



T.C.

ÇANKIRI KARATEKİN UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTE OF FINE ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF ART AND DESIGN

**THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN
CONTEMPORARY IRAQI PAINTING**

MOHAMMED BASIM AHMED AHMED

MASTER'S THESIS

Supervisor

Prof. Dr. Ersoy YILMAZ

Çankırı – 2023

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BİLİMSEL ETİK BİLDİRİMİ

Yüksek Lisans olarak hazırladığım *The Representation of Women in Contemporary Iraqi Painting* adlı çalışmanın öneri aşamasından sonuçlanmasına kadar geçen süreçte bilimsel etiğe özenle uyduğumu, tez içerisindeki tüm bilgileri bilimsel ahlak ve kurallar çerçevesinde elde ettiğimi ve sunduğumu, doğrudan veya dolaylı olarak yaptığım her alıntı için kaynak gösterdiğimi ve yararlandığım eserlerin kaynakçada gösterilenlerden oluştuğunu; ayrıca, yazılı izin alınmış olması dışında tezde herhangi birisine ait kişisel veri bulunmadığını, tezin bizzat teslim ettiğim basılı veya elektronik kopyasında bulunan bana ait kişisel verilerin tezde yer alması için izin verdiğimi ve telif hakkı başkasına ait olan yazılı, görsel, işitsel veya başka biçimdeki herhangi bir malzemenin ancak bilimsel etik ilkeleri çerçevesinde ve/veya gerekli izinler alınarak tezde kullanıldığını beyan ederim.

10 / 08 / 2023

Signature

Mohammed Basim Ahmed

TEZ KABUL VE ONAY

ÇANKIRI KARATEKİN ÜNİVERSİTESİ

GÜZEL SANATLAR ENSTİTÜSÜ

Mohammed Basim AHMED AHMED tarafından hazırlanan *The Representation of Women in Contemporary Iraqi Painting* başlıklı bu çalışma, 20/06/2023 tarihinde yapılan Tez Savunma Sınavı sonucunda oybirliğiyle başarılı bulunarak jürimiz tarafından Sanat ve Tasarım Anabilim Dalı Sanat ve Tasarım-İngilizce Programında Yüksek Lisans Tezi olarak kabul edilmiştir.

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ONAY

Bu tez, Çankırı Karatekin Üniversitesi Güzel Sanatlar Enstitüsü Yönetim Kurulunun 15/06/2023 tarih ve 19/05 sayılı kararıyla belirlenen jüri tarafından kabul edilmiştir.

Prof. Dr. Ersoy YILMAZ

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FOREWORD

I appreciate the one who taught me how to write, study and achieve the real result, my dear supervisor Prof Dr Ersoy YILMAZ. I also thank all my dear doctors. I would like to thank everyone who contributed to the completion of this study. First of all, many thanks to God and my family who helped me to reach this special stage.

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Mohammed Basim Ahmed



ABSTRACT

Thesis Title : The Representation of Women in Contemporary Iraqi Painting

Author : Mohammed Basim Ahmed

Supervisor : Prof. Dr. Ersoy Yılmaz

Thesis Type : Master's degree

This thesis aims to explore the nuanced portrayal of women within the realm of contemporary Iraqi painting, which bears the indelible imprints of Western artistic influences. Focusing on the creations of eminent Iraqi artists, including Jawad Salim, Muayad Muhsin, Mahmoud Fahmi Abboud, Mahood Ahmed, and Afifa Laibi the study employs a methodology encompassing visual, iconographic, and semiotic analyses. Through the examination of academic literature, exhibition catalogues, digital platforms, and artists' social media accounts, the investigation unravels the intricate interplay between style, form, and content in the depiction of women. These artists traverse a diverse socio-cultural terrain, reflecting the broader shifts in gender roles and societal values. Rooted in qualitative research, this exploration serves as a conduit bridging traditional art historical methods with contemporary digital platforms, thereby weaving an insightful narrative that sheds light on the dynamic representation of women in modern Iraqi painting. In its depictions of women, modern Iraqi art resonates with both the historical and cultural heritage of Iraq and the influences drawn from the Western artistic canon, often synthesizing these diverse strands. The artworks reveal a delicate intermingling of artistic evolution and cultural identity, with a focus on women's autonomy being conveyed in both explicit and implicit ways. Occasionally, the exploration of the portrayal of women also delves into the nuanced realm of their erotic dimensions. Through the juxtaposition of Western inspirations within indigenous contexts, this inquiry aspires to offer not only a deeper comprehension of Iraqi art but also a broader perspective that can potentially reframe the global discourse surrounding art, gender, and culture.

Keywords: Art, woman, modern, Iraqi, painting

ÖZET

Tezin Başlığı : Çağdaş Irak Resminde Kadın Temsili

Tezin Yazarı : Muhammed Basım Ahmed Ahmed

Danışman : Prof. Dr. Ersoy Yılmaz

Tezin Türü : Yüksek Lisans

Bu tez, Batılı sanatsal etkilerin belirgin izlerini taşıyan çağdaş Irak resminde kadınların incelikli tasvirlerini araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Jawad Salim, Muayad Muhsin, Mahmoud Fahmi Abboud, Mahood Ahmed ve Afifa Laibi gibi önde gelen Iraklı sanatçıların eserlerine odaklanan çalışma, görsel, ikonografik ve semiyotik analizleri kapsayan bir metodoloji kullanmaktadır. Akademik literatür, sergi katalogları, dijital platformlar ve sanatçıların sosyal medya hesaplarının incelenmesi yoluyla, araştırma, kadın betimlemelerinde üslup, biçim ve içerik arasındaki karmaşık etkileşimi incelemektedir. Bu sanatçılar, toplumsal cinsiyet rolleri ve toplumsal değerlerdeki daha geniş değişimleri yansıtan farklı bir sosyo-kültürel zeminde geziniyor. Nitel araştırmaya dayanan bu araştırma, geleneksel sanat tarihi yöntemleri ile çağdaş dijital platformlar arasında bir köprü görevi görerek, modern Irak resminde kadınların dinamik temsiline ışık tutan anlayışlı bir anlatı örüyor. Modern Irak sanatı, kadın tasvirlerinde hem Irak'ın tarihi ve kültürel mirasını hem de Batı sanatsal kanonundan alınan etkileri yankılamakta ve çoğu zaman bu farklı damarları sentezlemektedir. Eserler, sanatsal evrim ile kültürel kimliğin hassas bir şekilde iç içe geçtiğini ortaya koyarken, kadınların özerkliğine odaklanarak hem açık hem de örtük bir şekilde aktarılıyor. Zaman zaman, kadın tasvirlerinin araştırılması, erotik boyutlarının incelikli alanına da giriyor. Batılı esin kaynaklarının yerel bağlamlar içinde yan yana getirilmesi yoluyla bu araştırma, yalnızca Irak sanatının daha derinlemesine anlaşılmasını değil, aynı zamanda sanat, toplumsal cinsiyet ve kültürü çevreleyen küresel söylemi potansiyel olarak yeniden çerçeveleyebilecek daha geniş bir perspektif sunmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: sanat, kadın, modern, Irak, resim

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1. INTRODUCTION

Iraqi women played an important role in shaping the nature of Iraqi society. Due to the importance of that female role throughout the ages, many Iraqi artists, past and present, have established the status of women by portraying various social and artistic details of the woman's body and nature. The current research deals with the paintings of a group of the most important contemporary Iraqi artists, which paint the image of Iraqi women.

The research sheds light on the image of Iraqi women through the ages, where various details will be studied about the nature of women in contemporary Iraqi society. It is an amazing feminist view that has not previously been addressed through art. Although there are many paintings and artists worldwide, the Iraqi artist could give detailed pictures of Iraqi women through his drawings.

These paintings are considered artistic ambassadors explaining a group of interesting and wonderful details about feminism in Iraq. Sometimes the paintings tell us about a village woman who bears various bodily details. The current research is based on artistically analyzing these details. At other times, one of the paintings bears a married woman who paints the details of her face, the boring daily routine life. The Iraqi woman throughout the ages carried with her various feminist, social, traditional, religious and cultural experiences. The nature of these experiences will be indicated by analyzing each painting separately.

What distinguishes the current research is its ability to fill an artistic gap that has yet to be studied: the image of women in a group of paintings by contemporary Iraqi artists. It is a feminist, social, artistic and pictorial study of one of the most important pillars of Iraqi society. When the image of Iraqi women is dealt with in the paintings of the most famous Iraqi artists, this means that several aspects will be dealt with in the research, such as the view of women through the ages, the consolidation of the status of women through paintings, the use of physical expressions, colors, backgrounds, and many others.

1.1. RESEARCH TOPIC AND CONTEXT

Art has long been a mirror reflecting society's perceptions, values, and changes. In this context, the representation of women in artworks carries significant cultural, social, and historical implications. This research embarks on a journey into contemporary Iraqi painting, a dynamic realm where artists convey their insights into womanhood against the backdrop of evolving artistic trends and cultural dynamics.

Artists across time and cultures have engaged with the portrayal of women, creating a discourse that intersects with gender studies, cultural analysis, and art history. In Iraq, a country steeped in history and artistic tradition, exploring how modern painters depict women unveils insights into the nation's social evolution while highlighting the artists' connection to their heritage within a rapidly shifting global context.

By delving into the representations of women within contemporary Iraqi painting, this research seeks to not only explore the artists' perspectives but also to decipher the cultural implications embedded within their creations. This exploration provides a unique window into the ways in which women are depicted, understood, and communicated through the medium of art, unveiling a tapestry of narratives that resonate both locally and globally.

1.2. FOCUS AND SCOPE OF THE THESIS

This thesis delves purposefully into the intricate realm of contemporary Iraqi painting, with a distinct focus on the portrayal of women. Amidst the dynamic interplay of artistic expression, cultural shifts, and global influences, the study meticulously examines a curated array of artworks by five eminent Iraqi painters: Jawad Salim, Muayad Muhsin, Mahmoud Fahmi Abboud, Mahood Ahmed, and Afifa Laibi. Notably, a substantial segment of the thesis is dedicated to an extensive analysis of the latest generation of Iraqi artists, specifically Muayad Muhsin and Mahmoud Fahmi Abboud. This emphasis not only introduces their relatively lesser-known oeuvre but also illuminates the distinctive trajectory of contemporary Iraqi art, setting it apart from preceding artistic epochs. This illumination of the art of these two painters traverses the domains of art criticism, an endeavor deeply embedded in the present

artistic discourse, while concurrently weaving into art history's fabric, conventionally focused on the artistic heritage of the past. Consequently, these dual perspectives converge seamlessly within the thesis, enriching the exploration of this nuanced subject matter.

By selecting these diverse artists, this research endeavors to encapsulate a multifaceted range of perspectives, styles, and thematic approaches that together construct a comprehensive mosaic of contemporary Iraqi art. Each artist brings their distinct experiences, influences, and creative visions, making their works a microcosm of the broader societal narratives they engage with.

Through a close examination of a single painting by each artist, the study aims to uncover the intricate layers of style, form, and content. However, the central focus of the analysis rests upon the representation of women within these artworks. The investigation delves into the nuances of how these artists interpret femininity, identity, and empowerment in the context of Iraq's evolving sociocultural landscape.

While the exploration remains rooted in the realm of contemporary Iraqi painting, it does not exist in isolation. Instead, it seeks to establish a cross-cultural dialogue by comparing the selected artworks with their counterparts in Western and global art, shedding light on the intersections and divergences of artistic perspectives on women across different contexts.

This focused study ultimately aspires to contribute to the discourse surrounding the depiction of women in modern Iraqi art, offering fresh insights, critical analyses, and a deeper understanding of the socio-cultural currents that shape the artistic representation of women in this vibrant and dynamic context.

1.3. THE RELEVANCE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE RESEARCH

The significance of this research is embedded in its potential to unravel the intricate interplay between art, culture, and identity within the realm of contemporary Iraqi painting. As Iraq navigates the currents of modernity and grapples with a complex sociopolitical landscape, the artistic expression becomes a poignant reflection of these

transformative dynamics. By specifically focusing on the representation of women, this study aims to illuminate a crucial facet of these intricate cultural dialogues.

In the context of modern Iraqi art, depictions of women transcend mere aesthetics. They serve as a canvas through which broader societal narratives, gender dynamics, and cultural shifts are articulated. Understanding how artists choose to portray women and the narratives they construct offers valuable insights into the evolving perceptions of gender roles, empowerment, and identity in the country.

Furthermore, the research extends beyond national boundaries. As art increasingly traverses cultural borders, examining how Iraqi artists engage with the global artistic conversation contributes to a richer cross-cultural dialogue. By comparing the selected artworks with Western and global counterparts, we open a window into the universal themes of femininity, empowerment, and cultural representation.

Ultimately, this research contributes to the growing body of knowledge that bridges art and anthropology, offering a deeper understanding of how contemporary Iraqi artists navigate complex societal changes through their creative expressions. It also provides a platform for fostering cultural appreciation and dialogue by highlighting shared concerns and diverse perspectives.

In sum, the significance of this research lies in its capacity to illuminate the intricate dance of art, culture, and identity, while also fostering cross-cultural understanding and contributing to the discourse on women's representation within the broader context of contemporary art.

1.4. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS

This research is driven by a set of overarching objectives aimed at unraveling the nuanced complexities of the depiction of women in contemporary Iraqi painting. To achieve these objectives, the following research questions will guide the investigation:

Research Objectives:

- **Objective 1:** To critically examine the representation of women in the selected paintings by Jawad Salim, Muayad Muhsin, Mahmoud Fahmi Abboud, Mahood Ahmed, and Afifa Laibi.
- **Objective 2:** To analyze the artistic styles and formal elements employed by these artists to portray the female figure and the contextual influences on their artistic choices.
- **Objective 3:** To explore the potential cross-cultural dialogues and intersections between contemporary Iraqi painting and Western/world art by comparing the selected works with similar pieces.
- **Objective 4:** To contribute new insights and critical perspectives to the discourse on the representation of women in modern Iraqi painting.

Research Questions:

1. How do the selected artists portray the female figure in their respective artworks, and what are the common themes and variations among them?
2. What artistic styles and formal elements are utilized by these artists to convey their narratives, and how do these elements contribute to the overall interpretation of the artworks?
3. How do the cultural, historical, and societal contexts of Iraq influence the depiction of women in these artworks, and how are these influences negotiated within the realm of artistic expression?
4. In what ways do the selected artworks engage with broader global artistic conversations, and how do they contribute to the cross-cultural dialogue between contemporary Iraqi painting and Western/world art?
5. How can these critical analyses of the chosen artworks contribute new insights and perspectives to the ongoing discourse on the representation of women in modern Iraqi painting?

By addressing these research objectives and questions, this study aims to provide a comprehensive and nuanced exploration of the multifaceted relationships between art, gender, culture, and identity within the context of contemporary Iraqi painting.

1.5. LIMITATIONS AND STRENGTHS OF THE RESEARCH

This research endeavor, like any scholarly pursuit, is bounded by certain limitations that warrant acknowledgment. However, it also benefits from inherent strengths that contribute to its academic rigor. These limitations and strengths provide valuable context for the interpretation of the findings.

Limitations:

1. **Scope of Artworks:** The focus on a single painting per artist, while allowing for in-depth analysis, may not capture the entirety of an artist's oeuvre or their diverse artistic expressions regarding the depiction of women.
2. **Availability of Information:** Access to comprehensive biographical and artistic information on some artists, especially in the case of Muayad Muhsin and Mahmoud Fahmi Abboud, may pose challenges due to limited published materials or interviews.
3. **Subjectivity:** The interpretation of artworks and their meanings inherently involves subjective perspectives, and while efforts will be made to ensure objectivity, individual biases might influence the analysis.

Strengths:

1. **Interdisciplinary Approach:** The research benefits from an interdisciplinary methodology, drawing insights from art history, art critic, gender studies, cultural studies, and cross-cultural dialogues, enriching the depth of analysis.
2. **Comparative Analysis:** The inclusion of comparative analysis with Western and world art enables a comprehensive exploration of both commonalities and distinctions in the representation of women.

3. **Primary and Secondary Sources:** The utilization of primary sources such as exhibition catalogues, alongside academic articles, books, and digital resources, ensures a holistic examination of the chosen artworks.
4. **Original Contribution:** By offering fresh insights and critical perspectives on the representation of women in modern Iraqi painting, the research endeavors to contribute to the scholarly discourse in a meaningful and innovative way.

It's important to recognize that these limitations and strengths are inherent to the research process and are part of the academic landscape. While the study strives to navigate these boundaries with care and diligence, they inevitably inform the context in which the findings will be interpreted and discussed.

1.6. STRUCTURAL OVERVIEW

The structural framework of this thesis is designed to systematically explore the depiction of women in contemporary Iraqi painting while contextualizing it within the broader realm of Western modern art. Each section contributes to a comprehensive understanding of the research topic and its significance. The following is a breakdown of the structural organization:

1. **Introduction:** This initial section serves as a conceptual entry point, introducing the research's purpose, context, scope, and objectives.
2. **Women's Depiction in Western Modern Art:** This section delves into the portrayal of women in Western modern art, providing an overarching historical perspective. It includes sub-sections that explore different movements, such as Romantic art, Impressionism, Symbolism, Expressionism, Machine Aesthetic, Surrealism, and post-1960 art.
3. **Portrayal of Women in Modern Iraqi Art:** Here, the focus shifts to contemporary Iraqi painting, providing an insight into the artistic exploration of the female figure in the context of Iraq. This section lays the foundation for the subsequent analyses.

4. **Analysis of the Research Samples:** This forms the core of the thesis, comprising individual analyses of the selected paintings by the chosen Iraqi artists. Each painting is examined through formal, stylistic, and semantic perspectives, while also exploring cross-cultural dialogues.

- **Women's Deception (1953) by Jawad Salim:** Explores the artist's Al-Wasati style, analyzes the painting's elements, and examines its cross-cultural connections.
- **Iraqi Lady of the Lamentation (2018) by Muayad Muhsin:** Investigates Muhsin's unique approach, assesses the formal and stylistic features, and examines the portrayal of female figures.
- **Sleeping Baghdadian Khatoon (2012) by Mahmoud Fahmi Abboud:** Studies the painting's elements, discusses the artist's style, and analyzes the cross-cultural dialogues present.
- **Toy Moon (1989) by Afifa Laibi:** Examines the formal and stylistic aspects of the artwork, delves into the artist's unique vision, and explores cross-cultural connections.
- **Boredom by Mahood Ahmed (1972):** Investigates Ahmed's work in terms of form, style, and semantics, while also considering its potential cross-cultural dialogues.

5. **Results, Conclusion, and Suggestions:**

Summarizes the findings of the individual analyses, highlighting key patterns and insights regarding the depiction of women in the selected artworks. Offers a holistic overview of the research, considering the implications of the findings within the broader context of contemporary Iraqi painting and its relationship to Western modern art. Provides suggestions for further exploration and avenues of research that could contribute to the evolving discourse on the representation of women in modern Iraqi art.

This structural arrangement ensures a coherent flow of ideas and insights, progressively building from the introduction to the culmination in the conclusion and recommendations.

1.7. RESEARCH METHODS

The methodology employed in this research is designed to comprehensively explore and analyze the representation of women in contemporary Iraqi painting, fostering a multi-faceted understanding of the subject matter. Through a judicious combination of both qualitative and comparative approaches, this research aims to shed light on the intricate interplay between artistic expression, cultural context, and cross-cultural dialogues. The methodology is structured as follows:

Literature Review: A meticulous review of scholarly literature, academic articles, books, exhibition catalogs, and other relevant sources provides the foundation for understanding the broader landscape of modern Iraqi painting, Western modern art, and the depiction of women in both contexts. This literature review serves to identify gaps in existing research and establish the framework for this study.

Artistic Analysis: Each selected painting is subjected to an in-depth artistic analysis through formal, stylistic, and semantic lenses. This approach allows for a nuanced exploration of compositional elements, artistic techniques, visual symbolism, and narrative elements present in the artworks. The analysis unveils the intricate layers of meaning embedded within each painting.

Cross-Cultural Comparison: A vital component of this research involves comparing the selected Iraqi paintings with analogous works from Western modern art or other global artistic traditions. This cross-cultural comparison illuminates the universal themes and cultural nuances surrounding the depiction of women, fostering a dialogue between diverse artistic contexts.

Artists' Contextual Insights: The research delves into the background and influences of the selected Iraqi artists, including their academic training, artistic inspirations, and

socio-cultural perspectives. This information contributes to understanding the artists' motivations and how they reflect their unique experiences in their artworks.

Critical Analysis: The collected data from artistic analyses, cross-cultural comparisons, and contextual insights are synthesized to construct a critical analysis of each painting. This involves identifying recurring themes, aesthetic choices, and potential cross-cultural dialogues that enrich the interpretation of the depiction of women in modern Iraqi painting.

Interdisciplinary Approach: An interdisciplinary approach integrates perspectives from art history, cultural studies, and gender studies to provide a well-rounded examination of the chosen artworks. This interdisciplinary lens aids in unraveling the complex interconnections between artistic representation and socio-cultural contexts.

The methodology outlined above aligns with the research objectives, ensuring a holistic exploration of the chosen paintings and their significance in the realm of contemporary Iraqi painting. It enables a rigorous examination of the depiction of women, uncovering layers of meaning and cross-cultural dialogues within each artwork.

1.8. LITERATURE REVIEW

The current research is one of the researches that shed light on an important gap not previously addressed by researchers, which is the reflections of the nature of women in Iraqi society through analyzing a group of paintings that embody the image of Iraqi women through the ages. It is a research that gives artistic, social, design, traditional, civilized and rural dimensions about the importance of art in expressing the nature of society, especially women. When the image of Iraqi women is dealt with in the paintings of the most famous Iraqi artists, this means that several aspects will be dealt with in the research, such as the view of women through the ages, the consolidation of the status of women through paintings, the use of physical expressions, colors, backgrounds, feminism, and others. In order to shed more light on the importance of the research and the problems it addressed, it is necessary to address some of the most important research and studies that are similar to the topic of the current research,

where the objectives, problems and gaps of each research will be compared with the current study, in brief, as follows:

A study by Ahlam Abdel Sattar Shaneen (2020) entitled *The Image of Woman in the Artist Jabr Alwan* deals with the bad aspect of the form of a woman who has an existential duality with a man throughout history. Shaneen was able to clarify various elements about the existence of women and also pointed out the details related to the formation of the figure of women in contemporary arts. The researcher dealt with the image of women in one artist. At the same time, the current study was able to study a variety of contemporary Iraqi artists, in addition to dealing with a group of international artists, to give multiple dimensions to the research subject. The previous study did not deal with how to consolidate the image of women in Iraqi society through art, as the current research did; it only dealt with the expressive dimensions of the image of women in the works of the artist Alwan.

A study entitled *The Image of Women in the Works of the Artist Mahood Ahmed* by Nada Ayed Youssef. This research dealt exactly with the previous study above but with another Iraqi artist, Mahood Ahmed. The current study was distinguished in giving expressive, social, formal and artistic dimensions to the image of women by various artists. In contrast, Nada Youssef's study dealt with the image expressions and formal dimensions only of the image of women. It can be said that Youssef's study filled the gap in the visual expressions of Iraqi women at the artist Mahood Ahmed, in contrast to the current study that covers the social and artistic dimensions, colors, measurements and backgrounds that pertain to the woman's face in Iraqi paintings.

A study entitled *The Dualism of Man and Woman in Contemporary Iraqi Painting: Analytical Study* by Istabraq Shawkat Kazem & Salam Edwar Yacoub, which dealt with the constituent elements of colors and traditional treatments used to express the image of male and female in Iraqi arts through the ages. The importance of the research lies in studying the styles of artists in contemporary Iraqi painting and shedding light on the issue of men and women through different eras and styles. It analyzes some paintings by analyzing the state of conflict, passion, love, and hate between men and women.

The current study differs from Kazem & Yacoub's study in various topics such as boundaries, vision, purpose, and importance, as the current study tends to shed light on the feminist elements of Iraqi women, which deals with the image of women socially and culturally within contemporary Iraqi society through the selection of a group of paintings. This study does not address the emotional and existential conflict between men and women in contemporary Iraqi arts, as in Kazem & Yacoub's study. Rather, it deals with the nature of Iraqi women in contemporary society by studying a group of paintings by some Iraqi artists. The current study is similar to the study of Kazem & Yacoub in some elements, as both studies dealt with colors, patterns, and some technical details in the analysis of portrait paintings.

A study entitled *Images and Status: Visualizing Iraqi Women* by Nada Shabout. The study attempts to redraw the true picture of Iraqi women after the occupation of Baghdad in 2003. The study sheds light on the artist's role in trying to uncover the dark side of the so-called oppression of women in Iraq, in addition to the role of Iraqi women artists in shaping culture. The study sheds light on the study of the feminist discourse of contemporary Iraqi women in the face of the Western vision of them. The current study differs from Shabout's study in several factors, the most important of which are: Shabout's study is concerned with the feminist aspect and the importance of women in shaping culture, while the current study deals with the image of women in contemporary Iraqi art. On the other hand, Shabout's study focuses on the Iraqi woman artist as an important factor. In contrast, the current study focuses on the image of Iraqi women in the paintings drawn by contemporary Iraqi artists.

What distinguishes the current study from previous studies is that it conveys a focused idea about feminism and the nature of women in ancient and contemporary Iraqi society. It filled the artistic gap between the past and the present, and it did not deal with a specific artist in itself but with a group of the most famous Iraqi artists who care about women's rights and the need to consolidate them in contemporary art. Finally, the current study was distinguished by its brief and smooth style in analyzing each painting of the Iraqi artists. The research dives deeply into the details of each woman's

face, analyzes each background, and gives social, traditional, feminist, and civilized dimensions to the image of Iraqi women throughout the ages.



2. THE NATURE OF IRAQI WOMEN

For a long time, Iraqi women were distinguished by rights compared to women in the Middle East, as the Iraqi interim constitution, which was issued in 1970, guaranteed equal rights for Iraqi women in many areas, such as the right to vote, education, positions, and property ownership. In 1968, after the Ba'ath Party's takeover of Iraq and its assumption of power, the Iraqi authorities began issuing a set of economic and educational programs to strengthen its political position in Iraq. Iraqi women had a role in those programs, as the Iraqi government at that time improved the status of women in the public and private spheres. Until the nineties, Iraqi women played an active role in the development of the economic and political sphere of Iraq (Joseph, 1992, p. 178-179).

However, these rights did not last for a long time due to the devastating wars that Iraq went through, such as the Gulf War in 1991, when the status of women within Iraqi society deteriorated as a result of the economic consequences imposed on Iraq, as those consequences caused the loss of health, educational and food care for women. Thus, the status of women was linked to the political and economic situation of the country. Although the Iraqi Ba'ath Party dismantled many civil society groups, it established the General Union of Iraqi Women shortly after taking power. This union established many educational and development courses for women inside and outside cities, as these programs helped implement the state policy at the time. On the other hand, it can be said that these programs did not shed light on the hidden another side of Iraqi women, as this union contributed to destroying the image of real women inside Iraq (Joseph, 1992, pp. 182-183).

As a result of the ongoing wars in Iraq, the role of women outside the home has increased due to the absence of the role of men, as this increase contributed to entry into the fields of education, industry, trade, and politics, and this continued until the nineties when the number of women working outside the home increased. According to the statistics of the Iraqi Statistics Office, in 1976, women constituted about 38.5 percent of workers in the teaching profession, 31 percent in medical professions, 25

percent in laboratories, 15 percent in accounting, and 15 percent in civil services (Rassam, 1992, p. 87).

The status of women in a civilized, cultured society has been considered a great position since time immemorial because their presence in all social arenas is visible and prominent in a way that is not hidden from anyone. It possesses many artistic and spiritual gifts and has advantages in the world of beauty that have greater luck than men. Here comes the idea that embodies women in many creative qualities that they share with the world of beauty with a similar value. It is clear that many definitions have tried to reach a concept and what it is. The woman is the creature that occupies the mind of everyone wherever it is, as many philosophers, thinkers, scholars and writers know it, each according to his specialization. Some resorted to art in various colours and took emotions as a title. Some of them went to society and reality and the status of women in this. Some went to science to study composition, biological, psychological and organic for women, and the laboratory was used to define them (Khalil , 2002, p. 87).

Likewise, the wise men, philosophers, writers, poets, the civilized, the ignorant, leaders, politicians, and shepherds said what makes women happy and saddens them, according to his experience with her. Pregnancy and childbearing do not exceed, and some of them differ in whole or in part, according to the different societies and the factors affecting that society, such as religion, traditions and customs, or the economic or formative nature, and other things in which the status of women may differ due to these factors, but reality may impose its definition of women. She is half of society or more than that, as she is the other pole of the magnet. With its absence, gravity is absent, and there is no life. How can be forgotten the role of the mother in establishing and correcting society and other roles that women play in various fields of life? As for the artist, he creates the artist in his search for what he is inspiring, so some of them find what they want in a woman, some of them see her as affectionate, or see her as a lioness without a heart, and among them are those who see her as all causes of love, and among them are those who see her body as a painting and creativity from the creator, and among them are those who see her as nakedness. Thus, the artists have

consistently embodied her in various art forms, all embodied in what a woman is to a man (Zemlist, 1991, p. 6).

In modern science, which searches for everything that is big or small, women were among its priorities, as they have priority in various fields, as many studies were carried out in everything related to women from biological, organic, psychological and behavioral formation and everything related to them, as science answered the questions of many about women's affection and tenderness, and this is what psychologists have proven about that women are more susceptible to depression, emotion, affect and crying than men, and this is due to the secretion of the hormone 'estrogen', which plays a role in the secretion of the hormone serotonin, which is responsible for the psychological state of man, as it is secreted in women in a way that differs from the man, and this is what scientists or the authors of this study explain why women are quick to anger, depression, crying, and are quick to be psychologically affected, and this is because of those hormones that can be treated, in any case, this is just a hypothesis or theory that can be refuted with the development of science and discovery, and the sure thing that cannot be refuted it is that a woman is emotional, affectionate and gentle, at least when she is a mother (Saleh, 2013, p. 105).

As for biologists, they explained the reason for the large number of bends in the woman's body and the reason for her swaying walk. Because the fluidity of the woman's muscles and the convergence of her knees, for reasons related to the shape of the pelvis, which is associated with the causes of pregnancy, and so on, cause her to sway while walking, which is a matter that caused concern to many men and inspired many poets and artists.

After getting to know many of the characteristics that show us the fondness of poets and artists for women, in which they enjoyed these qualities, it is necessary to get acquainted with the socio-psychology of women, which is closely related to what women are, according to the view of scholars and examiners of the nature of women. Moreover, the different factors determine their conditions and positions in the social structure. Some attribute this difference and disparity to purely biological reasons

linked to the natural function of women, which are pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding.

Some believe that the difference is due to physiological and physical reasons related to the nature of each sex, considering that women are less physically and organically capable than men. Theologians see in their treatment of the issue of division of labour and defining the role based on type or gender that the association of the role of the homemaker with the woman and not with the man has purely biological roots. It means that the division of labour between males and females is due to factors. Natural biological motherhood and related jobs are considered a specialization of women, given that women are the ones who carry, give birth, and carry out childbirth. The child's care and nutrition, and then her role is determined based on this natural situation with which she is provided, and domestic work becomes the woman's speciality alone. Her life is linked to expressions rooted in her reproductive functions and the formation of her personality. Motherhood is a fixed role in every time and place that does not undergo any change or alteration. In contrast, the role of the housewife and the role of the wife changes according to the level of civilization and the progress of society.

In rural communities, peasant women have lost their freedom as human beings, where they have become a means of reproduction and production, they are seen as property that can be bought and sold in marriage, used as compensation for murder and humiliation, thrown aside through divorce and even murder under the pretext of “washing away the shame” (Efrati, 2012, p. 53).

Scientists have presented a detailed actual picture regarding the cruelty, poverty, illiteracy, and difficult living conditions of peasants in the Iraqi countryside, where the disease was one of the central features of their lives, so most academic studies have largely biased to rural life, especially peasant women who often live in small huts built of mud or mats without water or electricity. Where they shared the men in their misery and worries, and the diet was inadequate as they suffered from diseases such as malaria, bilharzia and ancylostomiasis, this affected women greatly due to childbearing and lactation (Efrati, 2012, p. 53).

The natural difference between women and men results in a difference in status and position. The social that each of them occupies in the social structure pattern, which results in a difference in the tasks and activities that are entrusted to each of them, and that the owners of this trend linked the biological role of women and their social role. The division of labour between the two sexes and the definition of the role of each of them - even if it is based on biological differences - is not rigid and narrowly defined. In many societies, each gender can accomplish and perform the work that the other sex does (El-Gohary, 2000, p. 412).

In industrialized societies, women do many jobs believed to be masculine tasks only, and some men have learned to cook and do other routine household chores. With physical and muscular strength that exceeds that of strength that characterizes women, the energy of endurance and physical strength can lead to differences that characterize both men's and women's activities. Researchers have justified their position through biological and anatomical studies, which confirm the existence of a difference between women and men in terms of the physical and muscular composition, such as the difference in the size of the skeleton, the skull, and others (Al-Saati, 2010, p. 17).

Previous proposals relied on data present in the human nature of women, taking these data as a criterion for dividing the circle of work and various activities between women and men. However, it can be said that women and their supporters strongly oppose this division of jobs and work, as women have achieved in some societies a status better than it was and proved their capabilities, so they participated in most wars and revolutions, as well as contributed in all areas of social life.

It is strange when these feminist cultural elements become restrictions and social pressures that impede the development of individuals and define their roles in a manner that is not in line with their capabilities and aspirations in a feminist society, as cultural considerations and mental perceptions have played a negative role throughout long human history, which was reflected in the view of women and their restriction to domestic work, and control over her career mobility in social life. This did not allow her to develop and advance despite what she wasted. It has an effort on the family and social levels. The precise definition of the roles of women and men in this era gradually

faded. The sharp distinction did not remain in developed societies, as the division of labour between the two sexes represented in the duality of productive/reproductive roles is currently being penetrated and overtaken (Hatab, 2009, pp. 80-90).

Women began to enter the fields of work that men monopolized, and in return, men began to accept greater responsibilities that fell within the scope of domestic tasks. It is important to single it out with the perceptions of international and Arab women, especially the Iraqi research subject. It is important to be unique to the preoccupation and shed light on it largely because of its social and cultural weight that has already been detailed and referred to. The research states that women, from the biological point of view, are the same in all parts of the world. Major differences do not differ except in the behavioural aspect due to the social pressure loaded with ideological and social pressures. Influences worked on achieving clear distinctions in the personality of Iraqi women. Because of this, the drawing of Iraqi women in contemporary plastic art was inevitably affected by those political, social and ideological controls, and the Iraqi folklore and its diverse environment had another important impact on this image through different eras. The research observed that the image of women in contemporary Iraqi painting is a metaphor on a large scale for the image of women in the ancient Iraqi heritage, especially the successive civilizations of the Mesopotamia valley, where the image of Ishtar took a wide place in this intentional construction of the image (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. *Statue of the Goddess Ishtar*, British Museum. ("Ishtar goddess", 2009).

For example, the most important Iraqi artists inspired by this image are Faiq Hassan, Kazem Haidar, Hafez Al-Droubi, Ismail Al-Sheikhly, Mahood Ahmed, Afifa Laibi and many other Iraqi plastic artists. In the following lines, the image of women in contemporary Western art will be discussed.

3. WOMEN'S DEPICTION IN WESTERN MODERN ART

3.1. OVERVIEW

Since ancient times, women have been represented in all forms of the creative arts, in poetry, literature, and legendary epics. Since the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, women have been present in literature and the arts in a broader way, acting as actors and strategic partners in all aspects of life. This presence went beyond the classical view of women as symbols of fertility, growth, and love. Despite the importance of this role, they have acquired characteristics and qualities that confirm that they are considered active women and an entity that plays a role in all aspects of life. The presence of women, especially in the visual arts, goes beyond this narrow view that highlights them as a purely female body that awakens instincts for a sober and living presence. This presence goes beyond the stereotypical or orientalist view that sees the woman as a symbol of wonder and excitement about the creativity of the woman. This presence goes beyond the stereotypical or orientalist view that focuses on women as a symbol of amazement and excitement to be creative women and authentic partners in all roles, confirming her leading position in advancement and development in many places and times (Mahmoud, 1957, p. 47)

The arts, especially the arts of drawing, are among the characteristics adopted by civilized society as a link between the depth of civilization and modernity and development. For this reason, painters have been interested since ancient times in the image of women, the meanings that surround them, and the vocabulary that interprets the ambiguity of women and the emotions they express, as the image of women in the Renaissance era was not limited. Only the image of the Virgin Mary, which was touched upon by many artists of the European Renaissance in Italy and other countries, was affected by it because the Renaissance era was the first attempt to show women in independent paintings that bear the meanings of beauty and true portrayal that overflows with the woman's femininity.

The apparent and moral transformations did not affect the aesthetic image of women, which was changed by the actions of priests, philosophers and theorists, starting from ancient times to the Greek era and in the Phoenician, Roman, and medieval periods to

the Renaissance era, which was devoted to the aesthetics of that established image that prevailed to the present time, the attraction between the concepts of form and content contributed to the post-Renaissance art trends such as neoclassicism and romanticism. These elements constituted an important joint in the history of art in the transformations of that image up to the tendency of impressionism in the nineteenth century, which rebelled against all the concepts of ancient art. However, it could stay within the aesthetic standards of the image of the Renaissance woman. Many international painters still have preserved their paintings, despite the multiplicity of schools from which they started and based their paintings on them (Muller & Frank, 1988, p. 4).

In the realm of modern Iraqi art, artists engage deeply with Western artistic paradigms, resulting in a fusion that extends to gender representation. This notable cross-cultural influence prompts a comprehensive exploration, delving into the layers of its impact. With this in focus, the forthcoming discussion undertakes a meticulous examination of distinct portrayals of women evident across modern Western art.

This investigation aims to unravel the intertwining nuances, stylistic reverberations, and thematic dialogues transcending geographical and cultural confines. The journey exposes potent influences that have shaped the representation of women in the vibrant realm of contemporary Iraqi painting. Delving into the depiction of women in Western art unveils insights that act as both evidence and guide, illuminating the intricate connections bridging these two distinct yet interconnected artistic domains.

3.2. THE PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN IN ROMANTIC ART

Paintings developed at this time of the eighteenth century and are characterized by the presentation of feelings and suffering and the rescue of the heritage and culture of the Middle Ages in the face of neoclassicism. In terms of confirming higher values through major events, this was also presented in the painting *Freedom Leading the Peoples* by the French artist Eugene Delacroix, and they worked according to the dictates of inspiration, not an order. In romantic works, the representation of landscapes stands out. The use of nature as a source of inspiration and its relationship to man, and among the most important

painters of the romantic movement, Caspar David Friedrich, Joseph Mallord William Turner, Eugene Delacroix, and Francisco Jose de Joya.

The romantic painting tends to express the emotions and feelings inside the artist, including looking at the woman as a constructive romantic element because of her symbolic referrals. The artists affiliated with it were famous for choosing strange subjects that were not familiar in the world of art; after the civilizational development and the advancement of science and knowledge in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, between which the romantic school appeared in plastic art, which relies on emotion, imagination and inspiration more than logic, as the romantic school tends to express the emotions and feelings inside the artist. The artists of this school were famous for choosing strange, unfamiliar subjects in the world of art, such as oriental and natural landscapes full of feelings and emotions; this led to the discovery of a new ability for brush movements integrated into vibrant colours, stirring up emotions and patriotism, and exaggerating the depiction of dramatic scenes.

Moreover, one of the characteristics of this school is that it cares about colours more than shading. In all of this, the one who sat on the throne of these romantic paintings and took a large share from them is the image of the woman who occupied the romantic school a great deal and a distinguished position in the paintings of the artists who created the image of the woman in her world. Romanticism, despite its reliance on higher values, did not neglect to include the image of the woman active in the artistic production in terms of counting the woman as an active symbol in building the romantic goal towards creating a story of transcendental values.

In addition, the paintings of women in this school focused on giving women their status and their unique position socially. The Frenchmen Eugene de Lacroix and Theodore Jericho are among the most famous pioneers of the romantic school, and they have many paintings preserved in the Louvre and others. The artist of the romantic school promises that beauty lies in the mind, not in the eye; the pioneers of this school were not interested in familiar everyday life but sought distant worlds from the past, directing their focus to the darkness of the Middle Ages, the secrets of the East where fantasy, magic and mystery are like the legends of *A Thousand and One Nights* (Chagall, 2008, p. 42-44).

In the painting *Freedom Leads the Peoples* painted by the French romantic Eugène Delacroix in 1830, the painting depicts the God of freedom as a bare-chested woman raising the banner of the revolution followed by a huge number of French from all categories of society, poor, rich, workers and nobles, and while she stands at full strength, some corpses of dead revolutionaries appear below her. The painting is considered a symbol of the French Republic today; Marianne has also become the national embodiment of France (See Figure 2).



Figure 2. Eugene Delacroix, *Freedom Leads Peoples*, 1830, oil on canvas, 260 cm × 325 cm, Louvre, Paris. (Alirees, 2014).

Among the artists who attended the romantic school and painted the image of women, the artist Jean-Louis André Théodore Géricault (Salman, 2017, p. 174). He was a French painter born in Rouen in Normandy, France, in 1791. He is one of the most famous painters of romantic art. his paintings, which he painted in the image of women, are considered influential paintings, including *The Three Lovers*, *The Woman's Obsession with Gambling* and *The Crazy Woman* (See Figure 3), who embodied the meanings and inspirations of the image of women in the romantic school (Salman, 2017, p. 184).



Figure 3. Theodore Géricault, *Crazy woman*, 1812, oil on canvas, 72×58 cm, Museum of Fine Arts, France. ("La Monomane de l'envie", 2020).

According to the notable insight of author Meisler (2002), the declaration that "modern art begins with the great Spanish artist Francisco Goya" (1746–1828) was made by the 20th-century French writer André Malraux. Goya, a celebrated figure in Spain's artistic legacy, held the esteemed role of court painter to King Charles IV, receiving patronage from influential individuals like the Duchess of Alba and Manuel Godoy, a royal adviser. Author Stanley Meisler underscores that Goya's representation of women and his interactions with them stand as a captivating facet of his identity, resonating across generations. Meisler goes on to elucidate Goya's diverse depictions of women, encompassing street vendors, gypsies, noblewomen, heroines, and more, capturing their essence with unparalleled sensitivity and realism in various mediums ranging from tapestry designs to portraits and satirical etchings. Painting amidst the backdrop of the French Revolution, Goya's approach to women was nuanced, characterized by irony and complexity rather than straightforward advocacy. In a time of shifting gender roles, Goya's art emerged as an ironic commentary on society, reflecting his ambivalent yet profound perspective on the evolving role of women. According to Richard (2002) in his works, an array of women, from urban and rural backgrounds, encompassing street-wise coquettes, beggars, high-ranking duchesses, shoppers, survivors of assault, as well as those seeking retribution, elderly companions, young children, heroic figures driven by patriotism, individuals motivated by fortune, and nurturing mothers, traverse

Goya's canvas. In his depictions, these women undergo satire, evocation of empathy, and even unabashed affection, encapsulating a rich spectrum of human experiences.



Figure 4. Francisco Goya, *The Nude Maja*, 1800, Oil on canvas, 97 cm × 190 cm, Museo del Prado, Madrid. (Zaragoza, 1828).

In defiance of the Catholic Church's prohibition against depicting nude women, Goya defied conventions to paint *The Naked Maja* (Refer to Figure 4) in 1800, commissioned by Spanish dignitary Manuel de Godoy. This artwork, a monument of XIX-century eroticism, portrays a reclining nude woman on a bed, capturing a gaze exuding desire. Interestingly, this allure is echoed in Goya's model for the clothed version, *Maja dressed* in her attire from 1803. Within this creative realm, Goya's work delves into the complexities of societal perceptions of women's modesty, delving into the implications of perceived sinful behavior. Notably, Theodore, a historian, opines that Goya's intense focus on the woman's physical form is a compelling and vivid testament to his prowess. These qualities resound in Goya's artistry, evident even in *The Clothed Maja*, painted at the behest of Spanish President Jodi (See Figure 5). The model's intent gaze upon the viewer, consistent across both paintings, portrays a tangible woman, even if rooted in the realm of fantasy. It appears that Goya dwelled in this interplay, allowing whispers of rumors to circulate about the woman depicted, yet refraining from definitive confirmation (Al-Erees, 2021).



Figure 5 Francisco Goya, *the Clothed Maja*, 1803, oil on canvas, 95x190 cm, Prado Museum, Madrid. (Zaragoza, 1828)

3.3. WOMAN IN MODERN ART

In the late 19th to mid-20th century, a transformative era emerged in art and society. Rapid industrialization left a lasting impact, with artists grappling to capture the mixed emotions of mechanization. Simultaneously, changing gender roles reshaped society and prompted artists to explore different facets of femininity.

This period saw the rise of avant-garde movements like Impressionism, Cubism, and Surrealism. These art revolutions challenged the norm, giving artists the freedom to experiment with form, color, and subjects. Art reflected broader societal currents, expressing the complexities of urbanization, evolving gender roles, and the aftermath of conflict.

In essence, this era merged industrialization, changing gender dynamics, and avant-garde art. Recognizing these contextual influences is key to understanding the transformative evolution of artistic representation during this time.

In modern Western art, the representation of women has evolved significantly. Artists have moved beyond traditional portrayals, depicting women in a range of contexts that reflect changing societal attitudes. This shift allows for a deeper exploration of women's identities, moving beyond physical attributes to capture their emotions and

inner lives. Artists often use women's depictions to comment on social issues such as gender inequality and changing roles. This has prompted a reevaluation of beauty standards, with a broader range of body types and appearances being embraced.

The feminist art movement has also played a pivotal role in reshaping how women are portrayed. Female artists have pushed boundaries and explored themes of empowerment, agency, and diverse experiences, resulting in more authentic and inclusive representations.

Abstraction and symbolism have provided artists with a way to explore women's roles beyond the surface. These approaches allow for the expression of universal themes while transcending individual identities.

Emphasizing individuality has become prominent in modern Western art, with portraits aiming to capture the essence of the subject rather than conforming to conventional norms. As societies have become more diverse, the representation of women from various cultural backgrounds has expanded, contributing to a broader narrative of shared experiences.

In summary, the depiction of women in modern Western art reflects a response to changing societal norms and the desire for more authentic and multifaceted representation. Artists have moved beyond traditional roles, embracing diversity and exploring the complex identities and experiences of women.

It would be good to start with a name that exemplifies the academic understanding of art, in order to make the formal aspirations of modern art visible:

As summarized by the insightful perspective of Campbell (1910, p. 27), Johann Georg Meyer von Bremen (1813-1886), commonly known as Meyer von Bremen, emerges as a German painter whose focus converged on Biblical, peasant, and familial scenes. Akin to his contemporaries, Meyer von Bremen's portrayal of women – be it as children, youths, or elders – often found itself veiled within the broader artistic narrative. His canvases, graced by a fusion of myriad ideas and persistent fascinations, transport viewers to bygone eras and folkloric realms. Echoing this sentiment,

Campbell expounds that upon casting eyes upon his creations, one discerns an alignment between the painting's era and the inherent significance perceived therein. With origins tracing back to Germany, Meyer von Bremen's artistic origins germinated in the city of Perm (Campbell, 1910, p. 27).

As summarized by the perceptive insights of Bach (1955, p. 31), Meyer stands as a notable exemplar among artists who have encapsulated the essence of femininity within their artistic aesthetics. This trait, resonating within German art and the collective oeuvre of German artists, persevered even amidst the backdrop of wars, a testament to their unwavering connection with the multifaceted portrayal of women. A gem within Meyer's collection, *The Sewing Lesson*, exemplifies the artist's prowess. This painting masterfully captures the essence of two generations, juxtaposing the girl and the grandmother. Their coexistence evokes a world adorned with purity and tenderness, a realm that evolves into a captivating past as time advances (See Figure 6). Noteworthy within this artwork is the portrayal of the grandmother enveloping her granddaughter with profound affection, a visual testament to the profound bond intertwining maternal love and tranquility. This piece stands as an exemplar of elevated artistry, a tribute not only to Germany but also to the artistic legacy crafted by its painters (Bach, 1955, p. 31).



Figure 6 Johann Georg Meyer, *Sewing Lesson*, 1850, oil on canvas, 82.55 x 67.31 cm, Private collection, Pennsylvania. (Freeman, 2015).

3.3.1. Women in Impressionist and Post-Impressionist Art

The 'Age of Impressionism' is a specific historical period, roughly from the 1850s to the 1890s, that refers to a particular set of perceptual and cognitive habits developed by French men and women to make sense of their visual environment (Thomas, 1992). It is therefore very important to study representations of women in this period.

Edgar Degas (1834- 1917) was a prominent French artist known for his contributions to Impressionism and his distinctive focus on depicting everyday life, particularly the world of ballet dancers, horse racing, and the urban milieu of 19th-century Paris. Degas' artistic approach combined elements of Realism, Impressionism, and his own unique style, resulting in a body of work that captured fleeting moments and candid scenes with a remarkable sense of movement and realism.

Degas' most celebrated works often revolved around the human figure in motion, particularly ballet dancers. His depictions of dancers backstage, in rehearsal, or during performances captured their grace, effort, and the behind-the-scenes glimpses of their

world. These works displayed his meticulous attention to detail, innovative compositions, and keen interest in light and its effects on color and form.

Edgar Degas is celebrated for his captivating depictions of women, which provide a unique glimpse into 19th-century Parisian life. His portrayals are characterized by their authentic realism, covering diverse subjects and facets of womanhood. Degas' exploration of the female figure often revolved around ballet dancers, a subject closely associated with his work. He depicted dancers not only during performances but also in their everyday moments of practice and rest. Through his brushwork, Degas conveyed their dedication and the human effort behind their graceful performances. According to Lebaudy (2023) Degas's depictions of ballet dancers rehearsing are characteristic of the voyeurism that runs through many Impressionist paintings: they take on the perspective of a man looking at women as if they were on display.

Beyond the dance studio, Degas captured women engaged in various activities in both public spaces and private interiors. His interest in city life led to scenes of women in cafes, theaters, and bustling streets, reflecting their roles within society. His portraits, often of close acquaintances, offered insights into their unique personalities. Degas also ventured into the personal aspects of women's lives, depicting domestic scenes that revealed moments of quiet contemplation, leisure, and companionship. His portrayals of women reading, bathing, or conversing showcased his ability to convey vulnerability and strength within their personal spaces (See Figure 7).



Figure 7 Edgar Degas, Woman in a Tub, Pastel on paper, c.1883, 700 × 700 mm, Tate, London. Throughout his work, Degas explored the emotional states of women. Whether capturing their intense concentration while dancing, their reflective moments in solitude, or their interactions with others, he conveyed depth and authenticity.

Édouard Manet (1832-1883) was a pioneering French painter often regarded as a bridge between Realism and Impressionism. His innovative approach challenged traditional artistic conventions and paved the way for modern art. Manet's works often depicted contemporary life and were known for their bold compositions, flatness, and directness.

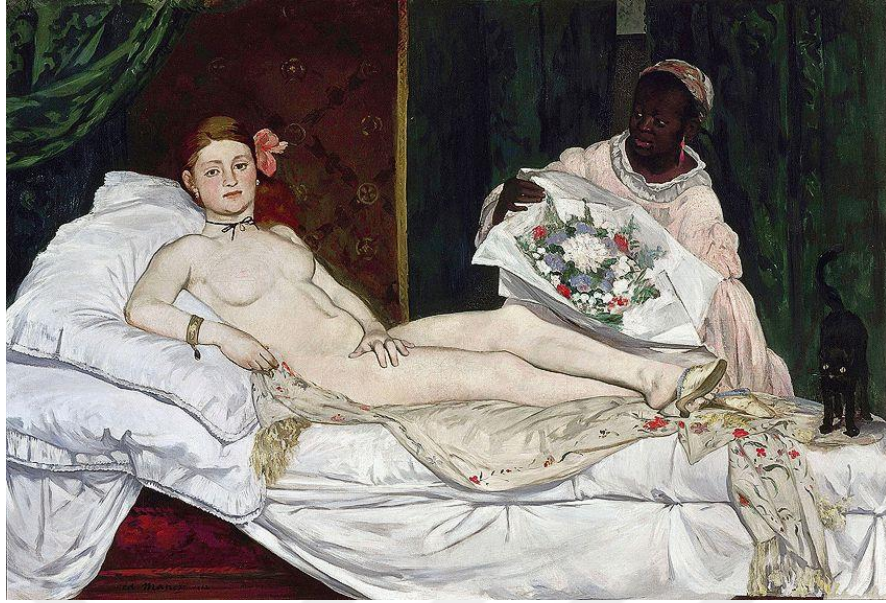


Figure 8 Edouard Manet, *Olympia*, 1863, oil on canvas, 130.5 cm × 190 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris. (Dredge, 2017).

Manet's woman depictions are notable for their audacious departures from prevailing norms. He portrayed women with an unprecedented sense of realism, eschewing idealized beauty for candid portrayals. His *Olympia* (1863) shocked audiences by depicting a reclining nude woman staring confidently at the viewer, subverting conventional expectations (See Figure 8). As highlighted by Meyer (2021), the painting portrays a reclining nude woman on a bed, attended by her servant who presents a bouquet of flowers. Victorine Meurent was the model for Olympia, while Laure posed as Olympia's servant. Olympia's resolute gaze stirred significant public controversy, with various aspects of the artwork implying her connection to a laboring profession or prostitution. Notably, her earrings, bracelet, the orchid adorning her hair, and the shawl she reclines upon were all interpreted as symbols of opulence and an overtly sensual theme. Similarly, *The Luncheon on The Grass* (1863) featured a nude woman picnicking with fully clothed men, challenging traditional notions of propriety (See Figure 9).



Figure 9 Edouard Manet, *The Luncheon on the Grass*. 1863, Oil on canvas, 208 cm × 264.5 cm, the Salon jury of 1863, Musée d'Orsay, Paris. (Dredge, 2017).

Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841-1919) is renowned for his distinct and enduring contributions to Impressionism, particularly in his portrayals of women. Renoir's approach to depicting women was marked by his fascination with capturing the fleeting effects of light and color, as well as a genuine appreciation for the beauty and vitality of his subjects. Renoir's women often exude a sense of warmth and vivacity, with his brushstrokes conveying a softness that lends an ethereal quality to their forms. His paintings frequently depict women engaged in everyday activities, such as lounging, reading, or strolling, which imbues his works with a sense of intimacy and relatability (See Figure 10).

According to Solana (2017), Renoir powerfully evoked the sense of touch throughout the various phases of his long career, working in a variety of genres. Renoir: Intimacy shows how Renoir used the tactile qualities of volume, material and texture as a means of depicting intimacy in its various forms - from the social intimacy of family and friends to the erotic - and how these images are viscerally linked to the sensuality of the artist's brushstroke and the physical surfaces of his paintings.



Figure 10 Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *A Bather*, oil on canvas, 60×53.5 cm, 1887, National Gallery, Oslo. Public Domain.

Another important name is the female painter Berthe Morisot (1841-1895). Berthe Morisot never became as famous as her colleagues Claude Monet and Édouard Manet, but her work occupies an important place in art history. Despite her distinctive and radical style, Morisot is not as well-known as male Impressionists such as Claude Monet, Édouard Manet, Auguste Renoir and Edgar Degas. During her years as an active member of the Impressionist movement, French artist Berthe Morisot painted almost exclusively women. In loose, rapid brushstrokes, she portrayed women at all stages of life, from childhood and adolescence to pregnancy and motherhood. Unlike many of her male contemporaries, Morisot never objectified or idealised her subjects (Meier, 2019). As noted by Kleiner (2015, p. 853), Morisot's subject matter - the leisure activities of Parisians at resorts along the Seine or in Paris's great park, the Bois de Boulogne - typifies the interests of many of the Impressionists (see Figure 11). But the people who inhabit her canvases are almost exclusively women and their children, always well-dressed and thoughtful, never frivolous or objects of male desire.



Figure 11 Berthe Morisot, *In the Bois de Boulogne*, oil on canvas, 73.5 x 61 cm, 1870s, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, Sweden (“In the Bois”, 2017).

Post-Impressionism is a term used to describe the reaction against Impressionism in the 1880s. It was led by Paul Cézanne, Paul Gauguin, Vincent van Gogh and Georges Seurat. While Impressionism marked the first steps toward modern painting by revolutionising an artistic medium stifled by academic conventions, Post-Impressionism, even more revolutionary, completely liberated colour and opened it to new, unknown horizons (Brodskaia, 2018). The arbitrary colours, exaggerated forms and abstraction of their works marked a new distance between artist and nature and prepared the public for the freedoms of the next generation of innovators (Thomson, 1998).

Paul Gauguin (1848-1903), a notable French post-impressionist painter, is distinguished for his unique artistic style characterized by vibrant hues and symbolic exploration. Classified as a Post-Impressionist, Synthetist, and Symbolist, Gauguin is renowned not only for his distinctive oeuvre but also for his intricate artistic relationship with fellow painter Vincent van Gogh and his self-imposed exile in Tahiti. His legacy is rooted in his defiance of conventional artistic norms and his fervent quest

to convey profound emotions and concepts through his canvases. Gauguin's works often mirror his fascination with nature, spirituality, and the human condition, providing insights into his journeys to remote lands in search of authenticity and creative inspiration.

Gauguin's woman depictions hold a significant place in his oeuvre, reflecting his unique perspective on femininity, nature, and the human connection to the primal. Inspired by his travels to places like Tahiti, where he sought a simpler and more innate way of life, Gauguin often portrayed women as embodiments of primal energy and unspoiled connection with nature.

In many of his paintings, Gauguin depicted women with strong, simplified forms and bold use of color. His subjects often exude a sense of strength and mystery, with their expressions and postures conveying a deeper emotional and spiritual narrative. Gauguin's fascination with the symbolic and the mythological is evident in his depictions of women as mystical figures, sometimes taking on allegorical roles that transcend their physical presence.

Gauguin's woman depictions also carry an air of melancholy, capturing a sense of longing for a world that may be lost or unreachable. He sought to tap into the inner emotions of his subjects, bringing their psychological states to the forefront of his compositions. This psychological depth is complemented by his use of vibrant, intense colors, adding layers of emotional richness to his portrayals. (See Figure 12).

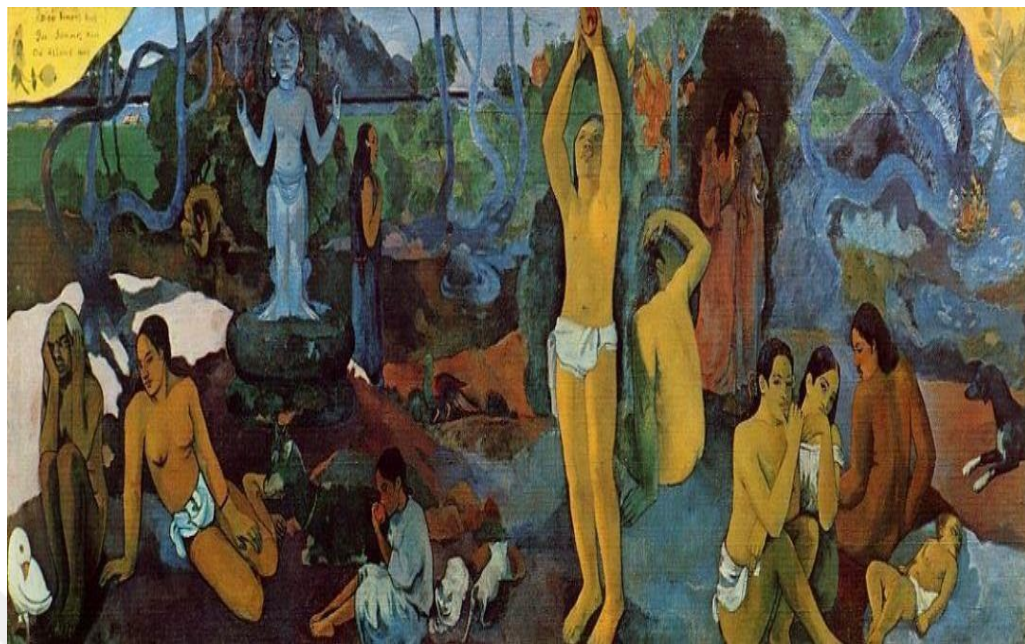


Figure 12. Paul Gauguin, *Where do we come from? What are we? Where are we going?* 1897-1898, oil on canvas, 139 cm × 375 cm, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (Paulson, 2017).

3.3.2. Women in Symbolism and Expressionism

Symbolism was a late 19th-century art movement of French and Belgian origin in poetry and other arts that sought to represent absolute truths symbolically through language and metaphorical imagery, largely as a reaction against naturalism and realism. Symbolist painters sought not to represent appearances but to express "the idea", and the imaginary therefore played an important role in their work (Gibson 1999). Instead of intellectual comprehension, the work seeks to make the viewer experience its mysterious depth like a vision. It is no wonder that the Symbolists created some of the most fascinating works of art of their time (Wolf, 2009).

Part of the Vienna Secession movement, Gustav Klimt (1862-1918) was also a very well-known and prominent figure in the Symbolist movement. The main subject of his art was the female form and his work is known for its strong erotic undertones. His work shows the strongest influence of Japanese art techniques and styles. *Woman with a Fan* reflects Gustav's blend of his distinctive style and the influence of Japanese art in modern art, known as Japonism (Meyer, 2021) (See Figure 13).



Figure 13 Gustav Klimt, *Woman with a Fan*, oil on canvas, 73.5 x 61 cm, 1870s, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, Sweden (“In the Bois”, 2017).

Expressionism is another aspect of the representation of women in modern art that should be highlighted. As summarised by Zeinhom (2013, p.136) it is the doctrine of art that primarily aims to express feelings or emotions and mental states provoked by objects or events in the same artist, rejects the principle of Aristotelian imitation, cancels the images of the real world to fit these feelings, emotions and situations by intensifying colours, distorting shapes, creating strong lines and exciting variations, critic Gerald Wells has pointed out that expressionism is the most over-subjectivist art form, expressionism is associated with German art of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, although its features are manifested in some works of art that live up to the medieval era (Zeinhom, 2013, p. 136).

In German Expressionism, women were portrayed with distorted forms and vivid colors, reflecting the movement's focus on raw emotions and societal challenges. Artists like Kirchner, Nolde, and Schiele captured women's experiences, depicting their vulnerability, resilience, and defiance in the face of urbanization and changing roles. The artworks conveyed a range of emotions, from isolation and unease to

empowerment and introspection, offering a unique glimpse into the complexities of women's lives during a time of rapid transformation.

One of the most famous German Expressionist painters was Otto Mueller, born in Libau-ji in 1874, a German painter and printmaker who became a member of the Expressionist movement. He is best known for his distinctive paintings of gypsy women. His painting entitled *Three Women in the Countryside* (1919) (See Figure 14) is one of the works that inspired many meanings that overflowed with what he depicted in his paintings of women (Bertazzoni, 2010, p. 27).

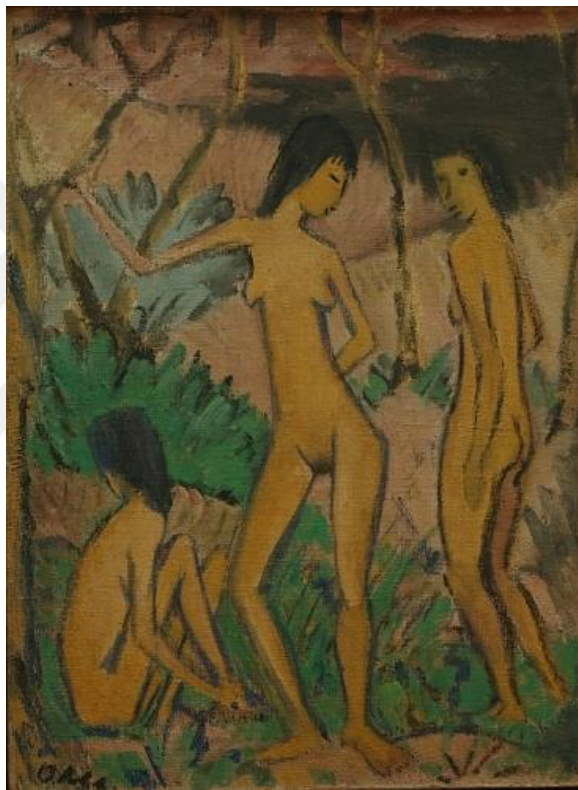


Figure 14 Otto Mueller, *Three Women in the Countryside*, 1919, tempera on canvas, Brücke Museum, Berlin. (Cordon, 2015).

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner was one of the most important figures of German Expressionism. There is a strong link between Kirchner's romantic relationships with women and his artistic output. In fact, he compared sexual relationships to artistic creation, as both were obviously highly inspirational (Angelica, 2019). His painting entitled *Woman in a Green Blouse* (See Figure 15) is an example of the power of emotion conveyed by expressionist portraiture. As explained on the Omega website

(n.d.), the woman depicted is lying in a position that suggests despair and hopelessness: the back of her hand is resting on her forehead and her eyes are slightly closed, suggesting weariness and melancholy. Although the figure looks directly at the viewer, she is only a stranger; the vagueness of the painting's title implies a sense of anonymity, since *Woman in a Green Blouse* could describe any number of women. Kirchner thus uses this woman as a microcosm for a larger set of emotions, to encapsulate his feelings about his role as an artist in a society on the brink of war.



Figure 15 Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Woman in a Green Blouse*, 1913. Oil on canvas, 31 5/8 x 27 5/8 in. Saint Louis Art Museum, Saint Louis.

3.3.3. Woman in Machine Age Aesthetic

According to Lucic (1991), from the 1910s to the 1930s, artists throughout the Western world simultaneously developed new aesthetic programmes to express the powerful symbolism of the machine. These modes of pictorial representation attempted to convey the essence of machine-made forms, but the resulting 'machine aesthetic' in painting and photography never consisted of a completely homogeneous set of stylistic features. Variations occurred from one national school to another, and even among individual artists in the same country (p.9). It was not unusual, especially in the 1920s,

for intellectuals and artists to speak of the machine as a religious force, a "new divinity" (Trachtenberg, 1986). For many 20th century artists, Cubism seemed to be the perfect pictorial language for expressing the essence of the machine age.

Pioneered by Picasso and Braque, Cubism has been described as the first avant-garde art movement of the 20th century. Inspired by African and Native American art and sculpture, its practitioners deconstructed European conventions of point of view, form and perspective to create flattened, fragmented and revolutionary images (Ganteführer-Trier, 2015). In Cubist woman depictions, traditional notions of realistic representation were abandoned. Instead, women's figures were deconstructed into facets and planes, challenging conventional perspectives. Artists fragmented and reassembled forms to convey the essence of the subject rather than their physical likeness.

The depiction of women in Cubism became abstract and complex. Faces and bodies were reduced to geometric fragments, showcasing a multiplicity of perspectives. This style emphasized the underlying structure and essence of the subject rather than visual realism. Cubist works often presented women as multifaceted, embodying various angles and dimensions. Their features were reimagined as a synthesis of shapes, encouraging viewers to engage with the subject in a new and contemplative manner.

Women were often depicted in domestic scenes, reflecting changing gender roles and societal dynamics. Their fragmented forms mirrored the complexities of their identities and experiences during a time of shifting cultural norms. In essence, Cubist woman depictions challenge traditional aesthetics and invite viewers to explore women's identities beyond the surface. This approach had a profound impact on modern art, paving the way for abstract and unconventional representations of women in subsequent movements.

Pablo Picasso was one of the founders of the cubist school, born in the year 1881 in the city of Malaga in the south of Spain to a middle-class family.

There are many paintings of women by Picasso, including *Duramar and the Cat*, *A Seated Woman*, *The Girl in Front of the Mirror*, *Jacqueline*, and the most famous of

his paintings that embodied the meaning of women is *Weeping Woman* (see Figure 16). Picasso was fascinated by the subject of this painting, as he revised the formal formulation of the subject several times that year, as this painting was the final, most decorative and dynamic, resulting from a series of artistic experiments, as it was Dora Mar, Picasso's lover from 1936 to 1944 (Hamilton, 1976, p. 25).



Figure 16. Pablo Picasso, *The Weeping Woman*, 1937, oil on canvas, 61 cm × 50 cm, Tate Modern, London. (Van de Cruys & Wagemans, 2011).

During their relationship, Picasso painted paintings of her in several guises, some of which were realistic, others tender, and others personified torture or threats. Picasso describes the painting and says, “She was the weeping woman for me, I have been painting it for several years in the forms of torture, not through sadism, not through happiness either, it was just an obedient vision imposing itself on me, it represented the deep reality, and she was not representing the superficial reality, she was a role for me, she was always the crying woman, and that was important because women are machines of suffering” (Hamilton, 1976, p. 26).

3.3.3. The Surrealists' Image of Women

Surrealism, a prominent artistic movement of the 20th century, reimagined the portrayal of women in profound ways. Led by figures like Salvador Dalí and René Magritte, Surrealism sought to explore the realm of the unconscious and the irrational. In Surrealist woman depictions, traditional norms were subverted. Women were often depicted in dreamlike or fantastical scenarios, challenging conventional representations. These artworks aimed to access the inner workings of the mind and emotions. Surrealism redefined the representation of women, offering a space for the exploration of dreams, desires, and the complexities of human experience. These depictions challenged norms, empowered women, and beckoned viewers to engage with the enigmatic and transformative aspects of the feminine psyche.

Marc Chagall (1887–1985) was a Belarusian-born French artist whose work anticipated the dream-like imagery of Surrealism. While many of his peers pursued ambitious experiments that led often to abstraction, Chagall's distinction lies in his steady faith in the power of figurative art, one that he maintained despite absorbing ideas from Fauvism and Cubism.

Many of Marc Chagall's most respected and famous paintings depict Bella, his wife and muse, who inspired his life's work and fuelled their love story. My muse of Bella Chagall was conceived long before I created her. The work was influenced by the dreamlike quality of Marc Chagall's numerous paintings of her, often as his bride, which are imbued with his love for her. These paintings inspired my portrayal of Bella, I saw her as Chagall's ethereal, loving, fantasy bride with green hair, wearing a floating dress and veil. My muse is not meant to be a realistic likeness of Bella, but rather an impression of her and their love for each other (See Figure 17).



Figure 17. Marc Chagall, *The Wedding Party on the Eiffel Tower*, 1928, oil on linen., 150 × 136.5 cm. CNAC/MNAM/Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY / Chagall, Marc (1887-1985) © ARS, NY.

Spanish painter Salvador Dali (1904-1989), one of the most important artists of the twentieth century, one of the leading figures of the Surrealist school, Dali is characterised by his works, which shock the viewer with their subject matter, formations and strangeness, as well as his personality. In Dali's life and art, madness is mixed with genius, but Dali remains different and exceptional in his chaos, in his creativity, in his megalomania and in his extreme narcissism (Timothy, 1983, p. 108).

The Girl at the Window is considered to be one of the artist's best works from the early stages of his career; the model for the painting was Anna Maria, who looked after Dali for a long time and continued to inspire him (See Figure 18). The painting has a deep psychological meaning, showing the little girl as an unformed figure, gazing out of the corner of her eye into a new and unknown world, waiting for the changes she wants and fears. It should be noted that the viewer does not see her face, but everyone can feel her desire to move forward, and this is what the artist Salvador Dali wanted for a woman by painting her image, which gained prestige unless an artist could embody it for her in the form of a painting (Dali, 1998, pp. 35-36).



Figure 18. Salvador Dalí, *Girl at the Window*, 1925, oil on paper, 105 cm × 74.5 cm, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid. (Descharnes, 2020).

3.4. POST-1960 ART AND THE FEMININE IMAGE

Post-1960 art refers to artistic creations and movements that have emerged after the year 1960. It encompasses a wide range of artistic styles, genres, and approaches that have developed in the latter half of the 20th century and beyond. This period is characterized by a diverse and rapidly changing art landscape influenced by cultural, social, technological, and political shifts.

Post-1960 art encompasses various movements and styles, such as Pop Art, Minimalism, Conceptual Art, Performance Art, Installation Art, Neo-Expressionism, New Realism, and more. These movements have often challenged traditional artistic norms, experimented with new mediums and techniques, and engaged with contemporary issues and themes.

Feminist art is a significant part of the post-1960s art landscape. The feminist art movement emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s as a response to the lack of representation and recognition of women artists in the art world.

As asserted by Gabriele Schor (2015), historical portrayals of women often emanated from male fantasies, biases, and relational dynamics. Yet, a transformative shift emerged in the 1970s, as female artists embarked on a self-exploration of their visual representations. These artists intimately engaged with their own corporeal forms, carving out assertive feminine identities. Under Schor's editorial guidance, the Feminist Avant-Garde gains prominence, underscoring its pivotal role spanning four decades. The resulting artistic corpus brims with provocativeness, radicalism, poetry, irony, anger, cynicism, and heartfelt emotions. Above all, an element of candidness pervades, embodying a collective awareness that reevaluated and, at times, cast aside preceding norms. This exploration led to fresh modes of expression within photography, performance, film, and video. Eminent contributors encompass Cindy Sherman, Ana Mendieta, Nil Yalter, Ketty La Rocca, Birgit Jurgenssen, Renate Bertlmann, Francesca Woodman, and other intrepid female artists spanning the global spectrum. Their art delves into diverse facets of the female experience, encompassing pregnancy, childbirth, motherhood, sexuality, partnership, beauty ideals, assault, and the woman's physicality (Schor, 2015).

Sherman (born 1954) is an American artist, whose work consists primarily of photographic self-portraits, depicting herself in many different contexts and as various imagined characters. In *Untitled #216* (See Figure 19) Sherman photographs herself parodying female stereotypes—here she poses as the Virgin Mary with the baby Jesus. Her stoic posture and demurely downcast eyes, her blue mantle, and the lace backdrop all imitate the conventions of northern Renaissance painting, yet the plastic breast awkwardly affixed to her chest and her creased robes betray the artificiality of the photograph. Sherman has explained, "I was getting disgusted with the attitude of art being so religious or sacred." She wanted to make something "that anyone off the street could appreciate. . . . I wanted to imitate something out of the culture, and also make fun of the culture as I was doing it." (The Museum of Modern Art, n.d.)



Figure 19 Cindy Sherman. *Untitled #216*, 1989, chromogenic print, 221.3 × 142.5 cm, MoMA, New York.

In postmodern art, the depiction of women takes on multifaceted dimensions, reflecting the movement's diverse and complex nature. Postmodernism emerged in the latter half of the 20th century as a reaction to modernist ideals, challenging traditional norms and embracing a pluralistic approach to art. Female depictions within this framework exhibit a range of strategies and perspectives that subvert and reconfigure conventional representations.

Postmodern artists often deconstruct and reconstruct gender roles and identities, acknowledging the historical and societal contexts that have shaped women's

portrayals. They engage with issues such as feminism, sexuality, identity politics, and the power dynamics inherent in traditional representations.

Fernando Botero provides a typical example. Botero (b. 1932) is a renowned Colombian painter and sculptor known for his volumetric stylisation of figures and objects. A figurative painter and sculptor, his style - known in the art world as "Boterismo" - is instantly recognisable for its exuberant and sensual volumetric form. This stylisation, known as "boterismo", is often interpreted as a sharp social critique. His rounded figures and objects, often imbued with a sense of affectionate humour and charm, have led the artist's detractors to dismiss him as little more than a "painter of fat people" (Padilla, 2020). According to Botero et al. (2007), their humorous exaggeration belies the more serious content of Botero's work - a commentary on colonialism, political instability in Latin America and the region's vernacular artistic traditions, as well as European art history.



Figure 20 Fernando Botero, *Dancers at the Bar*, 2001, oil on canvas, 164 x 116 cm. Fair Use. Created in 2001, Botero's *Dancers at the Bar* is an oil painting that takes on heightened significance amid a media landscape propagating thin beauty ideals for women (See Figure 20). Botero's distinctive artistic style, known for its exaggerations, irony, and detailed narratives, takes on a more poignant edge in this context. Renowned for his storytelling prowess through art, Botero employs this painting to convey his message (Asmaravilla, 2013).

4. PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN IN MODERN IRAQI ART

Iraqi contemporary art is part of the global fabric and has a history and references penetrating the Iraqi heritage, and Iraqi art has a relationship with world art, especially in the contemporary styles that emerged with modernity at the end of the nineteenth century, but on the other hand, it was associated with the new vision in European art that went beyond the principle of matching nature to express the reality of the world artist in the era of science and technology (Nizar, 1977, p. 49).

Iraqi plastic art is not far from these transformations taking place in the world, as the Iraqi artist took to emulating European art on the one hand and the other hand, his inspiration from the cultural heritage to enhance his artistic style and position from the movement of formation in the world, which indicates the artist's quest for renewal and his tendency to experiment (Al-Jazairi, 1977, p. 67).

In the previous chapter, the artistic products in painting carried various themes of shapes and connotations and came in harmony with the reality of human life in all its aspects. The artist formulated it with works of art that embodied many themes that shaped the life turns or obstacles facing society or the gifts that Western society referred to in the statement in praise or vilification, perhaps. At the top of the list that topped the attention by all measures was the image of women in that art, as that image interacted greatly with society's handling of its issues because women are the only model that can elevate the importance of society.

Despite the transformations that were in the past for women, they have manifested in the form of renewal, strength, and beauty in the works of Western artists. These artists, with their achievements at the level of artistic formation in the elements and foundations of composition in their paintings, were working like others from the group of artists and designers. They found the raw source of excellence in women and launched into other worlds. Through it, they seek to do justice to that delicate being, which is still the focus of the attention of the universe, and from which they took a lot of beauty, presence and manifestations on which the art of painting in the West was based in modern times, after which the aesthetic dimensions of the being of the image

of women in art, as she was the first accredited at the beginning of the female beauty and sparkling sensation of the European artist in his modern era (Zaidi, 2010, p. 125).

After addressing Western contemporary artists who addressed the image of women in art, this leads us to touch on the emergence of the Iraqi plastic art movement and the first beginnings that began at the end of the nineteenth century by a group of amateur painters known as the first generation. The most famous are Abdulkader Rassam, Mohammed Salim, and Asim Hafez. The first signs of the plastic art movement were with the opening of the painting branch at the institute of fine arts in 1939 and the subsequent emergence of art groups, such as the Pioneers or the Baghdad group of Modern Art, which was in the mid-fifties of the last century (Abdul-Amir, 2004, p. 34).

The generation of thirty and up to the beginning of the forties is the generation of discovery and expectation. The impact of WWII and the interaction process between Iraqi artists and their observations and studies made their artistic concerns focused on technique and subject matter. They continued to search for originality by drawing inspiration from constructivist styles through their Iraqi environment (Atiyah, 1985, p. 14). In the forties, specifically in 1940, the association 'Friends of Art' was formed, and the political events during this decade influenced the course of the constructivist movement in contemporary Iraqi painting (Al-Kanani, 2003, p. 141).

It can be recognized a result, which is that the Iraqi artist has become aware of the significance of contemporary without neglecting the heritage and, in general, the artistic establishment and the setting of rules, as in the rest of the arts. He began with an obsession with modernity and renovations and this beginning was able to form a base or tradition of artistic creativity. In all these formations and developments, the image of Iraqi women, with the beauty of their artistic compositions, remained the pinnacle of giving to the contemporary artist, so the image of women had an important place, many artists, including the artist Jawad Salim, portrayed her in many of his works (Abdul-Amir, 2004, p. 52). The artist Faiq Hassan adopted in the repertoire of his artistic products, in which he called women an actor in his works, including a painting of night reflection and milk sellers (See Figures 21 & 22).



Figure 21 Faiq Hassan, *Night reflection*, 1983, oil on canvas, 100 x 80 cm, Association of Iraqi plastic artists, Baghdad. (Qasim, 2016).



Figure 22 Faiq Hassan, *The Curd Sellers*, 1950s, oil on canvas, 90 x 80 cm, Iraqi Art Exhibition, Baghdad. (Qassem, 2016).

The artist Akram Shoukry in his painting *Eve* (1956). He portrayed a woman with a naked body without caring to customize her facial features or determine her shape or

identity, so she appeared to indicate the values of femininity through the adoption of the apparent shape of the body (See Figure 23).

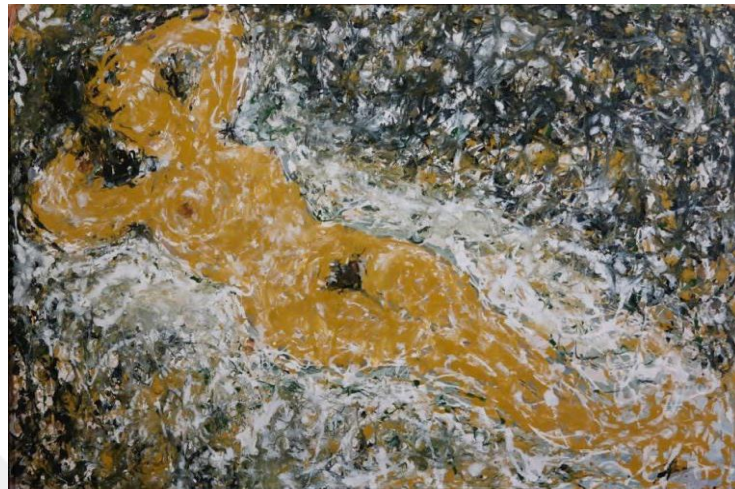


Figure 23 Akram Shukri, *Eve*, 1955-1959, pyroxylin on wood, unknown, Private collection, Baghdad. (Al-Hadithi, 2018).

As for the artist Rasul Alwan, he depicted women in her work two women 1961 to indicate the adoption of women by their legal value, and the painting shows two women sitting, showing three-quarters of their bodies. The first sat on the right side with a side position; the other sat with her eyes, body, and face to the viewer as if she wanted to disclose (See Figure 24).

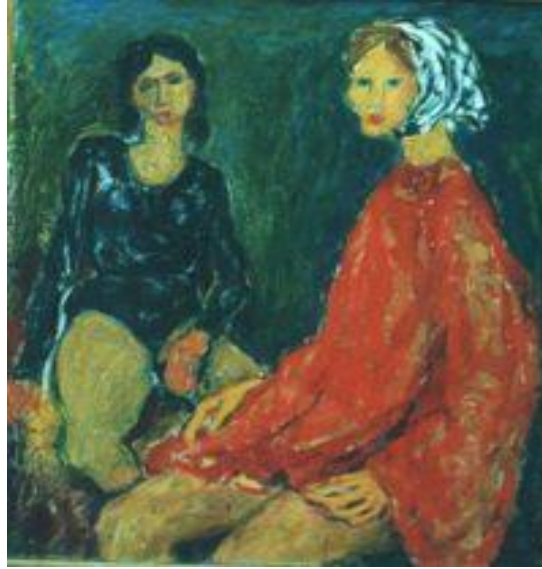


Figure 24 Rasul Alwan, *Two women*, 1961, oil on canvas, 60 x 70 cm, the Iraqi Museum of Modern Art, Baghdad. (Art, 2016).

The artist Madiha Omar in her work *Portrait of Blond Woman* (1984) about something that remained locked inside her; she worked to exploit the form of a woman to express the essence behind the external appearance, following the realistic style (See Figure 25).

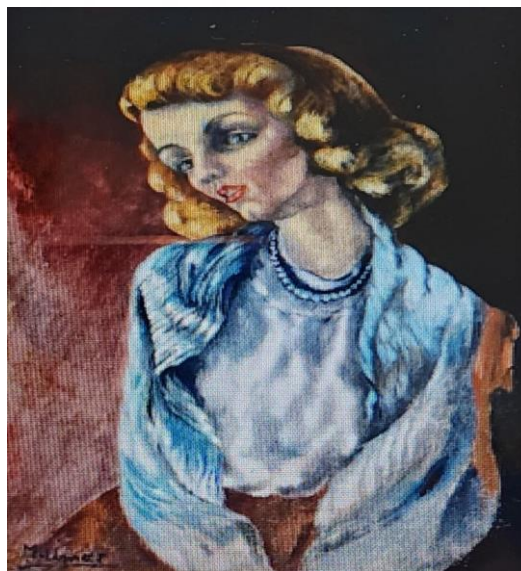


Figure 25 Madiha Omar, *Portrait of Blond Woman*, 1984, oil on canvas, 45 x 35 cm, Private collection, Iraq. (Madiha, 1984).

Thus, the artist Ismail Al-shikhli's products were by depicting the vocabulary of the expressive theme centered on the image of women in his paintings, including his painting *Around the Shrine of the Imam* (1969), which consists of several scattered female figures in a purely religious relationship. The work deals with a great religious value for Muslims: visiting holy places in an expressive style coloured by impressionistic colors to distinguish and advance women from others in the painting. The other painting in this work is architectural and light with a golden yellow colour. *Villagers in the Field* (1971) consists of several female figures standing facing the artist, looking forward as if waiting for something (See Figures 26 & 27) (Al-Sheikhly, 1979, p. 25).



Figure 26 Ismail Al-shikhli, *Around the Shrine of the Imam*, 1969, oil on canvas, 120 x 90 cm, Private collection, Iraq. (Habib, 2019, p. 215).



Figure 27 Ismail Al-shikhli, *Villagers in the Field*, 1971, oil on canvas, Private collection, Iraq. (Al-Qaisi, 2017).

Ismail Al-shikhli extended deeply into social life when painting the image of women in terms of the embodiment of faces, cloaks, palms, and water, which provided him with a formative vocabulary that escalates through the themes of the scene in the painting *Visit*, or *The Village Market* (See Figures 28 & 29) (Khalis , 2012).

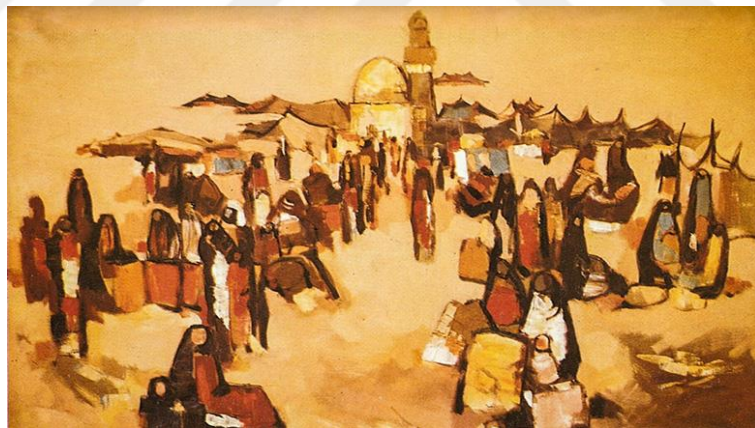


Figure 28 Ismail Al-shikhli, *Visit*, 1971, oil on canvas, 120 x 80 cm. the Holy Husseini threshold, Iraq. (Al-Qaisi, 2017).

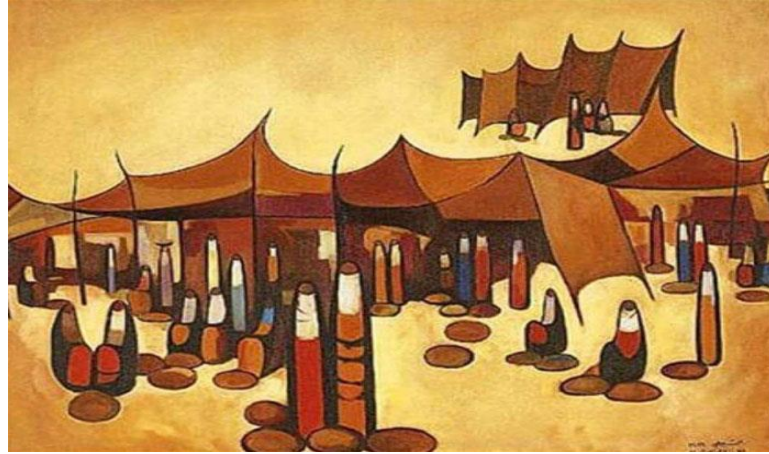


Figure 29 Ismail Al-Shikhli, *The Village's Market*, 1960's, oil on canvas, 120 x 80 cm, private collection, Iraq. (Nehme, 2019).

As for the artist Hafez Al-Durbi in his work *Samour Baghdadi* (1969), he painted the subject with realism, as well as his painting *Abbasi Fun Session* (1976), which represents an oriental theme focused on women in *The Thousand and One Night* (See Figures 30 & 31) (Fathi , 2017).



Figure 30 Hafez Al-Durbi, *Samour Baghdadi*, 1969, oil on canvas, 43 x 52 cm, private collection, Baghdad. (Ulaywi, 2020).



Figure 31 Hafez Al-Durbi, *Abbasi Fun Session*, 1976, oil on canvas, 105 x 87 cm, the Baghdadi Museum, Baghdad. (Ibrahimi, 2023).

As well as the artist Faraj Abbou was interested in depicting the image of women in his works of Art, which he shows in his painting *Bakers* (1963). Women baking bread in a skirt of Iraqi clay, a sheep appears with them in the photo to create the work triangle, and it is noted that the faces of the two women are similar (See Figure 32).



Figure 32 Faraj Abbou, *Bakers*, 1963, watercolour on paper, 35 x 25 cm, private collection, Baghdad. (Zayni, 2007).

The artist Naziha Salim portrayed women in her artwork *Iraqi wedding* (1971). As the work consists of several female forms dancing and beating tambourines and drums, and the women were distributed symmetrically and oppositely (See Figure 33) (Al-Sakaf, 2008).



Figure 33 Nazihah Salim, *Iraqi Wedding*, 1971, oil on canvas, 100 x 120 cm, a missing item, Baghdad. (Al-Sakaf, 2008).

As well as the artist Muhammad Ali Shaker depicted women in his work the iron bed in the seventies of the last century (See Figure 34). Where one of the most prominent topics that occupied the artist Muhammad Ali Shaker is the topic of family and family relations, especially the mother, as he sees from his point of view that the mother is the main element in the family and the family is based on her (Al-Araji, 2012, p. 421). As all this confirms the presence of the image of women in contemporary Iraqi art.



Figure 34 Muhammad Ali Shaker, *The Iron Bed*, 1970's, oil on canvas, 147 x 106 cm, Association of Iraqi plastic artists, Baghdad. (Al-Araji, 2012).

The return of a woman in her artistic image was not alone without the participation of a man in terms of his strength, passion, strength, and kindness. The contemporary Iraqi artist has participated in ancient civilizations in this and what went to the cultural

heritage in his inspiration of the heritage forms only to demonstrate the value of the past, its authenticity, and the presence of women with men in it. Self-discovery requires knowledge of the roots and compatibility between men and women. With the strength of men, women live, and with the tenderness of women, men live, participation is required here, and on this basis, this participation has embodied a young image of women in a deep artistic sense in contemporary Iraqi painting. From the beginning, Iraqi formalists tried to draw inspiration from the symbolic vocabulary that returns to sculpture. The Sumerian and Assyrian styles they have achieved resulted from this marriage between heritage and modernity (Adel, 2000, p. 47).

In 1950, a group of artists, led by Jawad Salim, was inspired by the spirit of heritage and modernity together and presented it in an artistic style parallel to the modern artistic style, where Jawad Salim worked to combine in his works the sculptures of Sumer and Ashur and various theories of modern art. Jawad Salim painted the duality of man and woman in many paintings, including *A Young Man And His Wife* (1953), *The Lady And The Gardener's Son* (1958), and *Two Women* (1951) (See Figures 35, 36 & 37).



Figure 35 Jawad Salim, *A Young Man and His Wife*, 1953, oil on canvas, 76 x 51 cm, Sold at Bonhams auction, London. (Raya, 2023).



Figure 36 Jawad Salim, *The Lady and the Gardener's Son*, 1958, oil on canvas, 72 x 53 cm, Art Center, Baghdad. ("The Lady and the Gardener's Son", 2020).



Figure 37 Jawad Salim, *Two Women*, 1951, oil on canvas, 33 x 27 cm, Barjeel Art Foundation, Iraq. (Highet, 2019, p. 23).

In the pioneering experience of Shaker Hassan Al-Saeed in the field of painting, he tried to express the concept of identity through his knowledge and technical accumulation and inspiration from the cultural heritage, where his products are highly sensitive aesthetic values related to the environment and folk art through his use of traditional and cultural symbols of Mesopotamia and Islam in his painting of men and

women, including the painting *Vagabond Family* (1961) (See Figure 38) (Adel, 2000, pp. 28 - 29).



Figure 38 Shaker Al-Saeed, *Vagabond Family*, 1961, oil on wood, 196 x 196 cm, Ahmed Makiya collection, Baghdad. (Al-Saeed, 1961).

The paintings of the artist Nouri al-Rawi are only texts of love for his village, town, and heritage, where he painted women in their most beautiful meanings, full of energy, joy and beauty in many paintings with a heritage dimension, the most prominent of which is the painting *Shining Joy* (1957) (See Figure 39) (Al-Mousawi, 2003, pp. 8).



Figure 39 Nouri Al-Rawi, *Shining Joy*, 1957, oil on canvas, 160 x 84 cm, national Museum of Modern Art, Iraq. (Al-Rawi, 2023).

While the artist Mahud Ahmed effective in drawing inspiration for his artistic themes about the duality of man and woman from the customs of villages in southern Iraq and its traditions, composing between realistic form and symbolic content in an expressive style. As well as he has a penchant for evoking the image of women in his photographic works and occupying large spaces, as in his painting *The Whale* (2006) and *Gift* (1993) (See Figures 40 & 41) (Al-Rubaie, 1984, p. 66).



Figure 40 Mahood Ahmed, *The Whale*, 2006, oil on canvas, 90 x 70 cm, Association of plastic artists, Baghdad. (Ahmed, 2020).



Figure 41 Mahood Ahmed, *Gift*, 1993, oil on canvas, 70 x 90 cm, Private collection, Iraq. (Ahmed, 1993).

The artist Suad Al-Attar has adopted the past of Iraq in folk arts and was inspired by Arabic poetry, history, and mythology to embody the duality of men and women in her painting *Bird of Paradise* (1992) (See Figure 42). Where she painted them with winged creatures and mounted races that are artefacts of the Babylonian forests and made them the main themes in her paintings, which reminded of the Assyrian and Sumerian visual

cultures, where her paintings included some other formations such as palms, horses, and peacocks, these are indications of Mesopotamian influences in her art. The texts of the artist's duet, Adel Kamel, a hope that predicted this flood, which is similar to the Sumerian and Babylonian without a match, but speaks in today's language about the tragedy of man, his moving female human bodies that do not belong to a specific time or place to express the infinite related to the depth of history and different aesthetic views, his works were more comprehensive and more profound (Al-Mousawi, 2003, p. 6).



Figure 42 Suad Al-Attar, *Bird of Paradise*, 1992, oil and gold leaf on canvas, 30 x 25.3 cm, Private collection. London. (Al-Attar, 1992).

Among the younger generation, it should be mentioned the artist Ahmed Al-Zaim. Who graduated from the faculty of fine arts in the seventies of the last century. The image of women was called richly and effectively and with a unique technique, especially the composition and cutting, which establishes an influential aesthetics in the horizon of reception. A woman for Ahmed Al-Zaim does not mean the other half, but she has an active place in existence, which Ahmed was able to achieve successfully in his painting *The Dreamy Girl* (2012) (See Figure 43).



Figure 43 Ahmed Al-Zaim, *Dreamy Girl*, 2012, oil on hide, 100 x 80 cm, Private collection, Baghdad. (Al-Zaeim, 2022).

Here, the artistic image of women in painting has been present since time immemorial, since the first sculptures were carved on the walls in ancient times, and the ages have passed. The aesthetic of the image of women has emerged in its transformations and connotations, which have grown era after era and civilization after civilization to suggest that the image of women in art in general, especially painting, is transformed. As soon as an era disappears from those worlds, women's transformations speak, develop and change. However, it turned into a new era that invited artists of that era to bring their ideas and collect their hopes to embody this transformation into art that keeps pace with the times and continues to belong to the initial roots from which it originated because women are one of the origins of life and a wonderful embodiment of the sensual meanings on which the bridges of love, giving and devotion are based. There is no doubt that this moral sense was the first motive and the main reason for art to continue with all its giving and grow stronger on strength and beautiful on beauty.

5. ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH SAMPLES

5.1. WOMEN'S DECEPTION (1953) BY JAWAD SALIM

5.1.1. About The Artist

Jawad Salim (1920–1961) was a prominent Iraqi artist, sculptor, and thinker who had a significant influence on the development of modern art in Iraq. He is widely recognized as a trailblazer in the country's modern art scene and a leading figure within the Baghdad Modern Art Group.

Born in Baghdad, Iraq, Salim displayed a keen interest in art from an early age. He pursued studies at the Academy of Fine Arts in Rome during the 1950s, where he was exposed to diverse artistic approaches and techniques. Upon his return to Iraq, he endeavored to integrate his artistic training with traditional Iraqi artistic elements.

Salim's artistic style underwent evolution over time, and he became known for his unique fusion of modernism with elements from Mesopotamian art and cultural heritage. His intention was to create art that both embraced modernity and honored Iraq's rich history and traditions.

His artworks often featured symbols and allegorical imagery, reflecting his aspiration to convey deeper meanings and messages. Moreover, he aimed to capture the essence of Iraqi society and its profound connection to its ancient past.

Apart from his paintings, Salim gained recognition for his sculptural creations, which often combined traditional forms with contemporary ideas. He employed materials such as bronze and stone to produce sculptures that embodied a sense of continuity as well as innovation.

Salim's intellectual pursuits led him to engage in discussions about the role of art in society and the importance for artists to express their cultural identity while embracing prevailing artistic trends. He contributed significantly to the intellectual and artistic dialogues of his era, leaving an indelible mark on the trajectory of modern Iraqi art.

The enduring legacy of Jawad Salim's contributions to Iraqi art is palpable. He played an instrumental role in nurturing a sense of cultural identity and pride among Iraqi artists, while also pushing the boundaries of artistic expression. His artworks continue to be celebrated and studied, both within Iraq and on an international scale.

5.1.2. The Al-Wasati Style of Painting

The Al-Wasati style of painting, often referred to as the "Centrist" or "Moderate" style, emerged as a significant artistic movement in modern Iraq during the mid-20th century. This style departed from prevailing academic and traditional modes, aiming to create a synthesis between modern influences and Iraqi cultural and artistic elements. The result was a unique visual language that bridged the gap between modernity and heritage.

One of the key characteristics of the Al-Wasati style is the fusion of modern artistic concepts with traditional Iraqi elements. This fusion often included incorporating folk motifs, calligraphy, and cultural symbols into the artworks. This approach allowed artists to express their modern ideas while maintaining a connection to their cultural roots.

Another notable aspect of the Al-Wasati style is its engagement with contemporary social and political issues. Artists within this movement used their art as a platform to address societal challenges, questions of cultural identity, and the impacts of urbanization on Iraqi society.

Calligraphy played a vital role in Al-Wasati art, both visually and thematically. Arabic script was often integrated into compositions, allowing artists to unite visual art with written expression and create a multi-layered narrative.

Figurative representation was also a significant departure from traditional Islamic art norms. Al-Wasati artists frequently depicted human figures in their works, enabling them to convey emotions, tell stories, and reflect on various aspects of the human experience.

The Al-Wasati artists were known for their experimentation with various artistic techniques. They blended traditional mediums like watercolors and ink with more modern ones such as oil paints. This experimentation contributed to the development of a distinctive visual vocabulary.

The movement was influenced by a range of sources, including broader Middle Eastern art movements and international artistic trends. This cross-cultural exchange of ideas and aesthetics enriched the Al-Wasati style.

Prominent artists associated with the Al-Wasati movement include Jewad Selim, Shaker Hassan Al Said, and Ismail Fattah. Each of these artists brought their unique perspectives to the movement, contributing to its diverse and dynamic nature.

In summary, the Al-Wasati style of painting played a pivotal role in diversifying Iraqi art during the 20th century. By blending modern and traditional elements, engaging with contemporary issues, and experimenting with techniques, Al-Wasati artists created a distinctive visual language that reflected both the evolution of modern art and the preservation of cultural heritage.

5.1.3. Formal, Stylistic and Semantic Analyses



Figure 44 Jawad Salim, *Women's Deception*, 1957, Watercolor on paper, the artist's private collection, Baghdad. (Zayni, 2022).

Jawad Salim's painting "Women's Deception" from 1957, executed in watercolor on paper, carries profound cultural and narrative significance within the context of 1950s Iraq (See Figure 44). The artwork encapsulates themes of flirtation and secrecy, drawing inspiration from the intricate storytelling tradition of the Arab world.

The painting demonstrates the artist's adeptness in adapting the Al-Wasati style, a modern interpretation of the medieval school of miniature painting. The composition is divided into two distinct sections, creating a clear visual separation. The male figure on the right side takes prominence, drawing the viewer's attention and serving as the focal point of the painting. Rendered in a life-sized manner, the figures occupy the

foreground, capturing the viewer's gaze and establishing a strong presence within the composition.

The artist's use of bold and vibrant colors is in line with the Al-Wasati style, evoking emotions and conveying the essence of the subject matter. This experimentation with color and form showcases the artist's ability to combine traditional color palettes with contemporary techniques, resulting in a visually captivating composition.

In addition to the formal elements, the painting integrates traditional Iraqi motifs, calligraphy, and cultural symbols, characteristic of the Al-Wasati style. This fusion allows the artist to maintain a connection to their cultural heritage while embracing modern artistic expressions. The incorporation of these elements adds depth and layers of meaning to the composition, inviting viewers to explore the rich cultural context within the artwork.

The artist's skillful use of clean, light areas of color and large flat areas of paint aligns with the illustrative nature of the Al-Wasati style. This technique not only enhances the visual impact of the painting but also contributes to the storytelling aspect. The figurative representation, a departure from traditional Islamic art, allows the artist to convey emotions, tell stories, and explore various aspects of the human experience.

Through the formal elements of composition, color, integration of cultural symbols, and figurative representation, the painting showcases the artist's mastery of the Al-Wasati style. It captures the essence of Iraqi artistic heritage while embracing contemporary expressions. The bold and vibrant colors, combined with the integration of traditional motifs, create a visually striking and emotionally engaging artwork.

Stylistically, the painting reflects the characteristics of the Al-Wasati style, which emerged in Iraq in the mid-20th century as part of the Baghdad School. The artist's adaptation of this style is evident in the use of caricature-like figures, clean and bright areas of colour and large flat areas of paint. The result is a modern expressionist style. These stylistic choices are in keeping with the illustrative nature of the Al-Wasati style and create a visually striking and expressive effect.

The integration of traditional Iraqi motifs, calligraphy, and cultural symbols is another hallmark of the Al-Wasati style, and this painting exemplifies that fusion. The incorporation of these elements adds depth and layers of meaning to the composition, allowing the artist to maintain a connection to their cultural heritage while embracing modern artistic expressions.

Unlike traditional Islamic art, which often avoided human and animal depictions, the Al-Wasati style embraces figurative representation. In this painting, the artist employs caricature-like figures to convey emotions, tell stories, and explore various aspects of the human experience. This departure from traditional conventions allows for a more nuanced exploration of the subject matter and adds a dynamic quality to the artwork.

The artist's use of clean, light areas of color and large flat areas of paint contributes to the illustrative nature of the painting. This stylistic approach enhances the storytelling aspect of the artwork, inviting viewers to engage with the narrative and themes depicted. The bold and vibrant colors, combined with the integration of cultural symbols, further enhance the stylistic impact of the painting.

Through the stylistic elements of caricature-like figures, clean and light areas of color, large flat areas of paint, and the integration of cultural symbols, the painting exemplifies the artist's skillful adaptation of the Al-Wasati style. It captures the essence of Iraqi artistic heritage while embracing contemporary expressions.

The painting depicts a scene that explores themes of flirtation and secrecy, drawing inspiration from the narrative of an Arab woman attempting to hide her lover. The presence of a large cupboard on the left side of the painting suggests a hiding place for the lover, adding an element of intrigue to the composition. This narrative element aligns with the story of "The Story of the Porter and the Three Ladies of Baghdad" from the collection of One Thousand and One Nights.

In this tale, a woman engages in flirtatious behavior and devises a plan to conceal her lover. The presence of three men standing out in the cupboard could symbolize the potential risks and complications involved in their secret rendezvous. This narrative

motif, derived from the rich storytelling tradition of *One Thousand and One Nights*, adds depth and layers of meaning to the painting.

The fusion of traditional Iraqi motifs, calligraphy, and cultural symbols within the composition further enhances the semantic impact of the artwork. It allows the artist to maintain a connection to their cultural heritage while embracing modern artistic expressions. The painting invites viewers to reflect on the complexities of human relationships, the risks taken for forbidden love, and the power dynamics at play.

Through the semantic elements of flirtation, secrecy, and the integration of cultural symbols, the painting captures the essence of the narrative inspired by *One Thousand and One Nights*. It invites viewers to delve into the captivating world of Arabian tales, where love, desire, and the human experience intertwine.

5.1.4. Cross-Cultural Dialogues

Women's Deception by Jawad Salim captures a scene that delves into themes of secrecy and allure, reflecting the narrative of an Arab woman concealing her lover. This subject matter is not only culturally significant but also finds echoes in various art traditions across the world.

In terms of its thematic resonance, the painting shares parallels with works from Western art, particularly those that delve into the complexities of human relationships, desire, and hidden narratives. For instance, artists like John William Waterhouse, a prominent figure in the Pre-Raphaelite movement, often depicted women in mysterious and alluring contexts, drawing from mythology and literature.

Salim's depiction of the woman's body language and the secretive atmosphere aligns with the works of artists like Edward Hopper, whose paintings often evoke a sense of voyeurism and unspoken narratives. Hopper's ability to capture introspective moments resonates with Salim's portrayal of a woman entwined in her private world.

Furthermore, the notion of concealment and deception as portrayed in *Women's Deception* draws parallels to the works of René Magritte, a Surrealist artist known for challenging reality through juxtaposition and unexpected scenarios. Magritte's

paintings often play with the duality of appearance and reality, much like Salim's exploration of the hidden truth beneath the surface.

On a global scale, the theme of concealed emotions and secret relationships is universal. Similar themes can be found in traditional Japanese woodblock prints, such as those by Utamaro, where the subtleties of human interactions are captured in exquisite detail. The narrative quality of these prints resonates with Salim's painting, as both convey stories through nuanced visual cues.

Moreover, the theme of secret rendezvous and hidden narratives aligns with the broader tradition of storytelling in Middle Eastern literature, such as the tales of the *One Thousand and One Nights*. This theme transcends geographical boundaries and can be found in various cultural narratives.

In conclusion, Jawad Salim's *Women's Deception* resonates with a universal theme that has found expression across different art traditions. Its exploration of secrecy, allure, and hidden narratives shares thematic kinship with works from Western art and resonates with the broader human experience. The painting's ability to evoke curiosity and prompt viewers to reflect on the complexities of human relationships and hidden stories is a testament to its cross-cultural relevance.

5.2. IRAQI LADY OF THE LAMENTATION (2018) BY MUAYAD MUHSIN

5.2.1. About The Artist

Muayad Muhsin, born on 19 April 1964 in Babylon, Iraq, is a painter deeply influenced by his life experiences and his profound love for art. His early fascination with color and form led him to begin drawing at a remarkably young age of 4. His childhood surroundings became his artistic playground, as he observed and sketched objects, creatures, and scenes. Despite discouragement from those who couldn't comprehend his artistic aspirations, Muhsin's inner drive to create remained unshaken (The Art History Archive, n.d.)

His formal art education unfolded at the Baghdad Art Institute between 1979 and 1984, a period he fondly recalls as a transformative phase. Amidst the backdrop of national

turmoil and a stifling political regime, his artistic talents flourished, revealing his resilience and determination. Upon completing his studies, Muhsin's path took an unexpected turn as he was conscripted into the military during the Iraq-Iran War (1984-1989) and the Kuwait War (1990-1991). Sadly, these years saw his creative pursuits relegated to the background, with his paintbrush and pen untouched. (The Art History Archive, n.d.)

The 1990s presented a new set of challenges for Muhsin, including periods of homelessness and joblessness. However, his unwavering passion for painting endured. He found ways to share his works through galleries and local markets, notably the vibrant Al-Karada in Baghdad. Muayad Muhsin's artworks are a vivid tapestry woven with symbols from the Mesopotamian region. His compositions resonate with theatrical and cinematic qualities, evoking the remnants of ancient myths and values. These elements converge to create a compelling world that echoes with the collective memory of the region. (The Art History Archive, n.d.)

Through his personal journey, Muhsin's commitment to his craft remained steadfast. His resilience in the face of adversity and changing circumstances is a testament to his indomitable spirit. His artworks serve as a bridge connecting the past and the present, inviting viewers to explore history, mythology, and the human experience through his skillful creations.

5.2.2. Formal, Stylistic and Semantic Analyses



Figure 45 Muayad Muhsin, *Iraqi Lady of the Lamentation*, 2018, oil on canvas, 120 x 80 cm. Private Collection.

Muayad Muhsin's painting *Iraqi Lady of the Lamentation* (See Figure 45) is a composition that carefully orchestrates its visual elements to create a compelling tableau. The arrangement on the canvas is purposeful, guiding the viewer's gaze through distinct sections that interact harmoniously. The foreground holds the central figure of the woman, while the background extends into the desert landscape, connecting the narrative threads seamlessly.

The color palette, predominantly composed of earthy tones, establishes a unifying thread that binds the elements together. This color harmony enhances the connection between the figures and their arid surroundings, underscoring the intrinsic link between humanity and the environment. The masterful rendering of textures, from the cracked appearance of the woman's skin to the tactile feel of the tree's bark, adds a layer of sensory richness to the painting.

The visual balance achieved in the composition is notable, with each element occupying a specific space that contributes to the overall visual rhythm. The deliberate placement of the child figure on the right side, juxtaposed against the central woman, creates a visual dialogue that enhances the narrative complexity. The railway track cutting through the landscape further enhances the composition's dynamism, adding a sense of movement and directionality.

In short, *Iraqi Lady of the Lamentation* showcases a meticulous orchestration of formal elements that harmonize to create a visually engaging and balanced composition. Through strategic placement, skillful use of color, and careful attention to textures, Muayad Muhsin creates a visual language that resonates with the narrative's emotive depth while inviting viewers to explore the intricate details of the artwork.

Additionally *Iraqi Lady of the Lamentation* demonstrates a distinctive stylistic approach that encompasses both surrealism and symbolism, inviting viewers into a realm that blurs the boundaries between reality and imagination. The artist's deft handling of these stylistic elements lends depth and complexity to the narrative, reflecting his nuanced exploration of themes rooted in the Gulf War and the invasion of Iraq.

Surrealism, as evidenced in the representation of the woman with a tree growing from her back and the child pointing towards the sky, evokes the dreamlike quality that characterizes the movement. The juxtaposition of incongruous elements, such as the tree emerging from the woman's body, challenges conventional perceptions and invites interpretation beyond the literal. This stylistic choice contributes to the painting's enigmatic and thought-provoking nature.

The symbolism embedded in the painting elevates its stylistic impact, creating layers of meaning that resonate with the artist's overarching themes. The railway track cutting through the desert landscape can be seen as a metaphor for the passage of time and the disruptive forces of conflict. The ancient Mesopotamian statue, falling like a bomb from the sky, serves as a powerful symbol of the destructive impact of historical events on a region with a rich cultural heritage.

The choice of a muted color palette, dominated by earthy tones, enhances the painting's stylistic coherence. This restrained use of color contributes to the overall atmosphere of melancholy and contemplation, inviting viewers to reflect on the profound implications of the subject matter. The cracked textures of the figures' bodies and the arid landscape reinforce the stylistic motif of desolation and the passage of time.

In conclusion, the painting employs a skillful fusion of surrealism and symbolism to create a stylistic language that communicates complex themes of conflict, displacement, and historical resonance. The artist's ability to seamlessly weave these stylistic elements together results in a painting that engages viewers on both visual and intellectual levels, offering a rich and layered experience that transcends the boundaries of traditional representation.

Muhsin's painting delves into a deeply contemplative and emotionally charged semantic landscape, resonating with the complexities of Iraq's historical narrative and the profound impact of conflict, particularly the Gulf War and the subsequent invasion. The painting's semiotic richness lies in its ability to merge elements of surrealism, symbolism, and cultural references, weaving a tapestry of meanings that evoke both personal and collective experiences.

At its core, the depiction of the woman with a desert bush growing from her back carries symbolic weight, suggesting the resilience and growth of the Iraqi people despite the adversities they have faced. The desert bush, an emblem of tenacity and survival in arid conditions, emerges from the woman's body, portraying an embodiment of Iraq's enduring spirit amidst turmoil. This poignant symbol is further underscored by the earthy textures of both the woman and the child, evoking a connection to the land and its history.

The child's presence and his gesture of pointing towards the sky introduce an element of hope and aspiration amidst the bleak landscape. In this context, the child becomes a representative of the future generations, indicating their potential for seeking higher ideals and transcending the scars of the past. The child's earth-colored attire and body

textures resonate with the woman's, suggesting the continuity of heritage and shared experiences.

The railway track, cutting across the desert expanse, holds dual meanings. On one level, it symbolizes the passage of time, evoking the notion of progress and change. Yet, the image of the railway track could also evoke the disruptive forces of war, which can fracture the continuity of a nation's history and disrupt the lives of its people. Similarly, the ancient Mesopotamian statue, descending like a bomb, becomes a potent metaphor for the destructive impact of external influences on Iraq's rich cultural heritage.

The painting's muted color palette, comprised primarily of earth tones, contributes to its semantic depth. These colors evoke a sense of solemnity and connection to the land, while also reflecting the desert landscape's arid reality. The choice of these colors aligns with the semantic intent of conveying the weight of history, the passage of time, and the interplay between destruction and resilience.

In sum, *Iraqi Lady of the Lamentation* encapsulates a multilayered semantic narrative that transcends the confines of the canvas. Muayad Muhsin deftly weaves the threads of surrealism, symbolism, and historical references to create a painting that resonates on personal, cultural, and historical levels. Through its evocative symbolism and imagery, the painting engages viewers in a reflective dialogue about Iraq's past, present, and future, inviting them to explore the intricate tapestry of emotions and experiences that define its complex journey.

5.2.3. Cross-Cultural Dialogues

The painting *Iraqi Lady of the Lamentation* by Muayad Muhsin draws parallels to several Western artworks that share thematic and visual elements, even though they may originate from different cultural contexts and narratives. Exploring these comparisons can offer insightful cross-cultural insights into shared artistic themes and expressions.

One prominent Western artwork that shares a sense of surrealism and dreamlike quality with Muhsin's painting is Salvador Dalí's *The Persistence of Memory* (1931). Although distinct in style, both paintings challenge conventional perceptions of reality and time. The distorted and fluid imagery in Dalí's work resonates with the disrupted sense of time and reality in Muhsin's painting, encouraging viewers to contemplate the malleable nature of existence.

Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* (1937) provides another compelling point of comparison. Despite differing visual styles, both paintings address the profound impacts of war on humanity. Picasso's iconic portrayal of the horrors of conflict finds resonance in Muhsin's exploration of the enduring scars left by the Gulf War and Iraq's invasion. Both paintings employ symbolism and powerful imagery to convey the devastating consequences of warfare.

In a different vein, Edvard Munch's *The Scream* (1893) conveys an intense sense of existential anguish and turmoil. Although distinct in context, the emotional depth of "The Scream" intersects with the underlying emotions present in Muhsin's work. Both paintings invite viewers to engage with the depths of human emotion and experience, fostering a visceral connection with the depicted subjects.

Hieronymus Bosch's *The Garden of Earthly Delights* (c. 1490-1510) presents a surreal depiction of human desires and behaviors. While differing in style and intention, the symbolic and imaginative nature of both works prompts contemplation of human complexities, moral dilemmas, and the interplay between darkness and light.

Lastly, Sandro Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* (c. 1484-1486) offers a compelling contrast in subject matter but shares thematic threads. The symbolism of the female figure's transformation and her relationship with the surrounding environment resonates with Muhsin's portrayal of the woman and the desert landscape. Both paintings touch on themes of metamorphosis and renewal.

By comparing *Iraqi Lady of the Lamentation* with these Western artworks, we foster cross-cultural dialogues and delve into universal themes such as conflict's aftermath, human experience, and the enigmatic qualities of artistic expression.

5.2.4. Female Figures of Muhsin

Muhsin's artwork delves into a symbolic and allegorical representation of the female form, intricately woven into broader sociopolitical narratives. The dreamlike, surreal quality of the painting prompts contemplation not only of personal experiences but also of Iraq's collective memory and historical context. The desert backdrop and railway track evoke a sense of displacement, reflecting the country's tumultuous history.

The woman's presence, seated in a pose suggesting contemplation or sorrow, hints at her role as a symbolic figure emblematic of the strength, endurance, and resilience of Iraqi women in the face of adversity. Her connection to the desert landscape, embodying both the country's beauty and harshness, metaphorically ties her experiences to the nation's shared history.

The addition of the child figure introduces further complexity. The child's gesture of pointing skyward conveys hope and aspiration, potentially alluding to a desire for a brighter future amidst challenges. This contrasts with the woman's introspective stance, underscoring intergenerational dynamics and the hopes vested in the next generation.

By integrating elements of traditional Iraqi motifs and cultural symbols, the artwork bridges contemporary depictions of the female form with the nation's cultural heritage. The subdued earthy tones employed throughout elicit a sense of timelessness and rootedness, reinforcing the notion that the woman's narrative transcends immediate circumstances, echoing enduring struggles and triumphs of Iraqi women.

Moreover, Muhsin's art often echoes the Gulf War and Iraq's invasion, adding layers to the interpretation. The piece can be perceived as a commentary on the consequences of conflict, displacement, and the indomitable spirit of Iraqi women amid adversity.

In summation, *Iraqi Lady of the Lamentation* encapsulates a myriad of themes pertinent to the modern/contemporary portrayal of the female form in Iraqi art. Through its allegorical language, symbolism, and resonance with larger sociopolitical

narratives, the painting beckons observers to engage with intricate notions of identity, memory, tenacity, and optimism, all within the framework of Iraq's evolving landscape.

5.3. SLEEPING BAGHDADIAN KHATOON (2012) BY MAHMOUD FAHMI ABBOUD

5.3.1. About the Artist

Mahmoud Fahmi Abboud, an Iraqi artist born in Babylon, draws influence from both his Ukrainian fine arts education and his experiences in Iraqi realism. is an Iraqi painter in Surreal style born in Babil in 1962.

He obtained a Master in Fine Arts from Kharkiv Academy of Arts in Ukraine. He has worked as a visual designer and writer of children's stories and has published around 50 children's books. From 1999 to 2002 he taught painting at the Norwegian Faculty of Arts. He then worked as a painter and designer at the children's centres in Sharjah. He gave drawing lessons in Sharjah between 2002 and 2011. He is currently working as a full-time artist.

Many times, he uses the honorific title "Khatoon" to signify respect for her association with the city.

Abboud's artwork is immersed in the memory of Iraqis, capturing the ambiance and stability of the sixties and its aftermath. His art seamlessly connects the past he fondly recalls with the present, creating an extended narrative within his paintings.

A notable focus in Abboud's works is the depiction of the female form. Whether depicted as statuesque or delicate, the female figure commands attention in his art. In his many pieces the women are central to the composition, sometimes robust and at other times slender, defying conventional proportions. This recurrent theme highlights his artistic intention and finds its place across multiple works.

5.3.2. Formal, Stylistic and Semantic Analyses



Figure 46 Mahmoud Fahmi Abboud, *Sleeping Baghdadian Khatoon*, 2021, 105 x 155 cm., acrylic on canvas. Barjeel Art Foundation. (Barjeel Art Foundation [barjeelart], 2015)

Sleeping Baghdadian Khatoon presents a captivating composition that seamlessly guides the viewer's gaze through a tranquil and intriguing scene (See Figure 46). The woman's graceful form reclines upon a carpet that stretches across the rooftop, leading the eye along a gentle diagonal trajectory. This compositional decision fosters a harmonious flow that enables effortless exploration of the painting.

The interaction between the woman's contours and the architectural lines in the background generates a compelling visual dynamic. Her gentle curves contrast with the rigid geometry of the buildings, creating a visually engaging tension that maintains a harmonious balance. This interplay between organic and structured forms contributes to the overall equilibrium of the artwork.

The subdued blue tonalities that dominate the palette imbue the scene with an air of serenity and enigma. Moonlit shadows cast across the surroundings evoke a sense of

introspective calm. Delicate shading and highlights enhance the tactile quality of the piece, inviting tactile engagement with its textures.

Each element within the composition, from the woman's pose to the placement of the keys, serves to create visual cohesion. Their strategic alignment strengthens the overall harmony and rhythm, guiding the viewer's gaze and reinforcing the central theme.

Scale and perspective also play a pivotal role in establishing the formal composition. The woman's prominent presence in the foreground, juxtaposed with the architectural elements in the distance, fosters a palpable sense of depth. This depth not only imparts a three-dimensional aspect to the artwork but also establishes visual context for the woman's serene repose.

Sleeping Baghdadian Khatoon emerges as an interplay of forms, lines, and colors, orchestrated with a meticulous attention to detail. The deliberate arrangement of these visual components culminates in a painting that is both visually captivating and emotionally resonant. The formal decisions made by the artist collectively contribute to a cohesive and immersive visual encounter for the viewer.

The painting showcases a distinctive stylistic approach that harmoniously merges elements of realism with a subtle infusion of symbolism, resulting in a captivating and evocative visual narrative. This stylistic fusion engenders an artwork that transcends mere representation to convey a deeper layer of meaning.

The artist's adept use of realism is evident in the rendering of the woman's form, the surrounding architecture, and the intricate details that collectively compose the scene. The woman's voluptuous physique is articulated with a meticulous attention to anatomical accuracy, while her facial features exude a lifelike quality that evokes empathy and connection. This commitment to realism anchors the viewer within a tangible reality.

However, it is the incorporation of symbolic elements that elevates the painting beyond conventional realism. The woman's relaxed and tranquil pose, her head gently resting

on a pillow, suggests a sense of ease and contentment. This posture not only invites contemplation but also establishes an emotional resonance with the viewer.

The presence of the keys, cradled delicately in the woman's hand, introduces a layer of intrigue and metaphorical depth. These keys may symbolize access, liberation, or secrets, inviting the viewer to engage with the artwork on a symbolic level. The juxtaposition of the keys against the woman's serene countenance implies a harmonious relationship between inner thoughts and outward expression.

Aesthetic harmony extends to the choice of color palette, where the subdued blues evoke a sense of calm and tranquility. The luminous quality of the moonlight casts an ethereal glow, subtly referencing nocturnal dreamscapes and contemplative introspection. This skillful manipulation of color contributes to the creation of a dreamlike atmosphere that envelops the painting.

The composition's formal elements, such as the placement of the woman on the carpet and the dynamic flight of the kite, amplify the stylistic narrative. The kite's vibrant colors and graceful movement infuse the scene with a touch of whimsy and vitality, contrasting with the woman's serene repose. This juxtaposition speaks to the multifaceted nature of human existence—where tranquility and dynamism coexist.

In *Sleeping Baghdadian Khatoon*, the artist successfully marries realism and symbolism to convey a nuanced narrative that invites the viewer to explore themes of introspection, connection, and aspiration. The stylistic choices made in this painting demonstrate the artist's ability to craft a visual language that resonates both aesthetically and conceptually.

In *Sleeping Baghdadian Khatoon*, the semantic layers are woven with profound intention, inviting a multi-dimensional exploration of time, memory, identity, and societal evolution. The canvas becomes a canvas of stories, echoing echoes of a period steeped in the collective memory of Iraqis—the nostalgia-laden sixties and the subsequent years that held fragments of stability and familiarity. This poignant choice of period resonates with a cityscape that is not merely a faded reflection of history but an extension of it.

Mahmoud Fahmy Abboud's works ingeniously transcend the mere visual; they encapsulate temporal narratives. Through the dominance of his distinctive style, Abboud channels the aura of a bygone era into his paintings, inviting viewers to journey through the corridors of collective recollection. The streets, characters, and hues reverberate with echoes of the past, rendering each brushstroke a thread linking the present to the cherished yesteryears.

A central thematic focal point within Fahmy's oeuvre emerges—his intricate portrayal of the female form. Women, portrayed as strong and central figures, hold an intrinsic role as vessels of memory and tradition. Whether depicted as robust or delicate, their significance is palpable. The large-scale presentation of the female body conveys a visual potency that captivates the viewer's attention, commanding a presence that cannot be ignored.

Through his focus on the women of Baghdad, Fahmy imbues his canvases with a desire to preserve and elevate their essence—unchanged, unadorned, and unaltered. The minute details within his paintings are not coincidental; they weave the tapestry of memory and experience. Each element, from furniture to daily objects, tells stories of moments, cultures, and lives once lived.

Amidst the tumultuous transformation of the city, Fahmy's dedication to preserving the aesthetics he cherished remains steadfast. The contrast between the paintings and the contemporary reality underscores a stark departure, magnifying the romanticism and poignant nostalgia that permeate his creations. Within his artistic sanctuary, Fahmy's works emanate the timeless fragrance of dreams and imagination, holding the weight of history while embracing the refuge of artistry.

The keys held by the sleeping woman must undoubtedly mean something special: The keys held by the sleeping lady contribute to the painting's symbolic depth. Keys often carry metaphorical connotations associated with access, secrets, and transitions.

In this context, the keys might symbolize the woman's connection to her home and personal space. As she rests on the rooftop, the keys could represent her role as a guardian of her household, ensuring security and protection for her family. They allude

to her responsibility as a keeper of the domestic realm, entrusted with the keys to her sanctuary.

Furthermore, keys can evoke a sense of privacy and ownership. By clutching them as she sleeps, the woman manifests her sense of control over her surroundings. The keys emphasize her autonomy and empowerment within the domestic sphere, even as she rests.

The act of holding the keys can also be interpreted as an act of trust and surrender. As she sleeps, the woman's grip on the keys suggests a belief in the safety and sanctuary of her home, allowing her to relax and let go of her worries.

The choice to include the keys adds an enigmatic layer to the painting's narrative, inviting viewers to contemplate the meanings behind these simple objects. Ultimately, they serve to enhance the portrayal of the sleeping lady as a multidimensional figure, deeply rooted in her surroundings and the complex significance they hold.

The issue of sleeping on the roof at night should be given special attention: In Middle Eastern and Iraqi cultures, sleeping on the roof at night carries particular cultural and social significance. Traditional homes often featured flat rooftops as communal spaces for families, especially during hot summers. Sleeping under the open sky provided ventilation and a break from indoor living.

The practice fostered community and togetherness, as families and neighbors gathered to share stories, enjoy the night breeze, and converse. Rooftops offered a refuge from home's heat, nurturing informal bonds.

It is an interesting and significant detail in the picture that the boy flying the kite suddenly sees the woman sleeping on the roof of the house. This specific scene carries profound symbolism, amplifying its significance. The inclusion of the child, engrossed in flying a kite while moving towards the viewer, imparts a nuanced narrative layer. This dynamic interplay between the child's energetic engagement and the tranquil presence of the slumbering woman introduces a compelling contrast, enriching the story depicted in the artwork.

The child's clothing, notably the white nightdress and nightcap, quietly alludes to historical cultural customs. Because nightcaps are now less prevalent, their appearance on the child's head carries a nostalgic and traditional resonance. This element can be interpreted as symbolizing a metaphorical link between the present, represented by the sleeping woman, and the cultural legacy and reminiscences of bygone eras.

The child's engagement in flying a kite carries symbolic significance as well. Kite-flying is a universal activity often associated with childhood innocence, playfulness, and freedom. In this context, the child's action of flying a kite can symbolize the continuation of joy, hope, and carefree spirit even in the midst of a bustling urban environment. The kite's presence against the backdrop of Baghdad's skyline reinforces a connection to the city's history and its people's enduring resilience.

The boy's gaze, directed towards both the kite and the woman, adds a layer of ambiguity and interpretation to the scene. His dual focus raises questions about his perception of the world around him. Is he captivated by the beauty of the kite soaring in the sky, or is he intrigued by the sight of the sleeping woman suddenly coming into view? This ambiguity invites viewers to contemplate the interplay between dreams and reality, between the tangible and the ethereal, and the connections between the characters within the painting.

Ultimately, this detail in the painting captures a moment of duality, where the child's innocent playfulness intersects with the tranquil vulnerability of the sleeping woman. It underscores the passage of time, cultural shifts, and the enduring human connection to both the past and the present, all while inviting viewers to reflect on the complex interweaving of memory, tradition, and contemporary life.

On the other hand, in Abboud's painting, a woman with caricatured and rounded features, partly overweight, sleeps serenely on a rooftop, resonating with this cultural context. It invokes nostalgia for a past when such customs prevailed. Her tranquil pose and rooftop slumber signify continuity between eras.

The caricatured elements contribute to the scene's charm, humorously capturing both the woman's physicality and the embrace of tradition. The pink satin nightgown adds an element of femininity and warmth, contrasting with the urban environment below.

The setting reflects introspection amid the bustling city. It symbolizes solitude and contemplation, contrasting the vibrant city life below. Rooftop slumber metaphorically seeks solace amidst daily turmoil, echoing a simpler, communal existence.

Factoring this into *Sleeping Baghdadian Khatoon*'s semantics, it becomes a meditation on tradition and modernity, embracing diversity in body representation. The woman's rooftop slumber evokes heritage within evolving urban landscapes. This enriches its meaning, prompting contemplation of cultural practices, urban change, and timeless human needs for connection and reflection.

5.3.3. Cross-Cultural Dialogues

Sleeping Baghdadian Khatoon finds its resonance in a broader artistic tapestry that transcends cultural borders. When contemplating its thematic currents and aesthetic nuances, parallels can be drawn to various works in Western and global art, albeit through an inherently unique lens.

Within the Western artistic landscape, the ethereal compositions of Johannes Vermeer come to mind. Vermeer's ability to capture the quietude of domestic scenes is akin to Fahmy's portrayal of the woman on the rooftop—a moment frozen in time. Vermeer's *Girl with a Pearl Earring* and *The Art of Painting* carry an air of tranquility and poise, much like the serenity encapsulated in Fahmy's work. These Western pieces encapsulate a sense of intimacy that resonates with the peaceful repose of the *Sleeping Baghdadian Khatoon*.

In the realm of global art, Fahmy's emphasis on portraying women with a keen sense of identity and power can be linked to Frida Kahlo's artistry. Kahlo's vivid self-portraits often explore themes of identity, culture, and self-expression. Just as Fahmy's women embody the spirit of Baghdad, Kahlo's self-explorations become emblematic of her

Mexican heritage. The boldness in both artists' depictions stems from a shared desire to magnify their subjects' stories.

Furthermore, Edward Hopper's evocative compositions resonate with the sense of solitude captured by Fahmy. In *Nighthawks* Hopper portrays individuals lost in their thoughts, existing in the intersection of isolation and urban life. Similarly, *Sleeping Baghdadian Khatoon* encapsulates a moment within the cityscape, prompting reflection on the connection between the individual and the surrounding environment.

In literature, the work of Gabriel García Márquez, particularly *Love in the Time of Cholera*, shares thematic undercurrents with Fahmy's painting. Both explore love, memory, and the passage of time. Márquez's portrayal of love's enduring nature echoes Fahmy's commitment to preserving the essence of a specific era—a testament to the power of art to transcend temporal confines.

While these comparisons provide a glimpse into the resonance of Fahmy's work beyond borders, it's essential to acknowledge that his unique fusion of Iraqi identity and artistic exploration sets his oeuvre apart. Just as *Sleeping Baghdadian Khatoon* stands as a unique reflection of a specific time and place, Fahmy's artistry transcends mere comparison, weaving an intricate narrative that encapsulates his personal experiences and cultural heritage.

5.2.4. Female Figures of Fahmy

Within the realm of modern and contemporary Iraqi painting, the depiction of the female figure holds significant cultural and artistic significance. The painting titled *Sleeping Baghdadian Khatoon* embodies several themes and artistic elements that align with broader trends in depicting the female figure in Iraqi art.

In this painting, the female figure becomes a poignant embodiment of cultural memory, identity, and the interplay between tradition and modernity. The artist, Mahmoud Fahmi Abboud, masterfully intertwines his personal experiences and the socio-cultural context of Iraq to create a visual narrative that resonates with viewers.

The portrayal of the woman, adorned in a pink satin-like nightdress, showcases a fusion of traditional elegance and contemporary realism. This juxtaposition highlights the artist's attempt to bridge the gap between the past and the present, presenting a woman who embodies both the timeless values of Iraqi heritage and the evolving aspirations of the modern era.

Through the serene posture of the woman and the gentle interplay of colors, the painting speaks to the enduring strength and resilience of Iraqi women. Their ability to find tranquility and beauty amidst the chaos of a bustling cityscape reflects the spirit of women who have navigated through Iraq's complex history and societal changes.

The incorporation of the rooftop setting, a space that blends urban life with a touch of intimacy, serves as a microcosm of the larger narrative. It symbolizes the balance that contemporary Iraqi women seek—navigating the demands of a rapidly changing world while preserving their cultural roots. The nighttime ambiance with blue tones captures a sense of calm amidst the city's hustle, echoing the woman's inner strength and ability to find solace.

The reference to the term *Khatoon*, an honorary title for a respected woman, adds layers of cultural recognition and respect. By entwining the title with the city of Baghdad, the painting becomes a homage to the city's rich history and the women who have played vital roles in its tapestry.

Moreover, the artist's emphasis on highlighting Iraqi culture, surroundings, and even childhood pastimes, like the flying kite, offers insight into the nostalgia that contemporary Iraqi artists often infuse into their works. This sentiment echoes the broader trend within Iraqi art to reclaim and celebrate cultural heritage as a response to decades of turmoil.

In conclusion, *Sleeping Baghdadian Khatoon* is a testament to the evolving representation of the female figure in modern and contemporary Iraqi painting. It captures the harmonious blend of tradition and modernity, portraying women as both guardians of cultural memory and agents of change. Through its intricate symbolism, aesthetic choices, and emotive composition, the painting contributes to the larger

dialogue on identity, resilience, and the evolving role of Iraqi women in a changing world.

5.4. TOY MOON (1989) BY AFIFA LAIBI

5.4.1. About the Artist

Afifa Laibi (b.1953) is a prominent Iraqi artist renowned for her significant contributions to contemporary art, particularly within the context of Iraqi and Middle Eastern artistic expression. Born in Baghdad, her artistic journey has been marked by her exploration of diverse mediums and her commitment to addressing themes encompassing identity, gender, and societal dynamics.

Laibi's artwork often engages deeply with her personal experiences as both a woman and an Iraqi, revealing the intricate interplay between cultural, political, and individual narratives. Her artistic style is characterized by a unique fusion of traditional Iraqi art forms and modern artistic techniques, resulting in a distinctive visual language that encapsulates the essence of her subjects.

Over the course of her career, Afifa Laibi has participated in a multitude of exhibitions and artistic endeavors, spanning Iraq and international platforms. Her works have graced galleries, museums, and prominent art events, facilitating her engagement with a diverse audience and contributing to the global discourse on art and culture.

As an Iraqi female artist, Laibi's oeuvre carries significance not only due to its artistic merits but also for its role in challenging and expanding the narratives surrounding women and contemporary art in the Middle East. Her dedication to exploring the complexities of identity and the human experience has firmly established her as a respected figure within the realm of contemporary art.

5.4.2. Formal, Stylistic and Semantic Analyses



Figure 47 Afifa Laibi, *Toy Moon*, 1989, oil on canvas, 120x120 cm, The artist's private collection, Aden, Yemen. (Aleiby, 1989).

From a proper angle, the painting *Toy Moon* by Afifa Laibi famous a well-balanced composition that captures a second of intimate joy between a mom and her baby (See Figure 48). The vertical linear balustrade on the balcony serves as a strong vertical detail that adds structure and depth to the scene. The shadow forged by using the balustrade, seemingly illuminated via the moonlight, creates a feel of realism and provides to the general surroundings of the painting.

The positioning of the full moon immediately above the kid's palms, symbolizing their personal full moon, turns into a focal point within the composition. This placement emphasizes the closeness and availability in their personal moon, as if it has been a ball of light that they are able to play with inside the sky. The moon's proximity to the kid's arms creates a feel of appeal and creativeness, as if it's miles within their reach.

The artist's interest to element is obvious within the depiction of the mom's flowing hair, which cascades down her returned without being attentive to a specific form. This free and uncontrolled depiction of the hair adds a experience of movement and spontaneity to the painting. The brushwork and use of shade further decorate the visible appeal and concord of the art work.

Overall, the formal factors in *Toy Moon* make contributions to a balanced composition that captures the joyous moment among the mother and infant. The vertical and horizontal lines, the interplay of mild and shadow, and the location of the moon all work collectively to create a visually attractive and harmonious composition.

Stylistically, *Toy Moon* by Afifa Laibi belongs to the school of symbolic realism, with a focus on the themes of femininity and motherhood. The artist skillfully captures a spontaneous moment when the mother pauses from her task of spreading clothes to engage with her child. This choice adds a sense of authenticity and emotional depth to the painting.

The artist's brushwork and use of color contribute to the overall stylistic impact of the artwork. The flowing brushstrokes and vibrant colors create a sense of movement and energy, enhancing the dynamic nature of the scene. The artist's attention to detail is evident in the depiction of the mother's flowing hair, which adds a touch of spontaneity and freedom to the moment.

The fantasy game played by the mother and child with the moon in the sky area is a key element of the painting's stylistic composition. The moon, positioned prominently at the top of the scene, serves as a symbol and catalyst for their imaginative play. Its presence adds a touch of magic and wonder to the artwork, inviting viewers to join in the enchantment of their shared experience.

In summary, *Toy Moon* showcases Afifa Laibi's skillful execution of symbolic realism, with a focus on femininity and motherhood. The spontaneous moment captured in the painting, along with the use of flowing brushwork and vibrant colors, creates a sense of authenticity and emotional depth. The fantasy game played with the moon adds a touch of magic and invites viewers to engage with the artwork on a deeper level.

Semantically, *Toy Moon* by Afifa Laibi, an Iraqi woman artist, carries profound cultural and social significance within the context of Iraq at the time of its creation. The painting explores themes of femininity, motherhood, and the role of women in Iraqi society.

In the Iraqi context, where women's roles and status have often been influenced by cultural and societal norms, the portrayal of the mother in the painting reflects a moment of empowerment and agency. The artist's choice to depict the mother engaging in a spontaneous game with her child, rather than conforming to traditional gender roles or expectations, challenges societal norms and highlights the strength and resilience of Iraqi women.

The fantasy game played with the moon can be seen as a metaphor for the aspirations and dreams of Iraqi women, who, despite the challenges they may face, find ways to create their own magical worlds and find joy in their relationships and connections. The moon, as a symbol of hope and possibility, represents the dreams and desires that women in Iraqi society may hold dear.

Furthermore, the artist's decision to depict the mother's flowing hair without adhering to a specific hairstyle can be interpreted as a celebration of individuality and freedom. It signifies a departure from societal expectations and norms, allowing the mother to express herself authentically and embrace her own identity.

In summary, *Toy Moon* by Afifa Laibi, an Iraqi woman artist, carries deep cultural and social significance. It challenges traditional gender roles and societal expectations by portraying a moment of empowerment and agency for the mother. The fantasy game with the moon symbolizes the aspirations and dreams of Iraqi women, while the depiction of flowing hair represents individuality and freedom. The painting serves as a testament to the strength and resilience of Iraqi women, highlighting their ability to create their own narratives and find joy in their relationships and connections.

5.4.3. Cross-Cultural Dialogues

Afifa Laibi's captivating painting *Toy Moon* invites viewers into a world of intimate moments, where a woman and child share a tender connection. This emotional resonance finds a parallel in the works of renowned Western artists, resulting in a tapestry of shared human experiences across cultures and time.

Reflecting on the artistry of Mary Cassatt, we encounter *The Child's Bath*, a masterpiece that captures the depth of maternal love and the cherished bond between mother and child. In Laibi's painting, a similar sentiment emerges, showcasing the universality of the maternal instinct that transcends geographical boundaries.

Venturing into the realm of global art, the iconic self-portraits of Frida Kahlo come to mind, particularly *The Two Fridas*. These introspective creations delve into the complex layers of identity, emotions, and the interplay between the personal and the cultural. Likewise, *Toy Moon* beckons us to contemplate the intricacies of human connections and the narratives that shape our lives.

Salvador Dalí's surrealist masterpiece, *The Persistence of Memory*, conjures a dreamlike landscape where time and reality meld in enigmatic ways. This enchanting quality resonates with the ethereal atmosphere of *Toy Moon* where reality and imagination dance together.

Turning our attention to Käthe Kollwitz's poignant "Mother with Dead Child," we witness a portrayal of raw emotion that strikes a universal chord. Similarly, *Toy Moon* captures a moment imbued with emotions that span beyond cultural borders, reminding us of the shared experiences that define our humanity.

Lastly, exploring the contemporary art scene, Yayoi Kusama's immersive installations, exemplified by *Infinity Mirrored Room*, beckon us to step into otherworldly dimensions. In a similar vein, *Toy Moon* invites viewers to immerse themselves in the emotional landscapes it paints, bridging the gap between artistic expression and the human heart.

In essence, *Toy Moon* is a remarkable piece of art that speaks to the human experience, intertwining emotions, connections, and narratives that transcend both geographical and temporal confines. Through its brushstrokes, it weaves a rich tapestry that unites us all as part of a shared global narrative.

5.5. BOREDOM (1972) BY MAHOOD AHMED

5.5.1. About the Artist

Mahood Ahmed (1940 -2021) was born in the city of Amarah in the Maysan province of south-eastern Iraq. Renowned in his homeland, he was a long-serving professor and painter whose work was influenced by a 20-year stay in Moscow during the Soviet era. Ahmed, who died on 10 April, left behind numerous paintings, academic articles and poems.

As Gronlund (2021) writes, he first studied painting at the Institute of Fine Arts in Baghdad, and in 1959 won a scholarship to the then USSR. He lived in Moscow for two decades, where he completed his doctorate at the Institute for Theoretical Studies in Fine Arts. Returning to Iraq in 1979, he and his wife, Wassma Al Agha, became part of the educational establishment when he joined the Faculty of Fine Arts at Baghdad University.

Ahmed remained in Iraq through the first Gulf War and the years of sanctions, continuing to paint, teach and publish, as Gronlund (2021) writes. He participated in a number of exhibitions in Iraq and the region, as well as in Europe. But his daughter explains that conditions became difficult during the Second Gulf War. As members of the intelligentsia, the family became a target for kidnapping. Ramia says that on one occasion the road was blocked and armed militants told Ahmed to get out of the car or they would shoot him. He refused, and the standoff only ended when helicopters appeared in the sky above them and the militia dispersed.

Ahmed's paintings underlined the political and social injustices of the Middle East, as well as bucolic everyday scenes of joy (Gronlund, 2021).

5.5.2. Formal, Stylistic and Semantic Analyses



Figure 48 Mahood Ahmed, *Boredom*, 1972, oil on canvas, 100x80 cm, the artist's private collection, Baghdad. (Zayni, 2021).

The painting *Boredom* (1972) by Mahood Ahmed conveys a complex interplay of elements, generating an evocative atmosphere that ignites contemplation. While the painting succeeds in eliciting a sense of mystery and intrigue, it also raises questions regarding its treatment of the female form and the implications it carries (See Figure 48).

The exaggerated proportions of the woman's body, particularly the pronounced hips and waist, contribute to an aesthetic that may inadvertently border on objectification. The prominent juxtaposition of her vulnerable pose and exposed nudity juxtaposed with child-like drawings on her body hints at a dichotomy between innocence and sensuality. The interplay of these elements adds a layer of ambiguity to the narrative, leaving the viewer with mixed emotions.

The work is expressive, expressing a suggestive contradiction between excessive femininity and poverty mixed with repression and pain, and the uniqueness of the work in one woman by emphasizing the areas of sensory signal within a circle describing the artist.

The woman forms the main axis in this work, and the main figure is lying on her side completely naked, and Iraqi tattoos are drawn on her body. Her body was given a blue color and a black and pink background, and a teacup was next to her. This work was executed figuratively, as the artist borrowed the form from reality and transformed it by his imagination according to an expressive formulation to make it belong to the area of modernity. The woman's body in this painting forms the center of sovereignty using light and volume; also, the meaning of tea at work indicates the presence of a man at work, not as an image, but as a sign of his presence and at the top of the painting the presence of a shadow of one of the pillars of the bed as an indication of its existence.

The artist took out the arms and part of the head outside the scene of the painting for two purposes; the first of which belongs to the artist himself, in which he emphasized the amplification and focused on the importance of the organs of fertilization, as for the second purpose, it is to allow the recipient to intervene by completing the work in his imagination. However, the title of the beauty of a woman lies in her face, and the artist deliberately cancelled it because it is unrelated to the work's intended purpose. The body was characterized by bulkiness in the lower abdomen and hip area; relative to the chest and waist areas; as for the head, it faded with the shadow and extended outside the work, and the upper part of the body was highlighted and focused on the abdomen and chest area. Thus, it becomes clear why the artist chose the organs of women associated with fertilization and instinct because they are the basis for the effectiveness of expressive performance.

The artist has reduced the body to a set of lines to transform them into symbols according to interpretive converters; there is no straight line in the woman's body, as the woman's body is executed with a curved line so that the shape carries other meanings, the artist used the two continuous parallel lines endlessly traced to confirm

the movement of the image and activate it despite the static position of the woman, as well as the artist's manipulation of shadow and light zones to emphasize sovereignty and areas of amplification in the female body.

The artist added tattoos to the woman's body, where the artist borrowed from social traditions a set of symbols indicating the time and place of his belonging. This resulted from the environment in which the artist grew up, where these images and ideas were associated with his imagination; he performed tattoos using circles, dots, and long and short lines. He occupies the hip, abdomen and chest area, where he adds charm and beauty to the woman's body and emphasizes certain areas of her body that are not related to reality but chooses areas for her that refer to signs associated with fertility and instinct when observing the shape of the tattoo, it indicates an abstraction of the figure of a man or a male, or more precisely, it is a symbol of masculinity. Where it is always repeated in exciting areas of the body associated with instinct.

The inclusion of a glass of tea within the composition of *Boredom* serves as a deliberate choice that adds an intriguing layer to the narrative. The image of the tea glass on a metal tray foregrounds the scene, enhancing the enigmatic atmosphere of the artwork. This symbol of hospitality and social interaction carries cultural connotations that invite interpretation and analysis.

The tea glass, with its delicate and transparent nature, contrasts with the subdued palette of the painting, drawing attention to its presence. The glass itself, poised on the tray, seems almost untouched, suggesting a moment frozen in time. It stands as a testament to the act of offering, a cultural practice steeped in hospitality and the creation of connections. However, the isolation of the glass from the surrounding scene also introduces a sense of detachment, hinting at a disconnect between the depicted woman and the act of hospitality it represents.

In the context of the reclining nude woman, the tea glass takes on additional layers of meaning. It could symbolize an invitation or a longing for connection, yet its untouched state might also evoke a sense of abandonment or isolation. The juxtaposition of vulnerability and invitation within the painting's composition creates

an intriguing tension. The glass of tea also contributes to the overall sense of mystery, as its presence begs questions about the narrative's unspoken elements.

The choice to include the tea glass in *Boredom* adds depth to the artwork's thematic exploration. It prompts viewers to contemplate the interplay between symbolism, narrative, and the portrayal of the female figure. However, as a focal point within the composition, the image of tea could have been further integrated into the narrative, perhaps interacting with the central figure or the surrounding elements, to strengthen its role in conveying the intended message.

In conclusion, the image of the tea glass in *Boredom* serves as a symbol rich in cultural and thematic significance. Its presence invites viewers to engage with the complexities of hospitality, isolation, and the enigmatic narrative that unfolds within the painting. While the inclusion of the tea glass adds depth to the composition, further exploration of its interaction with the central figure could enhance its role in conveying the painting's intended message.

5.5.2. Cross-Cultural Dialogues

The painting *Boredom* by Mahood Ahmed portrays a reclining nude woman in a mysterious and sensuous manner, reminiscent of Colombian artist Fernando Botero's characteristic style. Just like Botero's works, this painting emphasizes the woman's exaggerated lower body, particularly her hips. The woman's pale, flawless skin and her pose, with crossed knees and outstretched arms, echo the inviting vulnerability and eroticism often seen in Botero's art.

A distinguishing feature is the presence of Iraqi tattoos on the woman's hips and stomach, adding a cultural and symbolic layer to the artwork. This sets it apart from Botero's pieces, which typically lack specific cultural context. Additionally, the inclusion of a glass of tea with a spoon on a metal tray provides a cultural reference, possibly alluding to the significance of tea in Iraqi culture.

While both artists emphasize curvaceous figures and sensuality in their depictions of women, Mahood Ahmed's incorporation of cultural elements and symbolism adds a

unique dimension to "Boredom," setting it apart from Botero's more generalized representations.

Boredom by Mahood Ahmed and Francisco Goya's *The Naked Maja* present reclining nude female subjects, though within distinct artistic epochs and cultural backgrounds. Painted in the 18th century, Goya's *The Naked Maja* showcases his mastery in realistically portraying the female form. The woman's confident gaze challenges viewers, reflecting empowerment and self-assuredness.

In contrast, *Boredom* offers a contemporary interpretation. Illuminated by an enigmatic light source, the woman's alluring posture and pronounced hips evoke sensuality, reminiscent of the style seen in Fernando Botero's works. Notably, Iraqi tattoos embellish the composition, imbuing it with cultural significance.

While both artworks feature reclining nude women, Goya's piece underscores the assertive gaze, reflecting the societal norms of his era. On the other hand, *Boredom* melds traditional allure with contemporary elements, integrating cultural components. The two paintings, separated by time and cultural context, provide insightful glimpses into the progression of artistic representation and the diverse ways in which the female figure has been depicted across art history.

Boredom engages with the enduring tradition of the reclining nude in Western art. This tradition, rooted in ancient art and perpetuated through various art movements, involves depicting a reclining female figure often in a state of repose or contemplation. Ahmed's *Boredom* aligns with this tradition by presenting a reclining nude woman, albeit with a contemporary twist.

The painting's composition and style evoke elements of sensuality and allure that have characterized reclining nudes throughout art history. The exaggerated lower body, particularly the hips, adds a curvaceous and inviting quality to the figure. This aspect recalls renowned depictions of reclining nudes by artists such as Titian, Giorgione, and other luminaries of the Italian Renaissance.

However, *Boredom* deviates from the conventional ideals associated with this tradition. The portrayal of the woman is not idealized in the traditional sense; instead, it embraces a more contemporary aesthetic. The pale and smooth skin, along with the enigmatic lighting, contribute to a sense of intimacy and modernity that contrasts with the historical context of traditional reclining nudes.

In essence, *Boredom* pays homage to the reclining nude tradition by referencing its sensuous characteristics, while infusing it with a contemporary sensibility. This fusion of past and present illustrates how artists like Ahmed engage with and reinterpret established artistic conventions, resulting in a layered and thought-provoking representation of the reclining female figure within the context of Western art.

On the other side, Ahmed's evocation of "Boredom" through the languid pose of the depicted woman and the subtle details within the composition can be compared to similar themes in non-Western art, where emotions and introspection are often conveyed in nuanced ways.

For instance, within the realm of Japanese woodblock prints, the works of Kitagawa Utamaro come to mind. Utamaro's prints often captured intimate moments of contemplation, revealing the emotional depths of his subjects. Just as *Boredom* portrays a sense of internal reflection, Utamaro's prints invite viewers to engage with the introspective moments of the subjects, transcending cultural and geographical boundaries.

Likewise, in Persian miniature painting, artists like Reza Abbasi masterfully depicted inner emotions through the positioning and gestures of their figures. These works often portrayed not only physical beauty but also the emotional narratives that lay beneath the surface. In a parallel manner, *Boredom* communicates a sense of emotional depth through the figure's posture and facial expression, aligning with the tradition of revealing intricate emotions in non-Western art.

The Indian art form of miniatures also offers a comparable perspective. Artists like Abanindranath Tagore, known for his Bengal School of Art, explored emotions and narratives through delicate details and symbolisms in their artworks. Tagore's ability

to convey mood and sentiment through meticulous craftsmanship parallels the subtleties in *Boredom*, where the figure's expression and the elements within the scene provide insight into her state of mind.

By connecting *Boredom* to these non-Western art traditions, we recognize the universality of human emotions and introspection, transcending cultural contexts. The painting's ability to convey a sense of emotional ennui and contemplation aligns with artistic practices across different regions and eras, demonstrating how art can bridge gaps and speak to shared human experiences.



6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMENDATIONS

6.1. CONCLUSIONS

Although the status of women in the Middle East is considered to be within the circle of reservation due to religious and social influences, however, in Iraq, women managed to achieve an objective presence and a position adjacent to men in value and social influence, especially in the areas of living life, as well as what they provided in the second half of the twentieth century of a distinguished level in culture and education, including the culture of art and performance.

The last seven decades are a picture of transformation of social, political, and cultural struggles that influenced the constructivism of plastic art and its conceptual orientations, which inevitably influenced the artistic output of plastic art. This revealed the status of women in terms of their painted image, which was characterized by an attachment that provides political, social and cultural thought.

The image of a woman with a historical dimension was reflected as an aesthetic metaphor with an interpretive effect associated with the present by emphasizing the rich historical side of the Mesopotamia, the Iraqi artist borrowed fragments of figures drawn in Sumerian, Akkadian, Babylonian and Assyrian artistic styles, this has achieved a wealth in a positive interpretation of the image of modern women due to its relationships with its historical references to the civilization of the Mesopotamian Valley. It can be classified the diagnostic metaphors of women in contemporary Iraqi art from the fifties of the last century to the present into three classifications:

1. A historical metaphor based on the image of the heritage and civilization of the Mesopotamian Valley.
2. A metaphor with a political dimension in which systems are framed more broadly by the political conflicts in Iraq and the Palestinian issue.
3. Social conflicts represent the social oppression directed against women, especially the lack of consideration of them socially in the subject of family violence or in the class structures that affected them.

The psychological aspect of the drawings of the image of women in contemporary Iraqi plastic art can be classified into two categories. First is represented by the psychology of a man's view of a woman. Second, the psychology of women's self-perception. In the first place, the situation embodied in the drawings of Iraqi artists is full of oriental psychology with an associative dimension according to the logic of collective insensitivity. The second is the drawings of Iraqi women artists influenced by the psychology of the higher ego according to the logic of Simon Freud.

Iraqi artists and Iraqi plastic artists emphasized the aesthetic of a woman's body by showing her with all her grace. They were presenting their drawings of the woman's body with those oriental and Iraqi characteristics, especially in drawing breasts as tools of expression of fertility and femininity and wide black impossible eyes as a symbol of the aesthetic characteristics of Iraqi women and drawing plump legs.

The aesthetic formations of Iraqi tattoos, which refer to historical and heritage references associated with the tattoos of the Mesopotamian Valley in Sumer and Babylon, were widely invoked to emphasize the Iraqi image of women in these drawings. The Iraqi plastic artist emphasized showing decorative accessories, especially gold and silver ornaments, as aesthetic structures and confirming the Iraqi identity through historical and local ornaments. The clothes of Iraqi women, whether Southern or Baghdadi, have an important place in building the image of women in contemporary Iraqi painting; these clothes emphasize identity and personal image with their dimension.

International art is an important tributary in the manufacture of modern artistic styles, especially in the construction of aesthetic expressions of the image of women, where the influences of expressionist art with its multiple modernisms as well as what preceded it in the romantics of the nineteenth century. Some Iraqi plastic artists were distinguished by their intensive orientation to the image of women, where they returned a center or an aesthetic theme in their works, as is the case of Ismail Al-shikhli in the drawings of women's groups, Mohammed Ali Shaker, Jawad Salim, Mahood Ahmed, and others.

Iraqi plastic artists have achieved a wide artistic position in the contemporary Iraqi formation movement and have recently established art gatherings that emphasize the image of feminist art, giving a special life stream to Iraqi women and, most importantly, contemporary Iraqi women artists. The institutes and colleges of fine arts in Iraq, which have spread widely throughout the geography of the country, contributed to supporting the status of women in Iraqi painting, as large numbers of Iraqi girls joined these colleges and institutes, as well as many of them became teachers and holders of higher degrees in doctorate and master, this contributed to building a positive image of the image of women in contemporary Iraqi art. The Iraqi artist retained sight of the theme of motherhood as a rich expression of the image of women in the human conscience, as many maternity paintings have been honoured all the past seven decades by emphasizing the positive status of Iraqi women.

The study and analysis contributed to answering the questions that were formulated at the beginning of the research, and this can be summarized as follows:

Art is considered one of the main tools that can be relied upon in highlighting the image of women in primitive societies, and it can also contribute to conveying the voice of women, but this cannot be done unless there are special analysis tools through which these artistic aspects can be highlighted within each painting. Artists worldwide also contribute to shedding light on the nature of women and the problems they face or their private lives. Jawad Salim, Kazem Haidar, Naziha Salim, Afifa Laibi, and Mahood Ahmed are among the artists who have contributed to highlighting the image of women within Iraqi society.

These artists knew that art must carry a moral message, regardless of the paintings' details and their nudity. They refer to a message that must be understood, which is what the current study worked on. Many societal elements were noted in each painting. For example, the paintings of the artist Jawad Selim and Kazem Haider dealt with some of Iraqi women's social and traditional life. On the other hand, the paintings of the artist Afifa Laibi dealt with the rebellious side of the life of Iraqi women, as these paintings can be considered anti-feminist movements. Concerning the paintings of Mahood Ahmed, she conveyed a bold image of the nature of Iraqi women in the

contemporary time, and these paintings included the rural and civilized aspects of Iraqi women and the different times.

In reading the drawings of women multiple times, which can be traced back to the civilization of the Mesopotamian Valley down to modernity and modernity, it becomes clear that women have a place in the same Iraqi artist reflected from that societal value that a mother, sister, and wife consider. She has achieved this for her symbols with a valuable dimension that builds a lofty position for her. In an interactive relationship between the past and the present, the contemporary Iraqi artist summoned heritage vocabulary with an active relationship with women and employed it in his artistic product, which achieved what he wanted from the goals of recalling heritage and referring it to present active life.

The Iraqi artist deduced from modernism a stylistic approach by which he could establish an image of a woman related to modern methods in body anatomy, color rhythmicity and composition building. In the research's conclusion of the stylistic structures of women's drawings in the Iraqi formation, it turned out that realism took the top place. Then the symbolic, expressive realism achieved a wide place among the artistic styles in which the image of women was invested in contemporary Iraqi painting. The color structures expressing femininity harmonized with their symbols when the woman in the painting is a wife or a lover, as well as a color-shifter with the mother-woman, as the coding invested by the contemporary Iraqi artist is in harmony with the social interactions of color.

6.3. RECOMMENDATIONS

This study provides valuable insights into the representation of women in contemporary Iraqi painting and suggests areas for further exploration.

To enhance understanding, researchers could extend cross-cultural analyses to encompass a wider array of artworks from diverse contexts. Including more perspectives can offer a more comprehensive grasp of the global artistic discourse surrounding women's portrayal.

Moving beyond the selected artists, future research might incorporate emerging voices or those who approach the theme from distinct angles. This inclusive approach can unveil a spectrum of approaches to depicting women in modern Iraqi art.

Conducting interviews with contemporary Iraqi artists can yield personal insights into their motivations, artistic processes, and the cultural influences shaping their work. This qualitative dimension can complement the formal analyses conducted in this study.

Facilitating local exhibitions or discussions in Iraq that focus on the portrayal of women can foster dialogues among artists, scholars, and the wider public, enriching perspectives and understanding.

Exploring how artists with hybrid identities navigate the representation of women can reveal the intricate interplay between individual identity and artistic expression.

Consideration of psychological or sociological frameworks alongside formal analyses can deepen comprehension of the emotional and societal layers embedded in these artworks.

Furthermore, delving into the impact of contemporary socio-political contexts on the depiction of women in Iraqi art can provide deeper insights into the artworks' significance within their societal framework.

These recommendations encourage ongoing exploration, dialogue, and critical examination of the portrayal of women in contemporary Iraqi painting.

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