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Recommended Citation
Available at: https://doi.org/10.55554/2785-9649.1010

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REVIEW

Concepts of Post-Postmodern Art in Achieving Sustainable Development Principles

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Abstract

This statement article discusses a very controversial question and tries to hypothesize why postmodernism concepts could be no longer needed, and argue about its end possibility, after the birth of new concepts that came after, which were classified by the critics and thinkers as Post-postmodernism, to emulate the issues and developments that happened in the era of the third millennium which synchronized with the phenomena that evolved to contain cultural changes and social contexts in societies throughout the high-tech advancements, which caused harmful ecological impacts. Post-postmodernism started to create new concepts in how art and science gathered to serve the sustainability of human beings’ lives, which turned to nature through the framework of peace and reconciliation with the environment, that was near to achieve the principles of sustainable development. The article aimed to discuss the relationship between the concepts of Post-postmodern art and the concepts of sustainability, and also concentrate on how Post-postmodernism attempts to provide artistic solutions in its aesthetic creations; to realize concept of integration with social, cultural, natural, and environmental contexts. That is also targeted in the sustainable development goals.

Keywords: Post-postmodern art, Sustainability, Sustainable development goals (SDGs)

Introduction

There is a new stage with neoteric thoughts about the contemporary state of art. This state is not concerned with the concepts of fragmentation, deconstruction, disintegration, and transformation, which were advocated by the Postmodernism movement. At the same time, it is not opposing or attacking its considerations. However, it believes that it derived from it and agrees that such concepts are based on which the postmodern model was created. The English critic “Malcolm Bradbury” acknowledged that postmodernism was a “revolution”. He points out his evaluation in this regard: “The eighteenth century ended in an age of revolutions, meanwhile the nineteenth century ended in a less radical change, nothing less than the revolution of modernity; and so was the case of the twentieth century, characterized by the revolutionary spirit from its beginning till the end.” (Cigarenu, Elena, 2012, p 169) Then he discussed the changes in postmodern societies that influenced the artistic fiction of that time, which started with the end of the Second World War, racism in the Vietnam War, the Russian suppression of the Prague Spring, the assassination of Kennedy, and the rebellions on university campuses. All these famous issues led to radical changes in conceptions and different people's desires.” (Cigarenu, Elena, 2012, p 168)

According to the above, the main idea of those changes was that Postmodernism was...
established with the aim of rejecting and rebelling against the Post-World War II society and trying to understand the changes that occurred in that society. That explains the answer to the previous question: why are Postmodernism concepts could be no longer needed? After the decline of Socialism philosophy in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, there was no need for postmodernism and its tendency to skepticism and undermining grand narratives. The struggle ended with the victory of liberal democracy, and thus the set of problems and crises that came after postmodernism as a cultural and philosophical response to it has disappeared from contemporary history, so the artists should figure out new ideas and new concepts to explore. Critics also needed some proofs to show that there were no longer the last reasons to be rejected and introduced under the term of postmodernism. These changes, which are pretended to be political changes, however, they are originally intellectual and philosophical transformations, that produced a new paradigm and a major change in the patterns of thinking that constitute the culture of societies. Not only that, but unprecedented scientific, biological, and technological advances were a major contributor to that change. The technology provided at that time was different from what it had become at the beginning of postmodernity. If the emergence of postmodern concepts is related to the mechanisms of the post-industrial society, the knowledge society, and high technology, the fading of these same concepts is also linked to the power of biological policies and the development of the scientific and technological model that is directed towards breaking through barriers between humans and technology, and between physics and metaphysics, as well as directing attention to the element of matter and reconsidering it as being a subject rather than an object, all of which led to illustrating that there is a new stage that came after Postmodernism.

Everything has been mentioned provided an opportunity to develop new paradigms in art fields that do not adhere to standardized classifications. So, it is time for postmodern concepts to take a different place in the life cycle of thoughts in contemporary societies. To become the roots that are responsible for growing branches of new visions and missions, which do not deny the characteristics of Postmodernism, but they are no longer measured, or categorized by postmodern standards. A new stage must come post the Postmodernism. As a result, Post-postmodernism focused its attention on many of the developments that occurred in the era of the third millennium, the most important of which were the principles of sustainability that came seeking to enhance life on Earth planet with all its contents as a favor to save and keep the human beings.

History is repeating itself, as Postmodernism has turned against the Modernism. Here came Post-postmodernism with a new perspective, going beyond the postmodern paradigm that caused many political, economic, and social crises, moreover the natural or environmental disasters in the late twentieth century. That resulting mass migrations, and major demographic changes that impacted the replacements in traditional social structures as well as the change in people’s lifestyles.

The starting point of post-postmodernism
Since the beginning of the nineties of the twentieth century, the state of transformation from the cultural paradigm of Postmodernism started. It was difficult or impossible to accept at the time, that postmodernity had begun to come to an end, or that such an era, which had a significant impact on the state of change in traditional social structures and the change in lifestyle or behavior in contemporary societies, had begun to expire its principles and concepts. “Just as the term Postmodernism was used for the first time in a study on architecture that written by the researcher “Charles Jenks”, the term Post-postmodernism first appeared in a study by researcher and urban planner “Tom Turner”, in which he talked about the need to transcend the intellectual framework of postmodern culture and pay attention by realizing the features of the next stage, which he called Post-postmodernism” (Burn, Stephen J. 2008, p 11).

There were also manifested considerable differences between the new artworks and
those created in the 1950s and 1960s of the twentieth century. Critics and theorists started to debate about Postmodernism in a way announced that it is over, as well as at that time many articles were published, for many critics including “Ihab Hassan”, “Brian”, “McHale”, and “Bradbury”, asked the same question “What Was Postmodernism?” (Grabes, Herbert, 2007, p. 23) That illustrates it has become a part of the past, and no longer expresses the cultural and social reality at the end of the twentieth century. Critics and thinkers argued that each stage attempts to collect concepts that were neglected or marginalized in the previous stage. Postmodernism arose from the intellectual, philosophical, and cultural heritage of theses that were overlooked during the modern period. For instance, the theses of “Nietzsche”, “Heidegger”, and “Schopenhauer”. Post-postmodernism as a movement was also created from the issues and arguments that Postmodernism neglected and excluded. For example, the need for the upturn of humanism and the discussion of issues of subjectivity after they have been faced with distortion, doubting, and lost their unity and identity in the postmodern stage. Which is known as the concept of God death, as a result led to the concept of the author's death, and then, obviously, the concept of the artist's death. As well as the rejection of everything that could be constant or a reference. Consequently, Post-postmodernism came to reunite the human being who was eliminated by Postmodernism and deprived of his humanity.

These ideas began to spread in 1991 at a conference in Germany entitled “The End of Postmodernism”, organized by the researcher “Heide Ziegler”. Furthermore, the Franco-American novelist and critic “Raymond Federman” also contributed to illustrating the end of Postmodernism when he conducted a questionnaire in 1993 that included twenty American postmodern writers and novelists. The questionnaire consisted of only two questions. The first was, “Do you think that postmodernism has died?” and the second was, “What are the causes of postmodern death?” Everyone was conflicted about the answer to the second question, but they all agreed on the answer to the first question, and the answer was clear “Yes.” Postmodernism is dead or is over. “It has consumed its techniques and aesthetics, and has also been killed by the same consumer and post-industrial society that it aimed to create.” (Clavier, Berndt, 2007, p23-24.)

Launching a name for the recent movement

Several names have developed to describe the intellectual model that came after Postmodernism, as there is a viewpoint that tries to return to the formative roots that formed the modernist model before its failure, and promises to introduce a new applicable model, “which suggested a name by the social thinkers a “Reflexive Modernization” for the contemporary social and cultural state.” (Beck, Ulrich, 1994, p. 55).

On the artistic view, “Stuckism” is the name that refers to an art movement founded in 1999 to promote figurative painting instead of conceptual art, which spread under the slogan “The artist who does not paint is not an artist.” Stuckist artists aim to return to the true spirit of modernity, to produce art of spiritual value regardless of style, subject matter, or medium. It was a rejection of postmodernism, so it called itself “Anti-Anti-Art.” (Remodernist art group, 1999).

There is another term that refers to the cultural transformation in Western societies, it called “Meta modernism” or “Ultra modernism”, which describes historically what is beyond modernity and postmodernity, but at the same time agrees with them epistemologically and between them existentially. It is not a reflection of them, but it transcends them and crosses between them, and there is no doubt that this crossing may have a modern or postmodern impact. There are also those who call it “Generative Anthropology” (Eshelman, Raoul, 2001), which presents a strange new intellectual model that fits the current developments and ensures western excellency and its continued dominance all over the world.

On the other hand, there are terms that used to define the contemporary Post-postmodern paradigm through its relationship to high-tech outputs and the cybernetic or virtual space, like the terms “Pseudo Modernism” and “Digital
Modernism,” they present an intellectual style unrelated to how the modern paradigm was, and with no recollection of what happened in it, this concept of modernization that cuts off any connections with the past. Scientists described it as a memoryless stage, as if it was a new beginning that is not dependent on any previous references. In addition to this, what is known as “Hyper Modernism”, is a term that defines the style, model, or stage of the Post-postmodern dimension, which believes in the human ability to understand, control, and treat every aspect of human experience, which is evident in the increasing commitment to science and knowledge, especially regarding field convergence. Biology and technology emphasizing the value of modern technology to overcome natural obstacles, opens the way for derogation or outright rejection of the past altogether. This is because the knowledge of today is incomparably more than the knowledge of yesterday, and therefore, it makes sense that there is a deep gap that prevents the integration of the present with the past and stops the concepts of nostalgia that presented by Postmodernism.

Post-postmodern art and sustainability

In term of sustainable development, Post-postmodern art is a type of art that emerged after Postmodern art that has various approaches, one of them can be defined in the context of the sustainability cause its products shows principles such as reconciliation and integration with the social, cultural, natural, and environmental realms, rather than fighting and controlling the decreasing of natural energies and resources. Where Post-postmodern Art came to create a new intellectual and conceptual dimension, it affirms the optimistic view presented by science with its advanced achievements, against the pessimistic view of the “Nihilism” and “Deconstructivism” ideas then creates new concepts in which art and science gather to serve the sustainability of human beings’ lives. It turned to nature within the framework of peace and reconciliation concepts with the environment, which were violated by both Modernism and Postmodernism in their own ways.

This phenomenon of peace with the environment arose to contain the cultural changes and social contexts in societies in the era of high-tech developments with the harmful environmental changes. To motivate achieving happiness and quality of life, help all that is alive as much as possible, and escape the wrath of the planet abused under the service of progressive requirements. Fortunately, the dimensions of Post-postmodern Art align with the principles or goals of sustainable development (SDGs). Which “known as the Global Goals, were adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as a universal call to take action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity, and that development must balance social, economic, and environmental sustainability” (UNDP, 2022) “Fig. 1”.

Sustainable Development is “stated as a principal policy goal of many of the major institutions in the world, including the United Nations, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization. Since 2000” (Elliott, Jennifer A. 2013, p22.) These Global Goals consist of seventeen goals, eliminating poverty taking first place among them. Then came the goals of: erasing hunger, establishing good health and well-being, providing quality education, enforcing gender equality, improving clean

Fig. 1. (Kurdyukov, Vladimir and Karunany, Sergey, 2021) Shows the three main principals of sustainable development.
water and sanitation, growing affordable and clean energy, creating decent work and economic growth, increasing (industry, innovation, and infrastructure), reducing inequality, mobilizing sustainable cities and communities, influencing responsible consumption and production, organizing climate action, developing life below water, advancing life on land, guarantees (peace, justice and strong institutions, building partnerships for the goals. (UNDP, The SDGS in Action, 2022) “The international community has committed to achieving eight “Millennium Development Goals.” One of these goals refers explicitly to sustainable development but also to better and more equitable outcomes in areas such as health, gender, housing, and sanitation that directly affect poorer groups. They confirmed that poverty is a major cause and effect of global environmental problems, and addressing poverty and inequality are long-standing and central concerns of sustainable development.” (Elliott, Jennifer A. 2013, p22.)

Contemporary artists have started to highly consider in their creations how to incorporate achieving the principles of sustainable development in the concepts of artworks, which illustrates the deep relationship between Post-postmodern art and the principles of sustainability, with an invitation to speculate, enjoy, and reconcile with the nature of the land we live on, and then stay in, without the need to re-consume, violate, or prejudice it to deal with environmental and climate change through the principles of both Post-postmodernism and sustainable development scientifically and spiritually. For instance, there is an artwork that is installed outdoors, which depends in its installation on keeping nature’s sustainability. The young Vietnamese artist, “Duc Cuong Ha,” used a mountainous river and garden landscape in the western part of “Thanh Hoa” (Holmes, Damian 2016) in Vietnam. As a living natural medium for his art installation. All the artist did was form an empty white frame in the space in front of this beautiful landscape, inviting the recipients to do a meditation session for this natural landscape that beats with real life. “Fig. 2”

The artist said about his philosophy of the empty frame, “I thought that we could put frames between landscapes to help focus the mind on what is within this frame. Many people look, but only a few see.” There is an enormous difference between sight and vision. The hidden message of this artwork philosophy is that the other side of this natural beauty is the ugliness of human abuse and neglect of the sanctity of this purity of nature. Because in front of this mountainous area, it showed how the poverty affected the environmental problems, there is an area of factories in which bamboo burning and manufactured, emitting poisonous fumes, and disposing of their waste on the banks of this river. These two opposed worlds are the two scenes in which he wants the recipients who sit in front of his empty frame to look at and meditate on what nature has brought to the human being and what the human being has brought to nature. “Fig. 3”

As a result, this installation aims for conceptual and metaphorical dimensions that encourage people to be more aware of their surroundings, understand the sensitivity of the environment, and protect this natural heritage for future generations. The artist refers to the words of the famous British artist “Ashley Jackson”: “None of us owns these mountains, but all we must do is to be custodians of our homeland that preserves us, and to know very well that it does not belong to us and that we must leave it in a good state for the other coming generations” (Ha, Duc Cuong, 2016).

To conclude, this type of art tries to install its works in the natural environment without even harming or touching it; to introduce spiritual concepts that have a great impact on contemporary artworks, as it is no longer an intellectual luxury, but rather has become a haven for the question of happiness and peace in involvement between the material world and spiritual energies. This prompted artists to go through the minds of the recipients and give them a chance from their time that allows them to practice spirituality and meditation.
with full awareness of the importance of the sustainability of external physical reality. These ideas become crucial for developing the concepts of sustainability not just for life but also for art.

References


