

Reading Images and Practices through Diversities in Freud's Psychoanalytic theory, Marxism, Feminism, Art and their Political Aesthetics

Introduction

When it comes to a concretely concentrated and visual art-centralized notion of reading images and practice, it ought to get diversified along with their modes of actions and role-play. As psychoanalytic art relates to the unconscious impact of life experiences of the viewer or artist and the interpreted meaning largely represents the corporeal nature of human life in broader aspect, for interpreting or reading the meaning of Marxism arts, consideration of economic facts and political influences in terms of class and power have to be administered. As a manner of speaking, feminism considers the social and economic position of the women along with the issues of equality and power. Where, semiotics considers the symbols of an artwork, the iconography utilizes the definitions of the symbols for the interpretation or reading of the images. Formalism nurtures the visual elements of any art work that might include line, color, composition and media for performing the interpretation.

On a historical context, always the relationship in between the art as well as society has been the central question for the artists, although connoisseurship always found out art as a manner of visual enjoyment. However, whether it is the thinkers of activists of the right or left, even in the 12th century, it was believed that the art had the power to alter the course of the world. According to Lukas (1977), art could not only serve the interest of class struggles, but also it could forge social emancipation [Lukas (1977)]. The Hegel's postulation of a developmental relationship between artwork and an "absolute social spirit" emphasized the key aspects of 18th century arts and its impact on the political issues [Belting, Hans (1987)]. However, the motto of this essay is to elaborate the diversities in Marxist, Psychoanalytic and feminism art and their political aesthetics. Additionally, the essay would argue, whether the key aspect of art is to act on self-

interest and enchantment or to forge social, political or global changes, irrespective of the nature of the alteration.

Being a literature review based argumentative essay, this essay would at first enlighten the key facts regarding theories and methodologies of images in art and graphic design. Then, the features and diversities of Marxist, Psychoanalytic and feminism, art would be compared to find out which one has the most prolific impact on political point of view of yielding changes in the society, as Freudians often believe the psychoanalytic had potential and substantial role in yielding major changes in the civilization. In addition, the connoisseurship used to take an unusual view towards art and this approach happened to interpret art as a means of visual enjoyment. This argumentative essay will elaborate the previous researches and related art works to find out the political aesthetics of the arts and the pivotal role Marxist artworks perform to bring forth the face of present world depiction what we are observing including the idea of modern democracies, which could also be seen as a result of conceiving Marxist arts.

Very often formalism is misinterpreted as well as misread and people found it to be at an unhistorical point of view. Though, Riegl and Wofflin showed the fundamental importance of formalism in historical context. Even, different historical contexts could change the articulation of arts and vice versa [Vlad Ionescu (2013)]. This particular fact of utter importance has been noted by Panofsky depending on the neo-Platonic Philosophy. However, as it could be said that social impacts and political perspectives could change the course of art and vice versa, the unhistorical imprinting and interpretation could be ruled out, yet we have not introduced the Marxism and social history of art [Panofsky (1972)]. Most of the art historians always argued that the 20th century art was largely contributed by the ideology of Marx and psychoanalytic or feminism arts partially played a role in there including Fredrick Antal as well as Arnold Hauser. However, the Marxist Arts have gone through a lot and it had to embrace the changes according to the political situations and critical conditions, thus it has now been widely practiced leaving behind a few fundamental principles of Marxism as well [Stirton, P. (2006)].

The perspective of feminist art is closely related to the revolutionary aspect of Marxist arts. It also resembles the psychoanalytic model of Freud. However, as psychoanalytic model is largely depended upon the unreached desire and the art aspects are more self-centered in contrast to Marxist artists, its effects could partially be ruled out in term of political aesthetics. To get a

grasp on the different functions of the pictorial elements closely is related to the semiotics. However, Panofsky found out the role of film production and visual elements as a mode of yielding social and fundamental change through con-commercial art [Panofsky, Erwin (1995)].

Literature review

While demonstrating a broad understanding of the critical theory of art, design and media to find out the role of art in history and political aspects, we ought to consider the fundamental approaches of art-word, which would include the art as reparation, Das Ding, The Gaze, Psychoanalytic arts on the basis of Freud's theory, Scopophilia and sublimation. Where art as reparation could be driven by destructive fantasies, Das Ding emphasized on the fundamental aspect of loss and psychic requirements. While the Gaze considered the fundamental aspect of looking, the Freudian psychoanalysis considered the suppressed desires as a way looking towards the arts as a viewer or artist. Sublimation acts by suppressing the socially as well as morally unacceptable thoughts and the being the urges depicted as a manner of artworks, the artist attains personal relief [Hanna Segal (1964)].

While applying critical methodologies to describe, analyze and understand images considering their cultural, social and historical contexts, the automatism, dream theory, psychoanalysis, surrealism, feminism and Marxist perspective on the art ought to be considered. While automation in art could be an automatic technique to develop a chance in the creation of automated arts from inner being. While dream thoughts could be repressed desires, the veristic surrealism could aim to portray the unreal fantasies [Sigmund Freud (1930)]. Considering the Marxist aspect of art, the cultural capital ought to be regarded with utter importance, as it relates to the non-financial social assets and could promote social alteration and mobility absolutely overlooking the economic means. It could include the education, style of speech, dress, intellect as well as physical appearance.

As it has already been mentioned that this argumentative essay would consider the previous researches to establish the role of arts in change and political essence, despite huge attempts being taken to make it a matter of enchantment. As a manner of identifying, evaluating and employing appropriate critical methodologies, we had to enlighten the Marxist, feminist and formalism aspect of the arts, where Marxist perspectives broadly illuminate the class struggles

and has been inspiring social changes for hundreds of years, including the present-day democracy, which could have been found as an authentic and high-end by-product of the French revolution that was largely contributed by the artists.

However, while looking towards the art as a strong catalyst to social changes, Freud and Bloch, both believed that the human culture, progress and social struggles were all parts of our unconscious desires [Freud, 1930]. It in particular could contribute strongly to the argumentative issue, considering the psychoanalysis and Freudian theories. According to Bloch (1986), “belong completely to Not-Yet-Become, Not-Yet-Brought-Out, Manifested-Out in the world. Not-Yet-Conscious interacts and reciprocates with Not-Yet-Become, more specifically with what is approaching in history and in the world.” [Bloch (1986)]. This particular statement could narrate the overall attribute of art-work from a different perspective in conjugation with Freud as well. Also, during the 1930s, Benjamin developed a concept regarding the rejection of fascists about all kinds of arguments being political tools. They were also exploiting the arts for engraving the irrational hatred, suspicion and jealousy against the Jews [Benjamin, 1936].

One of the strongest comments of Benjamin regarding the Nazi exploitation of the arts during the WWII was, “There is no document of culture that is not at the same time a document of barbarism” and, nevertheless, the comment was regarding the Nazi exploitation of cultures to enslave the German people in the hatred, rage and jealousy by exploiting different modes of culture [Benjamin, 1940]. As a whole nation was distracted by manipulation of cultural property and art-work, even the Nazis were developing a philosophical explanation of mass genocide.

However, looking back towards the fundamental concept of interpretation of artwork, 15th century was the age of first art historian when art-history correlation started to be clarified by proper means. Giorgio Vasari mentioned an influential model to understand the nature of past arts in his “*the lives of the artists*”. According to Vasari, the golden Age of art was the fourth century Greece and the art-works were highly influenced by the political and social conditions. As the history and art were emerging, in the eighteenth century, art was first mentioned to be the distinctive expression of societies, civilizations and a modality to interpret or yield the changes. That was the first time when art was considered to be the embodiment of an expression, a conception of goodness as well as freedom and a moral idea [Johann Wickellmenn, 1764]. However, the Hegel’s model was the first to consider the art-word as a medium to connect the

past and present in terms of social, political and historical aspects. According to Hegel (1975), through the art-work, the human spirit comes forward, pushing aside the animal core seeking for a higher purpose and freedom. Hegel also found the art as a mode of social change, as he mentioned the designs of Pyramids should be considered as a manner of finding spiritual self, leaving behind the animal self, unfortunately that is what, psychoanalysis usually consider. However, as a higher form of art, the architecting of the pyramids could not only be seen as a way of altering social trends, but also it should be observed from the expression of the “Absolute Idea”, which was described in the introductory phase [Hegel, 1975].

While considering the feminist arts, Artemisia Gentileschi, “Judith and her Maidseruant SlayinB Holofernes”, circa 1625. Oil on canvas. Uffizi, Florence, could generate lots of feminist questions, as how was her training differ from the males? How did her childhood or youth persuade this particular depiction? However, Mask, “Mende people”, Sierra Leone. Early twentieth century, British Museum (1956.Af27·18), could be an eccentric example of feminist approach that did not directly crucify the masculinity and might contradict the co-relation with psychoanalytic perspective, as feminist approaches are often considered to be closely related to the psychoanalytic and Marxist approach [Anne D'Alleva (2005)].

However, formalism as well as the works of Riegl and Wolfflin should be considered with utter significance as people often misunderstood the meaning of formalism and to speak the truth, formalism raise fundamental questions regarding vision time to time [Vlad Ionescu (2013)]. While considering the iconology, Erwin Panofsky showed how particular themes or ideas are generated being highly biased by political circumstances [Erwin Panofsky]. The role of Marxist artists should be considered to be more political and global change oriented, as they played crucial roles in different parts of the globe during different rebels, especially based on class struggle.

Although the theory of formalism is misunderstood invariably, yet Panofsky mentioned that the motion pictures could be used to drive changes by utilizing the non-commercial films [Panofsky (1995)]. He also added that the French Renaissance was followed by the two short lived rebels and those were depicted in the classical art form of 9th and 12th century. It has also been mentioned that the Italian Renaissance was a total and permanent integration of art, culture and social struggle. As a matter of fact, it should be considered as the conceiving of today's

democratic world and art played a major role in the Renaissance questing economic and social development, political and religious status and stat of natural resources utilizing quite a lot of artistic approaches, needless to mention its impact in the overruling of the czars of Russia.

The Marxist aspect that largely relates to the class struggle puts a paramount extent of responsibility over the artists to yield social development and change. A Jacques Louis Painting, “*The Consecration of the Emperor Napoleon and the Coronation of Empress Josephine (December 2, 1804)*”, delivered an option to ask a wide range of question about the ideology, social and economic condition of Emperor Napoleon. Another sophisticated example could be Judith Baca's “*The Great Wall of Los Angeles*” about the history of people of the California, that could result quite a lot of questions about the nature of the population, who went through a massive civil war and an ugly history regarding the black slaves, needless to mention about the massive genocide of the native red Indians.

While arguing the facts, the “connoisseurship” should be regarded with utmost importance as well, though it used to perceive the attainment of an art-work as a mode of enchantment. According to P.P. Muratov (1927), art-works were for own sake and it was enchanting due its nature of exercising eyes, minds as well as judgement [P.P. Muratov (1927)]. On the contrary, according to Rumohr (1827), artists were capable of showing off their individuality, as they were working in a purpose while considering the art-works [Rumhr, 1827].

Methodologies

The key goal of this particular argumentative and literature review-based essay is to establish the relationship of art and social changes. In order to establish the role of art in political aesthetics, the diversities in Marxist, Psychoanalytic, iconic, and feminism art along with their political aesthetics were discussed in the literature review which is largely based on the previous art-works, literatures and critiques. A brief explanation will be provided in the analysis, commendation and limitation. The analysis would perform an attempt to establish the fact that the art is a major factor to the wheel of changes and it has key roles in political influences and social changes, despite lots of formalism artists and viewers still find it as a means of profound enjoyment.

Analysis and limitation

According to our findings, the most significant difference between Marx and Freud became apparent through the discussion and it was found that the Freudian approach to art was based largely on self-interest and it might have been all about satisfying personal physiological needs. In this instance, Freudian concept could have been seen to be involved an artist to be focused on commodity and marketing instead nurturing the social growth. Though, the fact was overruled as well, as it was found that Freud and Bloch, both believed that the Freudian theory of psychoanalysis was based on human desire that could propel the social growth and seek further rebel and social as well as political changes if it is required as well. In this way, psychoanalysis, art and Marxist perspective could co-exist.

Although the theory of formalism is misunderstood invariably and connoisseurship enhances the probability of viewing art as a mode of modern enchantment, yet Erwin Panofsky mentioned that the motion pictures could be used to thrive the human spirit forward and propel changes utilizing the non-commercial films. He also added that the French Renaissance was followed by the two short lived rebels and those were depicted in the classical art form of 9th and 12th century. It has also been mentioned that the Italian renaissance was a total and permanent integration of art, culture and social struggle.

However, the Marxist aspect of art delivered a significant change in the perspective. For instance, the Jacques Louis Painting that was mentioned earlier delivered an option to ask a wide range of question about the ideology, social and economic condition of Emperor Napoleon. As a manner of speaking, whether the painting is of Marxist, Feminist, Psychoanalytic or postcolonial in approach, all are related to the specific political or social interest.

The limitation of this argument lies largely on the connoisseurship, yet it has been found that the modern image interpretation could be utilized for political and social changes through non-commercial film and art production.

Conclusion and recommendation

The key goal of this essay was to elaborate the diversities in Marxist, Psychoanalytic and feminism art interpretation and their political aesthetics. Additionally, the essay was arguing

whether the aspects of art interpretation had to act on self-interest or psychoanalytical perspective and enchantment or would deliberately deliver social, political or global changes. According to the researched conducted previously, it could be told that almost all of the approaches of the painting would be viewed in conjunction to the specific political or psychic issues. However, it was also found that personal issues could also largely contribute to the social and political goals, as, psychoanalytically, the human nature is accentuated to reach out for suppressed feelings or desires which could lead to the contribution to a social and political struggle as well. Though, the modern-day capitalism could utilize the art in a way of absolute enchantment, yet that might have been overcome by an implementation of non-commercial motion images, arts, film and graphics.

Annotated bibliography

- Sigmund Freud (1930), 'Civilization and Its Discontents' (1930) in The Standard Edition Of The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud – The Future of an Illusion, Civilization and its Discontents, and Other Works, trans. by James Strachey (Hogarth Press; London, 1961), vol. XXI, 79–80

'Civilization and Its Discontents', in particular mentioned the basic tension in between the individual as well as civilization. The book encompasses the facts related to automation and reparation as well as dream contexts of the arts. However, as civilization emerges, the primary instinct of an individual will be repressed, the impacts could be found in the conscious act, unconscious thoughts could be obtained through automation and the framework could be similar to an iceberg phenomenon where the conscious state is the very little portion floating above the water. It could relate to the automatic creation of an art-work which would describe the inner being and relieve the individual as well. It also describes the reparation or destructive thinking that could resemble to a modern sci-fi graphical work of a large-waste land which we used to watch in the movies.

- Stirton, P. (2006). Frederick Antal. In Hemingway A. (Ed.), *Marxism and the History of Art: From William Morris to the New Left* (pp. 45-66). LONDON; ANN ARBOR, MI: Pluto Press. doi:10.2307/j.ctt18mvp14.9

“Marxism and the History of Art: From William Morris to the New Left” has been reviewed as a book of utter importance. It has also been considered to be a timely release and a provocative one too. This particular book is unique in its own way, as it is the first incorporated introduction of Marxist approaches to the art history. Although the history of graphics was largely neglected in the book, yet, the book encompasses a wide range of Marxist arts and their histories. Following the spirit of Marxism, the author interpreted the limitation as well as achievements of Marxist arts in contrast to the political and historical circumstances.

- Vlad Ionescu (2013), *The rigorous and the vague: aesthetics and art history in Riegl, Wölfflin and Worringer*

“The rigorous and the vague: aesthetics and art history in Riegl, Wölfflin and Worringer” spoke of the aesthetic and art-works of these artists mentioned in the title. The book lets us know how Riegl and Wölfflin countered the common misunderstanding related to formalism. As from time to time, formalism acted on changing visions and perspectives, it could not be considered as an approach highly motivated by self-interest similar to the psychoanalytic perspective of art. Firstly, this book mentioned that an art style was more than a collection of art-works. Secondly, it introduced that the history of art is diverse and the numbers of catalysts including vision are quite a lot. Thirdly, according to Riegl and Wölfflin, visual art was the end-product of technique, goal and material, which could significantly influence the appearance of the society.

- Walter Benjamin (1936). *Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. full-text: <https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/ge/benjamin>.

“Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” is an essay of exquisite nature showing extreme cultural criticism. As a matter of fact, within the book itself, the author, Walter Benjamin, was mentioning that the aura of an art-work could be devalued by the implementation of mechanical reproduction. The subject of this essay was more likely to be related to the art history, architectural history, media theory as well as cultural studies. As it was closely related to the art history, it mentioned the exploitation of art in a capitalist society. To be added, the book also added that according to the evaluating system of a society, the value of an art-word used to vary considerably.

- Winckelmann, Johann Joachim (1873) History of ancient art. New York, F. Ungar Pub. Co <https://archive.org/details/historyancienta01lodggoog>

The History of Ancient Art separates Greek art into periods and time classifications. Being highly motivated to seek the true nature of the artists, this book tried to find out the motivation of ancient Greek artists. Also, it is the first artistry related historical book and it also depicted the neoclassical movement of late 18th century. Yet, the true essence of this book lies in the inspiring catalysts of 4th or 5th century Greek artists and their social standing. As a permanent contribution to the European literature, this book comprehensively and chronologically accounted all antique arts, including the Egyptians as well as Etruscans.

References

- Anne D'Alleva (2005), Methods and Theories of Art History, Available in hyperlink: http://www.khist.uzh.ch/chairs/bildende/lehre/DAlleva_Theory.pdf, last accessed: June 26th, 2018
- belting, Hans (1987), "The end of the history of art?", Chicago University of Chicago Press, 1987
- Erwin Panofsky (1972), Studies in iconology, available in online, hyperlink <https://www.educacion-holistica.org/notepad/documentos/Arte/Panofsky%20-%20Studies%20in%20Iconology.pdf>, last accessed, June 26th, 2018
- Hanna Segal (1964), Introduction to the Work of Melanie Klein (London 1964) p. 89
- Hegel (1975), Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art, Vol. 1 - Monoskop, Available in Online, Hyperlink: https://monoskop.org/images/0/05/Hegel_GWF_Aesthetics_Lectures_on_Fine_Art_Vol_1_1975.pdfLukács,
- Georg (1977 [1938]) "Realism in the Balance," in Frederic Jameson (ed.) Aesthetics and Politics. London/New York: Verso. 28-59.
- Panofsky, Erwin (1995). Three Essays on Style. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press. p. 120. ISBN 978-0262661034.
- Peter H. Bloch (1986) ,"Product Enthusiasm: Many Questions, a Few Answers", in NA - Advances in Consumer Research Volume 13,
- P.P. Muratov (1927), Teodoro Brenson

- Rumhr (1827), Erster Theil., Available in Online, Hyperlink: deutschestextarchiv.de