

# The Impact of Psychological Content on Sculptural Work in the Contemporary Arab World

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## Abstract

The effect of the psychological content is apparent on the work of sculpture; the fact which has led the researcher to choose the topic of the research. That is to learn more deeply and to know the relationship between the psychological content of the artist and the work of sculpture. This study aims to tackle the extent to which psychological content affects the work of sculpture in the Contemporary Arab Art.

Knowing the impact of the artist's psychological content in a work of sculpture will highly evaluate that work's artistic value. By learning about the relationship between psychological content and sculpture work, complex psychological conditions can be cured. This study aims to study and understand sculptural works and to identify psychological conditions and factors affecting them. Also, follow the developments in the psyche of the artist are tracked through the stages of his artistic career through his sculptural work and analyze the psychological content both as a type and as a concept.

The study assumes that the psychological content has a direct impact on modeling the sculptural work. The study of contemporary sculptural works by some Arab artists makes it possible to learn about the concept of sculptural work and its relationship to the psychological content.

**Keywords:** Sculptural Work, Psychological Content.

## INTRODUCTION

The Man learned about the events of ancient history and the evolution of former human societies by means of inscriptions and figurines created by them. Thereafter, he analyzed them. Furthermore, through those symbols and the manner of formation, he realized the psychological state that the artist experienced, whether of grief or happiness, war or peace, injustice or justice, etc., and even its influence on the works of art and sculpture.

Then, the Man found that the effect of the psychological content, that an artist experiences when forming a piece of art, had a profound role to play on the content of sculpture, and

even can be observed or predicted from the external form of sculpture.

Thus, it can be fairly said that the effect of the psychological content is apparent on the work of sculpture; the fact which has led the researcher to choose the topic of the research. That is to learn more deeply and to know the relationship between the psychological content of the artist and the work of sculpture.

### Statement of the Problem

This study aims to tackle the extent to which psychological content affects the work of sculpture in the Contemporary Arab Art.

### Significance of the research

- 1- This study contributes to understanding the effect of psychological content in the formation of sculpture work.
- 2- Knowing the impact of the artist's psychological content in a work of sculpture will highly evaluate that work's artistic value.
- 3- By learning about the relationship between psychological content and sculpture work, complex psychological conditions can be cured.

### Objective of the study

This study aims to:

- 1- Study and understand sculptural works and to identify psychological conditions and factors affecting them.
- 2- Follow the developments in the psyche of the artist are tracked through the stages of his artistic career through his sculptural work.
- 3- Analyze the psychological content both as a type and as a concept.

### Hypotheses of the study

- 1- The study assumes that the psychological content has a direct impact on modeling the sculptural work.
- 2- The study of contemporary sculptural works by some Arab artists makes it possible to learn about the concept of sculptural work and its relationship to the psychological content.

### Limitations of the Study

- 1- The research has been limited to some of the works of only contemporary Arab artists.
- 2- The research deals with only sculptural works which have been affected by psychological content.

### Methodology

- 1- The research follows the Analytical Descriptive Approach in describing the psychological content in contemporary sculptural works of some Arab sculptors.

The researcher's procedural definition of the psychological content: the psychological content is what the memory of a person contains of psychological emotions, whether positive or negative, by which all senses get affected.

- 2- The sculptural work: is a personifying art based on creating three-dimensional figures of a man, animal, or abstract shapes. Besides, plaster, wax, rock carving or wood can be used.

### Review of Literature

First: content related studies

- 1- "Taking Advantage of the Form and Content of the Mural Sculpture for the Creation of Contemporary Sculptural Works" (Seyam, Amina Sabri Hamid Ahmad – M. A. Thesis, Faculty of Specific Education, Department of Artistic Education, Mansoura University, 2012).

The current study makes use of this study theoretically to learn about the psychological content effects of different sculptural work in nature, how to use them as formative solutions in the psychological content of sculpture work, and to know their sources.

- 2- "The Relationship between Form and Content through the Use of Slides in Modern Sculpture" Al-Shuri, Wesal Bashir Ibrahim – M. A. thesis, Faculty of Education for Home Economics and Artistic Education, Branch of Girls' College, King Abdul Aziz University, Jeddah, 2008.

The researcher benefits from this study in the second chapter of the research to identify the form and content in the Arab world and Saudi Arabia, the relationship between the form and content, whether the contents are linked to these countries or not, and what kind of relationship, i.e. political, cultural or otherwise.

Second: related studies according to the sculptural work

- 1- "The Doctrines of Contemporary Art: The Formative Vision of the Twentieth Century" by Hassan Hassan Mohammad – Dar Alfikr Al-

Araby, 2002. The researcher took advantage of this book by learning how science and philosophy can influence art production and a new vision of contemporary art.

2- "The Contemporary Art Currents", Amhaz Mahmoud, Prints Co., 1996.

The benefit from this book has been through the discovery of the mystery of the relationships, the meaning of soul and body in the material, and the depth of its vision as well. In addition, the imagination and the ability to create through the human image have been useful outcomes.

#### The Study Focal Areas

##### 1- The First Focal Area: The Impact of Psychological Content

Linguists define the Artistic Content as, "the ideological sense, namely the sense based on thinking. Only man can express that sense. Moreover, the artistic characteristics of a shape include other elements which are called the shape elements. Those elements form the artistic image which contains the content inside".

Thus, the effect of psychological content in the work of art is radically different from that in the areas of knowledge and expression that we practice in our working life. When we read an article in a daily newspaper, for example, we end up with it once we understand its content, which is the point of view of its author. Nevertheless, the form does not matter in many or few ways as long as it has been a good conductor of the author's ideas. The form, rather, is a means to an end, just to convey the content. On the other hand, both the form and content are the means and the end at the same time; for content does not end once it is known like in essays, newsletters, or scientific papers".

By/ Enas Hussein (1). The Subjective Relationship between the Form and the Content in the Literary Work: Two Faces of the Same Coin.

##### 2- The Second Focal Area: The work of sculpture

- "The art of sculpture differs in the style of composition from the rest of the forms of art. It does not deal with flat forms of two dimensions, such as the art of photography, but rather includes three-dimensional figurative forms, namely, mass, space, movement, form, content, and so on, till the artist gets satisfied."

Furthermore, Sculpture is made for two purposes: the first is for performing art as a profession through which an artist gets money; and the second purpose to do sculpture as a hobby in order to unload inner suppressed emotions from which man suffers.

##### Uses of sculpture:

The art of sculpture has been used since time immemorial to fulfill many purposes:

- 1 as a memorial and immortal purpose. - 2 as a historical purpose.
- 3 as a religious purpose. 4- It is sometimes used as a record to record the daily subjects of certain customs. But its uses are small in this area.

##### Sizes of sculptural works

- The different sculptural works have two dimensions:

1- One dimension is often found in ancient sculpture works, especially those associated with the art of architecture, such as the statue of sphinx in the ancient Egyptian pharaonic civilization.

2- Another dimension is less than normal, reaching smaller than normal, such as coins.

Moreover, the size of sculpture is influenced by functional purpose unless it is the only measure. An example is the social and architectural function of the statue of Chephren is to immortalize the greatness of the Pharaoh. Sizes are also subject to the art of sculpture, depending on the ores available in the sculptor's drawing gallery, and on its limited financial abilities.

Types of sculpture work: Sculpture works are divided into two sections:

1- Independent sculpture: it is the entire sculpture, that is, from all perspectives, and the details of which are all over it, so we can see the sculpture from all sides. This type of sculpture is the hardest of his kind, because it needs more work and effort.



Figure (1) *Ibrahim Abdul-Malak, sculpture*



Figure (2) *Aktham Abdul-Majeed, bronze, Al-Meraa*

## 2- Relief and Intaglio Sculpture

It is the inscription in which the shapes and designs stand out from their backgrounds. It differs from the three-dimensional sculpture in that the shapes stand alone and without a background, and have three full dimensions. Moreover, in relief sculpture, the shapes are only partially modular, but they appear as if they are holistic. These inscriptions may sometimes be relief in their background or engraved within, in which case they are called intaglio inscriptions.



Figure (3) *Ibrahim Abdul-Malak, sculpture, Egypt, Al-Meraa*

Gogolf, relief sculpture, wood

Materials of sculpture:

- Terra Cotta
- Wood
- Iron
- Brace
- Copper
- Cast
- Bronze and other metals
- Steel & Aluminum
- Stone

The Third Focal Area: The Impact of Psychological Content on Sculptural Work

The impact of psychological content on the sculptural work is intended in this study to refer to the philosophy of psychological content on the external form of sculpture work. Hence, the

researcher concludes that the psychological content can be divided into two types:

1- The conjured psychological content: it is the psychological state in which the artist lives evoking thoughts about the nature of the work of art, and by which he expresses to form the work of sculpture. Moreover, it is a state that goes away by the end of the work.

2- The enduring psychological content: it is the state stemming from the nature of the artist and his influence by life. Yet, it is not necessary for the psychological state of the artist to be a state of dissatisfaction or grief. Rather, it may be a state of joy, satisfaction or affection.

A number of artists, when asked about their psychological state in the formation of sculpture work, disapprove the existence of any psychological condition in them. They do so for the misconception that psychological condition is a state of illness that means that they are in a state of grief or oppression in society, for whatever reason.

Furthermore, in the formation of sculpture work, there are a few artists who separate the impact of the conjuring psychological content from that of the enduring psychological content. This happens by sensing the affecting factors or events that are technically relevant to the nature of the work, and eliminating any effect of the enduring psychological content from being shown in such work.

Nevertheless, most artists show a little or a high degree of the enduring psychological impact without feeling it. An example of this is when requesting the shaping of a horse; works vary according to the artist's psychological state. If the artist was affected by cruelty, his work would be a wild horse. If the artist was affected by freedom, his work would be a free horse out in the wilderness. If the artist's psychological state was affected by happiness and joy, his production would be like a dancing horse. Another case is if the artist's psychological state was affected by war, he would shape it like a hostile horse in war. Besides, there are many examples and cases.

Furthermore, the sculptural work conveys a message to the viewer about the impact of the artist's psychological content, which plays a key role in his intellectual, philosophical and expressive vision. Hence, the psychological contents of the past are raised in the form of compositions or sculptural works of art.

Moreover, the artist evokes the psychological content of scenes in sculpture. The psychological content of the form is like the soul in the body. If the psychological content is separated from the artistic form, the work of sculpture will lose its artistic value.

A work in which we find a gap between the form of art and the psychological content is considered weak, and the artist has not used his intellectual, philosophical and expressive vision well in it.

Thus, the researcher considers that the success of the sculpture is the result of understanding the impact of the psychological content and the intellectual, philosophical and expressive vision of the artist. It attracts the viewer to perceive, taste and understand the sculpture work, so the vision turns to be a sensitive, sensory and mental experience of the viewer.

### **The Analysis of some sculptural works of contemporary Arab sculptors:**

Having identified the impact of psychological content on the work of sculpture, it can be noticed that the relationship between the mass of sculpture that the sculptor forms, and the psychological contents is different in the work of sculpture. The various types of art materials are regarded as one of the methods of expressing the psychological content of the artist. There are some artists have chosen an ore that was flexible and expressive in its soft feel to make us feel the vitality of its psychological content in sculpture work. The other artists have used rough and hard ore to feel the harshness of the content and the psyche of the artist affected by the subject.

There is a large group of Arab artists and sculptors whose works have been influenced by the psychological content. The impact varies

from a psychological stage to another that the artist experienced and was influenced by.

This study will analyze the works of contemporary Arab sculptors such as, the visual artist Sami Mahmoud from the State of Kuwait, and the sculptor Siddiq Wasel from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

- The sculptor and visual artist Sami Mahmoud  
– Kuwait – contemporary

It is apparent, in the artist's work, that he has followed a dramatic expressive sculptural style that draws its psychological content from the reality of his life. Thus, he depicted it in his sculptural work. Moreover, his works have been varied from time to time, depending on his co-living of that period of time and his influence by it, whether physically, audio or visually. He, thence, dives into the mysteries of the human psyche to foreground its suffering to light and embellish it in his sculptural work in different sizes and human conditions that struggle for survival.



Sami Mahmoud, Sheikh Sabbah Al-Salem

Analysis:

In this work, the artist gives a general view of the social and human life for a period of his life. His sculptural work at that point was not influenced by any enduring psychological content, and his impact by the conjuring psychological content developed in his first works, the first appears in (Figure 4) a statue of Sheikh Sabbah Salem Al-Sabbah and the other in (Figure 5) a statue of Abdullah Salem Al-Sabbah in 1971. His work at that time reflected a highly sophisticated human thought, high artistic taste, and fine craftsmanship.



Figure (6), Sami Mahmoud, *Al-Mansoukh (The Cloned)*, bronze, undated

Analysis:

In Figure (6), the artist was influenced by the enduring psychological content which expresses the human suffering. He personified it in the shape of a weak man desperate of life. He did so in simple abstract mass in which human features have faded. Besides, the weak and austere cloned body suggests, and even makes us feel, the cruelty and torment of life. Most of the artist's work at that time was that of bodies carrying dead human beings, whether children or adults. By doing so, the artist wanted to bring that suffering to the viewer to be influenced by it and its psychological content by the simplest human positions, even if he did not live through that suffering.



Figure (7), Sami Mahmoud, *Sidra (a buckthorn tree)*, 1973, bronze

### Analysis:

For a specific period of time, the artist composed sculptural works on women with the contents of a twist on their different positions. Moreover, those sculptural works combined the two contradictions, the strict lineage and absolute freedom of expression, and a combination of bitter reality and dreamy imagination. The artist did not use sculpture to create shock for the recipient, but in order to evoke the viewer's feelings till he/she could integrate with the external form and psychological content of the work. The sculpture "Al-Sidra" (the buckthorn tree) in figure (7), for example, was approximately made in 1979 for a figurative figure in which the symbols of a woman and a buckthorn tree overlap. In the art form, it takes the symbol of the buckthorn, through inscriptions of leaves on some sides to give the general form of a buckthorn tree. Besides, the impact of the enduring psychological content based on the beauty, softness and femininity of the woman, as well as her strength appears very clearly. According to the artist Sami Mahmoud, "The palm tree has a close relationship with heritage and roots, it is linked to the desert, and it refers to the hot atmosphere. Besides, the extension of its roots in the subsurface totally resembles the great Gulf woman who has, over the years, given birth to men who have left great ground in the prosperity and progress of the Gulf \* Lysdo" (a style of nomadic embroidery).



Figure (8), "Sami Mahmoud, A trying out - 1978 – bronze – 30/ 32/ 62 cm"

### Analysis:

In Figure (8), the artist began with carving "boxes" in which a human being trying to get out so hard. The artist presented six works

numbered "Trying Out," which monitor the cases of a human being seeking to escape out of a box of bronze. Therein, the two hands pierce the solid applied wall making the rift in its sides to break free for open air. Works tell the story of a man who moves so hard, breaking his shackles and handcuffs, and hoping for salvation.

At this stage of time, man and his issues seemed to be the artist's greatest interest in all his work. Moreover, the artist has been able to convey his idea to the viewer through his enduring psychological content.



Figure (9), "Sami Mahmoud, The Scream - 1980 – bronze"

### Analysis:

This work reflects the impact of the psychological content of the artist, who embodied the suffering of the people of Kuwait in a dramatic manner, in Figure (9) "The Scream", at the time of Iraq's occupation of Kuwait. We find the work overwhelmed by the strength and toughness of bronze, the effects of violence. This appears in the cramped neck muscles and the intermittent tongue breakdown of the tie intensity of the ribbon and the tie of the eyes and half of the head. This manifests the severity of the pain and the cruelty of the attitude that the artist had experienced with his people. We can even hear the scream from the deep inside, the sound of shackling and tearing down the surfaces, and the inner whines of the tortured and oppressed human being. Besides,

we hear the grinding of heads with mouths unable to scream, the sound of foot jogging on the doorsteps, the sound of body shredding and human anions. This shows the impact of the artist's enduring compulsive psychological content on his work of sculpture which becomes very expressive.



Figure (10), "Sami Mahmoud, *The Sabra and Shtila Massacre* – 1983 – bronze – 72/ 25/ 55 cm"

Analysis:

In Figure (10), the artist managed to express his feelings about the impact of the enduring psychological content of man in the Sabra and Shatila Massacre. He monitored and depicted this massacre in front of the conscience of the human being in the Arab world, turning the sculpture into a drama that the viewer can sense, and which leaves a trace inside him or her. Even if the viewer does not know the meaning of the work, he feels that man is suffering from oppression, with tied hands suffering from violence. That is what the artist wanted the viewer to experience from the content of the sculptural work.

The sculptor Siddiq Wasel – Saudi - Contemporary.

The work of the artist, Siddiq Wasel, varies from time to time with the persistence of the ore of formation, namely iron or metal of different types. In the early stages, we note that his work was stripped of any characteristic of decoration, joy, reluctance to the aesthetic of creation and composition, random construction and simplicity in form. Besides, we can see the impact of smelting and welding that give a special rhinoceros that makes memory go back to the past. This is to make us see the significance of the impact of the enduring psychological content in the artist's world.



Figure (11)

Analysis:

In Figure (11), the artist used the inverted pyramid which represents the beginning of the approach to thought stripped of any impurities of visual reality. He sends through it some perception of life or any turn of social obsession need to be informed about. It seems as if he were asking to turn the scales upside down, so that he could reveal the impact of the enduring psychological content he has in the subconscious. He therefore did so through iron and everything associated with this solid material as an instrument of expression and creativity.



Figure (12), *Siddiq Wasel, The Lantern, iron, 2012*



### Analysis:

In Figure (12), the artist, in his work “The Lantern”, maintains that, “This work reflects ancient light and lighting, and for me, it was connected to study and education. The expression here is about knowledge and light, but in a different way that integrates heritage and spirituality. There is even a treasure on which the lantern man stands, namely the treasure of heritage and the Arabic language.” Hence, the impact of the artist's enduring psychological content on his work of sculpture is clear.



Figure (13), Siddiq Wasel, Love melts iron, 2014



Figure (14), Siddiq Wasel, The last mask, iron, 2014



Figure (15), Siddiq Wasel, Al-Rawasheen



Figure (16), Siddiq Wasel, Ramadan's Chariot

### Analysis:

The researcher finds that the artist's recent works have generally changed in composition, for they turn to be lines or slides and pipes of metal, and more stripped and influenced by the psychological content of the artist. In Figure (13) and Figure (14), the method of composition and the time period are the same. Moreover, the works were presented in the same gallery. Figure (15) was similar to them in the period of time; although it is totally different in the ore which is found for the first time in the artist's work, namely wood. Besides, the subjects of the sculptural work in Figure (14) "Love leans iron" and Figure (15) "The Last Mask" are contradicted, while the latter "Al-Rawasheen" has a completely different subject.

The use of color in the artist's work appeared to be contradictory. In addition, the Figure (13) is three dimensional, while Figure (14) and Figure (15) are of two dimensions. This illustrates that the affected situation in the psychological content at the time was present. While Figure (15) expresses that the artist was influenced by Mecca's “rawasheen”, it expresses a part of the past which has gone. Thus, he was influenced by the enduring psychological content. Since Figure (16), “Ramadan’s Chariot”, is the most recent sculpture by the artist, it is more simple and abstract than ever before. That makes it clear that the artist is not affected by the enduring content of the period, but rather he is an artist with an evoked content.

After analyzing the artists' works, it can be concluded that:

1- They followed the style of dramatic expressive sculpture which had an impact on the artist from the psychological content in his real life he lived. Thus, he could depict it in his sculptural works.

2- Their works differed from a stage of time to another according to each one's co-living of that specific period of time, and to its impact on him whether sensibly, acoustically, or visually.

3- Each artist chose a particular ore by which his psychological content was evoked, and his energy was satisfied, so that he could depict that in his sculptural work.

### Results and Recommendations:

#### Results:

After the analysis of the work of contemporary Arab artists in this study, the following results have been achieved:

1- The possibility of inhibiting the psychological content of the ideas resulting from the work of sculpture.

2- Psychological impacts add content to expressive values over the work of sculpture.

3- The possibility of treating psychological conditions by designing sculptures for different age groups

4- Composition with all its different ores helps express the psychological content of people who are not fluent in language expression.

5- The free handling of ores for sculptural works of different age groups and the appropriate psychological content make it easier to form a sculpture with different contents.

6- Metal, junk and wood can be used to express the psychological content, and extract suppressed energies within them using methods of formatting, coloring, forging, and welding.

#### Recommendations:

1- The need to study the impacts of psychological content in sculptural works and finding out how to treat them.

2- Benefitting from the properties of different ores from softness, stiffness, etc., to form expressive sculptures.

3- Making use of different metal formation methods in multiple sculptural works.

4- Giving interest to the psychological content in the Arab environment for sculptural work.

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