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**CONTEMPORARY ARAB ART AND ITS RELATE TO
CONTEMPORARY SOCIETAL ISSUES (DURING THE
COVID-19 PANDEMIC)(Analytical study)**

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**Mohammad Ahmad Bani Salameh, Contemporary Arab Art and its relate to
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Abstract:

This research discusses the impact of the contemporary Arab social conditions on contemporary Arab art, where there was an impact of the contemporary conditions (COVID-19 Pandemic) on the proposed idea on contemporary Arab Artworks. The study analyses (5) Artworks (survey sample) of what relates on the proposed idea in this works and its relate with reality. The study contained five contemporary Arab Artworks of (2020 – 2021) to confirm whether the contemporary Arab reality represented by the (Corona pandemic) affects the proposed idea in contemporary artworks. The results proved the impact of the contemporary Arab social reality on proposed idea of contemporary Arab arts even though limited of contemporary Arab works that is proposed by this case. (COVID-19 Pandemic).

Key Words: Contemporary Arts, Idea, Reality, The Arab world, COVID-19 Pandemic.

Introduction:

Throughout history, plastic arts of all kinds have been realized in response to contemporary political and social events, by Its intellectual and philosophical dimensions as it reflected through it the reality of lived life in all its details, cultural and social legacy, and its intellectual and political directives that express its privacy and the identity of its members, the matter that formed a strong relationship between the intellectual direction and realistic events on the one hand, and between plastic arts on the other hand. In the

time of the humanitarian crises; the artists tried to participate in the events that its take a place around them in the societies (Al-Ghanim, 2019).

According to Tolstoy from his book " What is the Art" he believed that the importance of art reside in its relation with life and its contemporary issues. in addition to, it will lose its value if stay out of main goal. The philosopher Marcuse points out that the art was essential in the contemporary societies, he confirmed on revolution in this art and the role it played in these issues in his society (Spens, 2013).

Mar'ae(1985) noted that internal and external risks and challenges have a clear impact on Arab society. he also referred that art is an important field in life that affects and is affected by the conditions surrounding it. Al-Yasiri (2011) agreed with Mari that the relationship between the individual, society and the surrounding environment is common; he referred that the surrounding environment has an impact on stability, peace, development, culture, freedom and others. all these influences are conducive to the scientific, technical, literary, technological, industrial and social development aspects. where the political and social situation is more influential at the present time.

Art has documented events related to society since ancient times, and we have sought this in antiquities, in cave drawings, sculptures, stone embodiments, and in digital writings written on clay tablets. So that these styles were an expressive language for that stage, so that the relationship of art continues to document and record events and crises across the ages, as was the case for the Assyrian civilization with their wonderful sculptures, statues, drawings and literary writings written in cuneiform on clay tablets, expressing everything that happened in their era; The same is true of the Pharaonic, Greek and Roman civilizations, and art continued in various stages of ancient, modern and contemporary history, monitoring events, epidemics and battles. so what has been documented in the history of art is the best witness to the events that have passed in the history of various artistic expressions (Al-Kanji, 2020).

Art that emerges from the depths of crises, suffering, wars and epidemics is an art committed and expressive for its distinction and creativity for the psyche of the human being in which it opens the windows of life in order to nourish humanity's sense of this overflowing spirit with transcendence to alleviate human suffering

and enhance self-hope to overcome difficulties and build the future with the strength of will and to confront and educate individuals and society with the crises and events occurring around the world, this is the message of art, especially at this stage in which the COVID-19 epidemic is spreading, which kills millions of people; that the creators of artistic works have influences, capabilities, skills, technology, and tools; they can exploit it to spread awareness and precautionary methods to prevent the COVID-19 epidemic or from the rest of the deadly epidemics; by presenting topics with expressions that suggest to the recipient the extent of the cruelty of the epidemic and the brutality of death and its ghost that clouded human societies (Al-Kanji, 2020).

The influence of art over the ages of those disasters and circumstances was a source nourished by art; Because this art is a documentation of those painful stages of human history, so that these actions genuinely expressed reality, and were not superficial; because it is not addressed with feelings and sincere expression, it will disappear with the passing of time, the passage of the crisis, and the disappearance of the event; as art didn't crystallize its concept except through the documentation of the seismic facts of conflicts, epidemics, wars and victories (Al-Kanji, 2020).

This is confirmed by the artist (Mwaz) in his statement in which he says: "The artist's efforts are desperate to make expressive art directly about life, while we cannot distinguish or separate art from life". Art is the true representation of life with all its events (Al-Ajlani, 2016).

We noticed in contemporary Arab art that it was influenced by the social conditions surrounding it, and this appears through the many artworks that were studied in this research. This research examined the impact of contemporary Arab social conditions (COVID-19 pandemic) on contemporary Arab art, to discover its connection with the current reality.

Problem Statement:

Smith (2015), Melkonian (1997), Ramadan (2014), Obeidat (2013), Al-Hamzah (2006), Al Far (2008).

Most of these studies and research have focused on the relationship between contemporary art and politics in general. The following studies have focused on the following: Melkonian (1997) where generally discuss the influence of political attitudes on contemporary art in the Arab world and the Middle East. Smith

(2015), presenting the problems faced by the Egyptian society and showing the artistic practices that occurred in the public space during the revolution in Egypt, and the influence of art in these places in light of the political changes. Moreover, Ramadan (2014) emphasized in his article that it is imperative to develop a new art system to meet the changes taking place in the region and meet the needs of art history. he also believed that the time has come for that change in the strategy of art in the Arab world, and he believes that the goal of art is to participate in directing the future. AL- Hamzah (2006) in his study: (The Nature of Artistic Work and its Social Role in the Electronic Age) dealt with the role of contemporary artworks in addressing social issues, and the role of the recipient in these works.

By Obeidat's study (2013), the researcher discussed the topic of contemporary Jordanian art and the impact of the media and political changes on the transformation of the artistic thought of the contemporary Jordanian artist during the period (1995-2012). As the study proved that one of the most important elements that led to changes in the image structure in contemporary Jordanian art is the political and social conditions. Al Far (2008) discussed in her study the local intellectual, social and political issues raised by the artist in his works.

However, there have been no previous studies or research confirming the impact of contemporary social conditions (COVID-19 pandemic) on contemporary Arab art. Therefore, this study is important in reviewing the impact of the relationship of contemporary Arab art and its close connection with lived reality, especially social conditions (COVID-19 pandemic).

Methodology:

This research deals with the impact of contemporary Arab social conditions (COVID-19 pandemic) on contemporary Arab art to discover its link with the current reality, where the researcher will use the descriptive and analytical approach to achieve his goal.

The researcher will collect the available information through what has been written and published in studies, research and articles on artworks (study sample), describing and analyzing them, in order to reach the main idea of these artworks, and then determine the impact of contemporary Arab social conditions (COVID-19 pandemic) on contemporary Arab art. in the end, conclusions that confirm the assumptions of this research are presented.

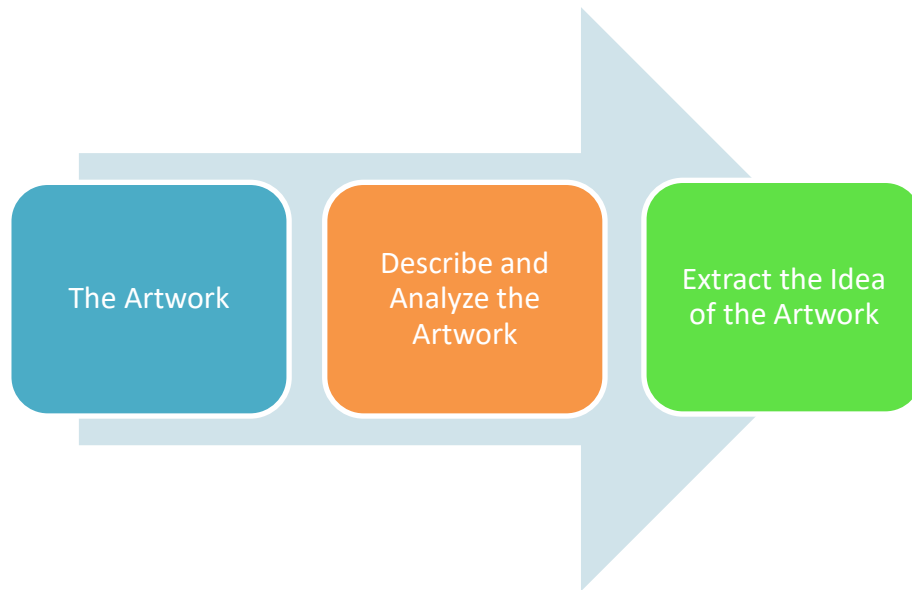


Figure 1: Descriptive Analytical Framework

Artwork 1:



The Pandemic, 2020, Senan Hussein, Iraq

The idea of working:

The artist Senan describes his work, which exceeded the 5,000 painting, as “wounded by reality,” explaining that the bitter reality, as he described it, “gave its reflections on my artwork to describe bitter, greed and murder. In short, reality as I see it” (Al-Fardan, 2021).

Sinan says, "Even the COVID-19 pandemic took a share of my artistic sense, especially the fashion shows that started offering

masks at exorbitant prices, while we were passing during the curfew period in stalemate until we became like statues, so I photographed in one of my works a statue wearing a muzzle of the latest international brands, and in it there is light Blue casts rays on the statue as if it were an MRI scan, through which it reveals the type of disease "(Al-Fardan, 2021).

Discussion:

If we look at the work of the artist (Senan Hussein) and through what he wrote about him and what the artist said about the work, we find that the artist unleashed his feelings about the issues facing the world and society, especially the COVID-19 pandemic in his work (the epidemic) and embodied that in his work that contained explicit symbols Which indicates the danger of the epidemic and its effects on society, as it is evident through artistic work the strong relationship between it and reality (COVID-19 pandemic), as it raises the topic of the COVID-19 pandemic that the world in general and the Arab community in particular suffer from.

Artwork 2:



Sad faces, 2020, SerwanBaran, Iraq

The idea of working:

The works published by the artist, SirwanBaran, naturally contained many vocabularies associated with this epidemic and its indicative elements, such as face muzzles, masks, and other

vocabulary that, within a few months, became one of the aspects of life on this planet.

Sad faces; the medical muzzle covers most of its features. we can only discern from these faces; the eyes that throw the arrow, while the artist uses the name of the epidemic in Latin letters in the background. The signs and speed lines here impose a tense effect on the whole formation (Khuzam, 2020).

Other paintings highlight the wandering movement of people, and there are signs and connotations that appear and disappear between one plate and another. In one of these paintings, a group of bodies covered with face masks and cloths clashed in an atmosphere enveloped in anxiety and tension. The scene in Baran's paintings seems turbulent, as if he draws bleak features of a new world whose vocabulary is rapidly forming before our eyes, a different world in which social distancing may become an inevitable fate, and perhaps this is what worries us all. These treatments presented by Baran, influenced by COVID-19 epidemic, are consistent with the nature of his photographic experience, which is rich in many contents and topics related to traumatic events that he and his eyes saw, which are events and facts that are still expressed and their pain to this day (Khuzam, 2020).

Discussion:

We see that the artist (SirwanBaran) expressed what happened and what is happening in society from the effects of COVID-19a pandemic in his artistic works, where he showed a group of portraits of people wearing masks, who are ordinary people and nurses who work in the health sector, and in these faces appears terror, anxiety and tension due to this epidemic.

The artist's artwork shows the close relationship between it and the lived reality in the society in which the artist lives, who suffers from the effects of COVID-19 pandemic, as the artist was able to express reality by unleashing his feelings and the tension and anxiety he feels due to this epidemic and portraying it in the faces of the people who he drew them, which expresses the anxiety pervasive in our daily life due to the virus.

Artwork 3 :



Tired Angels, 2020, Ishaq Bin Salah, Algeria

The idea of working:

The artist believes that it is his duty as an artist to give thanks and gratitude to workers in the health sectors, and the artist talked about symbolism in his work, which mixes international works, where the shape of the circular work symbolizes continuity and communication, and the clock whose hands point to the number 20 that indicates the year 2020 (Etarfanni, 2020).

Discussion:

Through what we see in the work of the artist (Ishaq bin Salah) and what he wrote about this work of art, the artist shows the suffering of the medical staff in the face of this dangerous epidemic and the tension and anxiety that accompanies these efforts towards the state in which the world is living, and the artistic work shows the extent of the artist's connection the reality surrounding it and the issues of the lived community that are exemplified by the Coronavirus.

Artwork 4:



Stay home, 2020, Rana Ramlawy, Palestine

The idea of working:

The artist says about her work (Stay home), "My message to all countries of the Arab world and the West as a whole is to stay at home to fight this virus that is spreading globally, and to eliminate it, as staying at home is one of the most important means of prevention and public safety" (Al-Omaui, 2020).

She also indicated that "this sand sculpture carries an awareness message to the world, and it was natural for me to use this art to raise awareness of the emerging COVID-19 epidemic" (Al-Omaui, 2020). The artist confirms that she thought about using her talent in sculpture to educate the people of Gaza about the importance of precautionary measures to prevent the Coronavirus and limit its spread (Magdy, 2020).

Discussion:

We see in the artwork of the artist (Rana Ramlawi) a clear expression of what society suffers from the effects of COVID-19 pandemic, and the importance of adherence to home as an important means of salvation from this epidemic, and the artwork carried an awareness message from the artist to the community stressing the importance of adhering to awareness measures to prevent and get rid of the virus. It appears through the work and the forms and writings it contains of the work's connection with the reality surrounding the artist who suffers from this epidemic, which confirms the artist's commitment to contemporary issues of society.

Artwork 5:



Face, 2020, Adel Al-Fortieh, Libya

The idea of working:

The Libyan artist (Adel Al-Fortieh) chose to focus on the face in a group of works drawn on paper with oil pastels and inks. The eyes in the Fortieh work are austere, while the medical muzzle covers most of the features. Panic and fear in the form of people and reflect on the artist's treatment of the eyes, while rapid signs and lines impose a tense effect on the whole composition. These new elements and other vocabulary associated with the epidemic that has invaded the work of Arab artists, such as muzzles, masks and sterilization packages, may represent part of the details of our daily life and the vocabulary of our future clothes, in a new world whose features are rapidly forming before our eyes (Sultan, 2020).

Discussion:

In the artwork of the artist (Al-Fortieh), anxiety and tension appear on the face drawn by the artist, which is an expression of the feelings of anxiety and fear that dominate the society surrounding the artist. this confirms its connection with the reality that the artist lives in his society, which suffers from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Results:

These artistic practices and works (the study sample) are part of the group of Arab artworks that have adopted plastic arts as a means of

expressing contemporary societal issues. where we clearly see the strong and solid relationship between these works of art and reality by raising important issues that society suffers from (COVID-19 pandemic), and thus we see the impact of the contemporary Arab reality represented by contemporary issues on the ideas presented in contemporary artworks, which shows the extent of acceptance of this art and its response to contemporary issues, especially (COVID-19 pandemic).

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