

Transferring the Omani Cultural Heritage through the Artistic Image Expressed by the Omani Artist

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Abstract

Images play a crucial role in visual arts, serving not only to convey specific messages and transfer knowledge but also to reflect the cultural heritage of the artists (Robb et al., 2021). Research indicates that the use of particular characters, symbols, and color combinations often relates to an artist's cultural background. An image can reveal an artist's thought processes, psychology, culture, and socio-economic status. Artists sometimes intentionally create images to communicate messages about society and culture, including critiques of societal flaws and commentary on political events (Smith, 2017). Consequently, art varies significantly across different countries. This essay critically examines the role of images in visual arts as a means of knowledge transfer and explores how Omani artists use imagery to convey their cultural heritage. The integration of symbols, forms, and intellectual relationships that encapsulate experiences and events is vital in preserving the intellectual and cultural heritage that surrounds an individual. In the era of globalization, the use of images in art has evolved, showcasing remarkable developments in the meanings and symbols that artists and photographers aim to convey, reflecting cultural and cognitive thought. This research examines the role of the Omani artist in using visual arts to communicate with both local and global communities through cultural connotations and symbols embedded in their work, which represents the culture and legacy of Omani society. Furthermore, it highlights the importance of artistic images in reinforcing both tangible and intangible cultural aspects in the Sultanate of Oman for future generations, consolidating these elements in mental thought through the culture and heritage conveyed by these images.

Keywords

Omani Cultural Heritage, Artistic Image, Omani Artist, Visual Arts

1. Introduction

Images play a crucial role in visual arts, serving not only to convey specific messages and transfer knowledge but also to reflect the cultural heritage of the artists (Robb et al., 2021). Research indicates that the use of particular characters, symbols, and color combinations often relates to an artist's cultural background (Smith, 2017). An image can reveal an artist's thought processes, psychology, culture, and socio-economic status. Artists sometimes intentionally create images to communicate messages about society and culture, including critiques of societal flaws and commentary on political events (Smith, 2017). Consequently, art varies significantly across different countries. This essay critically examines the role of images in visual arts as a means of knowledge transfer and explores how Omani artists use imagery to convey their cultural heritage. Galchenko et al. (2020) clearly highlight that art is a typical expression of the cultural heritage of a country. Any art is a component of a specific art culture or art form which highlights the intrinsic artistic parameters of the artists of a specific country or region. For evidence, Angus (2022) clearly defines that the art of postmortem culture is much more contemporary in its look and feel. American artists practice a lot of this kind of art. It clearly shows the impact of cultural heritage on art.

2. Innovations of Research in This Paper

This paper highlights specific artistic images and the form of plastic art as the most profound representation of Omani cultural heritage and Omani visual arts. The innovation of research in this paper is that it explores the area of artistic work through a secondary research study which has been seldom attempted. The current study uses image as a perspective to define visual arts. There are very few research papers which draw resemblance and conduct a comparative analysis of the visual art forms by Omani painters, photographers and sculptors with that of the artists of international reputation from the different historical era in different time frames. Through the same, the artistic inclinations of the Omani artists have been brilliantly discussed in this research. It is one of the important innovations of research in this research paper. This paper has performed a systematic literature review where a keyword based research method has been adopted. This research method also uses the approach of thematic data interpretation where multiple research codes including the keywords are consolidated into relevant themes. The themes are related to the research objectives at the beginning of the paper. The researcher has diversely debated and compared artistic works of several artists and fraternities to develop an expressive connotation of overall artistic work. While doing so, research data has been acquired from a fast range of sources like Google scholar, individual newspapers, magazines, corporate research papers on art forms, government research papers on art in different countries and so on. These are the mentionable innovations of research of this research paper. By applying these innovative parameters the researcher tries to find links of cultural heritage in the different art expressions by Omani artists. Based upon a critical comparison of secondary data, the researcher tries to emu-

late whether Omani artists have been able to effectively poetry cultural heritage through their art forms in comparison with the quality of cultural expressions in the art forms of global artists' fraternity.

3. Aim and Objectives

3.1. Aim of the Study

The main aim of the essay is to analyze the significance of artistic images and plastic art as the essence of visual arts. Additionally, the study aims to explore how Omani plastic artists use artistic images to convey their cultural heritage.

3.2. Objectives

The main objectives of the essay are:

- To analyze the significance of artistic work as the essence of visual arts
- To investigate the expressive connotations of artistic work
- To analyze the importance of image in transferring material and non-material culture
- To analyze how Omani artists use images to convey their cultural heritage

4. The Image Is the Essence of Visual Arts

Visual art, a creative form appreciated visually, encompasses various art forms such as painting, sculpture, and artistic images. Historically, painting and images are considered the foundational art forms, with artists creating images before any other type of visual art. [Alexander \(2020\)](#) highlights that images or paintings are the essence of visual arts. [Hall \(2023\)](#) further emphasizes that visual art is a fundamental component reflecting worldly phenomena artistically. Images, as the basic form of visual art, depict societal norms, political events, the beauty of the world, natural and mythological phenomena. Through this medium, visual art conveys the cultural heritage of countries, societies, or specific racial and ethnic groups ([Punzalan, 2018](#)).

According to researchers, paintings, photographs, and drawings can be considered two-dimensional images, while sculpture is seen as three-dimensional. [King \(2017\)](#), has clearly explained that photography is predominantly a form of two dimensional arts. The author clearly states that when any three dimensional art is created (refer into three dimensional pictures where buttons or tablet computers can be used to measure the three dimensional depth of an otherwise to dimensional digital image) its perception is different. However the author states that photographers find satisfaction thinking that a physical specimen of the photograph work actually exists in the real world. The same feeling has actually compelled artists like May Xiong to paint over photographs. [Meyer \(2022\)](#), has further clarified the specific art forms which might be incorporated under the domain of two dimensional artworks. The author claims that sketches, prints, painting as well as pictures are the reputed forms of two dimensional arts where charcoal, ink, oil painting, watercolor or pencil can be equally used to produce those. Also, [Meyer](#)

(2022), have clearly highlighted that other than sculpture and architecture, the other forms of traditional arts are mostly two dimensional. Hence it can be clearly concluded that sculpture and architecture are actually three dimensional forms of art. These art forms, including paintings, drawings, photographs, and sculpture, are crucial components of visual arts; to appreciate the existence of visual arts, it's important to reflect on the significance of all these art forms (Pelowski et al., 2017). Image is often regarded as the essence of visual arts. Researchers like Chen and Yang (2019) believe that art must represent life and cannot be detached from events in life. Artists frequently use images to depict human lives and needs, leading to changes in painting styles and the character of visual arts based on societal and lifestyle shifts. Without accurately representing society, conveying messages through visual arts is impossible (Qurbonova, 2021). Visual arts also play a role in knowledge and information transfer, with images, paintings, drawings, photographs, and other forms being used to share information between groups. Studies have shown that images are often employed to communicate about historical events linked to a country's heritage. For evidence Yi (2023) shows that the image of the Machine Man is an expression of the Zen aesthetics of Japanese culture.

Leonardo da Vinci was a renowned artist, and one of his masterpieces, the Mona Lisa, continues to be a subject of research for 21st-century artists. He aimed to convey hidden truths through the image (Robb et al., 2021). Artists utilize symbols, colors, texts, and expressive connotations to communicate significant messages to viewers (Rajarajan, 2019). Thus, images serve as a powerful medium for artists to convey important messages. In many case, artists also use images to portray their culture and heritage more effectively than other visual art forms.

5. The Image and Expressive Connotations

Expressive connotations are intrinsic to images, as artists use them to convey their feelings and ideas on various subjects. Malchiodi (2018) stated that visual arts invariably employ expressive connotations, with images being no exception. Daniel and Mason (2020) emphasize that artists aim to share their emotions with the audience through their work, whether it be images, paintings, drawings, or logical diagrams, utilizing various expressive elements such as text, color combinations, symbols, and specific uses of lines and materials. González-Zamar and Abad-Segura (2021) note that the incorporation of these connotations in visual arts is influenced by the artist's skill, cultural background, and intended message.

The artist's ability determines his/her effectiveness in using techniques to convey personal messages and ideas (Carreiro, 2017). Studies show that images contain expressive connotations, but ineffective communication techniques can lead to misinterpretation by the audience (Portnova, 2018). In contrast, an artist's culture and society influence how expressive connotations are utilized in imagery. Studies have found that cultural heritage affects the use of color combinations, texts, phrases, and the incorporation of carvings, lines, and symbols in images (Fayzullaevich, 2021). Certain symbols, specific to a culture, can be used by artists to convey ideas to people within their own country, utilizing these

symbols as expressive connotations.

Omani artists often use the symbol of the Omani Dagger to convey ideas related to Omani pride and history. This demonstrates the significance of expressive connotations in visual arts. Similarly, scientists and philosophers use diagrams and images to explain their theories and research findings to the audience (Rajarajan, 2019). The education and research background of artists can influence their approach to expressing ideas through images. It is clear that expressive connotations play a crucial role in helping artists share specific ideas, theories, concepts, and messages. However, the use of expressive connotations is greatly influenced by the culture and the artist's capabilities.

The expressive connotations of the different artists are based on the country or cultural background from where they belong. The difference in expressive connotations of two iconic paintings can be considered here for explaining the same. For evidence *The Scream* by Edvard Munch in 1893 reflects the art forms of modernism. The post impressionist culture of art in Paris, made popular by Vincent van Gogh, Paul Gauguin and others is exhibited in this painting by Munch (Davis, 2020) (Figure 1). In the post impressionist movement during modernism the expression of overpowering industrialisation and urbanisation leading to anxiety and frustration in nature is captured.

This painting is much contrasted from the painting named *The Blue Rider* by Wassily Kandinsky, made in 1903 (Figure 2). It is also a pending of the modern period which is however based on the abstraction. This expression is art highlighting bold colours and rough strokes of the brush. It shows heavy influence of German art where the symmetry and geometric harmony of nature was more popular as an art form (Davis, 2020).

In Munich, a lot of other painters follow such expressionist art forms. However their style is highly contrasting in comparison with the blended colouring style where circular and thoughtful brush strokes are more evident in *The Scream*. Paris based artists tried to capture the lack of harmony and discord in the society in the post revolutionist era where urbanization was disrupting the social setting (Davis, 2020). Hence it can be concluded that the cultural backgrounds and national origin of the two paintings are the reasons why the expressive connotations in the two art works differ.

6. The Importance of Art Work in the Transfer of Material and Non-Material Culture

Material culture encompasses the physical aspects of a society including behaviors, lifestyles, food habits, and fashion. According to Lovtsova et al. (2021), material culture refers to the behavior, life style, food habits, fashion and other physical aspects that represent material culture. Objects created or modified by humans convey messages about a country's material culture (Peak et al., 2023). In contrast, non-material culture comprises the thoughts and ideas that unite people, such as religious beliefs, social norms, and ethics, distinguishing one culture from another (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2020).

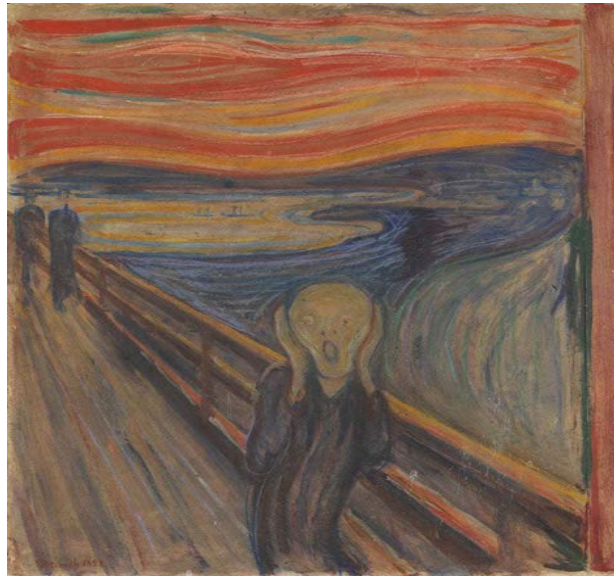


Figure 1. The Scream (1893) by Edvard Munch, a traditional Paris based post impressionist drawing. (Source: Davis, 2020)

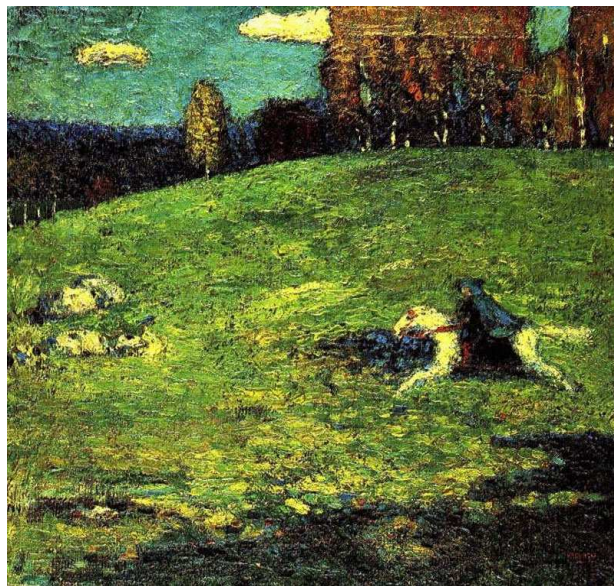


Figure 2. The Blue Rider by Wassily Kandinsky, 1903, WikiArt (private collection). (Source: Davis, 2020)

Cultures feature both materialistic and non-materialistic elements, varying from one country to another. For instance, since women in Oman typically wear the Burka and Hijab, an Omani artist depicting the country's material culture might portray a woman in these traditional dresses. There are specific examples of relevant art forms by Omani artists who have depicted women in Oman wearing burka and hijab traditionally. A unique reference of the same is found by Sulaimani (2023) (Figure 3), who Brooklyn that the Omani burkha is a part heritage cultural with women in some place in Oman for example Al-Sharqiyah and Al-Dhahirah Governorate. The author describe that the burka used in

Oman was used traditionally by the Bedouins in women and has been adopted from the same design. Referring to the boutique business called The Magical Burka, Sulaimani (2023), suggest that the business uphold the legacy of the typical Omani burqa which are sold internationally through the brand also. An Omani artist, Tasneem al Saqawi has brilliantly featured several models wearing burqas from “A Magic Burka” wishes also been exhibited in the 20th digital horizon student forum.

One of the famous women artists from Oman into the genre of oil painting is Rabha Mahmoud (Figure 4). She had a critical impact on the art movement in the country. She also leveraged the use of women in women as the topic of oil paintings during 1974. She has characterised different forms and colours in similar compositions of women wearing traditional dress (Al-Yahyai, 2013) (Figure 5). The woman of her painting wears dresses and colours in contextualization with the fundamental objectives of her work. She has used semi abstraction method to create her idea where the details of the individual person in the image would be still vibrantly exhibited.



Figure 3. Photograph by Tasneem al Saqawi. (Source: Sulaimani, 2023)



Figure 4. Painting of Omani women by Rabha Mahmoud. (Source: Al-Yahyai, 2013)



Figure 5. Painting of Omani women by Rabha Mahmoud. (Source: Al-Yahyai, 2013)

The objective portrayal of Omani women in groups representing different social settings is a necessary proof that the author is reflecting on Omani society. Every time the author represents women of Oman traditionally in burqa. It shows clearly that women wearing traditional dress then be depicted as the material culture of the country.

Similarly, Omani artists can create images of Omani foods and marriage parties to convey messages about the country's material culture. On the other hand, any artist from a European country can depict a girl wearing a traditional gown common among European women. However, it is more challenging to portray the non-material culture of a country, which includes abstract ideas and beliefs. According to Winner et al. (2020), because non-material aspects of culture are abstract, artists find it difficult to use symbols and lines to represent these beliefs. For example, to communicate the religious beliefs of the Omani people, an artist might create an image of a mosque, use Islamic symbols, and add texts or captions to convey the beliefs (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2020). Conversely, an artist might develop two contrasting images of human experience, such as ancient and modern celebrations, to depict a country's non-material culture. Similarly, the differences between the cultures of two countries can be highlighted by showcasing photographs or paintings of religious festivals from different countries. Based on the discussion, it is clear that images can effectively communicate both the material and non-material culture.

7. Omani Plastic Artists and Photographers Often Use Images in Their Works to Convey Heritage and Culture to Society

Similar to photographers and artists worldwide, Omani plastic artists and pho-

tographers have utilized imagery to convey their cultural heritage. This study section analyzes how Omani artists have employed images to express their heritage and culture (Boutsi et al., 2019). Alia Al Farsi, a renowned artist from the Sultanate of Oman, has consistently been influenced by the culture of Oman and the heritage of Arabian society. One of her celebrated works, “Warmness,” depicts the unity among the country’s people. Another piece, “The Art of Love,” illustrates the love among individuals of the Islamic faith (Peak et al., 2023). Similarly, Anwar Sonya, another esteemed Omani artist, known as the godfather of Omani art, drew inspiration from the beauty and lifestyle of the Dhofar region. His work, “Oasis Connects Art,” captures the lifestyle and fashion of women in his region. Hassan Meer, a founder of Stal Gallery—a visual arts studio and exhibition space—has significantly contributed to promoting various visual art forms (Vines, 2022). One notable work by Hassan Meer, “Faces of the Unknown,” aims to portray unity among people from diverse backgrounds.

Making ingenious adaptations of visual arts, numerous Omani artists have sought to express their heritage and culture through images and other visual art forms. It is fair to say that these artists have emphasized the importance of using images and paintings to convey culture and heritage (Al-Yahyai, 2017). We can now discuss some photographers who have utilized imagery to raise awareness of the Sultanate of Oman’s culture and heritage. Khalid Abusaidi, a renowned photographer from the Sultanate of Oman, created the notable image “The Ghost of the Opera.” This photograph depicts a dance style in the Omani Opera, attempting to inform viewers about Oman’s art and entertainment (Hemmy & Mehta, 2021). It reflects the grandeur of traditional operas in the Sultanate of Oman. Additionally, Tariq Al Hajri, another celebrated photographer in Oman, has produced two famous photo series: “Rejuvenation of Past” and “Westernized Omani.” In the first series, he captures the traditional culture and heritage of the country, while in “Westernized Omani,” he highlights the transformation of Omani culture and lifestyle.

Focusing on the connection between arts and life, artists and photographers have utilized images and visual arts to convey and raise awareness about the culture and heritage of the Sultanate of Oman (Johnson-Perkins, 2023). They have depicted the fashion, lifestyle, and religious beliefs of its people. Additionally, these visual mediums have been employed to highlight the country’s art and entertainment (Bortolini & García-Granero, 2022). Bright and Bakewell (2022), also highlights that paintings and other common forms of art can represent the high and low of cultural expression of a country. The authors noted in their research work that due to several external factors the cultural expressions and exhibition of art forms in a country can be inhibited or exhilarated. These factors, which might be a historical or geographical paradox, can be captured in the works of art. Photographers, in particular, have aimed to capture the lives, religion, and entertainment modes of Omani people. The use of color combinations, the attire depicted in images, and portrayed behaviors communicate both the materialistic and non-materialistic aspects of Omani culture and heritage

(Winner et al., 2020). The work of these artists and photographers reveals the richness of Omani culture, showcasing the deep emotional connection its people have with their history, religion, and traditional lifestyle.

8. Conclusion

The study analyzes the importance of images in visual arts and their role in communicating both material and non-material culture. It explores how Omani artists, such as Alia Al Farsi, Hasaan Meer, and Anwar Sonya, and photographers, such as Khalid Al Busaidi and Tariq Al Hajri, use images to share their culture and heritage with the Omani people and global audience. From the discussions above, we conclude that images effectively transfer knowledge and information on a variety of subjects. Artists and photographers often use images to promote their culture and heritage. To summarize the findings of the study, images serve as a powerful medium for conveying messages about natural phenomena, historical events, religious beliefs, lifestyles, and more. The study highlights that artists employ symbols, text, and expressive connotations to communicate specific messages, which may vary based on the artist's cultural background (Ursu, Chiriac, & Bostan, 2022). This underscores the extent to which images become widely used and how images play a central role in visual arts.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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