

[DOI: 10.20472/IAC.2015.015.018](https://doi.org/10.20472/IAC.2015.015.018)

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ART FOR NEW CONSCIOUSNESS, ART FOR A NEW HUMANITY: AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION OF AESTHETICAL AFFECT OF KAMRAN KHAVARANI'S PAINTINGS

Abstract:

Our research is motivated by Boime [2005], a seminal research by the foremost art historian of our time for writing *The Birth of Abstract Romanticism, Art for a New Humanity*, exclusively dedicated to Khavarani's paintings. Boime suggested that Khavarani's painting has artistic characteristics that impart positive affects on individual's mental state. We empirically investigate his proposition. Our data is comprised of 400 subjective surveys, carefully gathered in an art outreach in LA, in 2013. The questionnaire included both pictorial and open-ended questions. All participants visited Khavarani's gallery, exclusively housing his paintings, and two random galleries of their choice, on the same day. The dependent variable measures the change in the viewer's mood, comparing the mood after and before viewing objects in each gallery. The measure of mood is a six-point Likert scale, recording respondent's affective ratings (degrees of sadness and joy) of each gallery. Our basic statistics illustrate a striking contrast between the affects of the two randomly selected galleries' content and Khavarani's. Viewers reported a neutral affect or degrees of negative affect for the other galleries. In contrast, 70%-92% of Khavarani's cases reported maximum "joy." Open-ended comments show many additional affects of his paintings. Our non-parametric models, include the Friedman [both general and pairwise post-hoc], and Mann-Whitney and the Kruskal-Wallis tests. In all iterations of the non-parametric tests, the Chi-squares statistics strongly reject the null hypotheses, at 95-100% levels. Therefore, we confirm the hypothesis that Khavarani's paintings have positive affective properties. We illustrate with a variety of basic statistics and formal tests a striking contrast between the affects of the two randomly selected galleries' content and Khavarani's. Our tests are robust to all specifications. The size of our data enables us to treat it as parametric. Our histograms confirm that. For added rigor, we use a parametric model (GLS) for our estimations. Our results in all cases are highly stable to all our specifications. We conclude with confidence that viewers of Khavarani's painting experienced a high degree of "joy," in contrast to other cases. In this research we have considered related multidisciplinary literatures. Our study fills a threefold gap in those areas. Our research is also a vanguard empirical study of paintings to be housed in Khavarani's museum in Beijing, China, late in 2015.

Keywords:

Empirical Study of Aesthetics; Survey Method and Design, Nonparametric Modeling, Abstract Romanticism, Aesthetic Affects of Khavarani's Painting

JEL Classification: C14, C83, Z11