

Impact of Mental Illness on Creativity in Visual Art

Dhaneshwar Shah^{1, a*}, Sunanda Rani^{2, b}, Meiyan Wang^{3, c} and Jining Dong^{4, d}

^{1,2,3,4} School of Art and Design, Wuhan University of Technology, Wuhan, China

^a dhaneshwar005@yahoo.co.in, ^b sunandaartist@yahoo.co.in, ^c 1020196432@qq.com,

^d 1662917685@qq.com

*Corresponding author

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Abstract. Mental illness, creativity, and visual art are often influenced by each other. Medical science proved that highly creative people are suffering from a different kind of mental illness or disorder. Mental illness and creativity is a comprehensive process and influenced by internal and external factor. The purpose of this research was to analyze the influences of the mental illness on creativity in visual art such as schizophrenia disorder, mood disorder, alcoholism, bipolar disorder, hereditary psychosis, manic depression, etc. The study investigated the mental illnesses impact on the perception of the artist and their artwork. This paper argues that what and how mental disorder are positively associated with creativity and evolutionary perspective in between madness behavior and creativity through visual art. The study aim was to bring up the latest literature as well as the epidemiologic and hypothetical argument of this subject matter.

Introduction

Aristotle mentions that “*No great mind has ever existed without a touch of madness.*” even the BBC can resist, having featured a headline in 2012 reading: “Creativity is often part of mental illness; Writers had a higher risk of anxiety and bipolar disorder” [1] “.... Madness may be the price for possessing one of the most sublime human gifts” (Barrntes). According to Carson (2011) experimental evidence for a connection between creativity and mental illness was found by latter half of the last century. Karlsson (1970) reported that relatives of psychotic patients (schizophrenics, manic depressives) had a higher rate of listing in who is who, both based on a general listing and on creative endeavors [2]. The Guardian, the British newspaper published the latest result that artist and the schizophrenic patients are genetically similar. Mental illness has a most important force and impact on an artists’ creativity and his expression. Many famous artists were affliction with a different type of mental illness such as schizophrenia, dementia, depression, anxiety and bipolar disorder, and they created many great artworks.

The study of literature has shown that so far influences of mental illness on creativity in visual art have not been studied in deeply. This study addresses the major issue such as influences of mental illness on creativity, the relationship between creativity and mental illness, the impact of mental illness on the artist and his artworks, positive aspects of mental illness on the visual artist. The author used a different type of research methodology mainly is historical data and text collection, image analysis, which was collected from various sources and analysis according to the research viewpoint.

Mental Illness

Mental illness is a health problem that significantly affects how a person feels, thinks, behaves and interacts with other people. Mental health problem is more common and that can be experienced temporarily as a reaction to stresses of life [3]. The earliest study of genius historic surveying studies found that among 1,030 prominent people, there are 4.2% of the population showed manic symptoms at certain stages of their lives. 8.3% of the population showed depressive [4]. According to mental health in America reported in 2005, day by day increasing mental health issues in society especially in adults 18.19% to 18.07 to youth 12.63%. Different type of mental illness presents different

disorders experiences, and symptoms. The most important types are depression, nervousness, schizophrenia, bipolar mood disorder, personality disorders, and eating disorders. Few mental illness, disorders, and symptoms are mainly the following:

Schizophrenia: Schizophrenia is defined as a chronic mental disorder in which a person is inhibited from reality. This is one kind of brain disorder those people are suffering from this for them it is very difficult to find the difference between reality and fantasy.

Hereditary psychosis: If someone entirely isolates from the society of family for a long time or not in contact with other people, in this situation people can go through with mental disorder or hereditary psychosis.

Manic depression or Bipolar disorder: Manic depression is an older term for what is now referred to as bipolar disorder. Bipolar disorder is a kind of mood disorder, which has both manic episodes and depressive episodes. The bipolar disorder first appeared in the medical literature in the 1850s when alternating melancholia and mania were paired in a single condition [5].

Neurological impairment: Neurological impairment refers to a large group of disorder in which the inner nervous system does not function properly and leads to some form of physical or mental problem.

Paranoia: Paranoia is a rare form of mental illness characterized by progressively logically structured systematic paradox. It is an uncommon mental health problem. In this condition, the person believes others are trying to harm them. The main cause is for this anxiety, loneliness, drugs, alcohol, and depression.

Synesthesia: The term "synesthesia" comes from Greek words syn, which means "together" and aesthesis, which means "sensation" this is involuntary physical experiences of cross-model association. Synesthetes hear colors, feel sounds and taste shares. it denotes the rare capacity to Hear color, test shapes, or experiences other starting sensory blending whose quality seen difficult for most of us to imagine [6].

Relationship between Mental Illness and Creativity

What is creativity? Preeminent definition of creativity was found in 1953, Jung said "the dynamic tension between novelty and useful likely has important neural correlates that we are attempting to explore with neuroimaging techniques [7]. Creativity and mental illness are influenced by many factors, both internal and external. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi defined creativity; this is flow and the psychology of discovery and invention. The studies of creativity had begun in mind of the 20th century. According to that time, if idea or product is both original and effective or says novel and appropriate, it means creative. According to Ludwig three forms of creativity can be found: the creative person themselves, the creative process and the product of creativity. Creativity involves the use of imagination in order to bring something into reality. Creativity is important for society but it is very risky for individuals because most of the creative artists suffered from mental illness. Creative people talents are influenced by different kind of life and experiences or genre. Simon Kyaga; there is a thin line between genius and madness? The mentally ill are regular people who may have unusually creative abilities. The promising link between genius and insanity was suggested very early; Aristotle thought that great philosopher, artist, writers, and politicians are susceptible to mentalcholy, even in Pre-Grecian myths a close relationship between the creators, gods, and madness was described [8]. Seneca, an ancient Roman philosopher in Mediation, he wrote: "every great genius must go with madness." An analysis of Swedish genes confirms that there is an intrinsic link between creativity and mental illness.

Most of the people included from the creative fields such as arts, music, drama, and writing. In 2003, the international journal of psychiatry published an article, in which people who are engaged in creative works suffered from bipolar disorder, Synesthesia, Neurological impairment, hereditary psychosis, and other mental illness. This mental illness appears to people who are engaged in a creative profession. According to the study, the way of thinking about creative people is different from other people. Considering it as a sign of creativity, this is what history has generally described as genius. Reason for insanities, such as Edward munch, mark Rothko, Francisco de Goya, and Vincent

van Gogh. Andreasen and Ludwig explained this relationship is a simple method, they think some mental disorders are being beneficial for creativity especially in the visual arts for examples fantasy, imaginations, and surrealist thoughts of hypomania in bipolar disorder. Creativity need sometimes exacerbate psychopathology. According to Kaufman poets may be susceptible to mental illness because creative writing or works always needs emotional expression and introspection. Accordingly, to the past research creativity and mental illness has similar genetic roots.

Artist and Mental Illness

Vincent Van Gogh (1853–1890): Van Gogh is Dutch post-impressionist painter, born in the protestant pastor family he is a pioneer of post-impressionism and deeply influenced the art of the twentieth century. He known by his famous painting “Starry Night and Sunflower” and his abnormal and creative behavior, it was an impact of depression or anxiety. He was not a totally mentally ill artist, but his behavior was a not like a normal person. He was suffered from depression, anxiety, frenetic mood disorder, and hallucination and bipolar. Henri Gastaut found in his research about artist’s life and medical history in 1956, recognized artist major mental illness was during last two years of his life, many other researchers found bipolar disorder or manic depression in his behavior. He had mental illness in the later period of his life and lastly died by his own hand, as a committed suicide. Mostly his famous works were produced for the period of his last two year of life, just before the suicide. That time, he was deeply involved in mental illness.

Edward Munch (1863-1944): Most of the post-impressionist artist has a mental disorder and Edward Munch was one of them. Munch was born in 1863 at Oslo, the capital city of Norway. Munch childhood was not pleasant, his family background was very disturbed, his mother and sister have died very earlier stage with tuberculosis, and his other sister was also diagnosed with schizophrenia. Munch described in his own diary about visual and auditory hallucinations, mental situation, bipolar disorder, and psychosis. He also infected with alcoholism. Many great works of Munch are expressed in his own mental disorder, depression, anxiety, mood disorder. His artworks directed his obsession with death and his overwhelming fears about life, even the title of the painting also represent his mental illness like Flower of pain (1897, Munch Museum, Oslo, Norway), Death in the sick chamber (1895, lithography on paper,), Self-portrait in distress (1919, Munch Museum, Oslo, Norway), the scream (1983Munch Museum, Oslo, Norway). The famous painting “The Scream” is resulting from his own painful life, he depicted his unconscious emotions and spiritual energy.

Francisco Goya (1746-1828): Goya was Spanish artist, he born in 1746 at Fuendetodos, Aragon, Spain and died April 16, 1828, Bordeaux, France. He is well known for expressive drawing and engraving. He created so many great artworks, with full of energy and emotion. His life touched his deeply, therefore creating a link between his life, artworks, mental illness, and psychology. He suffered from hallucinations, delirium, and melancholy, his later works often depicted mental illness in a different way as violence and death. His feeling of pain and depression were found in his “Black period painting” though the color and form. Goya’s artworks can be divided into two faces: before and after his illness, the first face was characterized by enjoyment and illumination, in which the artist was, produced portraits, cartoon and tapestries and the second face characterized by an expressive painting- Black painting. He used horror and ghost figures for depicting his emotional expression. The separating line between these two faces was probably related to his mental illness. In 1972, Goya started seriously health issues, became critically mental ill. He began to be ill with hearing loss, loneliness, tinnitus, headaches, paresis and his sight. Researcher and art critics have found especially the second period of artworks has the many symbols which can represent his mental illness and anxiety. He did not exhibit these drawings and etching anywhere until forty years after his death. He expressed his life, mental illness, what he lived and what he felt.

Louies Wain (1860-1939) British illustrator Louies Wain painted a various creative expressive anthropomorphic cat’s images from normal perception to schizophrenic view. Psychosis illustrator Louies Wain was recognized for cat’s images, before and after suffering from mental illness. He was the chairman of the international association for cat and always given respected cats in real life. The reason for loving cats was because his wife has named Peter but suddenly died. But the death of

Kitten’s Kitten Peter made him cat lover. This small animal was the only spiritual reassurance for the couple. Unfortunately, His wife also died when he was only 26-years-old and he has never married again and accompanied by a cat. On the other hand, mental illness began to appear in his later life. The theme of Wain’s life painting was only cats, although he suffered from schizophrenia. Critics found a cat painting with different style and patterns with the impression of his mental illness. Critic analyses schizophrenia, a mental disorder was the main cause and affects not only an artist’s philosophy but also artist individual behavior. When he exhausted fifteen years of his life in a psychiatric hospital, his life and his perception of the world and artworks totally change.

Few important artists (Table 1) those were suffered with mental illness, they express their thoughts and mental illness in artwork, personal life exposed relationship between mental illness, creativity and artworks.

Table 1. List of mental diseases associated to renowned artists

Mental Illness	Artist Name	Artworks
Anxiety	Mark Rothko (1903-1970)	Red on maroon
Alcoholism	Jackson Pollock (1912-1956)	Blue poles
Bipolar disorder	Vincent Van Gogh (1853-1890)	Starry night
Hallucinosi	Francisco Goya (1746-1828)	Young man with skull
Hereditary psychosis	Edward Munch (1863-1944)	Death in sick chamber
Manic depression	Isaac Llyich(1860 -1900)	Sokolnik’s autumn
Neurological impairment	Yayoi Kusama(1926 -)	The obliteration
Schizophrenia	Bernard Buffet (1928-1999)	Self-portrait in bathroom
Sch	Lous Wain (1860-1939)	Anthropomorphic cat
Synesthesia	Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944)	Composition

Positive Aspects of Mental Illness in Visual Arts

The optimistic aspects of bipolar disorder found that empirical evidence for the arguments of a few positive psychological facts, which were spiritual, empathy, creativity, realism, and resilience (Galvez) mental disorder maybe along with encouragement mental traits of creativity, spirituality and flexibility (Thommi). Those people who are suffering from mental disorder have forgetfulness or lost to describe how and what they feel. In addition, they are unable to express their desires when they don’t have any medium for self-expression, at that moment art can be an appropriate medium for self-expression. Mental disorder people can illustrate the nature or world in such imaginative way, even normal people unable to match their vision. Research has shown a correlation between bipolar disorder and increased positive emotional responses [9]. Few investigations of the emotional module were found that a schizophrenic artist’s artworks are characterized by strong emotions. Emotion is the fundamental idea in between art and creativity, without emotion artworks are the same as a common object. When artists are suffering from mental disorder such as bipolar disorder, they come to be more emotional towards self or society. In this way, bipolar disorder plays a positive influence in art practice for producing emotional artworks. Furthermore, in art, spiritually and empathy is also equally valuable for any great artwork. The research found that bipolar disorder can raise spirituality, empathy with mood disorders. Empathy appears to be more commonly in depressed artists. Mental illness especially schizophrenia and bipolar disorder can provide the unique expressive ability to the artists. It can totally change the thoughts and perception of the mentally ill artist.

Summary

From the analysis of the artist personal life behavior and artworks, it assist to understand the positive aspects of psychological features and mental illness. Mental disorders are generally viewed as valuable and morally or socially beneficial for creativity and visual art. The few experimental facts stated; mental illness was good for creativity but worst for artist personal life. Creativity and mental illness are exceptionally associated with internal as well as external factors. Highly creative people have comparatively more mental disorder than general people. The research observation shows that artists have the unique approach of expression, creative appearance, productive power, and distinctive visualization through the mental illness. Several notable artists with a mental disorder have expressed their emotions and pain in their artworks successfully.

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