

The Role of the Murals of Tassili in Influencing the Contemporary Art Movement After Independence in Algeria

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ABSTRACT

Since time immemorial, the Tassili Mountains region has been a source of inspiration for many artists, whether from Algeria or other nationalities, and a source of great civilizations in the Central Sahara region of interest to many historians around the world until today. Its roots extended to different parts of Africa. The stability of the climatic condition was one of the most important motives for human settlement in caves and the beginning of sheep herding. It contributed to the development of life and the emergence of multiple civilizations, resulting in a huge artistic production of murals and sculptures, a source of inspiration for many artists of the current era. The ancient man was able to exploit all the surrounding natural elements such as stones and ostrich eggs and decorate them with vertical and undulating decorations to produce unique works of art despite their simplicity and primitiveness. And their sticks hunt animals like wild buffalo and deer, The reason for doing these actions is the belief of the ancient man that by filming these scenes he will gain strength to overcome them later. They also included in their mural their own writing "Tifinagh", which is their own writing system, which is considered one of the oldest writings in history and had a great spread in the northern coastal region of Algeria, in addition to the desert areas such as Tassili and Tadrart. This rich artistic heritage was able to influence a whole generation of contemporary artists who had faith in their identity and roots and made a great effort to revive it and preserve its survival and spread it around the world through various artistic forums and exhibitions, especially after Algeria gained its independence From the French occupation, artists such as Mohamed Khadda and Mohamed Isakhem and artistic movements appeared in protest against traditional art schools, such as the Al-Awsham group led by Denise Martinaz, a contribution from them in preserving the heritage and Amazigh art and adhering to their roots. Their main reference was the murals and sculptures of the Tassili region.

KEYWORDS

Tassili murals; plastic art in Algeria; tattoo group

An Introduction

The first spark of art for the ancient man came from trimming stones and decorating ostrich eggs and snails with vertical, horizontal and wavy shapes and animal images and coloring them with red ocher, and they used the same shapes on pottery. The ancient man was also able to accomplish many works of art made of pottery, sculptures of animals and statues of women, especially in the medieval and modern stone ages. In addition to mural painting, which occupied most of the caves and cavities of Tassili, which were the resting place of the ancient man. Even UNESCO included it in the World Heritage List in 1982 and considered the area as the largest museum of stone inscriptions. The murals were drawings of predators, pets and people carrying sticks and bows surrounding animals to hunt, such as deer and rhinos, believing that he would

obtain the necessary strength to overcome them by drawing himself defeating them. And some murals were a sanctification of some other animals such as the ram, so he depicted the ram in many of his works and the sun disc between its horns. One of the most important features of the artworks on the walls of those caves was the lack of consideration for proportions and dimensions. The length of the giraffe may reach more than six meters, while the height of the rhinoceros is seventy centimeters. The artist used to define the parameters of the scene by dotting the painting, then removing the bumps with a hard stone scraper from the surface of the painting, and polishing the surface with a hard scraper until the surface became smooth, then he began to implement his artwork, first planning the details, then grooving and coloring.

With the development of life, the artistic stages of the primitive man developed, and he began to develop his artistic methods, surface treatment and coloring materials, and the most famous colors used were red ocher extracted from iron oxide and the white color extracted from white and black rock powder from wood charcoal.

Although the artworks of the primitive man in Tassili may seem simple and primitive and far from complexity and details, they passed through several stages, each stage describing a stage of the development of life in the region, and they inserted their own writings (Libyan Berber writing) into their murals and artworks. . It is a writing system of their own and one of the oldest of the alphabets known in history and dates back to the second half of the first millennium, and it was discovered engraved and illustrated on the walls of caves and was used in the past in short messages, shrines and funerary monuments. Used in many artworks by Algerian contemporary artists.

And the passage of time and the development of life and the passage of Algeria with many political and social changes and the entry of the Romans and after them the Islamic army and the Ottomans and the last of them the French occupation. The most distinguished of them, which made a group of contemporary artists rebel against the rigid artistic traditions and schools of Western art and revive the authentic Amazigh heritage represented in the murals of Tassili, and contributed to the production of their own artworks inspired by the Berber culture, moving away from realism and academic visions and replacing them with the abstract trend and Cubism, symbolism, ancient Amazigh writings, and the emergence of artistic groups in order to preserve the Algerian identity and return it to its Amazigh roots, such as the tattoo group, the presence and the group of painters.

research importance

- Analyzing and studying the artworks found in the Tassili Caves, including photography, carving, and the artistic methods used in those works.
- Analysis and study of artworks. Contemporary artworks affected by primitive art in Tassili and introducing the most important contemporary artists.
- Shedding light on the artistic groups that emerged after the independence of Algeria, such as the tattoo group and the attendance group.

research aims

Introducing the most important features of Amazigh civilizations and the changes taking place on them and their contribution to a contemporary artistic production inspired by the past of primitive art and prehistoric times, and proving the strength of the artistic construction that created a whole generation of artists interested in their original identity and keen to spread it inside and outside Algeria.

- Going deeper into the civilizations of the Maghreb countries and contributing to the introduction of new styles and types of arts.

Research Methodology

A descriptive, historical, and analytical approach to the most important artworks found in Tassili, and the most important contemporary artists and contemporary artistic movements that emerged after independence.

Findings and Recommendations:

First, the results:

Since prehistoric times, primitive man has been able to create artworks and murals for the purposes of survival and adaptation to wildlife and contribute to overcoming predatory animals.

- Tassili murals had a unique taste and character and went through different artistic stages, each stage was a documentation of human life at the time, and each stage had its own style, colors and technology.

- Tassili's murals were able to inspire many contemporary artists in Algeria, especially after independence, and helped them restore the Amazigh identity again after colonialism and obliterate the effects of colonialism in the annihilation of the Amazigh Algerian identity.

Second: Recommendations:

Introducing the most important features of the ancient Amazigh art found in the Tassili Caves and its artistic stages.

- Considering the research as a reference to this civilization and this ancient artistic style and trying to shed light on new arts and different techniques that contributed to the development of contemporary arts in general.

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