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PAIN AND CREATIVITY ACCORDING TO THE ARTIST “M'HAMED ISSIAKHEM”. AN ANALYSIS OF THE PAINTING “MARTYRS”

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ABSTRACT

Our study aims to review the intertwined relationship between pain and creativity of the artist M'hamed Issiakhem through the analysis of his painting "The Martyrs", and sheds light on how the artist embodies pain and psychological conflicts in his artwork by providing a deep vision of the painting “The Martyrs”, and the article addresses the factors that may be influential in enriching artistic creativity through the experience of pain and personal suffering, and highlights the psychological and human dimensions of art and how art can be a means of expressing pain and delivering messages Human suffering. The article reinforces our understanding of the creative spirit and how art can emerge from deep life experiences.

KEYWORDS

Art, Pain, Creativity, M'hamed Issiakhem

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Introduction

Most definitions of creativity revolve around specific concepts such as creation, i.e. creating something from something or from something without a previous example. Also among the recurring concepts is the element of innovation, i.e. a new proposal that was not expected or anticipated. There are those who link creativity to originality, spontaneity, innovation, difference and uniqueness... which is Contrary to what is familiar, following, imitating and copying.

In general, creativity is coming up with a revolutionary approach in a specific field while preserving the goal. As for art, creativity is an essential feature of it, and the most prominent characteristic of an artist is creativity in outlook, work, and presentation.

All humans see the sunrise and it may arouse in them a sense of beauty, but not all humans can do that.

They draw inspiration from him for works such as Monet's immortal painting, " Impression, Sunrise " A woman's body may move us instinctively, but it does not move us creatively like Egon Schiele or Modigliani, and one may go through painful experiences but do not translate them into paintings like the works of Issiakhem or others who were driven by pain to create.

The sources of inspiration and creativity are as diverse as the creators, and here we will specialize in one of the sources belonging to the Algerian artist M'hamed Issiakhem, which is pain and suffering as his motivation and source of creativity.

What is the relationship between art and pain? Is pain really a source of inspiration? What is the relationship between creativity and pain and suffering according to Issiakhem? Do we need suffering as the essence of artistic creativity?

1. Pain is a source of artistic inspiration:

The artist's sources of inspiration and creativity cannot be limited to one specific thing and not another. All human feelings and all existing things can be transformed by the artist's hand into an aesthetic creative work.

Art may also serve as a cure for suffering, and through it we can also express happiness, fear, and even anger.

In art we also find a refuge where we can confront ourselves, embrace insecurities, escape blackness, return to ourselves, and be free from pain. Does art necessarily require suffering?

Opinions vary greatly on this, Art can help access one's feelings and at the same time be an outlet to compensate for inner pain, When it comes to art, there are no limits. Everything we experience and do not experience can be transformed into words, images and melodies (Ghadban & Naamon, September 2017, p. 170) Painful situations can be a source of inspiration, but they are by no means a necessary or essential source.

What do artists need? It is often said that artists need inspiration and talent, and that in order to create unparalleled creative work, it is necessary to meet conditions different from others. Therefore, when an artist is presented, his special circumstances are looked for to explain the extent of his genius and how creative he is compared to others.

"Sadness and pain" is considered a tool that an artist may use, and in some cases it may become a condition for highlighting his art, expressing his environment, the experiences he faced, his disabilities and psychological anxiety, revealing individual tragedy, and using art to overcome pain and reality, and the works he creates convey his experiences and perseverance to Viewer.

Sadness and pain is an emotional response to frustrated desires and the loss of something of value, or physical pain, negative feelings resulting from force majeure events or unfortunate situations. There are many types and intensity of sadness.

It can be a reaction to the individual unhappiness that the individual feels, or it can be It is a series of unhappiness that passes through life. Sadness goes beyond the everyday joys and sorrows of human beings, and becomes a special inner opportunity that creates philosophical meaning in itself. Sadness and pain are accompanied by loss. (Hassanein Ahmed, 2013, p. 88) When people lose the things they had in life, they find the meaning of life again.

Aristotle saw tragedy as a serious true story, not a comedy, Tragedy does not apply only to the plot of the drama, but rather includes all the arts. The artist here expresses the pain that the artist is going through or is affected by and turns it into a creative work, so the recipient feels it even if he does not know the author's background. For example, Munch's "The Scream" is famous for the pain and despair conveyed by his expressions. The face and all the elements of the work, even those who do not know Munch can feel the fear of death, the blurred lower body, the screaming expression, and the melting background, highlighted Munch's pain and conveyed it to the viewer.

Every artist's tragedy and the way it is transformed into a masterpiece is different, but in the end it arouses compassion or solace. We sympathize with the artist's tragedy, and at the same time the artist's work and his story sympathize with our tragedy, and the pain in the tragedy turns into comfort. The artist translates sadness and pain with aesthetic philosophical meanings, which in the end brings... Catharsis and comfort are felt by the connoisseur and stimulate his sympathy with the tragedy of the work and the tragedy of the artist and stir his feelings. This is roughly what Aristotle calls purification (Aristotle, 2003, p. 95).

2. Artists whose source of creativity was pain:

It is no secret that many prominent figures in the artistic fields suffer from emotional, intellectual and psychological problems. Their illness, psychological disorders, feelings of disappointment and loneliness, despair and dark thoughts were influential factors in the way they worked, formed creativity, and produced new and different opinions and ideas.

Suffering is everything that causes psychological and physical pain, as a result of loss, illness, or other things... and that sadness and pain may push the artist to confront himself and become a source of inspiration for him. For many artists, pain was the source from which they drew their work. For example, for Frida Kahlo, drawing was a means of expressing Her pain in an artistic way. It was her therapy, her refuge, and her form of freedom. Since she never wanted to be a victim, she understood very early on that it was not worth identifying with one's physical suffering.

When staring at her work in general 1944 *The Broken Column*, (Hayden, 2019, p. 517) One couldn't help but feel cold. The meaning of pain is felt more strongly in this canvas than in any of her other works. The physical pain is so palpable that it is almost depressing. The years of treatment and orthopedic braces she had to wear are long immortalized in this photo as her body's suffering and a synonym for her plight.

Frida was painting all these self-portraits because she felt lonely and in pain. Not only did she want to channel her physical suffering, but more importantly, she needed someone to explain what she felt, and that someone was none other than herself (Schiffer, 2021, p. 134).

The famous Mexican painter is a role model in terms of life and attitude, and she has shown us that creativity is a strategy, an extraordinary tool capable of helping us not only to heal pain, but also to heal suffering. Expressive therapies such as drawing, writing or installation are also a way to find yourself, take care of yourself and find your emotional balance again.

Among the artists we mention Van Gogh, Gauguin, Modigliani, Beethoven, Dostoevsky, Edgar Allan Poe... who lived a tormented life and highlighted this through their writings, colors and music... An artist's career may not be devoid of works that deal with pain as its subject, an example of which is Picasso. He is known to be a prosperous artist, but he accomplished works filled with suffering during his blue phase. He produced works of fear and pain that tell of the scourge of war, such as *Guernica*, which shows the German air force's attack on Spain. It is not a condition that the artist deal with his own suffering, but rather the suffering of his people, his society, and humanity as a whole. The artist is always... He is influenced by the current events, experiences and events around him and "*Guernica*" is a landmark in dealing with pain, suffering, humanity and brutality.

But this does not mean that the artist needs a tortured mind and a wounded heart to reach the pinnacle of expression and genius. Many still imagine a tortured poet and author who writes feverishly on rave nights as the model artist. This is an idea that was perpetuated by the Bohemians and who chose a certain lifestyle, but that gradually disappeared, especially with post-modern arts that transcended this concept. There is so much suffering in the world that it does not produce any kind of artistic response. While many find their inspiration at the bottom of a bottle, few find it there. True art remains a rare and inexplicable matter.

3. Art as a cure for pain:

Art in general is a relative term, and it is not only expressed differently, but it also carries other dimensions and enormous potential that affects a person. In the context of what art becomes a person's reconciliation with his difficulties, losses, and sacrifices, it may become a treatment that depends on the integration of creativity and therapeutic practice, and aims to correct areas. Emotional, motivational, communicative, organizational and contributing to the development of the individual. This method provides an opportunity to study unconscious processes and attitudes, the expression of unmanifested emotions, and social roles and behaviors. (Ben Yamina, 2020, p. 35).

The language of art tells us what is difficult to express in words. Art therapy is a field that uses art for personal development as a means of communicating with the deeper aspects of our spiritual life, and with the inner reality that consists of our thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and lives. Art therapy is based on the fact that artistic images can help us understand ourselves, creative self-expression, and like other therapies, art therapy gives hope to get rid of mental suffering, change oneself and feel better, positively affects the spiritual, mental and physical state and helps to discover resources. The interior through interaction with iconic and symbolic systems, self-expression, symbolic projective communication, expression of unconscious internal experiences, and acquisition of social and emotional experience, and perhaps this is one of the motives of human creativity. (Mustafa, 2010, p. 99)

4. Pain and creativity according to Issiakhem:

"I am amazed by people's taste because they love flowers and forget everything... I hate flowers and do not draw them... I am here to move the viewers, to remind them that they lived through miserable and difficult times that cannot be forgotten... I have maintained my characters, the characters of the Algerian people." Those who have not yet gone mad because they have tasted calamities, all my characters are tormented." (Poetry Channel, 1985) This is how the artist M'hamed Issiakhem describes part of his artistic vision and outlook. By referring to his personal biography, we find the reasons that led him to this perception.

Issiakhem has suffered psychological and physical pain throughout his life, especially when it comes to traumatic childhood experiences. His works carry a complex mix of conflicting emotions and a lot of sadness because it is part of him and part of the liberation that shapes his creativity. He is an artist who suffered from

his art and describes painting as nothing more than bleeding onto the canvas. He also says that drawing for him is not a luxury, it is a masochistic pain (Algerian , 2023) .

He lived his art and made it a refuge to channel his pain and translate the sensory events presented by the distorted body and the tortured thought into images and condense them. In his drawings, he directly targeted the paths of pain. The theme of death was close to his experience since childhood, and feelings of despair, sadness, and anxiety for himself and his body accompany him, as is evident from his saturated paintings. With loneliness, pain, physical sensations (injury, breakdown, division and separation), lost childhood, death and the emptiness of life.

At a very young age, he was taken away from his mother to live with his father in a city far from his birthplace. Perhaps this was the first tragedy he experienced, which was deprivation of his mother, but what affected him greatly was the painful accident that caused him, which was the explosion of a hand grenade that he found when he was young. This caused the death of many of his family's children (chourfi, 2004, p. 136).

He describes the scene in which he remained conscious for a few moments, watching the destruction he caused while the children were dead around him and limbs of their bodies stuck to the walls. After this incident, he remained in the hospital for two years and many surgical operations were performed on him. He lived death in all its details. When he left the hospital, he returned to the roof. The house where the accident occurred, and here he remembers a picture of an airplane that his little sister drew on the white wall, and he remembers his sister who died in the accident. What made him more painful was that he was rejected by the family, so he left the house alone and went to the capital without papers or money, with an amputated arm, and a distorted body and feelings (Algerian , 2023) These tragic events and private experiences later became primary material for his art. He says, "I am always on the edge of the abyss. I had to find some solace and find something of my own because I was helpless and disabled." His works were not just artistic ideas but an existential experience. His career was a tangible basis for his works. It was a source of inspiration for him, as he transformed his life into images with real expression and not just symbolic expression. Personal materials became the raw materials that became aesthetic components of his worldview. He built himself up as an artistic personality, and so illness and pain served him to shape this personality.

In addition to his own suffering, Issiakhem experiences his society's suffering from wars and famines, which has created chronic anxiety and intense emotions in him. He talks about art as memory, engine, and strength, and the artist's mission is to transmit. He considers that a country without artists is a dead country, and society is in dire need of art (Poetry Channel, 1985) His paintings put us in the heart of his bitter life experience with oppression and isolation. He transformed his life into art on canvas and paper, and depicted his fragile personality besieged by painful feelings of despair, existential emptiness, disgust and cruelty towards his body. Self-portraits appear in a large number of his works not only through paintings. Autoportraits but also in faces and compositions with strangely curved and distorted elements, and in drawings and violently assembled figures.

He has a rare ability to create strange and dark images using a broken and hesitant formula, highlighting fragmentation, decay, disgust, death and suffering. He fought face to face against his own desolation, against his crumbling memory, and against his aching mind and the frightening sounds emanating from within. At the same time, he found in painting a space to escape from. The actual pain that was embedded in his body, and the existential fear and troubles of the world, and despite the pain, violence and ugliness, he was able to preserve and contain the frightening experiences and explosive hallucinations by transforming them into images with an aesthetic dimension.

In his last years, after his health deteriorated further, his paintings became more mature, depressing, and sad until he died at the age of 57 years after a struggle with cancer, (chourfi, 2004, p. 137) His entire life was accompanied by many cases of depression and anxiety, which gave him a special concept of creativity and a unique way of creating images and metaphors imbued with deep and complex expressions that often linked the mind and body and the experiences accompanying this connection, as documented in his works.

5. A reading of the painting “Martyrs” by M'hamed Issiakhem:



*The shape1: Painting of the Martyrs, M'hamed Issiakhem
Les Martyrs, Private collection, 1965, Oil on wood, 90 x 190 cm*

First: Initial description

Technical aspect:

- Painting title: **Martyrs "Les Martyrs"**
- Name of the owner of the painting: M'hamed Issiakhem
- Painting completion date: **1965**
- Technology used and type of holder: **Oil colors on wood.**
- Shape and size: **190/90 cm**

The plastic aspect:

- **Colors and their degree of spread and distribution:**

The work in general is saturated with adjacent and contrasting colours. The colors of the bodies consist of yellow, green, violet and red in different shades, showing paleness, death and dread. The colors of the clothes that are placed next to each other show the colors of Algerian rural dress, especially women's clothing. The background colors contain different shades of grey, blue and yellow. Blurry, as is usual in Issiakhem's paintings. The red color is repeated on and under the bodies of the characters and on the severed limbs. It is the color of blood and death. The spread of colors added an impact to the shapes and added a dramatic touch to the work. The artist used black and white to highlight the faces and main objects. The painting as a whole is saturated with colors that incite each other with great sensory effects in their contrast.

- **Iconographic representation:**

The scene depicted by the painting of martyrs is a place full of movement, screaming, and dying men and women in a horizontal formation. On the left there is a man with obscured features, an amputated hand, and a blood stain on his chest. Next to him is a corpse, and so on the characters and shapes follow. The horizontal arrangement of the characters contains eight faces, and another shape that resembles a face, but it cannot be said with certainty.

The painter used perspective in the painting, whether linear or color, which created depth and many levels. The general scene consists of three levels. The first level contains the eight figures and severed human limbs. The second level, behind the characters, we find on the left the remains of a dilapidated wall, and next to it are barren trees. As for the third level, it is a statement on a background of greys and hues.

The artist filled in the right and lower sides and created a void on the left side. It is a play on mass, void, abstract geometric shapes, human and plant forms. The large-scale painting is executed in different colours,

so that the clearly defined surfaces of the image are engraved in the viewer's memory with precision and graphic solidity.

Subject:

– The relationship of the painting to the title:

The title is a linguistic message that directly expresses the painting. He chose this title, which tells about the millions of Algerian martyrs who fell victim to colonialism. The painting was painted three years after independence, and the effects of the war were still present in the souls of the people, and the pain was still in the souls of the families of the martyrs and in the minds of For those who lived through that period, Martyrs is the appropriate title for this painting. It is a direct title that reflects the subject of the painting and its techniques, reaching the recipient without affectation.

– Initial description of panel elements:

Eight figures and a set of human limbs appear. The composition begins on the right with a woman who appears to be dead or dying in a sitting position, next to her is a man trying to stand, under her is an arm that may be of a corpse under the rubble, and to her left is a bleeding hand, and behind her is a blurry background as if it were ruins and smoke. The background suggests chaos and horror. In the middle of the composition are four figures. The first is at the top in the middle of the composition. She appears to be in a state of wailing. Her clothes are torn and stained with blood. On her side is a woman raising her head and watching her sadly. At the bottom are two corpses and blood, a hand and a man. These limbs we do not know their owners. To the left of this horizontal structure, there is a bleeding man with his face on his face. Tortured and disfigured, with an amputated hand, he suffers from a serious wound. In front of him is a corpse, facing a pile of corpses and ruins. Behind him are scrawny, barren trees and the remains of a slanting wall. The sight of the corpses enhances the horror of the scene, reminding us of the difficult experience of war.

The remains of dead people, hands, open mouths, confusion and fear, screams and moans of pain, radical deformities in bodies. Faces with dramatic expressions, chaos of bodies - this is what the painting depicts, which expresses human pain, brutality and cruelty.

Second: The painting environment.

The technical and plastic container in which the painting was contained:

The famous painting, which he painted in his own style, depicts the horrific struggle for survival, he reenacts the gestures of the dead and dying in a dramatic scene, he paints large pictures entirely devoted to the expression of pain and helplessness. It symbolically expresses the defeat of man. The story of the tragedy of violence and destruction is concluded by the final scene on the right.

With a revolutionary and provocative choice at the same time of the man trying to move, this skill in alternation gives the painting the drama of an atmosphere of pain and death.

What is striking about the painting of martyrs is that it is not a traditional history or a picture of an event, as there are no specific topographical references to the site of the event or any civilian signs of the aggressors. Only the dress alone shows the Algerian rural dress. From here we can conclude that it is a square in some Algerian countryside or village, as That Issiakhem does not describe a specific historical event, but rather the horrors of war inflicted on the civilian population, it was clearly important to the painter that the meaning of the painting could not be explained in a direct way. Issiakhem combines traditional iconographic modes of representation and symbols with a visual language that stems from his own mythology and highly individual symbolism.

The relationship of the painting to the artist:

Martyrs is a true allegory of human pain. It bears witness to Issiakhem's participation in the tragedies of humanity. Issiakhem was convinced that the painter had been entrusted with a historic mission to contribute to the formation of a democratic civic conscience. He believes in immediate visual impact. He carries the issues of the homeland and humanity. He lived through the horrors of wars and the various political changes that took place in his city, his country, and the world. He experienced that himself. He was influenced by the issues and pains of society. He integrated into all national events and contributed visually to them. His works reached all groups of people, whether through Exhibitions or through the advertising paintings that he used to draw or the banknotes and even postage stamps that he used to design, and also through the newspapers and magazines in which he used to draw and through the films whose decorations he designed. He is a comprehensive and diverse artist whose works reached the Algerian public and abroad through the exhibitions

that he designed. He resided in different countries of the world, but he never deviated from his origin and personality.

In this painting, Issiakhem expressed the simple, innocent person who becomes a victim of war. He meant the martyrs of the Algerian revolution, which claimed the lives of a million and a half martyrs, and the thousands who were forced to leave their homes and their lands were burned. The impact of this on the artist produced several works that deal with these issues, as Issiakhem is an influential artist. He is influenced by his society and humanitarian issues. As for the painful method of execution and removal, it may also be part of his personal life. All this destruction and horror that is in the picture he experienced himself, and the severed hands may also be his amputated hand and the mutilated bodies are his body. He draws inspiration from himself, and the scenes are repeated. The hand in many of his paintings is perhaps because of the arm he lost in a bomb explosion accident. This painting deeply expresses his feelings as an artist towards himself, his community, and all the victims of wars.

Third: Interpretive reading:

"Martyrs" is a relatively large work 190/90 cm. Filled with haunting images showing human suffering, painted in different and contrasting colors it is perhaps the color scheme that complements the rough shapes and horrific faces and adds a sense of panic and dread.

The work adopts many symbolic icons and direct and indirect suggestions in clothing, background, faces, etc. On the left of the painting there is a dilapidated wall, which means the destruction of homes and homes and lack of security even inside the dwelling. Next to it are barren trees, and this has clear suggestions indicating death, withering, and crises, which increases the scene. Horror and impact, while the blurry background of mixed colors wants to convey an image of the explosion and bombing, the horrors of war and the cluttered darkness. The dress is the dress of simple, modest and conservative Algerian rural women, which indicates that the martyrs in the picture are simple people from the common people in their traditional clothes who are not at fault. The clothes also appear torn and stained, evidence of the severe injuries to which they were exposed. As for the faces, they tell stories of suffering, pain, horror, and sadness... All elements of the painting carry human meanings and messages about war, injustice, and the ugliness that results from them.

Fourth: Analysis results.

The conclusion that we emerge from after studying the various previous analysis steps is that the artistic work "Martyrs" by the Algerian artist M'hamed Issiakhem establishes an aesthetic view derived from pain, and that suffering may produce aesthetic works, but at the same time it chronicles and broadcasts human feelings that we cannot get rid of, as they are rooted in all people. People go through painful experiences throughout their lives.

We also find that the painting is inspired by the painter's body, his own suffering, and his community. It is an honest work stemming from a deep human feeling that produced an image of strength and influence.

Conclusions

Based on the content of the research, and through studying and analyzing the painting "Martyrs" by the artist M'hamed Issiakhem, we have come to the conclusion that pain, suffering, and difficult human experiences can be a source of inspiration and artistic creativity, as they give the artist the ability to express his feelings and personal experiences in a way that enriches his works and gives them additional depth. This represents a contribution to understanding the depth and aspects of this important relationship from which we started.

In this study, the details and dimensions of the painting "Martyrs" were shed in depth, through an analysis of the colors, symbols, and plastic techniques used. This analysis contributed to our understanding of the extent to which these elements influence the translation of human pain and conflicts in contemporary art.

One of the notable findings we reached is the importance of experiencing personal pain and suffering in enhancing the creative side of artists. This experience allows them to express their personal stories and feelings in a way that enhances human connection and inspires the recipient.

In conclusion, this research can form the basis for future studies on the role of pain in enhancing artistic creativity, and its impact on human expression and the cultural and social messages that art can convey to our society.

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