

Research Article

# Analysis of Gender Paradigms in the West and the East: An Example of Visual Arts

Alimova Nargiza\* 

Department of Ethics and Aesthetics, National University of Uzbekistan, Tashkent, Uzbekistan

## Abstract

The article focuses on the differences between Eastern and Western art, characteristics of the representation of women's images in Eastern and Western art, and aesthetic criteria regarding women's images in Eastern and Western art. The author emphasized the need to understand the image of women in Eastern and Western visual artworks in different cultural and historical contexts and concluded that studying the image of women in visual art can help one better understand regional gender paradigm differences. To understand the representation of women in Eastern and Western cultures, it is necessary to first understand the differences and similarities between these two cultures in order to gain a deeper understanding of how women are portrayed in these cultures. A few of the differences that can be found between East and West include the geographical structure, the ethno-cultural colors, the social outlooks, and the aesthetic ideals of the two regions. In addition to these factors, it is also important to consider how the visual arts of the two regions differ in their methods, materials, and religious, philosophical and philosophical perspectives. Throughout the article, the author discusses these aspects in great detail, showing specific approaches as to how the female image is represented in Eastern and Western visual art traditions. As such, the article provides valuable insight into the cultural divide between East and West and how their respective artistic styles have interacted with each other.

## Keywords

Female Image, Visual Arts, East And West Visual Arts, Eastern And Western Woman, Cultural Differences, Gender Paradigms, Image Transformation

## 1. Introduction

The social, economic, spiritual, cultural, and moral development of any society in a certain sense will also be associated with the attitude towards women in this society and the level of their social activity. As a consequence, the works created by the creators of that society reflect this.

Art is a form of social consciousness, and an integral part of human history. Throughout history, it has reflected the desires, dreams, aspirations, spiritual needs, and aesthetic ideals of different nations in different eras, the reflection of existence in

the social consciousness at different times. Undoubtedly, the image of women is one of the most frequently addressed subjects in art. The formation of attitudes towards women in the East and the West and the transformation of gender relations in the course of social development can be analyzed by researching the visual artworks created during that period.

The depiction of women in Eastern and Western visual arts, and the unique approaches of the creators of the two regions to the creation of a female image are among the topics that have

\*Corresponding author: [nargisalimova0104@gmail.com](mailto:nargisalimova0104@gmail.com) (Alimova Nargiza)

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been researched and discussed for many years. Throughout the centuries, the representatives of the existing schools of fine arts in both regions have addressed the image of women in their works. The image of women in Western and Eastern visual arts is very different from each other, and to understand this difference, it is important to understand the cultural and historical context of the regions.

## 2. Methods

Issues such as the role of women in social life, the social attitude towards them, and the representation of women's figures in works of art or concrete creative work served as the basis for many scientific studies. In general, women-related topics have been studied to one degree or another since antiquity. The expression of the female image in various art forms and its reflection in the social artistic consciousness affects the formation of the attitude towards women in society and whether the attributes of a beautiful woman in the future correspond to socio-moral measures and national and universal aesthetic principles.

Scientific research methods such as source analysis, induction, deduction, systematic approach, comparison, generalization, and analysis were used in the article. These research methods allowed the author to conclude from the sources they studied. For example, source analysis was used to analyze the sources and conclude, while induction was used to make generalizations from specific instances and deductions were used to draw logical conclusions from the evidence.

## 3. Results and Discussion

Common differences between the East and the West. The concepts of East and West do not imply only geographical latitude today. They embody many civilizations, and ethnocultural units, which today differ from each other in sociocultural, axiological, religious, social, spiritual, moral, and aesthetic terms.

When analyzing the dialectic of East and West, it is necessary to first focus on the following specific aspects:

'The East' and 'the West' meant different geographical areas in different historical periods. For the earliest, Ancient World (Asia, Europe, and Africa), the direction of sunrise was called East, and the direction of sunset was called West. Later, the peoples around the Mediterranean Sea, in particular, the ancient Greeks, considered all the countries located to the east of them as the East and the Apennine Peninsula, the Iberian Peninsula, and the north part of Africa (for example, Carthage), where the ancient culture spread, were considered as the West. Due to the spread of Christianity and Islam, the terms 'the West' and 'the East' have also been adapted to the geography of these world religions. In the last two or three centuries, these two terms were used to distinguish the capi-

talist world and non-capitalist regions, and in the last century, the systems of capitalism and socialism.

In Eastern and Western cultures, there is a phenomenon of mutual exchange and migration of development. Both the East and the West favored the use of ready-made 'patterns' in cultural development and civilizational processes. In other words, development has been constantly moving from the East to the West and from the West to the East from time to time, and both regions have effectively benefited from each other's cultural achievements. For example, in the IX-XII centuries, which are considered the Eastern Renaissance, the scientific and cultural heritage of ancient Greek and Roman authors was assimilated, translated, and enriched in the East. And in the following centuries, the West re-appropriated mills and baths from the East. The works of Ibn Sina, Ibn Rusht, Farghani, Khorezmi, and Mirza Ulugbek were translated and studied into Latin and other European languages [1]. These processes continue even now.

In Eastern and Western social consciousness, moral and aesthetic categories mean different content. For today's West, human rights are the most fundamental moral value, while in the East, the interest of the community takes priority. While the West promotes individualism, the East favors socialization. The difference between values, principles, and categories depends on the forms of moral, religious, and political outlooks prevailing in the regions. Sometimes aesthetic principles and categories can be understood in two different, contradictory ways in two regions. For instance, for the West, the human body is considered a mature example of beauty, many 'masterpieces' of ancient works of art depict characters half-naked or unclothed. From the Renaissance period of the West, especially in the Baroque style, this tendency can be observed to intensify again. In the East, the opposite of this process can be observed. For example, in the art form under the influence of Islam, the image of the human body in a naked form is not found at all. The image of the naked human body is considered to be an example of beauty for the West and ugliness for the East.

Even though there are many contradictions regarding the use of terms, these two geographical areas can be conditionally separated from each other. The ethnic units that lived in the regions of China, Japan, India, Southeast Asia, Central Asia, and Ancient Asia in a settled or nomadic way can be interpreted as Eastern. The regions in the northern part of the Mediterranean Sea that were affected by the Antique World and later European culture can be classified as the West.

Differences between Eastern and Western visual arts. Western and Eastern visual arts differ from each other according to the styles, tools, and materials used, cultural environment, aesthetic ideals, and religious and philosophical views. For example, the materials used in painting and sculpture are different for the West and the East. In the past, Western painting mainly used thick hemp cloth, while traditional Korean, Japanese, and Chinese art preferred to paint on

thinner paper made of rice. While Western sculpture uses mainly metal and stone as materials, Eastern sculpture also uses textile products and wood in addition to these.

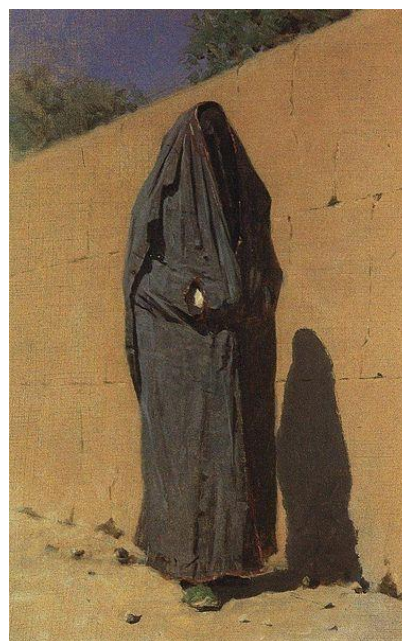
In terms of aesthetic ideals, the West emphasized the beauty and physical perfection of the human body. In the East, for example, in Islamic art, special attention was paid to Islamic patterns and geometric shapes. Or, in Western art, drawing complex images using different colors of paint were valued, while in China and Japan, calligraphy using simple ink was elevated to the level of high art. Cultural cults also had a great influence on Western and Eastern visual art. In the East, art focused on social institutions such as the family, and art was viewed as a social product. In history, you can find works of artists from Japan and West Africa who did not even put their signatures on their works. On the contrary, in the West, attention was focused on individuality, the genius of the artist, and liberal humanism was placed in the central place. In addition, the progress of Western and Eastern visual art was heavily influenced by the factor of religion. In Western visual art, initially, the ancient Greek polytheistic views, then the ideas of the Christian religion inspired art and encouraged the expression of religious themes in art. In the East, sculpture developed under the influence of Buddhism, and literature, architecture, miniatures, painting, and calligraphy flourished due to Islam [2].

Western and Eastern painters tend to use different perspectives to represent the visual world geometrically and metaphorically [3], and, in our opinion, this is completely natural. Audiences representing different cultural and social groups may have different aesthetic impressions from the same visual image [4]. For example, according to the results of some studies, people living in the Eastern region, who belong to the cultural environment of this region, considered the works of visual art that belong to the region where they live to be more beautiful than those created based on Western styles. But Western art lovers have the opposite opinion. This proves that cultural relevance plays an important role in the formation of aesthetic ideals such as beauty. Cultural differences can help explain that the same aesthetic objects are objects of beauty for some viewers and not for others [5].

The image of women in Western visual arts. The cultural, social, and historical context in which artists created their work greatly influences the creation of images of women in Western art. In the visual arts of different periods, women are depicted as goddesses, religious ideals, objects of beauty, and sexual desire. In ancient Greece, women were often depicted as idealized figures, with perfect proportions and graceful poses. These visual images embody femininity, such as the elegance, beauty, and ideality of women. Due to the influence of Christian-scholastic views on art in the Middle Ages, features such as paleness, weakness, and suffering from pain were shown in the visual image of women. In the Renaissance period, artists such as Leonardo da Vinci and Raphael painted women with idealized beauty, portraying them as pure, graceful, and elegant. In the Baroque period, artists like Peter

Paul Rubens and Rembrandt van Rijn painted women with voluptuous curves, emphasizing their sensuality and eroticism. In the modern era, artists like Pablo Picasso and Salvador Dali portrayed women in a more abstract and surrealistic style.

One of the themes addressed in Western visual art as well as Eastern visual art is, undoubtedly, the glorification of the Eastern woman and her beauty. European art began to address this topic from New History, from the 17th-18th centuries. Europe, which claimed cultural hegemony in the 19th century, divided the world into Europeans and Others (non-Europeans). Asia, Africa, and the Arab world were culturally considered 'marginal areas' for Europe. Thanks to travelers such as Marco Polo, Athanasius Nikitin, and Herman Vambery, intellectuals of the West got their first idea about social life, religion, culture, and art of the East. In the works of Shakespeare, Cervantes, and Montesquieu, representatives of Arab or Turkish nationality also appeared, and artists were inspired by them to paint their oriental pictures. However, Orientalism, in particular, the active penetration of the Eastern theme in visual art, was closely related to Western imperialism. In the 19th century, Western art, particularly French and Russian visual arts, began to focus on the theme of Muslim culture, particularly the women of the Islamic world.



**Figure 1.** V.V. Vereshchagin. 'Uzbek Woman in Tashkent', 1873.

Initially, French artists J. D. Engr, E. Declarois, E. Fromanten, T. Chauss'rio, and P. Delaroche created many works on the theme of the East, in most of them the central role was played by women of the East. Most of these painters depicted their heroes in their works in the nude, undressed, or semi-dressed form. In 19th-century Europe, it was considered immoral to depict a contemporary, for example, a French or Italian woman naked. But the depiction of non-European

peoples, including Eastern women, in the naked state was not considered immoral. Because Asian peoples were moral 'Alien' or 'Them' for Europeans and were not accepted as 'Us'. This was undoubtedly the effect of cultural hegemony. In contrast, in early Renaissance paintings depicting the physical beauty of women, mythological figures (such as Venus or Danae) were depicted, rather than oriental women.

The painting 'Odalisque with Slave', painted by Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres in 1839, depicts the harem of Eastern monarchs. The picture shows an odalisque (a maid), whose body is partially covered with a silk cloth, resting while listening to the music of the slaves. Or Eugène Delacroix's painting 'Odalisque' (1857) depicts a maid in full display of her physical beauty, smiling at the viewer [6].

In general, these images are the product of the artist's imagination, and in the social consciousness of Europeans, the exotic image of the East is reflected by the physical beauty of women. Russian artists used a relatively realistic approach when depicting an oriental woman. For example, V.V. Vereshchagin's painting 'Uzbek Woman in Tashkent' painted in 1873 depicts an Eastern Muslim woman wrapped in a paranja-burqa (figure 1).

With this, the artist emphasizes that only a spouse can see the physical beauty of the oriental woman, the perfection of her body and that the chastity of the Eastern woman is her greatest wealth [6]. While the artists who portrayed the Oriental woman in Western art before Vereshchagin was interested in exotic subjects such as the sultan's harem, and concubines in an extramarital relationship, Vereshchagin tried to illuminate the essence of the Oriental woman of that time.

Image of women in Eastern visual art. In Eastern visual art, a completely different approach to depicting women's image has been formed. Here, women were depicted not as real persons, but as symbolic figures, a generalized image. Initially, in most regions of the East (India [7], China [8], etc.), the image of women appeared as the goddess of fertility and productivity, a symbol of luck and prosperity. Later, the image of women reflected their place in social life and their duties as mothers and obedient spouses. During the 16th-19th centuries (except in the Islamic world), women began to appear in the art of the East in socially active images such as warriors (for example, Hua Mulan in China [9]) or in the image of the ideal of beauty.

The difference between the views of the perfect image of women is more clearly manifested in painting and sculpture than in other forms of art. In the visual arts of the countries of the Far East - China and Japan, which are usually recognized as typical Eastern art, the attitude towards women was quite different from that in the West. For example, Chinese portraits are amazing not only by depicting the aesthetic features of a person's appearance but also by their ability to depict the inner world and intelligence of a person. In European fine art, especially in the pictures drawn by Renaissance artists, the main attention was paid to the physical perfection of a person.

The difference in aesthetic ideals is most noticeable con-

cerning beauty. Women considered the aesthetic ideal in ancient China had to have small feet, they should take small steps, and had to walk stooped like a willow. Delicate, thin, long fingers, soft palms, soft skin, a large forehead with a pale appearance, small ears, black hair, thin black eyebrows, bright lips, and a small round mouth - these are considered the most important aesthetic requirements for the appearance of a classical Chinese woman's beauty.

In traditional Japanese visual art, the depiction of women's beauty mostly was hidden the physical features that indicate their femininity. The ideal beautiful Japanese woman is depicted as a young teenage girl wearing a kimono. Kimono simultaneously hides the flaws and advantages of a woman's body, only the shoulders and waist of the woman wearing it are noticeable. For the Japanese, external beauty was considered part of inner beauty. Therefore, in Japan, women not only strived to be beautiful but also learned to play music, recite poetry, and have beautiful conversations. For Japanese fine art, the standards of the aesthetic ideal in the female image were thin long eyes, large lips and a small mouth, a face close to the shape of a circle, and full cheeks. Over time, these standards have also changed, with a pear-shaped head shape, reduced shape of the nose and mouth, small line-like eyes, and straight, long hair becoming signs of women's beauty [10].

In the Central Asian school of fine arts, in particular, in the school of miniatures, special attention is paid to the aesthetic criteria of the female figure's appearance. For example, Kamoliddin Behzod's miniatures for Amir Hisrav Dehlavi's 'Layli and Majnun' (1492) and Fariddin Attar's 'Mantiq ut-Tayr' (1494) focused on the aesthetic criteria of women's appearance. Also, in modern Uzbek visual arts, female beauty, grace, and sophistication are vividly expressed in the works of Chori Akhmarov, 'Dancer', 'Nodira', 'Poetress', 'Kizlar-khan', 'Mother and Child' within the scope of oriental social aesthetic requirements [11].

Despite the differences in the representation of women in Western and Eastern art, there have been instances where the two have intersected. For example, during the 19th century, Western artists such as Vincent van Gogh and Claude Monet were heavily influenced by Japanese art, which led to the incorporation of Eastern themes and styles in their work. Similarly, during the 20th century, Chinese artists such as Wu Guanzhong and Zao Wou-ki were heavily influenced by Western art, which led to the incorporation of Western techniques and styles in their work [12].

## 4. Conclusion

Based on the analysis of how women are represented in visual arts in the West and the East, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. It is important to consider the cultural and historical context of works of art when analyzing the image of women in Eastern and Western visual art. Visual artworks in the two regions often reflect the differences in



gender paradigms in the two regions due to factors such as religion, culture, and art style. Additionally, the materials, tools, types, and styles of paint used in the creation of a work of visual art had a significant impact.

2. It is generally accepted that in order to create the image of the woman in Western and Eastern visual arts, the first step is to understand her role within society and to feel who she is as a member of society. No matter where they live in the world, artists continue to be inspired by the beauty of women regardless of whether they are creating their works in the East or the West.
3. It is one of the characteristics of both Eastern and Western visual arts that the artist in Western painting focuses on the main image, and that image is clearly distinguished from the general image, as in women's portraits, Madonnas, and antique Venuses. In the East, for example, in China and Japan, the main image is considered a part of the overall image of the country.
4. In the depiction of women, the aesthetic values of modern visual art of the East embody the modern artistic and aesthetic views of the West as well as the national mental characteristics of the nation. Modern types of visual art are generalizing the aesthetic features of Eastern and Western art, and efforts are being made to create a global image of a woman in global visual art. This is related to the creation of the global gender paradigm today, as well as, the convergence between cultures.

## Author Contributions

Alimova Nargiza is the sole author. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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