

I mainly confined on
specialized papers
and always



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I see this essay as a tool that allows one to orientate oneself in a very fascinating study sector like the Psychoanalysis of Art.

This is going to be a synthesis and interpretation of a bibliography vast as the subject itself, problem that I already had before. The analysis of the material was set to the purpose of showing an excursus of the ideas in the most efficient combinations, trying to show a panoramic which represents the study of the chosen subject, not forgetting the original idea, based on the desire to know the rich world of visual art in a psychological key. This study tries to show the contribution of many authors who dealt with this matter, renouncing the delimitation of domain of the different backgrounds and considering each one as a bringer of experience and knowledge, according to one's opinion and point of view. I'll offer some indications on the possibilities, the results, the limits, the prospectives and the problems aroused by this fascinating field of investigation to better explain what my studies were really about.

During the bibliographical research on the matter I was met with a really vast literary interdisciplinary production curated by the most disparate professionals: critics, philosophers, literary professors, theorists, and of course, psychologists; this drove me to look for more Italian texts to better understand these difficult writings full of technical alien words, so my bibliography will mostly show that. Until the 1950s the psychoanalytic researches on and of art were pretty limited and mainly confined on specialized papers and always discussed by psychologists, never by artists. From the 1960s, especially after 1967-'68, psychoanalysis spread culturally, resulting in a proliferation of literature expressly dedicated to the theme of <https://assignbuster.com/i-mainly-confined-on-specialized-papers-and-always/>

the relationship between art and psychoanalysis on magazines, newspapers and reviews by critics, theorists, and art and literature historians.

A certain disdain was soon to come and so it did, as we can see from the dates of my bibliography that show an average of 30 year old texts. Art psychology uses theories and psychological methods to analyse artistic productions and phenomenons. Its field of investigation prevalently looks at figurative art and unites different studies directed to interpret different artistic productions: from literature to painting, from sculpting to music. The research applied to art includes many experimental techniques, amongst them clinical surveys on various types of art specifically made by patients. This comprehends four distinct areas of study: perceptive mechanisms, both visual and motor; the cognitive process like imagination, memory, language, creativity and perception; personality, with its motivational, emotional and aptitudinal components; the production or practice, intended as representative, graphic and symbolic capacity. (Harre', 1983)Originally the psychoanalysis of art was developed in the context of debates on the evaluation of memory drawn drawings, on the link between genius and madness and on the nature of perception and imagination. Among the founders of the scientific psychology of art you can surely name Wundt and Fechner, who introduced the experimental method in psychology.

Fechner also recognized a set of generalized rules and constants in the artistic experience, distinguishing it in philosophical aesthetic, and empiric aesthetic. He conducted some experimental researches on these alleged principles of visual aesthetic and had the merit to have created the first premises on the psychometric researches on aesthetics. (Galimberti, 1992)
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Some empirical investigations conducted on aesthetic problems inspired many scholars, amongst them Eysenck, to continue with the experiments on sensations and on the aesthetic discrimination. According to Arnheim the psychoanalysis of art has until now offered just poor results, because the psychologist that deals with it doesn't have the sense of artistic experience and the art theorist doesn't have any notion of psychology. This is one of the reasons i was interested in this matter, having studied psychology for 5 years.

He furthermore says that art is an activity of the mind that is subjected to psychology, useful for the complete description and comprehension of the human mind. Every sector of psychology has artistic applications somehow: from the study of perception to research of motivation, from the study of personality and its relative disorders to social psychology. Arnheim thinks of art as a tool to make the nature of things visible and that allows you to comprehend what the artist really means. (1996)The three main schools on the matter of art psychology are three and they represent completely different views: there is the psychoanalytical school, the socio-historical one and the Gestalt one. (Gianni Gallino 1989) The existence of different approaches is useful to the comprehension of the matter. For example, through the psychology of the Gestalt you have a base of researches on artistic perception, meanwhile with other forms of dynamic psychology there is an effort to more adequately interpret the art piece.

Psychoanalysis gives its contribution to art and to the knowledge of the creative process, offering an analytic observation of the art piece. In origin the analytic approach to aesthetic regarded the analysis of the piece itself, <https://assignbuster.com/i-mainly-confined-on-specialized-papers-and-always/>

considered like individual artistic creations, like it was for dreams. This application brought us to the discovery of repressed oedipal fantasies and to their expression masked in the artistic form, sublimated. Subsequently the analyst considered artists as they were neurotic patients, using their life history and their pieces to analyse the meaning of their artistic production and spot an eventual fil rouge (Grotjahn, 1957). The researches carried on psychoanalysis are divided in three essential themes: the investigation of an art piece, extended to the study of the behaviours and attitudes of the author and to the eventual message that wants to be transmitted; the analysis centered on the personality of the artist, referring to one or more pieces; the interpretation of pieces executed by patients that are already being psychologically followed, in which the character of the person and his or her artistic activity are fused together, while dreams, behaviours and credentials are examined separately (Gianni Gallino, 1989).

The encounter between art and psychoanalysis is expressed through the study of the mechanisms of the imagery through the interpretation of the piece and its language, and the creative associations with the dreams (Caroli, 1984). Psychoanalytic theory has centred the artistic studies on the creative impulses and the deep motivations, trying to unveil the irrational and intuitive elements of artistic production and their latent content; it has caught the reactions between the impressions of the artist's life, its experiences and its art and has allowed us to see the influence of childhood moments on artistic production. Freud affirms more and more times in his writings the extraordinary importance invested in childhood impressions; these very first experiences don't happen to the individual just by chance,

but they correspond to the first activities of the drive provisions inherent in oneself. (Freud, 1913) Melanie Klein joins this specific debate with her studies and analysis conducted on children, coming to identify in the very first phases of childhood development the base of a great part of the evolution of the adult individual. The author recognizes in the depressive position (infantile psychosis) the origin of artistic creativity and in the first experiences of the newborn the desire to reconstruct the lost object. Psychoanalysis has dedicated much space to artistic interpretation and creativity, maybe because this field offers a direct access to obscure zones of human psyche. The charm exercised by creative personalities and by their art induces us to think that art constitutes a second main road to the knowledge of the subconscious. The artistic or literary creations become the privileged objects for the psychoanalytical investigation (Chasseguet-Smirgel, 1971).

Freud tried to shed light both on the piece itself, so to decipher its message, and the relationship between it and the author's life . In this scope are the essays on the *Gradiva* by Jensen, on Michelangelo's *Moses* and on Leonardo Da Vinci; the latter work was considered the first psychoanalytic biography, where he tries to overcome the barrier between the ordinary and the pathological. With these studies Freud wasn't looking for the characteristics of artistic creativity in itself, but he was attempting to apply the mechanisms used in the analysis of neurotic people to the pieces of famous artists, demonstrating that the newly found mechanisms of psychoanalysis come into play with normal people too (Pagnin, 1977). The analysis of the *Gradiva*, first example of psychoanalytic interpretation of a literary piece, effectively

started the practice of the psychoanalysis of Art. It convinced Freud that a literary fantasy can not could be analysed as a dream, a fantasy or a lapsus. With the interpretation on the Amlet in an oedipal key, Freud linked the literary piece with the inner motives and the author's personality, clarifying the sources of his inspiration. The study of art contributes to grow of knowledge of man because it allows you to obtain extra-clinical tests on various aspects: the fantastic life of the individual, the relationship between the artist's biography and his piece and the relations between artistic creativity and ideational processes, that are studied in clinical settings. The artist surpasses his inibitions through the creation and expresses his or her psyche through the main themes of its symbolism, whereas for Freud it is the inner desires that are satisfied in the imagery of the art piece.

This latter is a symptom and consequentially an attempt to heal which acts as a compromise between the different drive forces, with the sole purpose of avoiding a conflict with removal. Freud greatly admired artists of every kind, with even a hint of envy for their superior gifts (Jones, 1962). Freud knew of and recognized the relationship between scientific and artistic instincts and speculated on their eventual conflicts and contrasts. In the artistic intuitions, he said, you can often find confirmation on ideas uncovered by analysts.

The scientists formulates the general rules of the psychological functioning through the observation of the conscious psychological processes of his patients; the poet (or artist in general), on the other hand, intuitively digs in his or her unconscious psychic processes and expresses artistically his or her findings. The purpose of analysis is comparable to the one of the artist,

according to Freud, that " gives and takes" until a " sufficient level of
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similarity with the tangible or imaginary objects” is achieved. (Freud 1932) Freud had two completely different behaviours towards art; a critic one, that tried to confirm psychoanalysis outside of its domain; the other scientific, paying attention on the creation relatively to psychic facts or the cathartic effect.

The author has given an impressive contribution to the comprehension of the creative activity and has had contacts with many personalities of the literary world. Freud himself had a very impressive style of writing, witnessed by the Goethe Prize that was awarded to him in 1930 in Frankfurt. His literary interests are derived by the observations made on the compositions of the writers who are able to describe in detail some mental processes. Freud felt an affinity with writers and admired the easiness they had in finding deep truths on their emotions; he thought that they drew from sources inaccessible by science and that the literary production has in common with medical psychology the description of the normal psyche and psychic disorders. He states that in everyone on us is hidden a poet and asks where the charm exercised by art that makes us feel so strongly might come from, and where the substance of the the artist’s fantasizing might come from.

He considered poets and novelists revealers of the soul and mediators between un and the unconscious. The poet lives in an intermediate sphere between what we can call God and men, where the hidden truth is finally revealed (Migliorini, 1980). The art piece has a universal validity that derives from the influence exercised by the artistic pleasure on the receptive subject. “ The common element is the transformation of the subject, its enrichment, its deepening, its strengthening or its commotion. Art, contrary <https://assignbuster.com/i-mainly-confined-on-specialized-papers-and-always/>

to science, operates on the human subject more directly” (Migliorini, 1980, p. 88). Literature has fathomed the human soul more deeply than psychoanalysis ever did. In a certain sense, the author has always come before science, identifying a slight border between the normal psychic state and the pathological one; for this reason Freud offers a interaction between these two fields of study, with the consequential poetic treatment of psychiatric arguments.

(Bodei, 1974)