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Automatism in Abstract Expressionism

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Abstract: Automatism, which is accepted as a technique by some critics and philosophers in the art world, is the unconscious automatic reflection of the unconscious on the work by the artist by focusing on a kind of trance while the work is being produced. II. The war environment of the artists who left Europe and immigrated to America during World War II caused some psychological problems that affected many parts of society. The changes felt as a natural consequence of the psychological problems caused by the psychological problems experienced have affected all kinds of environments as well as artistic formations and played a significant driving force in creating different perspectives for artists. Therefore, Abstract Expressionism, which went down in history as one of the most important modern art movements of the 20th century, came to the fore as an art movement that emerged in this period when the social and political environment was intense. In this context, it has been continued by the artists who produce works with an understanding that gives importance to revealing their own unique expressions rather than a harmonious expression language. Historically, after Expressionism, in Abstract Expressionism, pure emotions were tried to be reflected by removing the figure or abstracting it. With Abstract Expressionism, which fully overlaps with the automatism technique, pure emotion transfer has been realized by making the subconscious emotions, traumas or feelings in a state where the consciousness is closed. In the research, examples of how artists randomly reflect their subconscious on works by using Automatism were examined.

Keywords: Abstract Expressionism, Automatism, Art.

Introduction

Man is a being who has an energetic soul as well as a material body. Spirit is human existence. A person does many things in his life with his soul. Especially in psychology, the soul is used synonymously with the mental process and the psyche. The mental process includes the conscious, preconscious and unconscious of the human being. There are different levels of perception and different systems in these processes. Man thinks, decides and implements within the framework of mental processes. When approached from this point of view, it is seen that man acts with his soul rather than his body. Superficially, consciousness includes things that people do with

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awareness, it includes information that can be remembered before consciousness and various information that cannot be remembered because the unconscious is limited. That's why the unconscious affects what we do in life, sometimes consciously and sometimes unconsciously. Humans store the information they perceive around them unconsciously. This information affects people's lives in various ways, psychologically and behaviorally. Affected behaviours are reflected in the actions of the person without being aware of it and without making sense of it. These effects come to our awareness through various works or sometimes spontaneously. Here, it is important to listen to oneself and face oneself.

Conscious, Unconscious and Reflections in Art

Psychoanalytic concepts are some concepts that each psychoanalyst can interpret and name differently according to his/her own theory, methods and studies. Art and mind are interconnected, a physical part of the universe and a single reality. Perceived objects are first processed by physiochemical reactions in the eye and then in the brain (Solso, 2003: 21). We can express the situations that occur in this process as the rise of consciousness. The concentration of consciousness and the subsequent phase is the processing of the unconscious. In the concentration of consciousness, the ability to think increases, sensory processes are strengthened and memory intensifies (May, 2019: 81). The artist uses the unconscious to produce creative ideas. These ideas pass from the unconscious to the conscious with the permission of the censorship mechanism. Unconscious information first becomes preconscious, then some of the censorship mechanism becomes a symbol, and some of them pass into our consciousness as they are (Lugo, 2010: 45).

Intellectual and emotional, conscious and unconscious form a complete whole in our consciousness. Intellectuality extends from emotions, thoughts, memories, and feelings in the conscious to those in the unconscious. Unconscious elements have an important place in our artistic activities as well as in our lives (Timuçin, 2017: 105-106). In artistic reflection, creation has come to the fore with the development of the unconscious. Jung stated that the unconscious and creativity are interconnected.

According to May, creativity is explained as an intense awareness and consciousness-raising. This state of intensification of awareness occurs when you are distracted, in dreams, or on unconscious levels. What is evident is that it continues at different stages of creativity without the direct control of the conscious will. In other words, the artist does not call the thoughts that come to his consciousness willingly, the thoughts come to the consciousness without his help. Therefore, an increase in awareness includes letting go of oneself, adapting to the flow, and a sudden increase in awareness in all phases of the mind, rather than being self-conscious (May, 2019: 68-69).

'Automatism' as a Concept

Automatism, as a word, is synonymous with self-movement. It can be thought of something as automatic, automatic movement, automatic, self-acting. It is "automatisme" in French and "automatism" in English:

> "Automatic drawing is the act of drawing a picture or object in a hypnotic trance or distracted state. In hypnotherapy, it can be used to give the therapist access to the client's unconscious material" (Vandenbos, 2007:91).

"Automatism; In cognitive psychology, automatic information processing is generally characterized as no attention load, lack of controlled processes, lack of consciousness, parallel processes and fast execution" (Houdé Kayser, Koenig, Proust, Rastier, 2004:3) According to Sözen and Tanyeli's explanation, automatism in art is "an artistic work that does not adhere to any prejudices, principles or rules, is not controlled by the brain, and is done unconsciously and "automatically". This behaviour, created by Dadaist artists in the 1910s, was also used by Surrealists in the following years, between 1929 and 1930. (Sözen and Tanyeli, 2016: 232)

After Surrealism, Automatism started to be used by Abstract Expressionists influenced by Surrealists. The Automatism technique used in Abstract Expressionism was adapted by the artists and reflected in their art. A high focus is one of the important elements when artists apply Automatism to their paintings. When artists are fully focused (a kind of trance state), they move into the creative process, in which the unconscious is ready to extract information.

In automatism, the hand has been removed from the features that shape and form the object and has become an unconscious movement that expresses feelings and is conscious of real movement and solitude. These movements are now an intuitive, spontaneous expression that is not based on any causality and judgment, psychically and instinctively. (Sepetci, 2019: 53-54)

Automatism in Abstract Expressionism

After Surrealism, Automatism started to be used by Abstract Expressionists influenced by Surrealists. The Automatism technique used in Abstract Expressionism was adapted by the artists and reflected in their art. In automatism, the initial suspension of the conscious mind should be taken as the beginning of the creative process, not the whole. Abstract Expressionists took Automatism in this way and allowed information and images to come from the unconscious.

Since there is individualization in Abstract Expressionism, artists have produced works in different styles according to their own lives. This has led to the creation of creative works with different infrastructures, although they are in the same trend. As a result, it can be said that the Automatism technique has been applied in individual ways in art and creativity, difference and originality are felt intensely in the works.

In the research, three prominent artists from the universe of artists who produce works in the context of abstract expressionism were selected and examined as a study sample.



Image 1. Jackson Pollock, Lavender Mist, 1950

He painted the painting on the canvas he laid on the ground, by pouring, dripping, and splashing from a stick, brush or tin paint can be mixed with handmade enamel paint with different materials such as gravel, sand, and oil paint, using the movement of his hands, arms and body, as if dancing or like a ritual. is doing. For Pollock, who states that he has a way of "being" for himself and uses movement and paint as a tool in the creative process, pouring colours onto the whole canvas like a net becomes a kind of ritual (https://www.nga.gov/collection). The essence of human action mentioned, Pollock said, comes from the unconscious. The artist reflects the unconscious with Automatism.



Image 2. Willem de Kooning, The Excavation, 1950

It is thought that the artist was inspired by Picasso's Guernica while painting this work. It is also said to be influenced by Giuseppe de Santis' 1949 neo-realist black and white film Riso Amaro (Bitter Rice). De Kooning draws shapes and colours from everyday life. The construction pit mentioned in the title is a common sight in New York. The painting makes us think that it witnessed a historical human disaster and what the artist did was to remove it (Hess, Grosenick, 2005: 48).



Image 1. Franz Kline, Chief, 1950

It is said that the dark side of Franz Kline is reflected in his paintings as black and white as emptiness. From a different point of view, black and white can be interpreted as the persona and main personality of the artist. When we go down to the deeper meaning of the work, it should be taken into account that the artist had a traumatic childhood. The death of his father and the feeling of being alone in the school he was sent to, the harsh education at the school as well as the fatherlessness, the tense atmosphere and the fact that all the children there are orphans are enough for the artist to be an introvert. It is thought that the use of only black and white in Abstract Expressionist paintings after 1950 is related to expressing his feelings not with colour but with movement.

Conclusion

The unconscious in art contains the information that artists reflect in their paintings without their awareness. Abstract Expressionist artists have reflected unconscious effects on their works by using some techniques in the process of reflecting their inner world. As a result, in the analyzed works of the three artists who were taken as samples among the abstract expressionist artists, the lives, traumas and primitive impulses of the artists, that is,

these unconscious effects, are censored, forgotten, and unable or difficult to reach the level of consciousness, with the Automatism technique, the relaxation of the censorship mechanism and the release of the unconscious. It can be said that the knowledge that is present in the world is reflected in his works.

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