

أثر الهوية المصرية على الأعمال النحتية لمحمود مختار*

The impact of the egyption identity on the sculptural works of mahmoud mokhtar

أ.م.د. محمد رضا محمد الصياد

أستاذ مساعد بقسم التعبير المجسم- كلية التربية الفنية -جامعة حلوان

Assist. Prof. Dr.Mohamed Reda Mohamed elsayad

Assistant Professor in the Department of Embodied Expression - Faculty of Art

Education - Helwan University

mohamed_elsayad@fae.helwan.edu.eg

Abstract:

The impact of Egyptian identity on the sculptural works of Mahmoud Mukhtar*

In light of the spread of modern and contemporary sculptural styles and trends, the importance of searching for identity becomes apparent, as identity represents the unifying part of a society's personality that enables it to live in intellectual and cultural harmony.

Identity enables the sculptor to prove himself in his works, distances him from imitation, and pushes him to intellectual and creative excellence. Point can be made to the pioneer of modern Egyptian sculpture, Mahmoud Mukhtar, who took the Egyptian identity as a starting point for sculptural expression and creativity and pushed it to the international level. Mukhtar's importance in this research is that he is the first Egyptian sculptor. In the modern era, after a long period of cessation of Egyptian art in general and the art of sculpture in particular, it increased Mukhtar's fame and the gathering of the Egyptian public around him, his pride in his identity during a period of time when Egypt was suffering under the British occupation and the Egyptian people were searching for their identity in their resistance against the British occupier. It changed its language, religion, and art, beginning the Egyptianization movement that ended with the revolution of 1919, influencing the form of the arts and the development of literature in the following decade. So that both Mukhtar and the Egyptian people would meet under the banner of national identity, as the Egyptian people found in Mukhtar's sculpture works an image of belonging and patriotism, so that the spectrum of society would unite and rally around his sculptural works.

Despite Mukhtar's study of Western models of sculpture, his talent, vision, and search for self and identity, which were not lost on his vision in his artistic works, prompted him to benefit from what he learned and then be inspired by the cultural heritage of Egypt in his works, in which he found endless art. These works were not imitations of sculptures. A culture that disappeared decades ago. Rather, it was a civilization with an Egyptian identity, the life of the Egyptian people.

The researcher chose to study Mokhtar's works in the field of modern Egyptian sculpture to search for the Egyptian identity in them, and the influences that shaped his sculptural vision and became characteristics of his works and gave them the Egyptian spirit and identity.

Research problem:

Modern sculpture represents many trends that spread in the world and in Egypt. In the twentieth century, political events, including revolutions, wars, and cultural and societal changes, shaped the conscience of intellectuals and artists. With openness and information communication, Western culture spread, and artistic and cultural Westernization became a phenomenon driven by modernity, which prompted the researcher to search about identity and how to become aware

of it and root it through Mokhtar's works, which the artist worked to root in his works as an extension of Egyptian art, and employing this distinctive value of ancient and contemporary Egyptian art.

Hence, the researcher poses the following question: How can the features of the Egyptian identity be extracted from the works of the sculptor Mahmoud Mukhtar (plastically and expressively) to root the Egyptian identity in teaching sculpture?

Research aims:

1. Extracting the features of Egyptian identity in Mukhtar's sculpture works.
2. Explaining the influences that shaped Mahmoud Mukhtar's artistic thought and rooted the Egyptian identity in his works.

Research hypotheses:

1. Characteristics of Egyptian identity can be extracted in Mokhtar's works.
2. Entries can be drawn for teaching and awareness by rooting the concept of identity in the field of sculpture.

Research importance:

1. Confirming awareness of the concept of Egyptian identity in sculptural works and identifying its characteristics.
2. Benefiting from the sculptural vision of Mahmoud Mukhtar as an introduction to awareness of establishing identity.
3. Shedding light on the importance of attachment to Egyptian identity inspired by the ancient Egyptian heritage and the Egyptian environment.

Research Methodology:

The researcher follows the descriptive, analytical and historical method through the following:

First: Defining the concept of identity in plastic art.

Second: Sources of vision for shaping Egyptian identity in Mukhtar's sculptures.

- Political events in Egypt and the world that shaped Mukhtar's identity.
- The impact of art and arts education on Mokhtar's artistic identity.
- The environment and artistic heritage of ancient Egyptian heritage.
- The role of thinkers and politicians in awakening identity.

Third: Plastic approaches to highlight the elements of identity in Mukhtar's works.

Fourth: Results.

First: the concept of cultural identity.

With social, economic and political transformations, the term identity emerges as a term that means the same thing or as it is.

“The identity of a thing means its essence expressed through its attributes in a specific diagnosis. Identity constitutes a special and different entity for self-realization and clinging to its privacy.” Culture is the vessel that comprehends and embodies identity, and it is what expresses the feeling of belonging. “Culture is a synthesis between it and the accumulated and interacting values.” With the other as well, especially with humanity, and with the traditions and customs that reflect human behavior and life and embody the phenomena of behavior and moral and practical life practices of values, traditions, morals, beliefs, customs and arts.

The identity of a thing is its expressed reality, and a person’s identity is his awareness and sense of self and his belonging to a humane, national, or religious group. Identity represents a minimum level of cultural characteristics shared by a group of people to which they belong, which makes them distinguished by their characteristics from other individuals and groups. According to Adonis*, “Identity is not a given thing that is ready or final, but it is a work that must always be completed. It is a given that can develop through openness to others, shrink, be limited, and become racist. It is a communicative structure. Identity is not what the individual is as much as what the individual wants to be. It is a perception of the world and a mental image that is created through sincerity of communication and interaction. Identity is a moral product that protects against the different and reconciles the person with himself.

According to Hall Stewart, identity is “a state of constant transformation. It is not a given, an integrated, never-ending achievement.” It requires awareness and consolidation in light of the variables of globalization and Westernization, and strengthening and development within the framework of common humanity. It is an ongoing creative process. Nadim Al-Bitar believes “The nation’s identity is a historical identity and history is what shapes it.” There is no identity outside of society, history, and heritage. It is the people that produce identity, whether a large or small group, and pride in belonging to history and civilization are what contribute to the formation of that identity, it is a summary.

• **The impact of art and arts education on Mokhtar’s artistic identity.**

Academic arts education existed in Egypt at that time with its classical curricula, and many Egyptian artists were influenced by European forms in their works due to their contact with European communities or through their learning of art abroad.

Mahmoud Mukhtar learned art at the School of Fine Arts by hitting gooseberries in 1908. He joined the first class when he was seventeen years old, and his talent appeared before foreign teachers, including the Frenchman Laplante. These professors allocated a special studio for him within the school building in which he formed his sculptures because of the excellence and talent they saw in him. The patron of the school, Prince Youssef Kamal, sent Mahmoud Mukhtar to Paris on a mission to learn the arts under the example of Mercier.

In his mission, Mukhtar witnessed the transformation of art in the Western world into an expression of the ordinary person and daily life away from classical teachings and the aristocratic class. In this period of time, several artistic trends prevailed in the Western world, rejecting the classical and romantic trends, to emerge movements such as Dadaism, Futurism, and Expressionism. The outlook on primitive arts have changed. Civilizations in the Western world. Mukhtar saw in museums these diverse trends, which differed from the French scholastic trend. These trends and arts raised in him questions about art, its nature and influence, as well as its origins. He was influenced by the works of Rodin, whose workshop he created through the grant, and Antoine Bordel, to be influenced by his monumental works. Mayol sees these

sculptors' drawing inspiration from works from ancient Egyptian and Greek sculpture. This diversity of vision led to the expansion of Mokhtar's artistic perceptions and pushed him to find a contemporary concept of formation and its treatments. Mokhtar tried to distance himself from the superficial imitation of any of the Western cultural and artistic trends*, which created new trends, it called for the individual creative vision, and the search for the artist's self within his community and not the other way around. Mokhtar always tried to stay away from blind imitation of any of the incoming cultural trends. "But he was influenced by the Impressionist school, which he exploited its expressive dimension by playing with light", allowing the vibration and shaking of light, shadow, and subtle movement for blocks. The artist put his talent in the service of the national movement after his return and expressed the Egyptian identity, moving away in his works from the artistic form represented by the aristocracy.

Mokhtar also contributed to establishing the Higher School of Fine Arts and participated in sending artistic delegations abroad, and to hold an exhibition in 1930 in Paris through which critics in the Western world became acquainted with the modern Egyptian school in the field of sculpture, thus influencing the future and identity of sculpture and art in Egypt.

• **The environment and artistic heritage of ancient Egyptian heritage.**

"Artistic heritage has a special importance in the culture of nations. Heritage is at the heart of cultural identity and one of its most important components. It is the results of a civilizational process that brings together sciences, knowledge, arts, and intellectual values." Heritage enhances commonality and emphasizes identity and the group's tendency toward unity. Ancient Egyptian art is distinguished in that it was not searching for the viewer's admiration, but through the look and the mass (expression and formation), carried within him an artistic depth represented in his creation by calculations and laws that were almost mathematical, in which the realistic simulation decreased, even if it did not disappear, but rather became more simplified, deeper and more ideal, so that his works carried a special aesthetic look, which distinguishes this Egyptian sculpture. The ancient "characteristic of direct expression that reflects the artist's vision and its objective embodiment in forms with a coherent entity."

Mokhtar began to strengthen his identity through his vision of the environment and the Egyptian countryside, and he "revived the traditions of ancient Egyptian art from its various eras without neglecting the experiments of modern sculpture, and he became the pioneer of Egyptian sculpture."

During his formative period, Mokhtar headed to search for compatibility between artistic creativity and Western teachings in an art that has distinctive features and features that is not an imitation, but rather an original art in which he seeks the national plastic and expressive identity that meets his civilization and the traditions of ancient Egyptian art in a cohesive structure. "Mokhtar dealt with his topics from his local environment, such as the Bride of the Nile, the Khamsin Winds, the Nubian, and the Egyptian farmer."

Mokhtar's success in creating Egyptian sculpture that he derived from the values and traditions of the Greek and Roman heritage and the ancient Egyptian character is that he revived the art of sculpture and that he created purely Egyptian sculpture, as his sculptural works carried the "common" identity in light of the great nation in a new vision of the sculptural form, which is treated with a new contemporary concept and reality, he presented the political identity that preoccupied the Egyptian person at the time and its central issues at the level of daily awareness through his art. He also presented the issue of women, independence and work, drawing

inspiration in sculpture from values derived from popular heritage and using his plastic skills that he learned from the Western model to present these forms in a modern spirit. While Lotfi Al-Sayyid was writing about the farmer and Taha Hussein about the countryside in the novel "Al-Ayyam," and Tawfiq Al-Hakim was writing about the farmer in "The Return of the Soul," Mukhtar tends to embody the Egyptian people and their connection to the Nile through the shapes of farmers or even through the relief paintings that he carved on a base. The statue of Saad Zaghloul in Cairo, drawing from the Egyptian environment, its easy nature and the purity of its sun, which made his prominent sculptures (inside the cavity) (Figure 4b) imitate the ancient Egyptian style, to present architectural elements and decorative units of Egyptian heritage in works that have characteristics and features that indicate the local environment as a creative artist. He does not imitate, but rather develops, in mutual projections between the past and the present, to establish the link between history, the present, and the roots extending into the past through his art, to establish the concept of identity, through the heritage that constitutes pride for Egyptians throughout the ages and gives them an advantage to distinguish among the neighboring peoples around them.

Research results:

1. Mukhtar's study abroad provided him with a comprehensive vision of the development of the art of sculpture, which qualified him to search for his identity and choose for his identity to be Egyptian.
2. Gouda existed in a period of time that was dominated by the spirit of independence and the search for national identity in all fields, and his contact with intellectuals and politicians pushed him to adhere to the Egyptian identity in his works.
3. His awareness of heritage and his emergence from a rural environment brought together multiple sources and a rich artistic vision.
4. His technical skill and awareness of material made it easy for him to express his ideas.
5. His love for Egypt and his pride in his identity is what made him a successful international sculptor.