

## A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF BIOMORPHISM AND GROTESQUE IN ART

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### ABSTRACT

*Grotesque and Biomorphism have had an unbreakable bond with art since time immemorial. The current study was an effort to comparatively study Biomorphism and Grotesque in art. In this paper, a combination of Grotesque and figures of living creatures, animal and vegetable elements, and tissues has been studied. Grotesque and biomorphism in their evolved form have been used in the arts of painting, architecture, sculpture, etc. The combination of these two methods in the creation of artistic works have crystallized human internal feelings and have established a deep relationship with the viewer of the work. This paper has investigated the process of manipulation of the icons of an interesting and shocking painting in contemporary art aiming at altering the mutual disagreement with something as a sign of pleasure and hatred.*

**Keywords:** Biomorphism .grotesque.visual art. Comparative study.organic forms, surrealism. erotic.

### INTRODUCTION

In this study, firstly the concepts of Biomorphism and Grotesque have been investigated. These two methods crystallize human internal feelings. Moreover, the features of the works of such artists as Max Ernest, Francis Bacon, and Jason Briguees have been assessed and finally these two methods have been compared with each other.

The comparative study of Biomorphism and Grotesque seems to be naïve without an exact evaluation of the concepts applied in these two methods. Since time immemorial, art has been always associated with nature, life and human beliefs. We are also witnessing the extensive use of natural and ideological elements in a simultaneous way in many artists' works. Grotesque provides evidence of human potential to create new things.

Now, these questions are raised that how are Grotesque and Biomorphism defined?

Where is their origin in visual arts?

How can Biomorphism and Grotesque influence the appearance of artworks?

This study was conducted in an analytic-descriptive way.

### ***Biomorphism***

"Biomorphic is a Greek term composed of "Bio" in the sense of "living" and "morphe" which means "form". (Biomorphism –Wikipedia; Biomorphic Abstraction: Organic Shapes in Sculpture, Painting, [www.visual-arts-cork.com](http://www.visual-arts-cork.com/history-of-art/biomorphic-abstraction) › history-of-art › biomorphic-abstraction)



**Figure 1: Lindsay Feuer Ceramic Gallery**

<http://www.lindsayfeuer.com/cgi-bin/gallery.pl>

“Those statues that lie in a domain between reality and fantasia reflect the organic process of development, reproduction, and movement.”



**Figure 2: Surrealism and Visionary art: Charles Birnbaum**

<http://www.charlesbirnbaum.com/>

These works often seem to be of autonomous identity. There is no doubt that they are abstract, but they represent body members and weird creatures". (<https://www.elizabethshriverceramics.com/2016/10/09/what-is-biomorphism>)



**Figure 3: Elizabeth Shirirer Ceramics**

<https://alice-ballard.squarespace.com/pods/>

“Biomorphism has emerged in the sculpture of 1930s following the efforts of such sculptors as Jean Arp, Brancusi, and Henri More for reaching particular notions of nature and in the form of an extensive attraction towards natural organs and appearances and concepts of nature.”Biomorphic .newdesign.ir.

Biomorphic signs are seen in many of the paintings and statues in the history of human beings. Even early human beings have used biomorphism for building statues and drawing paintings. Even in architecture, some elements of nature have been used. In this sense, a relationship between living organisms is seen in art in all ages. Imitation of nature is called biomimetic. Drawing is done based on the diversity and flexible concept in order to form environmental consistency. “(Biomorphism - The Art Story, <https://www.theartstory.org> > movement > biomorphism; <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/b/biomorphic>; <https://www.elizabethshriverceramics.com/2016/10/09/what-is-biomorphism>)

The artists with their specific sense of enthusiasm have always sought to create newer methods. “The philo-morphists believed that various natural forms are similar and repeated. They indeed believed in philosophical pantheism. Some of them contended that natural forms are related to the world where they exist. “(Pantheism – Wikipedia, <https://en.wikipedia.org> > wiki > Pantheism)

Biomorphism, as a method, takes advantage of nature, organic forms, and even the unicellular forms. The principles of the works of art that have taken advantage of this method are inspired by nature, plant and animal forms, and tissues.

Biomorphic, is the process of abstraction with such methods as summarization and stylization of natural forms to reach pure. To this end, the artist or designer strives to achieve an effective form by preserving the overall spirit and eliminating details.

The Latin word, *forma*, has been replaced from the beginning with two Greek words, *morphe* and *eidos*. The former refers to a visible form, while the latter represents the mental and



conceptual forms. This twofold heritage has been extensively influential in various meanings of the form.

The form is created with the combination of visual elements and visualization of mental elements like point, line, plane, and mass. The evaluation of the form structure depends on the assessment of communicational elements, the direction of situation, space, and attraction.

The organization given to the external situations by mind has a form as its essence. Elong Then, one can say that form is one of the features of the human mind. The artists can create their own works by adopting an aesthetic approach. Moreover, they can take advantage of social and cultural values as well as pictorial relations for creating works. In some cases, the artist is forced to use certain cultural elements or traditions bing to the people of the world.

#### **Grotesque Art:**

" Grotesque art is a style in the fantasy genre that deconstructs and distorts the ordinary forms of humans, animals, and objects. Grotesque is constituted of weird, ridiculous, exaggerated, unreal, and ugly forms. Grotesque is the revenge that the artist takes from the thing that has deeply annoyed him. This has originated from the human primordial thirst for the impossible, but after a while, it has changed into a complicated for.

Grotesque paintings and statues are horrible forms. Grotesque art is an art in which one can find nihilism and monstrous inconsistency. Grotesque art reveals excessive sexual lusts and paradoxical feelings. Even in some cases, it uncovers destruction, wars, and their effects and tragedies. Grotesque pictures present the reality in distorted forms and picture a broken and complicated world for us. Grotesque artistic pictures consist of an inconsistent and ridiculous combination of pictures. These Grotesque features in the art can be annoying, weird, and disgusting. Grotesque experience reveals a moment in which the mind becomes suspended between insanity, intuition, silence, and revelation. (Grotesque in Art, James Adams and Wilson Yets; <http://www.heidjeub.com/s/vocabulary.pdf>; Grotesque Art –Wikipedia)

Nevertheless, we experience them right at the moment when we come across these weird pictures. Of course, we have to allow this constructed world to let us share it. We enter a strange and at the same time artistic world. Humans are self-transcending creatures who create work of arts in this freedom of thought out of supremacy and “power. Grotesque in its contemporary sense refers to the reconciliation of two paradoxical intellectual streams, which reflect one or several modes. (Pakbaz, 1999)

#### **Comparative Study of Biomorphism and Grotesque:**

Imaginal forms of biomorphism in some works of art are found as a Grotesque, which in fact is a combination of biomorphism and Grotesque. These works are capable of being universal and indeed can give an international and global aspect to the work of art.

“Beauty is not a personal and private phenomenon; rather it is the outcome of dynamic and evolving processes of the order, structure, and harmonic qualities. Grotesque and Biomorphism have had unbreakable relationship with art. The combination of these two methods can reveal human inner feelings and deepen the viewer's relationship with the work of art. (The Biomorphic Grotesque in Modernist and Contemporary painting by Audrey Howell; The Biomorphic Grotesque in Modernist and Contemporary Painting Semantic Scholar)

Grotesque paintings and statues and their design and combination with biomorphic forms in most cases can enhance pleasure in human beings through sensory perceptions.

Historical backgrounds by weird beautiful paintings of Max Ernest:



Max Ernest in his artistic works has consciously taken advantage of biomorphism and has created some works in which one can find different degrees of Grotesque.

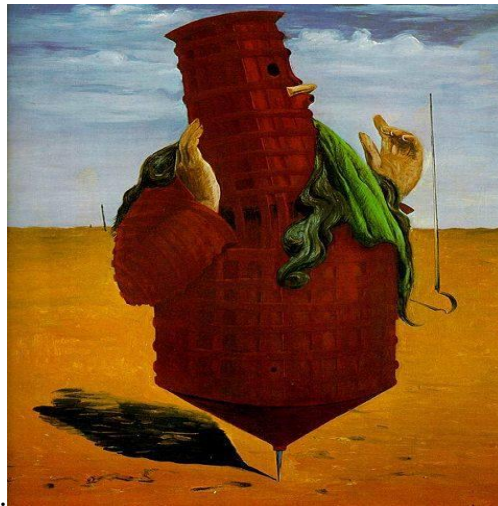


Figure 4: Ubu Emperor, 1923\_by Max Ernest

Biomorphic forms are those forms in contemporary art that have emerged imitating the cellular structure of human body and organic forms.

Francis Bacon contended that his works have been created out of the destruction of the normal forms of the human body in general and human face in particular.



Figure 5: Three Studies for Selfportrait (1976) painted by Francis Bacon



Bacon has been described as the painter of modern man after WWII.

Among the most renowned paintings of Francis Bacon, one can refer to the "Three Studies of the Bodies around the Cross circa 1944" as the highest climax of the artist's professional activity. The bodies of Bacon's paintings like the literary characters of Existentialism are in most cases lonely and metamorphosed. In this era, Bacon often used cinema and photography, particularly the photos from journals, faces, and bodies as the early sources of inspiration for his own paintings. He drew the body members and faces in an appalling and violent manner.

"Monstrous Chinese objects by Jamson Brigues are surrealistic and dependent on carnal love. The art of Jamson Brigues is an expression of the powerful sexual levels with fetish points. Despite their abstract nature, they are associated with implicit life-related forms as well as weird pornographic sense of surrealism. (<https://www.designboom.com/art/jason-briggs-grotesque-porcelain-objects-07-08-2016/>)



**Figure 6: Jason briggs' grotesque porcelain objects are surrealistically erotic**

<https://www.designboom.com/art/jason-briggs-grotesque-porcelain-objects-07-08-2016/>

Biomorphic forms are some forms that have emerged in contemporary art imitating the cellular structure of the body and organic forms.

In Grotesque art and Biomorphism, the artist must take his own sense of pleasure, joy, sorrow, and even fear in his works in a simultaneous way into consideration. In some works of art, the brilliance of the work can be seen in the combination of these two methods insofar as the work of art simultaneously has particular visual pleasure and eroticism as well as sense of fear and the biomorphic elements. The combination of these two methods is visible in surrealist, cubist, and expressionist paintings and abstract works.

## CONCLUSION

The issues studied in this paper included simultaneous association of paradoxical and weird feelings. The relationship between the artworks and Grotesque and Biomorphic features would lead the viewer towards the simultaneous comprehension of pleasure and thinking. The combination of these two methods can herald a type of freedom in the eyes of the viewer.

These two features can be reflected in surrealist and abstract paintings. The combination of these two methods has been influential in the formation of artworks in history.

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