

# *An Analysis of Joy and Sadness Brought by Artworks from the Perspective of Aesthetic Value*

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**Abstract:** From the perspective of aesthetic theory, art is not merely a visual or sensory experience, but a profound interaction between the viewer and the artwork that triggers a range of emotional responses. This study delves into the intricate realm of aesthetic value by analyzing the emotions of joy and sadness evoked by artworks. By employing a multidisciplinary approach that combines psychology, philosophy, and art history, this research aims to explore how different artworks elicit contrasting emotions of joy and sadness. It examines the aesthetic elements, such as color, composition, theme, and style, that contribute to these emotional reactions. Furthermore, the study investigates the cultural and personal factors that influence an individual's aesthetic experience and emotional response to art. Artists often convey joy and sadness to the viewer through the combination of meaningful lines and colors.

**Keywords:** Art, Aesthetic value, Emotional appeal, Joy, Sadness

## 1. Introduction

In aesthetics, emotion, as a fundamental element of aesthetic perception, has consistently garnered significant attention. Joy and melancholy, as the two primary emotional states of humanity, significantly impact daily life and profoundly influence aesthetic endeavors. The multidisciplinary amalgamation of psychology, aesthetics, and neuroscience has progressively enhanced study on the aesthetic significance of these two emotions. Researchers, both nationally and globally, have undertaken comprehensive investigations into the aesthetic merits of joy and sadness. Joy is commonly perceived as a favorable aesthetic experience linked to pleasure and fulfillment, whereas sorrow is typically viewed as a negative emotion; nevertheless, in some situations, such as tragic art, it can also elicit significant aesthetic pleasure. Moreover, scholars have performed comprehensive examinations of the aesthetic mechanisms, expressions, and determinants of joy and sadness from several angles, including physiological, psychological, and socio-cultural viewpoints. Despite the considerable focus and investigation into the aesthetic merits of joy and melancholy, significant study gaps persist [1][2]. Primarily, current research predominantly examines the aesthetic experience within a singular emotional state, with insufficient investigation into the interplay and evolution between joy and sadness in aesthetic endeavors. Secondly, there is an absence of systematic comparison and analysis of the varying aesthetic values of joy and melancholy across various cultural contexts. Furthermore, the advancement of new media and digital technology is transforming the manner in which individuals experience emotions during aesthetic activities; nonetheless, research in this domain remains inadequate. The importance of this research mostly resides in the following

aspects: Initially, by thoroughly examining the interplay and change dynamics between joy and sadness in aesthetic endeavors. Furthermore, it enhances and refines the theoretical framework of aesthetics and establishes a foundation for aesthetic experience.

## **2. Overview of aesthetic value of works of art**

### **2.1. Definition**

This concept of aesthetic value actually involves two subsidiary questions: first, what makes aesthetic value aesthetic and, second, what makes aesthetic value a value? The former has been referred to as the demarcation or aesthetic question, the latter as the normative question, terminology that originates in Lopes and was adopted by subsequent work in philosophical aesthetics [1]. Value arises from the "non objectification behavior" of human beings, which involves the emotional evaluation of the object. Aesthetic value is an objective existence for the aesthetic object, but it also has subjective characteristics for the subject. In essence, aesthetic value refers to the psychological efficacy and spiritual value that people discover and establish in aesthetic appreciation, which is an intrinsic attribute of art and beauty [2].

### **2.2. Characteristics**

**Subjectivity and Objectivity:** Aesthetic value is the result of the interaction between the subject (people) and the object (artwork)[3]. It encompasses both subjective and objective dimensions. Subjectively, personal aesthetic experiences, judgments, evaluations, and attitudes determine the aesthetic value of an object. Objectively, an object's aesthetic value is determined by its unique aesthetic characteristics and the extent to which it satisfies people's aesthetic needs.

**Historical and Cultural Variability:** Aesthetic value is shaped by historical and cultural contexts. Different societies and historical periods have varying standards and ideals of beauty, which influence how people perceive and evaluate the aesthetic value of artworks [4]. The transformation of aesthetic reception over time is evident in how identical works of art may be interpreted differently across eras, sometimes even appearing to lose their original impact. This phenomenon underscores the relativity and subjectivity of aesthetic and artistic value, which have been widely recognized in aesthetic theory.

**Universality and Diversity:** Although aesthetic value is influenced by cultural and historical factors, there is also a universal aspect to it. Certain aesthetic principles, such as balance, harmony, and contrast, are widely recognized and appreciated across different cultures. Meanwhile, diversity in aesthetic values allows for a rich variety of artistic expressions and interpretations. Aesthetic value manifests differently across various artistic mediums, such as oil painting, music, and literature, each of which conveys emotions through distinct mechanisms.

Emotional expression in oil painting is mostly conveyed via color and composition. Colors inherently lack emotion; nonetheless, individuals imbue their happiness, rage, grief, and joy into colors, enabling them to function as conduits for emotional expression in art [5]. Initially, individuals progressively elicit psychological responses by the observation of phenomena and interaction with their environment, so fulfilling their intrinsic desires and requirements. Color exists objectively in nature; when individuals perceive these hues, they form their own interpretations and assessments. In emotional expression, color serves as an efficient amalgamation of hue and sentiment. Furthermore, the intensity and composition of colors are crucial in establishing the emotional tone of a painting. Artists intentionally utilize color choice, contrast, and saturation to provoke particular emotional reactions from spectators, rendering the conveyance of emotion in oil painting a multifaceted and potent artistic endeavor. Music conveys emotion through sound and rhythm, creating immersive auditory experiences that evoke a range of feelings, from joy to sorrow. The aesthetic value of music

lies in its ability to establish harmony, tension, and resolution through melodic and harmonic structures. Different musical genres—such as classical, jazz, and rock—each employ distinct compositional techniques to elicit specific emotional responses. The expressiveness of music has been widely discussed in aesthetic theory, with one perspective suggesting that music's capacity to express emotions parallels human emotional expressions. Just as individuals may respond to another person's sadness with genuine sadness or empathy, music's expressive qualities can evoke corresponding emotional reactions in listeners [6]. However, the precise mechanisms through which music conveys emotion remain a subject of debate, as music lacks a clear semantic content that directly corresponds to human emotions. Literature, through the use of language and narrative, transports readers to different worlds and perspectives. The aesthetic value in literature lies in its ability to inspire thought, evoke emotion, and provide insight into human nature. Different genres, such as poetry, fiction, and drama, each have their unique way of delivering this intellectual and emotional experience [3]. The value of literature is closely linked to its capacity to resonate with readers on both intellectual and emotional levels, underscoring the interplay between artistic merit and meaningful content.

### **3. Analysis of emotional appeal of works of art (joy and sadness)**

#### **3.1. The concept and mechanism of emotional contagion**

Emotional contagion refers to the phenomenon where individuals unconsciously mimic the emotional expressions of others, thereby experiencing similar emotional states. This occurs primarily through the observation of non-verbal cues such as facial expressions, voices, and body language. The mechanism behind emotional contagion involves the activation of mirror neurons in the brain. Mirror neurons are specialized neural cells that get triggered when we observe the actions and emotional displays of others. This activation leads us to "mirror" or simulate the observed emotional state, resulting in a corresponding emotional experience.

Additionally, the facial feedback hypothesis posits that the subtle mimicry of facial expressions, often referred to as facial mimicry or mirroring, plays a significant role in shaping our emotional responses. This hypothesis suggests that when individuals observe and unconsciously imitate the facial expressions of others, such as a smile or a frown, these mirrored expressions can trigger corresponding emotional states within them. In other words, the physical act of adopting a particular facial expression can activate neural pathways and emotional responses associated with that expression, even if the initial imitation was not intentional or conscious [7]. This process highlights the intricate connection between our physical actions, particularly facial expressions, and our internal emotional experiences, further emphasizing the importance of non-verbal communication in influencing our emotional well-being and interpersonal interactions. In this case, emotional contagion functions like an invisible mirror, reflecting and amplifying the emotions of those in one's surroundings.

#### **3.2. Emotional elements in artworks:**

Artworks often incorporate emotional elements to evoke specific feelings and resonate with viewers. These emotional elements can be manifested through various means:

Next, there are two main aspects.

1. **Color and Hue:** Artists use color to convey emotions. Warm colors like red and orange often evoke feelings of warmth, excitement, and energy, while cool colors like blue and green tend to induce calmness, tranquility, and serenity.

2. Line and Form: The way lines and forms are utilized in an artwork can influence its emotional impact. Curved lines and soft forms may evoke feelings of softness and comfort, whereas sharp lines and angular forms can convey tension and conflict.

#### **4. Emotional appeal of works of art from the perspective of aesthetic value**

The relationship between aesthetic value and emotional appeal is intricate and interconnected[8]. Aesthetic value often stems from the ability of an artwork or an experience to evoke certain emotions in the viewer or listener. On the other hand, emotional appeal refers to the capacity of an object or experience to generate strong feelings or resonate deeply with people. In essence, aesthetic value can be enhanced by strong emotional appeal, as it suggests a deeper connection and appreciation for the art. Conversely, an artwork with high aesthetic value is more likely to possess significant emotional infectivity, making it memorable and impactful. Thus, the two concepts are mutually reinforcing, with one often amplifying the other in the realm of artistic expression and appreciation.

##### **4.1. Joy in artworks**

**Formal Beauty:** The visual appeal of an artwork, such as harmonious colors, balanced compositions, and skillful technique, often brings joy to viewers. The pleasure derived from appreciating well-crafted art is universal and can be experienced by people of various backgrounds and tastes. **Emotional Resonance:** Artworks that depict happy or uplifting scenes, or that evoke positive emotions through their subject matter or execution, can bring joy to viewers. When an artwork resonates with a viewer's emotions, it can create a sense of connection and fulfillment.

##### **4.2. Sadness in artworks**

**Depiction of Tragedy:** Artworks that depict tragic events, suffering, or loss can evoke sadness in viewers. These works may focus on human struggles, social injustices, or natural disasters, and their emotional impact can be profound. **Personal Connection:** Sometimes, viewers may experience sadness when an artwork touches on personal experiences or emotions that are close to their hearts. The artwork may remind them of lost loved ones, past traumas, or difficult life experiences.

##### **4.3. Case analysis**

"Mona Lisa" by Leonardo da Vinci Aesthetic Value Analysis

Mona Lisa's slightly mysterious smile, gentle and implicit, offers boundless room for imagination and serves as the highlight of the painting. The language of the Mona Lisa's design embodies a kind of "beauty of harmony", with a strong and gentle connotation, moderate emotional intensity, and characteristics such as subtlety and tranquility, leaving infinite imagination for people.

First and foremost, intuitive feeling is crucial. When confronted with this masterpiece, we can directly perceive Mona Lisa's mysterious and subtle smile, as well as the aesthetic pleasure brought by her dignified and elegant image. This intuitive feeling serves as the foundation of art appreciation and an important avenue for emotional communication with the work.

While multiple interpretations of Mona Lisa's smile exist, an exclusive reliance on external factors, such as Leonardo da Vinci's personal history or artistic techniques, is not necessary for appreciation [9]. However, understanding the background factors behind the work helps us gain a deeper comprehension of this painting. Leonardo da Vinci's painting techniques, his handling of light and shadow, and his capture of the character's psychological state are all important factors contributing to the unique charm of this work. Additionally, knowledge of Leonardo da Vinci's personality, life

experiences, and other background information also aids in our understanding of his original intentions in creating this work and the emotions it seeks to express.

The painting features a balanced composition and harmonious color pairing, fostering an atmosphere of tranquility and elegance.

**Joy Evoked:** This Mona Lisa, with its exquisite artistic techniques and unique charm, provides immense visual enjoyment. Viewers are often captivated by its delicate brushstrokes, harmonious lighting, and enchanting smile, leading to a delightful aesthetic experience. Mona Lisa's smile seems almost magical, touching people's hearts and inspiring viewers to aspire towards a better life, thereby bringing inner joy.

**"The Scream" by Edvard Munch: Aesthetic Value Analysis**

**Strong Color Contrast:** Munch utilizes vibrant colors such as red, blue, and yellow, creating a striking contrast that gives the painting a powerful visual impact.

**Distorted Human Figures:** The human figures in the painting are exaggeratedly distorted, with expressions of pain, as if undergoing inner struggles and screams.

First, Munch employs a large amount of dark tones and contrasting hues to convey emotion. The sky in the painting is a mix of dark red and orange, giving viewers a sense of oppression and unease. The color of the water is relatively dull, contrasting with the sky and further enhancing the heaviness of the scene. This use of color allows viewers to feel a sense of pressure and sadness.

**Expressive Lines:** Munch adopts distorted and exaggerated lines to represent the figures' forms and emotions. The figures in the painting are elongated and twisted, especially the facial expressions of the characters, which appear extremely painful and terrified. This use of line not only enhances the expressive power of the painting but also allows viewers to intuitively feel the sadness and despair within the figures.

**Sadness Evoked:**

- **Emotional Resonance:** This painting, with its unique artistic language and expressive techniques, conveys strong negative emotions such as loneliness, fear, and despair. When viewing this painting, viewers often feel a deep sadness and resonance.
- **Reflection on Human Suffering:** Munch's "The Scream" is not just an artwork; it is a profound reflection on human suffering and inner struggles. When appreciating this painting, viewers may recall their own or others' unfortunate experiences, thereby generating a sad emotional experience.

## 5. Conclusions

Artists often convey joy and sadness to the viewer through the combination of meaningful lines and colors. From the perspective of aesthetic value, artworks can arouse the audience's joy and sadness. These emotional reactions not only reflect the aesthetic value of artworks but also can touch people's hearts and trigger profound emotional experience. This paper mainly focuses on the analysis of joy and sadness, and whether other emotions are universal remains to be discussed. The research conducted in this paper has certain limitations. By concentrating on two basic emotions—joy and sadness—it does not fully address the impact of more complex or mixed emotions on the aesthetic experience. Additionally, due to cultural differences, individual variations, and methodological limitations, the cross-cultural comparison and analysis of individual differences in the aesthetic value of joy and sadness may not be sufficiently in-depth. Future research should employ more diversified research methods and samples to further expand and deepen research in this field.

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