of the Arab revolutions, and the Arab artist specifically, and made him engage in the spaces of intellectual and creative production.

### **Analytical study of contemporary art**

It is known that the artist simulates the surrounding circumstances and living culture, and many Arab countries have gone through a series of revolutions and crises, Which produced a new method for many artists who lived under these circumstances, and the change has touched their work in a clear and concrete way, we have chosen for this research two Arab countries in which revolutions or wars have taken place: the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq, we selected six works for three artists from these countries, three of them representing the period leading up to the crisis, and three others representing the following period, in order to compare the style practiced by the artist before and after, and the difference between them. Iraqi artists Serwan Baran, Ghassan Ghaeib and Syrian artist Ismail Rifai were chosen.

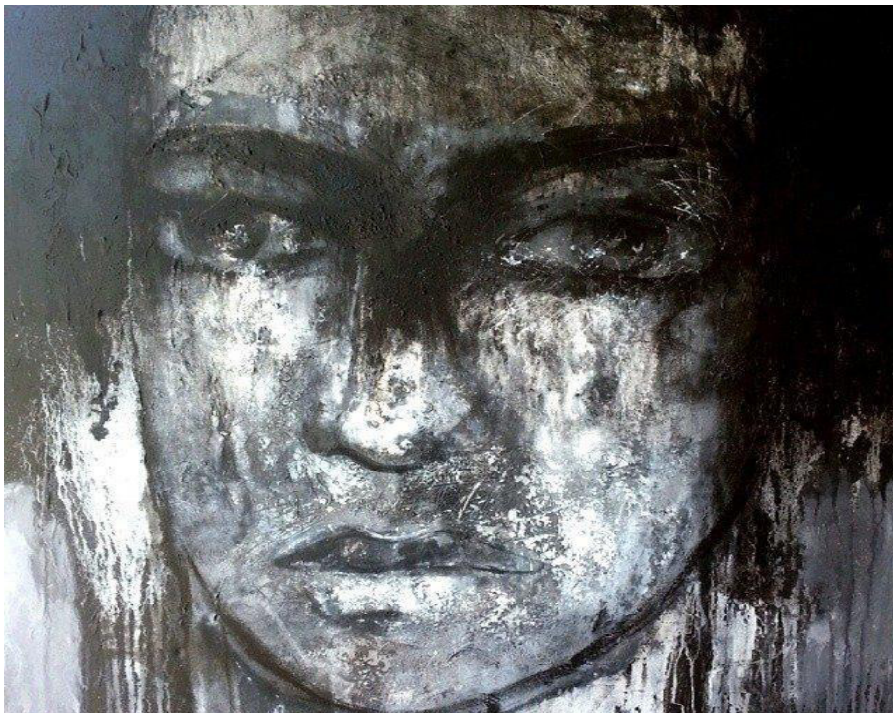
We start with the artist Serwan Baran, whose work has been characterized by academic strength since his beginnings, and the colors of joy and warm pleasure have a clear share in most of his works.



In this work we note that Sirwan simulates the local Iraqi scene, where we see a group of sheep in the middle of the bottom panel in a scene that calls for reassurance and confirmed by the scenes of people in Arab and Iraqi clothing and many colors where they look at their cattle with all the comfort and pleasure, those colors worn by Iraqis indicate a scene of joy and pleasure, like a national wedding in all its rituals, this is the scene that we used to see most Iraqi artists before the years of the American blockade.



And if we moved to this painting, which represents a military commander, indicating the nature and colors of the uniform that he wears, this military uniform came to color to serve the subject of artistic work, where this color leads us to think of the cruelty and destruction of the military machine, and this military leader appeared in a defeated and without any sign of the irony of the artist and his alleged authority, despite the aesthetics that we see in this work, but the horror of the subject and distort the shape of the human face came to highlight the inner meaning of the phenomenon, a distortion of the status of the identity of the human face is the most valuable in humans.



We then turn to the Syrian artist Ismail Rifai, who said: Who comes from the culture of the Euphrates must be carrying a cloud fills the text and the painting with beauty, the blueness must be his range no matter how the gray spread. Let us consider his words which mixed with romance and joy.

He writes his legend with the affection of the loving artist, and this is evident in his works that preceded the Arab Spring and the Syrian revolution, examples of his work are the work of art, which has long been employed by Rifai, the human face, which represents all the symbols of simulation, where we see the color gray-blue as he says himself, this is the beauty that Rifai talks about. He is the face of the beautiful female. He is the face of life. He is the dream, the mirror that reflects the love of others.



But if we look at his works after the revolution, we find it has shifted from this scene to another dramatic one, and here in this work what we are talking about, Rifai has come to resemble the past and recall it to his mother as a simulation of a list that represents absolute beauty. He says: Art frees me from the pain of war, my mother is the permanent embrace, security and security, he is looking at his painting about the time it evokes in memory, but it is the beautiful past, which is represented in the pre-revolution, there is no example of this safety as mother's bosom, it is a shift in the cultural intellectual system, not just the visual system.



We return to another example of Iraqi artist Ghassan Ghaeib, who tasted the woe of the siege and the war on Iraq, tasted by all Iraqis, which we see in his press statements is hardly less than any contemporary political analyst, like Ghassan like fellow Iraqi artists, who imitated his diary of his heritage, but enjoyed a unique style in its beginnings crystallized in its solid abstract style, within very bold colors, this is evident in this artwork, which is characterized by rich color and using the colors of the desert and the sky and the Iraqi palm tree. Thus Ghassan began and continued his journey forward, until he hit the wall of shock from scenes of disease and the death of children without medicine and mercy, and the demolition of houses and the theft of heritage and the symptoms, this emotional shock led to the transformation of the optical counterclockwise, returned to the point of zero, as shown in this work, which represents the artist himself holding a butterfly on its wings has the news of the children of Iraq, and he is interested in reading it, refusing to look forward, and can hardly turn his face on this fact, it has brought him back to practice the traditional art he is supposed to have passed in his last year of college, but he rejects that idea, so he may live those comfortable days again.



Ghassan Ghaeib says: The wing of the butterfly reflects the geopolitical and economic changes that have occurred and continue to promote and develop as a cancerous, including the body of many countries and peoples, led to the fragmentation and division of countries into small parts ..... His words are the best evidence of his rejection of the reality of the Arab world of disintegration and loss.

Thus, it is clear to us how the subject of loss, whether for parents or relatives, friends, neighbors or the nation as a whole, all or part of it was of great importance in building the artistic work of the contemporary Arab artist, the surrounding circumstances affected all forms of artistic formulations, and the artistic visions in Arab art varied and changed as a result.

### Results of the study

1. The Arab artist did not separate from his reality, he tried to cling to his right to express, land and art, as a means of expressing what he had lost, he tried to do so by using tools and techniques that fit his reality.
2. The Arab revolutions blew up innovations and creative new situations, and made the artist start with his imagination to intellectual limits and wider creative spaces, in response to the tragedies and the pains that they cultivate.
3. The creative condition of the contemporary Arab artist has resulted in contemporary formations and compositions that combine the legacy of artistic heritage with the challenges of the present and the hope of a bright future, and thus it was a combination of the past, reality and imagination without the predominance of heritage mainly on its artistic production.
4. The identity of Arab art has become a more influential force in the world art, because of its association with Arab identity and the issue touches on the feelings of the Arab artist and reflect the reality imposed by arrogance and the Arab artist.

### Conclusion

It must be said that the contemporary Arab plastic artist has suffered from the scourge of wars and diaspora, and these scourges in the bearing of tragedy the subject of the Arab artist, so that his works included what his ideas and his thoughts carried, they express what he has lost, and his aspiration for freedom and clinging to him at other times. Which is what makes the twentieth century with all its wars, destruction and tragedies, but it is a unique case of the Arab artist who made his tools and his art carrying a new era and a new trend in contemporary Arab art.





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