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# The Symbolic Expression of Modern Spanish Sculpture

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## ABSTRACT

*Art is first and foremost a new point of view, and the modern artist looks at the world as if it were something he had not seen before, as if he was the first to set his eyes on the features of the universe. That is why the various creative artistic movements emerged that was characterized by trends that found for themselves common signs in the changing awareness of time. Many modern artistic movements have appeared which were embodied in sculpture in a modernist style that included various topics, the purpose of which was to reach an artistic reading characterized by creative features. To unleash the mind of the recipient to read and understand the creative text we contain according to the ability of the recipient and his intellectual level using symbolic expression, whether at the level of idea, line, color, texture, material or space. And among those movements, Spanish artists appeared who excelled in various arts, including the art of sculpture, which has always been a reflection of what stirred in their souls and minds, so they excelled in it. This was evident in the public squares, museums, galleries and exhibition halls of the artists themselves.*

*If the researcher sheds light on a group of these sculptors and a specific time period to study the symbolic expression in modern Spanish sculpture,*

*As the first chapter contained the problem of the research, which ended with the following question: What is the symbolic expression in contemporary Spanish sculpture? As for the goal of the research, which stipulates the definition of symbolic expression in contemporary Spanish sculpture, the importance of research and the need for temporal and spatial limits? The second chapter contains three topics, The first topic is conceptual and artistic expression, The second topic is the concept of symbol in modern art, The third topic is the Spanish sculpture form and technique. As for the third chapter of the research, it contained the research procedures, namely, the research community, which consisted of (15) sculptural work, and the research sample consisted of three works and the analysis of the sample models. As for the fourth chapter, it included the results of the research, including (coding appeared clearly in the models of the research sample through the use of sculptors for internal and external spaces and their distribution to the sculptural work). And the conclusions of the research, including (creativity was associated with symbolic expression in artistic production through the large number of stylistic transformations and the*

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*diversification of topics and treatment of them with a special aesthetic vision). In addition to the recommendations and proposals, the research ended by showing the photos of the research community.*

**Keywords:** *Symbolic, Spanish Sculpture, artistic.*

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

### **(A) Research problem:**

Art, as an imaginative field, is the field of producing symbols, which represent our dreams and psychological and social crises, and is a means of building and transmitting human civilizations, with a symbolic language that whispers in the conscience, and this symbolism has made art more enjoyable, aesthetic, and tasteful. Art is no longer an imitation of literal reality in all its details.

Rather, the symbol came to make the recipient taste art better by decoding the symbols in the artwork, and understanding its connotations and formal elements. Through it, the artist tried to remove the deceptive shell that things exert on our senses. He reflects his feelings, feelings, and thoughts in these symbolic products or compositions. At the same time, In it, the Iraqi artist formulates a symbolic form and presents with it a certain content.

That is, there is a connection between the symbolic significance of form and content through which each of them derives its entity from the other in a way that cannot be separated between them, as many treatments were generated in his style,

In the plastic arts, the symbol is considered the element that moves the mind towards the imagination that immerses itself in it and distances itself from its supernatural limits. Therefore, regardless of the method adopted for artistic achievement, the symbol remains the basis of the idea and the driver of the concept because it traces the traces of the invisible and follows those metaphysics to design its aesthetic, sensory and intellectual combinations.

This is what enriched symbolism since the beginning of the nineteenth century and moved towards it at the expense of impressionism and realism, and with it he took his steps towards creating dialectical outlets of expression that developed according to the technical stages that developed with him and changed according to the symbols and artistic styles, which produced abstraction, surrealism, conceptualism, and others.

Among the products of modernity in Europe in general, Spain produced many famous and influential artists at the level of painting, sculpture, architecture, and others. Art was particularly influenced by Italy and France during the Baroque and Neoclassical periods, but Spanish art

was often characterized by very distinctive characteristics, clearly visible through the Moorish heritage in Spain (especially in Andalusia), and through the political and cultural climate in Spain during the Counter-Reformation and the subsequent absence of. It struck Spain in the subsequent periods of this time period. And in light of the above; the problem of the current research can be defined in the following question:

### **What is the symbolic expression in modern Spanish sculpture?**

#### **(B) Research objective:**

Revealing symbolic expression in modern Spanish sculpture

#### **(C) The importance of research and the need for it**

The importance of the research is evident as follows:

- 1- It is an academic scientific attempt to study modern Spanish art.
- 2- Lack of academic research on the research topic.
- 3- It is useful to researchers in the field of fine arts and modern art history.

#### **(D) Limits of Research:**

#### **The Research Is Determined By The Following:**

- 1- Thematic Boundaries: Modern Spanish Sculpture
- 2- Spatial boundaries: artworks found in Spain and other countries.
- 3- Temporal Boundaries: Modern Spanish artworks completed in the period (1920 AD - 1945 AD)

## **II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **(A) Expression conceptually and artistically**

Art is an expression, or a language of expression, and the artist is the being who carries out this process, the process of expression, using all the media that can be used, so that his expression is aesthetic.

“The truth is that the artist is the person who feels that reality cannot have meaning unless it is organized within the scope of a world, and that upon him lies the task of discovering that world from which nothing emerges, oh God, except the thick, dark, black dust of reality.” The artist is the creator who organizes the world through a group of special means, the foremost of which is the medium of expression. The artist’s genius is not to convey reality faithfully, but rather to express reality deeply **(1)**.

Expression is a change in the materials used to express it. The raw material - (such as stone, marble) or other materials - may resist the act of expression carried out by a person, and the artist's task is to organize and adapt the material to be an expression of emotion. These materials must undergo a process of change: "The marble must be burnt, the colors must be poured onto the fabric, and the words must be combined with each other... and the motive that arises in the soul, causing it to have a kind of disturbance that requires expression or utterance, is in It also needs to be subjected to a process of thorough and precise organization, in order for the eloquent statement that it reveals to come into being, just like marble, color pigments, colours, or sounds. Perhaps it would be less correct to say that here we are not faced with two different processes, one of which is taking place on matter. The other applies to internal matter or mental elements, and the work is only artistic to the extent that the two transformation processes are united to form one process (2).

The expression of beauty results in the work of art, and if we look at these means of expression, we find that expression takes place in many aspects depending on the material of expression. "If stone was the means, then expression was through architecture, and if language was expression, then poetry was expression, and if tone was expression, music was Whether it was color or the expression of the human form, this was one of the arts of anthropomorphism. (3)

In the words of Schopenhauer, who saw that the lowest level of expression is in architecture, and its highest level is in poetry, as it "rises to the highest degree of objective realization of the will, by expressing man in his continuous desires and continuous actions (4)"

"Matter, form, and expression... depend on each other. None of them exists in isolation from the other. The expressive content of any work is not what it is except because of the material elements, the formal organization, and the subject matter, and these are the elements whose combination leads to the formation of the specific work." (5) All the elements of an artistic work come together to express a certain meaning or significance. The form may radiate this meaning, and the choice of the subject helps to reveal this expression. The expression cannot exist devoid of the material contained within the form. Although the word "expression" is one of the most commonly used terms, in the field of art it is shrouded in ambiguity. It may "refer to the process of creation in the artistic work that leads to the appearance of the work. Or to a characteristic inherent in the work itself."(6) If we can identify the raw materials that constitute a work of art (marble - colors - words - melodies...etc.) Or we were able to grasp (the subject matter) of the work or its form, but we cannot grasp the expression as we grasp the raw material. The expression that "contains a work of art may be the most difficult of its elements to analyse, for what the work of art reveals is not in the actual meaning that can be understood and

interpreted, but rather is an emotional connotation that is perceived in a direct, intuitive way.”(7) It is difficult to describe the expression in words or provide an accurate perception of it, because - meaning the expression - “it is not a mark or indication that the artist leaves on his artistic work, but rather it is the real human element that lies at the heart of this work.” (8)

**(B) The concept of symbol in modern art:**

In the plastic arts, the symbol is considered the element that moves the mind towards the imagination that immerses itself in it and moves away from its supernatural limits. Therefore, regardless of the method adopted for artistic achievement, the symbol remains the basis of the idea and the driver of the concept because it traces the traces of the invisible and follows those metaphysics to design its aesthetic, sensory and intellectual combinations. This is what enriched Symbolism since the beginning of the twentieth century, and he moved towards it at the expense of impressionism and realism, and with it he took his steps towards creating dialectical expressions that developed according to the technical stages that developed with him and changed according to the symbols and artistic styles, which produced abstraction, surrealism, and conceptualism. According to the difference in the work, the symbol and its aesthetic expressions differed from one region to another in In the world, the symbols of Western arts, their impact, and their meanings differ from those in the East and the Arab region, even though both of them can draw inspiration from the symbols of the other, given the openness and the global impact on the expression of the symbols of philosophy, literature, stories, and poetry. Geography, in which symbolic experiences were considered a space of expressive communication with memory and identity, Man, the land, the myth, and the icon, whether in literature, civilization, or myth, with its tangible and material signs and features.(9)

The bottom line is that we can accept a definition of the symbol as ((a sign in discourse that uses presentations of a specific topic equal to a narrow conceptual content. The symbol performs the function of verbal alternatives and also performs the function of syntactic alternatives)) (10)

It is also useful to clarify the word “symbol” based on the dictionary of literary terms. It is the motive or set of motives present in the work that is a hint of deeply hidden or unclear texts. Its mission is to direct the reader towards it, and the prominent characteristic of the symbol is the instability and lack of confirmation of the meanings that it reminds of. Building Therefore, the symbol is not translatable, as... Its flash texts cannot be conveyed through this or that performance, as it would then lead to the end of the existence of the most distinctive and special quality of the symbol, which is represented by the approved puzzle or riddle. The symbolic connotations and the meanings evoked by it are fused in a way that cannot be cancelled. Any

change in the wording leads to canceling the connotation or transforming its meanings.. Here we must separate the concept of the sign from the concept of the symbol, even though they often appear in an alternating manner The sign sometimes plays the role of a symbol, and the symbol can play the role of a sign. In fact, the concept of a sign differs from the concept of a symbol.

**(11)**

**(C)Modern Spanish sculpture form and technique:**

Spain is an outstanding example of public art that gives the Spanish capital, along with other elements such as its architecture, the network of museums, or the collection of parks and gardens, an art comparable to that of European countries, as Spain has always been committed to art and culture as one of the main features of its identity, despite Most of the monuments and statues found in public places date back to the nineteenth century onwards.**(13)**

The first monument located on a public road explicitly and by municipal order preserved is the Monument to Santa Eulalia, in Plaça del Pedro, from 1673; Other earlier works considered public art are either fountains or statues located within niches, on the facades of public buildings, although in many cases they were private commissions that later became public property. **(14)**

The Collections of Art Nouveau, a movement of great artistic and cultural importance in Spain. In painting, sculpture, ceramics, architecture and other arts, but the most prominent current in the embodiment of modernism is the current represented by the Renewal movement led by Ramon Casas and Santiago Rossignol, who incorporated certain aspects of French impressionism into their Parisian works. Another current is symbolism, represented by the paintings of Alexandre de Riker and Joan Brühl and which also appears in some photographs taken by the photographer Pere Casas Abarca.

Equally important are the presence of artists of the second generation of modernism, such as Isidre Nunell, María Pedlicera, Ricard Canals, Hermán Anglada Cámarasa, Nicolau Roerich, and Joaquim Mir, who brought Catalan painting into the twentieth century.**(15)**

After a period of prosperity between World War I and the Civil War, in which Spain was familiar with European artistic movements, the post-war period was a time of cultural decline. Despite this, Spanish art is associated with various movements called avant-garde, which involved radical changes in the concept of art, whether in the theoretical, technical or material field. Successive avant-garde “isms” (Cubism, Futurism, Dada, Surrealism, Expressionism, etc.) aimed to transform society with art, proposing a project committed to the cultural regeneration of the peoples. Abstract art meant a loss of form, which gave way in the second

half of the century to trends of informality or intangibility.

It was the first ephemeral attempt at renewal. Noucentisme is the Agrupació Courbet, founded in Barcelona in 1918 and dissolved in 1919. They claim the master of the French realist painter Gustave Courbet, whose revolutionary stance they seek. Led by Josep Llorens i Artigas and Josep Francesc Ràfols, names such as Joan Miró, Josep de Togores, Josep Obiols and Olga Sacharoff emerged.

After the war and the cultural crisis resulting from the exile of many artists and the repression of the Franco dictatorship, in the late 1940s the Spanish art scene began to re-emerge through exhibitions in private galleries and cultural movements such as the Circle. Maillol. A new generation of young artists emerged, including the group that formed the Dao Six, which was created in 1948 around a magazine of the same name and published until 1956, although the group can be considered disbanded since 1951. It was formed by Antoni Tàpies, Modest Cuixart, Joan Brossa, Joan Josep Tharrats, Joan Ponç and Arnau Puig, who are the first to come into contact with European currents, making an art that develops from some magical surrealism to somewhat abstract informality, except in the cases of Joan Pons

As for the post-war movement, it meant the rejection of form for better conceptual freedom and a new relationship with the viewer, according to the concept of “open work” formulated by Umberto Eco. They are generally abstract works, in which the color and material underlying the work stand out. Antoni Tàpies, a world-famous painter and the first great modernist of Spanish art in the post-war period, the main representative of “material painting”, author of an introspective work with a certain spirituality, with small symbolic sculptures (Zoom, 1946; Collage Crosses, 1947; White Oval, 1957).

#### **(D) Research procedures:**

##### **1. research community**

The researcher reviewed what was published and available in sources related to the subject of the current research, as well as through the International Information Network (the Internet) to identify the research community, related to the sculptural works of a group of Spanish artists, as the sculptural works that were viewed were approximately (13) Work: These are sculptures that were completed by artists throughout the period specified by the researcher within the limits of the research, and which varied in shapes and materials, and examples of them were chosen as a sample for the current research.



## **2. The research sample**

The researcher selected a representative sample of the research community, which amounted to (4) sculptural works of art, distributed over different years of the time period specified for the research.

The sample samples were chosen according to the following justifications:

- The selected sculptural works cover the temporal boundaries mentioned in the research.
- The selected models were characterized by expressiveness, coding, and lack of clarity in their meaning.
- The selected works were characterized by a distinctive aesthetic value through artistic style and innovative presentation.

### **(E) Research Methodology**

The researcher adopted the descriptive approach in analyzing the content and content included in his research sample models.

### **(F) Description of the research sample models and their analysis**

#### **Form No. (1)**

Artist: Julio Gonzalez

Work title: The First Cactus Man), 1939

#### **General Description:**

A sculptural piece in a vertical position, interspersed with window spaces and protruding protrusions from more than one side. It rests on a floor with two supports, and in its general shape it refers to the shape of a human being in a stationary position, not specifically identified. It comes in a dark color tending to black. It is a form made of iron and other materials.

#### **General visual analysis:**

The sculptor formed his sculptural model, relying primarily on the high dynamism that excites the recipient with a feeling of being in motion through his maneuvering in using the open spaces at the bottom, middle, and top of the sculptural piece first.

The external space formed by the external lines of the work, which came with high flexibility, forms those spaces that unleash the recipient in producing multiple expressions and readings that can caress the recipient's imagination while viewing this model.

It is possible to extrapolate what this composition came from in terms of a form in which there is a reference to more than the shape of the sculptor's body, with high symbolism in the artistic vision loaded with an intellectual dimension that came as a result of the sculptor's proposals in this field, influenced by the nature surrounding him, and this expressive vision is intended to show what is my life through the symbolization of the part. About everyone in this, without resorting to diagnosis or defining the human form in particular, but we can read this form, and through what carried its formation, as a human being who resists the various hardships of life, especially that human being who suffered from the scourges of wars and their repercussions and effects, which the sculptor intended to embody in this work. In addition to the harmony and interconnectedness of the lines, add to that the free rhythm used in this sculptural scene, which was made with a rough texture by attaching nails to the body, which evokes the sensation and feeling of what a person felt during that time period. All of this adds to the sculpture an additional beauty to the beauty that is formed intellectually. Through multiple interpretations of this sculptural formation.



**Model (1)**

**Form No. (2)**

Artist name: Pablo Gargallo

Business name: Kiki de Montparnasse (alias of Alice Pryne) in 1928

This work consists of a sculptural portrait of a woman executed in a symbolic expressionist style, with a relatively long neck and irregular ends. The work contains styled hair that extends to the end of the neck with the head slightly raised. The lips have been colored and there is a red line surrounding the top of the neck.

The artist was able to break free from the academy and its prevailing teachings and discover the

secret of movement with its spiritual and physical meaning. He treated the flexibility of matter, space, and movement in this work in ways that reflect the depth of his vision, the breadth of his imagination, and his ability to create.

The sculptor mixed his subjective and pure metaphorical observations about people and societies. He emphasized the organizational aspect of his sculptural composition and sought to achieve something that pleased and enjoyed the recipient and departed from the familiar framework of European sculpture. The artist's style of expression guarantees the aesthetic element of the form and the creative unity that that form produces through its three dimensions. It occupies a space in space that the artist decides for the benefit of his artistic work, as well as through high flexibility in manipulating the surface topography.

The content of this sculptural work relates to the emotional and contemplative state of the human being, represented by the face of this woman, so the artist chose bronze to implement his idea. This material enabled the artist to manipulate the texture of the surface of the sculptural work, as the sculptor deliberately reduced some parts of the face as a symbol of the expression of the other face. For women, who is characterized by sharpness, strictness, and cruelty in some aspects of her life, which gave the work a creative dimension and a different outlook from women, despite his use of the smooth surface to indicate her.

As for the color of the work, the artist used the golden color to express well-being, prosperity, and power. Likewise, the artist's use of the symbol of the snake and its representation in place of the eye is only an indication of the woman's knowledgeable, confident, and balanced look, and this is confirmed by the smile drawn on the face.

As for the lines from which it was composed, they were distinguished by their high flexibility, which added a creative element, as they suggest warmth and calm, which makes the recipient more ready to empathize emotionally with the executed subject.



**Form No. (2)**

**Form No. (3)**

Artist: Eduardo Chileda

Work title: Thyssen Skyscrapers, 1945

The artwork consists of five almost separate pieces, leaning on four pieces diagonally over the large piece, representing the general body of the work. During this sculptural work, we notice the addition of an illusionary movement transmitted by the work as a result of assembling the pieces together and in different directions. The artist's ability came through his investment in the element of space at the expense of the rest of the other artistic elements by creating an internal space that was proportional to the external work space, which calls for the presence of the power of expressing the idea. What is intended to be implemented, which is one of the most important basic components of creativity.

The sculptor also relied on showing the artistic characteristics in his sculptural work, which is the element of movement that the artist employed to give the appropriate expression in a way that contributes to enhancing the creative aspect and showing the beauty of the artistic work.

Each unit of this work had its own connotations that served to inspire the idea of this work. The four cubic pieces at the bottom are close in shape to a cube as they are based on a base of the same shape.

Despite the strength of the material, the artist was able to create a mixture between tenderness and solidity. He made his work full of symbols that embody the idea of the artistic work. By choosing the appropriate material for the idea, he made the sculptural work more creative. The material is the language that the artist adapts to harmonize with the aesthetic and intellectual rhythms of the work and achieve the characteristic of originality.

The artist embodied the work in an abstract style also from a group of pieces inspired by geometric shapes, where the shape of the inclined cube predominates in this work. This work is considered original by breaking the tradition followed in traditional sculpture by using the iron material, which helped him convey the idea to the recipient, as the artist was able to create a work Original and unique through its emphasis on the rough texture.

It added movement to the work as a result of the diversification of the texture structure and its investment in the internal spaces and giving it complete sovereignty in this work, as the artist assembled them from iron pieces, most of them in the form of flat cubes and other large and small inclined cubes, arranged with great professionalism by the artist and relying on the sharpness of the lines and their distribution over the work.

Through this work, the artist was able to symbolically express two fundamental ideas. The first represents the collapse of the weapon (the pistol) in the face of the greatness of peace and beauty, and the second represents the collapse of buildings during war and after it can rest on a solid base that protects it from total collapse.



**Form No. (3)**

### III. RESULTS

- 1- The levels of expression vary in the models of the research sample, depending on the circulation of the visual given of the structure (of the line) and the intensification of the structural and perceptual effects of the sculptural form, as happens with the clear use of types of sharp lines, in Model No. (2,3)
- 2- The symbolic expression of the works is embodied through the varied terrain between roughness and scribbles achieved on the surface of the works, as in Model No. 1.
- 3- The symbolic expression of the idea to be implemented was achieved through the skill of the Spanish sculptor and his ability to adapt the color of the material to the benefit of the form, by contrasting with the color of the original material to approach the color of another material, in order to show the creative action of the sculptor by manipulating the element of color, as in the (3,2,1) model.
- 4- Coding appeared clearly in the models of the research sample through the sculptors' use of internal and external spaces and their distribution over the sculptural work, as in Model No. (3.1)
- 5- The characteristic (balance) adopted by the Spanish sculptor in the models of the research sample contributed to the crystallization of an aesthetic and constructive horizon for the nature of the general form of the composition, and thus the symbolic expression of the idea to be achieved was achieved through the functional and technical use of that characteristic.

- 6- Symbolic expression was achieved through flexibility, plasticity, and attention to the sculptural mass and its spatial treatments. The Spanish artist was fully aware of his ability to move this mass within the space it occupies while moving the mass within its internal spaces, as in Model No. (3,2).
- 7- The sculptor intended for his sculptural models to be open and tolerant of more than one reading, and the multiplicity of these readings added another aesthetic feature that characterized most of his sculptures, achieving a set of interpretations of a single work, all of which may be correct or all of which may be incorrect depending on the differences in viewpoints, as in the models (research sample). ).
- 8- Some of the works, in their expressive dimension, came loaded with high vitality through their drawing lines of the mass, with the pulse of life they carry, indicating openness to life by starting from the tragic reality, as in models No. (3,1).

#### **IV. CONCLUSIONS**

Through the research results, the researcher reached the following conclusions:

- 1- The political, economic and technological developments witnessed in the contemporary world affected the experience of the Spanish sculptor, and as a result sculptural products were crystallized that carried in their contents what is related to those developments, in addition to the emergence of the features of the contemporary modernist tendency in his various sculptural forms.
- 2- Art in the modern era has become an expression of the artist's personality by keeping pace with the spirit of the era within the contexts of modern European sculpture, in which the Spanish artist rebelled against the concepts of traditional arts that prevailed in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, which constituted an incentive for him to launch his creative imagination.
- 3- The ability of the Spanish sculptor to revive the sculptural work was demonstrated by using distinct techniques in treating the surfaces of the sculpture. These are experimental data that the sculptor invested in imposing creative visions, concerned with treating the sculptural surface, and giving importance to the tactile nature of the sculptural work in creating new formulations for it.
- 4- Creativity was linked to symbolic expression in artistic production through many stylistic shifts, diversifying topics, and treating them with a special aesthetic vision.

#### **(A) Recommendations:**

In light of the results reached, the researcher recommends the following:

1. Archiving the works of Spanish sculptors to be a source in the Arab library and to benefit researchers and specialists in the field of contemporary art.
2. Paying attention to the translation process with regard to Western art sources in order to facilitate the process of referring to them and benefiting from them.

**(B) Proposals:**

The researcher suggests conducting the following studies:

- 1- Encryption and coding in contemporary Spanish sculpture.
- 2- Features of creativity in modern Spanish sculpture.

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