

ANXIETY AND ITS REPRESENTATIONS IN EXPRESSIONIST PAINTING

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Abstract: The current study, titled (Representations of Anxiety in Expressionist Painting: Edvard Munch as a Model), aims to explore the concept of anxiety and its representations within expressive aesthetic artworks. The study also seeks to examine artistic styles of modern art movements—especially Expressionism—by shedding light on the psychological dimension and its manifestations in the aesthetic output of the artist Edvard Munch.

To achieve the research goal of examining the representations of anxiety in Expressionist painting, using Edvard Munch as a case study, the research is organized into four chapters:

Chapter One: The methodological framework, starting with the research problem and moving to the research objective:

To reveal representations of anxiety in the artworks of Edvard Munch.

This was limited to the period 1885–1900, focusing on Munch’s oil paintings. The chapter also includes definitions of key terms used in the study.

Chapter Two: The theoretical framework, divided into three sections.

The first discusses the concept of anxiety, the second examines anxiety through psychological theories, and the third focuses on anxiety and its representations in Expressionist painting.

Chapter Three: The research procedures, including defining the research population and the tools used for collecting data. A purposive sample of six oil paintings by Munch was selected, and the descriptive method was adopted for analysis.

Chapter Four: Presents the results and conclusions derived from the research objectives and theoretical framework. Key findings include:

1. The expression of the self and its anxiety gives rise to new symbolic and semantic forms, especially when realistic representation fails to encapsulate inner psychological dimensions.
2. Munch's artworks display a diversity of themes and ideas, often stemming from a single central idea. Through this, he generates a powerful visual narrative filled with symbolic meanings and deep expressive values—as seen in his painting “The Dance of Life”.

This chapter also includes recommendations and suggestions, such as:

1. Modern and contemporary Iraqi art should give more attention to psychological dimensions, especially in academic settings (Bachelor’s and postgraduate studies) in faculties of Fine Arts across departments (Visual Arts – Art Education – Performing Arts – Theatre Education).
2. Conduct further studies that trace the representation of psychological dimensions in both modern and contemporary artworks.

Chapter One: Research Methodology

1. Research Problem:

Art is one of the most significant achievements of human thought. It has helped to articulate human perception of the surrounding world from ancient times to the present. Humans have used various means to express themselves and the impacts of surrounding events, both incidental and enduring. These modes of expression have taken many forms, reflecting critical aspects of human experience—often negative—due to the individual's inability to resolve them, making them key dilemmas of their time. One such dilemma is anxiety, a fundamental issue due to its negative effects on psychological and social well-being, as well as on human activity. Anxiety lies at the heart of many psychological problems, particularly in a world marked by rapid change, complexity, constant pressures, and the difficulty of fulfilling desires, along with the decline of moral and religious values.

Understanding anxiety as a societal phenomenon helps uncover its causes and influencing factors, while also exposing inner emotional conflicts—one of the most essential existential values. Artists across eras have sought to express and confront these anxieties through their work, sharing in the collective human experience of suffering and fear. Among the modern movements addressing human values and struggles is Expressionism, with Edvard Munch standing out as a leading figure. His artworks powerfully portray anxiety and suffering in varied forms, becoming a universal visual language of human pain and fear.

Thus, the current research problem can be summarized in the following key question:

What are the representations of anxiety in the artworks of Edvard Munch?

2. Research Significance and Rationale:

The importance of this research lies in its interdisciplinary approach, linking psychological, philosophical, and aesthetic perspectives with visual art. It emphasizes the value of transferring psychological studies—particularly those grounded in psychoanalytic theory—into art analysis. Moreover, the study deals with a key figure in modern art, Edvard Munch, analyzing his work in form, content, and technique. According to the researcher's knowledge, this topic has not been previously studied in this specific manner. Therefore, it fills a gap and serves researchers in psychology, aesthetics, fine arts, and art criticism, especially postgraduate students in faculties of Fine Arts.

3. Research Objective:

To reveal representations of anxiety in the artworks of Edvard Munch.

4. Research Boundaries:

This research is limited to examining representations of anxiety in oil paintings by Edvard Munch, created between 1885 and 1900, and sourced from academic and online art resources.

5. Definition of Terms:

Representation (Tamathulat):

In the Qur'anic context, the term is mentioned in Surah Maryam (19:17) and interpreted as a non-literal embodiment or appearance of one entity in the form of another, without actual transformation. Linguistically, it can mean to depict, illustrate, or embody something. In art, it implies expressing symbolic or emotional qualities through visual form.

Operational Definition in Art:

The representation refers to the expressive manifestation of meaning—both symbolic and structural—based on visual forms and the artist's intentional aesthetic message.

Anxiety:

Multiple definitions include:

- Spielberger (1966): A temporary emotional state characterized by consciously perceived feelings of tension and worry, increasing autonomic nervous activity.
- Al-Rifa'i (1981): A psychological state that arises when an individual perceives a threat, involving emotional tension and physiological responses.
- Al-Dabbagh (1983): A vague feeling of fear or tension with no clearly identified source.
- Al-Omari (1986): Mental discomfort that leads to intense psychological distress, often linked to unfounded fears.
- Ibrahim (1995): An emotional state marked by fear and tension, present in daily or academic situations.
- Al-Issawi: A sense of fear, panic, or anticipated danger, often undefined.

Operational Definition:

Anxiety is an emotional state experienced by individuals, expressed as a feeling of disturbance or unease regarding issues that relate to personal or collective well-being—across political, economic, psychological, social, health, family, or academic contexts.

Expressionism:

An art movement that began in Germany, associated with groups like Die Brücke (The Bridge, founded in 1905) and Der Blaue Reiter (The Blue Rider, founded in 1911). It featured artists like Kirchner, Heckel, Nolde, Munch, and Kandinsky. The movement arose as a reaction to the devastation of World War I, particularly in Germany, and emphasized raw emotion, social critique, and psychological depth through distorted forms and bold colors

Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework and Previous Studies

First: The Concept of Anxiety

The term “anxiety” is derived from the Latin word *anxietas*, which means a disturbance of the mind. It is a psychological condition historically associated with worry and fear that impacts both the mind and body. Distinguishing between anxiety and fear can be difficult due to their similarities—both are emotional states that involve pressure and internal tension, and both are triggered by perceived threats. However, as Dollard and Miller noted, anxiety is a vague, continuous feeling of dread toward an unknown, while fear is a reaction to a specific, observable threat in the present.

Anxiety can be healthy and functional when it motivates individuals to avoid danger and act appropriately. Al-Dabbagh (1983) argues that anxiety may accompany any significant undertaking, new experience, research, or invention—making it a potential driver of creative or civilizational energy, often referred to as *positive* or *motivational anxiety*.

Anxiety comprises several components:

1. Emotional Component – Involves feelings of fear, dread, tension, panic, and self-disturbance.
2. Cognitive Component – Refers to the negative effects on perception and thought, often involving fear of failure and apprehension about the future.
3. Physiological Component – Manifests through the stimulation of the autonomic nervous system, resulting in symptoms such as increased heart rate, rapid breathing, pale complexion, sweating, and trembling.

Furthermore, anxiety has been classified into several types:

- Objective (Realistic) Anxiety: Arises in response to actual threats, such as fear of failure or concern for the future.
- Neurotic Anxiety: Characterized by a diffuse, non-specific fear; Freud described this as fear without a known cause.
- Ego (Self) Anxiety: Involves guilt and internal conflict, often stemming from personality structure, as described by Abbas (1980).
- State and Trait Anxiety: State anxiety is temporary and situation-based, while trait anxiety is a relatively stable personality characteristic that manifests frequently under stress.

Anxiety symptoms are divided into:

- Psychic Symptoms: Feelings of distress, cognitive preoccupation, and impaired decision-making.
- Physical Symptoms: Breathing irregularities, high heart rate, blood pressure spikes, sweating, trembling, dizziness, and digestive issues.

Second: Anxiety in Psychological Theories

A. Psychoanalytic Theory

Freud considered internal forces as the primary motivators of behavior, leading to internal conflict among three personality components:

- ✓ *Id*: Primitive urges based on immediate gratification.
- ✓ *Ego*: The rational self that mediates between the id and reality—source of anxiety.
- ✓ *Superego*: Internalized moral standards, producing guilt and moral anxiety.

Freud's view influenced other psychoanalysts. Jung emphasized personality development and unresolved early-life conflicts. Fromm saw anxiety as a product of cultural and societal pressures. Horney connected anxiety to repressed hostility toward parents. Sullivan attributed it to early family experiences and inadequate emotional support.

B. Behavioral Theory

Rooted in Pavlov and Skinner's work, this theory views anxiety as a learned response. According to Pavlov, anxiety results from conditioned stimuli triggering learned fears. Skinner added that behavior, including anxious responses, is shaped by environmental reinforcements.

C. Cognitive Theory

This perspective emphasizes how individuals think about and interpret experiences. Anxious individuals tend to exaggerate perceived threats. Lazarus and others argued that anxiety arises from how a person evaluates stressors. Kelly and Mandler noted that anxiety is an emotional response learned through experience.

D. Humanistic Theory

Humanistic psychologists see anxiety as fear of future threats to personal identity or existence. Murray linked anxiety to unmet internal or external needs. Maclelland identified three motivating needs—power, affiliation, and achievement—as sources of anxiety when unmet. This theory ties anxiety to personal growth, autonomy, and self-realization.

E. Existential Theory

Existentialists view anxiety as stemming from a lack of meaning or purpose. Kierkegaard believed anxiety was a uniquely human trait involving existential dread. Heidegger linked anxiety to the burden of existence and confronting life's responsibilities. Sartre distinguished between external fear and internal anxiety caused by existential tension and responsibility.

F. Anxiety-Drive Theory

This theory treats anxiety as a motivator. Tension compels individuals to act, especially in tasks requiring performance. Taylor and Spence noted that anxiety might improve performance, but only to a point. Excessive anxiety impairs functioning, especially in complex tasks, as observed by Chyldé.

G. State-Trait Anxiety Theory

Cattell and Spielberger distinguished between *state anxiety* (temporary, situation-induced) and *trait anxiety* (persistent, personality-based). Spielberger emphasized that trait anxiety predisposes individuals to respond anxiously to a wide range of stressors, while state anxiety is linked to specific contexts.

Researcher's Perspective:

The researcher aligns most closely with the Humanistic and Existential perspectives. These frameworks consider anxiety as a reaction to contemporary threats such as war and societal destruction—making them more suitable for analyzing expressive art. Anxiety is thus viewed as a situational state rather than a stable trait, with its representation varying according to individual experiences and inner psychological states.

Third: Anxiety and Its Representations in Expressionist Painting

The rise of war and destruction in the early 20th century gave rise to anxiety that deeply influenced both art and literature. Expressionism emerged as a movement during this turbulent period, rejecting classical realism in favor of emotional depth and psychological expression. This art form emphasized distortion, simplification, and exaggeration to express inner turmoil, often bordering on caricature.

Expressionist artists aimed to reveal facial expressions, psychological states, and inner emotions through bold lines and symbolic colors. The goal was to evoke emotional responses from the viewer, transforming subjective suffering into universal experiences.

Expressionism is essentially a continuation of Romanticism, reconstructing natural forms in a tragic and intense manner, reflecting the modern era's anxiety and crises. Among its pioneers are Vincent van Gogh, Edvard Munch, and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec.

Through their art, Expressionists rejected rationalism and materialism, seeking instead to reconnect with human subjectivity. The movement was marked by rebellion against tradition, the industrial world, and false societal values. It focused on deep human emotions like alienation, fear, spiritual emptiness, and existential dread—precisely the kind of anxiety visible in Munch's work.

Munch, particularly, used expressive lines, dark color palettes, and symbolic figures to convey themes of isolation, despair, and psychological unrest. For instance, in his iconic works (*The Scream*, *Anxiety*, *The Dance of Life*), we see his concern with the inner self, often depicting existential fear in distorted, shadowy forms.

Expressionist groups like *Die Brücke* (The Bridge) and *Der Blaue Reiter* (The Blue Rider) sought to transcend naturalism and dive into the human psyche. Their artworks were not mere visual records but emotional outcries, challenging social norms and reasserting the primacy of the individual soul in a world dominated by mechanization and alienation.

Munch's influence and alignment with these ideals position him as a key figure in rendering psychological anxiety into aesthetic expression—making his work a fertile case study for understanding the visual representations of anxiety in modern art



(3)



(2)



(1)

The fundamental goal of Expressionism is the freedom of art, which should not be restricted by the need to record visible impressions, but rather should express emotional experiences and spiritual values. As Franz Marc (1880–1916) stated:

Today we strive to go beyond the mask of appearances behind which things hide in nature, as these seem more important to us than the discoveries of the Impressionists."

What distinguishes Expressionist artworks is their subjective inclination toward free expression in art, which is not limited to the use of color. Rather, it is an approach, a philosophy, and a mode of expression that aims to replace the response to the visible with a response to what the self proposes in terms of beauty, in a way that the illogical becomes a new logic. Thus, freedom of expression replaced the constraints and visual obligations that had dominated Western art for over four centuries. Instead, the Expressionist artist listens to what the self offers in terms of values, impulses, and human concepts, which were previously bound to the framework and control of external reality.

The aesthetic form in Expressionism was founded on inner feeling, and the Expressionists gave free rein to human emotions to determine its structure. They focused intensely on psychological states and conditions, delving into a world built on perception using new techniques, symbolic elements, clashing colors, and deliberately distorted forms. In this context, Marc emphasizes:

I have long found people ugly, while animals appear more beautiful and pure. This expression already implies the ugliness of human reality, driven by the innocence of animals and their freedom from pretense and deceit, as they are in harmony with their existence, integrated into nature, and possess absolute freedom."

In his painting *Blue Horses* (Figure 4), Marc used color as a purely expressive value, through which he conveyed his emotions and love for nature as a free existence. The color took on a symbolic and formal expressive role, blended into imagined, pure spaces. In doing so, Expressionism rejected the sensuousness of Impressionism—which had ignored the sufferings of the age—and sought through free expression to release repressed energies, distort objects from their natural context, and reconstruct them anew to create visions that elevate the self and reveal its inner truths



(4)

The researcher believes, based on this, that there are essential truths that Impressionism failed to reach, due to its reliance on sense and reason. At a time when Fauvism was emerging in France, Expressionism arose in Germany, where expression became a means to explore the depths of the human self and a goal to elevate subjective emotion and feeling to the point where objective reality—objects and materials—became mere vessels containing the true content of the artwork.

This assumption is supported by the fact that realistic forms, with their elements and principles, transitioned from their mimetic content to an internal, subjective conception. Take color, for example: in Realism, it was considered a key element for creating likeness with the subject; in Impressionism, it was treated with sensory and rational intent. But in Expressionism, color transformed into an emotional charge tied to the soul and how the self perceives and interprets the subject or idea being depicted. In this context, color gained greater expressive freedom—green, typically associated with trees and foliage, might become a vibrant red, and black or white—colors rejected by Impressionism—could dominate as necessary expressions of specific psychological states.

Thus, the artist's vision of truth was no longer linked to fidelity to the subject, but rather to alignment with feelings of anxiety and repressed emotions that arise within the artist through contemplation of a given topic or event.

Driven by this expressive vision rooted in emotion rather than logic, Expressionism opposed the geometrical structure advocated by Cézanne, the scientific technique of Pointillism, and instead turned toward expressive, impassioned execution, rendering artworks as visual equivalents of the artist's life, anxiety, and inner turmoil.

The Norwegian artist Edvard Munch (1863–1944) and the Belgian James Ensor (1860–1949)—as seen in Figures 5 and 6—conveyed deep personal visions, transforming their work into symbols of life and human anxiety, and structuring their compositions according to a psychological-symbolic perspective. Through their intuition, they sought an absolute purpose and a universal idea, distancing themselves from anything relative or material. Consequently, the intense colors and distorted forms that later appeared in the works of Nolde, Kokoschka, and Kirchner reflected imaginary worlds filled with monstrous figures and grotesque carnival masks, expressing a bizarre, fantastical vision both in form and content



(7)



(6)



(5)

Emil Nolde (1867–1956) sought to extend the artistic vision of Van Gogh, Munch, and Ensor in his painting “Dancing on Ice” (1910), Figure (7), pushing forms toward abstraction in a primitive direction, as if the scene represented a “rain dance” filled with bursts of laughter and erratic movement. *“The color strokes were applied in bloody smears to freely emphasize the emotional character of the uncontrolled form—serving as a model of the new barbarism and expressionism”* (42, p. 109).

The researcher observes the influence of existential and humanistic theories, where the artist portrayed these emotional, impulsive disturbances, yet concealed them behind masks. This is particularly evident in “Masks” (1911), Figure (8), which reveals the artist's expressive use of and influence by African masks, known for their expressive features that convey a range of both visible and hidden emotions such as anxiety, mockery, anger, madness, and fear, among others.

This inspiration and application were paved by Van Gogh and Gauguin, turning exaggeration and alienation into the essence of things. Expression took on a primitive quality, with free treatment of color values and uninhibited emotional expression, forming one of the artistic representations of anxiety. Whether dealing with religious subjects—depicting apostles and reformers in awkwardly stylized, aestheticized ways (Figure 9)—or portraying nightclub-goers (Figure 10), or using overwhelming dramatic or caricature-like lighting, the artist attempted to instill a sense of astonishment in the viewer while also achieving a sense of emotional alignment.

This, in itself, represents a form of artistic freedom often shared by both artist and audience, though with the distinction that this emotional charge was now encapsulated within the frame of the painting, which came to symbolize the social, economic, and political realities of the time



(10)



(11)



(12)



(13)

The political turmoil of the time had a direct impact on the psyche of the human being/artist, as it represented a rejected reality that stood in opposition to, and as a rival of, human values. This was clearly reflected in both artistic and literary output in various forms, where painting became a carrier of meanings loaded with expressionistic intensity—a notion also discussed in Adler's analytical theories.

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner (1880–1938) is considered a distinctive individual voice in expressing anxiety, using his brush to trace emotional turmoil in his work *“Self-Portrait”* (1915), Figure (11). In this painting, he presents psychological content by placing himself in his studio with a model, his hand appearing amputated, wearing a military uniform—symbolizing the impossibility of painting during that dreadful time (42, p. 113). He declared then: *“We no longer paint for art's sake, but for the people.”*

Expressionism thus marked a turn toward representing the human figure, articulating the artist's suffering in life, the suppression of individuality, and the neglect of existence as a core value. This was often carried through a political-critical lens, trying to escape into another world devoid of absurdity, anxiety, chaos, and violations of freedom in the name of freedom. Artists found in children's drawings a powerful expressive sensitivity—primitive in structure—that could serve independent purposes detached from their original contexts. This became a way to break free from the harshness of reality.

Nietzsche emphasized this through the concept of “will to power and strength,” urging that the human confront life's tragic side with a type of optimistic sorrow, stating: *“Pessimism is a sign of weakness, while a sorrowful optimism is the trait of a strong man who seeks freedom from deep experience.”*

Likewise, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809–1865) stated: *“Art is freedom, and to cross the line of its decline, it finds support in the unknown—in returning to ancient forms of expression. Art contains more thought and spirit than aesthetic rules. It is a fundamental symbol of dynamism and creative power, with a dimension that is both aesthetic and socio-political.”*

Thus, the outcomes of expressionism differ fundamentally from other approaches. Its visual relationship with the viewer varies, because: *“The aesthetic meaning the artist gives to form and subject may not belong to the subjects themselves, but to the psychological states they generate in us.”* In other words, the spontaneous expressive means the expressionist artist resorts to—means

that express inner feelings about a subject—are subjective and not necessarily tied to objective structures, nor the classical compositional traditions.

This is rooted in the distinct nature of expression, which differs from imitation. *“Expression is an emotional indication that is perceived intuitively, and this intuition only comes to the mind through action, formation, and expression.”*

Expressionism thus aligns closely with existentialist philosophy, which centers on the freedom of the self as a value-based existence, beginning with the human being. It is a philosophy that concerns itself more with the self as a free reality, rather than with external objects. The self is the true “existent”—not merely a thinking entity, but one that takes initiative, becoming the center of feeling and emotion.

Jean-Paul Sartre believed that: *“In man and in beauty, value applies only to what is imagined—man is the one who introduces nothingness into the physical structure of the world.”*

Expressionists thus translated existence into their inner selves, treating themselves as reservoirs of accumulated experiences shaped through interaction with objective reality. This allowed them to project their individual state onto both nature and humanity, relying on intuition and imagination. The painting, as such, became entirely liberated from the slavery of the subject matter and its constraints.

Chapter Three: Practical Framework

1. Research Community

The researcher examined available and published imagery of Expressionist artworks, including sources from foreign websites. The researcher reviewed approximately 10 diverse artworks.

2. Research Sample

A purposive sample of 6 paintings was selected. These were oil on canvas works that varied in their year of execution and stylistic approach to aesthetic representation, in alignment with the study’s topic and objectives.

3. Research Methodology

The researcher adopted the descriptive method and employed content analysis to analyze the selected samples in pursuit of the study’s aims and results.

4. Research Tool

To fulfill the study’s objective of identifying representations and meanings of anxiety in Edvard Munch’s paintings, the researcher developed a content analysis tool (as found in Appendix 1), based on the findings of the theoretical framework. This tool was reviewed by a panel of experts, leading to its final version for valid analysis.

5. Sample Analysis: Analytical Steps

To reach a scientific approach in analyzing the chosen samples, the researcher followed several steps for the analysis of oil paintings, including:

1. General Description: A visual description of the elements in the artwork.
2. Artwork Analysis: The analysis was conducted according to the following axes:
 - Axis One: Identifying the forms executed on the surface of the painting
 - Axis Two: Revealing Representations of Anxiety in the Paintings of Edvard Munch

Sample (1)

Title: *The Sick Child*

Artist: Edvard Munch

Date of Production: 1885 and 1887



(14)

Ownership: Tate Gallery, London

This work leans toward realism in both form and content, yet Munch, guided by his subjective approach, distorts realistic perception to impart an emotional depth to the scene. His choice of subject, combined with the rapid, expressive brushstrokes, gives the forms emotional and aesthetic significance.

The painting embodies, through its technique and expressive execution, the artist's inner projections. Rapid brushstrokes leave a disturbed surface, and the swift lines struggle to capture the form, blurring its contours—as if the entire composition has been intentionally distorted. These elements signal the intensity of tension and suffering, which the artist found imperative to express honestly. This suffering is reflected in the anxious sorrow of the woman (perhaps the mother) for her child. Munch directly engages with his inner feelings, reducing the role of the unconscious and enhancing the rational mind's control over social behavior and abstracting forms on the artistic level.

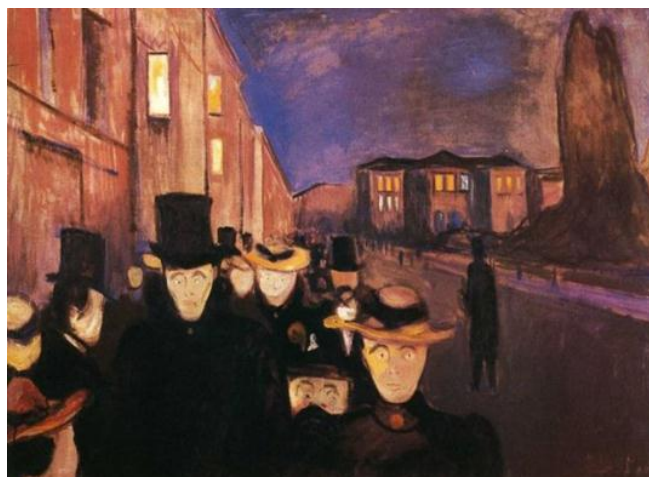
Sample (2)

Title: *Evening on Karl Johan Street*

Artist: Edvard Munch

Date of Production: 1892

Medium & Dimensions: Oil on canvas, 84.5 × 121 cm



(15)

Munch draws expressive power from freely manipulating form and meaning, especially in his alteration of the painting's spatial environment. The lines forming perspective are combined with dark strokes, transforming space into a stretched and shifting temporal dimension. This gives the painting a compelling expressive energy.

Narratively, the scene shatters the iconic imagery of human or earthly forms, rendering them into a terrifying dream. Munch aims to reveal the hidden, disturbed dimension of reality, suggesting an alternate truth. His distortion and reduction of facial features, particularly in the man and woman's terrified expressions, reflect a creative attempt to express widespread social anxiety and psychological unrest through artistic abstraction.

Sample (3)

Title: *Ashes*

Artist: Edvard Munch

Date of Production: 1894

Medium & Dimensions: Oil on canvas, 141 × 120 cm

Ownership: The National Museum, Oslo



(16)

In this painting, Munch strips away all that hinders direct emotional expression, deliberately incorporating a sense of detachment and emotional intensity through aesthetic distortion. The result reflects a deeply personal and collective anxiety, arising from spiritual and societal turmoil. Munch's expression taps into a shared subconscious, making the painting a vessel of universal suffering, not just his own.

The expressive figures—a screaming woman and a weeping man—are imbued with symbolic meanings, transcending surface beauty. These forms are deliberately symbolic, aiming to communicate deeply embedded societal truths, often in cryptic yet emotionally accessible ways. The emotional weight of anxiety dominates the work, with stylistic variations in each element emphasizing the psychological burden.

Sample (4)

Title: *The Scream*

Artist: Edvard Munch

Date of Production: 1893

Medium: Oil on canvas

Ownership: Munch Museum



(17)

This iconic expressionist painting is a modern embodiment of anxiety. A man stands on a bridge, clutching his head, his mouth wide open in a silent scream, framed by swirling forms and intense red gradients. It's Munch's most famous work, likely due to its condensed drama and the existential fear it conveys.

In the foreground, a figure raises its hands to its ears, eyes wide in terror, mouth agape. Behind are two figures in hats, with a natural landscape and a winding path suggesting motion. The elongated, distorted face, and the swirling environment evoke a nightmarish atmosphere. Munch wrote in his diary about hearing "a loud, echoing scream" while overwhelmed with fear, sorrow, and a sky turned red—a description resembling a brief psychotic episode. The painting questions whether the scream originates from the sky, the self, or both—suggesting that true art can encapsulate multiple layers of psychological meaning.

Sample (5)

Title: *Death in the Sickroom*

Artist: Edvard Munch

Date of Production: 1895

Medium: Oil on canvas

Ownership: The National Museum, Oslo



(18)

This work reflects stylistic evolution through Munch's growing experience and experimentation. Painting became his way of life, yet never fully divorced from his internal struggles and anxiety, which are deeply reflected here.

Munch's late works, including this one, are more refined in how they link psychological life with artistic form. He leans toward abstracting shapes, giving them intense emotional and symbolic depth. This painting rejects the superficial realism of the Impressionists and expresses the psychological dimensions of experience—specifically, an unconscious yearning for balance and release from tension.

Sample (6)

Title: *The Dance of Life*

Artist: Edvard Munch

Date of Production: 1899–1900

Medium: Oil on canvas

Ownership: The National Museum, Oslo



(19)

In this work, Munch addresses the everyday life that shaped his worldview. The people and places around him became so essential that he could no longer detach from them—they had become the very essence of his anxieties and inner conflicts.

This painting demonstrates how Munch used form to express anxiety, particularly through expressive linework. The scene is dominated by the psychological power of the line, pulling the forms away from realism. Though oil paint is typically used to reduce the dominance of line (as in Impressionism), here, Munch intensifies it through sketch-like marks and bold color contrasts. Quick brushstrokes, especially the stark white ones, give the painting a raw, emotional immediacy, embodying his inner tension

Chapter Four: Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

1. Findings:

The researcher reached the following findings:

1. According to Freud, the unconscious is the domain that shapes the features and truths of the human personality. Anxiety, being an unconscious process, results from the conflict between consciousness and the unconscious. This concept is evident in the works of the Expressionist movement, particularly in the symbolically rich and aesthetically charged forms in Edvard Munch's paintings.

2. Repression is considered an unconscious defense mechanism by which a person conceals or suppresses distressing impulses, thus achieving a degree of psychological stability. Therefore, repression serves as a justification for compensation. The forms that depict pain and sorrow are visual representations of anxiety and compensatory expressions, as demonstrated in all sampled works.
3. Carl Jung emphasized the role of internal conflict, in which the individual is driven toward unconscious compensation. Projection, as defined by Jung, is a psychological process whereby the artist externalizes unconscious imagery into visible subjects that can be perceived and felt. This serves the purpose of achieving emotional balance and empathetic engagement. All samples reflect this concept.
4. Karen Horney believed that personality is driven by feelings of anxiety and the desire for security. Compulsive drives, according to her, are not aimed at sexual gratification but at securing safety from isolation, fear, and hatred. This notion is reflected in Munch's artworks.
5. The expressionist tendency provided an opportunity for the expansion of personal aspirations and imaginative freedom, allowing the artist to express profound emotional and psychological distress during periods of national and global crises, particularly wars.
6. Expressionism became active in modern painting movements by shifting artistic focus from the external (object) to the internal (self). Artists, especially German Expressionists like Edvard Munch, embraced painting as a medium to manifest anxiety through emotional energy and personal expression.
7. In Munch's paintings, the expression of self and anxiety took shape through forms imbued with symbolic and metaphorical depth, compensating for the limitations of realistic form in conveying psychological dimensions and internal experiences.
8. The theories of Freud and other psychoanalysts profoundly influenced artists by opening up new insights into the unconscious and the dream world, enabling expression through the cognitive and aesthetic conflict between rational consciousness and unconscious instincts.
9. Anxiety was clearly expressed through line, which revealed psychological implications and aesthetic depth across all sampled works, embodying a stylistic quality tied to the artist's emotional state.
10. Color served as a significant expressive element, carrying psychological, symbolic, and emotional connotations. It reflected alienation, repression, anxiety, sadness, and love across all sampled artworks.
11. Form was used expressively in a variety of ways, whether realistic, distorted, abstracted, or geometric. Techniques such as magnification, minimization, elongation, shortening, deletion, addition, and flattening were utilized in all samples to visually manifest anxiety.
12. The forms in Munch's paintings demonstrated thematic and conceptual diversity. He often built entire works around a single central idea, transforming it into a new visual message loaded with symbolic meanings and expressive depth, as seen in *The Dance of Life* (Sample 6).
13. The woman was the most significant axis for representing anxiety in the samples, due to her symbolic and expressive importance in modern society and its visual discourse.
14. Anxiety was expressed as a psychological state through sadness in samples (1, 2, 3, 5, 6), and as a synonym for shock, fear, and depression in samples (1, 2, 3, 4, 5).

2. Conclusions:

1. The inward vision of the expressive self has become the true means of perception, where subjective interpretation of events leads to understanding truths that resonate with the human condition. Expressionist art rejected dominant themes such as history, mythology, and religion, giving rise to a new artistic language that focuses on self and content over aesthetic formalism.

2. Expressionist structures center on the portrayal of the artist's internal emotions, which originate from intense inner experiences and deep affect. Hence, the visual composition of the painting became a reflection of emotional space rather than a sensory one—a visual equivalent to the inner truth of the soul striving for liberation.
3. Expressionists deliberately dismissed the authority of rationality in favor of artistic freedom. The proposed subjects and rebellious forms emerged from inner drives. Their manipulation and distortion of form aimed to evoke a deeper emotional resonance and greater impact than the familiar shapes of objective reality. This characteristic defined Expressionism and enabled the expansion of imagination and the conscious expression of inner meanings.

3. Recommendations:

1. Researchers and students in art colleges can benefit from using the analytical tool employed in this study to interpret and analyze anxiety indicators across various domains, including social, psychological, economic, future-oriented, and political dimensions.
2. It is essential to organize regular meetings with undergraduate and postgraduate students to address issues that contribute to heightened anxiety and emotional distress.

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