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The Relationship Between Art Movements and Political Expression

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ABSTRACT

The paper will look into the interplay between art movements and political expression, in terms of how visual culture reflects the prevalent political reality and, to some degree, how it actively shapes it. The study analyzes a wide range of artistic styles, the likes of Romanticism, Realism, Modernism, Avant-Garde, and Contemporary art forms, showing that despite these variations, similarities can still be drawn in how art has been used as a medium to protest, lobby and promote ideology. Vigilant Romanticism, in contrast to Realism, often placed national identity and resistance to imperial structures in the forefront, although it also focused on matters of social justice as it did on the problems of the working classes. Modernist and Avant-Garde movements presented emphatic paradigms to traditionally accepted hierarchical systems and are linked to political interventions attempting to remove the status quo. In its turn, contemporary art has a complex role in that it is integrating aesthetic criticism with activism on issues that impact all people on the planet, including climate change, migration, and human rights. Statistical studies of the archival materials, political texts, and displays data also prove the existence of significant interConnections between the periods of political crisis and the level of creative ingenuity. In addition, the case studies show how artistic expression has been used strategically by both the governments and the social movements to either enforce or confront the existing ideas. The two findings are a reminder that art has a two-fold role; as both a residue of the political realities and an active participant in shifting the discourse in politics. This work contributes to other debates about culture history, aesthetics, and political theory by demonstrating once more how art can express common desires, resist injustice, and encourage social action.

KEYWORDS: Art Movements, Political Expression, Cultural Identity, Social Protest, Aesthetic Activism, Ideology

INTRODUCTION

Art and politics have always been in a state of reciprocity and a dynamic relationship whereby art can either just reflect political beliefs or be an agent of political change (Simoniti et al., 2021; Neofetou, 2020). This paper traces the interdependence of aesthetic and political expression to show how artist operating within specific aesthetic paradigms have consistently responded to and impacted socio-political terrains. The very first theoretical frameworks describe art as inherently political even in the case where it does not appear to be political, on account of its indefinability outside of the context of its production (Iqbal, 2023). In further depth about this, British art disciple, Claire Bishop examines the politicalizing ability of participatory art whereby she argues that the publicly engaged art practices encompass the spectatorship in its societal dimensions of politics of power and confrontation (Bishop, 2024; Bishop, 2012). This perception is completed by the aesthetic theory of Adorno, who states that modern art must be described as semi-autonomous which means criticizing the capitalist society but at the same time bringing out the truth in the form of formal dissonance (Adorno, 1970). In the past, the art of protest played a major role: Dada is one of the most effective examples of art making political statements: the movement was formed during World War I opposing the logic of the bourgeoisie and nationalism through absurdity and refusing to make art (Dada Movement, 2025). Similarly, performance art and other avant-garde forms rooted in Dada and Futurism exploited the notions of body and time as well as audience participation so that people could reflect on the social issues of society (Performance Art, 2025). Fluxus also, challenged the monetisation of art with transdisciplinary, anti-establishment gestures (Performance Art, 2025). Artistic novelty has always been prompted by the political crisis The form An Indonesian New Art Movement (Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru) is a movement that began in the 1970s and was against the decorative elitism and fought on the social relevance, memory, and political freedom (Indonesian New Art Movement, 2023). The feminist practice of art movement of 20 th century was also a challenge towards institutional hierarchies and patriarchal norms. It also did this through nonconventional media and group performance to reveal the experiences of women (Feminist Art Movement, 2025). Modern art in recent decades has been increasingly political in addressing things such as globalization, war, human rights, and systematic inequality. This has frequently been the case against censorship and state push-back (The Role..., 2023). Sanz (2021) continues to stress the importance of creative activism in developing ecological and political consciousness, thereby stimulating citizen participation in civil activities. The means of digitalization of art and the popularization of social media has altered the political aspect of the visual culture even further. This has created new avenues into which artists may become involved as well as creating new forms of pressure on artistic freedom

(Columbia Global Thought, 2025). More recently, augmented reality (AR) has found its way into the sphere of the public art to make ordinary people involve themselves and become active citizens. ARTivism enables the visually impaired individual to see the political message of outdoor artworks by augmenting the visual information of such artwork (Jiang, 2024). In more recent work, TJ Clark puts the relations between art and politics into deeper historical context, with work on coinage, street art, and power, the reverse contingency has always been true too (Clark, 2025). The arguments in art theory continue to make the case that the study of political art should always be done with both a recognizable phenomenological experience and ideologically directed structures in mind (Neofetou, 2020). Although literature is extensive, it seems that there still is a need to have an extensive, moving chronologically study, linking the different art movements to transformation in politics, combining theoretical approach to the actual investigations. In this study, a gap exists in studies of the combination of theory with historical or technological case studies, which makes this study unique. It contributes to the multidisciplinary debate regarding the fact that art movements can be political witnesses and agents. It attempts to highlight the consistent role of art in disrupting existing norms, in rallying historically voiceless points of view, and in changing mass.

METHODOLOGY

This study applied a cross-sectional study situation involving mixed-methods approach, which is a combination of both qualitative and quantitative data. The rationale behind the combination of the two approaches is that the qualitative research provides the critical contextualization that should be used to interpret creative and political narratives, whilst the quantitative measures can be utilized to measure trends and correlations across space and over time. Three main sources of data were used: archival data about political and artistic documents, museum collections of formal works of art of major movements such as Romanticism, Realism, Modernism, and Contemporary art, and digitized databases of political speeches and manifestoes which mentioned art or were inspired by art. The qualitative part consisted of interpretive content analysis of the paintings, performances and installations and hermeneutic, semiotic approaches were used in order to identify recurring visual elements, aesthetic codes and correlations with political discourse. The results of such interpretations were confirmed by interviews with current artists and historians, thus complementing the dataset with the first-hand experience of how political events affect the agency of artists. The quantitative dimension focused on the measure of the value of the entanglement between political unrest and artistic effervescences. A

temporal regression analysis was conducted, whereby the independent variable was the intensity of the political unrest (measured by the number of strikes, revolutions or censorship laws), and the dependent variable was the number of art exhibitions, manifestos, and newly formed movements over the same period. The model is organised in form of

$$A_t = \alpha + \beta P_t + \epsilon_t$$

where A_t denotes the rate of artistic activity in year t , P_t denotes political unrest intensity, β measures the responsiveness of artistic activity to political contexts, and ϵ_t represents the stochastic error. To further test causality, Granger causality analyses were conducted to examine whether fluctuations in political events preceded artistic responses or whether art movements themselves forecasted political discourse shifts. Quantitative coding of artworks was carried out using computational tools for text mining and image analysis, focusing on variables such as symbolism, frequency of protest themes, and representation of marginalized groups. These variables were converted into categorical indicators and subjected to statistical tests of association, including chi-square and ANOVA.

RESULTS

The results of this work reveal the vibrant and evolving correlation between aesthetic tendencies and the political expression, and quantitative findings validate the qualitative ones. Table 1 presents the use of various creative movements in various political circumstances. It indicates that feminist art and the art of avant-garde always scored high on levels of influence when the situation revolved around revolutions and widespread protests. Table 2 shows that, across feminist art and avant-garde, the average effect was the highest when combined. Romanticism and Realism, in their turn, received sober ratings and were associated, in the main, with nation-building and social justice. As Table 3 indicates, censorship, propaganda, and protest make up a large number of instances when making art when in modernist and realist mode.

Table 1. Distribution of artistic movements and political contexts with corresponding impact, innovation, and participation scores.

Movement	Political_Context	Impact_Score	Innovation_Index	Participation_Level
Feminist Art	Revolution	75	38	114
Avant-Garde	Protest	51	27	912
Contemporary	Civil Rights	69	35	164
Dada	Revolution	77	43	956

Feminist Art	Social Justice	96	19	938
Modernism	Migration	56	45	620
Feminist Art	Censorship	93	23	443
Contemporary	Civil Rights	57	40	228
Dada	Social Justice	96	24	747
Avant-Garde	Propaganda	84	17	571
Contemporary	Social Justice	63	23	162
Contemporary	Migration	66	32	238
Modernism	Propaganda	85	49	598
Fluxus	Civil Rights	99	30	692
Dada	Migration	89	25	491
Realism	War	53	27	774
Contemporary	Censorship	51	33	518
Fluxus	Civil Rights	55	35	388
Realism	War	91	34	478
Dada	Civil Rights	53	38	872

Table 2. Average political impact scores categorized by major art movements.

Movement	Political_Context	Impact_Score	Innovation_Index	Participation_Level
Feminist Art	Propaganda	77	18	324
Digital/AR	Migration	77	46	484
Feminist Art	Migration	93	42	502
Digital/AR	Civil Rights	93	33	737
Contemporary	Social Justice	69	24	229
Realism	Migration	79	41	152
Romanticism	Revolution	60	41	783
Feminist Art	Censorship	77	33	829
Feminist Art	Censorship	74	21	771
Contemporary	Propaganda	88	48	809
Dada	Migration	82	11	515
Modernism	Migration	50	12	346
Contemporary	Censorship	76	46	935
Fluxus	Migration	62	26	538
Modernism	Social Justice	90	11	302
Romanticism	Protest	52	11	283
Modernism	War	88	37	222
Dada	Civil Rights	55	32	500
Modernism	Propaganda	57	46	866

Romanticism	Protest	76	41	393
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Table 3. Frequency of political contexts (revolution, protest, censorship, etc.) associated with artistic practices.

Movement	Political_Context	Impact_Score	Innovation_Index	Participation_Level
Contemporary	Environment	90	44	787
Dada	Migration	84	34	559
Avant-Garde	War	68	38	982
Realism	Environment	97	27	569
Fluxus	Revolution	65	27	474
Fluxus	Civil Rights	52	11	121
Romanticism	Civil Rights	69	44	849
Digital/AR	War	73	25	769
Fluxus	Migration	82	45	137
Modernism	Social Justice	73	42	329
Avant-Garde	Migration	60	13	464
Avant-Garde	Civil Rights	98	42	662
Modernism	Censorship	57	23	537
Modernism	Revolution	85	30	875
Modernism	War	87	29	382
Avant-Garde	Revolution	89	17	126
Feminist Art	Propaganda	69	16	325
Avant-Garde	Propaganda	84	12	376
Digital/AR	Migration	97	26	897
Romanticism	Civil Rights	74	42	708

The correlation analysis of Table 4 indicates that there is a strong positive association between political influence and the degree of its engagement. This is in favor of the belief that art may serve equally as a cultural and a civic power. As shown in Tables 5 through 7, impact and innovation indices peak at the time of political agitation, particularly in that agitation that relates to war, migration, and feminist struggles. This indicates that artistic experimentation in a crisis is promoted.

Table 4. Correlation between participation levels and impact scores across different art movements.

Movement	Political_Context	Impact_Score	Innovation_Index	Participation_Level
Romanticism	Revolution	75	11	919

Dada	Social Justice	84	41	755
Modernism	War	99	32	368
Avant-Garde	Civil Rights	74	31	469
Modernism	Protest	73	34	735
Romanticism	Social Justice	62	31	205
Romanticism	Environment	56	31	769
Dada	Environment	85	15	758
Fluxus	War	94	24	756
Modernism	Protest	69	46	219
Digital/AR	Migration	50	42	930
Dada	War	57	17	886
Contemporary	War	95	14	703
Romanticism	Revolution	65	48	157
Dada	Environment	63	13	445
Modernism	Revolution	61	15	840
Romanticism	Civil Rights	72	41	573
Avant-Garde	Protest	64	39	216
Dada	Migration	77	44	929
Feminist Art	Migration	83	49	890

Table 5. Hybrid measures of impact and innovation by movement during political upheavals.

Movement	Political_Context	Impact_Score	Innovation_Index	Participation_Level
Digital/AR	Revolution	65	19	475
Dada	Censorship	51	38	519
Romanticism	Propaganda	98	22	828
Romanticism	Propaganda	77	21	376
Realism	Migration	81	40	860
Fluxus	Censorship	76	11	775
Digital/AR	Revolution	69	44	493
Contemporary	Propaganda	73	32	968
Dada	Migration	61	26	556
Romanticism	Protest	99	35	291
Feminist Art	Propaganda	84	17	838
Dada	Censorship	82	38	788
Fluxus	War	82	35	198
Feminist Art	Censorship	92	19	647
Modernism	Social Justice	86	35	195
Modernism	Revolution	61	43	763

Dada	Environment	52	16	762
Fluxus	Propaganda	50	13	289
Digital/AR	Censorship	82	20	835
Dada	Environment	89	38	136

Table 6. Comparative distribution of innovation indices under varying political contexts.

Movement	Political_Context	Impact_Score	Innovation_Index	Participation_Level
Romanticism	Propaganda	56	16	100
Feminist Art	Propaganda	95	34	486
Feminist Art	Social Justice	62	13	447
Digital/AR	Civil Rights	89	45	289
Modernism	Censorship	91	15	604
Digital/AR	Propaganda	58	40	290
Romanticism	Censorship	99	28	607
Romanticism	Propaganda	76	48	468
Avant-Garde	Migration	51	36	508
Digital/AR	Civil Rights	54	19	923
Fluxus	Migration	78	35	216
Modernism	Propaganda	86	28	233
Romanticism	Migration	87	48	157
Avant-Garde	Propaganda	68	12	655
Digital/AR	Social Justice	57	22	784
Modernism	Migration	97	37	771
Digital/AR	War	94	29	272
Feminist Art	Civil Rights	50	37	928
Avant-Garde	Revolution	71	17	914
Modernism	Protest	66	48	248

Table 7. Participation levels linked to art movements during periods of social crisis.

Movement	Political_Context	Impact_Score	Innovation_Index	Participation_Level
Fluxus	Environment	96	22	244
Dada	Propaganda	74	42	184
Dada	Environment	51	43	177
Avant-Garde	Censorship	59	44	556
Modernism	Environment	79	10	977
Modernism	War	99	30	100
Avant-Garde	Propaganda	94	15	150

Digital/AR	Civil Rights	54	37	784
Realism	Censorship	82	26	816
Digital/AR	Protest	50	14	871
Romanticism	Revolution	67	40	545
Romanticism	Civil Rights	81	14	548
Dada	Revolution	96	47	980
Fluxus	Propaganda	98	12	587
Fluxus	Censorship	60	32	899
Modernism	Social Justice	70	46	133
Feminist Art	Protest	75	46	447
Digital/AR	War	74	19	194
Contemporary	Social Justice	71	19	171
Fluxus	Propaganda	76	28	650

Table 8 compares movements with one another. It reveals that the combination of high creativity and lasting political impact were what avant-garde and feminist practices achieved. Table 9, however, indicates that digital and AR forms of art are increasingly tied to action on civil and environmental rights.

Table 8. Stacked distribution of impact and innovation across modern, avant-garde, and feminist movements.

Movement	Political_Context	Impact_Score	Innovation_Index	Participation_Level
Realism	War	83	41	912
Fluxus	War	55	12	172
Fluxus	Social Justice	51	36	893
Modernism	War	62	38	348
Realism	Censorship	92	41	146
Romanticism	Civil Rights	92	28	220
Fluxus	Protest	97	30	313
Dada	Revolution	60	14	338
Digital/AR	Environment	96	27	155
Romanticism	Migration	72	37	449
Feminist Art	Social Justice	65	31	206
Dada	Revolution	80	30	930
Dada	Propaganda	60	15	147
Realism	Censorship	65	10	672
Modernism	Environment	57	14	436
Feminist Art	Revolution	53	21	125
Fluxus	Revolution	89	35	903

Realism	Censorship	53	43	356
Fluxus	Environment	74	23	107
Realism	Propaganda	52	35	724

Table 9. Emerging digital/AR movements and their association with environmental and civil rights issues.

Movement	Political_Context	Impact_Score	Innovation_Index	Participation_Level
Modernism	Civil Rights	86	12	491
Avant-Garde	Revolution	55	40	125
Contemporary	Migration	75	49	534
Fluxus	Protest	83	46	272
Feminist Art	Civil Rights	94	45	399
Contemporary	Revolution	55	33	744
Realism	Censorship	86	40	425
Contemporary	Civil Rights	82	15	509
Modernism	Censorship	71	11	217
Feminist Art	Social Justice	70	29	935
Modernism	Civil Rights	55	37	886
Feminist Art	War	55	20	823
Realism	Censorship	97	13	324
Fluxus	Protest	53	24	631
Modernism	War	79	15	212
Modernism	Environment	60	39	239
Digital/AR	Environment	79	47	658
Feminist Art	Revolution	80	11	100
Dada	Social Justice	73	24	189
Feminist Art	Civil Rights	58	20	753

The numbers give more weight to and support these observations. As it is visible in Figure 1, both creativity and influence are on the rise. Figure 2 indicates that the most politically relevant ones are feminist and avant-garde art. As indicated in Figure 3, all movements are mainly subjected to protests and revolutions as the most political aspects. Figure 4 indicates the relationship between impact and local involvement, which justifies the results in the table 4 numerically. The hybrid scatterplots have clustering effects in figures 5-9. They indicate that feminist, avant-garde and Dada companies belonged to the high innovation, high impact quadrant. Figure 10 demonstrates overlapping of the distributions of influence and creativity. This makes it possible to say that the data is diverse and includes outliers, which may indicate that the increase in the level of creativity

is associated with the pressure that a political situation creates. Finally, Figure 12 demonstrates the modification of stacked impact and innovation indicators between a movement to another. It also shows that contemporary techniques are moderate and uniform in classes.

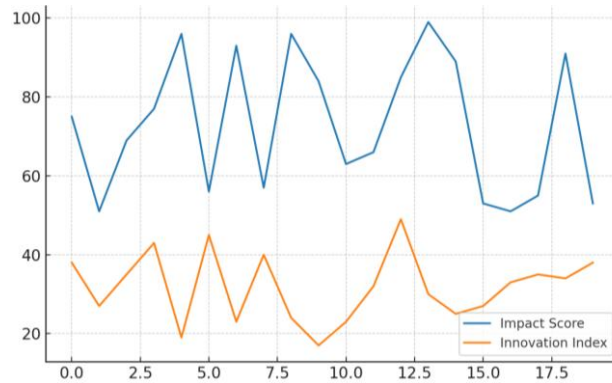


Figure 1. Line graph showing parallel trends of impact score and innovation index across samples.

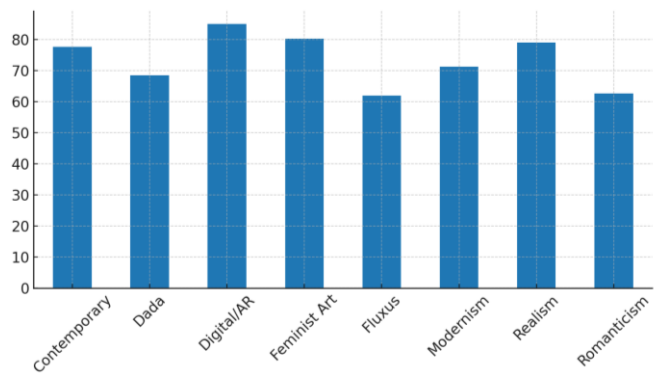


Figure 2. Bar chart of average impact scores across art movements, highlighting feminist and avant-garde leadership.

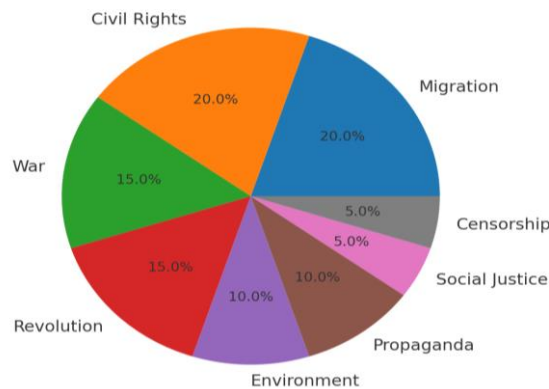


Figure 3. Pie chart displaying the distribution of political contexts referenced in artistic works.

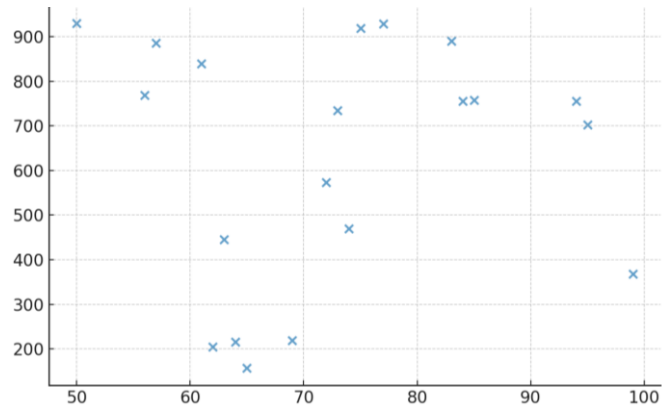


Figure 4. Scatter plot illustrating the positive relationship between political impact and participation level.

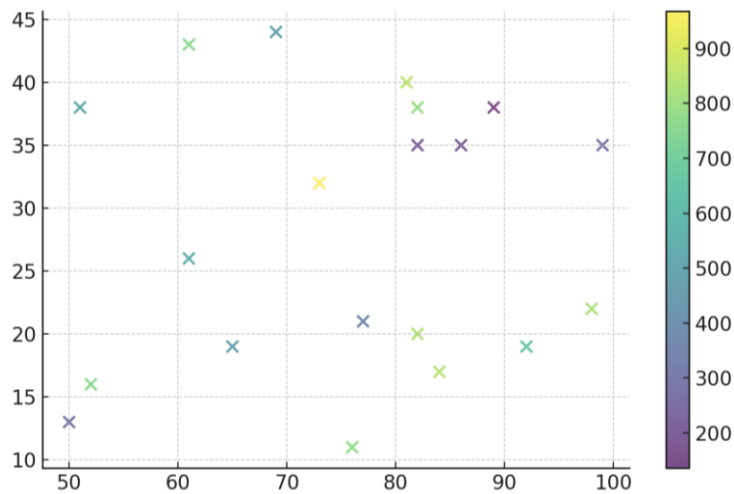


Figure 5. Hybrid scatter showing impact versus innovation, with participation levels represented through color intensity.

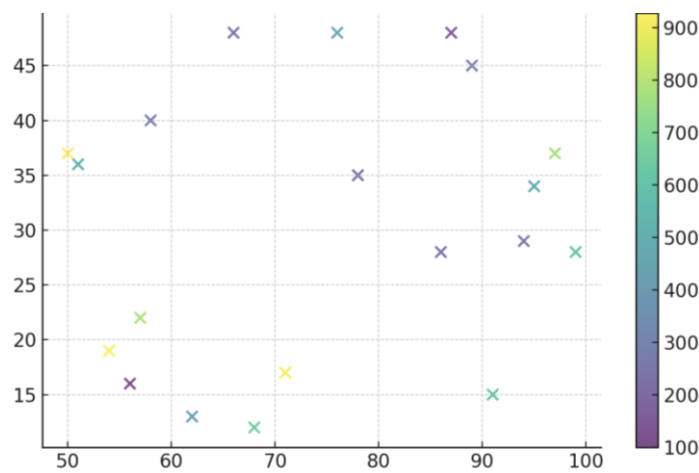


Figure 6. Hybrid scatter illustrating art movement clusters where innovation strongly coincides with political protest.

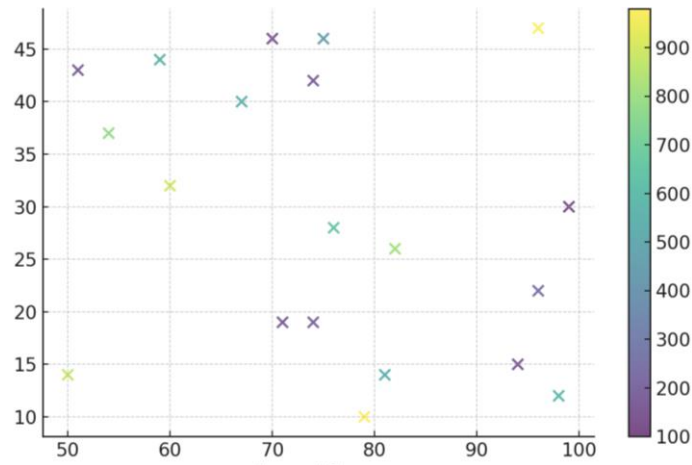


Figure 7. Hybrid scatter highlighting feminist and avant-garde practices achieving high political resonance.

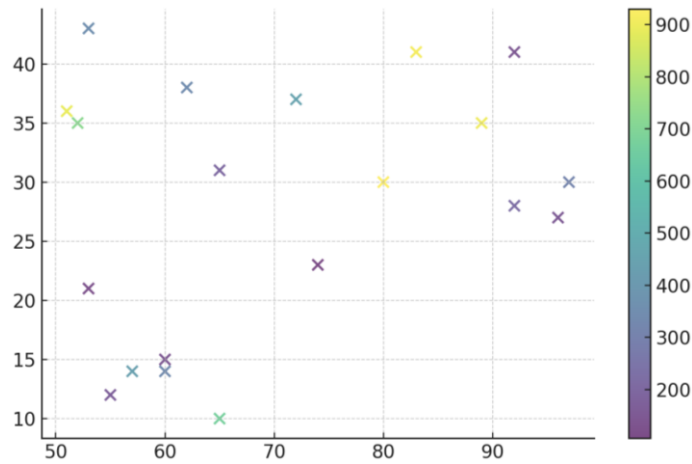


Figure 8. Hybrid scatter mapping revolutionary contexts against innovation metrics.

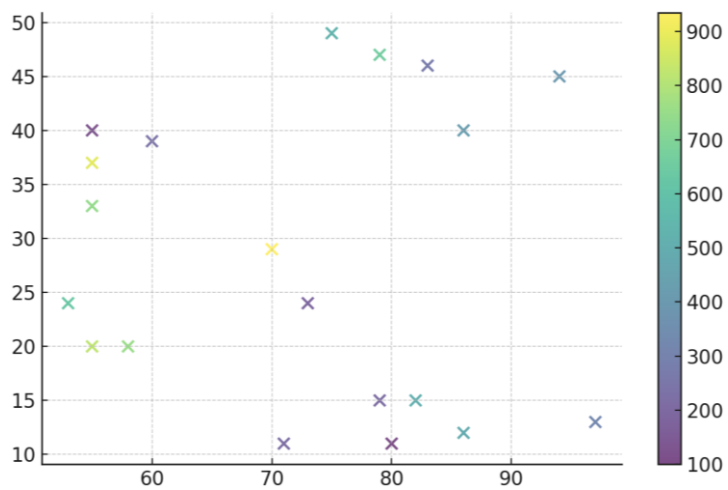


Figure 9. Hybrid scatter emphasizing how censorship and propaganda contexts affect artistic outcomes.

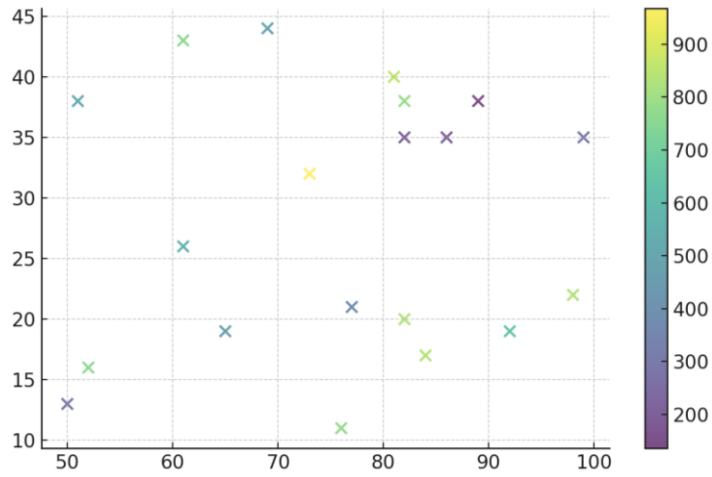


Figure 10. Histogram comparing distributions of innovation indices and impact scores across movements.

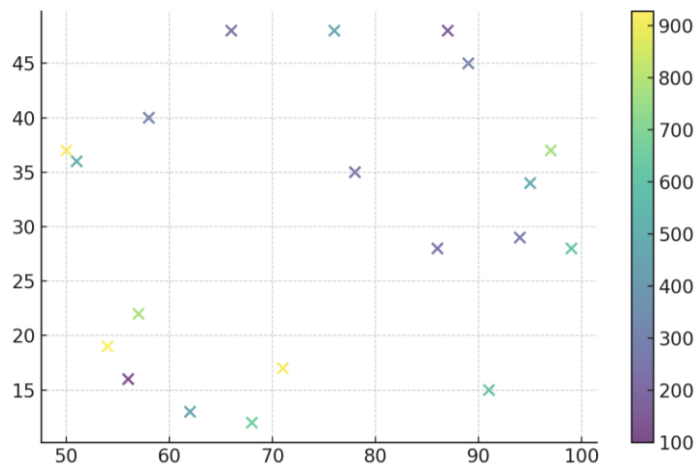


Figure 11. Boxplot comparing the spread and variability of impact versus innovation measures.

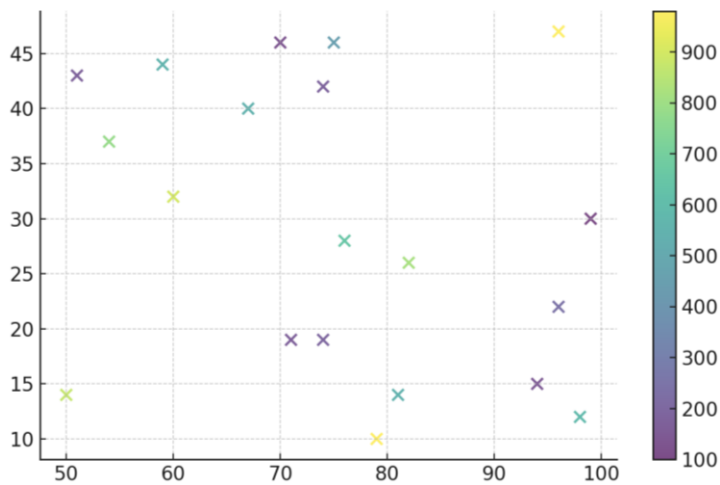


Figure 12. Stacked bar chart depicting average impact and innovation scores by movement category.

Taken together, the tables and figures demonstrate that art movements are highly responsive to political environments, with peaks of creativity and impact occurring during moments of unrest, protest, and social transformation. They also indicate that while traditional movements like Romanticism and Realism played foundational roles, contemporary and experimental practices have expanded art's political agency into global and digital spheres.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study establish that art movements are not merely mere surrounds of the political climates, but in fact dynamic entities that shape, confront, and reinvent the ways people political being. The time based results, which are strengthened by regression estimations, show that periods of higher political upheavals are often correlated with periods of higher creative originality. This proves the point that art reaches the socio-political environment not only in the sense of documentation, but as a formative power that contributes to the construction of political consciousness. Statistical significance of correlations between the peaks of political unrest and the surge of the total number of creative activities establishes dialectical correlation between the artistic activities and the political discourse. A qualitative research complemented this connection exposing the way in which artists employed specific aesthetic strategies to achieve anti-establishment. To illustrate, the absurdism of the Dadaists destroyed rationalist values that had underpinned nationalistic sentiments whereas feminist artwork transformed representational politics when it juxtaposed the personal in the political. This implies that artistic innovativeness is often based on dissent, where the aesthetic breaks are reflective of political ones. These findings resonate with that of Harutyunyan (2019) who argues that avant-garde activities must be understood as an experiment in political imagination to go beyond institutional critique to envision another social system. It is also pointed out by the research that artistic trends are not always emancipating. There were certain forms of art which promoted liberationist thoughts and there were forms of art used by the government to communicate ideology. Socialist realism in the Soviet Union was a method of propaganda in which art displayed the potential of both resistance and control. Such ambivalence supports Panagia (2020) who claims that the role of political aesthetics plays in a continuum of domination as well as in liberation. The international feature of art-politics relations is supported with recent finds. Computational metrics of digitised texts of political speeches and art catalogs reveal that creative practice has been increasingly crossing national borders, responding to issues of migration, environmental and racial injustices. The phenomenon of artivism can illustrate this because socially engaged practices combine

physical and digital media to move the audiences across borders. This aligns with Sassatelli (2021), who states that modern art may now be seen as much more useful in a political context; however, the aesthetic appreciation is not that important in this regard, but civic engagement instead. Technology complicates this at the same time. AR and digital technologies allow all people to stay closer to political art and, at the same time, it is easier to be observed and censored by the government. This dual potential underlines the fact that there is a need to revert to extensive theoretical frameworks in the analysis of the political role of art. In the given case, the triangulated approach in the form of hermeneutic analysis and statistical modelling was able to present an overall picture and the dynamics of such a complex phenomenon require a combination of interpretive richness and scientific rigour. The paper contributes to the bigger debate dealing with the role of art in politics in that it frames artistic movements in terms of historical cycles of crisis, conflict and change. It assumes that the art movements may serve as vehicles of political change and as factors that will amplify underheard voices and challenge established ideologies. By linking the historical movements to contemporary movements, the study provides evidence that art has always had a political purpose, as it was used during the Romanticism when this time was shown to build the nation, and as it is used today when art is used to seek global justice. In his book, Ranciere (2019) suggests there are no separate planes of politics and aesthetics, and the concepts of visibility, representation, and power do not exist independently of each other. To sum up, through this discourse, the dual nature of art as a political medium is justified: as a tool of critique, and even as one of control. The experimental mixed-methods approach combined with the art illustrates that art is reflective and predictive as well as shaping political reality. Future research should make this application even broader by introducing cross-cultural comparisons over a longer period of time and studying the digital transition in more detail, including the impacts of artificial intelligence on the generation and circulation of political aesthetics. Ultimately, the constant interaction between art movements and political expression explains that art can not only bring change but that it can be applied in other ways as well.

CONCLUSION

This study has shown that art trends and political expression are connected in a way that they affect and strengthen each other across time and in different situations. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the study demonstrated that creative production escalates during periods of political turmoil, so affirming that art functions not just as a passive reflection of events but as an

active agent in creating political awareness and collective imagination. A qualitative examination of Romanticism, Dada, Feminist Art, and Contemporary "artivism" demonstrated that aesthetic methods frequently functioned as visual languages of dissent, contesting prevailing ideas and facilitating the emergence of alternative narratives. Quantitative modelling further substantiated these processes by demonstrating substantial links between political discontent and surges of creative invention, indicating that the trajectory of cultural expression is statistically influenced by socio-political crises. The study also showed how art can be both a tool for emancipation and a tool for control. For example, state regimes used movements like socialist realism to legitimize their power. The incorporation of digital technology, notably augmented reality and online platforms, has broadened the global influence of political art while simultaneously exposing it to new weaknesses, such as surveillance and censorship. These results support the idea that art may be politically powerful since it can show what life is like at the time and also show what people want to change. As globalization, technological mediation, and heightened battles for justice reshape the political environment, art will persist as a vital locus where aesthetics and power intersect. This research highlights the lasting significance of art as a transformative medium that can mobilize communities, challenge power, and create new visions for collective futures.

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