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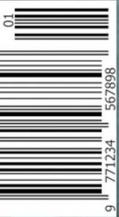
DaVinci

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Number 1

Flow Magazine #01 - 2021
Made in Danville, KY



Explore How Psychology Influenced the History of Art

FLOW

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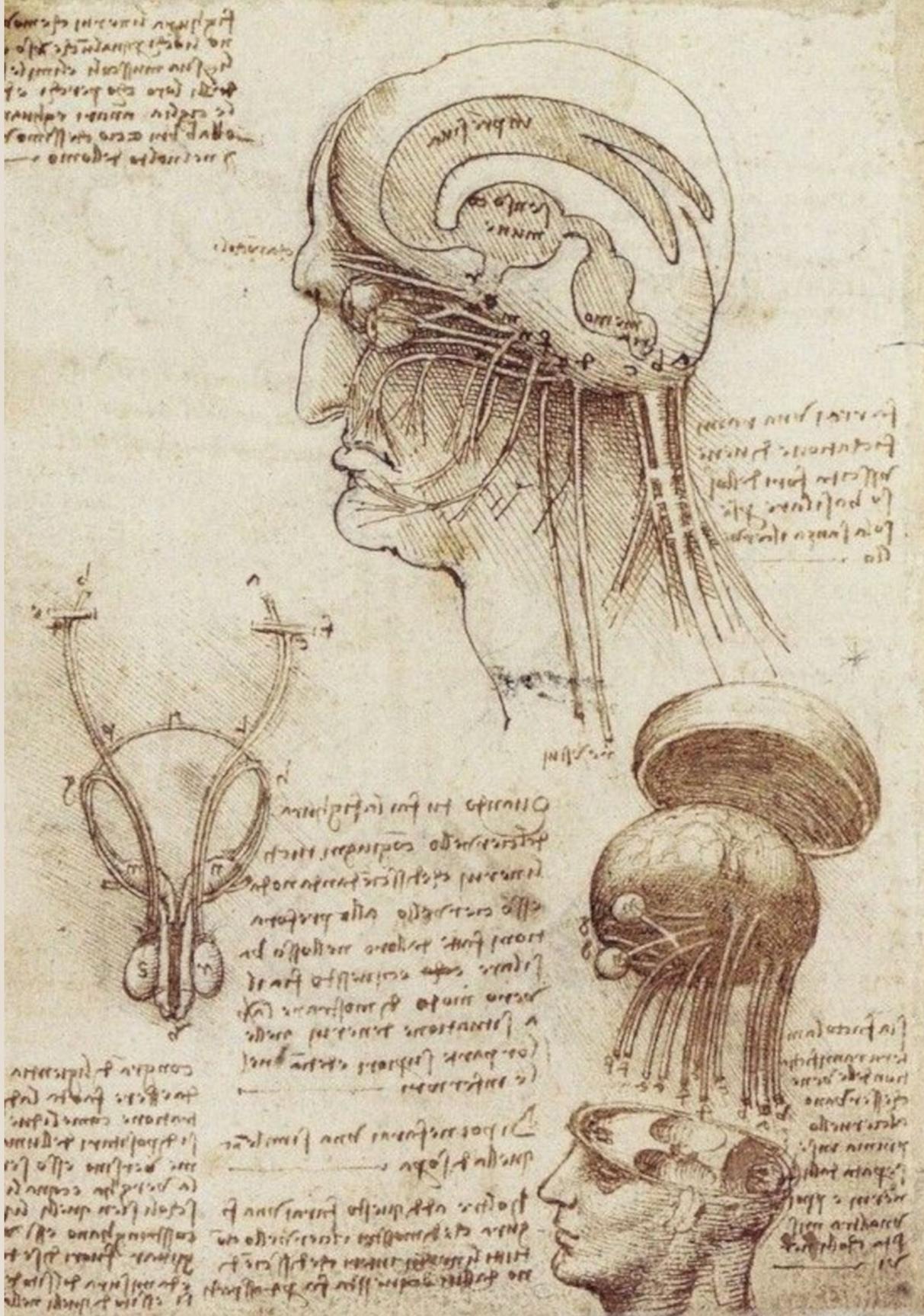
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WHAT IS FLOW?

Flow, also known as being "in the zone," is the mental state in which a person performing some activity has a feeling of focus, involvement, and enjoyment of the process. It is a complete absorption into what one does.

If you've ever created any type of art, you know what flow feels like. What you might not have known is that this feeling is defined by **psychological science** and is very important in positive psychology. (Positive psychology is a type of **Humanistic psychology**.)

Psychology and art are very connected in so many more ways that we are just beginning to understand. Take a closer look at how both art and psychology are related in Flow Magazine.



Leonardo Da Vinci

Untitled drawing circa 1509

EARLY PSYCH

Psychology has a long history. Most experts trace the beginnings of psychology back to ancient Greece in which philosophers such as Aristotle and Plato debated over whether characteristics are innate or acquired through experience (**nature vs nurture**).

Among other early psychological questions was the **mind/body problem**: are the mind and body separate or interconnected? Scholars at the time mostly believed that the mind was separate from the body. However, artist Leonardo Da Vinci challenged this by dissecting human bodies and studying anatomy. While many of his theories were far from correct, his drawings and work are important to both the art world and to psychology because they show an important and early attempt at explaining how anatomy is connected to brain functions.



Sir Thomas Landseer Night & Day, oil on canvas, 1855

ART & EVOLUTION

Evolutionary theory and Charles Darwin's work was highly influential for almost all areas of life such as modern thought, society, science, and philosophy. It clearly influenced psychology to a great extent because we know that the human mind has been shaped by evolution.

The art world was not immune to the huge impact that evolutionary theory had on the world. The mid-1800s saw a huge influx of work depicting the natural world surrounding Darwin's publication of "The Origin of Species." This artistic time period, known as naturalism, was full of realistic depictions of the environment. Each artwork emphasized how the environment was a big force in shaping human nature.

For example, Sir Thomas Landseer's 1855 oil painting "Night & Day" depicts two bucks fighting one another at night. The next day, one of the bucks can be seen dead, demonstrating Darwin's ideas about **natural selection** and survival of the fittest.



Salvador Dalí

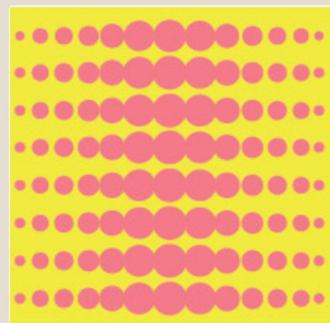
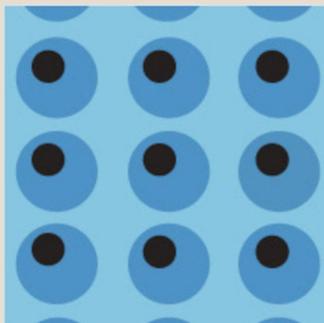
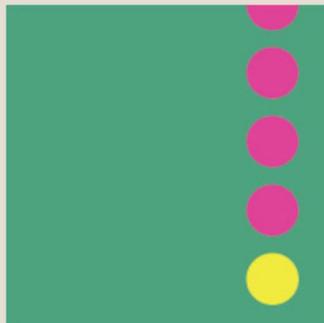
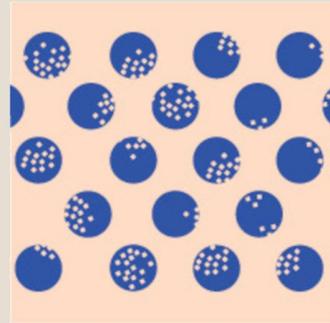
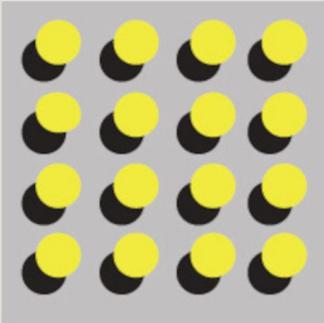
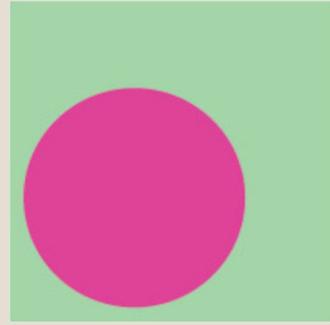
Flaming Giraffe,
oil on panel, 1937

FREUD & DALI

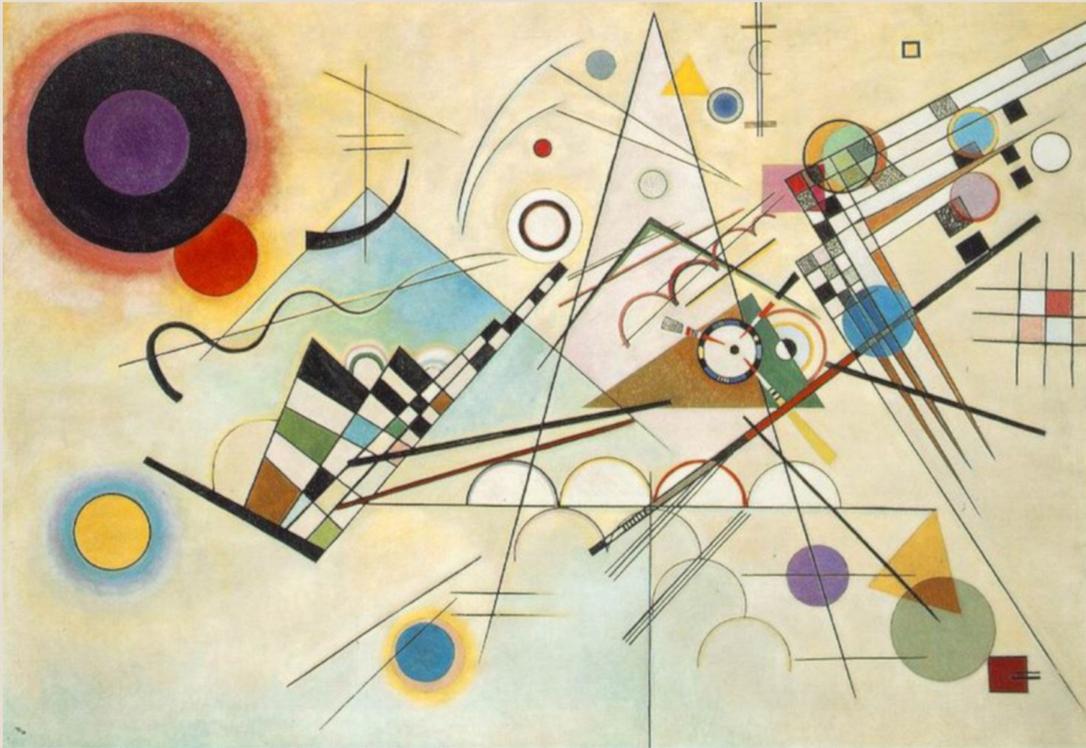
Surrealism arose in the early 20th century and was an avant garde movement in both art and literature. It was highly influenced by the ideas of Sigmund Freud and **Psychoanalysis**.

For example, one of the main goals of surrealism was to "liberate" the **unconscious** mind. As a result, much of the artwork that rose out of this movement was dreamlike and both familiar and strange at the same time. In literature, writers used **stream of consciousness** writing. While stream of consciousness is an idea associated with functionalism in psychology, the main goal of it in surrealism was to reveal unconscious thoughts.

Salvador Dali is one of the most famous surrealist artists with some of his major works being "Persistence of Memory" and "Flaming Giraffe."



GESTALT



Wassily Kandinsky - Composition VIII, oil on canvas, 1923

Gestalt, which in German translates to "shape" or "form," is used in psychology and means that "the whole is more than the sum of its parts." **Gestalt theory** has been applied to design and most commonly, abstract art because it helps artists think about composition - how objects are organized visually on the page.

There are many principles of Gestalt such as figure/ground, area and convexity, similarity, focal points, law of Pragnanz, closure, continuation, uniform connectedness, common regions, proximity, and symmetry.

Wassily Kandinsky was a master of the principles of Gestalt whether he realised it or not. He utilized parallel lines (parallel lines are seen as more related to elements that are not parallel), and was able to group shapes together in a way that is visually appealing.

Glossary

1. Evolutionary theory (p. 13): Evolutionary theory is one that views the history of species as having inherited and adapted certain physical and mental characteristics and behavior. I applied this to my artifact by explaining how the theory has influenced many different aspects of life including art where it influenced that naturalist movement.
2. Gestalt Theory (p. 15): Gestalt theory is based on the idea that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. In psychology, it means that the entire experience is different from the sum of its different elements. I applied this by listing different principles of Gestalt that have been applied to art and how a specific artist (Wassily Kandinsky) used gestalt in most of his work.
3. Humanistic Psychology (p. 16): Humanism focuses on the basic goodness of people and how they can become happier. I applied this in the title of my magazine because “flow” is a concept in positive psychology. Positive psychology is part of humanistic psychology.
4. Mind/body problem (p. 10): This is a question about whether the mind and body are separate or connected. I applied this by giving an example of how Da Vinci pushed against the popular opinion at the time that the two were separate.
5. Natural Selection (p. 13): This is the theory that those who have traits in which they adapt to their environment have an advantage over those who do not and are more likely to survive. These traits are more likely to be passed on. I applied this by showing a work of art by Sir Thomas Landseer that depicts a buck surviving over another.

6. Nature vs nurture (p. 10): This is an argument about whether we inherit our characteristics or if our environment shapes us. I applied this by using it as an example of early psychological questions that would later influence art.
7. Psychoanalysis (p. 14): Psychoanalysis attempts to bring the unconscious mind to the forefront so that things can be revealed that would have otherwise gone unnoticed. I applied this by showing how it influenced the Surrealists.
8. Psychological Science (p. 4): Psychological Science is the study of mind, brain, and behavior through research. I applied this in my introduction by stating that flow is a term that is a part of psychological science because it helps give a greater understanding of our mind.
9. Stream of consciousness (p. 12): This is a continuous series of constantly changing thoughts. I applied this by showing how it relates to surrealism through literature.
10. Unconscious (p. 14): This is where things happen below our awareness. I applied this by explaining that the primary goal of surrealism was to depict the unconscious, dreamlike mind.

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