



Psychoanalysing Visual Art Creation from the Imagination to Understand the Creative Process

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Abstract. This research aims to understand, analyse and conceptualize a particular creative process of an artist that generates visual images from the imagination. The artist compares his creative process with an archaeologist that finds ancient artefacts inside the soil, in the same way he finds images inside the canvas while painting. He states that the images spontaneously appear as if he is dreaming, in this matter the artist finds mythological and symbolic images inside his final visual artworks that comes out spontaneously into the canvas. To understand this phenomenon, this research uses qualitative approach applying art-based methodology, by unpacking his artwork's meaning, in order to find the theory behind this practice. The technique to collect data is with study document, art analysis and literature review. The artwork collection called "Unknown Evermind" that we are going to analyse contain 9 paintings, it was created in Indonesia during 2019 in an art studio in Bandung by an artist that we will call SEA. The findings shows that SEA's artworks collection created within this period of time, are related with psychological concepts of Carl Gustav Jung such as the collective unconsciousness and the archetypes. The creative process is analysed with Jung's methodology called active imagination, it explains why when SEA create his paintings he feels as if he is an archaeologist that discover artefacts in the canvas and the images spontaneously start to appears as if he is just dreaming them. We identify the archetypes of Mother, Self, Child, Hero, Great Man, Shadow, Wise Man, Anima, Animus and Person; the collective unconsciousness is also present due to the symbolism founded in in mythologies and holy books in the final art works of SEA in the collection called "Unknown Evermind".

Keywords: Creative Process · Art Creation · Imagination · Visual Art · Psychoanalysis

1 Introduction

Talking about SEA's creative process, the artist states, "It feels like falling into a dream but still awake, images spontaneously start to appear, the artist is just like a medium who let them be, as if an archaeologist discovered ancient artifact into the soil and with

his tools tries to bring them out, as if all of those images founded were already there before, deep inside our minds, somehow covering by soil, waiting to be discovered by the artist.” [1]. By analyzing the artworks of SEA created under this statement we will be able to understand the theory behind the practice, it will provide meaning to this artistic creative process.

Following SEA’s statement of his creative process, to understand this phenomenon, we need to analyze his artwork with the deep psychology concepts. According to the psychoanalyst Carl Gustaf Jung the mind is divided into consciousness and unconsciousness. Consciousness is The Ego which consist of thoughts, feelings, and emotions. by the other hand, the unconsciousness consists of our personal unconsciousness as our traumas repressed from our consciousness and another deeper part called the collective unconsciousness that is not shape by any personal experiences [2].

Jung has studied the dreams of people from all around the world and different cultures and backgrounds, he found that in those dreams spontaneously emerge historical themes and characters that once are examined and interpreted came to keep an intimate similarity with mythological narratives that have accompanied to humanity in different times and places. Jung argued that such similarity cannot simply be the attribute of direct or indirect contact between the individual and his ideas during his daily life, so it infers that these stories and symbols emerge from a common creative substrate that Jung called Collective Unconsciousness [3].

Moreover, according to Jung the symbolic images contained in the collective unconsciousness are called archetypes. The archetypes are common to all human beings, independent of their cultures, are not related with personal experiences but inherited from our ancestors, it is a kind of knowledge we all born with, yet not directly aware of. Furthermore, it influences our deepest behaviour, believes and instincts [4].

Furthermore, to be able to consciously access and externalize the symbolic images located in the collective unconsciousness, Jung considers very important to use our creativity and imagination to establish an ethical dialoged with our unconsciousness mind to discover what is deep inside it as a therapeutic practice that can help us understand more our deep selves. Jung has called this procedure the Active Imagination [5].

The novelty of this research is to understand the connection with artistic process from the imagination and the psychological concepts of collective unconsciousness, archetypes, and active imagination, to prove if the artwork of SEA created from his imagination in the collection “Unknown Evermind” can be related with the Jungian Theory by finding evidence that the symbolic images in his artworks are related with mythological images and archetypical symbols that is contained in the Collective Unconsciousness.

2 Literature Review

As an academic subject, psychoanalysis can be defined as the branch of psychology initiated by Freud that is concerned with three distinct areas of study: the development of the mind and the influence of early experience on adult mental states; the nature and role of unconscious mental phenomena; and the theory and practice of the psychoanalytic treatment [6]. A younger colleague of Freud, Carl Jung, explored the contents of unconsciousness as his life’s work. He went equipped with a background in Freudian theory,

and with an inexhaustible knowledge of mythology, religion, and philosophy. Jung was especially focus in the symbolism of complex mystical traditions such as Gnosticism, Alchemy, Kabala, and similar traditions in Hinduism and Buddhism. If anyone could make sense of the unconscious and its habit of revealing itself in symbolic form, it would be Carl Jung [7].

According to Jung, the collective unconscious is formed by instincts and archetypes that are symbols, signs, and patterns of behavior that are physically inherited from our ancestors. Moreover, the collective unconscious consists of mythological themes as archetypal images are the same for all cultures, are common to all people of different ages, races, cultures and correspond to the phylogenetical condition as part of the human structure develop [3].

Moreover, to access to the collective unconsciousness Jung mention the use of Active Imagination and [5] has been synthetized the Jungian theory of Active Imagination for study proposes in the next four main phases. The first phase is emptying the mind. The participant must keep a deep concentration rather in an image as reference or an emotion. The second phase is let the psychic event happen. The participant who choose an image will experience its deformations, and the participant who choose emotions will experience its formation. The third phase is objectivation. The participant will give personality to the image with unique characteristic and its own reality. It cannot be reduce to our caprice and put our personality neither appearance on it. The four phase is Ethical confrontation with the unconscious. The participant take dominion inside the image by asking and giving answers to the images that emerge from the imagination, to understand how the image is related with the participant and validate the active method.

Some scholars have studied the relationship of art and the Jungian Theory [8]. Presents interpretative phenomenological analysis research to compare participants experience with Jungian theory and establish a corelation with the archetypes and techniques that guide to the imaginary images. His findings shows that there is a little published research about guides forms to the imaginary [7]. However, Jung's depth psychology provides active imagination with a well-established methodology.

Bowman [9], states that active imagination is a process to explore the psyche thought free play of fantasy [12]. In contrast Schaverien [10], states that the active imagination can be as real as if it has life of its own, like in a dream. But it is not always active imagination, sometimes it can be merely fantasy. "Fantasy is your own invention, it remains on the surface and the conscious expectations of a person. But active imagination, means the images have life of their own in which the images cannot be reduce to our caprice and put our personality nor appearance on it." [13]. Furthermore, fantasy is a passive joy, different from the active imaginations that involves the ethical commitment of ask and give answers to the manifested images [14].

The research of Bacon [11], reveals that apart from active imagination there is another method called "focusing". It responds the idea that beyond our five senses, we can perceive an imaginal realm [10]. To access this realm, Eugene [12], developed the following six phases: clearing a space, felts sense, finding a handle, resonating, asking, and receiving [15]. According to Bacon [11], the goal is to acknowledge what is intrinsic in a moment of movement and its symbolic archetypal potential [10]. This method is similar as active imagination. In spite of it, focusing is more suitable for artistic expressions

such as dance, performance art and any other expression that involves body movement as their final product. Even though active imagination applies the body movements to create art, its final product is more suitable for visual arts, due to the symbolic language reflected as the image of the archetypes [16]. However, the similitude of both methods, remains in the acknowledge of the archetypes that must be identify in the final product of the imagination.

3 Research Methods

This research uses qualitative approach applying art-based methodology, by unpacking his artwork's meaning, in order to find the theory behind this practice. The techniques to collect data are with study document, art analysis and literature review [17]. The present study psychoanalyse SEA's artwork collection called "Unknown Evermind" that contain 9 paintings, and it was created in Indonesia during 2019 in an art studio in Bandung. We will analyse his artistic process and his paintings with the Jungian Theory of Collective Unconsciousness, Archetypes and Active Imagination. We tend to prove if the symbolic images we find in the paintings are related with the archetypes located in the collective unconsciousness to unpack the theory behind this practice.

4 Result and Discussion

With the visual art project called "Unknown Evermind" the artist explores the mind using his artistic instinct and imagination. The artist believes that our personal mind is contained in an universal mind that lies deep inside ourselves and has recorded through memories all the history of the humankind but we have forgotten by the time goes. SEA tends to reconnect with this universal mind within inside our own selves that he called "The Original Self" [1]. SEA started by doing small quick sketches of their friends and family, after selecting the drawings he started to painted them, he began with small life sketches of the reality, drawing his friends, making a quick sketch of his classmates and teachers, soon he started to use another senses beyond the view, exploring the psyche, painting people just by listen the voices to stimulate the memories and drawing what he believes were their faces. SEA started to add texture using ashes from Tangkuban Perahu Volcano, glue, organic and nonorganic pigments of batik, gauche, modelling paste and acrylic, applying spatula and brushed that makes him feel as if he is looking for artefacts inside the soil, just like an archaeologist, as result the sketches started to have variations, deformations and new images started to appear in the canvas, SEA describe this phenomena as if he is dreaming while still awake painting, spontaneously images came from his unconsciousness and he uses his imagination to give them their own shape and unique characteristics, by this process SEA founds different images such as people faces, aliens, angels and genies, crossing thought imagination to the reality of the art itself, using artistic movements such as Intuitivism, Expressionism, Automatism, and Figurative art to find his own subjective style. In the next subsection, we will psychoanalyzed with the Jungian theory each of the 9 paintings which shown at Fig. 1.

4.1 Psychoanalysis of the 9 Paintings

Cyclops Portal. For this painting SEA started with an emotion, then this emotion started to get the shape of a rose due to the red colour, later on the image started to look like a sea creature that contains just one eye, that represents according to him a cosmic portal that has been open the entrance a dimension inside his mind. We find that a single eye linked up with the idea of destruction, is the spiritual equivalent of sight, the clairvoyance [13]. The beginning, the portal to the unknown, the destruction of the ego, the access to the archetype of the shadow [13]. Jung often represented the circle, square, or mandala as the archetype of the mother [14], from the Mother other archetypes arise such as the Self archetype that represents the unification of the unconsciousness and consciousness in an individual [15].

The First Argonaut. In this painting SEA started with an emotion as well, later on he started to noticed a shape of another portal in an spiral and also a face going out of that spiral, later on he identify it is an astronaut that is chaotically landing. Furthermore, he choose this title because of the stories his father use to tell him about argonauts and he refers to the painting as the person who is crossing the portal to the unknown and he relate this as a kind of hero that explore the limits of the things we know, comparing the argonaut with an astronaut. Within the observation and literature review we identify that an argonaut is an octopus that the colours and shape are very like the painting, also in Greek mythology the argonauts are the people who sail in boats called Argos. We can identify that this is the archetype of a hero who explore the unknown to bring knowledge and new stories to his family and friends, we also identify by observation the archetype of the Mother that Jung associates with a mandalas as a magic circles where the birth can take place as a shelter or uterus. We represent the mandala as the equipment that protects the hero in his adventure, the mother that always pray for his children. According to Jung [15], from the archetype of the mother another archetypes arise, one of the is the archetype of the child, in this case the child become the hero, as the one who explore the unknown, the hero represents the artist himself that explore his deepest regions of his mind. The archetype of the Great Man according to Jung [15], is the archetype of the self-inside the mother, it means that we are facing in SEA painting the archetype of The Great Man.

The Sons of Matahari. For this painting SEA started with one of his previous sketches, he could experience the deformation of the images in the sketch as well as how new shapes and images started to show up, so he gave them its own and particular personality and characteristics. The previous sketch was a tree and the roots of the tree were fingers, in the top of the tree there were two faces and in the middle of the tree there were three eyes. In the deformation of this previous sketch, we observe the eyes are looking in different direction and one of the eyes become a face, one of the roots that were fingers became the face of a dog, one of the eyes has yellow light rays such as the sun, also we identify new images, such as an astronaut and an old man. For the artist this painting represents the sons of the sun, in Indonesian language sun is “matahari”, if we translate “matahari” means the eye of the day, from the eye of the day its kids are born [15]. States that the archetype of the mother is related with things that represents fertility, such as a tree or caves, due that the eyes is naturally in a cave and in the painting it is



Cyclops Portal



The First Argonaut



The Sons of Matahari



Self-Obsolete



The Seekers of Unlost



The Bottle of Wisdom



Esoteric Dinner



The Other Side of The Light



Holy Reborn

Fig. 1. The 9 Paintings.

contain by a tree, we can identified as the archetypes of the mother [15] also states that from the archetype of the mother other archetypes arise, such as the archetype of the child, in this case, the male and female creatures that appears in the top of what was a tree represents the archetype of the child. The astronaut represent the archetype of the hero that explores the unknown, it is the kind of character who is brave, face the evil

and save the day and it is common in many mythologies and cultures around the world [14]. The old man or wise man that appears in the painting, according to Jung [15] is the one who leads to the goals and point them out to the hero. Talking about one of the eye that transform into a face, SEA mentioned that it seems familiar to him, he mention that looks like Garuda from Indonesia, that is why he choose to put the name of the painting with Indonesian language also. When we analyse the painting we identify that the image that he mention as Garuda is actually an ancient Ecuadorian artifact made by gold, and also is the same image on an ancient artefact from the Sumerian culture that is made of soil, by observation we identify that indeed this image is similar as Garuda in Indonesia, the face of a reptile mixed with a bird, from this amazing “coincidence” we can assume that the theory of the collective unconsciousness of Jung is taking place in this practice. Within the review of Sumerian literature we found his name is Enki and he is an extra-terrestrial scientist, the lord of humankind on Earth and the underworld in the sea, is related with a snake or dragon, and it is the responsible of the creation of humankind, the eyewitness that leads the first group of astronauts to the Earth [16]. Robert [17], mention that the antichrist is a beast from the that is related with a wolf. We identify this image in the painting as the archetype of the shadow, due to the negative connotation with the antichrist [15].

Esoteric Dinner. For this painting SEA started with a previous sketch, the artist experienced a lot of deformation until he funds the unique characteristic and personalities of every element. The painting elements suggest a dinner that contain esoteric elements such an eye served in the dining table, and levitating invert pyramid over a chair. SEA interpretate the painting as a female angel that has fallen from the sky and is lost in and trap in the everyday worldly. Searching a female angel in the literature review, we found a particular story of a bidadari by the name of Urwasi, we found her story in the Rigveda Holy book of Hindu, in this story we found some elements that are included in the painting such as the falling female angel, her sun that is a raven, and the red ring as an amulet used by the raven in Urwasi story. As conclusion in this painting, we identified the archetype of the shadow due to the tragedy story with negative connotations and mysterious events [15].

Self-Obsolete. For this painting SEA started with one of his previous sketch, SEA experienced some deformations of the sketch and then he recognised some new elements such as angel with two faces, and the multiplications of a face. This is a combination between the consciousness and the unconsciousness, what happened in the artist daily live and what is in his unconsciousness, inspired in his teacher that explained the artist expressions in the contemporary art is obsolete. When we look closer the angel with two faces is similar as a symbol from his country that is a big angel statue in the middle of the city, we could also recognized his teacher and classmate in the painting, as well as the flags of his mother country and Indonesia. We identify the Self archetype that represents the unification of the unconsciousness and consciousness in an individual [15].

The Seekers of Unlost. For this painting SEA started with a previous sketch of him, in the process he found some deformations of the sketch but basically the symbols in the sketch were maintain as the original sketch. We observe some pirates that have candles in the top of their hats, and other pirate with a boat in his hat, he is in chains, prisoner by

one of the pirates with strange humanoid face. For the artist this represent the colonialism era when Cristobal Colon was looking for a new land and the pirates were stilling the treasures from the invaders. But also has a deeper meaning for SEA, the candle that the invaders have in his hat, represent something that they have forgotten, because is higher than them, they can't see, so they believe they have lost that light, and they are desperately looking for it, until they betrayed anyone and slaved anyone to obtain what they have lost. This represents the archetype of the shadow for the negative connotation of the history [15].

The Bottle of Wisdom. For this painting SEA also started with another of his sketches, this sketch had a of deformations and transformations, until he found the shapes of the new elements. we identify something that looks like an alien inside a gadget, the alien's transportation, a candle that has another candle inside itself that it is reflected in this alien gadget, and another candle in the top of the painting that it is in a kind of heaven's door with two big pillars that are levitation in the entrance of this candle's door. SEA represents this painting as the manipulation of the knowledge and information, in order to control the humankind and keep them asleep and decontrolled.

This is the representation of a alchemic principle as the correspondence law of the universe that states what is bellow is above in a material, mental and spiritual way [18]. We represent this universal law as what is below is the unconsciousness and what is above is the consciousness. This painting is the representation of the unification of this principle, so we recognize the archetype of the Self that unifies the consciousness and unconsciousness, the inner fire that ascends to the eternal fire, the fore that is the source of light [15]. Nevertheless, with every light the shadow will be present too, in this case the alien represents the shadow in the painting that according to SEA is the one who control and manipulate the knowledge, for the negative connotation of the interpretation we attribute the archetype of the shadow [15].

The Other Side of the Light. This painting stated with an emotional impulse, later on the shape of an alien stated to come, physically from the own shadow of the artist. At this point the artist didn't use previous sketch, he was standing Infront of the canvas in a state of meditation, suddenly he realised that his own shadow was reflected in the canvas and he decide to follow its shape and paint it, soon the in this shadow and alien shape started to appears. SEA called the other side of the light rehearing to the shadow. So we interpretate this as the archetype of the shadow, due to the connotation and the symbolism of the alien that appears in the previous painting of "The Bottle of Wisdom".

Holy Reborn. This is the last painting of this collection called "Unknown Evermind", it started with a mix of an emotional impulse and with the previous image that was inspired by a bird that died in SEA studio while he was painting, soon the shape of the bird stated to appears with open wins and pointed to the sky, around the bird he stated to see the shape of spiral circles. SEA called this painting the holy reborn because he feels as if the bird that died in the studio come to live again while painting as if the bird has another opportunity to go back to the sky, this is the psychological analogy that everyone needs a second opportunity, it is the renovation sign of the rebirth archetype [15].

4.2 Active Imagination Steps Mapping with the Paintings

We have divided the artistic process of each painting with the 4 steps of active imagination in the Table 1, in order to summarize the most important information, such as if the painting started with emotion or a previous sketch, if the sketch experienced deformations and formations, what kind of characters we find in the paintings and last but not least, to summarize the archetypes founded in every painting and the elements founded in the literature review that belongs to mythological histories that prove the connection with the Jungian Theory of the collective unconsciousness.

Table 1. Active Imagination Steps in The Paintings.

Paintings	Active Imagination Steps			
	(1) Emptying the Mind	(2) Let the Event Happen	(3) Objectivation	(4) The Ethical Confrontation with The Unconsciousness
Cyclops Portal	Emotion	Feelings get shape	Rose, cosmic portal, sea creature, eye	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A single eye linked up with the idea of destruction, is the spiritual equivalent of sight, the clairvoyance (Cirlot, 1962). • The beginning, portal to the unknown; the destruction of the ego, the access to the shadow. <p>The self is an archetype that represents the unified unconsciousness and consciousness of an individual. Jung often represented the self as a circle, square, or mandala.</p>
The First Argonaut	Emotion	Image get shape	Cosmic portal, astronaut	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sea creature, shelled octopus • Greek mythology, argo boat they sail • Self • The Hero • Is the one who fight against the shadow, against the unknown

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

Paintings	Active Imagination Steps			
	(1) Emptying the Mind	(2) Let the Event Happen	(3) Objectivation	(4) The Ethical Confrontation with The Unconsciousness
The Sons of Matahari	Previous image	Previous image get deformation	Mask, astronaut, wise old man, a wolf, the eyes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sumerian Mythology • Enki: extraterrestrial scientist, humankind, Lord of Earth and the Underworld in the sea, snake, dragon [16]. • Eyewitness, the leader of the first group of astronauts [16] • Image of the antichrist as the beast from the sea, refers his as a wolf [17] • Archetype • The Wise Men: guide, knowledge, wisdom, reveal the collective unconscious to the hero, light to the hero • Anima and Animus, The Persona
Esoteric Dinner	Starting point: previous image or feeling emotion	Previous image get deformation	Give personality to the image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hindu story of Urwasi in Rigveda Holy Book. • Red ring, the crow and the bidadari • The falling angel • Lost the light • Trap on earth, • Mysterious events, The Shadow
Self-Obsolete	Previous image	Previous image get deformation	Angel with two faces, flags	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confrontation of the opposite psychic • Images from daily life, memories, mythology • The Self archetype as the unification of the opposites

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

Paintings	Active Imagination Steps			
	(1) Emptying the Mind	(2) Let the Event Happen	(3) Objectivation	(4) The Ethical Confrontation with The Unconsciousness
The Seekers of Unlost	Previous image	Previous image get deformation	Give personality to the image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Archetype • The pirates represent The Shadow • That light that is in all of us, but as they can't see it, they are lost wandering outside.
The Bottle of Wisdom	Previous image	Previous image get deformation	Give personality to the image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active Imagination, Eitic confrontation with the unconsciousness: confront it in a kind of alchemy • The Correspondence law: as is above below (material, the mental and the spiritual). • Archetype • The Self: unify consciousness and unconsciousness. • The inner fire that ascends to the eternal fire • The fire that is the source of light • The shadow
The Other Side of The Light	Emotion	Formation of the image	Give personality to the image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotion • Archetype • The Shadow • Alien race, The Greys

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

Paintings	Active Imagination Steps			
	(1) Emptying the Mind	(2) Let the Event Happen	(3) Objectivation	(4) The Ethical Confrontation with The Unconsciousness
Holy Reborn	Previous image and emotional impulse	Previous image get deformation	Give personality to the image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotion • Bird, Blue color: the holy spirit, the heaven, the celestial light • Bird, Red color: Fenix, the inner power, the fire, the light of the earth inside of us, the reborn. • Archetype of the Self the consciousness and the unconsciousness.

5 Conclusion and Recommendation

SEA explores the mysteries of the mind in the unconsciousness by creating art, SAE has been able to discover images hermetically preserve deep inside himself since the beginning of times in common substrate of creation, those images are known as Archetypes and the common substrate is known as The Collective Unconsciousness. It is possible to access to this common subtract of creation while we are sleeping but we can also access while we are awake by doing art. It is possible to use the Jungian procedure of Active Imagination in order to manifest those images with drawings and paintings. The archetype founded in (SEA) artworks are related with mythological images that connect us unconsciously with different cultures around the world, if we are aware of this symbols in our personal mythology this is a powerful tool of education with self-knowledge.

We recommend a deeper study of the archetypes for a better, faster and easier analysis of the art created by the particular process from the imagination.

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