

The Paradigm Shift of Creativity Concept (Modern to Contemporary Era)

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Abstract

The concept of creativity in the creation of works of modern art has always been associated with innovation and originality. Slowly but surely the art creation comes out of the rules and tries to match the technological development and the theory in changing the structure of human life. Artists began to create and perform a variety of experiments to be able to express the meaning of the changes they are experiencing. Thus, creativity is one of the things that dominate the way people think in the modern era. The concept of universal modern creativity then criticized by the current developments, the issue of globalization, the paradigm shift in the art, the emergence of arts from the non-Western world to be the trigger. Creativity is then interpreted diversely, ranging from a contextual approach in sociology to a cultural strategy. The research looks at the shift and tries to site the subject in the context of contemporary art. This research uses interdisciplinary methods, including the use of the theory of the creative process in view of psychology and sociology of Art.

Keywords: Creativity, Art Creation, Globalization, Paradigm Shift

1. Introduction

1.1 Historical Background

Modernism is an art movement that took place mainly in Europe in early 20th century, which aimed to shatter what had been defined as art in the previous century, which included realistic, narrative, perspective, and tonalistic tendencies. The use of "modern" as a terminology in the art world is not associated with the historical chronology; it is in fact used to describe a certain group of artworks that embed specific

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characteristics. "Modernism is a twentieth-century European movement in the creative arts that sought to break with dominant conventions of nineteenth-century art, such as realism, linear narrativity, perspective and tonality." (Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin, 1998:143) Historiographically, the birth of modern art had been indicated since the end of the 18th century with the break of industrial revolution and French revolution at almost the same time. Both revolutions pushed the advancement of technology and science simultaneously. One of the most progressive inventions back then was photography, which instantly destroyed the traditional classifications of visual art. Based on this phenomenon, modern art rose to guard the standards of aesthetic values in art making processes.

Modernism believed in the concept of progress because it went in line with their norm of novelty, originality, and creativity, which eventually led to what we know as "Tradition of the new" or "Avant-garde". In the beginning people rejected the new art form, but by time they accepted it as new innovation.

In the modern era, visual art became an important element in an ideology due to its autonomous characteristic within its intellectual frame that is equivalent to other sciences. The idea of autonomy became a part of the spirit of modernism that freed traditional ways of thinking in art. Hence, modern art was considered as the touchstone of advanced visual art, beside the fact that in this era artists used values of creativity optimally.

Modernism is a time period where a lot of changes happened, such as effects of industrialization, World Wars, advances in technology, new ideologies, and Western imperialism. One of the characteristics of modernism is people's strong will to get out of old habits and create new things. People of modern era did not want to be tied to a certain system that limited and obstructed any creative processes, particularly in the art world where artists started asking about the limit of art and trying to get out of the existing benchmark. Clifford Geertz, an anthropologist, states that art is a part of a big text in the semiotic systems that are unique for its society. It is a worldview, a perspective of human, life and all things related. We could see that even in pre-modern era, art had been a way of thinking for its specific society whose every element related to a unique history of imagination. It then changed during the modern era, when art became autonomous and unattached to anything outside of itself. It became a representation of the global culture, behaviour, and the way of thinking of the society. Thereafter, a paradigm shift happened during the postmodern era as an attack towards modernism, which was considered a metaphor of the reality. Art brought about what truly happened in the world.

Similarly, contemporary art offers a new atmosphere with hybrid situations. It creates an area where a mixture of the past, the present, critical reflections happens systematically. Contemporary art has a specific pattern, which is diversity. Generally, contemporary art is defined as a tendency in the art world during the past decade. In semiotics, that tendency is contextualized as intersexuality, which, according to Julia Kristeva, is a condition where a text refers to another text in a dialogical crossover between texts in a span of history.

Yasraf Amir Piliang in his book titled 'Hipersemiotika' (2003) explains that this crossover creates some kind of a double code (double coding: hybrid, eclectic, ad hoc-ism). The tendency of contemporary art to exist includes 'the end of subject', anti big narrative, relational, and the tendency of mind as the concept of truth. Art becomes a subject of existential aesthetic; the value of art lies more on the attitude than on the artefact. Art answers various challenges, whether it is the internal dynamic of the art world or its global interaction with the outside world that expands the perception of art. On this level, art as metaphor has its own role as beautiful artefacts as well as a zeitgeist.

A real bodily experience can also be found in art; it describes mental phenomena in terms of visual experience. Another way to understand such non-verbal metaphor is, as stated by Garry L. Hagberg in his article titled 'Metaphor', that was published in book titled 'The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics', (2001) to consider an interaction between two visual forms, that is partly familiar, embeds their complementary connotation, and when put together can create a way of seeing that combines the two to create a new perspective. Unlike modern art, postmodern art brings down boundaries, questions established categorization, and challenges while celebrates diversity in the spirit of parody and even juxtaposition. It no longer functions merely as personal expression or a channel for instinctual drive or intuition; it is more than that. Art now has layers of functions.

1.2 Theoretical Underpinning

The concept of creativity in modern art creation was always related to innovation and originality. According to Harris (2006: 73-74) states that artistic creativity has innovative, inspirational and visionary quality. Slowly yet surely art started to move away from any constraints and closer to the development of technology and theories that changed the structures of human life. Artists began to be able to do different experiments, which also enabled them to express meaning from changes they experienced. Overall, creativity became prominent in the way of thinking of people in the modern era.

Creativity was also viewed as a way for people to avoid anxiety. Many of the changes that happened during the modern era caused a gap between people's internal and external world. With the birth of new technology, machine began to take over human's tasks. Unquestionably, it changed the relation between human and their external world. People became alienated not only from their society but also from themselves. They were expected to adapt to quick changes in culture. To adapt, people had to set aside different drives from within themselves, such as sexual desire, violent urges, etc.

This condition, according to Sigmund Freud, could stimulate neurosis. Creativity acts as a defence mechanism, which Freud further considers as a sublimation of aggressive drives. Freud sees that every behavior stems from primitive instincts (sex and aggression) that usually clash with the norms in the society. These primitive instincts are unconscious and demand instant gratification, following what is known as 'pleasure principle'. To adapt well into the society, people repress those instincts and channel them through socially acceptable behavior.

The concept of sublimation describes psychological processes when instinctual desires are altered to have meaningful aims for the society. Creative process in all aspects of human life, according to Freud, is a sublimation of primitive instincts. Aggression and sexual desires can be altered and expressed in socially acceptable ways that still embed valuable aims and sustain the intensity. Instinctual drives can be represented in works of writing, theatre, painting, sculpture, and other art forms without fully portraying eroticism or aggression but staying true to its essence. Consequently, we can assume that cultural products and artworks do express and reflect the soul of the creator, whether it is a desire, conflict, serenity, and beauty.

Creative processes, according to Freud, are also related to the Unconscious. Freud states that sexual and aggressive drives are expressed through a mechanism called 'primary process thinking'. In contradiction to the 'secondary process thinking', which is rational, logical, realistic, mature, and conscious, the primary process thinking is imaginative, emotional, immature, and uncontrollable. Creative people are assumed to be able to use primary process thinking effectively to avoid anxiety whilst still conform to social norms. They are thought to have more capacity to express their ideas through meaningful and communicative symbols. Sigmund Freud views that if one represses threatening thoughts or wishes, then intellectually he/she will be obstructed. In contrast, during primary process thinking, ideas are very easily formed and flexible (free association).

Creativity arises when fantasy is given freedom and will be limited when logic is overly used while the creative energy flows. According to Freud's theory of free association, ideas and images intertwine within one's thought, and relate to one's past experiences. Every idea or image reflects deepest unconscious instincts and can be expressed through free association. When one allows his/her mind moves freely beyond the limit of ego conscious, free association will enable the instinctual energy to flow. In some of his writings, 'The Psychopathology of Everyday Life' (1901), 'Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious' (1905), and 'The Uncanny' (1919), Freud states that free association and artworks are reflection of desire, fear, and hope that one keeps in the Unconscious.

Ellen Winner in her book titled 'Invented World: The Psychology of the Arts' describes that creative artists have very strong ego and are very independent. Creative geniuses and artists generally do not suffer from neurosis or anxiety. They are thought to be able to cope well when struggling with a problem. Similarly, Freud differentiates neurotic people who repress their instinctual drives from artists who naturally express them in subdued manners into more productive activities such as art creation.

According to theories of psychoanalysis, every artistic creation is a compromise between an artists's unconscious and conscious. Psychoanalysis further explains how creative process becomes a defence mechanism against neurosis. This mechanism rises from the Unconscious and plays a prominent part in art creation. Consequently, art creation, viewed through psychoanalytical perspective, constitutes of unconscious drives that are sublimated to create a concept of creativity.

Art creation bridges fantasy and reality, thus becomes a way for an artist to build contact with reality. Freud compares artists' fantasies and those of children, because children are capable of building fantasies to fulfil their unconscious wishes. Freud states that artists use artworks to fulfil their unreal out-of-this-world fantasies. Many critics and historians use psychology theories to describe artistic behavior of artists in the modern era. Some artworks were also specifically made with the help of psychoanalytic interpretation and theories, especially in describing visual images as artworks that embed symbols of unconscious repressions. Andre Mason, for example, developed a method called 'automatism'.

Figure 1: Andre Mason, Automatic Drawing, 1924



Source:<https://www.moma.org>-

During art creation, artists who use automatism relayed unconscious impulses into a variety of movement reflexes. Some people consider automatism as the earliest process in art creation; some create the whole artworks using only this method. Salvador Dali used automatism as an early process, which he usually followed by a method known as 'paranoiac-critical' that exploits the tendency of human's way of thinking to connect unrelated things rationally. His finished artworks are usually drawings of ambiguous objects combined with intertextual signals.

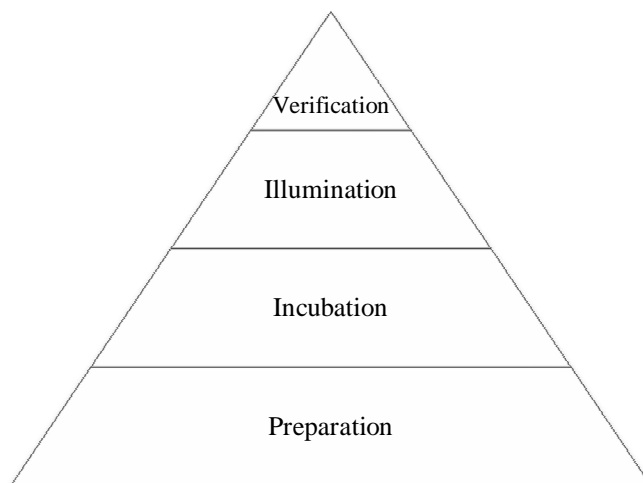
Artists who put forward mathematical and geometrical aspects will articulate their unconscious impulses differently into artworks. Ego strength within artists in this category is higher compared to those who create using only their unconscious drive. Furthermore, these artists usually go beyond the conscious level when making art, which triggers the emotional impulses to transform into some kind of psychic energy full of spiritual and transcendental experiences. This concept of catharsis is also one of Freud's manifestations in psychoanalysis. Artworks done through this method of catharsis will feel as if they are distanced from the artists and are new entities which do not represent anything real in this world. Picasso, Piet Mondrian, and Mark Rothko are perfect examples from this category.

Graham Wallas, a British psychologist, states that there are four stages of creation. The first stage is preparation, where a creative individual gathers and investigates a problem or theme from different perspectives so that he finds a new way of thinking that leads to new ideas. In his book, 'The Art of Thought' (1926) as cited by Maria Popova in 'The Art of Thought: A Pioneering 1926, Model of the Four Stage of Creativity' (2013), Wallas states that educated people have and will continue to study voluntarily, involving him/herself in the process of preparation to focus his/her attention to different elements.

The second stage that comes after preparation is incubation that happens in the unconscious mind. This stage, according to Wallas, has two approaches. Firstly, the problem is incubated in the unconscious mind or when we think about other problems. Secondly, we relax and unattach ourselves from every problem and mental work that requires consciousness. Moreover, he describes this stage of having positive and negative notes; on the positive note we unconsciously solve the problem, whereas on the negative note we cannot really decide on which problem we want to solve.

The third stage is illumination; this happens when we consciously compile all the impulses from previous stages and shape them into new patterns. This stage sometimes comes spontaneously, like an insight, and cannot be forced. Some thinkers also believe this to be the beginning of almost every invention in science. It seems that big artists go through this stage massively, when they find new patterns and are able to relate them with different contexts. The last stage is verification; unlike the second and third stage, this stage correlates directly with the first one. Both appear in the conscious and examine the problems in reality. During this stage, many things are often reduced depending on contextual needs. According to Wallas, these four stages do not have to happen in sequence and can happen simultaneously. It all depends on the problem and needs for a solution.

Figure 2: Illustration of Stages Creativity Graham Wallas



In the context of art and art creation, we might suppose these stages as basic drives. Genius artists, such as Leonardo da Vinci, Picasso, and Jackson Pollock are examples of people who have mature level of creativity.

Modernism, as we know, puts creativity on a pedestal as the highest achievement in creating novelty. The question is whether those stages can be applied when explaining patterns of art creation by contemporary artists whose culture, contexts and methods of creation are different.

Shifts in Concept of Creativity within Contemporary Contexts As was discussed, creativity is a manifestation of modernism; indeed the word appeared during the industrialization era. Robert Nelson in his book titled 'Jealousy' (2009) states that creativity has specific concept that depends on culture. Creativity also correlates with the concept of individuality in process of creation, which includes in all kinds of innovation not only art.

The culture considered by Nelson was one that is identical to that of European, white, middle class society, which has been applied universally to justify practices of art creation everywhere around the world. This raises some questions; How about contemporary art? What happen to cultures from parts of the world that still hold symbolic values of their communal lives? Can the concept of creativity remain meaningful and universal?

Nelson makes an early conclusion that creativity is not and should not be universal. We can further presume that creativity is the primary drive in art creation that pushes artists to explore concepts, media, and techniques to deliver their ideas and ideology of art. Creativity can also be achieved through a series of process not only individually but also as a bigger network of people. In contemporary art, when an artist no longer stands for an individual, creativity might emerge from discussions or insights of teamwork. The team includes the artist, artisans, or a wider social network in the art world.

In her book 'Seven Days in the Art World' (2008), Sarah Thornton summarizes the whole mechanism of contemporary art world. Thornton reveals another side of strategies in the process of creation. One part discusses about artists with unique paradigms; the chapter is titled 'Studio Visit'. Thornton sees the artist she discusses as an entrepreneur and chooses Murakami as her subject. Her choice is poignant because Murakami views his art creation as business aside from his idealism and fantasy of Japanese Pop Art. In her book, she also mentions Kaikai Kiki Co., Ltd., which is an art and design company that produces merchandises, becomes an agent and producer for several young artists, an organizer for an art festival called Geisai, and has generated millions of dollars worth of projects in fashion, TV, and music from Murakami artworks. The company employs 90 people in Tokyo and New York. Undoubtedly, Murakami is an artist with a new perspective on art, art creation, and career. He represents the change of paradigm in art and the rise of Asia in global art scene.

He puts forward the contemporary zeitgeist and pushes away the assumption that artists are introverted individuals who spend a lot of time and thought to create art alone in his/her studio, and is drown in his/her own idealism of art that is pure. The paradigm of artists has been identical to those of lunatic, intuitive, and incomprehensible things.

Thornton, furthermore, discloses her conversation with Jeff Poe, an art dealer who thinks of himself also as an editor and even a conspirator whose part is huge in today's art scene. He moulds the image of artists through exhibiting their artworks. In his hand, we do not only see how artists create their works but also how their artworks emerge in the sociological development.

Moreover, Thornton explains how memorable her visit to Murakami's studio was. He owns a big studio with 12 staff members who help him work. Each of them has a specific task and is drown in his/her own iPod world. Murakami is hard at work; he always wants to pour out his dreams and fantasies into his artworks and will not hesitate to shout at his artisans. One of his artisans is also a professional artist whose artworks are different than his yet complies with his orders and sets aside his own creativity and taste. Murakami also gets royalty from the famous fashion brand, Louis Vuitton. In 2000, LV's former art director, Marc Jacobs, invites him to redesign the monogram canvas logo. It made a transformation from beige and brown to 33 different candy colors with black and white background. It was not long before that special Murakami monogram becomes a phenomenon, which he turns into another famous artwork on canvas.

The aforementioned description is more than enough to give us a perspective of artists nowadays. An artist no longer only expresses his/her mind into valuable and meaningful forms; he/she also creates a more complex mechanism of creation. An artist is his/her own manager and also that of his/her work environment. He/she also needs to strategize to face unpredictable challenges of today's art world.

Murakami's process of creation is indeed a dominant pattern that contemporary artists adapt. They do not only act as entrepreneurs for their artworks but they also own various business ventures to support their finances. Additionally, art creation also acts as a research. Such practice can actually be traced back to Picasso who stated, "I never made a painting as a work of art, it's all research." Art-based research can be defined as a systematic use of artistic process, where a researcher applies a variety of aesthetic expressions to understand a problem. It differs from researches that focus on art subjects, which basically uses artistic data to investigate a subject while using descriptions that is scientific, verbal, mathematical, phenomenal, and traditional.

1.3 Art Creation and Contemporary Culture

Anton Chekhov, a doctor that also worked as a scriptwriter and a theatre enthusiast in the modern era, writes that an artist that relies only on inspiration and works without a planning is crazy, as quoted by Ghiselin in his book "The Creative Process: A Symposium",

"Anton Chekhov has insisted that only a lunatic would create quite automatically: "...to deny that artistic creation involves problems and purposes would be to admit that an artist creates without premeditation, without design, under a spell. Therefore if an artist boasted to me of having written a story without a previously settled design, but by inspiration, I should call him a lunatic." (Chekhov in Ghiselin, 1952:16)

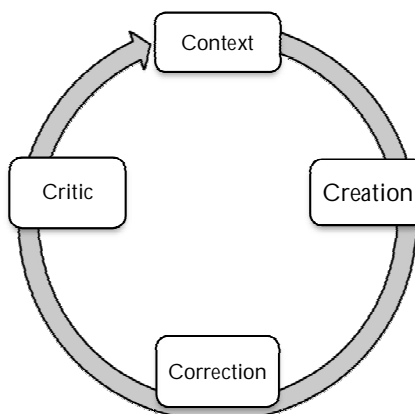
The text above refers to Chekhov's critique on unplanned automatism artworks, which back then was generally presumed as a fundamental movement in modern art. It seems that Chekhov's opinion is relevant to today's context. Reasonably, process of creation nowadays has a sequence of: contexts, creation, correction, and critique.

The context would be understood here not just as the passive vessel of an artist's ambience but it involves the artist's penetration of present circumstances, an inquiry within a tradition or current of change. This engagement ought to involve a literature search; it may be, or should be, inspiring, supplying the mind with potential content.

The creation is clearly the phase of doing; but some part of the doing has already been done before the work has begun, because an idea to do the work had already occurred. Beginnings are very exciting. Creation is often expressed at its most heroic when a blank canvas is imagined. Thus, to indulge in a Biblical excursion, God's creation took place 'in the beginning', presupposing that there was nothing before that time. In the western imagination (and there are plenty of Pagan counterparts), this is the radical or original creation.

But even with that most monumental of creations—when there was no light and dark, no land and water and so on—you would have to say that there was a context, a context consisting of two elements, namely chaos and God. (Nelson, 2009:105)

Figure 3: Illustration of Creative Process in Contemporary Art by Robert Nelson



The context does not only relate to problems surrounding the art creation but also to overall situations around the artist. It relates to changes, conditions, and how it connects the artist with his/her social arena. Those relations should inspire, grow, and fulfill the mind with potential contents. Creation is surely a 'doing' phase, however, according to Nelson, such phase begins long before the actual creation of an artwork. It begins when an artist processes ideas for his/her artwork. Nelson also notes that the phase feels the most heroic, as if artists could act like God who creates out of nothingness (blank canvas). The whole sequence of creation, from processing ideas, generating early sketch to making finishing touches, involves a continuous revision.

All drawing and designing, not just the finishing touches, are full of the spirit of revision. (Nelson, 2009:105)

However, in art creation, artist and artwork are inseparable, so that both need an outsider's perception. In fact, distance is inspiring and criticism is needed to enrich the values contained in the artwork. Clearly criticism is related to this, though criticism does not normally take place within the rectangle or the time-frame of the artwork. It is normally post-facto and not from yourself. (Nelson, 2009:105). Consequently, art creation and creativity form a circular process. When an artwork is made, critique from both outside of the artist, art world, and inside of him/her will go around in a context, which triggers new artworks or new meanings of an artwork.

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