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Features of Contempt in Contemporary Arab Painting Features of Contempt in Contemporary Arab Painting

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Abstract: This study explores the aesthetic and conceptual representation of contempt in contemporary Arab painting, examining how artists articulate resistance to oppression, marginalization, and political injustice through visual expression. By analyzing selected works from Iraq, Palestine, and Egypt, the research reveals how contemporary Arab art transforms the human body and symbolic elements into vehicles of critique against societal and institutionalized contempt. Employing a descriptive analytical method, the study draws on philosophical and postmodern frameworks to contextualize contempt as both a social phenomenon and an artistic motif. The findings underscore that contemporary visual art in the Arab world transcends traditional aesthetics to function as a powerful medium of protest, documenting collective trauma and human rights violations while advocating for dignity and social change.

Keywords: features, contempt, contemporary drawing

1. Introduction

Contempt, as a complex social and psychological construct, has permeated various human interactions across historical epochs, manifesting in interpersonal dynamics, institutional structures, and cultural narratives. In the context of the Arab world, this phenomenon has gained renewed visibility, particularly through the lens of contemporary visual arts, which serve as both a reflective mirror and a critical voice against the socio-political injustices of the time [1]. Contemporary Arab painting, in particular, has emerged as a dynamic space where artists confront the embedded realities of marginalization, war, patriarchy, occupation, and systemic violence. These artists harness aesthetic strategies not merely to represent suffering but to evoke resistance, dignity, and political consciousness.

Against a backdrop of revolutions, wars, displacement, and the entrenchment of authoritarian regimes, Arab painters have turned their canvases into sites of protest and memory. Their works interrogate the mechanisms of power and dominance, portraying contempt not only as a psychological state but also as a symptom of structural inequities and historical trauma [2]. This visual discourse finds its roots in postmodern critiques, drawing from movements such as conceptual art, graffiti, performance, and digital expression, while simultaneously infusing them with localized symbols and cultural references distinctive to the Arab experience. While philosophical traditions have long debated the origins and ethics of contempt—from Descartes' epistemological skepticism to Marx's critique of class oppression—contemporary Arab artists provide a visceral, embodied interpretation of the concept. Their artworks do not merely illustrate contempt

Citation: Al-Sarayfi A. S. J. and Abbas M. A. H. Features of Contempt in Contemporary Arab Painting Features of Contempt in Contemporary Arab Painting. Central Asian Journal of Arts and Design 2025, 6(2), 72-92.

Received: 10th Feb 2025
Revised: 18th Mar 2025
Accepted: 24th Apr 2025
Published: 22th May 2025



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but materialize it through fragmented bodies, distressed expressions, disrupted spatial compositions, and symbolic objects that evoke pain, humiliation, or resistance [3]. The representation of contempt in these artworks thus serves dual purposes: documenting personal and collective suffering, and challenging the cultural narratives that normalize such disdain.

2. Materials and Methods

This research adopts a qualitative analytical approach centered on identifying and interpreting the visual and conceptual features of contempt in contemporary Arab painting. The study addresses a persistent historical and psychological issue: the dehumanization and oppression of individuals as reflected in art, particularly in visual representations that challenge social and political injustice. Through the lens of selected artworks from Palestine, Iraq, and Egypt, the research explores how contemporary artists respond to and represent themes of contempt—a phenomenon often fueled by conflict, authoritarianism, economic disparity, and systemic social inequality. These artists use painting not only as a medium of aesthetic expression but also as a means of protest and critique, raising critical questions about human dignity, freedom, and rights.

The research problem is rooted in the enduring presence of contempt in human history and its vivid portrayal in visual culture. This study focuses on the aesthetic and structural characteristics that signify contempt, analyzing how these are conveyed through symbolism, composition, and style. The thematic boundaries are limited to artworks that overtly address contempt, while the spatial scope includes works from the aforementioned Arab regions. Temporally, the study is confined to the era of contemporary art, marked by its pluralistic styles and responsiveness to modern socio-political transformations.

Key terms such as "features" and "contempt" are defined both linguistically and procedurally. Features are understood as observable aesthetic or symbolic traits, while contempt is approached as a complex emotional and socio-political expression that manifests in visual narratives through irony, distortion, or confrontational imagery. This methodological framework enables a nuanced understanding of how visual art engages with and challenges societal mechanisms of marginalization and psychological harm.

3. Results

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND PREVIOUS STUDIES

Section One: The Philosophical Concept of Contempt

Human beings differ from other living beings in their thinking and rationality. However, they sometimes deviate from this wisdom through behaviors that reach the lowest levels of ugliness and hideousness, namely their contempt for others through harming and insulting them in various ways that reflect their negative thinking. Contempt is a negative phenomenon that reflects a diminishing of the other value. Either due to social, cultural, or psychological factors, as well as racial and religious differences, this behavior is manifested in offensive actions or harmful statements targeting the person directly or indirectly [4]. Thus, contempt leads to the deterioration of social relations and the spread of tension and conflicts, which negatively affect individuals' and societies' psychological, mental and emotional health. As it is one of the topics that raise questions about the nature of man and his status, and because it is a dangerous and harmful behavior, philosophical research and discussions have played an important role in understanding and analyzing the concept of contempt as the French philosopher made an essential shift in the intellectual and philosophical approach through his contempt for all previous beliefs, knowledge and opinions and his rejection of them. Because of him, minds began to awaken from their slumber, which the churches had despised for many years, and to free them from submission and dependence on free thinking and independent beliefs. Descartes subjected everything to doubt until he reached certainty, relying on the

ideas he derived from within the mind, not caring about other scientific readings or studies [5]. In his book (*Principles of Philosophy*), he says with a kind of contempt for the scholars who preceded him, "There have been great men who tried to find wisdom... but I do not know at all which one of them has succeeded in this task so far" [6]. The Cartesian ego has strengthened man's value through the idea of the "cogito," which is the principle on which Cartesian philosophy is based (I think, therefore, I exist). Any reliance on the mind and the human self as a tool to reach knowledge and the existence of God and the existence of the world, as Descartes surrounded the freedom of the individual within the circle of reason, and that thought is what distinguishes man from other living beings and is what gives him his value among his peers in society, as for the English philosopher. Who dealt with contempt for the state within his political philosophy, expressing the effect of the state's authority in its oppression of individuals because it deleted their rights and restricted their freedoms by ignoring them through its control over all aspects of life, economically, politically and socially, so Hobbes describes the state as a "mighty dragon"? [7] He expresses his vision of the great negative impact that the state has on society because it works to completely control individuals by controlling them and forcing them to submit to its oppressive policy and its contempt for the will of people without paying attention to their desires and special needs, which hinders their innovations and personal developments, whether on the individual or collective level. Because human nature tends to be appreciated and respected by others, any contempt for it is considered a threat to its dignity, as Hobbes has given the right within his philosophy to respond to disdain and defend with all the means they possess, as it is necessary for them to struggle to achieve a better position and greater respect in society [8]. Hobbes presented the idea of the "social contract" in his famous book "*Leviathan*," which states that individuals give up some of their rights in exchange for protection from the ruler to maintain the stability of society because they are always in a state of continuous conflict as they seek to achieve their interests and goals. One of them contempts the other, which creates a kind of chaos and permanent conflict in society, which does not end except with the existence of a state that controls the negative behavior of individuals and limits their contempt for each other. They submit to it according to that contract, while the English political thinker [9]. He emphasized that civil laws should be based on rights and not on force, protecting and respecting all the rights of individuals with justice without discriminating against one another, as all creation is equal since all creation is of the same kind and class. Everyone enjoys power and authority without dependency, submission, preference, or legitimate or even judicial authority. Locke promotes that reason is the basis of laws, which teaches people that no individual should contempt another individual in his life, his freedom, or his property, and thus they should be treated with equality and respect. Just as he does not accept that he is contemptuous, he should also not be contemptuous of the rest of humanity [10]. Furthermore, the rationalist philosopher attributes negative emotions as represented by contempt for the requirements of reason, which is what determines the behavior of the individual in terms of not transgressing against the rights of others and thus not causing any harm to others. Also, the submission of the person to these behaviors and being affected by them, which exceed human virtue, makes him lose his balance, which makes them unstable and changeable, and leads him in directions that lead him to enmity between them. This disturbs the peaceful social coexistence between individuals. Spinoza stresses that it is not possible to stop people's contempt except by an emotion that contradicts it and is more powerful than it, and that is by imposing a law that limits contempt, provided that this law is not based on reason alone, which Spinoza considers weak in suppressing such behaviors, but rather on fear of consequences and retribution under the roof of the state that protects those citizens [11]. Spinoza also pressures that the state should not contempt the criminals when holding them accountable, even if they have made mistakes, and should look at them with mercy and tolerance, based on the wisdom he said, "Our belief in reparation strengthens our resolve and supports us if the days show

us their fangs" [12]. Spinoza believed that reparation of the opposite and avoiding his contempt elevates him to a high level, strengthening his will to resist difficulties and overcome circumstances, no matter how harsh they are. As for Voltaire, whose real name was François-Marie Arouet. He was one of the first scholars interested in defending human rights, using a unique style of criticism, combining sharpness and mockery, to target the corruption and injustice spread in society due to the dominance of authoritarianism. Voltaire lived in conditions of social inequality, where classes were separated based on status and lineage, leading to a preference for the nobility and contempt for the common people. This class discrimination and the contempt shown by the authorities towards the people aroused Voltaire's deep resentment. They prompted him to criticize the ruling regime boldly, using a stinging style that exuded sarcasm. A touch of contempt characterized his criticisms as he mocked the royal court and revealed the duplicity of the ruling elites. He points out that they exploited the country's wealth and their power to oppress the people. His criticism was not random but came from a deep awareness of the manifestations of injustice suffered by the middle class and the general public, who fell victim to poverty, marginalization, and contempt. He saw that injustice and class disparity were not merely social problems. Rather, they are signs of deep corruption within the ruling structure, so he did not stop at superficially criticizing the king or the ruling elite but rather deepened his speech to address the root causes of injustice and expose the policies of oppression in a style of denunciation and biting sarcasm, hoping to bring about real change [13]. Whereas the German philosopher pointed out, among his philosophical ideas, his rejection of contempt in all its forms and his call for equality among individuals. The French Revolution was a glimmer of hope for Kant for the dominance of democracy and the suppression of contempt and slavery, which played a major role in spreading social peace. He also emphasized the government's role in raising the individual's status and assisting him, not exploiting him. Kant says: "Respect for every individual is a duty, considering the individual as an absolute end in himself, and it is a crime against the honor of humanity to use the individual as a means for any purpose", meaning that the individual has his value, his being, and his consciousness, and he cannot be exploited as a tool for others [14]. Kant emphasizes that man is a human being in himself and his thoughts. He believes that the freedom and will of the individual are the basis of morality and that they guarantee the safety of the individual from contempt of the soul and body. He carried a republican culture, reflecting freedom, equality, and resistance to contempt and tyranny [15]. As for the pessimistic philosopher. His contempt for women distinguished him due to what his mother left in him, which was the main reason for his hatred of them. It reflected a negative view in his philosophy through the tone of extreme contempt for women. We find him describing her as a trivial being that must be destroyed because she is the cause of human misery and suffering. He sees her as the source of evil and considers her a great barrier that prevents the world from being straight. He marginalized her and belittled her as a grown child, meaning that she remained like a child all her life, unable even to lead herself. Schopenhauer sought to strip women of all virtue [16]. Moreover, the philosopher and political thinker Karl Heinrich Marx adopted contempt for social classes in his materialist theory. As society was divided into a submissive class and a dominant class that despised the former, there was a struggle between those who had and those who did not have. We find that Marx warned against the despotic ownership system because of its social evils that despised the working classes (the proletariat), and he suggested replacing it with a system of collective ownership. Which reduces contempt due to the prevalence of justice and equality. Marx says that if we wanted to mention the historical tracing of society, we would only mention the continuous societal contempt for humanity, represented by the contempt of the free for the slave, the contempt of the noble for the commoner, and the contempt of the teacher for the craftsman. In short, oppressors and the oppressed. This contempt may be clear and public or hidden and concealed [17]. Therefore, in his philosophical message, he rejected all forms of slavery, contempt, tyranny, and

domination because they threatened human dignity, restricted his freedom, and hindered his development. He sought a more stable society and a better life for all [18]. While the German thinker Friedrich Nietzsche dealt with man from several points of view, his belonging to existential philosophy led him to research human existence from its formation, meaning that the stage of worms, up to the stage of the higher man, that man with noble morals who develops himself through practicing his freedom, rejecting his contempt, getting rid of slavery, and reshaping his image on the canvas of time [19]. By human will, strength, and determination, man elevates himself to the top. Nietzsche rejected all religions because, as he put it, they hindered man from realizing his abilities and potential. "This is the basis of his attack on sublime metaphysics and all religions that assume the existence of life after death" [20]. This is because he believes that religions and their ideas work as a means of controlling and despising people, and their belief that there is a life after death makes people neglect the present and become bound and obedient to religious laws without question. Nietzsche believes that Christianity has played a major role in destroying and highlighting the weakness of humans with its traditions and religious values because it despises the human spirit and sacrifices and distorts the mind. Nietzsche calls for replacing Christianity with the theory of the higher man (Übermensch), which affirms the world and life and enhances the individual's freedom according to his own will [21]. Jean-Paul Sartre, who is considered the father of existential philosophy, was distinguished by his atheistic philosophy, as he despised God, rejecting the idea of his control over human destiny, considering that religious beliefs restrict human freedom and hinder his development, stressing that man is responsible for his actions and proves his value. There is no god in this world but man [22]. In this, he follows the approach of Nietzsche's philosophy, saying, "Man replaces God" [23]. Man can assume control of the world and himself as the basis of existence, and Sartre believes through the theory of rejection that man is responsible for arranging his life alone without the need for a god to lead him. The existentialist philosopher declared his rejection of the contempt of man because he cannot be enslaved sometimes and is free at other times, but man was created to be free. In this way, he strengthened the value of man and his position in this world and gave greater importance to human existence [24]. Sartre linked the concept of human freedom to coercion, oppression, and contempt. In his play "The Republic of Silence," he expressed his extreme dissatisfaction with the contempt shown to people by the German occupation of France, which deprived them of the right to speak and defend themselves. He says, "We were exposed to contempt daily, either from newspapers or television screens, but we were free. The whips of the executioner do not prevent us from being free because the slave is free by breaking his chains." [25]. The humanist philosopher Erich Fromm, considered one of the most important thinkers of the twentieth century, was distinguished by his humanist tendency. We find that this thinker of Jewish origins rejected Zionism's contempt for the Palestinians, and his criticism may be somewhat strange. However, he rejects any contempt for man by man, as any human philosophy does not accept the contempt of the strong for the weak and his humiliation to control him, as the basic and highest goal is to liberate that human being from all forms of slavery. Fromm resisted imperialism in all its forms because it contempt's a certain group for the sake of another group, whether in the societies of the dominant countries or the dominated countries, because of the impact the two world wars left on him, as war is waged without any ethics or rules. It despises a man without a sense of guilt. Because contemporary war technology allows killing without seeing the battlefield, Fromm warns in his humanist philosophy that even if tyrannical rulers control their fellow human beings and can exploit them, they cannot curb their reactions to their contempt for them and their brutal treatment of them [26]. They must be constantly prepared to resist those responses [27]. From the above, the researcher sees that contempt is one of the concepts that has occupied the interest of philosophers throughout the ages, as their opinions and visions about how to deal with it and its causes have varied. Visions varied between philosophies that

advocated justice, equality, and human dignity and other philosophies that reflected discriminatory tendencies that despised certain segments of society, such as women and enslaved people. While some philosophers called for rejecting all forms of contempt and the promotion of values of justice, other philosophies sought to establish social systems that discriminated between people based on gender, class, or power.

Section two: (Contempt in Postmodern Arts)

After the devastation and exhaustion in which Europe found itself as a result of World War II, artists saw crowded cities losing their humanity, shocked by the devastation of war and the scale of the destruction. This reality prompted many artists from the School of Paris to emigrate en masse to America, especially after the Nazi occupation of France. These artists faced major challenges in the post-war period, as lifestyles struggled and changed radically with economic, cultural, and technological developments, which led to transformations in human and social relations. Thus, it was reflected in the psychological and spiritual state of individuals and, therefore, had a great impact on the artistic and aesthetic experience, which led to the emergence of new artistic styles and products based on continuous change, which were classified under the umbrella of "postmodern arts" [28].

Abstract Expressionism

The first of these artistic movements was Abstract Expressionism, which emerged in the 1940s and focused on spontaneity and emotion by using the technique of pouring and dripping color and spotting on the visible surface and linking it to movement to break away from everything familiar and to rely on the amorphous and the subjective [29]. The works of the artist Leon Golub were distinguished by their remarkable expressive power, as they reflected his vision of human life in light of the violence and brutality inherent in society. His paintings embodied harsh scenes of torture, terrorism, oppression, and persecution practiced by governments in the streets. They also highlighted racial inequality and social injustice, which gave them unparalleled human depth and expressive honesty, as in **Figure 1** below.



Fig 1. Representation of Domestic Violence and Power Dynamics in Contemporary Painting

It depicts the strong's contempt for the weak, how power can turn into a monster that despises the common people, and its contribution to creating an environment of fear, injustice and contempt [30]. The works of popular Art known in the 1950s and 1960s of the twentieth century reflect a satirical, contemptuous, and mocking content of society using various methods. It constitutes a revolution and reaction against the prevailing artistic beliefs, seeking to break away from the past and build a new future history for society, as in **Figure 2** [31].



Fig 2. Symbolic Sculpture Reflecting Cultural Identity and Resistance

The painting (Skull) by the artist (Andy Warhol), as in **Figure 3**, expresses a deeply emotional, subjective dimension based on manifestations of violence, contempt, torture, and death, which have become life-threatening and have resulted in many victims, whether physically or psychologically.



Fig 3. Pop Art Interpretation of Mortality and Political Dissent

Warhol used the skull as a focal point to reflect in this artwork the concepts of nihilism, absurdity, and despair that characterize the current era, in which violence and contempt have become part of the culture of daily life [32]. Furthermore, the artwork (Hot Doc) as in **Figure 4**, by the artist (Edward Kienholz), which was completed in 1968, is also considered a critical message about war, its impact on society, and the violence and contempt it generates for people, as the presence of soldiers and their attempt to establish the flag on the ground expresses an attempt to achieve peace.



Fig 4. Visual Protest Against Occupation: A Palestinian Resistance Narrative

The gray paint also symbolizes the memories of war and its negative impact. The artist deliberately included photographs of the man and woman sitting in front of the restaurant to add a symbolic character that expresses the rejection of contempt for war and the adoption of a luxurious civilian life [33].

The Fluxus Movement

In recent years, many forms and manifestations of Art have taken a new direction, relying on what defies logic and transcends the bounds of reason. This has led to the emergence of artworks that seek to shock and provoke feelings of anxiety and turmoil in the viewer within the framework of contemporary Art. Especially the Fluxus movement, where manifestations of falsehood and an excessive desire to explore the unknown emerged, along with a departure from traditional perceptions of beauty. By employing vulgar goods and naked bodies and presenting them as if they had artistic value. The Fluxus movement was distinguished by adopting absurd and extreme positions, tending towards mockery and contempt, and lacking self-worth [34]. The work "The Prostrate" by the artist Ana Mendieta, which was executed in the 1970s, represents a cry against forgetting the consequences of human existence and its inevitability. By combining violent performance art, feminist Art, and land art and confronting lived reality, Mendieta takes a photograph of a woman's corpse covered in a white cloth stained with blood as a sign of human fragility, contempt, violence, and suffering, as in **Figure 5**.



Fig 5. Graphic Installation Depicting Brutality and the Human Cost of Conflict
Conceptual Art

It flourished in the 1960s thanks to the continuous development of Art and the production of artworks that differed from the usual and prevailing ones (conceptual Art), which relied primarily on the idea of transferring it from the artist to the recipient, meaning that the idea is the essence around which the artwork revolves. The idea is not just a part of the work, but what produces and shapes it as a tool that creates Art. This reflects the philosophical nature of conceptual Art and the liberated and open nature that goes beyond traditional artistic theories [35]. In 1965, the artist (Leon Ferrari) presented a different work on the concept of contempt (Western Christian civilization), as in **Figure 6**.



Fig 6. Militarized Symbolism of Western Intervention in the Middle East

In it, he explained the idea of using airplanes instead of serving people and facilitating their lives by bridging the distances between them, but rather exploiting them to despise and destroy people and kill people without mercy, as this work carried several connotations, through the airplane that the artist used to refer to killing, and placing explosives on the wings of the plane specifically, and the crucified Christ, which represents contempt for the human race, while placing the red color on the front of the plane indicates a warning and the seriousness of the situation regarding the development that man has reached and its effect on the injustice of humanity [36]. The conceptual artist deviated from traditional aesthetic and ethical standards, moving towards expressing new symbols and connotations. He used the human body as an innovative medium, which allowed him to present a new vision based on dismantling and reshaping traditional art methods. The artist relied on writing, engravings, pasting, and tattooing to express contempt in his contemporary artistic experience.

An example is the artist's work (Sean Clark) as in **Figure 7**, which includes tattoos bearing the names of 223 soldiers who were disdained and killed in the Afghan war, along with images of weapons and other symbols, as these elements became an expression of a new cultural vision that challenges traditional concepts of identity. Thus, the artist adopted the idea as the essence of his Art, transcending prevailing values and presenting a new approach to conceptual Art [37].



Fig 7. Tattoo as Memorial: Embodied Testimony of War Victims and Loss

Graffiti art

Graffiti is a visual act that combines writing and images. It cannot be classified as traditional drawings or pictures. It appears in squares, parks, streets, and homes. It is street art and in books, newspapers, and other places. It is an advertising art that breaks with the traditions of exhibitions, where paintings are hung. It imposes itself on the viewer in an unavoidable way, haunting them with images and words. It emerges from society and expresses its aspirations. It competes with the screen in its influence, as it penetrates spaces and remains fixed on the walls or moves between places. It carries political and social messages that express protest against contempt, oppression, and capitalist ideas and rebellion against the laws and methods of oppression to which the poor and marginalized are subjected [38]. The artist sends political, social, personal, and other messages through it. The methods and techniques used in this Art are diverse, as are the topics it presents. The isolation walls carried intellectual connotations of contempt through the use of graffiti art, the first of which was the murals of apartheid between the West Bank and Israel in the Palestinian territories, which contained many drawings and words drawn and written by citizens, artists, and human rights activists of different nationalities, with different images and topics to break the siege and show support for families as in **Figure 8**. The Berlin Wall was also the scene of many graphic works drawn in protest against the arbitrary separation and isolation of the people from each other, calling for freedom and hope and condemning contempt, as in **Figure 9** [39].



Fig 8. Mixed Media Installation Exploring Chaos and Identity in Urban Life



Fig 9. Political Street Art Critiquing Power and Western Hegemony

Digital Art

Digital Art represents a form of artistic expression that relies heavily on digital technology. Its emergence began in the 1960s, and it has undergone a variety of terms, ranging from "computer art" to "multimedia art," until the term "digital art" was finally established, to become the comprehensive umbrella that gathers under its various forms of artistic expression based on modern technologies, so that human creativity comes together alongside electronic innovation, to enrich the contemporary global artistic scene in countless ways [40]. Digital tools have given artists unlimited freedom, enabling them to distort and manipulate forms so that the image is no longer fixed. However, it can be reconstructed with imaginary elements added and digitally distorted with sarcastic expressions that carry a kind of contempt [41]. The Mona Lisa is one of the most famous paintings in the world and a global symbol of beauty and mystery, and changing it digitally is a direct challenge to artistic heritage, as shown in **Figure 10**.



Fig 10. Cultural Parody and Recontextualization of Mona Lisa in Modern Attire

Art is no longer merely a representation or beautification of reality but has become a means of expressing complex issues, such as identity, power, globalization, social justice, oppression, and contempt. Contemporary Art has become a fertile field for experimentation and innovation, in which artists express their visions and ideas in unconventional and bold ways. "Art is the most capable form of human activity in expressing communication between individuals, generations, and nations" [42]. It is a true bridge for human communication, a living record of human history, and one of the most powerful tools of expression. The artist (Jean-Michel Basquiat) embodied in his drawings the contempt for black people within American society and their intellectual, economic, and personal struggles in that harsh environment. His painting (Flexibility), which he completed in 1984 in **Figure 11**, reflected the crisis of contempt for the human self, with a portrait that shocks the viewer of a black man in the middle of a white background, using the black color with broad lines, and two arms connected and extended upwards in a distorted, abbreviated form, lacking anatomical proportions, to address and read the recipient without restrictions in this work the contempt of the black man and his pains among the white-skinned people and the fear of the future threatened with annihilation and destruction, as the mirror of the artist (Fernando Botter) in 2007 had a great role in revealing to the world the ugly face of America, this was through his works that dealt with the contempt of American soldiers for the sanctity of the bodies of Iraqi prisoners in Abu Ghraib prison, violating their bodies with police dogs, mocking them by wearing women's clothing, forcing them to undress, piling them on top of each other in indecent positions, and electrocuting them [43] [44].



Fig 11. Expressionist Portrait Conveying Inner Conflict and Social Alienation

As shown in **Figure 12**, where the artist exaggerated the bodies to convey the ugliness of wars and the contempt they produce for humanity and the killing, torture and persecution that people suffer as a result of them, the artist (Banksy) had and still has a major role in addressing social issues, especially contempt.



Fig 12. Visual Overload of Human Suffering and Collective Struggle in War Imagery

His 2012 graffiti work (Return to Africa), as in **Figure 13**, is distinguished by simplicity in execution and composition.



Fig 13. Satirical Commentary on Conformity and Dissent in Political Expression

Still, the message it carries is strong and influential, reflecting the feelings of hatred, loathing and contempt that some individuals in Western societies face towards others of races other than the dominant white race. The painting features five identical gray pigeons holding three signs, one of which says (Migrants Not Welcome), another (Go Back to Africa), and the third (Stay Out of Our Food), with the faces of a migratory swallow. They all stand in a line drawn by Banksy, taking advantage of the edge of the building to represent an electrical wire on which birds usually hang. This line symbolizes that everyone is equal in value and importance, that nature has not discriminated between anyone, and that the world must realize that the old concepts of racial superiority and contempt based on colonialism have no place in contemporary society [45]. The Serbian massacre that occurred in 1995 had a great impact on the soul of the war artist (Peter Hoosen), which he described as hell on earth, a genocide against humanity that claimed the lives of approximately 8,000 men and boys. He says, "I was shocked by what I saw." After a quarter of a century, Hosen began to accept the scenes of contempt he saw and to reconcile with everything he had gone through, to bring back the memory and embody this massacre in a horrific realistic style in the year 2019 through his painting (The Serbian Massacre) as in **Figure 14**, which depicts thousands of men with their hands tied behind their backs in torn clothes.



Fig 14. Symbolic Landscape Reflecting Mass Movement and Hope Under Oppression

Their faces are covered with fear and terror as they await their inevitable execution. This painting is considered an artistic cry against the cruelty and contempt to which innocent people fall victim [46]. Art has an effective role in treating the psychological and social shocks that individuals are exposed to. Through it, contempt can be shown in its deepest forms, which contributes to raising awareness about these issues, as it is a powerful tool for revealing social injustices, including the case of the killing of George Floyd 2020, a black man, at the hands of an American police officer, which is a living example of how Art can be used to highlight injustice, as many artists have expressed solidarity with the Issue of racism and contempt [47]. Among them is the artist (Nathan Murdoch) in his work (Amazed), as in **Figure 15**.



Fig 15. Street Art Depiction of Unity and Human Connection through Symbolic Gestures

Arab plastic Art has always been a powerful means of embodying the conflicts of societies and documenting their experiences, transcending the limits of traditional aesthetics to become a loud voice in the face of injustice and contempt under conditions of oppression and persecution. Arab artists use their works as a platform through which they express the suffering of their people and reveal their harsh reality. Thus, paintings and artworks become visual messages that convey sincere calls for liberation and change. The events witnessed by the artist (Assem Abdul Amir) in his homeland, Iraq, had a deep psychological echo within him, starting with the Iran-Iraq war and the wars that followed, up to the economic blockade that the people paid the price for in terms of food and medicine shortages, and what the Iraqi child experienced in terms of contempt as a result of those wars, which the artist embodied through his painting (Childhood and War) as in **Figure 16**, that he completed in 2001, with symbols of an aesthetic nature that carry psychological and social connotations, which appeared clearly to the children in the painting executed in a condensed and abstract manner.



Fig 16. Mural Highlighting the Emotional Impact of War on Children

To express, through a kind of imagination, different realistic scenes of fear, anxiety and contempt, the artist (Sulaiman Mansour) completed 2005 a digital artwork in which he dealt with the subject of contempt for man within his homeland and on his land, through the racist wall that the occupation built on the Palestinian lands, where Mansour based his work on a part of the painting (The Creation of Adam) as in **Figure 17**, by the Italian artist (Michelangelo) which he processed the image digitally [48].



Fig 17. Artistic Reinterpretation of Michelangelo's 'Creation of Adam' in a Contemporary Context

The two extended hands in the painting symbolize the desire to maintain communication between the two sides despite the wall's existence. It also embodies the separation of the soul from the body by separating Jerusalem and the holy places from the rest of the Palestinian lands to reflect the extent of the influence of this wall on the Palestinians through the Palestinians' contempt and its tearing apart of the geographical and social community as in **Figure 18** [49].



Fig 18. Political Wall Art Evoking Separation and Loss of Divine Connection

In the summer of 2014, the western regions of Iraq experienced one of the most tragic moments in their modern history, as terrorist groups invaded those regions, forcing residents to flee from the looming death. Amid this catastrophic context, the artist (Amal Fadel Al-Daraji) presented her artwork (Displaced People). In a modern abstract style that carries a deep symbolism of the experience of collective contempt and flight in search of safety, the painting embodies the story of an Iraqi woman fleeing with her children,

making her way across a barren desert in a desperate attempt to escape the imminent danger, with overlapping and turbulent colors expressing moments of tension and terror experienced by the displaced, increasing the severity of the pain, cruelty, and contempt. The painting embodies the experience of displacement and the state of escaping from the unknown to imagine the contempt and collective loss of peace and security, as well as a visual documentation of those harsh moments, as in **Figure 19** [50].



Fig 19. Installation Reflecting Institutional Power, Surveillance, and the Fragility of Freedom

In 2017, the artist (Nasser Haji) sought to convey a strong message about rejecting the dark ideas of contempt imposed by the extremist ISIS against Yazidi women. Especially in the market of Raqqa, where the phenomenon of their enslavement was at its peak, the artwork (*Women in ISIS Prisons*) as in **Figure 20**, depicts a woman sitting in a dark cell facing the harshest types of oppression, contempt and torture, where she appears as a symbol of steadfastness and struggle despite her ongoing suffering, extending her hand towards a glimmer of light that penetrates the darkness surrounding her, indicating the hope that refuses to be extinguished despite the pain [51].



Fig 20. Symbolic Painting of Captivity and the Struggle to Reach Enlightenment from Confinement

Besides, the contempt continues to this day, represented by the Jewish contempt for the Palestinians, which resulted in the Al-Aqsa Flood War in 2023. In light of this difficult reality, Art was one of the most important tools of Palestinian resistance, as it became a means of drawing the features of the Palestinian identity that the occupation was trying to erase. Many Palestinian artists have confronted Jewish contempt, using the rubble of destroyed homes to embody the suffering of the children of Gaza, as in **Figure 21**.



Fig 21. Expressionist Depiction of Torture and Human Suffering in Carceral Settings

Palestinian artists resort to employing this type of Art to convey powerful messages related to the injustice, oppression, and contempt to which the Palestinians are subjected and as a symbol of their tragedy. These graphic artworks offer a reflective and expressive view of daily life in Gaza, where children face the remains of destruction in an attempt to recover what they have lost. In some paintings, children are depicted trying to play or relive childhood moments during destruction, highlighting the harsh reality they face. These works show the psychological impact of war and contempt on the new generation of Palestinians [52]. The researcher believes from the above that visual Art has played a fundamental role in conveying and embodying issues of social contempt and injustice, as we find that artists strive to produce artworks that reflect their challenge to existing social and political systems, revealing them to the public in a sometimes-shocking manner, to stimulate awareness of these issues and contemplate their role in the continuation or change of these phenomena.

Indicators resulting from the theoretical framework

1. Although the largest number of philosophical orientations have denounced contempt, other philosophies, such as nihilism and others, lead to contempt.
2. Differences in viewpoints and intellectual and ideological differences have led to contempt among members of the same society, expressed through facial expressions, hand gestures, words, and sometimes physical force.
3. The human body has been used to express resistance to contempt in contemporary visual arts, such as performance art, conceptual Art, and post-conceptual Art.
4. Human beings have been subjected to contempt in some contemporary visual arts trends, where their human value has been violated through works that have significantly degraded the human body.
5. Contemporary Art has supported people subjected to contempt, murder, and persecution due to devastating wars, which have negatively impacted women, the elderly, and children.
6. The sharp, random lines in the artwork express tension, violence, and divisions, highlighting manifestations of contempt and social hostility, while the soft, broken lines signify the weakness and fragility of victims of persecution and contempt.
7. Colors reflect the deep meanings in the artwork related to contempt, as dark, warm, and contrasting colors express the sadness and depression that dominate the lives of marginalized individuals and groups.

4. Discussion

First: The Framework of the Research Community

Due to the great diversity of contemporary art trends and the breadth of its production, especially after it broke free from traditional methods limited to the painted canvas. In addition to the multiplicity of production locations, it became difficult for the researcher to inventory artworks accurately. However, by reviewing relevant artistic sources and using the information available online, a research community consisting of 30 contemporary artworks was identified. These works were distinguished by their treatment of the value of contempt and diversity in their production methods in drawing, which aligns with the research objectives.

Second: The Research Sample

The researcher worked to determine the selection of her research sample, which numbered 3) as a model, from the framework of the research community, which was chosen intentionally. The sample was chosen according to the following justifications:

- Selecting artworks that prominently embody manifestations of contempt.
- Considering the diversity of contemporary artistic trends.
- Taking into account the chronological differences in the production of artworks.
- Selecting the most famous works by different artists without repeating the same artist.
- Including works from the fields of painting, sculpture, and installation art in the sample

Third: Research Tool

Due to the nature of the research sample and its characteristics, and to achieve the research objective and uncover manifestations of contempt in contemporary global visual Art, the researcher relied on the observation tool and the intellectual and aesthetic indicators she obtained through the study. The works were also analyzed within the research's theoretical framework and according to the period.

Fourth: Research Methodology

The researcher followed a descriptive approach, using content analysis for the research sample, which aligned with the study's objective of uncovering representations of contempt in contemporary global visual Art as shown in Table 1.

Fifth: Sample analysis

Table 1. Comparative Analysis of Selected Contemporary Arab Artworks Addressing Societal Themes

Artist	Work	Achievement	Measurement	Materials Used	Property
Hani Zaarob	The Arab Spring Is Not Yet Complete	2011	200 x 200 cm	Acrylic and pigments on canvas	private collection
Safaa Al-Saadoun	Auction	2014	160 x 210 cm	Oil on canvas	Private Collection
Walid Obaid	Child Marriage	2019	100 x 100 cm	Oil on canvas	Private collection



Model 1



Model 2



Model 3

Visual Representations of Social and Political Issues in Contemporary Arab Artworks

Model 1

This work depicts a group of overlapping, incomplete human faces with angry expressions amidst a crowd of people, their hands raised in a state of struggle and resistance. A large shoe dominates at the top of the painting on the right, and all these elements overlap against a dark green background.

Work Analysis

This work depicts a large crowd gathered in a protest or demonstration against the ruling regime. The artist depicts this work in a contemporary manner through incomplete faces and raised hands, which he depicts in a reduced manner. It can be seen that the chaos that covers the structure of the painting breaks the rules of traditional composition, as the characters overlap with the background to reflect the turmoil of the reality they live in, which constitutes an honest representation of the state of human collapse in the face of

oppression, where man loses his identity and being in the shadow of absolute domination. The artist used a group of colors represented by light brown, which he used to represent human faces with sullen features that scream in the face of injustice, tyranny, and oppression, with looks looking forward to change and achieving a bright tomorrow. We also see a clear dominance of the color green, representing life and living, as the artist desires a new life full of dignity and humanity, far from oppression, injustice, oppression, and contempt. The artist deliberately used these colors together to create a stifling visual environment. We find a clear appearance of the base of a shoe imposing its presence on all the elements of the painting. The artist drew it prominently, occupying a not-so-small space in one of the parts of the work, which expresses clear symbolic connotations of the ruling authorities' oppression of the people, crushing their dignity and usurping their rights. The movement is manifested through raised hands, open mouths and angry eyes, which express protest and cries of rejection of contempt and injustice and rejection of the bitter reality to reflect the continuous conflict between man and the forces that seek to suppress him.

Additionally, the work lacks traditional perspective, as the characters overlap and appear flat, creating a sense of crowding and suffocation, making the characters appear trapped in a closed space with no horizon or exit. The sharp, random brushstrokes also reflect the artist's inner turmoil, confirming that this painting is the product of revolution and resistance. Although the visual chaos covers the work, the distribution of shadow and light draws attention to the characters, highlighting their suffering. The light falls on certain parts, such as the faces and hands, making them stand out from the dark background. Through this, the artist wants the viewer's attention to focus on the victims. This work represents the artist's unbridled desire to stand up against injustice and revolt against oppressive authorities who practice the most heinous contempt for their people. It also calls for a reconsideration of the rights usurped and for a stand against all forms of oppression, persecution, and contempt. The work possesses a special beauty that stems from its expressive power, embodying human pain in a way that makes the viewer feel the intensity of the tragedy.

Model 2

The painting depicts a crowd of sharp-faced, mysterious men with long beards, holding hostile looks, gathered around a submissive-looking woman wearing a white dress surrounding her.

Work Analysis

This work depicts the trafficking of women, particularly Yazidis, during the ISIS occupation of Mosul. The artist creates a visual representation of darkness and gloom, using dark colors and sharp brushstrokes to convey the horror, chaos, grief, suffering, and contempt experienced by women during that era. In this artwork, we find the dominance of dark blue and black colors in the scene units, with light strokes of yellow. Meanwhile, the painter deliberately made the dress worn by the woman in the center of the painting white, stained with several colored spots, to draw the viewer's attention to the chastity and purity that have been desecrated. The artist paid some attention to the rules of perspective, as the close figures appear in dark colors and clear features, while the distant figures appear in light colors and have blurred unclear features. This way of presenting the characters gives the painting an atmosphere of violence and aggression towards the victim, represented by the woman. The artist successfully presented a balance between distortion and realism to confirm that this visual scene is not merely a distortion of beauty but of humanity itself. Through it, he shows how women were exploited during wars and clarifies their suffering from oppression and contempt during those periods. Although the movement is invisible, it is felt through the accumulation of bodies and their crowding around the woman, which creates a closed scene that suggests the suffocation and pressure that the woman is experiencing. The painter's deliberate use of anatomy inaccurately reflects the chaos and tension of the scene. He also employed the technique of light and

shadow in the painting, where the light is dimly cast on the woman's body. At the same time, the surrounding crowd is immersed in shadows, a profound indication of the forces of evil seeking to extinguish the light. This visual technique reinforces the struggle between good and evil. The contempt in this work is represented by how the body and dignity of women were violated in the name of a false religion that conceals disbelief, deception, and hypocrisy. This painting is a human message that transcends the visual dimension to reach the depths of the viewer, as the combination of all these elements is a clear indication of the social, religious, and political contempt that women were subjected to during the period of ISIS control.

Model 3

This painting depicts a young girl sitting uncomfortably on an old metal bed, wearing a white dress and a wedding veil covering her head. Her facial features are tense, and her eyes are filled with sadness, anger, and resignation. She is holding onto an old bed with her legs spread open. To the right of the painting is a black suitcase, and to the left is a bouquet of red roses lying on the floor, upon which is an older man's cane. In the background of the painting is a slightly open door with a red dress hanging behind it.

Work Analysis

This painting embodies a harsh stance against the tradition that degrades underage girls in an inhumane manner, such as early marriage. The artist can reveal girls' suffering by using a closed space that makes you feel confined and imprisoned, reflecting societal pressures. The artist has excelled in using contrasting colors and distributing them equally. The pale green color covers the background to express the calm of ordinary daily life. Through the girl's white dress, he indicates the purity and innocence associated with the wedding. Still, it has been presented here differently because of the tension that the painting reflects. The red color was used in the roses lying on the ground and the dress hanging behind the door to symbolize that the girl's life has fallen, which increases the turmoil in the painting. The artist also considered anatomy and proportions, as the brush strokes were precise and accurate, especially in depicting the girl's features and the details of the bed. The artist represented the body of the girl sitting on the bed with a childish, immature body. Her braids, her tense facial features, her sad, submissive, angry looks, her uncomfortable sitting position, and her feet folded on the bed completed the visual scene of her unfitness for marriage and its responsibilities. In addition to the stick on the bed, which indicates her marriage to an older man and the disdain of the girl due to customs and traditions, the movement that the artist represented with the hands holding the bed frame rigidly confirms the restriction that the girl lives in and her inability to liberate herself and the moral imprisonment imposed on her by society. The artist focused the light on the girl from above to focus the visual attention directly on her, revealing her facial features and highlighting her strong expressions, while the shadows in the background of the painting make the room appear dim, which adds a sense of loneliness and isolation that afflicts the girl. This controversial artwork carries a humanitarian and social message about the phenomenon of contempt for young girls, child marriage, and contempt for girls, placing them in an extremely difficult situation that is not appropriate for their age and entering a world that was not for them, neither psychologically nor physically. It was observed that the artist had combined several visual elements to illustrate the contempt for minors, which he embodied in the white wedding dress worn by the little girl, the black bag, and the bouquet of roses thrown on the ground, indicating the loss of innocence and her transition to a new stage in her life that is imposed and forced as well as the slightly open door in the background of the painting, which indicates the presence of an exit but is difficult to reach. All of these elements come together to urge the viewer to think critically and sympathize with the girls who fall victim to the contempt of the unjust traditions represented by underage marriage.

5. Conclusion

First: Research Findings

1. Contemporary visual Art is a means of social and political critique, as artists use their artistic messages to express issues of injustice, discrimination, and contempt, as in most of the research sample models.
2. The chaotic structure of the work breaks the traditional rules of composition, creating a visual structure that is an honest representation of the state of human collapse in the face of contempt, as in models (1, 2).
3. Artworks have been significantly influenced by the social and political conditions and circumstances that humanity has experienced. These influences are reflected in the creativity of contemporary artists, occupying a significant portion of these works, as seen in the overall research sample.
4. Artworks have documented and recorded prominent global events inspired by lived reality, contributing to a rich historical record, as seen in the overall research sample.
5. Visual Art was and still is a powerful tool and an important means of expressing the pain and suffering of the most vulnerable groups in society and their contempt, such as women and children, as in models (1, 2).

Second: Conclusions

1. Contemporary visual Art is no longer merely an aesthetic medium but has become a fertile environment for exposing manifestations of social injustice, political corruption, and contempt.
2. Humanism in contemporary visual Art is linked to depicting the suffering of vulnerable groups and embodying the contempt individuals face due to classism, racism, and social and political marginalization.
3. The contemporary visual artist works to deconstruct the stereotype and reshape artistic awareness of marginalized groups by adopting contemporary philosophies that reject contempt.
4. The persistence of the stereotype of contempt for women in contemporary visual arts reflects the fragility of their social status and their continued exposure to violence and marginalization.
5. Suffering and harsh experiences were not obstacles for the contemporary visual artist; they became a basic motivation for refining his artistic vision and uniqueness.

Third: The researcher recommends:

1. Work on translating foreign sources and books that discuss the phenomenon of contempt in the visual arts into Arabic, which will enrich the Arabic library and broaden the horizons of researchers and students.
2. Organize workshops and intellectual dialogues targeting students and the academic community to promote a culture of reconciliation and reject all forms of contempt.
3. Establishing permanent exhibitions and libraries specializing in collecting and documenting artworks that address contempt issues and stimulating community dialogue about them.

Suggestions

1. Sources of contempt in modern European painting.
2. Representations of contempt in the arts of Mesopotamia.

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