AN INVESTIGATION OF MODERN AND POSTMODERN PAINTINGS WITH EMPHASIS ON RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

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ABSTRACT
In the historical trend of the works that were created within the context of the religion, the transmission of religious teachings through image was considered the most important objective. The modern era was called the era of human biological wisdom, while such thinking was rejected in postmodern era. The underlying situation was shifted in modern and postmodern times, and there was not either a consistent affinity between religion and art. In the meantime, some artists came to the scene who underscored religious traditions and signs in their works. The current article seeks to present a historical and social analysis of modern and post-modern paintings, and to survey how artists have taken advantage of religious themes and traditions. Artistic styles are reviewed based on a cultural and social context. One of the most important features and objectives underscoring the modernism is art for art's sake. Art itself seeks to be its own objective rather than a means to strengthen political, religious and moral teachings, and what is proposed in postmodernist ideology is that various forms of arts and plural ideologies and thoughts should be raised and discussed. Art is an outcome of time, milieu, and consciousness of the creator's era. In artistic works created by modern artists, religious allegations originate from a critique of wisdom. Postmodern works are the result of diversified and plural bungling of contradictory visual elements. The symbols and signs of religious traditions that have been applied in postmodern painting are the adaptations that lack any intention to sanctify the meaning underscoring artistic work.

Keywords: *Religious Traditions, Modernism, Postmodernism, Symbol, Sign*

INTRODUCTION

Modern art regards artistic experience as independent and homeostatic. As a result, the pinnacle of modern art was manifested in its revolutionary manipulation of form. From a historical perspective, modernity is a more or less long period of training "the reasonable necessity of living" and fight to achieve social and political liberty at the same time. Postmodernism insists on the fact that the era of the rein of reason has been elapsed. The reason is not either reliable. While the reason nurtured absolutism in the modern era and had an allegation of comprehensiveness and universalism, it fails to have a position any longer. Postmodernism is an eclecticism and adaptation of varied styles and trends from different historical styles. However, in modernism and postmodernism, religious signs can be traced in the works created by some artists. An important question that comes to mind is, what have been the artists' intentions to investigate and take advantage of such signs in their works?

In the historic trend of the works that were created within the context of religion, the transmission of religious teachings through images was the most significant objective. Such semantic transmission did originate from the beliefs held by artist and community. Given the modernism and postmodernism's reluctance to acknowledge religion, the current article mainly seeks to examine such contradiction in the application of religious signs. The article addresses modern art as an era since the beginning of impressionism to the scene of Pluralism in art at the end of the twentieth century, and also regards the beginning of postmodernism as the 70s. Then, following a review and determination of the relations between religion and modern and postmodern art, the article presents an explanation and analysis of the works created by four artists (Paul Gauguin, Francis Bacon, Mimmo Palladino, and Robert Gober). In the

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end, based on the investigation presented on such works, a comparative review of theoretical results and the reasons for using religious signs in such works is presented in the current article.

MODERNISM: STRESSING THE IDEA OF PROGRESS AND IMMEDIATE EXPERIENCES

Modernism, in general, is a term that refers to a technique and expression style that is specific to modern age (Pakbaz, 2007, 526). It is the renewal of techniques, trends, styles, and practices, and in such critical period, religion is replaced by the scientific worldview. The proponents of modernism consider inspiration and revelation as a personal perception of divine truth, rather than a general and objective perception of God and its expression to the public. Within context of visual arts, modernism emanated from a series of social, cultural, and artistic evolutions in Europe in the nineteenth century. Acting in the form of an endeavor to redeem from the blind alley of academic art as an extract of naturalism, modernism prompted young artists to pursue new experimentations (ibid.).

Regarding the exact time of the initiation of the modern art and the fact that which work of art, art style, artistic movement or even artistic discourse in art history timeline can be taken into account as the starting point of modern art, there are some disagreements among historians and scholars of art. Some other theorists believe that the modern art is almost the art of the twentieth century, and they regard 1905, when the opening of Fauvists' Exhibition in Hall Fall in Paris, is the point of departure.

Some other artists including Christopher Witcombe, American art researcher, believe that modern art initiates in the 1860s with the exhibition of Édouard Manet's "The Luncheon on the Grass" in Mordechai Hall in Paris, and continues approximately until the 1970s (Lynton, 2004, 7). In the introduction to the book entitled "Art of Modernism", Sandra Bokula writes that "I seek to fill the vacuum of the shortage of the research that intends to explicate the artistic evolutions occurred in modernism with an analysis of the transformations occurred in modern art since its impressionistic beginning to the scene of Pluralism in art at the end of the twentieth century, and to propose it in the form of a coherent, continuous and meaningful process (Bokula, 2013, 1). Indeed, Bokula also regards the beginning of impressionism as the initiation of modern art. In the current research, based on the idea proposed by Witcmobe and Bokula, the beginning of the modern art is considered from the 1860s onwards.

Important issue regarding the characteristics of modernism, it should be noted that different ages have long had their own unique features and qualities: Ancient Greek and Rome Era was based on essence of man and single and indivisible matter; Christian medieval age on the belief in immortality, Anthropomorphic God and resurrection; modern age on some concepts such as genius, powerful Anthropomorphic man, and complete dominion over natural forces; and modernism based on belief in sciences, rational cognition, sustainable planning, and unity of existence[1] (Bokula, 2013, 16).

Major developments that occurred in the second half of the nineteenth century in three areas including technology (invention and evolution of photography as an art and industry since 1839 onwards and the evolution of communication systems), science and philosophy, and also economics and politics were able to exert profound impacts on artists' perspective and ideology. Such evolutions not only transformed financial status of artists but also impacted their spiritual values and ideals (Lynton, 2004, 7). Thus, visual artist was required to redeem itself from deep-rooted traditions and long-lasting creeds of classical and academy art, and to challenge its norms and standards. The fact that what and how should something be expressed were required to be modernized (ibid, 8). Modern art indeed considers artistic experience as an independent and homeostatic issue. As a result, the culmination of experimentalism in modern art was manifested in an evolutionary manipulation of form. In fact, modernism insists on the unity and independence of work of art. By presenting three realms including theoretical, practical, and aesthetic, Kant paved the way for the suspension of non-artistic rules in the area of art. It could be said that modern art is manifestation and symbol of the realization of Kantian intuitive. Clement Greenberg, as a prominent critic of American modern art, believes that the modern art originates from the philosophy of Kant and in

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particular from his *Critique* of Judgment, and Greenberg considers such masterpiece as the foundation for some teachings such as authenticity of aesthetics, art for art's own sake, and autonomy and self-sufficiency of art, etc. (Lynton, 2004, 8).

In the course of the rejection of traditional values, modernism brought about a fundamental change in the social status of artist and function of art (Pakbaz, 2007, 526). Modern art distances form political-social issues. While in pre-modern age, art and beauty were objective and non-essential issues, postmodern age alleged that art and beauty possess a subjective and essential nature. Accordingly, wit and talent were regarded as the preconditions to artistic work, and aesthetic experience as an individual element draw highest attention, and finally it should be reckoned that art in pre-modern age was not considered an independent entity. However, from the seventieth century onwards, art and beauty were discussed in an independent epistemic area entitled aesthetics. Since then, and as Kant reinstated, art was considered an internal and independent issue, and when the beauty of something is judged or evaluated, the beauty is introduced as ultimate and certain intention.

POST-MODERNISM: A RETURN TO THEMATIC FIGURE DEPICTION

The term "postmodernism" is mostly applied in the area of English literature. However, in French language, the adjective form of the term (i.e. postmodern state, postmodern thinking, and postmodern art) is used. Postmodernism did emerge as a reaction to modernity crises and its meta- and holistic theories.[2] The term was then prominently applied in the literary criticism in the 50 and 60s to refer to the response to aesthetic modernism, and the term was used also in the 70s within the realm of architecture. The application of the term to philosophy dates back to the 80s, and firstly it was used to refer to French post-structuralism, and secondly to an indication to a general reaction against modern rationalism, Neverlandism, and fundamentalism (Cahoone, 2007, 3).

Baudelaire regards modernity as the destructive age of clichés that had hindered transformation and evolution. Kant regards Enlightenment as a procedure to exclude prejudice and bias, and courage to use mind and reason, and Baudelaire thinks of it as "hope for the future" (Ardakani, 2004, 25-29). The main idea underlying the birth of post-modernism is that as there is no foundation, the truth fails to be achieved, and the universe must be read same as a text with the feasible meanings, yet the meaning is different from the truth. The postmodernism's intention to read the text is to deconstruct it, i.e. to find contradictions, and the unutterable rather than the author's intention. Postmodernism rejects any type of fundamentalism. Fundamentalism alleges that cognition can be achieved through some basic and fundamental principles in an indisputable and unquestionable manner (Jahanbaglou, 2002, 53). In postmodernism, it would not be possible to speak of a universal rationality, because there is no universal reason and truth. What is proposed in postmodernism is that plural reasons, insights, and thoughts should be discussed (GharehBaghi, 2001, 22).

The most important philosophical attempt in the area of theorization on postmodernism is made by Jean François Lyotard. He states that the computerization of modern industrial communities has transformed the nature of cognition. Cognition has been turned into an information commodity, and science has been distanced from its principal and early state, and acts as a tool in the hands of the power. Thus, those who dominate recognition can dominate politics as well. Lyotard believes that, in postmodern age, grand narratives that were able to propose sublimed and universal truth were replaced by linguistic games (Jahanbaglou, 2004, 77-78). Lyotard states that: grand narratives were main narrator in modernism and the monologue of the narrator has now come to an end, and postmodernism is indeed emancipation from the autonomy of the narrator and monologue narration. Now, simply it should be noted that, not only rationalism in the previous ages, but also the sole reason have been a narrator, even though it did not act so effectively (Cahoone, 2007, 508).

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One of the characteristics of postmodern approach to art is that it considers non-artistic issues and neglects political-social ones. In general, it should be said that the proponents of postmodernism have always attempted to present a critique of Clement Greenberg's teachings on art, i.e. they merely marginalized aesthetic dimensions of art, and applied the concept of rational cognition to it. Thus, language again was applied by the proponents of postmodernism as a mean to transmit message (Zamiran, 2002, 32). Postmodernism had another aspect through which it could take pleasure from the nastiness of the art that was utterly built upon adaptation. The overlapping of styles and incoherent images derived from different resources can impair the historical originality of original model and its underlying meaning. Accordingly, postmodern was accused of the fact that it is bereft of any historical sense, and its mere output is selfish bundling of the elements that are kidnapped from multiple places only due to their visual appearance. Indeed, postmodernism is the art of mere surface and lacks any deep meaning (Archer, 2009, 151).

There are different interpretations regarding the relationship between religion and postmodernism. According to some postmodern theorists, perhaps postmodernism can be considered the death of God and destruction of religion. However, from the perspective of other theorists, the school seeks to return to faith and commitments imposed on traditional faith, and according to the third group, such philosophy indicates the possibility of reconstructing the forgotten religious ideas (Nozari, 2001, 407). On the other hand, some faithful people have sought to refute postmodernism, while some other have acknowledged it, and intended to establish a harmony between religious teachings and postmodernist requirements and rules, or to present post-modernist interpretations of religion, and establish a consistency and adaptability between religion and postmodernism. From the perspective of postmodernism, human thought temperamentally lacks any unchangeable principle. In this sense, religious thought same as human thinking, is prone to change and transformation. In fact, one of the meeting points in modernism and postmodernism is critique of religion and its principles. Postmodernism was a continuation and pursuit of the experimentations made by modernism in the name of human independence and exploration of facts and human capabilities within the context of religion and in line with the realization of human principles. As a result, critical appraisal of religion and religious teachings is a common turning point between modernism and postmodernism. Accordingly, postmodernism fails to acknowledge religion with realistic and factual characteristics inherent to all religions (Rahnamaei, 2002, 196). Indeed, postmodernism rejects religion as an overall ideology that is built upon its principles and features. The result obtained from such perspective is a relativistic and pluralist stance that has per se brought about multiple stances held by scholars.

GAUGUIN, A PAINTER TIRED OF URBAN LIFE

Paul Gauguin who belongs to the last period of the century regarded civilization as a disease, and he aspired to live a natural and simple life. He fled from Europe to identify with pristine and remote lands, and to regain anew the forgotten world of myth among primitive peoples. He was among the first European artists who was attracted to the art of the ancient East and post-Columbian art. He sought to abandon European naturalist tradition and reacts against the realism advocated by impressionists and scientific interpretations proposed by neo-impressionists (Pakbaz, 2007, 461).

Gauguin was born in Paris in 1848.[3] He befriended with Pissarro since 1875, and took part in impressionist exhibitions since 1880 to 1886. From 1895 onwards, he spent life in Tahiti and Marquesas Islands (Lynton, 2004, 473 -474). Gauguin was a character quite different from Von Gog. Because he knew that the paining has been used as a means to beguile people and it has distanced from deep associations and meanings. He believed that all the consciousness and wisdom fertilized in European civilization could sterilize artistic talents, and prevent them from manifest and explicit expression of intensity and power of their emotions (Gombrich, 2009, 539).

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Gauguin was an opponent of western art, and his work reflect the strong influence of classical school, and he was able to fight against the fundamentals of this school and its roots in naturalism and rationality. His main message was that: "first emotion and feeling and then understanding". He stated that expression of feeling is more important than accurate depiction, and shock and de-familiarization is more critical than accurate coloring, and the scenes should not be prone to rational interpretations (Lynton, 2006, 25). He first dealt with rural art, yet he chose another path. He felt deeply that he should be separated from Europe, and spent life among South Pacific natives and live same as them to be able to achieve redemption.

Although Gauguin's Paintings in Tahiti reflect some decorative aspects and are of resemblance to woven handworks, they depict an ideal message. In Gauguin's mysterious look and stare into the distance, his rhythmic coloring and sensual curves, it is possible to sense his aspiration and everlasting joy for originality, consistency with destiny and also the Lost Paradise (Bokula, 2012, 130). Undoubtedly, this is a reflection of desire to escape from urban life and culture as the common trend at the end of the nineteenth century; but it can achieve a new form of artistic expression in Gauguin's painting. The Romantics and Orientalists considered the object of desire as an unrealized dream and a literary thought and depicted it in a totally naturalistic and descriptive style, replete with scenes and whimsical imaginations, while Gauguin sought to achieve the visual equivalent of his desire and wanted to show its spiritual quality. In search for appropriate means to achieve the goals, he discovered the expressive power of colors (Bokula, 2012, 130). The works that he was able to bring back from that land, due to their primitive and wild representation, surprised even his former friends, and Gauguin exactly wanted the same thing. He was prideful of the fact that they would call him wild and primitive. He thought that even the color and design of tableaus should be "wild" to be able to observe the justice toward natural clean and pure children who had admired him while settling in Tahiti (Gombrich, 2008, 539).

In art history, although post-impressionism did not form a group, it is considered a school, and the impressionists contributed to the emergence of different original ideas and artistic works in the twentieth century. The most primitive of the impressionists is undoubtedly Gauguin. His life story, unique paintings and also his shocking printings made primitivism attractions more eye-catching (Lynton, 2003, 24-25). In Gauguin's aestheticism, design is the skeleton of the work, and color manifests protrusions, distance, and meaning. Space is not either a stable and static element in the nature, rather it is an expressible quality same as the proportion between color and scripting. Such space can be visualized in two dimensions and in an utterly meaningful manner (Pakbaz, 2007, 461).

While studying visual principles, Paul Gauguin's attention was repeatedly drawn to the psychological meanings of colors, and concluded that in this way, without resorting to literature, the subject can be interpreted. The painting "Jacob Wrestling with the Angel" (Figure 1) is one of his first endeavors to use color as a means to do expression. The painting "Yellow Christ" (Figure 2), rather than representing the reality, is a visualization of an imaginary form that is created through the coordination of simplified forms and bright and sharp colors (Pakbaz, 2007, 461). The simplification of design and application of pure color that form the broad motifs attached to the picture all are in line with such objective. He objectifies and manifests his dreams and inner emotions with the assistance of such two-dimensional motifs, transparent lines, and symbolic coloring (ibid, 462). It is not merely the themes in Gauguin's tableaus that are strange and wonderful, he tried to penetrate into the aboriginal people's mental realm, and behold the things same as the way that such people observe. He surveyed handicrafts designs and techniques applied by the aborigines, and he often used the images created by them in his portraits (Gombrich, 2009, 538).

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Figure 1: Jacob's wrestling with Angel, color and oil on the canvas, 1888, 92×73 cm
Source: (https://en.wikipedia.org)



Figure 2: Yellow Christ, 1889, color and oil on the canvas, ×73 cm
Source: (https://en.wikipedia.org)

Besides common spiritual theme and explicit signs of Gauguin's painting style, the two paintings are the reproduction of a historical narrative that people can observe it under the light of their deep conviction. Gauguin enables them to live freely and without any barrier based on their beliefs and conviction, and he admires their faith in this way. One of the most important features of the two paintings created by Gauguin is a depiction of women as observers of the events. The presence of mournful women beside the cross has a long history and it is a tradition among Christian painters: "in many Crucifixion tableaus, Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene are standing near the Cross" (Northrop Frye, 2000, 214).

Gaugin neither sought to visualize myths nor he regarded himself as the painter of allegorical themes. The main intention was to create sculpture-like paintings that can represent a symbol of universal man (Pakbaz, 2007, 462). Disappointed with industrial developments, Gauguin was highly concerned about human valuable characteristics that were gradually disappeared at that particular urban community, and increasingly found different forms.

FRANCES BACON: PAINTER OF ACUTE CIRCUMSTANCES

Frances Bacon[4] is considered the painter of modern human crisis following the Second World War. Bacon depicted helpless and desperate figures, and his portraits are a portrayal of deformed and distorted and crying faces. He depicted human in the form of a piece of raw meat. However, the overall form of his Triptychs depicts religious icons and altar paintings.

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Due to his personal and independent style in depicting tragic representation of modern man, Bacon is considered one of the most distinguished contemporary expressionists. He was born in Dublin, yet he settled in London in his youth (1925). He continued painting craft without any formal education. Within a period of over 10 years activity and presentation of his works in some exhibitions, he failed to achieve so much success. However, by presenting some controversial works such as "Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion" (1944), he achieved a lofty position in European painting (Pakbaz, 2007, 107). However, undoubtedly, he is he is one of the most distinguished English formalist painters, and indeed, one of the most renown contemporary European artists. Using a visual or figurative language, Bacon was able to express European modernist mentality and subjectivity in his works (Smith, 2006, 76). In fact, he depicts acute situations through awesome distortion of statues in a twisting and exhausting atmosphere. As a result, the works created by Bacon and Alberto Giacometti as a pioneer of "modern sculpting" are considered existentialist (Pakbaz, 1997, 108). Giacometti as an Irish artist is mostly famous due to the deformations created by him in the body and figures of his painting characters.

Frequently, Bacon found the original idea of his paintings from radiography pictures, consequential images, movies, etc. Among the works of old great painters, Bacon was interested in a Rembrandt, Velázquez, and Goya (Pakbaz, 2007, 108). Bacon's works represent a painful experience. The distorted face of man, the damaged characters who are twisted out of fear in a bright room under the glare in an astonishing brightness that can both represent aristocratic and luxurious quality of life and convicts' gas room. These pictures are not merely the symbols for the isolation of contemporary man, and they can manifest modern man's misfortune and misery, and as if the nakedness of the figures in Bacon's works are a testimony to this allegation (Smith, 2007, 78), and the painter has manipulated them in devious and shocking trajectories.

The scenes depicted by Bacon using distorted and shaking statues in theTriptychs curtains are mainly shocking and appealing. The framing of the Triptychs is practically a modern experimentation, and the relation between the Triptychs is not completely based on narration but it is largely formal. Accordingly, the spaces are distinct from each other and they become interconnected at the same time (Pakbaz, 2007, 108). For instance, consider his distinguished work "Triptychs" (1973) (Fig. 3). In the middle frame, a man sitting on the toilet, and under his feet, a dark hole of water is leaked similar to an evil specter. The images are dark and painful, and the audience can sniff the smell of death. But here and in other works created by Bacon, emotional and irrational impacts are neutralized by formal traits.

Bacon claimed that the theme of his paintings is merely painting. In response to the critiques leveled against Bacon's appealing and anxious painting themes, David Sylvester, as a formalist critic, and one of the first proponents of Bacon, underscored bacon's abstraction. Under the circumstance when the works created by Bacon were represented for the first time, and they shocked audience, it was necessary to show that form is the main element underlies such great works. Of course, the emotional and irrational quality of Bacon's works was excessively underestimated by Sylvester. According to Sylvester, crying and screaming mouths depicted in Bacon's works are merely simple etudes in pink, white, and red colors (Sylvester, 2007, 42).

Although Bacon personally did oppose to those who sought to interpret his works based on his personal perspective or twentieth-century anxiety, another group of critics presented a psychological-biographical interpretation to rectify extreme formalistic approach adopted by Sylvester. As Bacon had a very bad relationship with his father, this was a good pretext for Freudian theorists to present a Freudian interpretation of his work. Other theorists believed in the application of other theoretical interpretations on Bacon, and they alleged that other dimensions of Bacon's life could be reflected in his art. Perhaps, the horrifying images depicted by Bacon emanate from his experience in clearing buildings from the dead bodies in Second World War 2. Bacon lived a radical life with simple and masochistic adventures.

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However, the significant issue observed in Bacon's works for this article is his collection of work on Pope X (Fig. 3). In a set of the curtains that show shouting Pope, Bacon utilizes Velázquez's "Portrait of Pope Innocent X", the shouting nurse in the film "Battleship Potemkin" by Eisenstein and also shouting woman in "Massacre of the Innocents" by Nicolas Poussin (Pakbaz, 2007, 108). Pope sitting on a golden throne and his fists clenched on the handle, his mouth open, and as if screaming. He sits against a pale background with impressive vertical movements. It is a vague and distorted picture, and the audience can fathom the pain on the boards.



Figure 3: Color and oil on the canvas, 1973, Triptychs, each one 143×178
(Source: https://en.wikipedia.org)

In "Portrait of Pope X" as an allegorical portrait, we observe yellow lines that seem they are the continuation of the same yellow gold color of the chair that Pope X created by Velázquez sits on it. While the mythology of colors introduces yellow color is the symbol of "immortality" (Dobokor, 194, 127), some questions may be raised regarding this portrait. For example, whether the continuation of these lines refers to the world exterior to the work (the world governed by Pope) or they depict a passionate desire for immortality or not? Same as other lines in Bacon's works, the lines are derived from a place where man resides. On the other hand, the lines are driven from a never land, where man resides there and then is excessively restless. In general, Bacon's works are replete with such contradictions. Does the one who has ascended the seat recedes into the earth or ascends the sky? Is his shouting and mourning is because of the fall or desire for ascension? Is his opened mouth out of the passion for tolerance of agony caused by joining immortality or they are cries of a convict sentenced to the death by electric chair? Audience's awareness and the age's consciousness are the elements that can be traced in the works created by Velázquez and Bacon (Modarresi, 2007, 7). Bacon is not either inclined to show self-consciousness. He is an annunciator of unintentional and unconscious representation of gloom, violence, and destruction in the modern world. Bacon states that I never seek to depict violence intentionally, and I have merely presented realistic scenes in my portraits. Life is wild and violent, more brutal than the extent that I can depict in my portraits (Archambeau, Bacon, 2002). This is another contradiction inherent to Bacon's work (Modarresi, 2007, 7). "Portrait of Pope X" has bewildered much audience since its creation. The work's contradicting form and theme underscore overwhelming power, drama and emotion. He highlights disgusting emotions, and sometimes disgust deep in the human psyche with nightmarish intensity.

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Figure 3: Pope X, inspired by Velázquez, 1953, paint and oil on the canvas, 152× 118 cm, Karter Burden Set, New York
Source: (Smith, 2006, 77)

In describing Bacon's works, John Berger states that: Bacon is at the opposite pole to an apocalyptic painter that thinks of the possible occurrence of the worst things. For Bacon, the worst has been already occurred. The worst that has happened has nothing to do with blood, stains, and man's entrails. The worst is when man is seen as a brainless creature (Berger, 2001, 42). Hope has lost its meaning for Bacon, or even better it is said, by excessive insistence on the lost hope and his acute despair, Bacon bring to the surface his despair with meaning. According to him, death is the most artificial thing that he beholds. He does not either speak of man's metamorphosis in life (i.e. nature), rather he thinks of human death metamorphosis. It is something that Velázquez did not perceive even in his most appealing imaginations of the future (Modarresi, 2007, 7). When he depicts a crying Pope, there is nothing that can make him appealing, and the curtain ahead of Pope is not merely a means to make him isolated, and it is mostly a device to show that Pope himself is ignorant and oblivious to the issues at hand and cries for an unobservable thing (Deleuze, 2002, 61).

Critical discussions about the meaning of the works created by Bacon are common disputes in the art world. As mentioned earlier, rationalism is the most prominent approach to modern art, but Bacon was either reluctant to show his self-awareness. His depiction of Pop as a religious leader is not considered his aspiration to create a religious work. He is a missionary of ignorance in the New World, i.e. an Intellectual world that has gone through the experience of two world wars. In his work, Bacon seeks to show destruction and resulting violence, and, of course, while pretending to be unaware, he has created works.

PALLADINO: MYSTERIOUS PAINTER IN THE WORLD OF SYMBOLS

Mimmo Palladino is the most influential painter of trans-avant-garde group in international arena. His expression is powerful, because he can turn every banal feeling and perception into symbol, sign, and allegory (Achille, 1982, 98). The various images that are replete with free associations, sometimes refer to concrete and palpable situations that are combined with visionary dramatic ways, and sometimes they refer to distant past and other cultures. This can be a reference to a grotesque and Etruscan or even primitive work (SedaghatKish, 2002, 5).

Palladino was born in 1948 in Padoly in Italy, where he studied art training course (1964-1968). In 1970, he showcased his imaginary drawings, and, in the late seventieth, along with the study of art history, he changed his initial approach (Boghrati, 2008, 86). He tended to create monochromatic yellow, red and blue paintings along with a collage of real objects (Fig. 5). In the 1980s, he undergone some experiences in the area of *Aquatint* printing with some themes such as archetypes and wood printing. In his travels to

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Brazil in 1982-85, he was fascinated with indigenous cultures and the result was that that a synthesis of African and Gothic cultures did find way into his work (SedaghatKish, 1997, 5). The works created by Palladino has been showcased in some museums and galleries such as New York's Metropolitan, Museum of art in Basel in Switzerland, London Tit Gallery, etc. (Ibid, 5).



Figure 5: Sonata, paint, oil, and collage on the wood, 1985, a diameter of 300 cm
Source: (Tony, 1998, 156)

The style by which Palladino was recognized took shape based on a collage of the history of art. Such collage is composed of Greece archaic art, Romanesque in southern Italy, primitive art, and the motifs derived from modern art, Egypt's herbal and abstract symbols and icons, and also some private symbols such as masked and skeletal faces (Boghrati, 2007, 87). Palladino's work is characterized by the reciprocity of images and forms and basic elements, the presence of simple and rough shapes, bright colors are the results of neo-expressionism (Fig. 6). The death is a motif domineering his works. Thinking and feeling about death theme, instinctual life, nature and past, is the same "self" that Palladino seeks to discuss it (Ibid). In fact, with an attempt to restore art to its ancient, spiritual and mystical origin, search for death and metamorphosis, Palladino pursued a much different path in pursuit of purity. His works are comparable to the ones created by abstract painters because of the lack of definitive boundaries in art.



Figure 6: Room in storm, paint, and oil on canvass along with a collage of wood and objects, 1984, 240×265 cm
Source: www.high.org

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Regarding his style, Palladino alleges that, through an imaginary surface and internal overflow, allegorical sterilized signs and themes are transferred to the canvas unconsciously and simply. However, it seems that his images are more rational rather than immediate and improvise (ibid). I do not like just art, I appreciate all mysterious, indefinable and forgotten things. When I do painting, I would like to penetrate into those areas (Tony, 1998, 7). Impressionability by cultural heritage of his own familiar region, explore spiritual themes of life, sacrifice, death and mysticism, iconography of animals, plants and masked figures are some of the most important keys to enter the world of Palladino's works.

Although the references made by Palladino are relevant to far past, i.e. when tradition prevailed the situation and faith had not progressed to such contemporary stage, it seems that it is deeply associated with what is considered a re-reading of beholder in contemporary culture. Taking advantage of memory, tradition, and flexibility in the area of interpretation, these works categorize Palladino and other trans-avant-garde artists into postmodern art as well. Palladino's visual experiences are highly diversified, and he has took advantage of volume painting and statue, installations, printing and drawing, and also an eclectic of all of these elements (SedaghatKish, 2005, 5). Taking a glimpse of art of the past and create images in accordance with the spirit of the time can be traced in Byzantine iconography, and despite the tense relationship between this art and Christian theology and prevailing details, and also the most fundamental feature (the embodiment of divine word in the form of images), this artistic form was properly capable of reflecting many dimensions of social and political life and even popular beliefs in the contemporary age, which of course it has always taken advantage of a religious-spiritual aspect (Ayatollahi, 2012, 39).

Byzantines earnestly emphasized the compliance with traditions. Byzantine church requested the painters who painted sacred images to be seriously loyal to ancient models. However, if we consider one of the paintings of the Virgin Mary on the altar of a Byzantine church, we might find that it is very different from the works created in the realm of Greek art (Gombrich, 2009, 126), but this desire in retrospect indicated by Byzantine art, is visible in the works created by Palladino as well. This continuity provides a chain in the history of art that is of utmost significance.

Palladino states that "painting is an act of worship and a kind of mental state". Palladino's painting "Oscarticato" (1983), meaning "Flagellated", can be interpreted as a demonstration of the Flagellation of *Chris*t, and "the reprehension" hidden on the Friday Prayers is a reminder of it (Kramlyn, 2008, 148). Throughout all of the portraits created by Palladino, many Christian symbols including Cross, eagles (the symbol of resurrection) and the sacred image can be observed. The artist's proclivity for red color on the background of many of his works is undoubtedly derived from the use of this color in medieval churches as a symbol of martyrdom and resurrection (Figure 7). It also can be a reminiscent of the Red Sea, where the God of the Old Testament revealed his great miracle to Moses (Ibid). However, the claim that all the symbols are associated with Christian symbolism and have a close affinity with Byzantine iconography does not seem highly accurate.

Finally, it can be stated that, putting together the disparate styles and images from various sources can impair historical authenticity of the original model and the relevant meaning. Despite the continuation of a formal-visual style, and use of different resources, and Byzantine iconography, Palladino's works are bereft of any historical sense, and the mere result is selfish composition of the elements that are kidnapped from different places merely due to their visual form. Indeed, the meaning underscoring such works neither can nor seek to approach the historical authenticity of original spiritual and sacred model.

Submit Date: 12.09.2016, Acceptance Date: 16.10.2016, DOI NO: 10.7456/1060NVSE/172

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Figure 7: Campi Flegrei, the mixture of the materials on the canvas, 1982, 487×259 cm
Source: (http://www.artnet.com/artists/mimmo-paladino)

ROBERT GOBER

The collapse of the idea of progress caused a situation under which all interpretations and behaviors had the same validity, and everything was acceptable. In contrast, by taking lessons from the decades 60 and 70, it was possible to question all the perceptions and meanings underlying artistic adaptation (Archer, 2009, 151). At this time, Robert Gober noted that "particularly the United States, uses some seductive images". While Gober's famous chalk sinks were an allusion to totally prepared works created by Duchamp entitled "Fountain", the works were handmade same as the reminder of his works, and also the installation of the sinks was subtly and impalpably erotic (same as other works created by Duchamp). He collected a variety of products and showcased them, and although the combined objects were highly different, their color, material, texture and shape caused that the entire set seem integrated (Archer, 2009, 174).

Robert Gober was born in 1954 in America. He can be categorized in the same category of the artists practicing in 70's and 80's that created some works using psychological issues and figurative language (Smith, 2007, 220). Although Gober proceeded cautiously in this area, his works are annoying and elusive and sometimes exoteric. Some of the key elements and common images in his work include totally real man legs that have been ejected out of a wall, a fashion model or mannequin that wears a wedding garment, an envelope full of donuts on a pedestal, a baby bed with tilting and falling edge, wall paper that shows a design of man's genital organs, or a repeated design of slept man along with victim of criminal gangs that is hanged over a symbolic tree. It is said that Gober was homosexual, and probably due to the same reason, many critics states that his expressive visual style and image creation style in his body of work is influenced by the AIDS crisis in New York. Of course, this interpretation of Gober's works and fundamentally naming his works as "an art regarding AIDS" entails presenting a comprehensive investigation of his entire body of work, and finally, this idea fails to explain his entire body of work. Gober's works can impose a type of violation and anxiety on audience and afflict them with distress and restlessness. This impact is not caused due to the presence of some shocking and special objects; it is due to the associations between the objects and subjective result of the association (Smith, 2007, 220-222).
Accordingly, the works created by Robert Gober uplift the issue up to a metaphorical level by addressing conflicts underlying personal and general identity of modern individual. Super-realistic statues, and the legs below the knee that are protruded on a wall and a part of the leg can be observed when pants goes up are the result of objective experimentation of an artist (Fineberg, 2000, 480). He was able to sense such conflict within the framework of the privacy in a universe replete with administrative and commonplace masks: what should remain hidden would be manifested, and the commonplace is excluded.

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In one of Gober's last works that Moma purchased it in an unprecedented act, the artist creates a great installation (Fig. 4) in the form of a church with a beheaded Christian at the altar beside semi-open doors of the two baths with a series of other multiple elements such as some images taken from New York Times Newspaper at 11th September Event and Kenneth Starr's report on Lewinsky's scandal (New York Times: May 31, 2005) (New York Times: May 31, 2005).



Figure 4: Installation, without title, 2003-2005
Source (New York Times: May 31, 2005)

Gabor's use of newspaper in this work was related to his past experience. In the work that he created for Whitney Biennial Exhibition (1993) and Elizabeth Sussman regards it as a sample schematic of an overall biennial atmosphere, Gober placed the newspaper packages ready for recycling throughout the exhibition, from the entrance to exit. Over each package, a silk screen package of the New York Times could be observed that was re-edited by Gober himself (Sahhaf Zadeh, 2009, 231-233). For example, at the first page of the newspaper, he referred to the death of an artist, and in a visual ad, he had collaged his face instead of a bridal clothes model. On top of all the news, it was read that: the Vatican condones discrimination against gays. "The Newspaper" (1993) questions representation mechanism in the media, and reminds the audience of getting accustomed to this represented order, and reminds that how much we consider some issues (identical to the ones addressed by Gober as nominal editor-in-chief of New York Times) as "uncanny". In addition, Gober's work is a stubborn response to critics that contempt the works presented by some artists with political tendencies (Kelly, 1993, 238).

Gober's works addressed private and personal complexities, i.e. an instrument advocated by the highest number of audience is used to expose a private issue, or to symbolize compulsory exposition of private issues in the form of state or community's interference with incoherent life style. Feminists in the 70s insisted that "the personal is political", and they wanted to bring to the public debate everything that had been hidden and buried. Here, Gober speaks of the heavy pressure imposed by majority, state, and tradition, and seeks to influence even voluntary and volitional relations and behavior shown by two adults (Sahhaf Zadeh, 2007, 231-233).

Postmodernism had another aspect through which it could take pleasure from the nastiness of the art that was utterly built upon adaptation. The overlapping of styles and incoherent images derived from different resources can impair the historical originality of original model and hidden meaning underlying it (Archer, 2009. 150). In postmodernism, it is not either possible to speak of a universal truth because universal wisdom has no external existence. Postmodernism proposes that multiple forms of wisdom, insights, and thoughts should be discussed (Ghareh Baghi, 2002, 22). Unlike negative side of such

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attitude that is called "recursive postmodernism", there was also a radical critical postmodernism (Archer, 2009, 151). Gober's works should be considered an example of "critical postmodernism". Gober was inclined to bring to the public sphere all the issues relevant to the privacy in contemporary age such as religion and tradition. Gober's indication of symbols or use of Jesus's figure, Cross, or Mary Magdalene in his work, is considered allusions without any intention to sanctify his body of work.

CONCLUSION

The approval of the relationship and effect between religion, culture and art and understanding of religion, in an existential rather than theoretical fashion, can lead to the disappearance of multiplicity among religious, cultural and artistic areas, and can proceed these areas in one single direction and in direct relationship with each other. Although this perspective can be clearly seen in some periods of art history, it fails to take advantage of theoretical validity and scientific justification in terms of objective instances. Modernists believe that reason and science in the role of a discoverer could solve many problems, and faith and belief fail to accomplish such goal, and postmodernist culture was an adaptive culture that considered the universe as a simulated entity. In fact, one of the meeting points in modernism and postmodernism is critique of religion and its principles. Postmodernism would pursue what modernism accomplished in the name of human independence and exploration of facts and human capabilities and also on the path to realize the hopes and aspirations of the people within the context of religion and fixed principles. Thus, the critical approach to religion and religious teaching is the common ground between modernism and postmodernism. Accordingly, postmodernism fails to recognize religion with realistic and faithful characteristics that are inherent in all religions. Indeed, based on its principles and features, postmodernism rejects religion as a general ideology as well. The necessity to use religious signs in the works created by Gauguin and Bacon can be considered a criticism of rationalism and distancing from the industrial life of their era. Specifically, Gauguin adopts an ascetic style, and has epistemic view of primeval man. And although Palladino's body of work adopts Byzantine icons, the author does not ever seek to show that the meaning underlying his work is same as the historical authenticity of icons that are of a sacred and spiritual nature. In addition, in Gabor's works, the criticism of religious constriction in the lives of the time is the criterion to use religious signs in his works. The current research indicated that it would not possible to present religious readings of modernist and postmodernist artistic works that both can lead to an understanding of artistic work and to achieve the principles of religious art and teachings.

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Footnotes

1- Bokula makes a distinction between modernism and postmodernism and in the introduction to "Art of Modernism, he states that: "I consider modernism as an independent element and comparable to the ancient Romans (500 BC M-400 AD), medieval (400-1300), and modern age (1400-1900).

2- The term first was described in 1917 by German philosopher Rudolf Pannwitz for describing the nihilism in Western culture in the twentieth century, as a term borrowed from Nietzsche. The term was again proposed in 1934 in the works of Spanish literary critic Federico Oniss in reference to a literary reaction against modernism. In 1939 the term was used in the UK in two very different ways; by Bernard Ednizbel Metaleh to recognize the failure of secular modernism and a return to religion, and by the historian *Arnold* Joseph Toynbee as a historian to refer to the emergence of a mass society after the First World War in which the working class is considered more important than capitalist class (Cohoone, 2007, 3-5)

3- Paul Gaugin relocated to Pentawn city in Bertani State in France, and he settled the city again in 1988. This is the era when he was distanced from impressionism because of his newly0emerged proclivity for expressive and primeval symbolism. In 1889, he held an exhibition with French symbolists in Paris and Brussels. He resided in Tahiti during 1891 to 1893. Then he returned France, and settled in Paris and Bretagne since 1893 to 1895. During 1898-1899, he held an exhibition in a gallery in Paris, and he introduced his renowned portrait "Where we come from? Who we are? Where we going to go?" Gauguin died in 1903 in Marquesas Islands in South Pacific (Lynton, 2005, 473-474).

4- Francis Bacon was born in October 28, 1909 and died in April 28, 1992. Due to a variety of reasons, Bacon suffered from risk of asthma, during his childhood. He was seventeen-year-old that he was separated from his family and moved to London.

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