

Features of Feminist Criticism in Shafa Hadi's paintings

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Abstract

The present study represents a modest scientific effort to reveal the features of feminist criticism in plastic art through some artistic productions selected from the paintings of the Iraqi plastic artist Shafa Hadi. Section one presents the methodological framework. It indicates the aim of the present study in identifying the features of feminist criticism in the paintings of the artist Shafa Hadi clarifying the importance of the term feminist criticism and its most important features. Section two is subdivided into three subsections. The first tackles the feminist movement in the west, the second tackles environmental and cultural heritage of contemporary Iraqi plastic art, and the third discusses contemporary Iraqi women's plastic art. Section three is devoted to presenting the research procedures, including the community that was represented in the paintings of the artist Shafa Hadi and the sample that consisted of five paintings. The researchers conducted the analysis and came out with results and conclusions and then recommendations and suggestions.

Section one

The Methodological Framework

First: The research problem

Feminist criticism emerged as an organized discourse in the sixties of the twentieth century and relied on the women's liberation movement that demanded their feminist rights in the Western world. This was the first wave of the waves of the modern feminist movement in its organized form. In the seventies of the same century, the signs of the second wave appeared, which were able to help women achieve a very important qualitative leap. This wave went beyond its basic ideas of equality with men and began to re-read the existing cultural system to show the extent to which this system is biased towards the male. The female suffered from marginalization and exclusion. With the nineties of the twentieth century, the third wave began to emerge in the feminist critical discourse. From this wave, interest in women's literature began to escalate, with a sculpting of concepts and propositions that contributed in one way or another to enriching the women's critical movement by revealing the themes and signs that give women's writings and their artistic and literary production their special features. It focuses on feminist issues that are related to femininity and the study of the ways in which the image of women was formed. Feminist movements in thought and literature paved the way for feminist artistic trends dealing with women's issues in the Western and Arab world, including Iraqi plastic art. Many brilliant feminist names appeared on the Iraqi

plastic scene, such as Nazeeha Salim, Widad Al-Orfali, Madiha Omar, and Laila Al-Attar. In the present study, the features of feminist criticism in the paintings of the plastic artist Shafa Hadi are identified through the following question:

What are the features of feminist criticism in the paintings of Shafa Hadi?

Second: The significance of the present study

The present study is significant due to the following points:

1. Introducing the concept of feminist criticism and clarifying its most important features.
2. Shedding light on the paintings of the Iraqi artist Shafa Hadi.
3. Providing specialists and those interested in feminist plastic art with the features of feminist criticism in the paintings of Shafa Hadi.

Third: The Objectives

The present study aims to identify the features of feminist criticism in the paintings of Shafa Hadi.

Fourth: The Limits

Temporal limits: 2018-2021.

Spatial limits: Iraq.

Objective limits: Studying the features of feminist criticism in the paintings of the Iraqi plastic artist Shafa Hadi.

Fifth: Definition of key terms

Features

Linguistically: It refers to the attributes of a thing (1).

Terminologically: It is the characteristic that can be observed in a work of art or any of its well-established, stable meanings (2).

Criticism

Linguistically: It refers to each discussion of any matter (3).

Feminist

Linguistically: It refers to everything related to women (4).

Terminologically: It is considered a rejection of all positions of women in society. It is a criticism issued from a radical perspective of literature and various roles. It represents an initial step for a formula of feminist literary aesthetics and its development. It is an aesthetic aspect that establishes a complete break with all standards of dominant male values. It makes her evaluate literature and analyze it from the perspective of the authentic life of the

woman/female, which thus indicates that women have begun to look at themselves and their culture quite seriously (5).

Section two

The theoretical framework

First: The feminist movement in Western society

Women have suffered from a humiliating conditions throughout the past ages and still are. It is a very old situation since humanity shifted from the simple life of hunting and living on the fruits of trees to the life of grazing and agriculture, with which the images of ownership and possession began. Other forms of social oppression fell on the shoulders of men and forced them to play the role of defenders and warriors for survival. The image of the warrior man and the conquering hero remained. Zeus, the great Greek goddess, is on top of the pantheon as a hero of plunder, which is the ideal man (6). The woman remains submissive as she was in those ancient myths, having nothing of herself. Hera was so despite her sharp tongue, Artemis was so despite her playing the role of the goddess of hunting, or Athena, although she was an oasis of the pantheon goddess who fought wars just like men. Thus, submission and surrender was imposed on women. Humanity accepted this situation as a very natural axiom, especially when it was established by epics and legends, as well as lyrical poems, plays, and novels through the ages (7).

It became normal and usual in practical life for a woman to suffer more than men suffer from harsh treatment and the oppression of the system on the basis that her biological composition has assigned her a secondary status. Femininity became subordinate to manhood. It represents an obstacle to the human entity of women at any of the prevailing social levels. Likewise, the burdens and responsibilities that women carry out, such as pregnancy, preparing food, and maintaining the family so that its entity does not collapse deprived her from the most basic rights to express an opinion, whether with regard to family affairs, or related to community issues and problems (8).

Feminine waves

Research and studies divided the long and arduous march of women in claiming their rights into three waves, in which attitudes and ideas changed from one wave to another, namely the first feminist wave, the second feminist wave, and the third feminist wave, known as post-feminism (9).

First: The first feminist wave

Its demands centered on the right to have education and work, in addition to demanding the rights of married women, child custody, economic ownership, and the right to vote. Mary Wollstone Croft's book "In Defense of Women's Rights" issued in 1792 is considered the origin of the international feminist movement, in which she demanded the opportunity for women in education. She also talked about the society's view of femininity as a result of negative thoughts towards women (10).

Second: The second feminist wave

This wave exploded in the sixties of the twentieth century. It is an ideological product of economic and social conditions, including the demise of colonialism, anti-wars, criticism, and highlighting the defects of capitalism, and the emergence of the culture and civilization of non-European people as a party in the making of civilizations. It opposed colonialism and postmodernism. In its second wave, feminism has risen to the level of explicit theory and philosophy in addition to its social goals, such as gender equality in education and work, equal wages, improving women's health services, and tightening penalties for crimes of rape and physical violence against women (11).

Third: The third feminist wave

The third feminist wave began at the beginning of the nineties of the twentieth century, and it continues to the present time. It emerged from the second wave, but it is more comprehensive in terms of intellectual and class terms. It arose as a reaction to what it saw as the failure of the second feminist with the initiatives and movements produced by the sixties to the eighties. Third wave feminists are young women who have grown up influenced by feminism and women's studies, and young graduates with academic degrees, who have known modernity, postmodernism, and post-feminism. Many of them belong to popular classes and women of color. They realize that women do not represent one thing. Rather, they come from multiple class, racial, ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds (12).

The third wave of feminism crystallized on the grounds of the emergence of the postmodern trend and that the postmodern space is contradictory and centered around inequality. This trend has arisen in recent decades. Some believe that Nietzsche was the first to announce his gradual birth through his criticisms, which he was famous for in the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. The trend is a modernist one. It is a critical one. Its criticisms are directed at modernity with all its promises, such as the liberation and comfort of human beings (13).

The names of personalities in the post-modern period such as Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Jean-François Lyotard, and Jean Baudrillard, who are French thinkers, Richard Rorty, Elder McIntyre, Thomas Coon, and Paul Feyerabend, who are English thinkers, have shined. Any criticism of the theory itself is the basis for them, and not criticism to arrive at an alternative or new theory (14). From these three waves, feminist currents, schools, and trends that differed from each other in foundations and methods have emerged. They are either contradicting them or modifying and complementing them in order to improve the reality of women and to identify the reasons for their exclusion and marginalization of their role. They are liberal feminism, socialist feminism, radical feminism, environmental feminism, black feminism, cultural feminism, and existential feminism (15).

In the midst of these Western feminist waves, currents and trends, there were precursors to the women's plastic art movement, which are the efforts and achievements of feminists to produce art that reflects the lives and experiences of women. The artists suffered from the difficulty of participating and holding exhibitions, especially if they were artists of color.

Despite these difficulties, the art produced by women was characterized by Honesty, with direct affection for her femininity. The women's world has values, experiences, and feelings that differ from the world of men, which is reflected in their artistic works. Plastic artists in America obtained support from the seventies of the twentieth century, such as museums, galleries, and educational institutions of support for them and their artistic experience (16).

Second: The environmental and cultural heritage of contemporary Iraqi plastic art

Contemporary Iraqi plastic art has gained a remarkable presence and distinction, whether on the Arab or international level, for many reasons. Perhaps, the most important reason is the Iraqi artist's close connection with his/her ancient civilizational heritage, in addition to his/her personal characteristics that are generally characterized by a spirit of challenge, clarity of vision, and unity of expression. It gave Iraqi art that great and varied impetus of ideas, styles, and visions. It gave Iraqi artists all that confidence and daring in research, experimentation, and innovation (17). The civilization of Mesopotamia is characterized by its possession of an important cultural and artistic heritage. The archeology revealed many models and sculptures in the palaces and houses of cities, which were represented in carving on walls, fences and courtyards of civil and religious buildings, then the development that took place in plastic art in the Arab Islamic civilization. The art of decoration was born. Then, In the Middle Ages, Al-Wasiti's paintings of the shrines of Hariri and others appeared. The contemporary Iraqi artist stands on a solid ground on which a series of great civilizations have been deposited, all the way to contemporary civilization (18).

Contemporary Iraqi plastic art appeared at the hands of a generation of pioneers who learned the ABCs of art in Western countries. With their return, they were loaded with the prevailing artistic ideas in those countries. Their own style expresses themselves and their local and cultural specificity. Contemporary Iraqi art has carried the comprehensive human spirit. It derives its aesthetic components from the ancient and Islamic cultural heritage as well as the local environment (19).

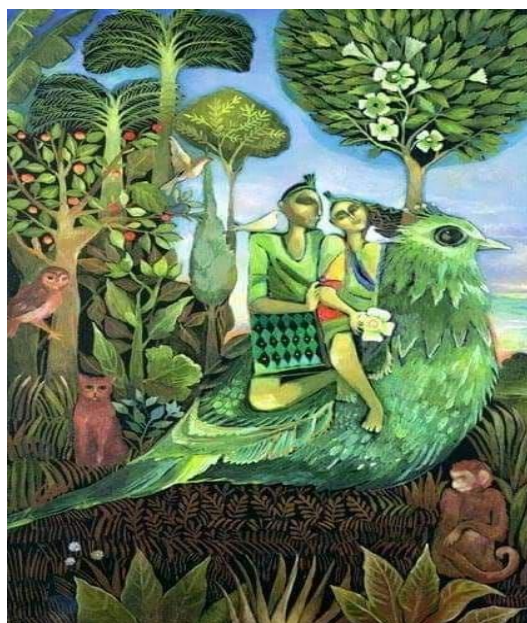
These pioneering artists have left their clear imprints on the contemporary Iraqi plastic scene, and have become artistic figures such as Faeq Hassan, Jawad Salim, Shakir Hassan Al Said, Ismail Al Sheikhly, Hafidh Al Droubi, Nazeeha Salim, Khalid Al-Jadir, and Faraj Abbou. Their methods and artistic legacies had a clear impact on the careers of artists from later generations, such as the generation of the sixties and seventies and motivating them to be interested in innovation, research, and experimentation to achieve artistic identity (20).

Third: Contemporary Iraqi women's plastic art

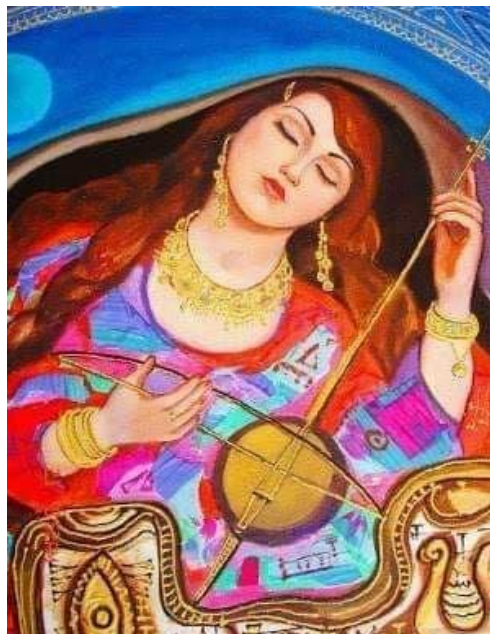
Since its early beginnings, the Iraqi scene in contemporary plastic art has witnessed the presence of pioneering female artists in plastic art such as (Madiha Omar, Nazeeha Salim, Ne'amat Mahmoud Hikmat, Widad Al-Orfali, Suzan Al-Sheikhly, Sua'ad Al-Attar, Laila Al-Attar, Bahja Al-Hakeem, Maheen Al-Sarraf, Salma Al-Alaq, Rajiha Al-Qudsi, Samaa Al-Agha, and Ashtar Jameel Hammoudi. The artistic movement is witnessing a great development represented by an increase in the number of plastic artists who emerged and formed a great feminist phenomenon through which they participated in finding artistic

privacy by drawing inspiration from history at times and communicating with the experiences of the world at other times (21).

The plastic artists left a clear imprint and works of artistic value. The pioneering women artists, as well as the pioneering artists, established their artistic methods and their ability to employ the ancient civilizational heritage and the contemporary one in finding the artistic identity of contemporary Iraqi plastic art. They influenced many artists from later generations. Sua'ad Al-Attar used the forms and the popular symbols in her paintings in the mid-sixties. Then, she turned into ancient Assyrian historical sources, ancient Arab miniatures, Sumerian balustrades, and Assyrian relief carvings, then Islamic art sources (22). The orchard was her favorite subject. The leaves of trees and birds have women's faces. Her works were characterized by broad imagination and poetic aspects. She relied on decorations, inscriptions, and symbols within the ancient and contemporary Arab civilizational legacies (23).

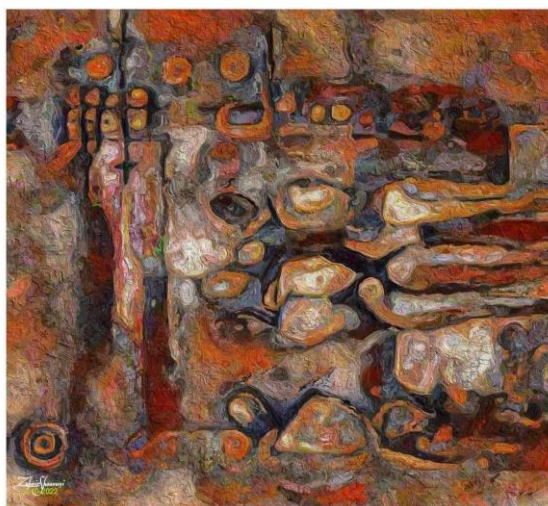


The artist Sama Al-Agha drew popular themes from reality. But, she worked to modify reality, change the realistic dimensions, remove them from their reality to the visual vision that reveals the implicit, which hides behind the bumpers of reality, the reality of women as it is intended to be seen, which is imposed on her by society and its traditions. The women she draws appear in a state of luxury and opulence and full of life using the power of expressive colors to show the state of joy of their women. However, on the other hand, it highlights women's suffering through the impressions drawn on women's faces in rejecting reality or the moments of sadness that appear on their faces (23).



The work of the Iraqi artist, Elham Jawad Al-Saffar, was distinguished by her attempt to search for psychological connotations and emotional premises that affect the formulation and formation of her digital artwork, its general format, its schools, tools, structures, and all its material and moral elements and equipment. This is because her visual and digital formative,

visual and digital artistic expression represents an emotional and unconscious repetition of her experiences and her manifold emotions, with diverse premises and directions. In its entirety, this is one of the sources of her inspiration and creativity, one of the factors affecting the creation of her experience, and one of the distinctive aspects behind her paintings and the expressive art forms completed from under her fingers, which can only be explained by the digital artistic process in its light and by trying to reveal the mysteries of women and their psychological and emotional composition (24).



Indicators of the theoretical framework

1. Western culture is patriarchal, stressing the dominance of men and the inferiority of women in all aspects of life and their religious, familial, political, economic, social, legal, legislative, artistic, and literary concepts. Women have come to see the inferiority of themselves as an absolute axiom.
2. The structure of the culture produced by the masculine prejudices prevalent in the culture of the West made the male characterized by positivity, adventure, rationality and creativity, and the female by passivity, complacency, confusion, hesitation, emotionality, and following custom and tradition.

3. The path of patriarchal thought has invaded all Western culture, which has led to the alienation of the female, or she is drowned out by accepting the man's perspective and values, and the ways of his perception, feelings and actions, until he recruits her against herself while she does not know.

4. Critics' statements and literary criticism are completely biased towards the male gender because the traditional critical classifications. The criteria for analysis and judgment on artworks stem from the man's assumptions and methods of reasoning, even though they claim objectivity, impartiality, and universality.

5. The most important explicit features of feminist criticism is the assimilation of the inherited and contemporary feminine production that men neglected for a long time. This criticism introduced many feminine works to the art scene that emulate the artistic heritage.

6. What women produce is defined in terms of artistic products through internal rather than external activity. How it is characterized as feminine is determined such as the relationship of a woman with a woman, the relationship of mother to daughter, the experiences of pregnancy, delivery, breastfeeding, and the home.

7. Uncovering the artistic history of the feminine heritage through the experiences of the previous pioneering women and imitating them as role models by others.

Section three

The Procedural Framework

1. The research community

the research community includes 45 paintings by the Iraqi plastic artist Shafa Hadi. The research community is specified for the time period (2015-2021).

2. The research sample

It includes five samples of paintings by the Iraqi plastic artist Shafa Hadi.

3. The research tool

The two researchers relied on the main indicators that resulted from the theoretical framework.

4. The research Methodology

The two researchers adopted the descriptive analytical method.

5. Sample analysis

Sample (1)

Artwork name; Street Salesman

Year of production; 2018



Size; 100×80

Material; Oil on canvas

General description of the artwork

This sample is a plastic art painting of a man carrying a bag on his back and two mugs in his hands. The man bows to the two girls near him. The seller wears a dishdasha adorned with a leather belt and pants. On his head, there is a hat called in the Baghdadi language (Al-Araqchin). One of the two girls wears a red dress and the other wears Light purple. The background of the painting shows the arched windows, which are old Baghdadi windows. There is a rooster standing on a wall in the upper right side of the painting.

Artwork analysis

This painting embodies one of the old folk professions, which is the itinerant drink seller, who was roaming the Baghdad neighborhoods and alleys. This work belongs in its characters, place, and colors to the Baghdad environment and its popular legacies. Calligraphy played an important role in giving the expressive character to the artwork, showing the basic shapes in the painting, and transferring the eye of the beholder smoothly and regularly from one place to another during his reading of this work. The artist also succeeded in employing the value, that is, the degree of lighting in the painting to highlight the characters. The person bends over the two girls to give them a drink. The artist worked on documenting successful visual visions, in representing an image of simple social life, which carries the local character with it in a contemporary artistic style. The subject of work leads to different walks of life in That period of Iraqi history in which most professions and jobs were the domain of men. So, the market, trade, and professions were the preserve of the male element. The woman is the other one who is hidden from view, governed by traditions and customs that made her a static element, who does not participate in social gatherings, but is isolated in their homes, spending most of their time there. Their childhood survived from those pressures to some extent. So, the two girls seem to go out to the street to play and buy juice from the street vendor.

Sample (2)

Artwork name; country girl

Year of production; 2018

Size; 100×100

Material; acrylic on canvas



General description

This sample is a fine art painting. It is a portrait of a rural woman putting her hand on her cheek. She wears a shawl on her head. She puts a tulip in her nose. She has two bracelets in her hand. She wears a red dress. In the background of the painting, several vocabulary were

used, such as the arched window and part of a rural door, as well as the palm tree with abbreviated symbols and inscriptions.

Artwork analysis

This painting embodies a rural girl who appears at the time of her break from the work that falls on the shoulders of the rural girl. The artist painted this painting in a realistic expressive style embodied in the form of the portrait. She dealt with the background of the painting using the symbols she chose from the Iraqi environment in order to highlight the identity of this artwork. The masculinity of rural culture is embodied in this painting that confirms the dominance of men. Fatigue and tiredness is evident on her features through her inability to adjust her neck. So, she urgently needed to support her neck with her hand. It is known that rural women are responsible for most of the work inside and outside their home, which confirms the supremacy of men and her inferiority in all aspects of life. Her structure seemed weak with her shoulders drooping and her head tilted. So, she was characterized with passivity, submission, and emotionality by the perspective of the patriarchal society. She followed custom and tradition by wearing a very heavy dress with her long-sleeved robe and scarf (sheila) so that the male would be the positive, adventurous, creative, and strong. Open spaces and participation are often unfair. Thus, the painting highlights the woman's extravagant productivity in giving. One of the most important features of feminist criticism is the assimilation of female production. This work absorbed her work and production at home and in the field as well, embodying her great efforts to participate in home and non-home activities, which highlights the reality of many Of the women who found themselves in a social context that they were supposed to be satisfied with it and obey its laws. In the woman's face, there is a story and suffering that leads to paths fraught with thoughts and obsessions until the inner voice of her failures can be heard, which seemed evident through the curvature of most of the figures in the painting from her tilted head to her shoulders, nets, and arches hanging on the wall and facing down. The geometrical shapes are arranged in a broken arch.

Sample (3)

Artwork name; woman spinning

Year of production; 2019

Size; 100×80

Material; Oil on canvas



General description

This sample is a plastic art painting consisting of a woman sitting and practicing spinning threads wearing a red dress decorated with green spots and putting a green tie on her head.

Artwork analysis

This artwork embodies a woman spinning threads, a profession or hobby that was practiced by most women, in a traditional and folkloric Baghdadi atmosphere. The doors and windows are arched with bright colors for their glass. The painting is characterized with its warm colors. The presence of red and yellow colors on the door and the window and orange and blue makes the work belong to the realistic expressionism that characterizes most of Shafa Hadi's works. This composition represents a woman sitting at home and spinning wool, which is a domestic occupation practiced by the woman in her home, in which she spends most of her time to perform several family functions such as caring for children, taking care of them, raising them, preparing food, arranging and cleaning the house, and the other times, she practices the profession that she masters, such as spinning or sewing or knitting and other professions and crafts that she practices at home by virtue of the traditions of the patriarchal society, which obliged her to spend most of her time confined to the house, where she is surrounded by walls and closed windows that only open with the presence of a man, and preventing her from leaving the house deprived her of getting an education. The woman in this painting is trying to get rid of these social constraints so that this work of spinning woolen threads is an outlet and an escape from the reality of the dominance of the patriarchal society and the imposition of its will to isolate the woman from her social environment under the pretext of preserving her. The loneliness and isolation she lives in are forced under the influence of the norms that have been exaggeratedly imposed on her by society. She is not about worlds other than her own, which is surrounded by those walls. The artist, Shafa Hadi, succeeded in invoking vocabulary from the folklore in her artistic painting to give it a local identity to be distinguished.

Sample (4)

Artwork name; Shanasheel

Year of production; 2018

Size; 100×80

Material; Acrylic Colors



General description

This sample is a plastic painting that is performed in a realistic style representing a scene of one of the Baghdad alleys, consisting of a street and a group of houses. The construction method is Shanasheel with a dome for the minaret of the mosque and the presence of people represented by a man, two women, a woman and a child at the end of the road.

Artwork analysis

The artwork represents a scene of one of the old Baghdad streets, which has become at the present time a part of heritage and folklore. These neighborhoods and the method of construction are present in most of the Iraqi provinces. This was painted in a realistic style with the presence of simplification and reduction. Color reduction in this work shows the extent of the impact of the environment and place on the imagination and conscience of the plastic artist, who is part of the environment and nature. The Iraqi shanasheel has a special flavor, which brings the contemplator back into the painting to the stories and tales passed on by generations. Those conversations relate to family bonding and human relations that bind the people of one neighborhood. Shanasheel and minarets are among the most important folkloric features that characterize a number of Iraqi cities. It is a history and witness to the social and civilizational transformations that Iraq has undergone. The closeness of the buildings to each other and their embrace with the minarets indicates the strength of the interconnectedness of social relations and the familiarity among them, which is based on human foundations among them. However, this does not prevent that the society, in its general form, was a patriarchal society. Women are governed by the laws of men that were imposed by traditions until they became part of the religion. Women wear long clothes and black aba. Yet, the education rate among them was low because of the prevailing traditions that prevent women, especially girls, from leaving the house. At that time, she was suffering from those social pressures imposed on her.

Sample (5)

Artwork name; None

Year of production; 2019

Size; 100×80

Material; Acrylic



General description

This sample is a plastic painting representing the picking of fruits, in which there are two people, a woman and a man. In her hands, the woman carries the fruits that the man picks. The painting is dominated by green, oak, and olive. There is color consistency in which some symbols are available in the background of the painting. There is amplification and blowing in the bodies of the man and the woman.

Artwork analysis

This artwork is within the realistic expressive style representing a man and a woman from the countryside picking fruits. The man wears the rural dress of the dishdasha and the shemagh with amplification in the size of the arms in an expressive way. The woman is in her rural dress wearing an aba and carrying citrus fruits. The artist canceled the third dimension, which makes the work As a prominent sculpture. This work is related to the Iraqi nature stored in the artist's memory and imagination. Rural women perform many tasks and work. Their day

is full of work from dawn to night. Most of them require great muscular effort, in addition to having responsibilities within the family such as taking care of children, preparing food for the family, and cleaning the house. At the same time, she stands side by side with her husband, helps him, and works with him in Agriculture in its various fields such as plowing, watering, planting, and harvesting.

Women have suffered from the harshness of rural life, which requires them to work hard for long periods. Despite that effort made by women, which is often for free, they are placed in a lower rank than men, as it appears from the height of the man about them, which the artist expressed, as It belongs to him in what he does.

The results

The features of feminist criticism emerged in the works of Shafa Hadi as follows:

1. She focused on the theme of women in her artworks.
2. She highlighted the reality of Iraqi women and their issues in various societies, whether in the countryside or the city.
3. She sought the liberation of women from the painful reality in which they live.
4. She tried to show the social character and the suffering of women in it.
5. She emphasized cultural heritage, whether ancient such as the Sumerian and Babylonian civilizations, or contemporary ones such as Shanasheel, ancient alleys, and rural life.
6. She revealed the dominance of the patriarchal society and its strict adherence to customs and traditions.

The conclusions

1. The paintings of the Iraqi plastic artist Shafa Hadi showed the reality of women and their issues that shaped the social system.
2. She emphasized the libertarian tendency from the domination of the patriarchal society.
3. She focused on the cultural heritage as a tool to highlight the position of women in history.

Recommendations

The two researchers recommend the following:

1. Translating recent sources on feminist criticism and gender.
2. Collecting the works of Iraqi artists in volumes to appreciate the aesthetics of their works.

Suggestions

The two researchers suggest conducting the following studies:

1. Features of Feminist Criticism in African Art.

2. Employment of miracles in contemporary Iraqi painting.

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