

Original Research Article

The Nihilism and Its Reflections in the Works of Jackson Pollock

Omar Ali Ahmed Yaseen^{1*}

¹General Directorate of Education, Babylon, Open Educational College

*Corresponding Author: Omar Ali Ahmed Yaseen
General Directorate of Education, Babylon, Open Educational College

Article History

Received: 26.08.2024

Accepted: 01.10.2024

Published: 03.10.2024

Abstract: The current research addresses Nihilism in the Works of Jackson Pollock, exploring the concept of nihilism in philosophical thought. The research consists of four chapters. The first chapter focuses on the methodological framework, which includes the research problem formulated in response to the following question: 1. Did nihilism influence Jackson Pollock's works? The first chapter also outlines the research objective: 1. To reveal the reflections of nihilism in Jackson Pollock's paintings. The research scope is limited to studying the concept of nihilism in Pollock's paintings and analyzing visual samples of his artworks, which appeared in the United States and Europe, using the descriptive-analytical method. The second chapter presents the theoretical framework, divided into two sections. The first section discusses nihilism philosophically, while the second section addresses nihilism in postmodern art. The second chapter concludes with theoretical framework indicators. The third chapter includes the research procedures, covering the research population, sample, and research tool, followed by the analysis of three selected artworks. The fourth chapter presents the research results and conclusions, along with recommendations and suggestions. The research concludes with references and appendices.

Keywords: Nihilism, Jackson Pollock, Postmodern Art, Action Painting, Existentialism.

CHAPTER ONE: METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Research Problem, Importance, and Need

The aesthetic, visual, and artistic discourse has witnessed, in general, a state of extremism and a shift away from the established and stable context in the aesthetic and artistic consciousness that dominated a vast temporal and spatial expanse. This shift caused the emergence and solidification of artistic movements and trends that were considered, at the time, distinct historical and transitional periods. These movements managed to classify artistic production and settle the aesthetic significance that resulted from the ongoing debate between the synonymous and contradictory elements of the theoretical and practical components generating aesthetic discourse. The relationship between thought and art during the modernist period was characterized by intimacy, meaning that art as a materialized creative output was subordinated to higher values and constants, which represented dominant forces over the entirety of human knowledge and practical activity. This subordination had been evident since the early days of Greek philosophy and persisted until the later stages of the past century. These values were collectively agreed upon and referred to as the "Trinity of Values"—Truth, Goodness, and Beauty. Creative activity, as a tangible existence capable of being read and circulated, did not emerge unless it was in a state of potential existence, which some philosophers referred to as "potential being." This refers to intellectual forms and representations that were considered to embody art and creativity without the need for a material or utilitarian basis upon which the artwork was created.

The concept of nihilism in postmodern painting, and revealing it as a concept that carries a unique manifestation and practice, differs from the concept of nihilism in other sciences. This is due to its associated phenomena and relationships that fall within its realm of influence, manifesting as abstract and symbolic expressions that succinctly point to a set of new forms, practices, or ideas. These are mental images that an individual can conceive and engage with within the context of

Copyright © 2024 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited.

CITATION: Omar Ali Ahmed Yaseen (2024). The Nihilism and Its Reflections in the Works of Jackson Pollock. *South Asian Res J Art Lang Lit*, 6(4): 45-53. 45

postmodern painting. Therefore, this concept requires thorough understanding after identifying its essential distinctive characteristics and their related aspects, followed by defining it comprehensively.

Since the concept of nihilism in postmodern painting is a broad one, its usage has often led to contradictions. What one person perceives as non-existence, another may see as existence, and vice versa. This issue calls for an in-depth study to understand its mechanisms and operational systems across various directions in postmodern painting, particularly in the works of Jackson Pollock. From this, the research problem is defined by the following question:

1. Did nihilism bring about changes in the structural and conceptual nature of Jackson Pollock's works through cognitive, aesthetic, and artistic mechanisms?

The significance of the research lies in shedding light on the role of nihilism in postmodern painting, ultimately arriving at an understanding of nihilism in Jackson Pollock's works. It also clarifies the importance of this concept, as it plays a role in directing the structural system of formal relationships in specific directions for each movement or artist.

Research Objectives

The Research Aims to:

1. Identify the conceptual and aesthetic frameworks of nihilism in the works of Jackson Pollock.

Research Scope

- **Temporal Boundaries:** 1940-1950.
- **Spatial Boundaries:** United States.
- **Subject Boundaries:** The current research is limited to studying the concept of nihilism in the paintings of Jackson Pollock.

Definition of Research Terms

1. Non-being (non-being)

a. Linguistic Definition

"Non-being: 'al-'adam' refers to the loss or absence of something."

It has also been said: "'Adima means to lose something, and 'adam is the state of non-existence."

b. Terminological Definition

Non-being is the opposite of existence and can be either absolute or relative. Absolute non-being does not relate to anything, unlike relative non-being. It can either precede existence, as in the non-being that comes before the possible being, or follow existence, which occurs after a being exists.

(Madkour) references (Ibn Sina), who argued that absolute non-being does not exist, but is always relative to something. Some members of the Mu'tazila school believed that non-being is an entity and considered the non-existent as something. Existentialists, on the other hand, held that non-being is inherent in existence, while Madkour considered it a deficiency in a quality that was originally supposed to exist.

2. Nihilism (Nihilism)

a. Linguistic Definition

According to Baalbaki, Nihilism is a term derived from both English and French, originating from the Latin verb Nihil, meaning "nothing" or "something of no value."

b. Terminological Definition

1. A doctrine that denies the existence of any moral truth or value structure. It is a state of thought that lacks recognition of such a structure and questions: What is the point? Yet, it cannot provide an answer. Nihilism, therefore, represents the absence of purpose, reaching its peak as a destructive force.

Operational Definition:

Nihilism is the negation of artistic and aesthetic existence; it is the counterpart of existence and cannot be separated from it. It serves as a foundation for the existing, as every existent will eventually encounter non-existence.

CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Section One: Nihilism in Philosophy

Nihilism is one of the significant events of the modern century, as it deeply marks Western culture in various aspects. On the other hand, it represents a historical and psychological necessity because it is the logical outcome of the illusory dominance of the values and ideals of Western civilization. Its emergence signals a fundamental turning point in Western history and the character of Western civilization.

The first aspect of nihilism can be described as negative, as it is a symptom of a serious illness affecting Western civilization, which Nietzsche refers to at times as "decadence" and at other times as "dissolution." The second aspect of nihilism is positive, as Nietzsche describes it as "ecstatic nihilism," which, in the view of some contemporary philosophers, represents a new horizon for thought in the modern West.

Metaphysics has spanned from the Pre-Socratic philosophers to Nietzsche. Nihilism, in part, is rooted in constant doubt—doubt in our senses and the world we live in and interact with. Since the existence perceived by the mind is inevitably influenced by what the senses present, any conclusions derived from it are subjective. This leads to a further step toward the nihilism of perception and knowledge.

In the second half of the 5th century BCE in Greece, various intellectual conflicts arose amid conditions that yielded only a limited degree of practical and philosophical progress. As a result, the intellectual movement that emerged in Athens began to focus on humanity itself, rather than on external nature, which earlier philosophers had exhausted themselves trying to understand. This new approach was represented by two main figures: a group called the Sophists (sophists) and a brilliant sage named Socrates. Each had their own method of examining the paths of human knowledge. Socrates' philosophy, which can only be understood through his dialogues, critiques, and discussions, stood in contrast to the Sophists' extreme skepticism. The Sophists doubted all prior and future knowledge, disregarding the judgment of reason, whereas Socrates took a more measured path, using skepticism to explore the foundations of ethics and knowledge.

The Sophists, particularly in their view of sensory perception's role in knowledge, denied the existence of absolute truth and knowledge, arguing that the senses were deceptive, limited, and relative.

Plato, a student of Socrates, absorbed the rationalist tendencies of Socratic philosophy and the intellectual environment of his early life. He favored deductive reasoning and had a strong affinity for mathematics and geometry. However, Plato also blended this rationalist approach with mystical contemplation and artistic sensibility, which he derived from religious mysteries and ancient myths. This mystical inclination led him to a form of non-rationalism that culminated in a theory of metaphysical knowledge, reliant on intuition or direct insight, which stood apart from deductive reasoning or sensory perception.

Meanwhile, David Hume enthusiastically embraced the formal conclusions of empiricism and revisited the analyses made by Berkeley, establishing modern skepticism. Hume accepted everything our senses directly present to us but went no further. He argued that direct experience does not lead to the knowledge of any underlying essence. As a result, he denied the existence of both material and spiritual substances. He did not only reduce the concept of the object to a collection of impressions but did the same with the self as well. This means that all we know are appearances—phenomena—and nothing beyond them.

We can now move on to another type of nihilism, one that differs from the nihilism of the Sophists, skeptics, and empiricists. This is the nihilism of René Descartes, expressed through his methodical doubt. In Descartes' view, this doubt was temporary, a means to arrive at certainty. He did not doubt for the sake of doubt itself but used it as a path to reach certainty. In this regard, Descartes states: "When I thought especially about what could make something susceptible to doubt and lead us into error, I removed from my mind all the errors that could have infiltrated it before. In doing so, I did not follow the skeptics who doubt for the sake of doubt and always pretend to hesitate, for my goal was the opposite: to attain certainty and move away from shifting sand and unstable ground in search of rock and solid clay."

On the other hand, Hegel contributed to the concept of nihilism by believing in the idea of "development and progress." This belief in the lack of stability in truth and its imperfection formed the basis of Hegel's contribution to nihilism. Another significant aspect of Hegel's thought is his view of negation. Hegel distinguishes between two types of negation. The first is negation as conceived by skepticism, which is pure negation, a complete rejection of all content. The second type is determinate or specified negation, which involves negating only a partial aspect of what is negated. Pure negation, according to Hegel, denies everything entirely, throwing all content into a void of doubt. This type of negation rejects the entire truth rather than merely addressing any errors or falsehoods within it.

In contrast, determinate negation is essential for progress. It is akin to a continual correction of the truth's course, where the rejection targets only a specific aspect of what is presented rather than falling into the hollow generalization that declares everything as either true or false. Hegel's idea of determinate negation relies on reason, and he believed that opposites form a unity. Therefore, truth is not found on one side and falsehood on the other; instead, truth is a correction of error. This idea led Hegel to his theory of dialectics, which represents the culmination of his contribution to the construction of nihilism.

The nihilism of Arthur Schopenhauer and his pronounced pessimism can be interpreted through his view of the world as beginningless and endless, without limits—essentially, infinite. The denial of purpose negates causality, rendering the world entirely absurd. For Schopenhauer, absurdity is not merely the rejection of all necessity or purpose, but rather the existence of non-purpose and non-necessity alongside purpose and necessity. The absence of causation leads to a world devoid of objectives or values.

Although the world is necessary—this being a fundamental characteristic of things—it is also absurd because it presents the idea of necessity without a cause. The absolute lack of causation leaves humans fundamentally anxious in a strange world characterized by brutality and absurdity. Thus, describing Schopenhauer's nihilism as negative is inescapable due to its connection to his pessimistic outlook, which is grounded in the idea of suffering. He posits that non-existence is preferable to existence, advocating for the annihilation of the will to live and endorsing Buddhist asceticism as an alternative to the collapse and erosion of values.

Section Two: Nihilism in Postmodern Painting

The Second World War had a significant impact on themes, mental states, and expressions in art. Many artists were profoundly influenced by events starting in the mid-1930s, while others were stirred emotionally by the defeat of France and the scandals perpetrated by Hitler. They expressed this deep impact either by highlighting contemporary issues, as seen with Marc Chagall and Max Ernst, or by employing a rough approach to subjects that lacked inherent tragedy, as Picasso did.

Accompanying this was a shift in the center of modernity from a war-torn Paris to a new geography: New York City. This transition was not coincidental; it resulted from America emerging as an economic and military power within the contemporary world, characterized by a cosmopolitan culture. Being relatively untouched by the ravages of war, New York became a safe haven for a long list of artists and writers, including André Breton, Piet Mondrian, and Salvador Dalí.

This shift marked a crucial realization: culture, art, and painting, in particular, were poised to move forward anew through diverse forms, practices, directions, and artistic methods. Among these, some of the most influential and significant included:

Abstract Expressionism

The rise of political, economic, and social crises, along with the fragmentation caused by World War II, deeply influenced young artists in America and Europe. Technological advancements did not ensure political or social progress, and a crisis of faith in rationality emerged within modern societies. While art had previously been concerned with the logical and idealistic foundations of Cubism and the movements that emerged from it during the interwar years, these concepts lost their allure and charm after World War II.

This environment paved the way for new, spontaneous attempts that abandoned academic traditions, leading artists into experimental processes and uncharted territories. Collectively, these developments resembled a revolution in art, altering the overall nature of artistic expression and redefining our understanding of art itself, as well as the relationship between the artist, the audience, and cultural practice.

A key characteristic of this movement is its non-objectivity, marked by a general abstract quality that transcends visible objects (the objective world). The formless expression unites these works, as this art form is not primarily tied to shape or representation but rather to color and techniques that express emotions directly. This explains the statement: "What went onto the pictorial surface was not an image, but an event."

In this context, formlessness represents a rejection of every project, every exchange, and every preconceived idea, yielding to the unseen qualities of movement and material. The formless artist fundamentally opposes the notion of the painting as a reflection or repetition of reality or a model, as well as any form of representation or imitation. This rejection becomes the structure and essence of the artwork itself.

These conditions collectively define Abstract Expressionism, which established New York as the capital of the art world during the 1940s. Prominent figures dominated the New York painting scene during this time, among whom Jackson Pollock stands out. He adopted a style now known for its commitment to free abstraction, characterized by his technique of dripping paint onto the canvas. Pollock described his approach: "My painting doesn't come from the easel. I prefer to have the unstretched canvas on a hard surface or on the ground, using nails to secure it. This way, I can move around it and work from all sides. I stayed away from traditional painting tools like the easel, palette, and brush. Instead, I prefer sticks, trowels, knives, and liquid paint or heavy paint mixed with sand, crushed glass, or other foreign materials. When I'm in the painting, I'm not aware of what I'm doing. I'm not afraid to make changes and destroy the mental image because the painting has a life of its own. I try to make life emerge through the painting."

In response to Pollock, Herbert Read noted that there is a desire to destroy the image and its symbolic relationship. This urge to destroy, combined with a determination to abandon traditional materials and tools in favor of unconventional ones, may seem like rebellion or defiance. However, it truly reflects a translation and expression of nihilism—a psychological and existential state of rebellion that the artist himself believed in and practiced.

Indicators Concluded in the Theoretical Framework

1. Nihilism has represented an important source for nourishing the ongoing dialectical conflict that is considered one of the signs of modernity, as nihilism is based on the principle of destruction and construction on one hand, and the dynamism of movement on the other. This is confirmed by the rapid proliferation and intermingling of modern artistic movements, as soon as a new aesthetic model is crystallized through the dialectic of its nihilistic counterpart, nihilistic forces move to undermine it and prepare alternatives and fertile ground for the growth of another aesthetic model.
2. Nihilism was able to inaugurate a new area within the context of its developmental journey in the fields of art. This opening was a consequence of surpassing the last achievements of modernity, which had fallen into a state of stagnation and futility. Nihilism took advantage of this condition by overthrowing the modern aesthetic model that had formed a significant presence at the time, and this overthrow of the aesthetic model was an incidental result of the overthrow of the idea of dialectic itself.
3. Nihilism has directly contributed to shaping the postmodern artistic product, reaching a state of diversity enabled by the amount of freedom in interpretation and understanding. The most important of these concepts refer to aspects of form, content, and technique, including: deconstruction, free play, demolition, consumption, irrationality, multiple readings, contemporaneity, the death of the author (artist/painter), relativity, transformation, non-values, alienation, regression, pessimism, ugliness, irony/satire, absurdity, anxiety, paradox, participation, and chaos.
4. Expressionism represented a self-revolution in reaction to the marginalization practiced by previous art schools. With expressionism, the opportunity arose for the self to express its psychological, emotional, and affective states. Consequently, it also excluded the requirements and necessities of realistic form and content in favor of the self's proposals that build its perceptions, and thus, its representations of the world to express what it sees as closer to the truth acknowledged by the self rather than by logic or prevailing norms. Hence, its forms appeared laden with overwhelming emotion and feeling, casting shadows on those forms to make them seem free from conventional aesthetic norms, allowing nihilism to prevail in the objective text almost completely in favor of the visible emotion through spontaneity, improvisation, or emotion that formed the distinguishing mark in the expressive artistic achievement, and the new relationship that art offers to society and the audience, which forces both the artist and the audience to overthrow the readiness of thought and aesthetic taste in favor of rebellion, distortion, deformation, expression, and human alienation in life and its practices.
5. Abstract expressionism shifted attention to a new area for the engagement of the self in exploring new mechanisms for the components of the creative process, starting with the subject that was pushed to the margins as a communicative given, and ending with the form that culminated in formlessness. This means that the elements of abstract expressive form no longer convey cognitive signals about reality; rather, they seek to construct another reality with other truths established by the creative self that rejects certain ethical certainties, and even transcendent aesthetics. This rejection carried with it inevitable transformations, the most important of which, on a technical level, was the reliance on materials and tools that are far and strange from the usual elements of formation, to reinforce the state of rebellion, rupture, and rejection of all previous artistic values. Here, rejection is the core of abstract expressive nihilism, and the free self is a solution as an alternative to conforming to decaying laws and values.
6. Abstract expressionism adopted a new mechanism for diagnosing and defining "beauty" in its contemporary postmodern concept. The sensory, mental, imaginative, and intuitive perceptions brought forth by the classical self, the Renaissance, and modernity were turned upside down in celebration of rebellion and rejection of metaphysical or physical aesthetic values. The artistic image transitioned from the context of the natural relationship between the subjective and the objective to an arbitrary relationship that does not hesitate to admire the role of chance, which surpasses in importance the element of systematic organization of creative work. Thus, improvisation, as seen in Pollock's paintings, became a substitute for the engineering, lyricism, or theosophy of the gradual form subject to intent and awareness, and the image stemming from an internal "necessity." There is no necessity in the vocabulary of the abstract expressive painting, which emerges in its formations from a markedly free reference that encompasses all the entrenched traditions, values, aesthetics, and intellectual concepts in modern cognitive and aesthetic awareness.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH PROCEDURES

After reviewing the theoretical framework and reaching a set of indicators that assist in analyzing the research sample, the researcher began the procedures by defining the research community and selecting a representative sample of

that community for qualitative analysis. This methodology was chosen as it is the most suitable for achieving the research objectives and addressing the question posed by the research problem.

The researcher reviewed the published works of the artist Jackson Pollock, considering them as the research community. A purposive sample was selected for analysis, relying on the indicators derived from the theoretical framework as a foundational basis to achieve the research goals.



Model (1)

Artist Name: Jackson Pollock

Work Title: Autumn Rhythm (Number 30)

Date of Production: 1950

Medium Used: Oil on canvas

Dimensions: 266.7 × 525.8 cm

Copyright: Artists Rights Society / New York

In this painting, Pollock's dripping technique acquires a documentary dimension, transcending the reductive indeterminacy of the formless structure of his unconscious identity. It elevates to a level of invocation based on the relationship between the liberating form of composition and the elements of the temporal-spatial framework of what is rooted in a philosophical horizon encompassing all manifestations of the self, alienation, rebellion, and absurdity.

The nihilism of Pollock's work is evident in the deconstruction aimed at destabilizing fixed meanings through the extremity of the visual language employed, creating an infinite play within the movement of meaning, composition, form, and interpretive horizon. This results in a destabilization of the dualities of visual form and readable visual content, presence and absence, nothingness and existence. Nothingness serves as the foundation upon which Pollock constructs his notions of non-being and being through the unconventional use of the elements of form and content. His attempts to dismantle the signifier and signified exist within a constantly shifting cognitive and visual nebula.

The formal and visual dispersion cannot be controlled or contained; its essence is free play, extending with the movement of shape formation and its instability, characterized by continuous repetitions that are both harmonious and disharmonious. They are harmonious as extensions of the artist's hand movements and emotions, and disharmonious because they lack a clear system. Chaos, non-reason, and play drive the artist to let paint spill from his brushes or from the openings of paint cans onto the canvas surface. The artist's actions are devoid of ultimate purpose or intention, serving instead to create a kind of psychological, formal, and emotional equivalence felt during spontaneous and instinctive work, relying on compounded or recurrent chance to form his shapes and overall composition.

There is no clear, defined reason for the separation between the moving, thread-like forms generated by the pouring colors, which exist in a chaotic world where phenomena succeed each other repeatedly and develop as they please.

The completion of Pollock's work is achieved through its engagement with the other, the viewer, and by meeting them on the shore of relative knowledge and the transcendence of truth. Here, the viewer must share their inner life with the text to become part of a purpose for both the self and the individual, rather than a purpose that limits rebellion and the specificity of nihilistic knowledge.

Pollock's pursuit of preventing form from reaching a static state of configuration results in shapes being in a constant state of formlessness, aligning with the relativity of knowledge and its dynamism, uncertainty, and the absence of fixed truths or deterministic rules. Doubt approaches the notion of nothingness following an object or phenomenon in front

of the viewer; it manifests as a visual series of transitions between matter and image, substance and material formation. The energy of formation, displacement, and becoming is an alienating act that resonates with the energy of doubt and relativity, placing all things, truths, and knowledge in continuous motion, needing to be touched upon to express the whirlpool of thought that the artist experiences, much like the contemporary human does.

Thus, the act of regression performed by the artist—returning to dreams, the collective unconscious, play, absurdity, and rebellion—immerses Pollock's forms and compositions in a darkness reflective of the contemporary human and societal environment. The persistent black and its swirls create a world far removed from our lived perceptions, a realm of play as well as pessimism, leading to the idea that nothingness is preferable to existence, non-being is better than being, and absurdity is superior to the seriousness of action. There is a need to expose the human practices that have rendered the world more grotesque, and it is acceptable to use ugliness, shock, and irony to awaken it.



Model (2)

Artist Name: Jackson Pollock

Work Name: Number 1

Medium: Oil on canvas

Date of Production: 1948

Dimensions: 172.5 × 264.5 cm

Ownership: Museum of Modern Art, New York

Jackson Pollock's technique of pouring and dripping paint dominates his artistic output, and this painting is one of his significant works. The artist employed a high degree of spontaneity in forming overlapping groups of colored lines, executed by pouring and spraying onto the canvas surface. As a result of this linear and color intensification, a holistic compositional structure emerged, imbued with two primary colorations: black and white against an ochre background.

Spontaneity (free play) played a crucial role in the predominance of the colored lines initially and the distribution of the black color over the ochre ground secondly. It became challenging to align the essence of the black color with its opposite—the white—due to the complexity of variation and reflection in the process of exploration. This culminated in an unconscious drive toward difference, where the spread/dispersal served as a significant factor in destabilizing the concepts and properties arising from the cognitive and psychological transcendence of deconstruction. This creates a margin wherein analytical and synthetic states are realized through the process of abstract perception of images stored in memory.

The images Pollock uses are based on forms reminiscent of various vital appearances of animal and plant compositions, evoking primitive symbols. These forms flow with the free use of color, producing semi-intentional (unconscious) models akin to the abstract automatic mechanism advocated by André Breton and applied by the Surrealists.

The structure of the painting is constructed based on an attempt to define an elusive dimension of meaning. The lines and colors poured onto the canvas appear to fragment any notion of mutual tendencies toward speed/motion, providing a perceptual/visual indication grounded in their formation through the forces that overthrow the center and penetrate into non-central/marginal and indeterminate compositions. This is often sought by Pollock in his conceptual and structural approach to painting, making this compositional vision one of the key applications of nihilism in his work.



Model (3)

Title of Work: Number 8

Medium: Oil paints, enamel, aluminum paints on canvas

Dimensions: 269 × 457.5 cm

Date of Production: 1949

Provenance: Museum of Modern Art, New York

The painting by Pollock was executed using the technique of dripping and pouring color onto the canvas, pouring colors (black, white, ochre, walnut) to create a web of amorphous, non-centered lines. Pollock had been interested in Jung since the early 1930s, as well as attending psychotherapy sessions to overcome his alcohol addiction since 1937.

Existential and human anxiety is one of the significant features that dominated postmodern art, and this anxiety is reflected in Pollock's work. The intermingling, moving forms lack a stable center, intertwining in a complex spatial, linear, colorful, and textural interplay. They spread across all surfaces and terrains of the canvas, suggesting an incompleteness, as the artist adds another color to the final layer.

From the above, we can deduce the nature of nihilistic knowledge and the nihilistic mechanisms that Pollock adopted, driving him to create his worlds and express his self.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND PROPOSALS

Results

The researcher reached a number of conclusions based on the analysis of the research sample and the theoretical framework, as follows:

1. Nihilism is linked to painting as a philosophical and cognitive concept, reflecting its tangible effects on the nature of aesthetic thought and a form of determinism with a dynamic understanding, influenced by the transformations of life throughout history. This connection has varied in forms and manifestations in postmodern art, as follows:
 - Nihilism is associated, similar to Greek philosophical thought, with the "relativity of knowledge," based on a dialectical method rooted in skepticism and the negation of the concept of the stability of truth.
 - Like the triad of Greek philosophy (Socrates, Plato, Aristotle), nihilism is connected with skepticism regarding the limitations of the senses and their inability to grasp the concept of truth. Achieving the highest degree of truth, according to their understanding, requires that "the beautiful" encompasses enough of "truth, goodness, and beauty," rendering anything lacking in one of those higher values outside the realm of truth.
2. Nihilism in postmodern drawings has stylistic and technical reflections in the treatment of structural and thematic elements that underwent displacement and distortion from the traditional usage preceding the modern era. This is particularly evident in the transformation of color, which became expressive of its conventional and referential contexts. Color has become autonomous, independent of emotional and sentimental needs, focusing solely on its sensory fulfillment. This is evident in visual art, where color complicates its expressiveness and symbolism, contributing to a purely visual illusion.
3. Abstract expressionism builds on the abstract traditions in modern drawings that are non-objective, representing a continuation of an approach that did not extensively explore experimentation due to strict dialectical logic. This

resulted in a range of abstract classifications during the modern era, fluctuating between lyrical, geometric, and suprematist styles. However, the conceptual shift and the disintegration of the dialectic led abstract expressionism to adopt non-objectivity as a means rather than an end, aiming nihilistically to reach the concept of art—image (event). This means erasing the notion of the artistic image and replacing it with a narrative of interactive relationships within a structure that is aesthetically visual, opposing mechanistic iconicity, thereby enhancing the idea of art as an event. One consequence of this approach is the shift in painting from a formal direction toward formlessness, inherently rejecting any prior project or idea.

4. Abstract expressionism is based on the idea of conflict among a group of existing theoretical concepts as entities or different cognitive, ethical, or aesthetic contexts.

Conclusions

Based on the results of the research, the researcher concludes the following:

1. Nihilism represents a characteristic of a human phenomenon involving transformation and value movement, which is linked to changes in objects, the universe, time, and life. It is a cognitive and psychological sensation that begins in various forms, associated with different civilizations. This indicates that the act of nihilism is a positive action that progresses in parallel, and indeed coexists with the wheel of intellectual development.
2. Nihilism aims to eliminate the artificial divides between science and art, as human knowledge is indivisible in the face of human/final fate.
3. Nihilism is not merely the expression of death, ugliness, violence, and horror; rather, the nihilistic artist transcends these elements to convey the meaning of life. Thus, it is evident that nihilism is the other side of existence, and the two cannot be separated, as the meaning of each resides in the other.

Recommendations

In light of the findings and conclusions of this research, and to enhance its intended benefits, the researcher recommends the following:

1. It is essential for art and aesthetic studies, as well as criticism, to be informed about the study's conclusions to better understand the mechanisms of nihilism in art.

Suggestions

To further meet the research requirements and achieve additional benefits, the researcher proposes conducting the following studies:

1. Nihilism in contemporary Iraqi painting.
2. Nihilism in postmodern sculpture.
3. The relationship between nihilism and the materials used in postmodern art.

REFERENCES

- Ibn Manzur, J. D. M. B. M. A. (n.d.). *Lisan al-Arab* (Vol. 15, pp. 286). Egyptian General Authority for Authorship and Publishing; Egyptian House for Authorship and Translation. For further details, see Al-Razi, M. B. A. B. A. (1983). *Mukhtar al-Sihah* (p. 418). Dar al-Risalah.
- Saliba, J. (n.d.). *Al-Mu'jam al-Falsafi* (p. 64).
- Madkour, I. B., & others. (n.d.). *Al-Mu'jam al-Falsafi* (p. 118).
- Al-Ba'lubaki, M. (2006). *Al-Mawrid* (40th ed., p. 613). Dar al-Ilm Lilmalayyin.
- Crooker, A. (2004, August 30). The desire for technology and the culture of nihilism: Heidegger, Nietzsche, Marx. *Al-Bayan* (Issue 12048).
- Krunden, R. M. (1995). A brief history of American culture (M. Hamad, Trans.; A. Ya'qub, Ed., pp. 375-380). Al-Ahliya Publishing and Distribution.
- Amhaz, M. (n.d.). *Contemporary plastic art* (p. 203).
- Smith, E. L. (1995). Art movements after World War II (F. Khalil, Trans.; J. Ibrahim Jabra, Rev., pp. 26-27). Dar al-Shu'un al-Thaqafiyya al-Amma.
- Reed, H. (n.d.). *A concise history of modern painting* (p. 142).
- Richard, F. (1975). *Abstract expressionism*. Thames and Hudson Ltd. (p. 6).
- Richard, F. (1975). *Abstract expressionism*. *Ibid.* (p. 6).