**Symbolism as a major aspect in Expressionism**

**Student name**

**Institutional Affiliation**

**Course name**

**Professor name**

**Date**

**Introduction**

First and for most one must ask oneself what is symbolism and what is expressionism so as to find out how they relate with each other. Symbolism is the use of symbols such as objects, characters, or events to represent something beyond their actual meaning. It's a way for writers, artists, and creators to convey deeper ideas, themes, or emotions without explicitly stating them. For example, a dove may be used to insinuate peace or hope, the color red when used may not just be used for coloring but may be used to imply emotions and feelings such as love, romance, or even be used to signify danger. Another instance of symbolism may be where the color black represents fear or death while a broken mirror may be used to signify lost hope or even missing identity. Expressionism on the other hand is an artistic and literary movement that focuses on representing emotional experience rather than actually reality. It emphasizes the subjective, internal world of the artist, often changing a bit of reality to express intense emotions, psychological states, or spiritual truths. The goal is to convey the artist's personal emotions and feeling to the world, rather than an objective depiction. It often reflects on the inner perspective of how the artist views the world. It can be chaotic, admirable, hateful, scornful or any emotion depending on the subconscious of the author and how he views the world. Expressionism became more prominent in the 20th century especially during World War 1 as artists wanted to express their conscious feelings about the world. Now we come to our main focus, how does symbolism and expressionism relate with each other? What do they have in common one might ask? The answer is quite simple actually. Symbolism plays a very vital role in expressionism since both of them share a focus on engaging and showing the inner emotional and psychological experience of the individual, rather than the real actual reality. However, while symbolism often involves small, layered meanings and may suggest an emotional or thematic depth through symbols, expressionism takes those ideas and pushes them to their extremes, changing and intensifying the world in order to more directly convey real, actual and unfiltered emotion. These feelings and emotions can be expressed through various means such as visual symbols, distorted forms and intense colors among other ways depending on the artists preferences. Expressionism differs from realism since it prioritizes the artists inner thoughts which symbolism caters for through use of imagery. Thus, it is clearly seen that symbolism and expressionism go hand in hand. Artists in the mid 20th century began incorporating their psychological states and conscious minds into their works thus their art became an embodiment of the emotions and feelings and conveyed their inner expressions and feelings. In doing so their art become more pronounced and even inspired other artists to incorporate the same into their arts leading to an improvement in the art sector in general as art then possessed deeper meaning. To expound more on this found truth I will be going into deeper explanation on Abstract expressionism and Surrealism which have been studied and relevant data and facts have been able to be compiled on such up to date.

**Abstract Expressionism**

This is an innovative art movement that emerged in the mid 20th century and continues to build the art world. Through examination of the works of prominent artists such as Jackson pollock and William de Kooning one was able to get insights into the psychological motivations and processes that influenced their art. Thus, we are able to get the definition of Abstract Expressionism as an art movement that emerged in the mid-20th century, predominantly in the United States, characterized by the use of abstract forms, gestural brushstrokes, and expressive color palettes to convey the artists' emotions and inner psychological states. Which basically in short implies to symbolism. Artists at this point in time started accorporating their psychological states into their art. The relationship between psychology and Abstract Expressionism is a multifaceted one, as the movement was deeply rooted in the exploration of the human psyche and the emotional aspects of the creative process. Take Jackson Pollock (1912-1956) who was a pioneering figure in the Abstract Expressionist movement and is best known for his innovative technique of action painting, which involved dripping, pouring, and splattering paint onto large canvases laid out on the floor. The chaotic, gestural brushstrokes and the raw, expressive quality of the painting can be seen as a reflection of Pollock's inner psychological state, as he grappled with his personal demons and sought to find meaning and solace through his art. Pollock's psychological difficulties can be traced back to his childhood. Jackson Pollock's personal life was marked by a series of psychological struggles, including alcoholism, depression, and anxiety, which had a significant impact on his artistic output and the development of his unique painting steamily environment, his father's alcoholism, and a strained relationship with his mother. Pollock's tumultuous emotional state and troubled relationships often served as the driving force behind his work, as he sought to channel his inner turmoil into a cathartic and transformative creative process. For example, let's take his art work the She-Wolf" (1943): Another work from Pollock's early career, "The She-Wolf" features an abstracted, primal figure surrounded by a dense, agitated network of lines and forms (Naifeh& Smith, 1991). The painting has been interpreted as an expression of Pollock's own psychological struggles and his feelings of isolation, anger, and vulnerability (Varnedoe & Karmel, 1998). The raw, visceral quality of the work serves as a testament to the profound impact of Pollock's personal experiences on his artistic practice. Another significant example is Willem de Kooning whose art work is known to be based from his memories and emotions. One of the most notable examples of the role of memory and emotion in de Kooning's paintings can be seen in his celebrated "Woman" series, which was inspired by the female form and his complex feelings towards women (Stevens & Swan, 2005). These works are characterized by their aggressive brushwork and distorted, almost grotesque figures, which have been interpreted as a reflection of de Kooning's ambivalent emotions and memories of his mother, who was a dominant figure in his life (Hess, 1959). Thus, one can be able to conclude that artists were able to use their art as symbols in order to express their own inner emotions.

**The Role of Symbolism in Conveying Emotion**

Symbolism plays a crucial role in the expressionist movement, serving as a vehicle for conveying profound emotions that transcend mere visual representation. Through the use of symbolic elements, artists can encapsulate complex feelings, inviting viewers to engage with the deeper layers of meaning embedded within a work. For instance, Vassily Kandinskys use of color and form often evokes specific emotional responses, illustrating how symbolism can transcend the physical realm and tap into the subconscious experiences of individuals. Furthermore, the discussion of metaphor in artistic intent highlights how emotive qualities are distilled into visual elements, allowing for a rich dialogue between the creator and the audience, as noted in (Murphy et al., 2007). As (Hagan et al., 2008) suggests, this layering of feelings often enables viewers to perceive the vital energies inherent in art, reinforcing its capacity to communicate emotion powerfully and effectively. Thus, symbolism emerges not merely as decorative but as essential to expressing the nuanced complexities of human experience.

**How symbols evoke deep emotional responses in Expressionist art**

In Expressionist art, symbols serve as conduits for profound emotional resonance, transcending mere visual representation to engage viewers on a visceral level. These symbols often embody the human conditions vulnerabilities and struggles, allowing artists to convey complex feelings that elude direct articulation. For instance, a vulnerable figure portrayed in an uncomfortable pose may encapsulate the fragility inherent in human experience, inviting the audience to confront the discomfort often shunned in daily life, as indicated in (Johns et al., 2009). Additionally, the tension between the body and the metaphysical often reveals societal constructs, particularly regarding gender and identity. The interplay of such symbols in Expressionist works not only prompts emotional reactions but also encourages critical reflection on broader cultural narratives, highlighting the intricate relationship between art, beauty, and truth, as observed in the evolving treatment of bodily image within the context of (Griffiths et al., 2000). Thus, symbolism emerges as a cornerstone of Expressionism, shaping its emotional depth.

**Symbolism as a Reflection of the Inner Self**

In expressionism, symbolism serves as a profound conduit for the exploration of the inner self, allowing artists to translate their psychological landscapes into tangible forms. The use of symbolic imagery enables a deeper connection between the observer and the artists emotional state, often manifesting the struggles and nuances of personal identity. For instance, one artist illustrates their experiences and heritage through a figurative body of work that reflects their physical and spiritual self, thus linking symbolism to their family history and memories (Parsons et al., 2011). Similarly, the effectiveness of expressionist drama highlights how symbols can convey complex spiritual and social realities, reflecting the internal dilemmas faced by individuals (Dahong et al., 2014). Through such symbolic representations, expressionism not only captures the artists psyche but also invites viewers to engage with the emotional depth and multiplicity of the human experience. As a result, symbolism emerges as a central feature that articulates the intricate dialogue between the artists inner world and external representation.

**The use of personal symbols to represent individual experiences and psychological states**

Artistic representation often serves as a profound medium for expressing individual psychological states, with personal symbols providing a unique lens through which the artists experiences can be interpreted. In Expressionism, these symbols function as a vehicle for the artist to portray their intricate emotional landscapes, revealing their struggles and triumphs in a fragmented world. For instance, the use of disparate elements in a composition can evoke feelings of anxiety and dislocation, as seen in the works influenced by contemporary cultural shifts (Ouzo nova et al., 2003). Furthermore, artists like Jean-Michel Basquiat illustrate how personal symbolism reflects not only individual experience but also socio-cultural dynamics, such as race and identity politics (N/A, 2017). This interplay between personal symbols and broader societal issues underscores the significance of symbolism within Expressionism, as it articulates the complexities of the human condition and the artists continuous quest for meaning amid chaos.

 **Conclusion**

In conclusion, symbolism serves as a pivotal aspect of Expressionism, intricately weaving emotional depth and meaning into artistic expression. This movement utilized symbolic elements to convey complex human experiences and inner turmoil, thus transcending mere representation. Through the use of vivid colors, distorted forms, and metaphorical imagery, Expressionist artists communicated profound societal and psychological concerns, inviting viewers to engage with their work on an emotional level. Additionally, the relationship between art and investment reflects the evolving perceptions of artistic value, as seen in studies examining art market dynamics where expressionism has gained financial esteem alongside symbolism (Houte et al.). While art investments may generally underperform traditional equity markets, the emotional and cultural significance of these artworks often supersedes monetary evaluations, echoing the intrinsic value that art offers beyond fiscal considerations (Renneboog et al.). Ultimately, symbolism in Expressionism not only enriches the aesthetic experience but also underscores the importance of interpretation in understanding human emotions and societal narratives.

**References**

1. Brodskaïa, N. (2023). *Symbolism*. Parkstone International.
2. Roberts, D. L. (2023). The Psychology of American Abstract Expressionism. *International Journal*, *11*(1), 9-22.
3. Roberts, D.L., 2023. The Psychology of American Abstract Expressionism. *International Journal*, *11*(1), pp.9-22.