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Representations of the body in contemporary potters

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Abstract:

The research includes four chapters, (Chapter One) the methodological framework of the research, which contains the research problem centered on the following question: What is the concept of the body according to contemporary artistic visions and trends, and did the connotations of the body according to contemporary intellectual and artistic trends have an impact on the meaning of the body as a concept and symbol? Did social changes and transformations play a role in changing the concept of the body? The aim of the research was based on introducing the concept and representations of the body in contemporary plastic art and in potters specifically, and shedding light on the concept of the human body in accordance with intellectual and cultural currents and aesthetic transformations in the field of potters and contemporary plastic arts, and exploring the relationship between the symbols and connotations of the body in life and art, through analysis a selected samples of potters who dealt with the subject of the body in their artistic works, within the temporal limits (1990-2020), and the chapter concluded by defining the most important terms mentioned in the title of the research.

As for (Chapter Two), the theoretical framework of the research included three paragraphs. The first paragraph dealt with the concept of the body in general, the second paragraph dealt with the body in the plastic arts, and the third paragraph dealt with the body in contemporary potters, as well as the indicators that resulted from the theoretical framework. As for (Chapter Three) of the research, it included the research procedures, which included analyzing the research sample consisting of (3) selected models. The researcher relied on the descriptive analytical method as an analysis method in the research. (Chapter Four) and the final part of the research included the results of the research.

Chapter one

Research problem:

Since the body has a pivotal role in life, it will certainly be pivotal in art as well, and its concept developed and crystallized through the major artistic transformations that accompanied the intellectual and social changes of human civilizations. The body has now played a role in raising the level of communication systems and it has become a common language and its semantic range has expanded. The life of the body has essential signification of life, so the visual arts invested the connotations and symbols of the body and employed them in the artistic achievement. The artist used the body through free contemplation of existence. The myth was born, and the body was transformed into an interpretation of the visible. Then it extended to the embodied material to the comprehensive world, and the scope of investing and employing the body expanded and entered



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In the field of imagination and interpretation, the duality of soul and body has produced a series of complementary and conflicting dualities such as light and darkness, form and meaning, subjective and objective. Contemporary art, especially in Europe, has tended towards subjectivity and considering it a source of primary inspiration in the process of creativity, and this has come as a result of a number of economic variables. Philosophical and scientific transformations were accompanied by social transformations that imposed changes on structures and linked to philosophical concepts and approaches, and there became sects established according to new intellectual trends. Modern and contemporary art has shifted from direct imitation of reality, rejected the dominance of external contents, and subjected all visuals to the requirements of subjective vision, and the body had a wide space and scope within this transitions.

Research importance : The importance of the research lies in revealing and shedding light on representations of the human body in accordance with intellectual and cultural developments, aesthetic and artistic transformations in the field of contemporary potters within the contemporary plastic arts, as well as in exploring the extent of the reciprocal relationship between the symbols and connotations of the body in life and art.

Research goal: Introducing the concept, representations, and expressive values of the body in contemporary plastic art, in the specialty (potters).

Research limits: The current research in studying representations of the body in contemporary potters is determined by analyzing selected samples of potters who dealt with the subject of the body in their artistic works. The current research was determined by Platti.

Spatial limits : Europe and America.

Time limits: 1990 – 2020.

Definition of terms:

Representations:

Representing a thing by imagining its example, which includes assimilation, which is the acquisition of the image of the thing in the mind or the perception of the specific content of every mental act. Or imagine the example that replaces the thing and takes its place (Saliba, 1982, p. 342).

- The appearance of the mental image in its various forms in the world of consciousness, or the replacement of some of them by others (Madkour, 1983, p. 54).

- Procedurally: It is the embodiment or manifestation of images of ideas in pottery artistic forms that contemporary ceramics have absorbed in their artistic productions.

Body: Linguistically: “It is everything that has length, width, and depth (Al-Bustani, 1956, p23).

“It is the physical body that constitutes the ontological unit that characterizes the existence of the living being in the world, and constitutes the self-existence of the human being” (Al-Zahi, 1999, p. 32).

- Procedurally: - It is the formative material structure that forms the presence of the human and human self in the world. It is considered a tool that achieves the individual’s self-existence in terms of its natural, vital structure, its functional structural characteristics, and its physical mechanisms, and the self is linked to it with all its psychological, spiritual, and cultural implications.

Chapter Two



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- The concept of the body

The body occupies an important position within knowledge systems. The body is a multi-semantic entity whose semantic dimensions range between real, symbolic, and imaginary, and it lives within functional values and actions. "Because it is the material entity that is subject to the laws and norms of social communication, it is the institution that constitutes the ontological unit that characterizes the existence of the living being in the world. Hence, it constitutes the goal of man's self-existence, and this character is not devoid of relationships with a cultural, symbolic, and expressive dimension" (Al-Zahi, 1999, p. 32). Man has deliberately used and employed the body as a symbol through what can be considered the first artistic and spiritual symbols, which are statues of (the gods and Mothers), which was worshiped by primitive peoples and was a glorification and sanctification of the female body as a symbol of fertility, growth and reproduction "because the first man lived under the pressure of his direct physical needs and had an aesthetic sense of tangible form that enabled him to transform women into statues of gods and exaggerated in showing the fertile areas of her body" (Freischauer (1999, p. 46), the physical body was not separate from its content, as the duality of soul and body was characterized by an interactive relationship, and these dualities varied with the diversity of civilizations, religions and cultures. "In the midst of the struggle between matter and spirit, the body was a place for their meeting and an arena for confrontation between them, which made it of interest with the body and its value in life, or asceticism of the life of the body, is a tendency towards the world of the spirit and according to the surrounding civilization" (Shengler, 1964, p. 456). The body is the first necessity for human existence and is the condition for the presence of the self in the world. A person's awareness of himself and his spirit is inseparable from his awareness of his body. "No. Of the soul, spirit, and body they form a unified whole, which is the human entity and its presence in the world. This makes the body a visible given confirmed by the physical presence" (Al-Zahra, 2002, p. 9).

The body in Idealism and Existentialism

Idealism

In idealism, the body is seen as the physical existence that manifests the soul in the material world. Therefore, movement, thought, and awareness of things are in fact emanations of the soul. The body is nothing more than the container that carries the mind and soul, and it is through its emotions and movements that it tells us what is happening inside the.

Idealism is a philosophical movement that believes in the primacy of thought and spirit over matter, and that the soul moves the body and has a control over it. The existence of the senses is attributed to the soul. The soul or mind is the force that lies behind the things and phenomena that are perceived. The soul is imprisoned within the body and is released from this constraint at the moment of death, to return to that immortal world (the world of the forms).

The roots of idealistic philosophical thought go back to the beginnings of Greek thought, and this thought developed into a cognitive system with fixed foundations under the leadership of Plato. Plato considered existence to be a sensory world in which there are material sensations, and that



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the body restricts the soul and prevents it from existing in reality for itself. The soul carries within it the ideals. The soul's possession of these ideals makes it seek its own cause and makes it achieve harmony between the soul or the mind and the body.

Idealism considers that the body is the form or visible element that perceives beings through the senses, but it is changeable and perishable, and the soul and spirit are constant and immortal because they derive their existence from another hidden world, "a world characterized by perfection, modeling, immortality, and has its independent existence from our world."

The body is the condition on which existence is established, and the soul's function is to guide the body according to the data of the ideals, so that it becomes the bearer of the laws that are established in thought. The soul that is led by the physical senses and desires is a darkened soul that has lost its purity and innocence, and becomes a follower and slave of the body.

Existentialism

Existentialist thought, especially in the thought of (Jean-Paul Sartre), assumes that man lives in a specific spatial and temporal reality, and that things and beings are the starting point for revealing our own existence through the body and its communication with others. This is because the body and its senses provide us with knowledge of the world around us according to its existence and its relationship with the things around it.

We find that the body in existentialist thought represents a moving and diverse cultural discourse according to the intellectual visions, and this difference in vision is attributed to intellectual and religious references, so we find in many tendencies the pursuit of a subjective meaning and liberation from the social and religious system and its restrictions. we can say that "existential thought is a doctrine that emphasizes existence and its characteristics, and makes it precede essence. This means that it is existence without essence, and it believes in absolute freedom that enables the individual to create himself and fill his existence in the way he desires."

Existentialist thought rejected the idea of using the body as a tool or as an intermediary, or placing it within limits and laws. It considered that the body is the vision of existence and through it we can know it, read it, and interpret it. Therefore, we find that man sometimes does not want to be like the rest of beings and things that are controlled by laws.

Existentially, the body is not concerned with its meaning and external form only, but in its human spatial meaning that moves as a witness to its existence. This is because the movement of the body, its effectiveness, activity, and its ability to innovate, create, and innovate are the alternative in order to restore the human value of the body.

The body is liberated its existence and freedom to be the basis of human existence. Man, according to (Søren Kierkegaard), "is a union of three elements: the body, the soul, and the spirit. The soul melts under the pressure of the other two elements and becomes impossible to sensory phenomena. Based on the function of the existential body that always seeks sensual pleasure, which is usually violates the formative symbols of the moral body, and gives it the concept of sin and anxiety, it is a source of anxiety that manifests itself in the spiritual dimension of man."



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The Concept of the Body in Art

Artists have utilized the body in their artistic creations by harnessing the connotations and expressions of the body, real or subjective, which they imbue upon it. Within the social fabric, the body derives its meanings and presence from its interactions, and occasionally it can transform into a process between the subjective and the objective, in accordance with intellectual and philosophical principles. "Within the body reside all of an individual's gateways to the world; it senses, is affected by, and impacts the world. An individual does not enter their world with an empty body, but rather one brimming with instincts, desires, and a will that formed long before they possessed consciousness." (Jung, 1984, p. 95) Based on the notion that the body is an image of the self, literary and artistic fields have taken great interest in the body, and have bestowed upon it diverse contents and objective representations. This, in turn, has established concepts of the body that render it an element open to interpretation. The presence of the body in artwork, the presentation of its concepts and narratives through its manifestations in reality, the awareness of its existence and its consideration as a vessel for ideas and an indicator of social changes and transformations – the utilization and employment of the body in the field of visual arts in general, and visual arts specifically, extends to all dimensions of its relationship with the world and objects. These relationships are intertwined, complex, and dialectical, and vary based on intellectual, social, and human stances. It is for this reason that the body is central to art, just as it is central to life. The body is no longer merely a mold or physical structure, but has transformed into a vast arena of signs and symbolic values, and has absorbed transformations within the world of art and society. It can be said that the body has achieved a dominant authority in artistic thought in general, and visual arts specifically, through its presence throughout history, ever since humans discovered the mechanism of drawing their first lines. It was considered that body drawings were a virtual reality mirroring the real body existing in reality. "Because art, particularly visual art, has summoned forth the system of the body, which has become an open, imaginary symbol that calls for a system that provides an open framework between the works themselves and their interweavings in representing the body. As a result, we find that the connection between the body and visual composition is firstly aesthetic, secondly environmental, and thirdly conceptual. As for the ideas, they represent the active imagination that combines the aesthetic phenomenon. Here, a relationship forms between the individual as a thinking self driven by psychological urges and their environmental surroundings." (Kerniya, 1984, p. 125) The subject of the body has attained immense significance within the sphere of the visual, aesthetic, and conceptual, and has become an actively prominent and distinct presence. Its representations have become diverse and varied at the level of style and execution, with their expressive and symbolic meanings and presentation techniques. "The diversity in visual art, through the utilization of the body, has shown us innovative formal horizons. The richness of the body has added semantic significance to the system of form in the concept of visual art. A blending of functional and aesthetic performance has emerged in body-based works, in a style governed by active trends in visual arts. The formula of function has been disrupted in favor of aesthetic performance, through the body's interaction with colors, lines, surfaces, and masses by creating connecting relationships in which the formal aesthetic system manifests." (Setin, 2011, pp. 15-18).

The Body in Contemporary potters



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Pottery art has kept pace with other visual art fields on both the intellectual and performative levels, and has been influenced by the changes that have occurred within them. Pottery artworks have acquired expressive energy and meanings. "And becomes capable of being brimming with rhythm, movement, and imagination, and when potters break free from the familiar, it achieves a dynamic harmony, a lively movement, free from any desire for imitation and mimicry." (Reid, 1986, p. 56) Pottery formations have now acquired a distinct identity and become laden with signs and indicators manifested through the accumulations of knowledge with a symbolic and expressive character on the bodies of pottery formations. Just like other artistic fields, the body has occupied a vast and important space in pottery art and within all cultures. The body and its movements have acquired representations, rituals, and encryptions according to the creative philosophical and cultural perspective. Pottery artists have now begun to innovate forms that present new and innovative ideas for the body and its representations in the surrounding environment.

There became an identity through which the essence of pottery art was defined, and the semantic influence of potters expanded as it was an art that transcended the functional aspect. This was based on the principle of keeping pace with modernist intellectual trends. "The liberation that modernity produced and what came after it, and the changes and transformations that accompanied it in styles, enabled the artist to transcend classical standards with a starting point that is not only from sensory phenomena, but from the living suffering of a new reality and from the experience of modern art, and that this experience led to deduce and arrive at plastic encounters capable of expression" (Imhaz, 1996, p. 21) and to achieve the strangeness that leads to attracting the attention of the recipient, and this opened the door wide. In front of potter artists to invent new ideas and focus their attention on visual and mental vision and visual responses, potters have found in new concepts innovative approaches to reveal what is unusual in their formulations. "The factors of change brought about by the modernity movement in potters have led to features that are inseparable from comprehensive transformations. Which struck the philosophical and social vision and had a role in building the personality of the contemporary potter and the status of potters as a sign among the modern arts, which was generated by components, conditions and contexts that pushed it to represent with the general modernization trend as a cultural, artistic and cognitive sign" (Al-Rubaie, 2004, p. 51) and this in turn was a reason for employing an icon. The body in pottery form according to new formal variables, and the scientific and technical development contributed to this as a result of the development taking place in the scientific and technological fields.

- Theoretical framework indicators:

- 1- The body was considered by various intellectual trends and throughout history as the mediator and language of communicative discourse in various societies.
- 2- The artist's self-vision pushes him to emphasize his individuality by acting in the dimensions of the body and even distorting it.
- 3- The body is transformed into a symbol that can be interpreted and the possibility of reading it opens up.
- 4- The body is a sign and image of the self, reporting emotional, instinctive and cultural data.



Chapter Three

Research community:

The current research community included a collection of pottery works by a group of artists, through which representations of the body in contemporary potters were demonstrated. Due to the limited scope of publication, (3) samples were selected to achieve the research goal by identifying representations of the body in contemporary pottery art.

Research sample:

Since the research community contained a large number of potters, the researcher selected (3) samples, which were chosen intentionally and in accordance with what serves the current research.

Research tool:

In order to achieve the research goal, the researcher adopted the indicators resulting from the theoretical framework as an analytical tool for the research.

Sample analysis:

The researcher adopted the descriptive method as a content analysis method.



Form No. (1)

Sylvie Renault

The Potter (Sylvie Renaud) has called Compositions for different materials

The main one (potters) is represented by a group women bodies of different shapes, sizes and colors, and executed with a high reduction of the human body. The overall shapes were characterized by their closeness to the shapes of the bodies of the statues (the mother god) that date back to the ancient Iraqi civilization. The other material is metal rods of different lengths and the human shapes are fixed at the top. This gives the pottery work movement and dynamism that moves the recipient's mind so that it becomes Part of the work achieves different readings that are appropriate to the visual achievement. It adds a story and a vital concept to the statues. Thus, installation art in potters restores the artist's production by liberating him from the system of codified work to release him into wide spaces of implementation options in fulfillment of his artistic desires to reach deeper values of beauty.



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Form No. (2)

Claude Cavin

The works of the potter (Claude Cavin) are reductionist works of the human body with an abstract, expressive approach, rich in concepts, inspired by imagination, and simulating reality in an expressive style linked to the passion for female bodies that are not devoid of beauty and mimic their own world, by focusing on certain aspects of reality and the feminist approach through art. The potter (Claude Cavin) worked on the glazing technique used in his work, using color combinations to give the type of this work the specificity of potters, and to express the creation of a kind of harmony and the creation of emotion in this contemporary work, so that the composition appears in its abstract expressionist working system.



Antonio Quesada

Form No. (3)



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The potter (Antonio Quesada) deliberately used the compositional structure to work on the geometric form in his structural composition, as it carries artistic characteristics. He approached Abstract Expressionism through the formal reduction of human faces, which in turn works to achieve the highest levels of excitement for the recipient, thus achieving specificity, since Abstract Expressionism was concerned with the form. In general, the fine details are not among its requirements, but rather they highlight the overall impression of the text. Here, the potter represented his work, *The Body of a Woman*, and the artist tried to show the importance of sadness as an aesthetic determinant. He resorted to the geometric shape on the surfaces of the text, to express the extent of the impact on bodies, as a result of their dispossession and violence. Its visual forms appear as if they dialogue with the mind of the recipient and even encourage him to discover life from another angle, in which the body is an actor.

Chapter Four

Results :

1. The multiplicity of materials and the diversity of artistic methods in potters have an important role in the concept of aesthetic discourse on the body. The issue of choosing materials and the multiplicity of different methods has been closely linked to aesthetic thought.
2. The artistic characteristics in the representation of the body in pottery works were subject to the intellectual and sensory aspects in order to demonstrate the aesthetic and expressive values that resulted from the artist's subjectivity and his style in the method of performance and creativity.
3. The body in potters is a sign in plastic art that has been transformed into a tool of formal manifestation that is read through the symbols and codes of social phenomena and their analysis and interpretation.
4. The duality of thought and body (essence and appearance), represented in pottery works, achieved the presence of the body in artistic products, to form a harmonious unit, which is the human entity.

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