

## Arab Issues in Contemporary Western and Arab Art

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**Received:**  
27/2/2023

**Acceptance:**  
18/5/2023

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**Cited by:**  
Jordan J. Arts, 17(1)  
(2024) 99 - 119

**Doi:**  
<https://doi.org/10.47016/17.1.7>

### Abstract

The study aims to explore the content of artworks by Western and Arab artists, which embodied Arab humanitarian and political issues, depicting the destruction, devastation, and displacement caused by Arab wars, conflicts, and revolutions, thereby raising awareness about contemporary Arab issues. The study employs analytical and comparative methods to analyze a selection of artworks by Western and Arab artists created between 1998 and 2019. Among the key findings are that the artworks shed light on Arab issues, inhuman violations, war suffering, occupation, and the effects of torture in prisons. Some artworks exhibit satire and sarcasm in expressing Arab political issues, while others are characterized by abstraction and symbolism, reflecting the artists' individuality in addressing their concerns. Certain Western artworks depicted exaggerated realism and satire, reflecting war forms and effects. Artists employed various styles and methods, including drawing, photography, multimedia, conceptual, and performance art, to depict these issues. The study concludes that contemporary Western and Arab artists' endeavors served as influential elements in shaping global awareness of the impacts of war and occupation in the Arab world, expressing Arab humanitarian and political issues through their visual artworks. Both Western and contemporary Arab artists adopt their unique styles and techniques to address Arab humanitarian issues, forming artistic image embodying war, conflict, and the suffering of contemporary Arab individuals.

**Keywords:** political art, social art, Arab art, conceptual art.

### القضايا العربية في الفن الغربي والعربي المعاصر

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### الملخص

هدفت الدراسة إلى التعرف إلى مضمون الأعمال الفنية لدى فناني العالمين الغربي والعربي التي جسدت القضايا العربية الإنسانية والسياسية، وصورت الدمار والخراب والتهجير الذي سببه الحروب والنزاعات والثورات العربية، والتي قد ترفع مستوى وعي المتلقي حول القضايا العربية المعاصرة. اتبعت الدراسة منهجي التحليل والمقارنة في تحليل مجموعة أعمال فنية لفناني العالمين الغربي والعربي نُفذت بين عامي (1998-2019). وكانت أهم النتائج: أن الأعمال الفنية سلطت الضوء على القضايا العربية والانتهاكات غير الإنسانية ومعاناة الحرب والاحتلال وأثار التعذيب في السجون، كما اتسمت بعض الأعمال الفنية بالسخرية والتهمك في التعبير عن القضايا العربية السياسية. تميزت بعض الأعمال العربية بالتجريد والرمزية، كما أظهر الفنان خصوصيته في التعبير عن قضاياها. وتميزت بعض الأعمال الغربية بالواقعية المفرطة والساخرة؛ إذ عكست أشكال الحروب وآثارها. كما استخدم الفنان أساليب وطرق مختلفة في تصوير القضايا كالرسم والتصوير والوسائط المتعددة والفن المفاهيمي والأدائي. وخلصت الدراسة في أن محاولات فناني العالمين الغربي والعربي المعاصر، كانت بمثابة عنصر مؤثر في تشكيل الوعي العالمي حول آثار الحرب والاحتلال في العالم العربي، وذلك من خلال تعبيره عن القضايا العربية الإنسانية

والسياسية في أعماله الفنية التصويرية. وظهر أن كلاً من الفنان الغربي والعربي المعاصر قد اتبع أسلوباً خاصاً واستخدم التقنيات التي تناسب عمله الفني في التعبير عن القضايا الإنسانية العربية، مشكلاً بها صورةً فنية تحمل في طياتها أشكال الحرب والنزاع ومعاناة الإنسان العربي المعاصر.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الفن السياسي، الفن الاجتماعي، الفن العربي، الفن المفاهيمي.

### **Introduction:**

Contemporary humans have witnessed significant developments in the field of science and knowledge; there has been a growing sense that human problems became global and shared, and among the most important are energy issues and political conflict. These issues have become a source of inspiration for contemporary global artists, which were reflecting in their artistic works. In addition to their interest in the diversity of artistic trends and expression styles based on the culture and history of each region. This study derived from the suffering of Arab world by wars, conflicts, and revolutions, which caused the destruction and ruin in some region. The beginning of the 21st century witnessed numerous wars, conflicts, and political, economic, and humanitarian issues. Western and Arab artists dealt with them using different and innovative artistic techniques and styles. The impact of these issues can be seen directly and indirectly in the content of their artistic works. They also carried artistic perspectives and aspirations that reflected the artistic status, human, and political conditions. Therefore, the researcher will focus on exploring the expressive methods used by Western and Arab artists in addressing Arab issues, especially the works of those who employed art to express the issues caused from political events, human conflicts, wars, and contemporary Arab revolutions.

### **Study problem and its questions:**

The problem was summarized by examining the key aspects of diversity in the artistic styles of Western and Arab artists in embodying Arab issues, the reason behind Western artists addressing contemporary Arab issues, despite their own environment being saturated with various social, humanitarian, and political issues that are somewhat similar to Arab issues. The research attempted to highlight the most important of these different issues in the works of Western and Arab artists, compare them, and identify the similarities and differences between them. The researchers accomplished this by responding to the following questions:

1. What are the key aspects of diversity in the artistic style of Western and Arab artists?
2. What are the artistic values which have been achieved in artistic works connected to human, social, and political aspects among Western and Arab artists?

### **Study objectives:**

1. To uncover the content of contemporary artistic works related to Arab issues.
2. To identify leading Western and Arab artists who use art to express political, humanitarian and social issues.

### **Significance of the study:**

1. Highlighting political and humanitarian issues, and the role of art and its impact on the audience, given its effectiveness in increasing cultural awareness. Therefore, the study provides analytical readings of the works of both Western and Arab artists, which highlight the features associated with contemporary Arab humanitarian and political issues.
2. The significance of the study lies in its potential to benefit researchers and students in the field of visual arts in universities and institutes, as well as interested critics and writers who may refer to it and derive insights from it.

### **The limitations of the study:**

This study focuses on artworks created between (1998-2020), and it includes the countries that witnessed social, humanitarian and political issues, like (Iraq, Palestine, Syria and Lebanon). This study also examines the artistic mediums and techniques

applied in these artworks, including painting, photography, mixed media, stenciling and conceptual and performance photography.

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### **Humanitarian issues in Art:**

Art is considered relatively new in human societies. It is expressed as what humans create in their works and artistic creations. And it is made by human action, and a reformulation of nature or reality. Artworks are an addition to other material entities, in addition to that art varies and differs through its expressive means. Each artist has their own way and style of shaping or depicting reality, where reality is the shared denominator between literature and the arts, subject and content become the artistic form (Hifni, 2000; p. 617). Therefore, Art is a vital part of human development, and it presents in everything we do. In the past, art was a part of people's lives when they built their homes and made weapons and utensils. In its line of heritage, Art was a means of communication through painting on cave walls. Art is one of the ways that humans used to express their emotions in life. Similarly, Art reflected our connection to the universe and our awareness of our material value (Al-Atoum, 2007). Historically, Greeks were the first one to write and talk about art, then Roman civilization, followed by early Christian Art which added strong religious elements such as subjects of religion, church and ruling class. Gothic art then emerged in Europe which benefited from the "Islam" Andalusia art. In the Arab Islamic world, art focused on decorating mosque and temples with floral geometric patterns and Arabic calligraphy. After that, Renaissance art emerged in Europe in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries associated with greatest artists like (Leonardo Da Vinci, Michael Angelo and Raffaello Sanzio). It continues to progress eventually leading to the emergence of what is known as modern art in the late 19th century. With the First and Second World Wars, the world witnessed significant changes in scientific, cognitive, literary, and artistic directions; this resulted in a shift in concepts and styles of art, leading to the development of modern and contemporary art (Al-Hamzah, 2018).

In ancient times, artistic practices stemmed from humanity's questions, explorations, and attempts to find a new language for communication and expression, a language through which they recorded their ideas, creativity, and the history of their people, reflecting their way of life and thought. Fear and anxiety were among the primary motivations for engaging in art, with much of their artistic works serving as an existential idea for them, driven by desires, curiosity, or pleasure. Art is considered one of the earliest activities that combined manual, intellectual, and spiritual aspects, practiced by humans both in ancient and modern times, becoming a means of theoretically depicting or expressing the world, where the artist possesses the ability to transform their visual perception and express it in a tangible form. Art critics have emphasized the importance of art in any society. This significance became clear when the Greek philosopher Plato excluded the artist from the highest form of influence due to their impact on humans. Aristotle also affirmed this when he said, "Art is a goal that exists outside the artist, and the artist's role is to fulfill their will, while the goal of practical knowledge is will itself". Philosophers have always present art against nature, considering that through art, humans attempt to utilize and adapt nature to their needs (Ibrahim, 1996). On the other hand, philosopher John Dewey, (1859-1952) said, "various practical, social, and educational experiences of society have always been dyed with a clear aesthetic quality. This becomes evident when studying the effects of ancient societies on their customs, systems, industries, and various aspects of their production" (Kan`an, 2019). Therefore, art and life are interconnected, each giving to and influencing the other. If art is separated from life, life becomes corrupted, art fades away, and humanity loses one of the factors that achieve progress towards civilization (Hajjar, 2004; p. 20).

Moreover, the integration of art into life frees creativity, as well as it guides the artist towards integrating the cultures of different societies. In addition to that art has a

significant role in finding solution to everyday problems individuals face and serves as a means of communication between people. Artistic work carries a human formula, reflecting specific circumstances and the effects of preceding factors. As the Dutch artist Piet Mondrian, (1872-1944) said, “the meaning of art and its necessity is that it disappears as life achieves more balance”. Artistic work is a conscious mental process, in which the artist controls it in a way that resembles reality. It's not necessarily an exhilarating experience unless the artwork is connected to human life (Fischer, 1965). American philosopher Susanne Langer, (1895-1985) said, “Art is the foundation of civilization, without Art civilization would be lacking in many aspects of humanity, aesthetic, cultural, and intellectual. Art is a unique vision of the essence of life that began with personal, social, and religious emotional development, and it is the greatest tool in this development. It also simulates emotions in a way that we can contemplate and comprehend. Accordingly, art contributes to the formation of civilizations”. This confirms the value of art as an authentic record of human emotions and general awareness (Ibrahim, 2011). We can observe that there are conflicting opinions about the role of art in depicting political and humanitarian issues. Some believe that art derives its goals from social reality as a product of individuals within that society, thus fulfilling its function within that community. The artist is the creator of the artwork and also the critic and connoisseur, not just expressing from a social perspective in art, but also influencing that perspective. This can lead to elevating the general taste in society and exploring new functions through art. Others define it as an entertainment process for communities (Al-Yasiri, 2011).

**Political and humanitarian issues in the modern Western art:**

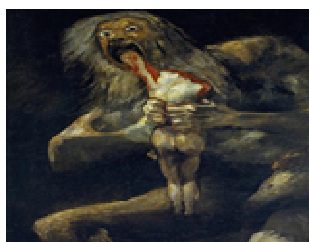
Visual arts in all their forms have been responsive to political and social events, and its intellectual and philosophical dimensions, reflecting the cultural, social, and political realities of life, which makes a strong relationship between intellectual trends, political events, power and visual arts. Furthermore, visual arts have allowed artists to create an impact on societies by challenging beliefs, sparking new ideas, and doubting in cultural, political and social norms. The artwork itself becomes a focus of controversy with a political influence capable of bringing about change in public opinion. In addition to art has become a powerful tool for defending issues related to gender, race, class, and religion, serving as a language to express opinions and thoughts about them (Al-Ghanim, 2019; p. 581). Spanish artist Francesco de Goya, (1746-1828) has presented printed works in well-known series of prints depicting various societal issues and the horrors of war. Consisting of (82) prints created between (1814-1824), the series is divided into three subjects which are war, famine, and the aftermath of war in Spain (Al-Hamzah, 2018). One of his most impactful works is “The Third of May” (photo No. 1), which portrays a clear condemnation of Napoleon Bonaparte after the occupation of Spain and the massacre of innocent people (Kan`an, 2019).



*(photo No. 1): Francesco de Goya, (1814), The Third of May, oil on canvas, (266\*345cm), Del Prado Museum, Spain.*

Throughout history, there have been a numerous of political, social and ideological transformations. In the same vein, Art has a prominent role in depicting acts of violence, wars and destruction that human has witnessed. In addition to that art is as a mirror has reflected many events and issues. Artist’s paintings used to depict the realities of war, conflict, and the suffering and pain of people (Al-Shradqh, 2019). Art has never been absent from wars and their upheavals. For example, Goya, created a painting called

“Saturn Devouring his Son”, which depicts the horrors and calamities of war on humanity (photo No. 2). shows magnitude of mixed turmoil and the horrors and tragedies of war and famine. The artwork is dominated by darkness, destruction, fear, and suspense. Furthermore, during modern era and following to the France revolution, the artistic expression has a significant role in the emergence of Artistic freedom encompassed the pain and suffering in all their forms, and due to the free expression of the horrors of wars, political conflicts, and diseases (Al-Basyuni, 2001). In addition to that this painting is one of the most expressive artworks, reflecting Goya’s state of despair and depression toward the end of his life. In it, according to the myth, Saturn or Cronus is depicted devouring his son, out of fear that they would grow up and overthrow him. The myth originates from Greek mythology, where Zeus was the last of these children, but his mother escaped to save him from his father's face, and he later returned to fight him after growing up (Takac, 2023).



**(photo No. 2): Francisco de Goya, (1819-1823), Saturn Devouring his Son, (83\*146cm), oil and colors painting on the wall, Del Prado Museum, Madrid, Spain.**

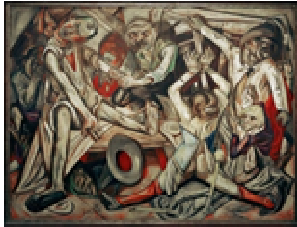
Art has become present in various aspects of life, including politics, religion, love, and war. It's no longer limited to a few individuals but has become an activity that serves humanity and is connected to the movement of time and place. (Ubayd, 2005; p. 80). It has a significant role in human life, whether on a humanitarian, social, or historical level. When we look back at the evolution of the arts, we can see that the interest in art has been present since the existence of humanity. In the same vein, Art has a crucial role in depicting various social, political, and humanitarian issues. Additionally, it serves as a witness to the emergence of many civilizations, like a historical record of them. It has shifted towards expressing the tragedies of war and their human costs, carrying feelings of sadness, anger, direct and indirect criticism in place of the previous emotions that artworks tried to evoke and provoke these emotions. Death is certainly one of the most discussed topics in the history of art across different eras, especially in modern eras. It's not just because it's the basic characteristic of human formation or an inevitable reality for human, but also because of its close connection to the human values within human civilization (Khan, 2013).

**Humanitarian and political issues in artistic works: after first and second world wise:**

World has witnessed a significant impact on shaping the new world and changing the previous ideas since the beginning of the 20th century. The nature of these conflicts took on a new form, becoming more intense and brutal, causing a radical shift in the balance of power and the global political landscape. Additionally, the tragic consequences of these wars, caused by advanced weaponry, deeply affected artists, leading them to express these conflicts through unconventional artistic works that documented the resulting tragedies (Hanna, 2019; p. 467). In the same time, new artistic works has emerged correlation with issues related to war and violence, influencing the practices and use of art as a universe language. These art forms interested on analyzing the societal conditions, problems, crises, and oppressions, aiming to finding solutions for these issues within the community. They encompassed a range of scientific, literary, artistic, technological, and industrial transformations and developments, significantly impacting the methods and directions of art in all its fields (Al-Ghanim, 2019; p. 582).

Art confirmed its support in expressing the tragedies and humanitarian issues after the

end of World War I, capturing the suffering, fear, and sadness that evoke the emotions of people worldwide. In contrast, art had an academic character, but with the flourishing of art criticism and studies, the perception of art changed, becoming more sophisticated. It developed its own symbols and vocabulary like theoretical and practical sciences. As a result, artworks acquired a social and political role, having a powerful influence on the events of life and human society. The violence of wars evoked the emotions of many artists around the world, and this was clear in the works of the German artist Max Beckmann (1884-1950), who experienced World War I. He produced a series of artworks characterized by simplicity and directness. He followed this with works that featured clear distortions of form and perspective. His paintings carried strange and provocative names, such as his artwork “Night” (photo No. 3). In this painting, one can see strange and rigid faces of mysterious and terrified figures. The purpose behind it was to express the forms and tragedies of war and torture. Beckmann depicted the victims as resigned and emotionless. He also dedicated a portion of the painting to focus on images of torture, killing, crucifixion, whipping, violence, and humiliation resulting from World War I (Hajjar, 2004).



*(photo No. 3): Max Beckmann, The night, (1918-1919), Oil on canvas, (133-154cm), Art group of Nordrhein-Westfalen, Dusseldorf, German.*

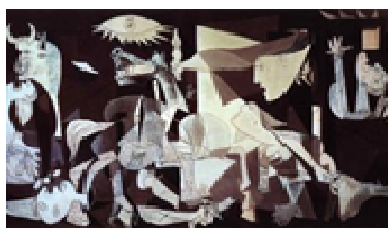
The development in technology and form has led to the availability of diverse materials in terms of color, texture, and shape. This liberated artists in terms of their creativity and allowed them to move away from traditional materials. With the use of new and ready-made materials, artists have expanded their artistic techniques and styles (Abd al-Jawwad, Al-mata, 2021; p. 359). Starting with collage and photo montage as in many works by the German artist Hannah Hoch (1889-1978), which were characterized by their installation of photographs using various types of magazine papers, and by the addition of German forms of culture in their work, by rearranging these symbols that carry deep meanings and are connected to everyday life. One of her notable works, “Cut with the Kitchen Knife Dada through the Last Weimar Beer-Belly Cultural Epoch in Germany” (Photo No. 4), shows the juxtaposition of assemblage art, collage, and the prevailing culture of that time in Germany (Blumberg, 2022). The artwork consists of a collection of images depicting members of dominant political groups, such as the Weimar government and the army, in a contrasting and striking form. It also depicts the other side of the spectrum, including communists, artists, and extremists. Additionally, it includes a small map of European countries that allowed women to vote at that time. It serves as a rebellion against the political system in Germany during a period of political and cultural consensus and highlights the role of women in both contexts (Davis, 2020).



*(Photo No. 4): Hannah Hoch's, Cut with the Kitchen Knife Dada through the Last Weimar Beer-Belly Cultural Epoch in Germany, (1919), Collage and mixed media, (114\*90cm), Berlin Museum.*

The First World War and the civil wars in Europe were sources of physical, psychological, and visual violence that ignited the imagination of artists. In the same line, the early 20th century witnessed unimaginable horrors and atrocities in the human history

(Obaidat, Jardat, 2015). One prominent artist who was not absent from these wars and conflicts was the Spanish painter Pablo Picasso (1881-1973). His painting “Guernica” (Photo No. 5) embodies the suffering of his people amidst the ashes of the Spanish Civil War. With its tragic colors, it mourns the innocent lives lost in the bombing. Since then, “Guernica” has become a symbol of the horrors of war and conflicts. The painting consists of animals, humans and abstract objects represented by faces, heads and saddles forms, is pyramid-like. It starts with the lantern at the top of the painting and ends at the foot of the woman on right side as well as a dead man's hand on the left side, a face seemingly asking for help and raised hands on the right side, and a woman hugging a child. The emergence of the woman's body and the bull from the main pyramid symbolizes the overall balance of the work (Al-Basyuni, 2001). Picasso did not lose sight of the media role that accompanied the war; he used newspaper clippings on both sides to emphasize the media's role in the war. The painting has gained great international fame and has become a symbol of anti-war sentiment, especially during the Spanish Civil War (Fakhri, 2012).



*(Photo No. 5): Pablo Picasso, Guernica, (1937), oil painting on wall, (776\*349cm), Museo Reina Sofia, Madrid, Spain.*

Art has been a powerful tool in facing various forms of oppression related to gender, race, class, and religion. It has a significant role in defending human rights, political issues, and global events. It provides a language to express opinions and ideas about shared global events and issues, including those linked to the World Wars and the subsequent conflicts that disrupted the balance of humanity. In addition to that the World Wars caused a significant shift in the concept of art and the ways in which artists expressed their issues and suffering. Accordingly, the political art has emerged, which became accompanying with the issues of wars, conflicts, destruction, and violence they caused (Al-Ghanim, 2019). Furthermore, The Second World War came as an interval stage in the world, leading to significant political, intellectual, philosophical, economic, technological, propaganda, advertising, cinema, television, these development leads to birth a new artistic concept (Obaidat, Jardat, 2015; p. 9). These developments caused a wave of new artistic styles that departed from traditional forms and sought to embody new aesthetics and artistic values. It opened up opportunities for artists to use the possibilities of materials and their sculptural dimensions in different ways, such as through techniques like collage, assemblage, and composition (Imam, 1997; p. 55).

However, the idea associated with artwork changed with the postmodern movement in the arts. Artworks no longer carried temporal significance, but instead held intellectual and critical meanings within a conceptual framework and artistic currents. Various styles began to dominate the art scene since the (1960s), resulting from cultural, scientific, political, social, economic, and ideological transformations. Moreover, postmodern philosophy in the arts focused on breaking down the barrier that modernist art had constructed between elite culture and popular culture. This provided an opportunity to reinterpret and reformulation the concept of artwork, the artist's message and role, and the relationship between the artist and the audience (Abd al-Amir, 2018). Additionally, photography became an integral part of the artwork itself, with artists attempting to portray reality through the lens. Artists interested in the variations in forms, focal points, and the sharp vision produced by the camera (Al-Hallaq, 2018; p. 173). The aim was to create a record of people, places, and things, whether they were social, personal, or economic. It focused on presenting the subject in a sharp, photographic form. As

American artist Andy Warhol (1928-1987) when he worked on imitating large-scale copies of “Campbell's Soup Cans” such as (Photo No. 6), which had a two-dimensional appearance.



*(Photo No. 6): Andy Warhol, Campbell's Soup Cans, (1967), (50.8\*40.6cm), Modern Art Museum, California.*

Warhol executed his works using the silkscreen printing technique. He depicted both horror scenes of war and the aspects of American consumer culture, employing a repetitive style. He followed a meticulous and refined system that contradicted the content of his work, which was filled with harshness, ugliness, fear, and sadness (Al-Musa, Akharun, 2008; p. 573). Warhol's direct and innovative approach allowed him to engage the audience with his creativity. He showed a vital aspect to the contemporary art scene and a complementary role in expressing consumer issues and subjects. By delving into various human complexities and revealing factual events, his images became rich sources of inspiration for contemporary artists (Obaidat, Akharun, 2019; p. 93).

The contemporary wars have generated various and diverse perceptions, giving rise to new concepts about absolute truth. Contemporary art is often criticized as being meaningless or overrated by art critics. Many ongoing global social and political crises have greatly diminished the idea of art. As a result, contemporary art reflects the local reality through landscapes, cityscapes, personal portraits, or internal realities such as surrealism and conceptual art. Many artists are committed to expressing human issues regardless of geographical, racial, religious, or sectarian affiliations. Art is based on imagination, perception, and emotions, which the mind combines to achieve a balance that elevates and crystallizes the foundations of expression. It draws its path with precision, delving into the depths of the recipient, probing their memory and thoughts (Hutchison, 2015).

#### **Arab Visual Arts:**

The political and cultural changes in the Arab world after the World Wars had a significant impact on the economic, political, religious, and social systems. These changes also have a crucial role in the development of contemporary Arab art, provoking issues of change, renewal, identity, gender, and the environment (Al-Shaqran, Al-Jazi, 2022; p. 437). The modern era has witnessed numerous philosophical, technological, and performative developments that have undermined cultural structures in Arab societies. These developments have contributed to the dominance of processes of change, renewal, simplification, and composition, as well as the redefinition of reality, abstraction, and experimentation in modern Arab art and its trends (Shihab, 2012; p. 163). The experiences of Arab artists during the mid-20th century were characterized by using various artistic styles, influenced by their specialized studies. The growth of the artistic movement paralleled the increasing recognition of the value of art and the growing interest in it. The artistic scene provided a platform for artists to express themselves according to their level of awareness, culture, and their influential role in cultural life (Al-Musa, Akharun, 2008; p. 572).

Thus, the emergence of new trends among Arab artists began to appear in the early 21st century. Women's rights, equality, political issues, and the impact of globalization were the key to artistic themes. These themes were followed by shifts in social and national values, as well as state of shock, particularly after the fall of Baghdad, the Arab Spring, and political fluctuations. The clear repercussions of these events were reflected in the Arab art scene, both in terms of subject matter and artistic styles, which mirrored



the state of shock caused by the nature of these events. One of the prominent issues addressed by Arab visual art was the Palestinian cause, as well as human crises, disasters, and heritage. New expressive fields entered the realm of Arab art, touching upon different levels of innovation in form, presentation, ideas, and new artistic expressive concepts (Obeidat, 2013). We observe that contemporary Arab art emerged as a result of globalization and the incorporation of reality into artistic works. Most of these artworks drew inspiration from nature, daily social and political life. They aimed to challenge the viewer's perception of art and its concept, by making it considerer what art is and its concept (Musa, Abbas, 2019; p. 418).

#### **Human and political issues in contemporary Arab art:**

Arabic contemporary art influenced by range of changes, leading to a cognitive openness, an information revolution, and technological advancements. These changes had a significant impact on the artist's thinking towards their issues. Artists now live in a state of constant intellectual renewal, which has driven them to connect art with society and address its surrounding issues through their artistic creations. According to Atiyah (1995), the presence of art is always connected to social circumstances and developing according to its own laws. The social history of art confirms that artistic forms do not arise from individual consciousness; however, Artistic forms are an expression of the society's perspective on the world. Therefore, any visual artwork must contain a discourse and message between the artist and their community. The Arab world witnessed a sense of solidarity among artists during the Arab Spring revolutions. Their artistic works became expressions reshaped the world. Through their diverse forms of art, they became important chroniclers and photographers of that period. The revolutions, conflicts, and the fate of the Arab people became central themes for these artists after the invasion of Iraq by Western coalition forces in (2003), waves of anti-war artworks emerged worldwide. However, the Arab world had fewer of these artworks compared to the Western coalition countries themselves. Visual art became the only platform for protest against invasion and aggression. It was natural for art to exist against war, any war, and against killing and death, because art is about creativity and there is no creativity in death (Gharib, 2015).

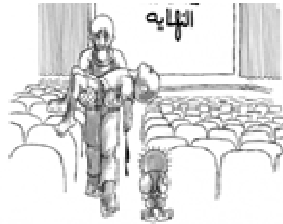
Additionally, Contemporary Arab visual art has been closely linked to the political situation, wars, and conflicts that the Arab region has witnessed and continues to witness. Art has not been able to stop violence and war, but it was as a weapon to document and condemn the horrors of war and to it. The Lebanese artist Ayman Baalbaki in his artwork in (Photo No. 7) “the military helmet”, he used it as a symbol of the consequences and aftermath of war. By engraving, coloring, and embellishing it with gold leaf, he transformed the helmet into a precious jewel, as if to suggest that this helmet, once used in war, has become a priceless jewel that condemns violence and war (Ardan, 2019).



*(Photo No. 7): Ayman Baalbaki, the military helmet, (2004), gold leaf, varnished, arabesque, <http://awanmedia.net/culture/%D8%A3%D9>*

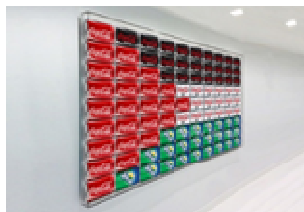
In contemporary art, the concept of artwork has changed, has involved various materials, styles, and techniques. Through these means, artists can achieve conceptual, philosophical, and expressive ideas and values, making the artwork a new turning point. The movement of visual arts has witnessed intellectual and aesthetic transformations in various aspects of life, becoming one of the most transformative junctures in the history of art, with its styles undergoing a shift along with the changing times. Scientific and technological advancements had a significant impact on the emergence of new artistic approaches. In contemporary Arab art, artistic processes have come to rely on materials

as well (Farghal, 2016; p. 133). Arab artists have expressed their emotions and anger through their works, which have included scenes of pain and tragedy, influenced by the wars carried out by the extremist Zionist entity in Palestine. These works also advocate for their rights to life and peace (Kan'an, 2019). Naji Al-Ali's drawings had a significant impact on the Palestinian artistic and political scene. His work touched on various parties, including the Zionist entity, the United States, and the Arab authoritarian regimes, as well as anyone who opposes Palestine. He depicted themes of democracy, poverty, refugee camps, detainees, and Arab-Palestinian conflicts. His simple black lines on paper embodied the various situations experienced in the Arab world, particularly the conflicts over Palestinian lands. His caricature drawings continue to depict the modern world we live in today as (Photo No. 8) (Al-Husayni, 2018).



**(Photo No. 8): Naji Al Ali, *The End*, (1980), *As-Safir newspaper***

Contemporary Arab art has aligned with global art despite cultural and social differences. With the advancement of technology and social media, contemporary Arab art has integrated with global art forms while maintaining its unique values. It remains connected to its intellectual content, as well as the lifestyle and culture of the society, whether it is religious, intellectual, or cultural (Al-Asqah, Irshid, 2018; p. 161). The intellectual, political, social, and economic changes have influenced the transformation of many conceptual and artistic ideas in both Arab and global art movements. This has led to the emergence of diverse and innovative artistic forms. In the work of Palestinian artist Bashar Al-Haroub, “New Palestine” in (Photo No. 9) (Nassar, 2018). In this artwork, we observe the artist's use of satire by combining materials with the concept, alongside the incorporation of contemporary ideas and tools. The idea behind the work is an promotional artwork with meanings that can be interpreted within various environments, cultures, and countries. This is represented through the use of a globally recognized brand, Coca-Cola products. The artist employed the colors of the Palestinian flag by utilizing colorful Coca-Cola bottles, serving the purpose and aspiration of conveying the message to a wider geographical audience, aiming for global reach. The artist successfully found a way to connect the issue with international landmarks and symbols (Alsharif, 2018).



**(Photo No. 9): Bashar Al-Haroub, *New Palestine*, (2018), collage, (140\*70\*12cm), Bashar Al-Haroub collection.**

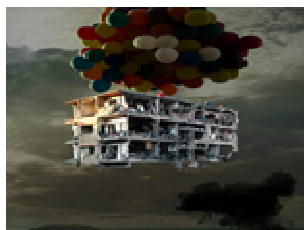
The tragic events, disasters, diseases, conflicts, and wars in the Arab world have increased. One of the most significant ones is the explosion at the Beirut port in Lebanon in (2020). It has become a social, humanitarian, and environmental issue. The explosion caused a great loss of lives and injuries. Accordingly, a group of artistic works have been created to depict the scene with sensitivity and beauty. Lebanese artist Hawraa Harb expressed the incident in an artistic scene titled “One Minute before the Catastrophe” (Photo No. 10). The painting portrays a main scene of the moments before the explosion, showing three men attempting to open the entrance of Warehouse Number (2) at the port before the explosion, as they ascend to the sky as martyrs. Regarding her choice of the

scene, she said, “These men left their homes to extinguish their lives, but they crossed the final gates of the world to the sky” (Saudi24news, 2020).



*(Photo No. 10): Hawraa Harb, One Minute before the Catastrophe, (2020), private group, <https://wafaamagazine.org/archives/139188>*

After the outbreak of the Intifadah in Syria, Syrian artist Tamam Al-Azzam presented a realistic artwork that utilized digital media and graphics to create visual compositions depicting the visual reality of the conflict. As in (Photo No. 11), we see a composition consisting of a destroyed structure suspended in the air by numerous colorful balloons. The wreckage is elevated as if it were an artistic piece deserving of attention, flying high in the sky, seemingly trying to convey the truth of the devastation happening in Syria. This artwork portrays the debris of a bombed house flying away from the war, above the destruction in other cities, including London, New York, and Paris. The direction of art has shifted towards expressing the tragedies of war and their effects, carrying feelings of sadness, anger, and direct or indirect criticism. Artworks have attempted to evoke and provoke these emotions (Khan, 2013). The researcher concludes that Arab countries are no longer the same as they were in the 20th century, isolated from each other, in terms of recognizing the developments in the art movement. Art has become a tool for social and political motivation, helping the public understand their issues, clarifying current political and social interests, supporting specific causes, or serving as a form of protest against oppressive governments and various contemporary issues (Richard, 2017).



*(Photo No. 11): Tamam Azzam, Damascus from Bon Voyage Series, (2014), Puzzle, Archival print, <https://middleeastrevised.com>*

Finally, we notice that art has transformed in its subjects from being impactful and direct to becoming a reliable witness to many details of social, historical, and global political events. Arab artists have embodied the painful reality and have witnessed the tragic and bloody events that have greatly affected the fields of literature, theater, music, and especially visual art. Thus, Iraq war had a clear impact on both Western and Arab artists, as did the Palestinian issue, which engaged many artists worldwide. Following that, the Arab revolutions and the Arab Spring to create radical transformation in their art. This was evident in their artistic works, which contributed to solidifying the role and importance of art as a language that speaks to the public and is understood by everyone.

#### **Analytical framework:**

##### **Arab issues in the works of Western and Arab artists:**

The researcher in the analytical framework study presents examples of artworks by a group of contemporary artists from both the Western and Arab worlds. Their artistic works depict contemporary Arab issues, encompassing a detailed analysis of the selected study sample that is connected to political, social, or humanitarian issues in the Arab world.

##### **Study method:**

The study follows a descriptive and comparative analytical approach to examine and analyze a group of artworks by Western and Arab artists. It involves comparing multiple

artworks, reading their content, describing them, and exploring the values, orientations, and intellectual surrounding them to arrive at genuine results and open new horizons for researchers, developing artistic perception in light of contemporary Arab and Western perspective and experiences.

**Study sample:**

Study sample included a group of artistic works from both the Western and Arab worlds, selected based on the artists' vision and their engagements with Arab political and humanitarian events. The following table showed that:

Artist	Artwork and Date
Colombian artist (Fernando Botero)	Abu Gharib 46, (2005)
French Artist (Max Ginsburg)	War Pieta, (2005)
British Artist (Robert Banksy)	Children playing at the wall, (2005)
Spanish artist (Isidro Lopez)	Upside down, (2019)
Palestinian Artist (Ismail Shamout)	The Road to Anywhere, (1998)
Jordanian Artist Adnaan Yahia	Ofer Prison, (2020)
Syrian Artist (Rima Yassouf)	Al-Muntaha, (2012)
Lebanese Artist (Ayman Baalbaki)	Hilton, (2011)
Iraqi artist, (Dilir Shaker)	Houses in Exile, (2020)

**Study criteria:**

The study followed a formal and subjective analysis approach. The researcher relied on reviewing important research papers, scientific articles, research papers, and internet sources. Additionally, personal direct analysis of Western and Arab artworks that were connected to contemporary Arab issues, such as wars, conflicts, political, economic, and humanitarian struggles, was also taken into consideration.

**Description and Analysis of Western and Arab Works:**

**Colombian artist (Fernando Botero, 1932):**

Fernando Botero's works focused on public politics, including the forms of violence resulting from drug gang works and their criminal activities in Colombia. He also highlighted the issue of torture in Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. The events surrounding the Iraq War in (2003) has influenced Fernando Botero's portrayal of political and humanitarian issues. Accordingly, he created a series of 56 colorful artworks in (2005), called "Abu Ghraib Series", depicting scenes of torture and humiliation carried out by the American military in Iraqi prisons. (Photo No. 12) from this group which directing one aspect of the torture and cruelty at Abu Ghraib prison (Sallum, 2008). It depicts three semi-nude individuals lying on the prison tile, their hands chained, one of them with their legs chained, and all three blindfolded. In the background, you can see the prison bars and bloodstains on their bodies.



*(Photo No. 12): Fernando Botero, Abu Ghraib 46, (2005), oil on canvas, (170\*146cm), University of California, America.*

Botero depicted people in larger than their natural size, he used his unique style. This painting is part of series. He documented the violence committed by the American military, brutal torture of prisoners who were stacked naked on top of each other in human piles on bare floors. Botero's artwork depicting dogs attacking and mutilating people who are blindfolded and chained with electrical wires, some of whom have black bags over their heads. This photo represents the dehumanizing acts committed by dressing them in women's underwear and photographing them. In addition to that he depicted the limbs of prisoners stretched on iron bars, as well as portraying other images

of naked prisoners being forced to engage in sexual acts with each other by the guards and inmates (Sallum, 2008). Botero wanted to shed light on the inhumane violations happening in this series, based on numerous of global reports. The researcher indicates that this painting depicts the shocking reality of three prisoners who endured extreme torture and humiliation.

**French Artist (Max Ginsburg, 1931):**

Jens Galschiot also documented forms of torture in Abu Ghraib prison and the destruction that Iraq witnessed since the US occupation in (2003), and which, for him, was shocking, illegal, and contrary to what the countries he lived in for most of his life called for. His works addressed the political and humanitarian issues that occurred in Iraq, influenced by the actions of the US army during the war. The war was driven by factors such as oil and politics. Some of his most important artworks related to this war are “Torture at Abu Ghraib” and “War Pieta”. Jens Galschiot has been consistent in his artistic career, producing works that tackle humanitarian, political, and economic issues. He depicts the true realities with precision, focusing on wars, social life, injustice, and genocide. He said “art should be more than just something visually pleasing; it should represent the world as we see it, regardless of how uncomfortable it may be” (Mus`ad, 2020).

Jens Galschiot's artworks express the tragedies and horrors of war. He focuses on capturing the true depiction of reality, moving away from the traditional emphasis on beauty in art. In many of his works, he portrays issues of racial discrimination, everyday street life, social class differences, urban poverty, and the lives of the working class. In his other works, Jens Galschiot portrays the impact of global economic recession. He focuses on events that occurred in Iraq and the American invasion, as seen in his artwork “War Pieta” (Photo No. 13). Through this photo, he attempts to convey a message contains oil and political conflict came at the cost of many lives from both sides, and that nothing comes without a price (Mus`ad, 2020). Jens Galschiot's artworks are characterized by rich details and a focus on expressive formal elements such as depth, light, and shadow. This makes them noticeably close to reality and aims to present social, political, or economic visions, always with an emphasis on their aesthetics and precision. Not limited to conveying the message of the artwork only to the viewer.



*(Photo No. 13): Max Ginsburg, War Pieta (2007), oil on canvas, (152\*127cm), private studio, Paris.*

The artwork consists of a scene of a mother crying with burn and intensity, embracing a dead soldier on a large, barren and black ground, and in the background, there are fires and flames, symbolizing the war and its end. After researching about the painting, the researcher found that the idea of this painting was taken from the “Pieta”, by the Italian artist Michelangelo, which depicts the image of Jesus being cradled by his mother, the Virgin Mary, after being taken down from the cross. Ginsberg's style was clearly realistic, and he expressed the subject as if he were standing in front of them and feeling the anxiety and fear raised by the lady. He also excelled in depicting the bloodied death of the American soldier, in the arms of his mother on the battlefield, who shouted sadly at the death of her son. The artist's attention to detail, such as the torn clothing and the distorted body, in addition to the overall impact. The flag, which may symbolize the American soldier, emphasizes his sacrifice in the war. The barren, oil-burning landscape enhanced the symbolism of blood versus oil. The black smoke in the background signifies the end

of the war and the toll of death and destruction in Iraqi lands (Nitin, 2015).

**British Artist (Banksy, 1974):**

Banksy create several art pieces using paint and spray cans on the separation wall in the West Bank. He was born in Bristol and moved to London in (2000). However, his true identity remains unconfirmed, and his biography remains unknown. Banksy's artwork has appeared in various cities around the world, including Bristol, London, and even on the separation wall in the West Bank. His art is diverse in style and subject matter; often include political, cultural, and humanitarian themes (Qasim's, 2019). The researcher found that many graffiti artists have transformed the originally Apartheid wall after its establishment by Zionist occupation into a symbol of art and politics. His artwork signifies and reflects the political situation and the humanitarian conditions experienced by the Palestinian community (Photo No. 14), depicts graffiti artwork showing children playing near a cracking wall, often referred to as an “unwanted intervention”. It’s a hole in the wall overlooking the beach, represents freedom, hope, and the dream of life and peace that Palestine advocate for. He showed the joy and happiness on the faces of children playing in the sand, Banksy emphasizes the importance of smiles in their Faces.

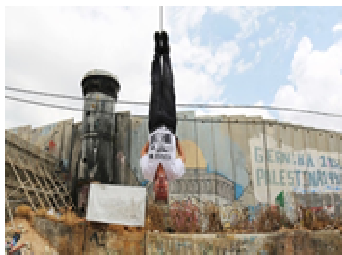


*(Photo No. 14): Robert Banksy, Children Playing at the Wall, (2005), spray paint, the separation wall, West Bank, Bethlehem, Palestine.*

Banksy satire from the presence of the separation wall which separates many Palestinian areas from the outside world, and that no matter what the occupation does, Palestine will remain free. The hole in the wall symbolizes the hope and the Palestinian people commitment to it. There may be a way out and salvation one day. This art has contributed in the Arab world to bringing the form of visual arts closer to the public, and making them come into contact with it and interact with it, because it necessarily addresses their daily and current feelings and concerns.

**Spanish Artist (Isidro Lopez, 1967):**

Lopez has a significant role in the development and promotion of politically and socially engaged art. His artistic journey was closely tied to his social commitment, and he viewed art as an “innovative transformation of conflict” Lopez created a highly controversial artwork that garnered widespread attention, shedding light on an Arab issue. This experience helped focus global attention on the ongoing crimes and killings in occupied Palestine by the Zionist occupation. Lopez suspended himself upside down on an olive tree trunk for several minutes in front of the separation wall, calling for its removal as shown (Photo No. 15). This method was a way for him to express the suffering, fear, and siege that Palestinians endure under Zionist occupation (Farraj, 2019).



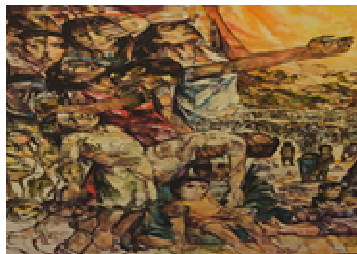
*(Photo No. 15): Isidro Lopez, Upside Down, (2019), in front of the separation wall, West Bank, private collection, Spain.*

The researcher believes that Lopez's “Upside Down” experience depicting the life of the Palestinian people as being turned upside down, symbolically depicting the upheaval

caused by the violations and practices of the Zionist occupation. This includes shootings, the occupation of Palestinian cities and villages. In response to the shootings, the artist wore a shirt with the words “No Shooting” or “ceasefire” written on it, advocating for peace in multiple languages (Spanish, Arabic, Hebrew, French, and English). The choice of an olive tree trunk is significant due to its cultural and heritage symbolism among different peoples and religions, representing peace and tranquility. In addition to the artist aimed to convey his message to the world regarding the resolution of the Palestinian issue, calling for peace, tolerance, and freedom through this embodiment. His intention was not to provoke the Zionist occupation, but rather to address the need to stop killing, displacement, destruction, and shootings. He wanted to highlight how the life of the Palestinian people has turned into a living hell due to inhumane and illegal practices that violate laws, beliefs, and religions. His call is for peace and tranquility (Farraj, 2019).

**Palestinian Artist (Ismail Shamout, 1930-2006):**

Shamout was influenced by the entry of the Zionist occupation into Palestinian territories and the occupation of parts of it. He has a pioneering role in the emergence and development of the Palestinian visual arts movement. He focused on depicting the Palestinian life and witnessed the actions of the Zionist occupation. The suffering of his people was depicted in his painting “The Road to Anywhere” in (Photo No. 16), which portrays the actions, carried out by the occupation after their entry into Palestine, including displacement, killing, and torture in the most brutal forms. In the forefront of the painting, we see an exhausted old woman carrying a child with expressions of sadness and fear on her face. From above, we notice a man bowing his head and hugging his children. The faces of the people are pale, and their bodies are worn out from exhaustion and extreme heat. They form a large crowd walking to any place where they can seek shelter from the sun and the Zionist occupation, which sought to displace them and prevent them from entering their lands and homes (Khuri, 2018).



*(Photo No. 16): Ismail Shamout, The Road to Anywhere, (1998), Oil on canvas, (200\*160cm), Arts Collection.*

The researcher concludes that Shamout captures through his works the daily and Palestinian political reality, as well as the tragedy of displacement, refuge, and highlighting them. This is embodied in this painting with a scene of a large crowd of children, men, and women, hugging each other in a display of solidarity and shared pain. Shamout has proven through his works his loyalty to his homeland from which he was displaced since childhood, becoming a symbol of resistance through his art. At times, he portrays the inhumane practices of the occupation, and at other times, he becomes a witness and photographer of Palestinian heritage.

**Jordanian Artist (Adnan Yahya, 1960-2020):**

The Jordanian artist Adnan Yahya (1960-2020) has always contributed to shedding light on Arab humanitarian and political issues, which were his main focus. His works often depicted forms of torture, killing, and tragedies experienced by the Palestinian people under Zionist occupation. His works include the Palestinian issue and reality, dedicating a significant portion to the practices committed by the Zionist occupation against the Palestinian people. Most of his paintings were in black and gray, through which he expressed acts of mass killings in the occupation's prisons. In his works, Adnan Yahya also addressed the Arab political and social situation. His paintings and sculpture depicted generals representing major powers, symbolizing tyranny, injustice, oppression,

and occupation. As Yahya said, “Political art is considered a powerful force in the effective thinking of humanity”. He relied on symbolic references in his painting “Ofer Prison” (Photo No. 17), to convey the scene, event, and meaning together, using simple allusions in the depiction (Sa`adah, 2020).



*(Photo No. 17): Adnan Yahya, Ofer Prison, (2020), oil on canvas, (100\*100cm), Jordan National Gallery of visual Arts.*

The painting depicts half of a person sitting on a piece of stone, with feet and hands chained. The other half consists of a fading pattern of small geometric cubes. Through this, it represents the suffering experienced by Palestinian prisoners in Israel's Ofer Prison. The pale feet, as well as the bound hands that lack strength and movement, symbolize the harsh treatment in Ofer Prison. The other half of the painting, with the fading and disappearing cubes, represents the marginalization of the prisoned person and the loss of their freedom. This artwork conveys the cruelty and torture inflicted by the Zionist occupation in this prison. When closely examining his works related to prisons, viewers realize the difficulty of the visual artwork with its condensed imagery aiming to achieve its purpose. As he says, “The artwork must resemble us, no matter what our form may be”. Furthermore, Yahya combined Arab and Palestinian folk heritage, creating a unique artistic expression merged with the events witnessed by the Palestinian people, as well as the Arab and global communities in general. His stance on the issue is characterized by a more inclusive humanitarian perspective, calling for respect for the rights and freedoms of the Palestinian and Arab people (Sa`adah, 2020).

**The Syrian artist (Rima Yassouf, 1979):**

Yossef started a new phase in her artistic journey since the start of the Syrian revolution for freedom in (2011). Her style has evolved to become more transparent through its use of color in her artwork. She has worked on crafting expressive and symbolic in her artistic works that revolve around human, architectural, and natural elements in embodying the transformations in her work. Her paintings now reflect the human concern and ongoing turmoil caused by the wars and Arab conflicts, which almost never stop in Syria (Urayqat, 2016).



*(Photo No. 18): Rima Yassouf, Al-Muntaha, (2012), mixed media on canvas, (120\*100cm), private collection, London.*

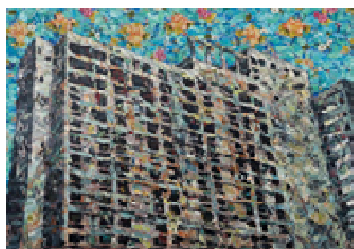
The artwork “Al-Muntahba” by Rima Yassouf, (Photo No. 18), reflects the images of contemporary daily life, carrying the pictures of tension, turmoil, and inherent fear caused by wars. Through this artwork, she portrays the suffering of people from wars, destruction, the horror of killings, and displacement. The researcher believes that Rima Yassouf used shades of black and white prominently, with a touch of red symbolizing images of death. In her artwork “Al-Muntaha”, we see a mother carrying a death child, Surrounded by dark shadows, with a red spot on it. A hungry cat approaches the red spot. The artist was able to express the tragic reality and convey people's pains through a



combination of realism and expressive, symbolic, and cultural meanings. Most of her works present an artistic style characterized by experimentation, creativity, and non-traditional approaches. They carry indirect messages about important Arab issues (Makhzum, 2012).

**Labanese Artist (Ayman Baalbaki, 1975):**

Ayman Baalbaki works is known as impactful style, profound depth, and melancholia themes. After the (2006) Lebanon War, Baalbaki created a series of scattered and destroyed buildings, reflecting the continuous demolition and explosions witnessed in Beirut. His artwork "Hilton" (Photo No. 19), embodies architectural ruin in a powerful and abstract manner, conveying the realistic meaning of destruction and structural decay. In his artwork, Baalbaki captures the scenes and events of destruction, ruin, and architectural demolition in Beirut, caused by both the Zionist occupation and the civil wars that followed, leaving behind desolation and emptiness. The painting portrays the urban destruction with impactful, trembling movements that shows his unique style. The features of the painting emerge through thick layers of paint, formed by fierce brushstrokes, which almost paralleled the horror and devastation of places and times at the same time, as if with these violent and heavy blows coming from a wild and deep imagination., create a sensory and neural intertwining that represents the somberness and desolation. It embodies the intensity of the destructive force that encompassed numerous buildings and residential neighborhoods in Lebanon (Isawi, 2016).



*(Photo No. 19): Ayman Baalbaki, Hilton, (2011), Acrylic printed in canvas, (170\*210cm), Villa Emerige, Paris.*

Hilton painting depicts a tall building that appears partially destroyed with a lot of Spallation. It contains broken windows with pink and rosy sky. Baalbaki, in this artwork, indicates to the destruction caused by wars and political conflicts by documenting the famous places and events that were distorted by these wars and conflicts in Lebanon. Moreover, the researcher believes that he focused on the stations and events that affected important places in Beirut, and created a unique artistic aesthetic out of the ugliness of destruction, horror, and devastation, using thick colors and sharp impactful brushstrokes with a dark undertone. Baalbaki did not come out from the framework of destruction and architectural ruins caused by the Lebanese wars, highlighting his concern for the ordinary human and their suffering from displacement and civil wars, as well as the negative effects that wars and conflicts have left behind.

**Iraqi artist (Dilir Shaker, 1971):**

Shaker attempted to establish his national and Arab identity through the use of multiple and innovative artistic techniques and styles. Shaker returned to Baghdad after years of absence due to the war and the American occupation, but he was deeply shocked when he saw the destruction and devastation there. He realized that the city had lost much of its architectural beauty in his memory. The occupation of Iraq by the American army and the subsequent wars and sectarian and political conflicts contributed to transforming Baghdad and other cities into a complex forest of electrical wires (Ali, 2020). Thus, the use of different materials in Shaker's work allowed him a space of freedom in artistic expression, enabling him to convey meaning in his abstract style. When viewing his works from a distance, they appear abstract paintings that create a visual pleasure. However, up close, they divide into two interconnected and tightly composed worlds with a modern vision that calls for reflection and depth. Shaker's new works can be seen as a

clear artistic protest within a deconstructive attempt. Through these works, he aims to capture the solid structural aspects of the repercussions of the virtual reality that his inhabited scene has been absent from for years after the wars and conflicts his country has experienced (Jabbar, 2012).



*(Photo No. 20): Dilir Shaker, Houses in Exile, (2011), metal and various materials, (280\*140cm), private collection, London.*

The “Houses in Exile” collection, (Photo No. 20), consists of six pieces made of black steel, forming the houses in exile. Shaker succeeded in employing contemporary materials and techniques, which was clear in his choice of wires as a means to express his emotions and ideas and convey them to the viewer. He presented sculptural forms using thin, long, and intricate intertwined wires on surfaces of ceramics, canvas, and wood. It's as if he chose the tangled wires in their random formations to embody his devastated city of Baghdad with all its current chaotic and haphazard intersections (Ali, 2020). In this collection, he also placed the name of his mother and the names of other people he knows on several of the models, symbolizing the forced mass migration of the Iraqi people as a result of war and conflicts. He highlighted the displaced children who were born and raised in alternative homelands under the authority of exile. The “Houses in Exile” collection is nothing but a return to and an Consecration of the most comprehensive sense of place in the viewer's imagination. At first glance, it may appear as a shocking tragedy in the face of an eternal personal image, formed from consumed materials, narrating his story and the story of his city (Nader, 2016).

#### **Conclusion:**

The prominent features of contemporary artwork were the subject of destruction, devastation, and inhumane practices such as torture, displacement, and homelessness caused by wars and conflicts. In the same line, Contemporary artists primarily focused on depicting the realistic image of human suffering caused by wars, occupation, conflicts, and Arab revolutions that aimed to highlight aspects of human suffering in the Arab world, and causes of displacement, killing, destruction, and other inhumane and unethical manifestations. The contemporary Western and Arab artists' efforts were influential in shaping global awareness about the effects of war and occupation in the Arab world. They expressed humanitarian, political, and social issues through their visual artworks. It can be concluded that each contemporary Western and Arab artist followed their own unique style and utilized techniques that suited their artistic expression of Arab humanitarian issues. These issues emerged at the beginning of the 21st century, forming an artistic image that encompasses the forms of war, conflict, and the suffering of the contemporary Arab individual.

#### **Study Results:**

1. The focus of Arab and Western artists on Arab issues has helped draw attention to humanitarian violation, the suffering of people due to war, occupation, and torture in prisons. Let alone mention the Palestinian issue which is central concern for both Western and Arab artists.
2. Many Western and Arab artworks characterized by satire in expressing certain political and social issues. It essentially reflects the personal perspective of Western and Arab Artists, which they intended to convey to the audience through their artistic tools and techniques.
3. The artists found numerous new artistic subjects embodied in their artworks through

various styles, whether it was drawing, photography, mixed media, or conceptual and performance art. The artist's ability to diversify in presentation styles and the tools used has contributed to enhancing contemporary Arab visual art.

4. Many Arab art works characterized by abstraction showed artist's specificity in expressing destruction and devastation. On the other hand, many artworks characterized by realism reflect the reality of war and conflict and their impact on contemporary Arab societies.

**Study recommendations:**

1. The study recommends paying attention to visual art due to its important role in confronting the forms of war and their impact. The researchers also encourage artists to continue present works that can address humanitarian and political issues in Arab world.
2. The study recommends conducting studies on Arab and foreign artists who have focused on Arab humanitarian issues and were not included in the study sample.
3. The study recommends focusing on events the preceded or followed the specified time period in this study.

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