



ANXIETY DISORDER AS AN INSPIRATION FOR CREATING PAINTINGS

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Abstract

This article explores how anxiety disorder functions as a conceptual and emotional foundation in contemporary painting, particularly within the artist's personal creative practice. The study examines how persistent worry, social discomfort, emotional sensitivity, and intrusive thoughts can be transformed into symbolic visual elements through a studio-based method. By observing internal emotional experiences and translating them into sketches, compositions, and painterly experimentation, the artworks reveal expressive figures, confined spaces, repeated eye motifs, and contrasting color arrangements that reflect the complex psychological atmosphere of anxiety. The findings demonstrate that painting becomes not only a medium for aesthetic expression but also a reflective and therapeutic space where internal conflict can be processed, reinterpreted, and communicated. This research concludes that anxiety disorder can enrich artistic creation by generating emotionally charged visual narratives that resonate deeply with both the artist and the audience.

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INTRODUCTION

Mental and emotional development is a fundamental aspect of human life, influencing how individuals interpret reality, regulate their behavior, and respond to internal and external pressures. Humans possess two inseparable dimensions the physical body and the psychological or spiritual self both of which interact dynamically throughout the lifespan (Priyata et al., 2022). While physical conditions can often be identified visibly, psychological conditions are more complex, abstract, and difficult to observe directly. Emotional experiences, whether positive or negative, continually shape a person's mental state and can significantly impact their overall functioning. When negative emotions are prolonged or poorly regulated, they may develop into psychological disorders such as anxiety disorders, which interfere with the individual's ability to maintain a stable and meaningful life. These conditions may be triggered by traumatic experiences, environmental pressures, family conflict, or internal cognitive patterns formed throughout development.

Recent national data reflect the increasing urgency of mental health concerns. A survey by the Indonesian Ministry of Health reported that the prevalence of mental disorders among individuals aged 15 and above rose from 6% in 2013 to 9.8% in 2018 (Setyanto, 2023). Globally, the World Health Organization estimates that 264 million people experience anxiety-related disorders, making it one of the most widespread psychological conditions worldwide and a significant contributor to suicidal behavior (Angelin et al., 2021). Anxiety is not merely an emotional reaction but a multidimensional experience involving physiological, cognitive, and behavioral components. Emotions emerge rapidly and can be difficult to manage, especially when strengthened by repeated life experiences or accumulated trauma (Nadhiroh, 2015). Although emotions are essential for survival, excessive or prolonged negative emotions can become harmful to both physical and psychological health.

Anxiety disorder, as described in clinical psychology, involves persistent worry, excessive fear, and physical symptoms such as trembling, shortness of breath, muscle tension, and difficulty concentrating, which significantly disrupt daily activities (Asrori & Hasanat, 2022). The condition can

arise from genetic vulnerabilities, hormonal changes, imbalanced neurotransmitters, or adverse life events such as prolonged stress and trauma. Individuals with anxiety disorder often struggle to articulate their inner experiences verbally and may isolate themselves due to fear of judgment or misunderstanding. Studies have shown that many sufferers feel unseen by their surroundings, as their condition is not always visible, leading to social withdrawal, heightened distress, and a decreased quality of life (Natasya et al., 2024). Anxiety becomes an internalized struggle silent, continuous, and emotionally overwhelming.

Within the field of art, however, emotional complexity including anxiety has long been acknowledged as a powerful source of artistic inspiration. Art serves as a medium through which individuals externalize psychological tension, transforming intangible feelings into tangible visual forms. Artistic expression allows for the communication of experiences that are often indescribable through spoken language. According to Yunus (2020), art functions as a form of expressive communication through which the artist conveys emotions, struggles, and inner meanings using symbols, colors, forms, and composition. Painting, specifically, is one of the most potent forms of emotional articulation. It not only reflects the artist's imagination but also embodies their personal history, traumas, memories, fears, and psychological conflicts.

Furthermore, painting is recognized for its therapeutic potential. Numerous scholars highlight that visual art practices offer emotional release, cognitive restructuring, and psychological relief for individuals experiencing mental tension (Maftukha, 2017). Through the repetitive gestures of brushstrokes, the exploration of color, and the freedom of form-making, survivors of anxiety may gain a sense of control, grounding, and self-awareness. This process helps individuals identify emotional triggers, process internal experiences, and reduce stress while developing greater confidence and agency. For many survivors, art becomes not only a creative outlet but also a form of self-healing. Historically, human emotional struggles have played a central role in shaping artistic movements. Expressionism emerging in the early 20th century foregrounded raw emotional intensity, subjectivity, and psychological depth. The movement challenged

traditional depictions of objective reality by emphasizing the artist's internal perception. Van Gogh, one of the most influential figures within Expressionism, demonstrated how emotional turmoil, psychological conflict, and intense personal experiences could be transformed into bold visual language through expressive colors, dynamic brushstrokes, and symbolic distortions (Streit, 2017). Expressionism suggests that art and emotion are inseparable: every stroke becomes a manifestation of the artist's internal world.

Beyond Expressionism, contemporary visual culture has introduced new hybrid approaches that merge imagination, pop references, and emotional symbolism. Pop Surrealism also known as Lowbrow Art is a visual art movement blending surrealism, cartoon aesthetics, fantasy imagery, and subcultural visual languages. The movement often presents psychological narratives through whimsical, exaggerated, or distorted figures that reflect inner conflicts or anxieties (Nafilah & Prabu, 2017). Influenced by 1960s animation, comics, horror films, pop-culture icons, and fantastical imagery, Pop Surrealism provides a playful yet emotionally charged visual vocabulary. Its imagery strange creatures, disproportionate figures, dream-like settings, and symbolic exaggeration becomes a metaphor for psychological experiences. Due to its imaginative freedom, Pop Surrealism is particularly effective in representing emotional states such as fear, insecurity, trauma, and anxiety, thus making it highly relevant to the author's creative approach.

In the present study, the author integrates Pop Surrealism with a cartoon-inspired visual language to express personal experiences related to anxiety disorder. Cartoon aesthetics characterized by simplified forms, bold outlines, distorted proportions, and expressive facial exaggerations allow the representation of emotional tension in a way that is communicative yet symbolically rich. This stylization enables the transformation of painful psychological experiences into visual metaphors, making the artworks approachable while still emotionally charged. According to Athian (2024), artistic creation is built upon emotional impulses, conceptual intentions, and the artist's subjective experience; thus, the visual form becomes a direct reflection of internal psychological processes. In line with this perspective, the author's works symbolize anxiety not through literal depiction but through metaphorical construction of visual forms, symbols, and imagined characters.

The author's paintings emerge from deeply personal experiences involving trauma, prolonged anxiety, emotional instability, and challenges in interpersonal relationships. These experiences rooted in childhood memories, family separation, bullying, and long-term psychological stress have significantly shaped the author's emotional landscape. Such inner conflicts eventually led to moments of severe emotional distress, including suicidal ideation, isolation, inability to communicate verbally, and difficulty trusting others. However, rather than allowing these experiences to remain internalized and destructive, the author transformed them into a creative process. Painting thus becomes a means to reclaim emotional agency and redefine traumatic memories into artistic insight.

At the same time, the artworks are not merely autobiographical; they also aim to represent the emotional experiences of other anxiety disorder survivors. Many individuals with anxiety share similar struggles: persistent fear, inability to verbalize emotions, social withdrawal, and overwhelming psychological pressure. Through visual storytelling, symbolic metaphors, and expressive formal elements, the author seeks to create an emotional bridge that fosters empathy, understanding, and awareness among viewers. By externalizing anxiety through artistic form, the artworks invite audiences to reflect on the complexity of mental health and the importance of compassion toward survivors who often suffer silently.

Therefore, this research-based creative project explores anxiety disorder not only as a psychological condition but also as an artistic source that holds expressive, educational, and therapeutic significance. The artworks generated through this project aim to communicate the inner emotional experiences associated with anxiety disorder while bridging personal narratives with broader social issues. Through this study, the author also hopes to contribute to and expand contemporary discourse on art, mental health, and emotional expression, emphasizing that painting can serve as a powerful medium to visualize unseen psychological realities.

METHODS

The creative inquiry employed a practice-based qualitative approach in which the act of creating

paintings served as the primary method for examining how experiences of anxiety influence visual expression. This approach positions artistic practice as both a process of making and a form of research, allowing the artist to generate knowledge through reflection, experimentation, and critical observation. The data for the inquiry were drawn from the artworks produced, documentation of the creative process such as sketches, photographs, and studio notes, and written reflections that captured the emotional states experienced during the development of the works. These materials provided both visual and narrative evidence that supported the interpretation of how anxiety manifested within the artistic outcomes (Diana & Afriansyah, 2019).

The production of the artworks involved a selection of materials and tools chosen for their expressive potential. Acrylic paints, cotton canvas, matte varnish, a variety of brushes, pencils, palettes, and an easel were utilized to support layered techniques and dynamic applications of color. The painting process integrated wet, glazing, and block techniques, enabling the creation of fluid transitions, translucent layers, and bold areas of solid color. These methods aligned with the intended pop-surrealist and cartoon-like aesthetic, which required both precision and expressive spontaneity (Yuliman, 2001).

Before painting, the inquiry began with conceptual exploration informed by personal emotional experiences, reflective writing, and readings on anxiety. Sketching played an important role in developing visual ideas, translating emotions such as fear, pressure, and restlessness into symbolic forms, exaggerated expressions, and distinctive color palettes. These sketches served as visual plans that guided the composition and thematic direction of each artwork, consistent with the function of sketches as structural guides for organizing artistic elements (Ibrahim, 2000). Personal emotional experiences were also regarded as rich sources of artistic inspiration, a perspective that reflects how internal struggles can shape visual expression (Laksono, 2017).

The process of creating the final paintings followed an indirect method, beginning with pencil sketches on canvas and progressing through multiple layers of acrylic paint. Each stage of creation was documented carefully through photographs and reflective notes, which recorded artistic decisions, emotional

responses, and adjustments made during the process. When the paintings were completed, a matte acrylic varnish was applied to preserve the surface and maintain color stability, and the works were photographed under consistent lighting for analytical purposes.

Data analysis combined visual examination with reflexive interpretation. Visual analysis focused on the formal elements of the paintings such as line, form, color, texture, symbolism, and composition to identify how these choices conveyed emotional or psychological meanings. Reflexive interpretation involved analyzing the studio notes and personal reflections to understand how anxiety-related experiences shaped specific artistic decisions. Together, these methods allowed the inquiry to connect internal emotional states with external artistic outcomes, forming a comprehensive interpretation of how anxiety disorder functioned as creative inspiration.

Ethical considerations were maintained throughout the creative inquiry, particularly because the visual and written reflections were derived from personal psychological experiences. Emotional safety was prioritized during the reflective process, and all personal narratives were handled with care and used strictly for academic purposes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Social Anxiety



Figure1. Social Anxiety
Source: Author's Documentatation

Title : Social Anxiety
Size : 80 cm
Media : Acrylic on Canvas

Year : 2025

Artwork Description

The painting presents a central figure positioned prominently at the midpoint of the circular canvas, making the character's face the dominant focal point of the composition. The figure appears childlike, with a rounded facial structure that occupies a large portion of the visual space, creating an immediate sense of vulnerability and emotional fragility. The eyes are rendered in a striking shade of light blue, significantly enlarged to emphasize innocence while simultaneously conveying a subtle, unspoken sadness. Soft blush tones on the cheeks and a small, gently curved mouth in pale red further enhance the melancholic impression. The skin is painted using delicate gradients ranging from cream to soft pink, producing a smooth, polished surface that contrasts with the boldness of the background.

The eyes, which serve as the most expressive component of the face, feature bright irises, deep-black pupils, and tiny highlights that make them appear reflective and alive. Thin, slightly lowered eyebrows contribute to the subdued emotional tone of the figure, while the nose is depicted minimally, offering just enough structure without distracting from the facial expression. Overall, the character's neutral yet penetrating gaze generates a quiet emotional tension that anchors the entirety of the image.

Surrounding the figure is an intense red background filled with numerous illustrated eyes that vary in size and orientation. These eyes encircle the character from all directions, creating a suffocating atmosphere of constant observation. The repetition of the eye motif produces a rhythmic pattern that reinforces the sense of surveillance and unease experienced by the central figure. Each eye is carefully detailed, with irises painted in shades of blue, brown, and green, and faint red veins on the sclera to add subtle realism despite the surreal context. Some eyes appear closer to the figure, while others recede into the background, generating a layered spatial effect within the otherwise flat field of red.

On the right side of the figure, a cluster of eyes bound together by a twisted cord is depicted hanging

downward. This cluster appears glossy and wet, with reflections suggesting a slick surface. The cord spirals tightly around the mass, visually linking it to the figure who grips the end of the rope. The entire cluster stands out against the flat red background, emphasizing its symbolic weight as an emotional burden carried by the character.

Together, these elements create a surreal yet emotionally charged scene in which the figure seems trapped within a world of unrelenting observation and internalized pressure. The circular canvas enhances this impression by evoking the sense of a confined inner world an enclosed psychological space from which escape feels impossible.

a. Formal Analysis

Formally, the composition centers entirely on the child-like figure placed precisely at the midpoint of the circular canvas, establishing an immediate and unavoidable focal point. The symmetrical placement of the face balanced on both sides creates a stable visual structure that contrasts with the emotional instability expressed through surrounding elements. The large, rounded head occupies nearly two-thirds of the central space, making the proportion intentionally exaggerated in comparison to natural anatomy. This disproportion draws the viewer's attention directly toward the character's expression, reinforcing the emotional weight carried by the figure.

The background is dominated by a saturated red field, applied evenly across the circular boundary. This bold chromatic choice generates high visual tension and acts as a psychological signal of intensity, alertness, and internal pressure. Against this red backdrop, the numerous illustrated eyes stand out through their varied hues ranging from blue and brown to subtle greens creating rhythmic visual movement around the canvas. These repeated eyes form a visual pattern that appears both decorative and unsettling, their irregular spacing generating a sense of instability and motion. The contrast between the flat red background and the meticulously detailed eyes produces a layered visual depth even though the canvas surface remains physically flat.

Color contrast also plays a critical formal role. The soft cream and pink tones of the face visually soften the central figure, creating a calm island

amidst the overwhelming red environment. The light blue of the irises introduces a cool counterbalance, preventing the composition from becoming visually monotonous. This warm cool tension between the red background and blue eyes strengthens the emotional conflict embedded within the artwork.

Shape and line are used strategically to reinforce symbolic meaning. The rounded canvas echoes the rounded facial structure, creating a visual harmony that enhances unity within the composition. The cluster of eyes bound by a coiled rope introduces sharp directional lines and irregular organic forms, breaking the circular softness of the surrounding elements. This contrast between roundness and rigidity contributes to the sense of psychological disturbance.

Texture within the painting remains mostly smooth, particularly on the face, where blended brushstrokes create a polished and delicate surface. In contrast, the eyes surrounding the figure exhibit more defined outlines and sharper edges, which visually “press” toward the center. This interplay between softness and definition adds complexity to the composition, emphasizing the tension between internal vulnerability and external pressure.

Overall, the formal arrangement through its use of symmetry, proportion, color contrast, repeated motifs, and textural interplay carefully constructs a visual environment that mirrors the emotional intensity of anxiety and the sensation of being trapped under constant observation.

b. Interpretation

The artwork can be interpreted as a visual representation of the emotional weight and psychological tension experienced by individuals dealing with social anxiety. The central child like figure symbolizes a state of vulnerability, innocence, and emotional fragility. Its enlarged facial proportions suggest a heightened sensitivity to the environment, as if the figure absorbs every nuance of external judgment more intensely than others. The neutral yet tense expression conveys an inner struggle that is quiet but persistent, reflecting the way anxiety often works internally while remaining invisible to those around the individual.

The surrounding eyes serve as a powerful metaphor for the constant feeling of being observed,

evaluated, or scrutinized an experience commonly associated with social anxiety. Their overwhelming number and varied directions create a sense of inescapability, as though the figure is trapped within a swarm of perceptions and expectations. The eyes do not merely represent external viewers; they also symbolize intrusive thoughts, self-doubt, and the internalized belief that one is always being watched. This duality external pressure and internal fear captures the complex psychological landscape of anxiety.

The red background further intensifies this emotional atmosphere. Its bold, saturated tone embodies urgency, emotional heat, and psychological discomfort. The red environment becomes an emotional space rather than a physical one, functioning as a visual embodiment of tension and mental overload. It surrounds the figure completely, suggesting that the anxiety is not isolated but deeply embedded in the character’s internal world.

The cluster of eyes bound by a twisted cord adds another interpretative layer. This object, held by the figure, symbolizes the emotional burden carried every day an accumulation of fears, unresolved worries, and persistent self-consciousness. The tight coil around the eyes indicates how these emotions often become entangled and difficult to separate. The figure’s grip on the cord suggests an inability to let go of these anxieties, even when they are heavy and suffocating. It represents the psychological cycle in which individuals hold tightly to their fears because they have become familiar, even when harmful. The circular canvas reinforces the interpretation by creating a sense of enclosure, as if the figure exists within a closed mental sphere with no escape. The round boundary resembles a confined emotional space, echoing the experience of feeling psychologically trapped.

Taken together, the composition depicts anxiety not as a momentary emotion but as a persistent internal condition that shapes perception, self-image, and one’s relationship with the surrounding world. The artwork communicates the overwhelming nature of social anxiety while also revealing the quiet resilience of the individual who continues to carry their emotional burden despite its weight.

2. Fragile



Figure2. Fragile

Source: Author's Documentatation

Title : Fragile
Size : 80 cm
Media : Acrylic on Canvas
Year : 2025

Artwork Description

The figure in this painting is depicted with a soft, rounded face whose gentle curves emphasize innocence and emotional fragility. The skin is rendered with delicate gradations of cream, peach, and pale pink, with subtle blush on the cheeks that enhances the impression of purity and vulnerability. The eyes large and colored in a cool blue-green hue serve as the primary focal point of the composition, reflecting a quiet sadness and an empty, distant gaze. They appear to look far beyond the scene, suggesting deep contemplation or a sense of emotional detachment. The thin eyebrows, slightly arched downward, strengthen the melancholic mood expressed through the figure's facial features.

Encasing the figure is a soft, translucent bubble rendered with smooth gradients of light blue, white, and hints of violet sheen. The bubble appears weightless yet fragile, its edges defined by faint highlights that follow the direction of the main light source. Its transparency allows the background to softly show through, creating both separation and connection between the figure and the surrounding environment. The bubble acts as a delicate barrier

protective yet isolating capturing the figure in a private space that feels both safe and confining.

The figure wears a pale green dress, simple and loose, painted with gentle tonal transitions that give the fabric a calm and harmonious presence. The muted green tone contributes to an atmosphere of softness while subtly suggesting a desire for inner peace, even though emotional exhaustion and uncertainty linger beneath the surface. The figure is seated atop a large, softly glowing sunflower whose petals spread outward with warm golden tones. The sunflower is rendered with careful layering of yellows, oranges, and subtle browns, making it appear luminous against the surrounding elements. This flower becomes the visual anchor of the composition, symbolizing a fragile source of warmth and hope that supports the figure amid emotional heaviness.

Surrounding the figure is an expansive field filled with a variety of blooming flowers. These blossoms are painted through repeated forms, contrasting warm and cool colors, and overlapping layers that create depth and visual rhythm. The field of flowers circularly envelops the central subject, reinforcing the sense of a world that remains vivid and alive despite the sadness carried by the figure. In the distance, a row of mountains rises in deep green to bluish-black tones. Their layered shapes create atmospheric depth and give structure to the landscape, while also representing an unreachable calmsomething the figure longs for but cannot yet touch. Above the scene, the sky transitions gradually from deep indigo to muted blue-gray, evoking a somber night atmosphere. A faint pale moon and scattered tiny stars illuminate the darkness, contributing a cold stillness while simultaneously symbolizing the presence of faint, distant hope.

a. Formal Analysis

The facial features of the figure are constructed using a soft realism approach, emphasizing expressive qualities through an enlarged head proportion and dominant eyes. The smooth gradation of skin tones from peach to pale pink and cream creates gentle volume and a porcelain-like texture. Minimal use of strong contour lines allows the softness of the face to stand out, reinforcing the melancholic atmosphere of the artwork. The symmetry of the face, paired with subtle lighting,

further enhances the impression of a fragile and contemplative character.

The bubble surrounding the figure is depicted through a realist-imaginative technique, utilizing transparency, light reflections, and smooth color blending. Gradients of light blue, white, and faint purplish highlights give the bubble a convincing three-dimensional form. The soft, glowing rim emphasizes its floating presence and spherical structure. The absence of firm outlines strengthens the bubble's fragile quality, making it appear delicate and easily breakable. Its placement tightly around the figure enhances the vertical balance of the composition while underlining the overall symbolic weight of confinement.

The field of flowers is composed through repetition, color contrast, and layered arrangement. Warm and cool tones alternate to establish harmony, while overlapping petals create a subtle illusion of depth. The sunflower supporting the figure becomes a central anchor through its enlarged proportion and luminous color, offering a warm contrast to the overall coolness of the bubble and landscape. The mountains in the background employ gradation from dark teal to bluish-black, building depth without overpowering the central subject. Their soft, layered forms maintain visual balance while guiding the viewer's eye toward the horizon. The sky's gentle tonal transition and the inclusion of a pale moon provide atmospheric calmness, contrasting the emotional heaviness conveyed by the figure. Overall, the formal structure of this painting through its arrangement, color harmony, contrast, and controlled detail creates a composition that feels serene yet emotionally charged, balancing softness with psychological depth.

b. Interpretation

This artwork can be interpreted as a portrayal of an individual who feels emotionally trapped within their own internal world while still holding onto a faint sense of hope. The bubble surrounding the figure symbolizes a personal barrier an emotional shield created as a response to anxiety, fear, and the need for protection. While the bubble offers a sense of safety from external pressures, it simultaneously intensifies loneliness and isolation, illustrating the paradox experienced by someone struggling with internal turmoil.

The seated figure appears weighed down by sadness and exhaustion, reflected in the empty gaze and softened expression. The bubble becomes a visual metaphor for self-containment: a fragile, transparent space where the character seeks comfort but also becomes confined. This dual nature mirrors the emotional condition in which someone wishes to escape overwhelming sensations but ends up creating boundaries that distance them even further from the outside world.

The sunflower that supports the figure represents a subtle form of hope warmth that persists even in moments of despair. Although the flower is slightly wilted, its gentle glow suggests that hope is not lost entirely. This duality emphasizes that emotional struggle does not eliminate the presence of resilience, even when it feels faint. The expansive field of flowers surrounding the bubble symbolizes opportunities, growth, and possibilities that still exist but appear distant or unreachable because of the emotional barrier. The distant mountains represent peace and stability an ideal state that the figure longs for but perceives as far away. The night sky, dark and soft, expresses a heavy emotional atmosphere while the faint moon and stars signify the presence of small, guiding lights that encourage endurance. Altogether, the painting expresses the internal conflict of seeking safety while simultaneously feeling confined, illustrating the delicate balance between fear, solitude, and the quiet desire to heal. It shows that even in moments of emotional fragility, there remains a lingering hope that guides the individual toward eventual peace.

3. Transformation Post Traumatic



Figure2. Transformation Post Traumatic
Source: Author's Documentatation

Title : Transformation Post Traumatic

Size : 80 cm
Media : Acrylic on Canvas
Year : 2025

Artwork Description

This painting depicts a small human-like figure wearing a green frog costume with a fine speckled texture on its surface. The figure's face appears round and soft, with pale pink skin that conveys innocence and vulnerability. Both cheeks are lightly flushed, creating a warm impression. The eyes are bright blue, large, with a subtle glossy reflection, giving the expression an innocent yet anxious look. The eyebrows are thin and gently arched upwards, while the small lips are slightly parted, forming a confused or fearful expression. The figure wears a black wizard hat adorned with yellow stars. A black robe with star patterns drapes over the shoulders, adding a fantastical and symbolic impression to the figure's presence. The figure stands on a water surface scattered with lotus leaves. The water is depicted with soft brushstrokes, creating a sense of calm, which contrasts with the anxious expression of the figure. Around the pond, several pink lotus flowers provide gentle, symbolic accents. Behind the figure lies a large fallen tree trunk, indicating a quiet and somewhat isolated natural setting.

In the background, the sky is rendered with thick pastel clouds in shades of blue, purple, and pink that blend softly. Small yellow stars appear among the clouds, even though the overall sky suggests daytime. These stars introduce a magical atmosphere and create a visual dissonance between hope and reality. The bright sky stretches widely, enhancing the emotional depth of the scene. Above the figure, a large floating lotus leaf hovers like a natural umbrella, symbolically offering protection. The figure holds a slender staff topped with a blooming pink lotus flower.

a. Formal Analysis

The composition of this painting is arranged on a circular canvas, creating a sense of visual unity while guiding the viewer's eye in a circular motion from the edges toward the center. The main figure is placed precisely in the center, becoming the first focal point. Supporting elements such as lotus leaves, the fallen tree trunk, clouds, and stars are arranged evenly around the figure. Their placement forms a visual

harmony that maintains a rhythmic flow without creating overly empty or congested areas. In terms of color, the painting is dominated by a soft palette consisting of green, blue, pink, and pastel yellow. The green frog costume provides a strong contrast with the figure's pink skin, ensuring the facial expression remains the focal point. The gradient sky in blues and pastels reinforces a dreamlike mood, while the yellow stars create rhythmic accents within the composition. This color combination generates a tranquil atmosphere while retaining emotional tension through the contrast between daytime elements and night symbols. The texture throughout the painting appears smooth, both on the clouds, pond surface, and the figure's skin. Gentle shading on the face and sky emphasizes emotional nuance through subtle color transitions. The frog costume features a more pronounced speckled texture, adding character and reinforcing the visual identity of the figure. These textural variations distinguish organic, magical, and figurative elements without disrupting the overall cohesion.

Regarding lines, the painting predominantly uses soft, curved lines across almost all elements. These lines enhance the sense of a safe but fragile fantasy world. There are no dominant sharp angles or hard lines, resulting in a visually enveloping and nurturing effect. The quality of lines supports the emotional theme of sensitivity and vulnerability. The forms employed are mainly round and oval, found in the face, body, lotus leaves, clouds, and stars. This predominance of rounded shapes conveys innocence, warmth, and approachability, even as the painting addresses heavy psychological themes. The figure's short, plump body evokes the sense of a doll or harmless fantastical creature. The interplay between organic and symbolic forms creates a balance between reality and imagination.

Lighting in the painting is soft and even. Subtle highlights on the lotus flowers, stars, and clouds add depth without altering the overall lighting character. Spatial arrangement is achieved by layering various objects and softening colors in the background, creating a sense of distance. Objects like the figure, lotus leaves, and tree trunk overlap, providing a clear sense of depth. Clouds in the background are rendered in paler colors, appearing farther away. This presentation allows the space in the painting to feel organized without relying on complex perspective. The pond surface and lotus leaves are

layered to partially obscure other elements, giving the scene a structured spatial depth.

b. Interpretation

This painting can be interpreted as a representation of a person confronting past trauma, particularly experiences related to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The figure's frog costume signifies a dual identity, balancing the true self with a protective façade. This costume can also be understood as a psychological defense mechanism employed to conceal unresolved emotional wounds. Hence, the figure is depicted not only physically but also psychologically as someone trapped between present reality and haunting memories of the past.

The frog symbol carries deep meaning, as frogs are amphibians living in two different environments. This symbolizes the figure's mental state, caught between the present and a past that continues to loom. This dual existence generates complex inner tension, reflected in the figure's fragile and anxious facial expression. Therefore, the frog costume is more than a decorative element; it embodies transition, extreme adaptation, and the inability to let go of the past. The presence of the wizard hat, robe, and lotus-adorned staff adds further symbolic layers. The wizard hat can be interpreted as a desire to control or transform circumstances, though such power is unrealized. The staff with a blooming lotus represents hope for recovery, as the lotus is a symbol of resilience and healing. Yet, the combination of magical and healing symbols underscores the figure's inability to break free from the chains of trauma.

The sky, bright yet dotted with stars, signifies the duality between hope and reality. A daytime sky typically suggests new beginnings and the potential for change, but the presence of stars normally a night symbol indicates that this hope is not aligned with the figure's emotional state. This incongruity represents the figure's attempt to appear calm while their inner world remains in the "night" of traumatic experience. Thus, the sky reflects the contradiction between external reality and internal psychological condition. The pond and lotus leaves reinforce themes of protection and the need for a safe space. The large lotus leaf above the figure's head symbolizes an ideal, albeit symbolic, form of shelter. The calm water suggests a desire for inner peace, though this

tranquility is fragile, sustained by a fantasy world serving as refuge. The large fallen tree and scattered stones indicate harsh and uncomfortable reality surrounding the figure. These natural elements depict vulnerability and a strong need for emotional recovery.

Overall, the painting represents an individual navigating inner wounds while seeking self-protection and hope for renewal. The combination of frog symbolism, magical elements, and natural motifs conveys that the healing process is nonlinear and complex. The journey is filled with confusion and emotional ups and downs, alternating between strength and fragility. The figure is portrayed not as a failure but as someone actively striving to reclaim identity and stability. This interpretation highlights themes of healing, vulnerability, and self-discovery through a poetic and profound visual representation.

4. Beauty is Pain



Figure2. Transformation Post Traumatic
Source: Author's Documentatation

Title : Beauty is Pain
Size : 80 cm
Media : Acrylic on Canvas
Year : 2025

Artwork Description

This artwork features a small child-like figure positioned at the center of the composition, with an innocent face and a melancholic expression. The figure's head is enveloped by thick, bright red flower petals that dominate the upper body, adorned with droplets of water. These petals form a large frame around the face, drawing attention to the figure's blue

eyes. The face is rendered with soft lines, conveying fragility and vulnerability.

The figure's body appears small and unclothed, suggesting an undeveloped, delicate form. It stands within a dark brown pot, from which a green plant stem grows and wraps around the figure's waist and chest like restraining cords. Fallen petals and small leaves beneath the pot indicate that the plant is under pressure or has been damaged. The background shows rolling green hills with smooth surfaces sloping downward. Behind the figure, there is a broken, tilted, and irregular wooden fence, creating the impression of an unstable or damaged environment. The incomplete fence reinforces the sense of insecurity surrounding the figure.

The sky is filled with thick, swirling gray clouds, as if a storm is brewing. Gradations of gray and white create dramatic contrasts, intensifying the tense and heavy atmosphere around the figure. These clouds frame the upper portion of the composition, adding to the sense of pressure from the surrounding environment. Overall, the visual atmosphere of the artwork feels dark, oppressive, and constrictive, limiting the small figure's space.

a. Formal Analysis

The composition utilizes a circular canvas to create a closed, unified visual space. The circular shape gives a sense of continuous repetition, directing the viewer's focus toward the center. The figure is placed symmetrically in the middle, serving as the primary element that immediately captures attention. This arrangement provides visual balance in contrast to the emotionally unstable environment depicted. Color usage plays a crucial role in setting the mood. The red of the flower petals acts as the strongest point of contrast, conveying emotional intensity and pressure. The sky, filled with gray gradations, creates a heavy atmosphere, reinforcing the sense of anxiety. Meanwhile, green tones in the soil and plant stem serve as balancing elements, though their brightness is kept low to maintain the somber mood.

Lines and forms reveal differences in character between the figure and the environment. Lines defining the figure are soft and curved, conveying gentleness and vulnerability. In contrast, the lines of the fence and clouds are broken and irregular, creating visual tension. This contrast emphasizes the

difference between the figure's inner world and the surrounding environment. Texture is also an important element in shaping the artwork's atmosphere. The figure and petals are depicted with a soft texture, suggesting fragility. Conversely, the clouds and fence appear rough and dense, creating a sense of external pressure. This textural contrast reinforces visual hierarchy and highlights the conflict between the figure's vulnerability and the chaotic environment. Lighting is focused primarily on the head and flower petals, which are the brightest areas, directing attention to the figure's expression. Surrounding elements and background are rendered darker, enhancing drama and emphasizing the emotional struggle within the piece. The lighting contrast produces visual depth, supporting the theme of emotional tension.

b. Interpretation

This painting portrays a figurative figure resembling a flower, appearing beautiful and delicate at first glance. However, this beauty is immediately contrasted by the figure's anxious and uncomfortable expression. This suggests that outward beauty does not necessarily reflect inner emotional states. Through this contrast, the artwork communicates the idea that beauty can coexist with hidden pain. The red petals surrounding the figure's head are fresh and vibrant, yet adorned with droplets that evoke ambiguity. These droplets may be read as rain or as tears that are not overtly shown. The wet petals symbolize an effort to maintain a composed appearance despite inner emotional pressure, reinforcing the notion of "beauty is pain" the idea of striving to appear well while enduring internal struggle.

The plant tendrils wrapping around the figure's body restrict movement, symbolizing burdens originating within oneself and the emotional pressure that continues to bind freedom. This element indicates that anxiety arises not only from external sources but also from internal experiences and thoughts. The sense of entrapment highlights the connection between anxiety and hidden pain beneath a beautiful exterior. The small pot in which the figure stands is disproportionately narrow, representing limited space for growth and development. This suggests that beauty may be forced to emerge in an unsupportive or oppressive environment. The narrow pot becomes a symbol of someone

maintaining strength and appearance under constraining conditions.

The background features a dark, stormy sky with swirling clouds and flashes of lightning, suggesting a chaotic, unstable, and threatening external world. Despite this, the figure must maintain its delicate, flower-like form. The contrast between the threatening environment and the gentle figure clarifies the message that beauty often coexists with suffering. Behind the figure, a damaged, slanted wooden fence usually a symbol of protection indicates that the figure's environment provides no true security. This lack of protection reinforces the idea that anxiety can arise when one must maintain composure in an unsupportive context.

Overall, the artwork brings together two central themes: anxiety and "beauty is pain." The visual beauty of the flower figure represents hope, softness, and the desired public image, while the surrounding elements reveal that such beauty is constructed amid pressure, pain, and limitation. The painting conveys that one can appear beautiful externally while struggling internally. This interpretation emphasizes that beauty often requires the maintenance of strength and control, even when the inner self is unstable. Through the delicate flower figure and threatening environment, the artwork invites viewers to understand that outward appearances do not always reflect inner comfort. Beauty can act as a mask covering deep emotional struggles, making the concept of "beauty is pain" inseparable from the theme of anxiety in this painting.

5. The Narcisstic Persona



Figure2. The Narcisstic Persona
Source: Author's Documentatation

Title : The Narcisstic Persona
Size : 80 cm
Media : Acrylic on Canvas
Year : 2025

Artwork Description

This artwork depicts a small, round-faced figure with rosy cheeks and closed eyes, evoking a sense of softness and calm. The figure stands inside a round music box resembling a miniature stage. The interior of the music box features a striking red-and-white spiral pattern, creating a strong visual focal point. The entire composition is set on a circular canvas, enhancing the sense of harmony.

The main figure wears a simple black dress that falls straight down, providing a strong contrast to the bright pattern beneath. Her feet are adorned with ballet shoes with red cross straps, adding a delicate visual detail. Her pose appears stiff yet graceful, as if presented like a doll within the music box. The serene expression conveys peace while retaining a sense of mystery.

The music box is decorated with gold ornaments along the edges, lending a classic and slightly luxurious impression. The open lid behind the figure features carved decorations with the same red-and-white pattern, reinforcing the theatrical stage theme. The repetition of the circular patterns beneath and behind the figure creates a consistent visual rhythm.

The background is dominated by light blue with soft white clouds, adding to the calm atmosphere. Red curtains open on the left and right sides suggest that the figure is being displayed on stage. A wooden floor at the bottom introduces a warm texture that balances the bright upper portion. Overall, the artwork combines theatricality, softness, and a dreamlike impression in a clear and approachable way.

c. Formal Analysis

Compositionally, the work centers the main figure on a circular canvas. This placement establishes symmetrical balance between upper, central, and lower elements. The red and white spiral pattern appearing both behind the figure and at the base of the music box reinforces visual rhythm, guiding the

viewer's attention to the center. In terms of color, the artwork employs a strong yet harmonious palette. The contrast between red, white, black, and light blue balances intensity and calm. Red accents on the curtains and the figure's cheeks add dramatic emphasis, enhancing the theatrical mood. Meanwhile, the blue background provides open visual space, allowing the main figure to remain prominent.

The forms in this piece are illustrated in a simple, rounded style. The face, body, and music box ornaments are rendered with smooth contours without excessive detail, creating a soft impression. Ornamental details of the music box add visual richness while remaining consistent with the overall style. The consistent use of form clarifies the artwork's visual identity and gives a cohesive impression. Spatially, the piece employs frontal perspective without complex depth. The red curtains on both sides frame the space, directing focus to the figure and her music box. The flat blue background reinforces a calm spatial impression, not distracting from the main elements. This simplicity allows the viewer to focus entirely on the relationship between the figure, the stage, and surrounding visual symbols.

d. Interpretation

The painting depicts a small doll-like figure standing inside an open music box. The figure is portrayed as the central character, compelled to perform each time the box is opened, like an object with no choice but to follow a predetermined mechanism. Her central position, surrounded by wooden ornaments and symmetrical patterns, conveys that she is deliberately displayed as the focus. The overall composition narrates an individual living within an aesthetically pleasing space, yet constrained and controlled.

Visually, the music box contains decorative elements reflecting orderly beauty, such as gold curves, symmetrical forms, and a miniature stage-like backdrop. Yet, this beauty simultaneously symbolizes the confined space trapping the figure. The music box functions repeatedly: it winds, opens, and forces the figure to perform. This can be interpreted as a representation of psychological pressure when one feels compelled to continuously present an ideal image without space to rest or express true emotions. The figure's soft face, rosy cheeks, and doll-like features suggest innocence and calm, yet this serenity is not derived from comfort—it is part of the "role"

she must play. This elegance symbolizes an emotional mask, a persona that must always appear pleasant, sweet, and perfect. In the context of anxiety, this superficial expression illustrates how individuals often hide vulnerability to maintain social acceptance. The figure does not resist but appears resigned to the role imposed upon her.

The red-and-white spiral patterns may symbolize thoughts that endlessly repeat, characteristic of anxiety disorder. The spiral movement reflects the tendency for the mind to return to the same worries despite unchanging circumstances. Dominant red emphasizes tension, anxiety, and agitation, while the white portions of the spiral represent small attempts to find calm despite being drawn back into anxious patterns. The figure's closed eyes symbolize an attempt at self-soothing, yet she remains under internal pressure. Her static pose represents passivity when feeling unable to move or escape burdens. The gentle but restrained expression highlights that anxiety is not always externally visible, showing that inner turmoil can persist silently.

The music box itself can be interpreted as a symbol of repetitive mental cycles, akin to anxiety mechanisms that recur without cessation. Like a music box that only moves when wound, anxiety is often triggered by stimuli that bring thoughts back to familiar patterns. Its small, enclosed form mirrors the narrow inner space where someone may feel trapped within their own thoughts and emotions. Furthermore, the music box forces the figure to dance or move, representing internal or external pressures compelling an individual with anxiety to "perform" despite feeling overwhelmed.

The star held by the figure can be seen as a small hope or inner source of light amidst anxiety. It symbolizes the desire to function, shine, or appear well, even under heavy internal pressure. The star may also represent an ideal standard or personal expectation, becoming an emotional burden when unattainable. Thus, it functions ambivalently as both hope and pressure. The red curtains opening onto the stage can be interpreted as social pressure or a feeling of being watched, exacerbating anxiety. The figure's performance for an audience reflects the experience of being constantly observed and judged, common for many with anxiety. The overall work conveys that anxiety disorder traps individuals

mentally, emotionally, and socially, even when outward appearances suggest normalcy. The painting's connection to the concept of the narcissistic persona does not refer to a clinical disorder but to a social-psychological phenomenon where individuals construct an ideal image to meet others' expectations. The music box figure serves as a metaphor for someone living under scrutiny, using aesthetic appearance to gain validation. Yet this image does not originate from comfort but from anxiety over not being "good enough" if not perfectly presented. The spinning music box reflects a repetitive cycle where the individual must maintain certain standards despite emotional exhaustion.

Thus, this painting offers a profound interpretation of the relationship between anxiety and the creation of an idealized self-image. The figure's beauty, the decorative music box, and the seemingly sweet surface conceal intense internal pressure. The work demonstrates that outward beauty and neatness do not equate to comfort but are adaptive responses to strong social demands. Through the doll trapped within an aesthetic space, the artwork emphasizes that anxiety often grows behind a perfect facade, and beauty can become a burden when it is an obligation rather than a choice.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the five paintings explore themes of vulnerability, anxiety, and emotional struggle through various visual metaphors. Each figure whether wearing a frog costume, surrounded by flower petals, dressed in a rabbit costume, trapped inside a bubble, or a positioned within a music box like a stage represents the tension between inner emotional states and outward appearances. The artworks highlight the complexity of human psychology, illustrating how individuals confront trauma, social pressures, and personal limitations. Through symbolism, color, and composition, these paintings convey that the processes of healing, self-expression, and emotional resilience are ongoing journeys, often concealed beneath delicate or controlled surfaces.

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