The Lights and Darks of human emotion as expressed
In Sufism and as painted in Art

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Introduction

Most works of art have been analyzed so an opinion is formed in various circles as to what it means to the artist and what it means to his audience. In most cases, the artist worked spontaneously on a concept and painted several paintings on the basis of the concept. Due to this fact, a concept then has several visual references for the artist and his audience.

Visual references for most people can be traded in for actual experiences that the artist can see in his audience and then define a meaning or an opinion for his self, if he wishes to be curious.

My thesis is about the trade of emotion, language and stature in more than one society. And the links that form between one source of experience to another, and how they are recorded in the mind and sometimes in works of art.

Since art and its teachers, provides the freedom to interpret incidents, social critique and political and intellectual events of the past and the ones that are taking place in the present.
In chapter 1, *Acceptance of flaws in nature and man*, I speak about the constant observation of nature in art as done by artists to provide aesthetics that sometimes mirror flaws with perfections. And Sufi association of accepting that man has imperfections that make most Sufi philosophies intelligible.

In chapter 2, *Journey through time and the placing of human body*, I elaborate on how the successes and failures of man in his time of the past, the future and present leaves an imprint on his body and soul that I celebrate in my paintings. And how Sufi thought plays on the fact that the body of man experiences successes and failures along with his mind and soul. And how the body may look or respond as a result of its unique experience.

In chapter 3, *Benefits of an honest exhibition of feelings of love and hate*, I have tried to accept that art induces an imitation of feelings whether they are of love or hate. And if one has to truly experience a painting or a work of art, then you need first to be honest to yourself before embarking on strong emotions like love and hate. And that to be strongly unique in one’s response, one needs time and emotional association to another person or an artist. And that if one reads quotes of Sufi philosophers, one may find the help they require to be strongly unique and firmly introspective to other people’s reactions and sentiments.
Acceptance of flaws in nature and man

Sufism teaches about teachers and ways of observing nature; it entails reading anecdotes of early Sufis reminiscing about love and the passion of man versus the passion of beasts. Art for me is a teacher in itself. Through art I am able to envelop various subjects together and see for myself a duplicated version of several ideas interconnecting with one another to form a concept that is entirely my own. It is through art that I feel like I am the centre of attention and escape reality; that ignores me not entirely but is never able to give me time or the kind of attention I require to survive. Art is not my savior and neither is Sufism. Although the art I produce may last longer than most of my best laid plans, longer than the most elaborate conversation I have ever had and that to me remains as something that may survive religion, politics and the harsh reality that is life.

I am not a big fan of fantasy. To me fiction is a reality that may take its form in time later and become a bigger reality than the fantasy it was conceived as. Therefore, most of my art work is reality based and not material or idea based. That simply means that the work of art I make has happened and been completed in its entirety and now then I bring it to the canvas or paper. If one was curious it tells a story captured in time, that I either witnessed as an observer or participated as a character. Most of the portraits I have painted for example have started out as portraits of me but most of them somehow become an intense study of people I had known in the past or people I am in contact with at present. This phenomenon is comforting as well as disturbing—I am witnessing myself disintegrate into other people. My natural self, is then similar to the natural character of
other people. Comforting because I can empathize with other personalities; disturbing because it may transform into a caricature.

Sufism supports hierarchy of individuals and intellectuals. I totally agree with the importance of class in society and the designed position of certain personalities to reign over the rest. This assurance to have someone look over you completes the study of man as himself. One is aware of where his freedom ends and someone else’s privacy begins.

Some artists are natural counselors. Their artwork is a threshold. It is a map of sorts that may take one to faraway places and discover ideas not yet probed. In an artistic community these artists are not leaders but lead nonetheless.

Two pairs of my paintings together represent a popular symbol (that of a flower) fig. 12 and 13, that may be compared to a painting by Mel Ramos titled Peek-a-boo fig. 11. It is a painting of Marilyn Monroe that to this day remains a sex symbol that represents the psychic deficiency of a sexual woman and her manipulation. Even to those who have never seen any of Marilyn Monroe’s movies, know her as a sex symbol because of her gestures that are captured and relayed by the artist. The flowers I have painted are cartoonish at best, but knowing what I know from my experience it is not innocent and certainly not for a whimsical moment. And this I have tried to paint—something that I hope would be excluded from the vocabulary of someone who does not understand their significance. After I had finished painting them, I realized that they don’t look like flowers but were intended to look like poppies some people smoke. These symbols then
represent the hippies or gypsies that smoke them, though I can not be completely sure. The beauty of symbols lies in the fact that it escapes normal comprehension in terms of words and description and formulates more than one perspective on the image being displayed. Most of the symbols that claim following do so with the knowledge that the followers pertain their own meaning to the symbol within the wide spectrum of its reach. Therefore, political symbols are in a separate division, because it does not allow that kind of freedom. The flowers I had painted were actually painted on a keychain that I had bought and then later decided to paint them because the image did not really communicate a meaning to me. And so after painting them, I defined a meaning for myself.

Some of my artwork, line drawings actually, replicate my desire to travel. I have always envisioned that if I were to go to France I would be sitting on roadsides, pavements and drawing people and architecture. Since this desire overtakes the actual trip to France, my line drawings then to me represent just the desire of travel. Some artists paint their desires literally i.e. drawings of maps and foreign lands they haven’t visited. My line drawings are not maps; they aren’t drawings of architecture, or of people. They are more than anything else, just lines intervened with gradations that form darks and lights.

One of the artists that does both in my opinion with his line drawings is Kai Ming Wong. He retains the line as the chief component of his composition and then forms easy to articulate images of travel; like planes and mountains. His drawings are an inspiration for me because he has not let the skilled artist in himself to overpower his urge to draw what
he desires for himself in the future. His lines are undefined just as the future is for most people.

*Sometimes when – if- you meditate or right before you fall asleep you might have seen clear pictures or scenes flash by in front of your eyes.* (Max Magnus Norman)

Norman’s art is about these visions. His painting *patience killed the dream 2008* fig. 4 is literally about the fall one takes deep in sleep. A lot of people relate that they dreamt of falling and woke up because of it. And his painting is relating that unconsciously I think for him, because the man in the painting could be levitating as do some illusionists. There are a lot of illusionists that are talked about in art circles and Sufi circles. And Max Magnus’s paintings have that presence—that of a magician, a hypnotist, illusionist. In the western art circles, a lot of artists are illusionists. They perform and paint themselves that becomes a subject that dreams their dreams, lives their lives or believes their beliefs. And this is done not with the intention to confuse- on the contrary it is to elevate your intellect somewhere the same as theirs. I don’t consider myself a performer, though I know I can perform at will if I desired for my concept to be understood.

One of his other painting titled *Flesh Bot Assassination Failed 2009* fig. 1 is special for me because I have been in the same physical presence as his subject at a very defining moment of my life. I remember after giving my Alevel exams I would bathe in a bath tub thinking about Art and about machines because I would dream that I was a machine so excluded my emotions were to the outside world. So this painting for me, is a recollection
of that time that Max Magnus has beautifully painted with the woman with a mechanical body.

Christo and two of his paintings titled *Orange Store Front* and *Pink Store Front* fig. 7 and 8, have significance for me because it has that order that makes architecture a science. It through its calculations becomes calming and soothing for one’s senses. Something that has been carefully studied and applied. Some of my paintings that are a calculated study of the human body carry the same significance. I made a point of not distorting the perspective but gave in to it easily so the visual is easy on the eyes. To me legs are the largest, most important instrument that I have come to use. And so my subject i.e. the legs escape fantasy and are represented as they are seen by me.

Two of the other artists that I wish to discuss as an inspiration for me are Roy Lichtenstien and James Rosenquist. They may have painted for some other reason, but for me their paintings are humorous and lift my mood. Roy Lichtenstien’s #39: *Sweet Dreams Baby* fig. 10 looks like it is literally picked up from a comic book. Comic Books are an art form in itself but it is brave to paint it as though it had no end or beginning. It is alone, has no story, no narrations and that is what makes it special.

James Rosenquist’s painting titled *Zone* fig. 6, is a study of a woman’s face that forms a character through the addition of her skin and hair, abstracted to separate the face from the character.
A pair of my water color paintings fig. 18 and 19, use repetition to create movement in an otherwise contained environment of the paper. It is a painting of legs and legs that want to walk, or spread but can not because the space does not allow it. And whether one takes it literally or conceptually my idea or desire to move is painted and expressed through repetition, and by choosing legs as the core subject.

My thesis work is primarily about the human body. Aside from models that I choose to draw, I will be painting myself. Paintings that I compose that take from my reflection in the mirror to the photographs of me, to line drawings of my limbs.

I will be doing all this because all my inspirations from other artists’ work is about permitting my physical self to move, to convey my desire to work in keeping with my fleeting thoughts. Admitting that inspiration for my physical body to respond positively to my environment is perhaps more important for me as an artist than being inspired to work on an idea. I am a physical person, and my physical needs now have surpassed my mental, or metaphysical needs. Therefore, artists whose work corresponds with my past experiences or future aspirations is my source of energy that may be called my inspiration too.

As what I am painting; myself, is closer to home than the ideal home. I reside in my thoughts and my thoughts communicate through my physical body, with my knowledge
of my body I can control my impulses and therefore, this training of impulses and thoughts are translated in my work—through paintings of me.

Paintings of limbs devoid of a face also represent the harmony that human chemistry induces when one is at peace with themselves and their surrounding. My paintings of legs need not have faces, but still convey my emotional state and my desire to move in a certain society or culture. This giving away of my emotional state through paintings of my body is a conscious decision that could have been achieved through portraits of myself also. But this segregation of the body from the face is also because I am aware that my body language sometimes negates what I am actually saying. Not that one form of communication is inferior to the other; or that there is no meeting point for both. It is a confident acceptance of how important one’s body language is and how important one’s way of speaking is. And finally, how an artist may transform a sitting or a situation through utilizing all aspects of one’s body, spoken language; for the benefit of making something truly spectacular.

*Presence: The state of being consciously aware, in alignment with our deepest and highest capacities.*

**Glossary**

The knowing heart: A Sufi path of transformation
Kabir Helminski
What I have tried to do in this chapter is exclude the intense criticism of other people’s art because in a really selfish reality, it is not mine. Though I have tried to only discuss artists whose work opens up a new dimension in light of my philosophical dialogue and art work.

My philosophies and intellectual capabilities, even my physical body has been ignored and slighted from time to time. I am not sore about being ignored but curious nonetheless. In coming about reading and researching on Sufism, I found the same drag of not accepting the human race as one but in groups that compete with one another. In that sense atleast, Sufism does isolate the ignorant and the intelligent; but in place of what or whom? Sufism rejects religious devotees and yet their school of thought encourages devotion to their masters and Sheikhs. In my four year experience of art, I find the same contradiction running through my mind: Are we painting to achieve perfection in aesthetics or distorting grotesque subjects so they imitate perfection in form and aesthetics? It isn’t a lively debate, neither in practice nor in thoughts. The only solution to this contradiction remains that nature itself has flaws that appear with perfecting forms and that is durable to time and age, and key to nature and its’ survival.
Journey through time and the placing of the human body

The Surrealists believe that love has an abundant means of transcending the three modes of existence (madness, dream, writing) and that, through love, man will come to know his true self, free himself from all restraints and raise himself up.

‘Sufism and Surrealism’ by Adonis

translated from the Arabic by Judith Cumberbatch

Most Sufi phrases talk of actions of the body (re: raise himself up), that if were to solely be of body, would be negligible. People raise themselves up several times during the day. Perhaps that is why it becomes obvious that they are speaking of mental capacity. This also implies that Sufis are critically analyzing body movements and gestures and giving one the benefit of the doubt when they expect the practice of ‘right thought’, or an inclination towards their line of thought, whatever that may be. One often gets into a habit of asking teachers or mentors if their thoughts are good or if what they thought was true! After awhile of being amidst artists, one loses this habit or if forced into giving up the habit of weighing thoughts in terms of words and phrases.

This freedom from thinking so to please others, is something Sufis are able to do. They don’t want to enslave people for their thoughts and therefore are not preaching for the right kind of thought. Since I was one of those students prior to being in IVS, that constantly thought, rationalized and spoke, I can relate to the fact that constant dependency on others for mood and place in a social setting is a cause for mental illness. Sufi teachings often help people to rid the psychotic need for reassurance.
However, Sufism separates from Fine Arts in one huge dependable factor; they are not studying or observing the human body for signs of maturity, or social setting or even gender. Artists while painting or drawing have to train themselves to observe and calculate features so as to replicate. The obvious difference then between Sufism and Art, is that though Art can be a backdrop to superior thoughts and actions, it still needs reality to fulfill its’ purpose. Art needs the human body as a subject. Though Sufism needs man; as the teacher and as a student.

A lot of my paintings are painted inspired by the positive moments in my past, happy feelings I recollect of the scenes from my past, but most of all happy moments that have past me by. I know this because upon touching on those moments my memory of them grows stronger and the realization of it being from another time past the present or the future becomes the stronger reality. It sounds sadly sentimental and rather pessimistic to have such beautiful memories that have become just that- memories. So painting is a huge reality for those that have had experiences that transcends even the absurdist school of thought. Surrealism is a watchtower where artists collect similar memories, ideas, concepts, subjects and form a sub-reality that hangs over present time. Sufism is special to me as an artist, because I can literally imagine the first Sufis to be untrained painters. People who probably had a different sense of time and place and had a passionate recollection of nature, women, wine, bodies, intoxication but had no one way of defining them all. Sufis write- they dream, they speak of madness and artists pretend that they are painting people who do all that when in fact I am sure one artist can pretty much define
the beginning of time and the end of it through the Sufi methods and several other modes of exhibition as well.

Most people are exhibitionists- they express themselves through their movement in social circles. To me exhibitionists are representing a core personality trait but most people outside of art circles consider exhibiting as an aggressive behaviour when it suits them and as a form of entertainment when it suits them. These reactions to me personally are archaic- they should not have a place in any class or in any society. Exhibitionists are basically providing a response and an action through the same means- in terms of painting it may mean using yourself as both the subject and the targeted audience. This response is backed up in Sufi circles where in present time most Sufis are loners, and most Sufi thinkers of the past had observed and written and philosophized in seclusion.

Most of my paintings after my past experiences have been sifted through for inspiration turn out to be a social critique where my body comes to have a mark through having experienced those experiences. This is not a narcissistic urge to come back to my body, but a photographic evidence of sorts if say, cameras were not invented. Though you may not come upon it in exact terminology, but if one has studied and spoken to people interested in Sufism one will find that most Sufis are modern day illusionists. They can perform deeds of the body that a normal middle class citizen for example would not be able to. Their means of pleasure of the body are also similar to someone who has keen interest in meditation. Most artists, learning to be artists, have to eventually perform tricks of the body that to an untrained person would be impossible. Not that artists have
to perform Herculean tasks but just tricks that one has to learn to be able to paint or sculpt. The most beautiful thing to see is when an artists is doing all that; without the artist acknowledging that they are juggling mental and physical performances with enough finesse to have anyone looking to wonder what they are working on. The mystique of the artist and the sufi is attractive; as should their work be.

Ironically, most of the paintings of other artists that I have chosen are centered on the power of movement. The key hole, with Marilyn Monroe’s body inside it, in fig. 11 by artist Mel Ramos, is cutting the legs. The painting by Max Magnus Norman in fig. 4 is a man with his hands spread on his toes; anticipating movement. Movement of the body, in any situation is beautiful; or if not that then atleast something that leads to curiosity. Legs having the power to lead then become the first thought when communicating leading movements. To me legs are important because the way I move translates into feelings of well being or feelings of being unwell. I have been physically active most of my life, being interested in sports and physical fitness and so the legs are something that I have been trained to train. And because of that, I think what I find missing in the artwork of other artists is this big chunk of what most of my life has been spent doing- working with my body. Even my paintings of the flowers in fig.12 and 13; I think what becomes obvious is the expression of light and dark- or day and night. Since Indus started for me, I have had to give equal preference to both my resting time being night and my working time being day- and that means knowing the difference between relaxation of the body and the intense expression of the body i.e. painting.
The other reason I chose the artists that I chose would be that their representation of the body is taking the form of popular symbols, even the painting of Marilyn Monroe is more a painting of a painted, made up woman and thus not realistic. The painting of a woman with a popular symbol of a popular car, fig. 5 by Mel Ramos is also taking the woman out of her normal circumstances and giving it a fake background to soften the nudity, maybe. In both cases in fact, it is made extremely obvious that women don’t walk around naked but are taken out of their natural environment and placed somewhere else. This to me growing up was a huge influence— that one could relay the sense of reality from fantasy through thinking about the subjects’ placement. I am too, while painting, thinking about whether the painting become exactly like the memory or the reality. And if it does, it usually becomes unattractive. And so my paintings too have a sense of fantasy, which is a huge relief because reality has no substitute obviously.

Another fantastical trick used by an artist fig. 1 Max Magnus, is by clothing a nude woman with metal parts as would someone with a machine. But the expression in the eyes of the woman are that of exhaustion. This ironical moment is witnessed by the man not really facing the figure in the back as shown by the artist as someone cooking in the back. Though having used tricks, perhaps too many disguises, the artist has lost the touch of fantasy and scraped too close to reality that hurts human sentiments.
Most Sufis start with explanations of the setting of its subjects, when using subjects to provide a concept for discussion or rely heavily on the human sympathy to remark on emotional breakthroughs of man for replicating success in one’s life.

So regardless of the fact that Sufis and artists can see clearly in human emotion the presence of sadness and regret, they still represent this human emotion as a step toward evolution of man. Painting scenes that represent the failure of man as part of the collective conscious of every man are thus providing a platform for hurting souls to gather and share. This unique factor that most other art forms cover up in order to just provide the positive side to life is not accepted in surrealism. The beauty of it remains in that it respects human emotion above all else.

*Love is pleasure and reality is astonishing.*

*Al-Daqaq*

*From ‘Sufism and Surrealism’ by Adonis pg. 79*

Given that human emotion travels in all spheres of its comprehension by man, most sad moments of our life are still very powerful. They have the power of being recollected and belonging to a certain time, of a certain place and that remains as something that can compete with the ecstatic existence or the high time of man in his memory. Through recollection and documentation such obscure moments thus captured in painting can then resurrect in the present or future and become more complete and not necessarily just be positive or negative.
The importance of travel, in terms of traveling ideas or an actual trip I might have taken is something that I consider a touchstone- a beginning or an end. Some of my paintings eg. Fig. 16, fig. 17 are open to interpretation. I have not utilized a language, either in terms of letters or an artistic form, but have let the line drawings perform in themselves. The artist Kai Ming Wong and his drawings in fig. 2 and fig. 3 is using architectural language, he is using repetition and overlapping of lines to perhaps let one’s imagination draw a conclusion and not be the one to explain from start to end. This form of dictation is soothing for anyone who is trying to escape complexities in their own lives, and have something simple and non-important to figure out to let their worries disintegrate. So the artist is then counseling people by exhibiting his work and not counseling in the traditional Freudian method, or a sit down psychiatric method. For such empathetic artists to be seen and discussed is beneficial I think, for someone who is wound up by work or a tragic incident.

Coming back to a painting, of Max Magnus in fig. 4, that I have noticed has a strong composition; I will be analyzing his impulse for painting it. The curve that his subject is standing on could be interpreted as the edge of the world. As most primitive religions expected man to control his desire for navigation, by stating that the world ends; that the world is flat and one could jump off its edge if he goes far. Though through modern science we find that to be untrue, I do believe that traveling beyond borders can end your life, and one does not need the edge to fall- we already have that through political segregation of lands and people. So his painting may look like a whimsical take on an
archaic thought, but it is still applicable in today’s unsafe world. If I were to rethink it by
concerning myself just with the elating man in the painting, I would say that he has
crossed over in his life from one important threshold to another. To me elevation is a
symbol for procession. It is something that represents leading sans regret or confusion.

Two paintings that I would critically analyze together may provide the two sides of two
very important human emotion; elation and aggression. One is a painting by James
Rosenquist fig. 6, and the other is by Roy Lichtenstien fig. 10.

There is no love between two people until one of them says to the other: oh, me.

Al-Sirri al-Saqati
Sufism and Surrealism by Adonis pg. 79

I chose Sufism to be a parallel because if one goes into reading about Sufism one sees
how important layers on human emotion is to most Sufis. To a Sufi no one is only just sad, or only just happy. There is a reason for and a complex web of several emotions playing underneath.

The painting by James Rosenquist in fig. 6, a woman’s face is seen partially. One notices
her fingers covering her smile. When someone smiles it makes other people realize that
they are enjoying themselves or are happy, but this painting hides that smile. Now, this to
me means that the smile itself could be a veil that the woman perfected to hide her real emotion. Such moments one sees in real life, people hiding behind their smiles and the saddest part of it is that because it is a smile it is hard to get through to the hurting part of
that person. Proper etiquettes teaches that if one smiles they are happy, and that it is not
polite to ask on someone’s face if anything is wrong. I have experienced with my closest
friends that if they smile and hide that smile they are not really happy but I have never
found out why they are sad. Such is the power of collective conscious of man; of the yin
and the yang. The power of being happy and being sad; and knowing the difference
between the two. With such etiquettes one loses emotional spontaneity. Though with
enough practice, one can notice several expressions in a person’s smile. Sufism defines
these layers in the emotional state of man as an expression, which utilizes words and
phrases to create complexities in order to conceal plain archaic behavior.

*Hide me from my name, or I saw him and he didn’t see me.*

*Al-Niffari*

*Sufism and Surrealism by Adonis pg. 143*

The painting by Roy Lichtenstein in fig. 10, is double sided as well. Can man fight
himself? How does one express aggression if it is not met half way by someone else?
Comic books are manipulating characters that have lives that intervene and so make
stories and jokes. This painting in my opinion is about the character in a comic book that
never gets any jokes, or meets anyone because he is not interested. Aggression just like
love, has to be with someone else that you make an emotional connection with. This
painting is beautiful because I truly believe that aggression can be constructive too,
because it is an emotional release.
Benefits of an honest exhibition of feelings of love and hate

The human body and its representation in art is not complete without its expressions, others’ impressions and the negative and positive spaces. In order to separate the human body from its environment, artists need feelings, emotions and personality to attach to the human body.

Now aesthetically the human body and its proportions can vary, and so it is with feelings and emotions. What I personally do to attach feelings and emotions to the human form is create a setting in my mind for it. The body moves around that setting and creates dull and bold colors, it makes an ambience. And from there I choose how to paint that body. In between all this come several other paintings and drawings, that can not be related to each other. This gives birth to a painting that has life that can communicate on its own. And finally, it resides on me whether to vary my positive or negative feelings of that painting; feelings of love and hate.

There are many ways of doing something; there are many people doing the same thing. If everyone realizes they are working towards the same goal, more often than not, the idea of attaining the goal forms a variation through the number of people attempting it. Early Sufis and modern day Sufis rely on this piece of information and gather a following and rewards through its manipulation and complete discipline in focusing on the same goal. Religions of the world retain peace in their empires through forming a unanimous goal
for its people in this life and the life after death. Warriors and hunters rely on man’s extreme differentiation between life and death, and so with delicate movements are able to survive and hunt. Sufism is that thin line, that encompasses people working for the same goal and gives them guidelines to form a formulae for success that can be applied later on in life after their time is over. So success once attained can occur time and again; that is why there are books and manuals on doing things right.

There are no rights and wrongs in art, we are told repeatedly. But there is a constant criticism attached to it negating the fact that there is inconceivable freedom. There is more freedom to represent freedom in all forms; be it revolutions, politicians, religious movements and people who attach freedom to their names. But that is it. It does provide inconceivable freedom to someone who has many skills and knowledge of the worlds, since it transcends language and regions and color and race. But even freedom comes to an end. And so it is with every artist. There comes an end- be it a concept, a theory or a style of painting.

For someone who has been negotiating with society or family to contain within their sphere a certain line of thought, or a belief and is turned down; art becomes the escape. Many people claim at certain time in their life that their ideas have not been had by anyone else, that their object of desire has never been seen, and that their life proves to be superior to everyone else. This line of thought in any society will probably move that person from public life and into a designed structure that cures madness. Art for most
people happens after this sort of treatment. In many circles it is called, therapeutic.

Mostly it helps because of the freedom it provides. It would not move you from public life to a structured design for curing; it does not provide a simultaneous dialogue of your actions. And that perhaps is the freedom of art.

Professional artists fear, loathe, seek and ignore criticism. Professionals in any field have a set behavior pattern that needs getting used to. For someone who is told to learn will most likely observe how behavior is learnt. To be able to differentiate between the learning process and the process of observing behavior will lead to an evaluation that coincides with a theory or a concept built by an artist. Therefore, art and artists are looked at and probed for questions frequently for their works of art or the art of their contemporaries and masters.

Questioning an artist or looking at an artists’ work does not always create an understanding. The understanding at least in most art circles, is gained through doing. That means repetition, copying an artists’ work or learning a skill based work of art. Skill is appreciated through exhibiting that most artists have to do after completion of their work.

In Sufism experience is attaining the absolute.

_Ideas do not appear by themselves, as in philosophy, but appear only in their relationships with what is within them._

*Adonis  Sufism and Surrealism  pg. 131*
Artists care most for how someone felt and related to their piece of artwork. Since their understanding of their idea is complete, their understanding of someone attempting to relate to it is far more precise than say someone who has been given the task to understand socio-dependence. Artists then become superior in their level of sensitivity than others. Because art has an artist spending a lot of time in studios and architectural spaces their experience of the collective conscious becomes unique. Their level of communication then becomes guarded with unique experiences and personal anecdotes that would be difficult to feign if one was not an artist.

*The glance perhaps addresses the onlooker with what expression cannot convey, nor translation carry.*

*Al- Niffari*

*Adonis   Sufism and Surrealism   pg. 115*

Just like in any other profession, artists carry confidence with their successes and embarrassment for their failures. Therefore, contradictions occur where there should have been pride or remorse. This becomes interesting sometimes in an artists’ career because his most powerful emotions have been veiled through occupation of his mind. This form of knowledge of another person through symbols and form is a revelation of art. This
happens frequently as no person can be completely aware of all his emotional experiences, but can then see a reflection of it through someone else’s response.

Negative feelings, not those of hate but feelings that negate an experience or a social setting or an actual incident can sometimes prove to be the most difficult experience for an artist. That someone would take the truth and mistake it for a whimsical flight of imagination, is sometimes the hardest to respond to. That imagination is a vital part of art and sometimes an actual subject to be trained for; it becomes hard to fight for reality when that needs taking care of. Manipulation of a situation for your benefit then becomes secondary. The most important truth becomes what happened to you—reality. Since there are simultaneous lives and educated circles that retain an air of sophistication even with acquaintances, reality and your imagination are worth the same. The training one receives in art, one should then utilize to differentiate with one’s fantastical work and one’s honest portrayal of what happened and where and when it happened.

Nothing beats failure than an attempt to do it again. The taste of failure and success has been consumed by every man. The negotiated response to either success or failure in one’s life is that of the sophisticated man. Man that has been taught to respond to others’ responses, man that has experienced first hand the reaction to both success and failure and then chooses for himself what he is most likely capable of doing.

Sufism rejects failure, it competes with success so as it does not owe any society its repetition. This fairness in looking for both success and failure in man and noticing its’
occurrence for when it happens in present and its prediction in an individual or a society in future is what makes Sufism as a study- brave.

People who visit art galleries or the one’s that remember art movements but have not attempted for it as a profession, find in art everything they are looking for. They find philosophers exchanging thoughts, they find knowledge taking its’ first taste in man, they find religious similarities, and political histories being defined. This makes art popular. At least in terms of the majority of people. Artists are made from all specters of society. Some claim that they are uneducated, others claim genius, some relate their life histories because in making art an artist can find either nothing or everything that he is looking for. Most artists then paint many paintings- not just for fame or fortune but if for nothing else than for what they missed capturing. An artist that found something while making a piece of art is the luminous- he is breathtakingly grateful it seems- for nothing. This attitude of an artist becomes attractive to witness. His responses and emotions react to something only he captured, only he can explain. And this interaction with an artist, even when one does not know his name, is the most fulfilling thing to experience. One smiles more, one is able to notice colors vividly, one can articulate experiences that before could not have been broached. This is art. But it is not everyday one comes across an artist. Because most artists more often than not are individuals or professionals or people who are wound up with work.

As it is with a profession in any other field, it becomes then inevitable to repeat the occurrence of success if it has happened before. One may then be able to decide for
themselves where they wish to be standing, what clothes they should be wearing—what features they want in themselves to be defined. An artist may well be able to induce an effect on an audience with a careful decision of his architectural space defined by himself; if his clothes should bear witness to what he was working on or if they should be clean. These things though minute make a difference. And it is not always the clean over dirty or fresh over beaten or the delicate over the sturdy.

One’s preference over what one finds attractive in other people could be the exact opposite to what one looks like or sounds like to themselves. This distinction as one understands of what one finds attractive in themselves, in comparison with what one finds attractive in other people can make preferences that an individual can use to define for themselves their body of work.
Conclusion

Beauty in any form is replicated in nature. Man seeks beauty in his self, and in others. The need to appreciate the joyous existence of beauty with all things mundane is an acceptance of a hierarchy that exists in the measure of beauty.

Human emotions and man’s search for answers divine or worldly are just as beautiful. Whatever helps man in his search for divinity and/or beauty becomes a study for a clear understanding of his impulse for doing so.

There are a number of subjects that speak only of attaining knowledge and the journey that leads one to it. And all these subjects have a link to a higher source that can be tapped into for answers when questions fail to spring up.

Art has people asking for nothing, and hearing about the answers as though it did not matter what the subject is. Study for anything and most often one finds a favorite topic one chooses for frequent discussions with peers and friends. Art has man find favorites in many topics, in other people and in themselves. Art is anything but limiting. It ignores your passions; and provides a passion for doing and speaking and hearing everything and everyone.
Once someone realizes that their passion sprung up not for a particular incident that happened to them but something good that should happen to them, the battle is half won. Positivism can break barriers that ignorance provides. So to find beauty or harmony in words and forms and colors and composition becomes a practice that forces one to neglect failure as an option and become freer—of hate, negativity and false pride.

If one happens to receive their strength from teachers then teachers from all spheres of life become the source. If one happens to be moved with poetry then the poetic return to art becomes evident. The point being, that there is a lot of good in the world. And one happens to find their source everywhere they look. You can break someone’s spirit but you can not break their bond with their eternal source of knowledge. This strengthening belief in pursuing knowledge leads one to become better at what they do and articulate in their understanding of their source of inspiration. So their inspiration can lead someone else to success, just like it did for them.

What I have finally gathered from my research in Sufism is that my interest in a subject is not reciprocated by other people for my thorough research or knowledge. Mostly people enjoy seeing their troubles whiff away even if it is for a few moments, and even though knowledge and an interest in a subject (e.g. Sufism) is appreciated in a classroom setting; in the real world one can probably achieve more with an honest opinion about things mundane.

Therefore, my research draws to an end with a sad acceptance of the fact that I could not find my peers to exclaim or define what either art or/and Sufism meant to them. I have
found something interesting though, that the teachings of Sufism that border on mysticism of Islam sound and read as harsh and are the same in practice. It does not provide answers, but lay down the absurdity of social connections that don’t amount to much in spite of its poetic fluency. Art and paintings, most of the ones I have chosen for discussion, too don’t mend the bend, but are a mirror to the reality of an artists’ life.

Finally, art and Sufism and most mystic traditions are hard to follow and even harder to attempt in real life. And that there is no substitute for reality; there may be whimsical descriptions of it, or witty and collected interpretations of it, but real life is hard. And my research proved that, as one important element; art is not a solace retreat, it is no one’s saviour. The positive element of my research is that art can not be faked, that even the fakes have a price tag and that from copies and imitations comes a unique style made just for the artist, that is true to his life and his self.
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