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The Relationship Between Music and Visual Arts: Synesthetic Experiences

Sagal Nasra Khadija

Faculty of Business and Management Kampala International University Uganda

ABSTRACT

Synesthesia, a phenomenon where stimuli in one sensory modality involuntarily trigger experiences in another, presents a fascinating intersection of sensory perception. This paper explores the historical, theoretical, and artistic dimensions of synesthetic experiences, focusing particularly on the relationship between music and visual arts. It examines how synesthesia has influenced artistic creation and perception throughout history, analyzing various case studies of artists whose works exemplify this cross-modal experience. The paper also delves into contemporary trends and future directions in synesthetic art, highlighting the potential of digital technologies to expand our understanding and experience of this unique phenomenon.

Keywords: Synesthesia, Music, Visual Arts, Cross-Modal Perception, Multisensory Experience.

INTRODUCTION

Synesthesia is defined in two ways, as sensory phenomena in which stimuli that originate outside the nervous system are perceived in forms that differ from their normal appearances, and generally as a cross-case of the senses. In the former case, synesthetic phenomena also appear as clinically defined symptoms, such as in migraine, epilepsy, and dementia. Also known as synesthetic artists, and especially as synesthesia per se, for example, there are cases in which specific stimuli are perceived as different smells. Synesthesia as a whole can cover various types of epidemiological aspects ranging from 0.05% to 14.0% in Western countries. Synesthetic phenomena often appear as multisensory phenomena that interconnect vision, hearing, smell, or taste. This article aims to study the historical, theoretical, and artistic fields of the clairvoyant relationship, which connects music and visual arts as synesthetic phenomena and synesthetic processes [1].

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES ON SYNESTHESIA

Synesthesia has a broad and enigmatic history that stretches back thousands of years. Throughout this time, the phenomenon was molded into a host of often unpredictable perceptual keys and purposes, in everything from the right to rule an empire to the legitimacy of a new style in Western music. Ancient views were strengthened by suffusive waves of doggedly scientific thinking, and the notion of seeing sounds or tasting shapes occasionally washed up on the gritty frontlines of 20th-century humanism and modernism [2]. The histories of music and visual art are enmeshed with historical surveyors of synesthesia, as this condition has provided a platform for temporary skids or sustained explorations of the perspectives of both disciplines. In the sphere of musical aesthetics, particularly the Augustinian view of music as a step towards the divine, an experience of music was understood to be as unique and personal as conversion. The synesthetic perspective offers an analysis of spatial and topological relations that vary widely. Thus, listening to music involves a shift from the most familiar to an unknown space, one that is not acknowledged as a space by either the synesthete or the listener. The modernist avant-garde in music addressed the "shift to an unknown space" in many performative ways, many of which are referred to as "anti-theatrical", aiming to shift attention to the pure sound rather than its visually impressive spectacle [3].

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS IN UNDERSTANDING SYNESTHETIC EXPERIENCES

Synesthetic experiences that bind sensory phenomena – particularly those that are bound spatially and temporally – have become particularly interesting for cognitive science, given that direct interactions between the senses are thought to be relatively rare. While many theories that sought to explain the more general psychological, neurological, and cultural principles of synesthetic experiences have been proposed, the theories that tackle the kinds of synesthetic experiences covered in this paper – those between music and the visual arts – comprise a set of their own [4]. The theories of synesthesia that have accumulated to date come from a range of sources and disciplines. Contemporary psychological theory embraces several paradigms for integrating the discovery of synesthetic mechanisms with the functional neuroanatomy available from non-invasive imaging of cerebral activity. One of the most enduring models of the functional organization of synesthesia is the cross-activation model that has its underpinnings in two principal theories that originated during the 19th Century. We discuss several synesthetic models and how contemporary scientific research into synesthetic experiences has selected from each type of theory. There are also several artistic theories on the one hand that compare synesthetic experiences with artistic creativity more generally, or simply conflate music with spatial constructions. We discuss several models and theories below [5].

METHODS OF STUDYING MUSIC-VISUAL ARTS SYNESTHESIA

Synesthesia has become a subject of interest for many scholars in different areas. When it comes to discussing synesthesia and methods of studying it, it often happens that scholars do not discuss or scrutinize their methods at all. Those who choose not to engage in discussions of their method might see themselves as pursuing a scientific approach, which is expected to be free from any sort of methodology. However, this intention might not be fulfilled, at least with regard to art studies. Artistic inquiry or artistic research, then, might seem to be the only branch of research which does not require a discussion of methods, as the artistic work itself should suffice as the final proof of one's theoretical assumptions [6]. Many different methods could be used to capture and understand the synesthetic experience. Basic scientific methods might include the work of a historian, mainly in the area of art appraisal, of art analogical methods or oneiric or evolutionary sources of synesthetic inspiration, to which should be added almost uncontrolled accounts by artists, enthusiasts or dumpers whose knowledge in the studied field, especially the visual arts, is often only peripheral. Some authors offer a typology suitable for particular scientific research requirements. Such a concept can be applied to other information given in the Table 14.2, where diffuse imaging is omitted. All synesthetic inspirations led to a response realized in a physical medium. The authors' research and nature of the synesthesia to be elicited, and strictly in a particular experimental situation, seem to indicate the nature of the methods used nowadays as unsuitable for exploratory activities, in which research in the field of cultural understanding [7].

CASE STUDIES AND EXAMPLES OF SYNESTHETIC ARTWORKS

- 1) Paul Klee, *Ad Parnassum* (1932). To the left of Paul Klee is a sentence that reads "The painter adapts to the contents of a given scene." To the right, it reads "To the contents of painting, however, the viewer must submit."
- 2) Viktor Lowenfeld, book cover of *Exploring the Hidden Art of the Artists* (1932). Viktor Lowenfeld worked as an art teacher in the 20th century in the United States of America. He was also a prolific writer and wrote books on art education and psychology [8].
- 3) Amy De'ath wrote *The Relationship between Music and Visual Arts* during the spring of 1946, a period when music and the visual arts were said to be forming a very good marriage. De'ath was, however, not content with the non-correspondence of this period and was soon anxious for it to end, contrasting the concrete practice presented in different early exhibitions and publications on this theme. She wanted artists to present a systemic assay of the state of Rayonism and establish once and for all "the nature of the relation of sound to colour, score to picture, word to thought." Even though this was not what actually happened, there are some examples of synesthetic artworks that will be studied in this chapter. Case studies of the relationship between music and the visual arts presented here will hopefully provide some answer to a few of the questions and topics outlined in Chapter 2. How can synesthesia be presented and proven? What is the solution of the "nature of relationship"? Can science finally decide? What role do authors, artists and musicians play in these matters anyway? This chapter will describe two such case studies and a further detour into visual music. Any kind of synesthesia that can be established is deeply personal and, occasionally, poetical. The various synesthetic examples presented will not only confirm this spiritual stance, but also express opinions quite contrary to those formed in this chapter so far. They also declared that these opinions were formed by earlier, "outmoded" criticism, courtesy of Mr.

(Stuart) Gilbert, a writer and musicologist, as "painting critic par excellence," and contemporary of Amy De'ath.

CONTEMPORARY TRENDS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Synesthetic experiences have always fascinated people. Meta-historical research now provides us with interesting results regarding individual pairs of sensations, while the connection between music and visual arts has yet to be thoroughly taken into consideration. At present, there are no sensational media hypes about new international congresses or a relatively large phenomenon common in the golden age of piano research, for example. This paper attempts to answer a question about the new trends in combining modern art made through the development of technological revolution, starting from the first experiments rather than avant-garde art. This is currently known as "synesthesia"—almost as a deliberate refusal of contemporary idiomatic linguistic suffixes—where not only can one do anything one pleases, but after a certain period of time anything exists in itself, without attention. Besides the rapidly growing interest in the area of the history of synesthesia in the West, future prospects are focused more and more on the potentials of digitalization. Computational models of synesthetic relationships have already been proposed, and a number of people deal or want to deal with synesthesia pursuing an all-front research aim to develop an empirical theory of the phenomenal character of sensory experience. Let us say that in the early 21st century synesthesia has certainly emerged in the public and academic arenas. In line with synesthetic art, other research areas try to consider synesthetic feelings in conjunction with the inner meanings of sound and visual art and their creative and expressive production. It is clear that today's scientific picture of art is invariably linked with painting—perhaps with the potentiality of color in combination with words—and a brusque "Non si fa più musica! (This is no longer art, in the sense of a thing)... or Amusement of the day the home delightful, art more or less far away etc." complements the blasé statement by those who know the field of classical music but are particularly attracted by its visual implications. Artistic respectability is handed down from the elites, as it always was, like historic writing, by means of relatively more communicative and rehearsed concerts, and more individual philological examinations. After this, free-for-all mass communication of concert schedules and micro-critique takes over and naive simplicity is, as it were, democratized. The thesis of a somatosensory appropriation of art and of the current anthropology of the multi/inter-sensorial collectivism was felt clearly, surprisingly and not surprisingly, by those who approached music and visual art for personal reasons. In this sense, we would like to stress the remarkable case of Art Brut. It is art of the undeserving peoples, the non-artists, the mentally ill, the psychotics, the trained and the idiots; behind it stands a man who is indifferent to study, fame, mass participation and exclusive quality [9, 10, 11]. Therefore, although it is difficult to predict various trends relative to present and future societies, as an aggregation of the phenomena and general aspirations of an entire musical world, an inescapable base of a documentary collection on synesthetic feelings ought to include its changed relationship with neosis, kenosis, erotic and anorectic love, introversion, spirituality, the very code whereby it joins kinship with and antipathy to hallucination, an attempt to scrape life from the human voice, bird-song and the sounds of the atmosphere, internal noise and the inner consciousness of the pathological subject of dementia. To these refrains, we must add, clarify, and accentuate the astonishing conjugation between music and visual art in the years of pioneers Hipgnosis, the "definition" of situationists to the effect that a color film is worth so much more than a black and white one, up to the ideas of the fifty shades of painters dating back to the graphic novel multimedia Living theatre mixes in Italy, England, and South American compendium, all under discussion in this essay [12, 13].

CONCLUSION

Synesthesia, with its rich historical and theoretical background, offers a unique lens through which to view the interconnectedness of music and visual arts. This phenomenon not only enriches artistic expression but also enhances our understanding of sensory perception and cognitive processes. The case studies presented illustrate how synesthetic experiences have influenced and shaped the works of various artists, demonstrating the profound impact of this cross-modal perception on artistic creativity. As we move further into the digital age, the exploration of synesthetic art continues to evolve, promising new insights and innovations. Future research should focus on leveraging digital technologies to deepen our understanding of synesthesia and expand the possibilities for creative expression, ultimately enriching both the academic study and the practical application of this fascinating intersection between music and visual arts.

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