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The Importance of Fine Art to Sustain the Cultural Heritage in Oman

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ABSTRACT

Cultural heritage can be substantially important for the country as well as a community. The cultural distinctions and variations for different countries create different forms of art specific to the country. The current study has attempted to analyse the relevance of fine arts for sustaining cultural heritage in Oman. The current study has found out that fine arts in Oman have been substantially impacted by the cultural traditions and customs in the country. Artworks and different types of handicrafts in Oman are based on local traditions and customs. Therefore, fine arts in Oman represent the culture of the country. Due to lack of effective training the artist cannot able to recreate the old fine art, whereas the art that are provided are of high price. Due to installation of technology, the Oman fine art is depreciating back. The problem statement of the study is to focus on the importance of fine art to sustain the cultural heritage in Oman It has also focused on the art of the artists in a proper manner. In addition, the study found out that there are other forms of fine arts such as historical buildings, handicrafts, ceramics that also represent the culture of the country. The study has also found out different challenges faced by the craftsmen in the country while preparing handicrafts.

Key Words: Oman, Fine Art, Sustain, Culture Heritage.

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1. Introduction

Culture and traditions are significantly important for the country of Oman. The country has an ancient history of cultural heritage. The rich heritage of Oman suggests that Omanis have a strong bond with their community as well as the country. The vivid culture in the country has a significant impact on the different forms of fine arts in the country. Every art form in the country has a distinct Omani identity. The Middle East countries are using the globalisation to highlights the artistic culture of the country. Therefore, to sustain cultural heritage of Oman, it can be stated that maintain its fine arts

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properly is very essential. In addition, Oman must also focus on the aspect of securing the rights of artists in order to sustain the cultural heritage of the country.

1.1 Aims

The current study was aimed at evaluating the importance of fine art in Oman in order to maintain the cultural heritage in the country. Oman has a significantly different cultural heritage and in order to sustain that, the country should preserve its fine arts properly. The current study has discussed the background of the fine arts industry in Oman. In addition, it has also attempted to discuss the history of fine arts in Oman. Furthermore, the study has also attempted to point out the challenges that are faced by handicrafts in order to sustain their design.

1.2 Background

Oman has always experienced a rich cultural heritage due to the influence of different countries on the culture. Oman artists in the country emphasize on their cultural heritage, wildlife and landscape in their artworks. Import of fine arts along with lack of effective training often leads to loss of cultural framework in Oman. At the beginning of the fine art movement in Oman, artists in the country have attempted to incorporate their distinct symbols in their work in order to retain the cultural heritage of Oman. In this report an overview will be provided about different factors that leads to declination of the artistic framework in Oman. The artists in the country were aware of the rich cultural heritage of the country (Mansour, Al-Awhadi & Al-Hatrushi, 2019). In addition, the distinct characteristics of the fine arts in the country also suggest that their works of art can be considered as the spontaneous outcome of their knowledge about their natural and cultural ambience. Artists in Oman depended on wildlife, landscape as well as the ordinary lives of the citizens to create their arts (Al-Yahyai, 2017). Arts in abstract form were quite rare, most of the artworks depended on reality. Oman artist believe that the cultural heritage of the country lies in fine art and for this reason the government of Oman has been supportive of preserving arts in the country. Ghouse, McElwee & Durrah (2019) also suggested that women in Oman have more contribution to the field of handicrafts than men.

In 1993, the Omani Government established the Omani Society for Fine Arts in order to make an official art hub for the country. Hawkes et al., (2019) suggested that the main aim of the organization is to sponsor the fine arts movement in Oman and also making people aware of the fine arts in Omani society. However, the effect of Globalization has also influenced art forms in Oman. Globalization impacted the fine arts in the country by introducing new forms of art from different countries in the industry (Hegazy, 2015). However, Omani Artists seem to have a strong dependence on their own culture rather than incorporating the cultures of other countries. Contemporary artists in Oman, as well as Middle East, have become more inclined towards cultural identity of their own. Aesthetics and artistic values of the Omani artists are still seen to be incorporated in their artworks.

2. Method of this study

The current study has attempted to analyse the importance of fine arts in preserving the cultural heritage in Oman. In order to carry out the study, secondary data has been used. Secondary data can be referred to as the data collected by other people for specific purposes. Secondary data collection help in finding the issues lies within the research topic (Han et al. 2019). The recent study has used secondary data in order to have a better understanding of the impact of cultural heritage on fine arts in Oman.

3. Oman and fine art

Oman can be regarded as a country with a distinct culture among the countries of the Middle East. The country has a rich history of tradition and cultures which has significantly impacted art forms in the country. Art forms in Oman, from the beginning, have been contributed by the symbols and characteristic specialised to the culture of Oman. Artists in the country are aware of the fact that they have distinct characteristics attached to their culture. Omani artists living overseas also influenced the art forms in Oman with features of the respective countries. Artists in the country largely emphasize on their cultural heritage, wildlife and landscape in their artworks. Before the 1970s, the country did not experience any movement related to art. At that time, artworks were largely independent ventures.

However, three eminent artists of the country namely Anwar Sonya, Maryam Abdul karim Al Zadjali and Rabha Mahmood started establishing a movement to rejuvenate the scenario of art forms in Oman.

After the movement, the country experienced an improvement in fine arts with artistic revolution, new shapes, ideas and colours. The Omani Society for Fine Arts was also established in 1993 by the Government of Oman. The institution has attempted to improve the state of fine arts in the country since its inception. In this current era, it was found out that the number of fine art gallery located in the country is minimal. Therefore, the Omani people have to depend on social media for gathering knowledge about arts. In this generation, Oman still has prominent artists such as Issa Al Mufarji and Budoor Ali Riyami. In addition, people are still in search of creative ways in which installing art and bringing it to the people becomes easier.

4. Challenge faced by handicrafts to sustain their design

Oman is a country which is rich in cultural heritage and this reflects in their wide range of handicrafts. Traditional crafts in the country are in different forms such as copper, metal goldsmithery, embroidery, pottery making and weaving. Despite the support provide by the Government of Oman in improving the handicraft skills. Due to lack of effective learning process, skills for making handicrafts were handed down from one generation to another. In Oman, craftsmanship has been appreciated and well preserved. However, in the current era, the handicrafts designers in the country are encountering a few challenges, such as,

4.1 Imported handicrafts

In Oman, there are a significant number of artists that are related to preparing traditional handicrafts. However, in the present era of Globalization, traditional handicrafts industries are being unable to cope up with the imported handicrafts. Almamari (2017) suggested that in the pottery industry of Oman, there is a negative impact of the pottery items imported from other countries. Almamari (2015) also suggested that women have more participation in the field of handicrafts. Therefore, women in this field also suggest that imported handicrafts are contributing to the decreased demand for traditional handicrafts.

4.2 High price

The cost of preparing a handmade product is significantly higher than the machine-made products. Almamari (2016) suggested that glazes in Oman are substantially costly which makes the students of Ceramic art depend on imported materials rather than local glazes. Oman can experience great advantage in preparing matt glazes for as its demand is high enough among the students of Ceramics in Oman. However, owing to the high costs, handcraft artists in the country are not being utilised.

4.3 Technological integration

People related to crafts suggest that technology cannot play a superior role in making crafts. They suggest that the source of creativity for art can only be derived from human beings and not from machines. Al Shihi, Al-Musawi & Al Mamari (2018) suggested that the implementation of Information and Communication Technology or ICT has become important for developing a knowledge-based economy in the case of developing countries. The technological models of CAM and CAD are being used in the case of designing handicrafts. Machines with these technologies designed more handicrafts in less amount of time. Therefore, traditional craftsmen in Oman do not encourage technological integration in their field. Owing to the fact that, with machine-made handicrafts, the cultural heritage of the country cannot be maintained; craftsmen in the country are discouraging the use of technology in handicrafts.

5. Design of Oman handicrafts

Pots, decorative chests, silver bracelets, khanjars were some antique designed crafts from Omani artists who were exceptionally talented with their art forms in carrying their cultural heritage within it. The khanjar in Oman used to be curved along with its beautiful macroscopic designs embraced in its body. It used to hold a lot of significance in the past in Oman as Omani people used to protect themselves from wild animals and enemies with that ancient weapon of them. Almuhrzi, Hughes &

Ballantyne (2019) suggested that heritage in a country attempts to represent the customs, cultural events and people. Therefore, it is significantly important for a country to preserve its heritage. In the present days also, Omani men wear the khanjars on special occasions as it carries their cultural heritage. The doors of the buildings in Oman also used to carry a lot of art signs. Especially the front part used to be engraved in the floral form of a rose as it was the favourite flower of most of them.

Presently there are very few Omani carpenters who curve the wood, so most of the designed doors are now it is made by Indian carpenters in Oman. A chest called Mandoos is also a wonderful sign of handcraft art in Oman, which most of them says is an art learnt from Portuguese artists in the 16th century. These chests can be of any size and used to be made with walnut or rosewood. There are a lot of designs in Islamic or in geometric signs on the body of these Mandoos, embracing with brass, silver, gold or sometimes with few lovely stones. Women in Oman used to make some lovely clay pots, called majors and used to paint them with various fine arts on its body. Causevic & Neal (2019) also suggested that high level of cultural richness in Oman has also positively impacted the tourism industry and this has in turn impacted fine arts in the country.

6. Fine art in Oman

Oman's government is always with there for helping the artists for bringing more growth in the fine arts of Oman. As a result, the government found the "Omani Society for Fine Arts (OSFA)" in the year of 1993 for the development of a culture of the nation. The man behind this novel thought was Sultan Qaboos (Sultan of Oman) along with his another huge foundation for the culture and science, the Diwan Royal Court. The main job of OSFA was to give some assistance to the originators and take their arts at the multinational level. Al-Ajmi (2016) also suggested that the organization organises different events for promoting fine arts in every part of the country. In addition, there were facilities of training, workshops, courses, expert's seminars for the improvement and the advancement of Omani artists. For taking into consideration so many things, the main motive of the government was to enlighten their artists with lots of knowledge of art.

The OSFA arranges many events of art where participants from different corners of Oman come to participate in those events and try to portray the best shot art. The organisation encourages the winner of these events with various heart-warming prizes. This organisation arrange many joint art exhibitions to support the artists to reach to a numerous amount of people with their art thoughts (Ribechini et al., 2016). The organisation facilitates its members with some lovely art activities such as, attending International conferences, attending international art workshops, attending international art competition and many more. By encouraging the emerging artists in such a way the organisation is making some benchmarks for the future generation and an emphasized way for the upcoming generation to explore Oman's cultural heritage to the world.

7. Fine art and handcrafts designs to sustainable this design

Most of the Omani artists whether they work on the materialistic art or if they work in various modes with the fine arts, it does not vary with any of them in carrying the cultural heritage of Oman in their work. Oman's environment and its play encourage the Omani artists to portray the cultural beauty of Oman in their work. The designers depict Oman's somatic heritage in the art form of bodily creations, paleographical areas and in the earliest cities. The depiction used to be so gorgeous and informative as it included each and every minor culture, starting from people's activity, a physical heritage of the country, women dresses and jewellery, instrument application of Omani people and many more, could easily taste the cultural patrimony of Oman while observing his arts. Saleem, Al Kindi & Ai-Rahbi (2017) suggested that the rich cultural heritage in the country also influenced the artists to incorporate distinctive features in their artworks. Anwar Sonia, one of the most renowned artists in Oman used to portray Oman's daily life with his realistic vision and in the form of various types of art skills.

Including all the specific details he used to mature his art with the cultural heritage of Oman, such as depicting the Omani traditional dance and the dresses women wear while dancing. Rabha Mahamood was also a renowned artist of Oman for her distinctive art form of her country's heritage. There were few artists with the art form of country's literature and creative heritage, who got rarely

some benefits from those things such as thoughts, faiths, manners, folklore and many more. She was famous for her paintings of women cultures, women wardrobes, pictures of the significance of each family member in Oman.

8. Outcome

The discussion about the history of fine arts in Oman suggests that the country offers a wide range of products according to their distinct cultural heritage. The country possesses a substantially different kind of culture and the application of this culture is seen in the various artworks in the country (Baporikar, 2016). In Oman, most of the artists are dependent on the regional landscape, culture and wildlife to incorporate in their artworks. In addition, some of the artists residing overseas also incorporate art forms and cultures from different parts of the world. However, Omani fine arts are largely influenced by prominent cultural practices in the country. Arts can contribute to the development of human beings in every community of the world. In order to sustain the cultural heritage of the country, it is required that all the citizens of the preserve and value their heritage in the first place.

In addition, the Government of the country should also have a major role in preserving cultural heritage through its art forms. Hegazy (2015) suggested that historical buildings can be considered as a significant example of fine arts and in developing countries; there have been attempts of preserving them. Preserving historical buildings and monuments can have a significant impact on preserving the cultural heritage and Omani French museum can serve as an example of that. In addition, Henderson (2015) also suggested that preserving cultural heritage can improve the potentiality of a country for a centre for tourism. Therefore, it is significant to maintain the fine arts in order to sustain cultural heritage. Alrawaibah (2016) also pointed out that in order to preserve the traditions and customs in the country, it is imperative to preserve different art forms and not only fine arts.

9. Conclusion

It can be concluded from the current study that it is significantly important for Oman to preserve their handicrafts in order to sustain cultural heritage in the country. The study suggested that Oman has a significantly rich cultural heritage and their culture is reflected in their various forms of arts. Therefore, it is significantly important to preserve and develop fine arts in the country to sustain the traditions and cultural heritage of the country. Fine arts help in developing the cultural heritage the main issue lies in lack of skilled labours whereas the price of the fines is high. Despite, this it has been found out that in this modern day the handicrafts are created with help of technological innovation. The technological models or policies related to CAM and CAD are being used in the case for designing handicrafts through which the core value of the art can be determined.

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