

Dirassat & Abhath
The Arabic Journal of Human
and Social Sciences



مجلة دراسات وابحاث
المجلة العربية في العلوم الإنسانية
والاجتماعية

EISSN: 2253-0363
ISSN : 1112-9751

**The aesthetics of popular heritage in works of art
Algerian plastic art - as a model-**

جمالية الموروث الشعبي في الأعمال الفنية
الفن التشكيلي الجزائري – أنموذجا-

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تاريخ القبول : 19 - 03 - 2024

تاريخ الاستلام: 29 - 02 - 2024

Abstract:

Folk arts are an integral part of society's heritage and culture, due to their symbols, vocabulary that express the feelings, emotions, ideas and beliefs of peoples and societies. It is considered a fertile material for establishing artistic works, including the traditions and lifestyles of individuals, and its importance for a nation lies in considering it as part of its entity and national identity.

Plastic art is an integral part of popular heritage and a symbol of national identity that is unique to each civilization. The plastic artist tried to introduce the culture and traditions of his society through his artistic works.

This study seeks to know the aesthetics of the Algerian popular heritage through plastic works that are rich in the diversity of their artistic forms.

Keywords: Heritage, popular heritage, aesthetics, plastic art. Algerian plastic art.

الملخص باللغة العربية:

الفنون الشعبية جزء لا يتجزأ من تراث المجتمع وثقافته :له رموزه ومفرداته ودلالاته التي تعبر عن مشاعر وانفعالات وأفكار ومعتقدات الشعوب. كما يعتبر مادة خصبة في تأسيس الأعمال الفنية بما يحويه من تقاليد وأسلوب حياة الأفراد ، وتكمن أهميته بالنسبة للأمم باعتباره جزءا من كيائها وهويتها الوطنية .
والفن التشكيلي أحد مكونات هذا التراث الشعبي مكونا بذلك رمز من رموز الهوية الوطنية التي تتميز بها كل حضارة عن حضارة أخرى ، فمن خلال هذا الفن حاول الفنان التعريف بثقافة وتقاليد مجتمعه من خلال آثاره الفنية .
وعليه جاءت هذه الدراسة من أجل إظهار جمالية الموروث الشعبي الجزائري من خلال هذا الأعمال الفنية التي تزخر بتنوع أشكالها الفنية.
الكلمات المفتاحية : التراث .الموروث الشعبي . الجمالية . الفن التشكيلي . الفن التشكيلي الجزائري.

1. INTRODUCTION

The subject of artistic heritage in general and folk heritage in particular has occupied many scholars, researchers and critics since its beginnings in the middle of the nineteenth century. Opinions and theoretical concepts have varied, and it has been adopted in many literary and artistic fields because of the values and characteristics it carries that have made it fertile material for cultural life.

The richness of the artistic work becomes clear only through the interaction of its elements, the unity of its idea and its originality, and the linking of the nation's past to its present. Heritage is "the experiences of the ancestors reflected in the traces they left in museums, cemeteries, installations, or manuscripts, and their influence continues until our present era." 1 What makes a generation or The new generation learns about the culture of its ancestors and works to renew and preserve it and catch up with human culture.

While the artist plays an important role in preserving this cultural heritage in order to transmit it to successive generations, through those artistic works that he has produced since ancient times and in various forms, which carry within them a number of symbols and connotations that express the lifestyle and the most important customs and traditions... and the widespread artistic types. In those times.

Artists relied on employing elements of popular heritage in their artistic works, whether a painting, a play, or a piece of music... where individual creativity merges with the unity of collective conscience in a single rhythm and harmony that increases

the richness, splendor, and originality of the artistic work..

There is no doubt that fine art in all its forms is considered part of society's heritage and established identity, as fine art works to embody this identity and thought in icons and visual forms that express society, highlighting its artistic, creative and cultural characteristics.

Fine art and the Algerian historical cultural heritage play an important role in enriching Algerian culture and spreading artistic awareness throughout the world.

When contemplating Algerian plastic works, they take us away from our imaginations and memories and separate us from the surrounding world to a world full of symbols, shapes and colours, a world full of values and cultural heritage that takes us to the distant past, the past of our ancestors. These works were characterized by a set of aesthetic values, which prompted us to address this study under the following problem:

-What is the role of popular heritage in preserving national identity?

- What is the beauty of the popular heritage in Algerian fine art works?

Through our study we are trying to achieve the following goals:

-Identifying popular heritage.

- Identifying the aesthetics of employing popular heritage in artistic works.

- Identifying the connotations and symbols of popular heritage in Algerian plastic art and their importance in preserving national identity.

2. Definition of terms

_ National Heritage: This word became commonly used after it used to mean heritage or folklore "It is a human heritage and one of the evidences that take on a historical, political, social, cultural and economic dimension, and one of the expressive forms of ancient societies and races and their psychological and emotional experiences, and a form of expression of their way of life in terms of language, thought, belief, stories, myths, proverbs, wisdom, customs, customs and achievements in various peoples and specializations. Such as medicine, chemistry, astronomy, physics, and various achievements such as buildings, architecture, and decoration And manuscripts and life practices, to extend and go beyond what was produced by the branches of thought..." 2. The concepts of heritage have varied, but most of them fit into one template, which is that it is everything that the ancestors left behind, whether material or moral legacies, that is, every intellectual or cultural production of a nation, which is What Al-Jabri confirms is that "in the sense of the cultural, intellectual, religious, literary and artistic heritage, which is the content that this word carries within our Arabic speech, wrapped in an emotional and ideological lining, it was not present neither in the speech of our ancestors nor in their field of thought, just as it is not present in the speech of any of the contemporary living languages that we import." Including new terms and concepts"3.

3. Procedural definition:

Heritage is those cultural elements and artistic forms passed down through generations and the identity of peoples that

distinguishes them from others through their values, beliefs and customs...

4. Aesthetic:

Aestheticism is the science of studying aesthetic values in a work of art.

Beauty aims to achieve higher values, which it seeks to achieve in the artistic and literary works it creates and tastes, for it is connected to goodness, which is the highest value that guides its judgments of goodness, and evil of behavior, and truth, which is the ultimate goal of knowledge, and since each of these three values has a value. Which varies according to time and place and according to human needs and desires. There have been many philosophies of beauty and its doctrines have differed, and from here the history of aesthetic thought has been.

Its importance" 4, this importance is represented in the search for the aesthetics and values of the artistic work.

It is stated in the Dictionary of Contemporary Literary Terms that aesthetics:

"1_ An ideal tendency that searches for the plastic creations of the literary and artistic product, and reduces all elements of the work to its aesthetics.

2_ The aesthetic tendency aims to pay attention to aesthetic standards regardless of the moral aspects, based on the saying of art for art's sake

3_ Every era produces an aesthetic, as there is no absolute aesthetic, but A relative aesthetic to which generations, civilizations, literary and artistic creations contribute, 4_ Perhaps every creativity is the attainment of

aesthetics to the feelings of contemporaries.”⁵.

Man’s interest in art since ancient times is evidence of his sense of beauty. He lives beauty in every moment of his life and practices it without feeling, which is what George Santayana confirms: “The sense of beauty occupies a much greater position in life than the theory of beauty has occupied in philosophy until now. The plastic arts are in addition to poetry and music.” It is the most prominent image that shows man’s interest in beauty, as it only aims at pure contemplation...”⁶.

Beauty and art are two complementary elements because there is something of art that is beauty, and something of beauty that is art, and one element of both cannot be dispensed with. The aesthetic quality is a fact of the human entity and its importance lies in the way of adapting and dealing with this sensory phenomenon among members of society, and art is an activity. An aesthetic creativity carried out by a group of artists to produce artistic works related to the civilization of a nation.

Procedural definition:

Considering art as an industry, aesthetic creativity... Aestheticism is research into the issue of art in its various types, and it has its origins and rules for studying and delving into it.

Fine Art:

Fine art is a unique human production that has the ability to convey the ideas and messages of the creative artist to the public. It is a means that works to preserve popular heritage and human and historical culture across generations.

Plastic art is the comprehensive name for what a person practices by assembling elements and materials with which he expresses his opinions, his directed messages and his visions, using the tools that enable him to communicate what he wants through them within an aesthetic framework. This work stems primarily from his human emotions and feelings. And the reactions resulting from the depths of his thinking... Fine art maintains its historical and intellectual importance stemming from its continuity, its abundance, and its ability to always provide various human civilizations with the energy necessary to create, manufacture, and develop them.”⁷.

Fine art in general is extremely important to humans, and the evidence for this is that humans created drawing before writing.

Fine art includes many sections (painting, sculpture, ceramics,...), these artistic classifications, each of which depends on rules and standards in expressing the artist’s creativity and the reality of society and its past, so that the artist can spread his culture to the world as a whole.

Aesthetic dimensions of heritage in fine art works.

The aesthetic dimension of popular heritage is one of the important axes in the creative process in general and the aesthetic process in particular. The aesthetic dimension of popular arts is an evaluation study or giving an aesthetic judgment of the elements of the artistic work that combine what is visual and intellectual content linked to the values of society.

The artist’s simulation of the surroundings in which he lives is the

beginning of the creative process, through which popular arts and intellectual foundations fuse with the artist's mental experience in a legendary fabric full of symbols and colors and of high aesthetic value.

The embodiment of popular heritage in plastic works of art has symbols, connotations, and meanings linked to the intellectual and cultural content, the individual's behavior in society, and the extent of its connection to the society's cultural, intellectual, popular, and creative values.

The beauty of folklore depends on a number of data that enable us to learn about important topics that have a close relationship with society. The nature, composition, and creativity of the artwork depend on several criteria derived from the artist's ability and artistic vision in the plastic process on the one hand, and the extent of his relationship with his environment, the events of his community, and his integration with society. and how to employ it in his various works. Artistic on the other hand.

The intellectual and aesthetic value of the artistic work depends on the extent of the connoisseur's ability and understanding of the references of the relationships that connect the members of society and their lived reality and the artist in a series of beliefs and values that the artist translates through plastic visual elements and popular heritage symbols.

-The aesthetics of the Algerian popular heritage in the works of some Algerian visual artists:

The Algerian popular heritage is

considered the outcome of the Algerian culture from which the artist derived inspiration in producing various artistic works throughout different eras. It is the primary source of Algerian popular art, an art that carries through its pages many symbols that in turn express various national, moral and religious values... rooted in the Algerian person since his earliest times.

The Algerian artist took inspiration from the topics of his works from the popular heritage, which is full of beliefs, customs and traditions, and made them the essence of those works directed to the recipient, the latter (the recipient) who depends in his taste on the standards of his culture, Islamic belief, and authentic customs and traditions that the Algerian people live through in their various historical stations and daily life.

Anyone who follows the Algerian plastic movement notices its roots in prehistoric times, and the frescoes of the Tassili Caves are the greatest evidence of this, as they are among the oldest artistic monuments left by primitive man, which express his various beliefs, rituals, and way of living.

During a period when French colonialism attempted to obliterate identity, fight the Islamic faith, and eliminate the national heritage, the Algerian artist was convinced of artistic resistance, and tried hard to make his works carry elements of national identity and the specificity of Algerian popular heritage.

In looking at the history of Algerian plastic art, we notice that the plastic artistic base consists of three groups:

_ A group fascinated by contemporary Western art and being led by it, and despising its local heritage.

_ A group of Orientalist artists who excelled in depicting social topics and introducing national identity in an indirect way.

_ Advocates of Occidentalism are artists eager to prove national cultural identity and confront Western intellectual invasion.

Therefore, we highlight the role of Orientalist artists in defining and strengthening national identity. The most important of these artists is Alphonse Etienne Diné. This artist whose artistic works reached their peak, especially after his conversion to Islam in 1913, and who was influenced by Algerian society, especially the picturesque desert nature, inspired the themes of his works, which ranked him among the best orientalist beloved by Algerian society.

Among his most important works are "Prayer Paintings", "The Surfaces of Laghouat"...

Many Orientalist artists also worked to highlight Algerian customs and traditions, such as Eugène Delacroix, who was creative in presenting some traditional elements in his paintings. The painting "Women of Algeria" is considered a wonderful masterpiece of African romantic Orientalist art, in addition to many themes of hunting, travel, and the local equipment of Algerian society.

All of these works were characterized by an aesthetic artistic character mixed between traditional plastic vocabulary and Western artistic rules.

_At the beginning of the twentieth

century, 1920, was the birth of the "School of Fine Arts" at the hands of the best plastic artists such as "Azawaoui Mammeri" and "Abdel Halim Hammash"...the latter, which was the basic rule in leading and nurturing many contemporary Algerian plastic artists who had an active role. In preserving national values and the popular cultural heritage in Algeria.

The artist Mohamed Rasem relied on Islamic miniature art to



express his similarity to the values and peculiarities of Algerian society, and to try to spread awareness among members of Algerian society in particular, and to introduce his heritage derived from Islamic civilization and cling to it "through his works that showed daily life in the alleys of the Kasbah and Calligraphic decoration."8.

the plastic relationships in which the artist Mohamed Rasem mixed Islamic decoration with the aesthetics of Algerian architecture, which is full of popular vocabulary (the alleys of the Kasbah, Algerian evening parties, the circulation of traditional dress in the Algerian street, the religious aspect...) had a great impact in establishing the Algerian identity and popular heritage.

Muhammad Rasim_Ablution Painting:

Showed the Islamic faith and religion

of Algerian society, and this is evidence of the artist's attachment to his national identity and the Islamic religion.

Muhammad raRasim " Khairuddin Barbaros"

In his works, the artist Muhammad Rasim imitated Iranian and Andalusian art by adopting Western rules.

In embodying in his artistic works historical figures (Khair ad-Din Barbaros...) and evenings of Algerian folk music in the corridors of the ancient Kasbah (Ramadan Nights...). the artist, through his paintings, focused on introducing the immortal Algerian battles as well as the heroic figures. This is in order to present it to the recipient in a sophisticated aesthetic form. And introducing Algeria's deep history and civilizations to the rest of the world's people.

The artist mixed themes of this local and Andalusian character with Western arts, embodying the aesthetic elements of Algerian architecture in the alleys of the Kasbah, from the decoration of doors and arches...

In most of his paintings, the artist Mohamed Rasem relies on the traditional Algerian dress for men and women, jewelry, Algerian architecture...

In the works of Muhammad Rasem, we notice the duality of formation between Western schools and local art in reviving this art, "miniature art" - "miniatures" - which was just an artistic painting for a specific story without adopting the art of perspective or the third dimension, so the artist Muhammad Rasim came and reborn it again by adopting it." The basis of the geometric structure based on its three

dimensions, and he added to it the spirit of modernity. He made the perspective depend on the relative diminution that suggests depth through the decrease and diminishment of things as they move away from the eye of the recipient through precise technical use of the intensity of colors and manipulation of them at levels of gradation... Muhammad Rasim also formed the aesthetic ethical structure. With a vivid aesthetic style that was unparalleled before, his painting became like a history of a chapter that reveals the environmental, human, and traditional components."9.

Mohamed Rasem's miniatures gave the true meaning of beauty through his embodiment of the components of the Algerian identity and its uniqueness with the authenticity of its Islamic artistic heritage. Not for nothing because he is connected to his homeland and saturated with its heritage and identity. George Marcy says, "He loves Algeria because it is his homeland and his birthplace. He loves its near and distant past, and he tries to revive this glorious past with what This includes family life through his vivid memories emanating from the



environment in which he lives."10.

Algerian art thought spread after

independence at the hands of the first generation of Algerian visual artists, such as Mohamed Khadda and Mohamed Asyakhem, who enriched the Algerian fine art scene with works full of cultural values, their civilizational affiliation, and their similarity to the traditions of Algerian society.

Referring also to the visual artist Bashir Yales, who also tried to embody the popular heritage through his archaeological artistic paintings that he excelled in embodying.

"Tlemcen Wedding" 1944 is his most powerful artistic work in terms of employing the historical and artistic figures of the Tlemcen community. In the middle of the painting is one of the figures of Tlemcen folk art, Andalusian music, and religious praises. He is "Sheikh Al-Arabi Ben Sari," carrying the rabab instrument with his brothers Ahmed Abdel Salam, Mohamed Ben Sari, and his son Ben Sari. They played for the audience, which was represented by important figures in Tlemcen society at that time.

It also addressed an important aspect of the values, morals and principles on which the conservative Tlemcen society is based, as the painting contained a large male element with a modest presence of the female element, where the artist separated the two elements, showing the lack of mixing at weddings and events between men and women, unlike some Orientalist artists.

Such as Picasso and Felix de Vuillefroy in his painting "The Wedding of Tlemcen".

This painting violated the sanctity of Algerian society and its Islamic principles.

In addition to this painting, the artist (Bashir Yales) created postage stamps representing the carpets (the Citadel carpet, the Qarqour carpet, the Namamsha carpet, the Jabal Amour carpet...), each region is famous for its own characteristics and represents an ancient artistic heritage whose roots extend back thousands of years.

he postage stamp, "The Citadel Carpet," represents the Beni Rashid region of the state of Relizane. Its historical roots go back to around 1492, "the date of the fall of Granada." This carpet is inspired by Andalusian-Moroccan art, in which the artist created his brush and colors, which express his culture and heritage.

— The character of the "Jebel Amour carpet" This type of carpet spread in the Aflou region and then moved to the Tlemcen region in western Algeria and then to Spain through joint trade between the two shores of the Mediterranean. The artistic composition of this carpet expresses the customs and traditions of the region, the sun and the moon...

— The character of the Tlemcen women's traditional dress, represented by the "shadda" of the Tlemcen bride, is the richest dress with its most beautiful and sophisticated components in Algerian traditional clothing because it contains many heritage elements and ornaments. Its aesthetic artistic value has made UNESCO classify it as part of the common human heritage.

— Characteristics of women's traditional dress in the Jebel Amour region: It is known as the Nile robe, in reference to the Ouled Nile tribe.

Spread in many Algerian regions:

Djelfa, Laghouat, Biskra, Bou Saada...

The original dress of the Nile woman consists of many pieces, namely: the wrapped robe, as well as the jewelry. By mixing these elements with each other, the original dress of the Nile woman, which has been inherited since ancient times, is complete.

The artist Bashir Yales excelled in depicting these traditional clothes with all their details and cultural and civilizational components. They are also a cultural standard that highlights the extent of an individual's adherence to his inherited popular heritage.

_ Without forgetting the extremely important role of the "Awsham Group", which emerged in 1967, it held its first exhibitions "at the hands of nine artists like Mesli, Saidani, and others who were self-taught, to form a whirlwind in the history of art for their use of other tools such as carpets, stones, and various pieces of pottery, which bore local decorative symbols and tattoos." Harmonious side by side with Arabic calligraphy, something that is considered a precedent in the history of Algerian fine art."¹¹.

The Awsham group influenced Algerian cultural art by imposing its values inspired by Islamic cultural history, and fighting French artistic thought, which tried to spread its Western culture and rules throughout the country.

The "Awsham" group relied on symbols as a means of artistic expression and delved far in search of the historical origins of Algerian plastic art and its expression.

_ In addition to the "Presence Group,"

which is an artistic group that worked under the artistic direction of Martinez, and each.

Its members are graduates of the School of Fine Arts. It delved into the depths of the artistic folk heritage to know the traditional roots, which it expressed in the contemporary artistic language.

Conclusion :

_ Heritage in general and popular heritage in particular constitute rich intellectual and artistic material for the artist in producing his artistic works with a local character that combine heritage and modernity.

_ Traditional vocabulary (belief, dress, architecture, jewelry,...) is considered psychological factors that affect the artist's style in choosing the appropriate topics for the event and his reliance on the popular, intellectual, historical, cultural and social heritage.

_ The artist in various civilizations relied on traditional thought with a social nature to express societal issues in an aesthetic manner and contemporary artistic ideas.

_ The Algerian plastic artist was distinguished by his imaginative ability to preserve his historical and cultural heritage and his civilizational affiliation in an aesthetic way in a period in which it was difficult to express freely as a result of the presence of the French colonialists.

The Algerian artist presented immortal works in Algerian and even Islamic history, with his rich themes inspired by the life of Algerian society, and his distinguished, sophisticated style, which affects the connoisseur and takes him to the world of imagination.

_ Algerian plastic art contained local artistic thought with an Islamic social character and its mixing with culture.

Western art and its cultural affiliation were preserved, so they were works of art that lived up to contemporary universal aesthetic values.

The study of heritage in general represents a study of the identity of peoples and their cultural components, a witness to their historical events and national occasions, and a record of their customs and traditions.

Algerian plastic art is characterized by a set of foundations and rules that the creative artist derived from the diverse geographical nature, rich in its customs and traditions, which appears in most of the works of Algerian plastic artists. Each region has its own characteristics and colors that distinguish it from other regions.

All of these elements were achieved by the Algerian visual artist, thanks to which he achieved a set of traditional artistic values and features that increased the richness of his artistic works in taste and beauty and placed him in the ranks of contemporary international productions.

Popular heritage must be adopted as an artistic term in order to introduce cultural history and enhance the cultural knowledge of the artist and connoisseur and benefit from it.

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