

The Scream & Starry Night: Emotions, Symbol & Motives

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Abstract

Starry Night & The Scream is the best known painting by Vincent van Gogh and Edvard Munch that symbolize fusion of life. The oil on canvas painting technique possesses multiple interpretations; one evident theme is Van Gogh's communication and Edvard Munch feelings and vision of vastness. Edvard Munch (Scream) and Vincent van Gogh has brought art and life together by communicating using their own personal phenomena experiences and passionately. The expression of universal approach and human mind has really created a journeying of psychological circumstances having a universal appeal which still communicates to us every human being today. Therefore, this research will look into the connotation of symbols or meaning of two great drawings that has certainly not just a painting but also sense of human iconic juxtaposed between art and realism of life.

Keywords: Van Gogh, Edvard Munch, Starry Night, The Scream, oil paintings, life, death, human, symbols

“El grito” y “La noche estrellada”: emociones, símbolos y motivos

Resumen

“La noche estrellada” y “El grito” son las pinturas más conocidas de Vincent van Gogh y de Edvard Munch respectivamente. Edvard Munch y Vincent van Gogh han llevado al arte la comunicación de la vida, de sus propias experiencias personales y de sus pasiones. Una comunicación con un enfoque universal en la mente humana, creadora realmente de un conjunto de circunstancias psicológicas con atractivo universal, algo que todavía nos comunica todo ser humano. Por lo tanto, esta investigación se centrará en la connotación de símbolos y en el significado de dos grandes dibujos que, además de pinturas, representan también el sentido icónico de lo humano, un sentido yuxtapuesto entre el arte y el realismo de la vida.

Palabras clave: Van Gogh, Edvard Munch, *La noche estrellada*, *El grito*, vida, muerte, humano, símbolos

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1. Introduction

Art is not within human thinking, but is surrounded with volume of expressions and emotions that recognize values and patterns of life. Edvard Munch begins as an Impressionist artist that draws a line between astuteness and idiom which allows him to create paintings or illustrations with beautiful stunning visuals. *The Scream*, Munch's iconic work, has come to symbolise the angst of modern man in today's frenetic society and, like the Mona Lisa, is one of the most frequently reproduced images in the world. Munch worked in a variety of media, repeatedly exploring the same themes in

painting, drawing, etching, lithography, photography and woodcuts. The Norwegian artist potent imagery and dramatic use of heightened colour, both radical in their time, combined with his innovative studio techniques, have secured Munch's reputation as one of the most revered and influential artists of the twentieth century. The paintings are like drama that communicates within the human mind and influence of the life style society. Even though he came from a poor family, but he is a person that lives between reality and visionary. After his death of his family members including his mom and older sister, Munch's early life was scarred by a series of traumatic events which profoundly shaped the development of his work.

Munch believes each individual that suffers depression caused by very pain and suffering was the driving force behind his creative life. Again, Munch has combined the philosophy of life and creativity as two entities that provides desired anomaly. Munch said 'I would not cast off my illness for there is much in my art that I owe to it' (et al. Susie 2004). Munch can be describe as a person that believes the *art of life* rather the *approach of life*. In this case, love is a word that purifies the heart and fostering relationship Munch's lucid and evocative writings are as expressive as his art, and about this time he started to write what later became known as his literary diaries, where he described love scenes, childhood tragedies and impressions of Kristiania café society. This can summarized Munch's influence towards his famous artwork "The Scream" not only as an impressionist artist but naturalism or represent natural objects as they appear reality within metaphorical exemplification. For example, Munch's *The Scream* literally epitomize swirling shapes, vivid colours, depth of field, contrast, patterns and with the combination of all, It metaphorically exemplifies that is, it *expresses* – feelings of anguish and alienation (Robinson, 2004).

According to Li Sheng-Bin (2010), Western painting and literature ceased to serve primarily as representations of colour, lines, shapes, music and movement becoming more of a media of expression becoming aesthetics objects. Munch was also interested in winter landscapes that finally enthusiastically by decorating of the University of Kristiania's new auditorium, the Aula. According to Munch, the motifs in the Aula commemorate the perpetual forces of human life.

Example, the background motif comprise of sunrise, scenery view with explosive composition may also be viewed as a symbol of the boundless and life-giving power of light. The human and nature symbols in his paintings in the Aula portraying an old man sitting under an oak tree in a inadequate and rugged landscape relating the saga with a little boy and a woman sitting on a seashore with a child at her breast while the other children admiring the panorama. Besides alluding to the humanities and sciences, the two "archetypal" motifs are expressions of a male and female principle, a central opposition in Munch's visual world. Vincent van Gogh artwork is still altering the way mankind views beauty, persona, and style of art. He has being influence by impressionists and post impressionists. Van Gogh was an artist with motives that creates various painting including landscape, portrait, and others. The Potato Peeler (recto: Self-Portrait with a Straw Hat), 1885 with its restricted palette of dark tones, coarse fracture, and blocky drawing, is typical of the works Van Gogh oil on canvas painted in Nuenen the year before he left Holland for France. The portrait is not only

visualized impressionist drawings but also styles for expressing emotions rather than simply optical impressions, concentrating on themes of deeper symbolism. Through the use of simplified colours and definitive forms, Van Gogh art was characterized by a renewed aesthetic sense as well as abstract tendencies. The striking, bold, intense colours, the emphatic brushwork, and contoured forms of his work are highly expressive, even excessive emotional. Van Gogh used the symbolic and expressive values of colours for expressing emotions rather than, as did the Impressionists, for the reproduction of visual appearances, atmosphere, or light. From early on Vincent van Gogh was fascinated by the mood conjured up by the evening and the night.

Van Gogh provides illusion of self reflection with time (evening and night) placing creativity particularly for looking back over the day's events. As such he loved to work during this hours of twilight and darkness, drawing from them energy, aspiration and inspiration. Van Gogh particularly associated the nighttimes' hours with a feeling of security, solace and the poetic. At the same time he was not immune to night's darker side, when one can be overwhelmed by feelings of loneliness and despair. Van Gogh was above all attracted by the landscape at twilight, thereby linking up with a longstanding painterly tradition. Evening and Nighttimes landscapes have for centuries been a well-loved theme. Though he could be erratic and difficult, though he suffered breakdowns and depressions, van Gogh was far from the madman of myth. Van Gogh loves art as a passion and impression, but not for money.

Even though he died at the young age of 37, Steven Naifeh & Gregory White (2011) describes Van Gogh as his turbulent emotional life, filled with loneliness and despair, there sprang in a single, incandescent decade a profusion of dazzling, vibrant paintings that fulfilled his ambition to create art that might provide consolation for the bereaved, redemption for the desperate. The mood and emotions in his paintings has always portray the art of aesthetic values and the post-impressionist once mentioned that how rich art is, if one can only remember what one has seen, one is never without food or truly lonely, never alone. Van Gogh describe the art is surrounding factor that conveys meanings, impression, and aesthetic. Vincent van Gogh's art holds a prominent place in the history of modern art.

2. 'The Scream' Symbolism of Art

In each philosophy of Edvard Munch paintings uses colours, lines, textures and metaphors to convey expression related to human phenomenon. Symbols are more closely linked with reality than are words. According to Weller Embler (1956), symbol is profligate with associations that have accumulated around it, and history is more often than not responsible for the wealth of meaning in a symbol. Example, Edvard Munch's *The Scream* (Figure 1.0) uses expressive waves of colours and undulating lines as symbols to depict himself in a moment of anguish. The human paradigm vortex of life consists of various emotions of pain, suffering, sex, envy and other that inspire him to be a symbolist artist. Emotion depicted seems to be intense anxiety, bordering on terror, horror, or dread.

He explored themes or celestial of death, fear, love, and loneliness that particularly influenced Munch's visual art styles.

The impressionist eras were admiring the phonology of colour and aesthetic of natural landscape, but Van Gogh and Munch took an approach in drastic perspective of art. They prefer to look inwards to discover a symbol or form of “self-expression” that provide them connotations of individual voice in a world that they perceived as insecure, vengeance and unsympathetic manner. It was this subjective discover in the context of expression and symbolism that paved art forms in 20th century to explore the inner path of the soul. *The Scream* (1893), Munch’s paintings are absolutely influential and analytical. Indeed it is so iconic the Munch’s ‘The Scream’ (1893) has become the Mona Lisa of neurotics, the Whistler’s ‘Mother’ of paranoids. It provides depth between psychological and emotional blueprint for Expressionist art. The painting consists of distorted shapes and exaggerated colours creating an amplifying sense of anxiety and alienation. *The Scream* is a manifestation of Munch’s inner voice crying between calm and backwoods. It also describe a scenario of inferior while Munch was walking along the road with two of his friends as the sun set describing night is approaching and the sky becomes a bloody and he stop. Munch visualized the clouds were like blood and sword.

He visualized his friends walk on, and he suddenly becomes naive, trembling with fright while listening to a loud voice unending scream piercing nature. Munch not only experience the fright factor around but also inside of him. Munch inner voice and scared to be alone, are symbols in his painting that able to create a horizontal lines between the subject and background representing opposite of meaning of life such as peace and war, fear and courageous, love and hate, and ambiguous or alone. Munch’s art, is built on paradox; his themes concerned “union and separation; death and regeneration; lust and guilt; love and loss. Thus, the painting style of the impressionist and post-impressionists, of Munch and Van Gogh, is gradually acquiring symbolic significance, as society discovers new relationships and meaning in their works; and one can begin to see a similar adjustment in our understanding of symbolism and other cultural movements of the early twentieth century. Munch has being inspired from the visual styles painters such as Paul Gauguin and Vincent van Gogh that help him to apply vivid colours to flatten visual art forms with dark or gothic outlines within the force.

His style and expression are doubtless, the painting might appreciated in such way. The painting might be reappreciated in such a way that feeling such emotions in some degree would enter into appreciation, and that too would reveal a new aspect in the painting. long, wavy lines seem to carry the echo of a tormented scream into every angle of the picture. Munch permeates his painting with psychic realities-which he described as “Panic” forces - that are otherwise concealed behind visible reality.

But that does not gainsay the importance of non-corresponding appreciation of depicted emotion in Munch art work. Just as Leonardo [Da Vinci] studied the recesses of the human anatomy and dissected cadavers, ‘I try from self-scrutiny to dissect what is universal in the soul,’ Munch explained. He was simply feared women. Their gluttonous erotic appetites threatened him. In *The Scream*, no symbols of female icons or metaphors were include in his paintings. Overall, Munch indeed was a courageous and difficult artist. Art, literature and music simply runs through his blood and also he dared

to make mistakes. According to Patrick Hearn (2006), Munch's lovers seem to be sucking the very life's breath out of each other. In its final conception, Edvard Munch remained insubordinate and naked before the world. While *The Scream*, reflects the artist's mental disturbance or psychology, *The Scream* pushes into more amplified distortion and primitive expression of art, define it as *Expressionism* between human self internal emotion and nature coerce. Another example is background approach used by Munch that simplifies the reddish background symbolizes the sky, and may have been inspired by the aftermath of the extremely powerful volcanic eruption of Krakatoa in 1883. Interestingly enough, the person in the foreground is believed to the artist (Munch) and is trying to shield himself from the scream of Nature rather than screaming himself. The depiction of the position could be a representation of typical reflex action for anyone who is struggling to shield him from disturbing noise. Thus, Munch uses symbols that not only design elements but motives with critical explanations that surrounds the manifestation of human life, nature and the artist himself.

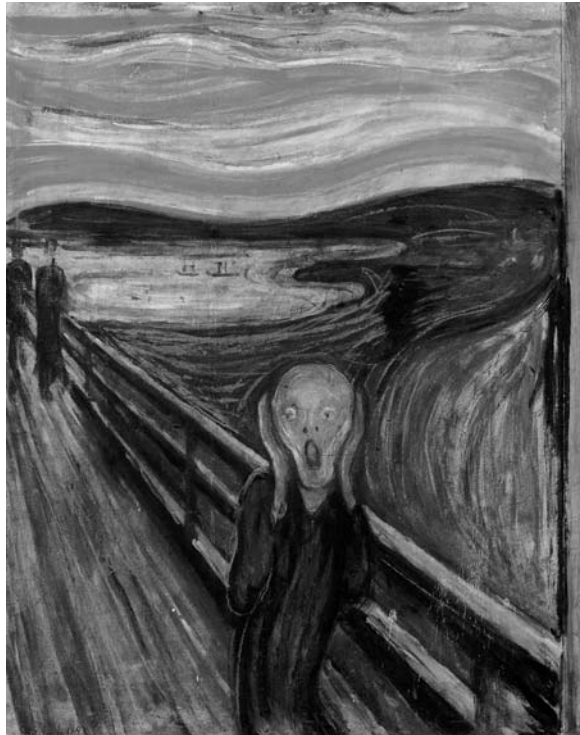


Figure 1: Edvard Munch "The Scream"(1893) that combines symbols of self expression

3. Starry Night Conceptual

Starry Nights (Figure 2.0) embodies an inner, subjective expression of van Gogh's response to nature. In thick sweeping brushstrokes, a flame like cypress unites the churn-

ing sky and the quiet village below. The *Starry Night* an art lingo between mental, emotion, and life after death segmentations. He completed the masterpiece near mental asylum of Saint Remy and he died at young age of 37. Van Gogh fulfilled that ambition. In St.Remy he painted a *Starry Night* over a landscape that was an imaginative vision. Vincent van Gogh was both artist and intensely religious man who influence by most religious anagram. Van Gogh uses art as medium to fantasies reality and emotions through abstracts and metaphors of burning rockets of burning yellow while planets gyrate like cartwheels. The hills quake and heave, yet the cosmic gold fireworks that swirl against the blue sky are somehow restful. His two descriptions, to Theo and to Eugene Boch, of the *Starry Night* over the Rhone are similarly restricted to the identification of motifs, allegory images and colours. In 1888, Van Gogh describes something important that desires him between pain, agony and melancholy. He was weak between mental and physical strength.

The most one could give or receive during life was consolation for its sadness and strength to accept it is religion factor. According to Lauren Soth (1986), the blue for Christ and the citron-yellow for the angel became the sky, and the stars and moon. Later, he goes out to a view the night of stars and inspire and consoling image of the *Starry Night* was the result of that process sublimation



Figure 2: Van Gogh “Starry Night” explains the emotion and religion metaphors

According to Judy Sund (1986), Van Gogh visionary between emotional and deepest theology feelings consensus into nature has created sublimated and its most profound level, the *Starry Night* is Van Gogh’s agony. *Starry Night* is one of his paintings involves few landscape that he did not paint on the spot but instead he exaggerate and blended with a variety of tranquillities motifs to create aesthetic imagery mood. Another interesting point about Van Gogh is the used of symbolism through synthesis or fusion. He attained this “affirmation of the character of things” through “his often dar-

ing simplification of forms. It can be summarized that fundamentals of expression ideas, synthesis with tacit aesthetic and logical explanation art forms into comprehension of dogmas. *Starry Night* is Van Gogh classic oeuvre.

Evert Van Uitert (1981), describe that Van Gogh has his own concept art of oeuvre. Though, remained incomplete in two respects: ideas which he carried around in his mind were never worked out on canvas and he was never able to organize a conservative exhibition for which he could make his own desire style or concept. The foreground and background in *Starry Nights* are expression and delirium factors that only Van Gogh could feel wisdom between human, universe and spiritual entity. Van Gogh's painting *Starry Night* is most significant in demonstrating the ability to use be influence astronomy in painting The swirl patterns atmosphere explains Van Gogh Other express the interaction of the two universal entities among van Gogh's painting. For instance, van Gogh paints the sky and the town in close proximity.

Van Gogh is a music and poem aficionado. It is believe Whitman's poem '*Song of Myself*' provides sufficient evidence for being an important influence for Van Gogh, although evidence exists that he had abundant influences or satire for painting *Starry Night*. Van Gogh inspired by Whitman doctrine of two universal domains that exist together. Example, the feminine concept and characteristic are define through the word "bare-bosom's" and "nourishing" flow on to the earth's masculine characteristics of "liquid trees" and "mountains. Van Gogh represents Whitman's "bare bosom's night" through the rounded hills being painted the colour of the vast blue sky hovering over the town. Objects such as the Cypress and the steeple may convey masculine objects, while the moon, stars, and blue sky convey feminine qualities. Van Gogh is a type of person that captures memory and observation and translates to visual abstract art. He transforms the ideas to visual context. An example of observation was the evident through Van Gogh's sketches and illustration into hospital of Saint-Paul-de-Mausole at Saint-Remy. The combination of both van Gogh's memory and observation would form the artistic level quality of *Starry Night*. *Starry Night* remains paradigm in acquisitive the awe-inspiring quality of the night sky or astronomy studies in context to the ephemeral and diminutive nature of man-kind in the world.

4. Conclusion

Vincent van Gogh's painting *Starry Night* involves the art of poetry, personal religious conflict, and astronomy. The aptitude for a painting to have numerous interpretations may indicate that the artist Van Gogh was a multifaceted or complex individual. Although uncertainty may exist about the exact connotation and origins of *Starry Night*, the commonality of the three perspectives and probably other interpretations lie in the relationship between the power of the human psyche and the power of natural existence. According to Vincent S. Stassi (2007), Van Gogh's complexity draws his multiple influences, from fellow artists, missionary work, memories, studies of poetry and astronomy, perspective of life, to create a depiction of reality that is greater and purer. The philosophies of art in *Starry Night* are regarded as mixed emotions, irony, memories, and variety of impression with emphasizes the immensity of space and time. Van Gogh perception to raise the concept of reality into dominant imagination

can be considered as factor among canonical art. *Starry Night* remains exceptional in avaricious inspiring visual quality of night sky atmosphere by communicating and diminutive nature of human existence in the world. Compared to Edvard Munch, *The Scream* painting is either another reflection of his interior vision. Munch defines art between emotion, death and loneliness refreshing his sorrow, yielding to turgid despair and less sympathetic figure.

Yet Munch never used line, form, or colour as decoration. Each had to be a symbol for the expression of his inner vision. Munch felt that life something scary to deal. The powerless individual is absorbed and car-ried along by the rhythm of natural forces. The *Scream* is a frieze was manifestly an expression of Munch's anxiety. He may conceal his fear, but the sky and landscape vibrate with his secret apprehension. The *Scream* was a successful conceptual art that inspired Munch to create a mirror that segregates him between inside and outside dogma of Expressionist world. Even though Munch was suffering from philosophical depression but his stroke, brushwork, expressionistic colours and motives may have been prophylactic. *The Scream* is a part in a series called *The Frieze of Life*, in which the artist has tried to look into the various dark themes of life, love, death, fear and melancholy but Van Gogh's *Starry Night* art are concepts involves haunting in spirit, conveys through its vibrant colours, emphatic brushwork, and contoured forms the anguish of a mentally ill genius.

Van Gogh inspired Post Impressionist style through psychological depth, emotion, and social significance using the iconographic power of symbols and colour in *Starry Night*. *Starry Night* is part of Post-Impressionism saw the final stripping away of traditional conventions of representations, perspective and use of colour and a movement towards a new simplification of structure and form favouring pure colours and gestures calculated to enhance emotional impact. In respect both artist and artwork are tied between emotion, expression, reality, and motives. It is also important to stress out that the paintings done for *Starry Night* and *The Scream* is an expression of inner feelings (emotions) and in the cases of Van Gogh, and Munch their mental states greatly affected what produces on the paper.

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