

# **CURRENT SOCIAL CHANGES AND ART**

**EDITOR:**

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ARTİKEL AKADEMİ: 378

*Current Social Changes And Art*

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ISBN 978-625-5674-17-3

1st Edition: October - 2025

Publisher Certificate No: 19708

Cover and Book Design: Artikel Akademi

PRINTING: Uzunist Dijital Matbaa Anonim Şirketi  
Akçaburgaz Mah.1584.Sk.No:21 / Esenyurt - İSTANBUL  
Certification No.: 68922

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## YAZARLAR

**Ayşe CAVGAN**

**Ayşe Ozge DIRAK**

**Büşra OZEN**

**Cemre DOLU**

**Feyzanur MELEK**

**Mahir DEMIRHAN**

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artikol  
akademi

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### **From The Editor,**

Dear reader, academic studies conducted and written in the field of art as well as science are very important in terms of understanding, interpreting and evaluating the field.

In this book, different topics in the field of art are discussed and examined by master students.

This book, which we think you will enjoy reading, is a book that researchers will refer to, with its sections focusing on certain topics.

We would like to thank the master students whose researches were included in the book for their original ideas and valuable contributions.

**Asist. Prof. Dr. Yıldırım Onur ERDIREN**  
2025, Tekirdağ, TURKEY

## SECTION 1

# NEW MEDIA ART IN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIOLOGY OF ART: CINEMA

Ayşe ÇAVGAN<sup>1</sup>

### INTRODUCTION

Emerging in the 1970s and making its mark alongside the advancement of technology in the 1990s, new media has become a multifaceted interactive tool that unites all communication systems. Changing and evolving technology has impacted society in every aspect and continues to do so. This transformation, which it creates in every aspect of social institutions, from economics to science, and from science to art, manifests itself in various forms. One of the areas where new media, which is evolving traditional media, finds its place in these diverse forms is cinema, which we call the seventh art. Cinema, a fictional reflection of social reality, has been shaped by the trends of the times, and its content has also evolved within these trends. The transformation of cinema in terms of the techniques used today began with the development of internet technologies. These developments have enabled the digitalization of cinema, enabling numerous transformations, creating an interactive art form. In this versatile and interactive form, cinema leaves a profound impact on individuals both technically and content-wise. Its visual dynamics, perspectives on events presented through camera angles, and its fictional narrative, informed by reality, along with music that aims to leave a deeper impression on the individual, are presented with a truly captivating effect. This presentation style can be said to have the ability to create a meaning distinct from other art forms. Cinema, encompassing a wide range of art forms,

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from literature and architecture to music and painting, emerges as an art form that captivates viewers both through its interconnectedness with other art forms and through its impact on individuals and societies.

The aim of this study, which explains the place of cinema in new media and art, is to try to explain the artistry and transformation of cinema within the relationship between society and art. By reviewing the literature, the perspective on cinema in a sociological context and the effects of the development of internet technologies on cinema and the individual were discussed in the context of the sociology of art.

## 1. SOCIOLOGY - ART RELATIONSHIP AND OVERVIEW OF SOCIOLOGY OF ART

Sociology, a discipline that scientifically examines the relationships between people, “examines the *patterned regularities of social interaction that exist throughout society*” (Fitcher, 2019: p. 3). When considering the practices of daily life, many areas of social life are among the research topics of sociology. The sociology of art is one of these areas.

“*The sociology of art, situated between the art historical tradition that examines the connections between the artist and their work and the aesthetic tradition that examines the connections between the viewer and the work*” (Heinich, 2013: p. 11), is a sub-discipline of sociology and a discipline that attempts to explain the relationship between art and society and between society and art. Art is a field that changes, develops, and transforms alongside society, and within this changing and evolving process, it manifests itself with various identities. Architecture, sculpture, painting, literature, music, theater, and cinema, which are branches of art, bear the traces of the society in which we live and simultaneously influence society. Art occupies both a passive and an active position within society. Changes and transformations in social life have led to changes in art and the perspective on art.

Because art and society interact, the artwork is shaped not only by the artist’s personality, techniques, and materials used, but also by society. The artwork also reflects the technological, social, cultural, and architectural characteristics of the period in which it was created.

As a human activity emerging from life, we can say that art is as old as humanity. Like science, art arose from human curiosity and the desire to dominate natural phenomena. Although the meanings of the word “art” (art) have changed over time from ancient times to the present, the aspect of human creations that

gives them an edge over those of nature is their ability to convey objects we perceive through the senses through technical (technological) mastery and a mysterious aesthetic language. (Büyükol, Arda, Şahin, 2013).

We can say that art, a human activity, stems from humankind’s quest for superiority. The individual’s desire to dominate nature, beginning with its imitation, has enabled reality to acquire an aesthetic quality and has continued this aesthetic attitude through various artistic disciplines. Art forms that emerged through the acquisition of aesthetic qualities, incorporating formalism and traces of the era in which we lived, allow us to view art from different perspectives. Since the dawn of humanity, art has continued to exist in modern forms today, alongside social changes and transformations. Looking back at primitive times, cave drawings and the shapes and forms that early humans carved into rocks can also be considered art. The definition of art in social life has been debated since ancient times and continues to be so. Art, where creativity and imagination are paramount, has been conceptually debated throughout history.

### 1.1 Art

Communication is crucial for all beings, affecting individuals’ interactions and forms of expression. One of these forms of expression is art. As individuals gain self-awareness, their communication and manual skills improve, and their ways of expressing themselves also change.

“To make life more enjoyable, humans have transformed the instrument they play, the shape they make, the line, the sound, the word, and the body language into art by achieving aesthetic perfection. Thus, humans have enriched their communication and interaction with nature and themselves” (Ören, 2015).

When we look at art from this perspective, we can say that its origins date back to antiquity. Prehistoric art is divided into three periods: the Paleolithic, Mesolithic, and Neolithic. It’s possible to argue that art, or artistic activities, were created in prehistoric times through drawings, murals, and wall carvings, using various methods.

As a result of human-nature interaction, art has achieved a social and universal richness by existing with individuals in many forms from past to present, while maintaining this diversity and richness today. While the essence and content of art bear the traces of the era in which it is lived, its expression is seen through artists. Fischer defines the essence of art as follows:

“There is tension and mutual conflict at the core of art; it is not enough for

art to arise from intense and real experience; it must also be constructed, must acquire objectivity and form. The result of this mastery is that art can grow and develop freely. According to Aristotle, often misunderstood, the role of art was to purify emotions; to overcome fear and pain, thus enabling the spectator, who equates himself with Orestes or Oedipus, to break free from this assimilation and rise above the random order of fate” (Fischer, 1990: p. 7).

Art, the expression of observations, feelings, and emotions, also appears as a space that soothes the individual and presents life from an aesthetic perspective. Art reflects individual observations within the collectivity, while simultaneously enabling the reflection to be interpreted in different ways.

“While art is nourished by life, it has become a field that foresees, investigates, understands, criticizes and reflects the changes and transformations in life” (Erkayhan, Belgesay, 2014).

In general, art carries meanings such as the combination of discipline and harmony, the expression of the individual’s self-expression, creation and form, but there are various views on what art is, and at the same time, philosophers define art in various ways within philosophical approaches.

According to Aristotle, art is generally imitation (mimesis). He uses the term imitation here not only in reference to the artist’s activity of imitating but also to works of art that are products of imitation. The differences between the various arts arise from three factors. Art forms are distinguished from one another by what is imitated, by what means, and how—in other words, by the object of imitation, the means of imitation, and the style of imitation. (Yetişken, 2012)

Art adds thought, creativity, and criticism to a seemingly monotonous life. Another characteristic of art is its multifaceted emotional mobilization. While there are many definitions of what art is, these definitions are relatively lacking in clarity. If a general definition of art possessing aesthetic values were to be established, art could be defined as the combination of aesthetics, aesthetic formalism, and the subject-object relationship.

## 2.2 Art-Artist Relationship

Gombrich begins his book, *The Story of Art*, by saying, “*There is no such thing as art. There are only artists*” (Gombrich, 1997: p. 15), and asserts that art can exist through the artist, and that without the artist, there would be no work of art. The artist’s observations, perception, and mode of reflection are always crucial to the creation of a work of art. To perform their art, the artist strives

to understand the society they live in in its full reality, aesthetically reflecting the fictional nature of society through their imagination and creative power. This mode of reflection manifests itself in various artistic disciplines. When we examine the sub-branches of art—painting, literature, architecture, music, sculpture, and cinema—we can understand this in their subtexts.

“To be an artist, one must capture and hold experience, transform it into memory, memory into expression, and materials into form. Perception is not everything for the artist; one must know and love one’s work, recognize all its rules, subtleties, forms, and methods, and thus tame the wild nature and adapt it to the conventions of art” (Fischer, 1990: p. 7).

The artist’s continued existence and the manifestation of his or her creativity necessitate a reciprocal relationship between time and artist. The formation of his or her own realm of existence and artistic production necessitate the artist’s perception of the realities of the age in which he or she lives. Furthermore, without being content with the age in which he or she lives, he or she also contains clues in his or her works about how the future will shape itself. These clues enable the artist to grasp and reflect the spirit of the age in which he or she lives, enabling him or her to build a bridge between the past and the future. (Akbulut, 2018)

To construct their artwork, artists draw inspiration from the geography, social turmoil, and social culture of their society. Artists who are keen observers see the world they live in differently, interpreting it differently and incorporating deeper emotions into their art. The prominence of aesthetics and emotion in many art forms, such as painting, sculpture, architecture, theater, and cinema, reveals numerous traces of the artist’s work, both from themselves and the era they lived in. The relationship between art and artist is in a reciprocal interaction with the era they lived in.

This form of relationship sometimes enables them to perform their art critically, while sometimes it enables them to reflect the structure behind what is visible.

## 2. DIGITAL ART / NEW MEDIA ART

The concept of digital art, also known as digital art and new media art, is the field of art used for the production of non-physical objects in which computer technologies play a role.

“Digital art, which is considered as the art of the digitalized new world, is generally defined as the art form in which virtual objects produced with digital

technology are constructed with aesthetic values” (Saglamtimur, 2010).

Digitalized art is emerging as one of the newest developments of the modern era. Digital art, which embodies modern consciousness, ideas, and creativity, has undergone a transformation from the traditional to the modern. As in every aspect of life, the migration of art into the digital realm is an inevitable reality. Many drawings are now being created using digital applications, and artists have begun presenting their works in digital media. This migration of art into the digital realm has also occurred within the wheels of capitalism.

“Just as the invention of the camera in the 19th century and the portable camera in the 20 th century profoundly affected society and art, it is a fact that today’s technologies have a similar impact and transform societies and art” (Erkayhan, Belgesay, 2014).

The modernization process, which began in Western Europe in the 17th century and continued until the late 20th century, brought with it social transformations. While these social transformations did not progress in clear parallels, they influenced different societies and marked the beginning of today’s postmodern societies adapting to a digital age. The development of internet technologies in the 1990s led to the emergence of the concept of new media. Unlike traditional media, new/digital media has introduced versatility and mutual interaction. New media, which has brought about change in every aspect of society, has also enabled the integration of technology and art in the arts, providing artists with a new avenue for artistic practice.

“New media, in parallel with its becoming an integral part of human life, is considered a medium for cultural and artistic production. New media art, where technology and art coexist, creates a free space for the artist, creates the opportunity for direct communication with the audience, and provides opportunities for interaction between the artist, the audience, and the work” (Saglamtimur, 2017).

Technology that entered our lives with modernization , pens gave way to clicks, and visual feasts were brought to screens. Techniques evolved alongside technology, creating a new field within digital media. Art, perhaps presented most effectively today, has gained new perspectives through the union of art, artists, and new media. The existence of two-way communication in digital and interactive media has created a space that transforms consumers into producers. With the development of internet technologies, the transformation of every aspect of life, and the world becoming, to quote McLuhan, a “global village,” has transformed every aspect of social life.

McLuhan considered electronic media as a kind of return to collective ways of perceiving the world (Altay, 2005: p. 17).

Electronic media has changed the way art is perceived. In situations where an art object might be perceived more literally, the artist can transform and alter this perception by approaching the work differently by learning visual spatial styles and forms. McLuhan and Powers believe that visual space is a consequence of the phonetic alphabet. According to them, visual space is a side effect of the monotonous, persistent, and fragmented nature of the phonetic alphabet, created by the Phoenicians and developed by the Greeks (Altay, 2005: p. 28).

The emergence of visual and audio technologies has given birth to media art and enabled art to create aesthetic categories in digital spaces by enabling multiple interactions and the coexistence of multiple users.

Experiments with visual and audio technologies in art date back to the 19th century. As new technologies emerged, artists integrated photography, film, radio, television, computers, and the internet into their artistic practices. Media art, while dominant in the history of art, also serves the aesthetic categories of new relationships such as process-oriented, interactive, and multi-user (Winegard, 2019).

The advancement of technology and its entrenchment within society has enabled art to be created electronically. This creative consciousness is based more on digital qualities, but it also manifests itself in dazzling visual feasts.

“The history of technology and media sciences play simultaneously important roles. Within the history of art, new media arts are linked to Dada, Fluxus , and Conceptual arts, which were founded in the 19th century, through their closeness in meaning and emphasis on audience participation” (Winegard, 2019).

Technology has increased the interaction between art, artists, and audiences, creating a multifaceted form of communication. Artists who used digital platforms in the 1960s through photography, film, and television began using computers and video media in the 1980s, and by the 1990s, the internet was emerging as a creative medium.

The internet, used as a creative tool, has enabled art to move away from traditional art and into modern digital environments.

Digital art, the art of today’s technological age, is formed in two ways. The first is the digitalization of artworks produced using traditional methods, that is, the removal of their objects and their transfer to a digital environment and sharing, and the second is the design of the entire work on digital platforms. Electronic arts (photography, video, etc.) created by referencing traditional art

patterns are among the first examples of digital art (Winegard, 2019).

When we look at art today, we see that traditional artistic fields have shifted to the realm of digital media. New media has become the center of three-dimensional sculptures, graphic designs, and visual feasts. Art, along with its capitalist dimension, has taken on a place where cinematography takes place, imagination and creativity merge with technology, and technical drawings are created with clicks.

With the developing and modernizing world, the presentation of art in digital environments, as well as the public display of some artworks via the internet, has made it accessible to both curious and otherwise inaccessible individuals. While the value attributed to art is often seen as the domain of intellectuals, particularly those in higher social strata and those with social prosperity, digital media, in this increasingly digital world, provides online access to artworks even to those who lack purchasing power or are unable to participate in artistic activities. The historical transformation and change of art forms, coupled with the development of internet technologies, a product of modernism, has brought art and technology into a global interaction, and art has attained a more modern appearance in digital media.

### 3. CINEMA AS NEW MEDIA ART

#### 3.1. Cinema

We can define cinema, also known as the seventh art, film, or the silver screen, as the projection of a predetermined story or scenario using sound, light, and various techniques. *“Cinema, with its technical and productive nature, expresses the experience of discontinuity that ‘modern devices’ bring to every aspect of daily life”* (Pezzela, 2001: p. 13). By presenting individuals with a reality constructed through fragments of the scenario, cinema conveys an ongoing experience. The history of cinema, whose foundations were laid in the 19th century, is said to have begun with humanity’s fascination with the image of light and movement.

“The cinematographic image is more like an allegory and is obtained from a montage of discontinuity in which the meaning comes from outside and merges with a second desire” (Pezzela, 2001: p. 16).

“When cinema first emerged, mostly silent films were made, but the first was the 1927 film *The Jazz Singer* film introduced a talking audience. With the advancement of cinematic technology, color films began to be shot, widescreen cinemas began to be produced in the 1950s, and Dolby Stereo was introduced in

the 1970s to provide better sound quality. These developments and techniques gave rise to various cinematic movements. The major cinematic movements include Expressionism, Poetic Realism, Neorealism, New Wave, Free Cinema, New Cinema, and Experimental Cinema.

- ↳ The Expressionist movement originated in Germany and produced examples of its kind from the 1910s to the late 1930s. It shifted from concrete reality to abstract reality, focusing on the human subconscious and inner world.
- ↳ Poetic Realism, a movement that emerged in France, combined the reality of events and characters with the poetic nature of the setting. This movement, which emerged after the Great Depression of 1929 and continued until World War II, addressed the reflection of social problems on the individual’s world.
- ↳ The Neorealism movement emerged in Italy after World War II and corresponds to documentary-type films in which the camera is turned not to melodramas but to streets and real stories, and natural lights are used instead of studio lights.
- ↳ The New Wave movement emerged shortly after World War I as a reaction to prevailing cinematic conventions and continued until the 1960s. Films depicting social and political change employed taboo-breaking cinematographic narratives and diverse plots, accompanied by diverse visuals.
- ↳ emerged in England with a manifesto published by writers for *Sequence* magazine in 1956. Addressing social and economic problems through documentary films, the movement later transitioned to fictional films.
- ↳ The New Cinema movement emerged in Brazil in the 1960s as a response to the dominance of American companies in the film industry, and continued until the 1970s, addressing issues of social injustice with an independent and realistic approach.
- ↳ The beginnings of the Experimental Cinema movement can be traced back to World War I. It is considered essential to try out previously untried techniques and ideas. Films within the scope of Experimental Cinema can also be described as “avant-garde” or “underground” ( <https://kulturveysam.com/ornekleriyle-birlikte-sinema-akimlari/> ).

It is highly probable that we see cinema as a world of reflection that feeds on society and gives aesthetic value to the forms it feeds on.

“A mimesis utopia, without the gaps of copy-images that are no longer distinguishable from their own model, is a very old and persistent dream of

Western culture. When the Lumiere brothers showed their first film to the public, it was on the verge of becoming a reality. It is said that when the image of a locomotive speeding towards the camera's gaze appeared, the audience fled in terror, fearing it would leap from the screen" (Pezzela, 2001: p. 39).

Fictional perception of reality is combined with various camera angles and montage techniques and at the same time gives the individual a sense of fictional reality.

"In one respect, it reflects the continuous temporality of visual experience; on the other hand, it tries to make sense of the rapid flow of impressions with all its possibilities and to find solutions to them with its own tools" (Pezzela, 2001: p.15).

While cinema may appear fictional, it also appears as a reflection of reality. Sometimes utopian, sometimes a critique of the system or based on a story, cinema effectively presents the lived world to its audience.

### 3.2. Cinema-Social Relationship

When we examine cinema within a social context, we can see various critiques of systems in some films and the reasons behind these critiques. Screenwriters, informed by social life, express their observations and even the mundane events in striking, fictional language, leaving an impact on individuals. When we examine films from past to present, we see that they have been influenced by numerous movements and the prevailing social trends of the time. Through its graphics, sound effects, and camera angles, cinema reflects the fictional yet real experiences of the script. Reflecting social values, social beliefs, and traditions, cinema also evokes individuals' emotions, appealing not only to individual but also to collective emotions, presenting them to us within a collective framework. Cinema can be seen as a medium that mirrors the cultures of societies. Cinema sometimes also renews collective memory. For example, when we look at many films about war, if they are period pieces, we can see the suffering and problems faced by the society at that time. Since mass media is a tool for dominating society, the power of the media is crucial, and cinema also plays a crucial role in mobilizing the masses. While the interaction between cinema and social structure is effective in making sense of the culture and films we experience, we can see that the individual's perspective and interpretation of the film we watch gives us information about the social structure in which they live.

### 3.3. Cinema – Art Relationship

Various periods about what art is, it is difficult to make a complete and clear definition of art. Cinema, considered the seventh branch of art, offers us a reflected reality through its fictional world, technical and cinematic qualities such as lighting, camera angles, and visual feasts. Within this reality, we can observe both artistic perspectives and social observations, and the creation of an artistic activity through the interweaving of these observations within a fictional framework. Art, which does not have a single meaning, merges with cinema, enabling fictional reality to be interpreted in different ways. Atilla Dorsay defines cinema in the introduction to his book "Those Who Make Cinema Art" as follows.

Cinema is undoubtedly an art, beyond being an industry or an entertainment. And what an art! With all the impact of the visual/auditory, films, which speak to our entire being and sometimes contain imagery that we cannot forget for a lifetime, also bring us unique, unparalleled information about humanity, life, and the world. . . Even the most insignificant film we find can contain such an 'edifying aspect,' or a few images that will affect our entire lives. The silver screen functions as a unique producer of values, a transmitter of dreams, a source of myths. Nowadays, with the contribution of 'color' TV programs and the widespread use of video, the magic of cinema seems to have gained new support (Dorsay, 1985: p. 11).

Cinema, while mirroring society and culture, offers both an entertaining and educational platform. It presents this presentation beyond colorful images as a fictional pattern of reality.

Cinema, which emerges as a reflection of reality, where imagination and creativity merge, techniques and the culture of the society we live in are integrated, has evolved into an aesthetic language for cinema, thanks to the proliferation of internet technologies and the internet's limitless limits. This aesthetic language has also created an objective representation of reality.

Cinema has been influenced by other art forms while simultaneously developing its own narrative possibilities. Cinema possesses the ability to both convey life in a direct and intimate way while simultaneously creating an illusion on the silver screen. Lighting, sound, camera, and editing have enabled cinema's technical development. Using such elements as a witness to the era in which it was born reveals cinema's artistic value (Serदारoğlu, 2016).

Cinema, which develops a unique creative style through its techniques and narratives, emerges as a field where art is more readily apparent. It can be noted

that cinema possesses a comprehensive structure encompassing photography, painting, music, literature, and other artistic disciplines. Technical advancements in photography not only paved the way for the birth of cinema, but also reveal the influential role of music within films, as well as the influence of painting, the fundamental image of cinema, on cinema. Viewed from this perspective, cinema's relationship with other art forms allows us to see the birth of art(s) within art. With its editing, lighting, actors, and sets, cinema creates an aesthetic space and, through this aesthetic, plays a significant role in individuals.

### 3.4. Cinema – Art Relationship

Unlike traditional media, new media emerges as a relatively modern form of communication. The multimedia environment, its hyper-realistic setting, and the two-way nature of interaction increase individuals' interest in this more active and social multimedia environment. With the development of communication technologies, new media has gained a global dimension. This global dimension, as in every field, has influenced and continues to influence cinema. The digital age's transcendental and trans-intellectual means of communication has enabled cinema to both advance technically and expand interculturally. It has enabled films like Turkish, Hollywood, and Bollywood to be viewed, recognized, and shared in diverse countries.

The status of art forms also varies within the context of new media. For example, cinema is the collective name for all filmmaking practices that come through various distribution channels. This also means including the internet, video, and television broadcasting as new media tools. Therefore, the term cinema is used to describe the combined cinematic efforts of a specific group or institution. Today, cinema is one of the countless forms of mass entertainment. The communications technology revolution is supported by the increasing flow of information and production in the global market (Gürkan, 2016).

With the emergence of new media, there have been changes in the production and exhibition areas of cinema, but technological advancements have made filming easier and less expensive. This convenience, brought about by internet technology, allows for filming to be recreated in studio environments rather than going to the exact same location. For example, the use of stunt doubles has been replaced by the safe environments created in studios with the help of technology for filming dangerous scenes. From another perspective, thanks to advancements in technology and the comfort it offers, the culture of group viewing has given

way to individual viewing. While cinemas were once the preferred destination for watching films, today we can watch any film we want on any digital platform. The changes and transformations of new media have not only made filming easier but also created a space where individuality is at the forefront.

“In fact, it is so much so that even in the movie theater, in the mass viewing culture, the audience can influence the course of the film. This is interactive cinema; in other words, the audience has become the subject in the cinema, and the film takes shape according to the audience's wishes” (Şeberoğlu, 2020).

While it's undeniable that new media prioritizes the individual and offers two-way interaction, it also plays a significant role in cinema. By facilitating film production, new media has also enabled filmmakers to advance and improve themselves technically. New media has transformed cinema at the production, distribution, exhibition, and promotion levels, and these transformations have occurred simultaneously.

## CONCLUSION

The concept of art, a product of human-nature interaction, has long been debated and continues to be so. While there are many definitions of art, it is quite difficult to define it precisely. Art, a product of interaction, is as old as human history. In this evolving and changing modernized world, art has divided into branches. One of these branches is cinema. Cinema, whose story belongs to the society in which we live, has changed and transformed with the development of technology. The silver screen has given way to digital environments. The emergence of new media has technically influenced cinema and continues to do so. Cinema, which appears as the fictional pattern of reality, encompasses many artistic disciplines such as actors, content, music, written language, photography, and painting. Cinema, encompassing almost all art forms, has enabled individuals to interact with many fields. This multifaceted interaction has also enabled the production and distribution of cinema to occur on a global scale. Cinema, viewed as a means of leisure and entertainment, also possesses an educational value through its fictionalized narratives derived from reality. Cinema, which helps preserve collective memory, has also transformed individuals into engaged spectators through its two-way interaction, rather than just collective viewing. While watching certain films, individuals can interactively change the plot and see other plots written by the screenwriter within the same film.

Digital media, in all its uses, has transformed and altered the content and

techniques of cinema, thus giving rise to individuality in the modern world. Watching a film on a digital platform allows the individual to choose among options based on questions presented through interactive participation.

Cinema, the fictional reflection of creativity and reality, reveals and continues to reveal the relationship between art and society, art and culture, with its content, techniques, actors and presentations of visual feasts within the comfort zone offered by new media. Cinema, by incorporating all the content of new media and enabling the interweaving of other art forms through the integration of other art forms, has offered an effective form of aesthetic satisfaction/pleasure.

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## SECTION 2

# THE CONSTRUCTION OF CREATIVITY THROUGH ART: A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY ON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

**Ayşe Ozge DIRAK<sup>2</sup>**

### INTRODUCTION

It is accepted that art education emerged in Europe in the 19th century, but art's interaction with humankind and its connection with society are much older than that. Individuals use art and creativity, consciously or unconsciously, to express themselves and find solutions to problems. In this sense, visual arts education is a field that competitive and multifaceted societies aiming for development attach great importance to. Visual arts courses aim to develop a positive attitude towards art in individuals by taking individual differences as a basis and assuming that every individual is born creative.

In Turkey, too, the Visual Arts course aims to help students become individuals who are sensitive to art, have aesthetic awareness, and value their cultural heritage. In this sense, creativity is one of the characteristics that this course prioritizes developing. This raises questions such as what creativity is, in what processes it emerges, and what factors promote or hinder it. Various researchers have examined the subject of creativity. Dimensions such as creative thinking, creative thinking theories, dimensions of creativity, stages of creative thinking, processes related to creativity, factors that play a role in creativity, and characteristics of creative individuals are examined in this research text. Finally, using the results of fieldwork, the relationship between visual arts education and creativity was investigated, and a snapshot of the situation in society was taken.

There is an inevitable connection between art education and creativity,

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concepts that may be as old as human history itself. Visual arts education in high schools aims to increase students' creativity through creativity-related achievements. However, due to reasons such as the absence of this course in exam questions in our country, the prejudices and attitudes of students and parents, the contributions of this course may be overlooked. However, investigating these reasons could contribute to the literature if it becomes the subject of another study. In this study, high school students will be interviewed to obtain their opinions on the importance of this course, and the effects of the course on their creativity will be investigated. It is hoped that addressing the issue from the students' perspective will make the research unique. Highlighting the difference between the intended and actual situations could be the first step toward finding solutions. This could lead to a better, more art-loving, and healthier society and world.

### **1.1. Problem Statement**

The problem situation in our study is to determine the structural and functional contribution of the Visual Arts course to Anatolian High School students and to reveal its relationship with the concept of creativity.

In our study, firstly, the historical background of art education and visual arts education will be examined. Then, the visual arts course will be explained in terms of the structure of the curriculum, its objectives and achievements, areas of competence and functions. Then, creativity, creative thinking theories, stages of creativity, factors that play a role in creativity and have an effect on creativity, characteristics of a creative person, factors that support and hinder creativity, visual arts course and finally the factors between creativity will be examined.

The dependent variable of this research is the perceptions of the importance and creativity of the Visual Arts course by Anatolian High School students. The independent variable is the psychological factors that students are born with and bring with them, especially in the context of creativity. These factors will be discussed item by item in the research.

### **1.2. Purpose of the Research**

Today, in most Anatolian High Schools, which are secondary education institutions, the Visual Arts course is taught as part of the curriculum. However, the researcher noticed that some students and even their parents do not attach

importance to this course. The reason given is that the course does not find a question area in the university entrance exam. However, what is overlooked here is that the purpose of the course is not limited to ensuring academic success. This course is planned to increase the student's sensitivity and interest in art, to create a visual arts awareness in the student and to contribute to creative thinking skills. The relationship of creativity with art, one's own life and society is also of particular importance. The aim of this research is to try to determine the importance of the visual arts course, especially by revealing its relationship with creativity.

### **1.3. Importance of the Research**

In the literature, studies examining the interaction of visual arts course in high school with different concepts were found. However, there are very few studies examining the effect of visual arts course on creativity. It was found that the studies that were found were generally conducted using teacher opinions. There is no research that explains high school students' views on the importance of the visual arts course and its contribution to creativity with the interview technique. Therefore, it is thought that this research may help to close the gap.

### **1.4. Assumptions**

It is assumed that there is a positive correlation between the visual arts course at high school level and students' creativity level.

### **1.5. Limitations**

At the high school level, only 5 students could be reached for economic reasons. These students are studying at Anatolian High School. This may lead to a sampling that may reduce the validity of the scope and therefore the data may not provide inclusive results.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Art Education

Art education is a concept that first emerged in Europe in the 19th century. However, considering that art and education have existed since much earlier times, it can be said that art education has been important for societies for a long time. Art education has been one of the important parts of preparing individuals for life by providing them with various skills in many societies. “*Art education is one of the most reliable environments where creativity education is at the forefront, where each student is guided in line with their personal development and tendencies, and where divergent thinking is developed.*” (Bahadır & Berkant, 2022: p.110). Art education is a universal concept and has an indispensable importance in raising individuals for societies. It aims to develop concepts such as divergent thinking and aesthetic sensitivity in students. It can be said that it is the transfer of the universal language of art to the individual.

#### 2.1.1. Visual Arts Education

Visual arts education is a structure that includes the knowledge that students learn in other courses. Although visual arts education is often perceived as unimportant in our country, it is multifaceted in terms of its benefits and is likely to continue its effects throughout an individual’s life. To make students think about the products they make in the visual arts course, to realize that the same subjects are not always drawn and painted, and to perform practices that do not involve memorization; a program in which questioning is at the forefront and students’ active participation in the lesson is ensured will also realize an effective learning.

With visual arts education, the individual’s aesthetic sensitivity, artistic interests and values, and talents are tried to be revealed. It is aimed for the individual to digest this sensitivity throughout life. It paves the way for the lifelong development of aesthetic and artistic potentials (Kara, 2020: p. 768).

With visual arts education, the active participation of the individual with the principle of here and now, such as producing something that does not exist in harmony with his/her originality, finding the opportunity to do activities that he/she has not done before, is put into practice. In this way, the student moves away from rote memorization.

Visual arts education is also very important for the personal and social

development of the individual. As a matter of fact, it can increase the sense of self-confidence in the individual, lead to the realization of his/her talents and interests, and these lead to social development (Başbuğ & Başbuğ, 2016: p. 83).

#### 2.1.2. Visual Arts Lesson

While the visual arts course pushes students to research and produce, it is also a course that entertains, interests and relaxes them (Başbuğ & Başbuğ, 2016: p. 81). However, although students see the visual arts course as a set of activities that aim to evaluate their free time, they may find it less important than other courses. Many other reasons can be mentioned as the source of this situation, such as the fact that the student’s parents also have this approach, that the visual arts course is not included in the exams, and that this course is made to feel unnecessary and unimportant by paying more attention to other courses. However, this course aims to enable individuals to express themselves through intellectual, cognitive, affective and psychomotor activities. This course contributes to the development of the individual as a whole, helping the individual to reach personal integrity and develop self-confidence. For this reason, the aim of visual arts education in secondary education is not to train artists, but to train individuals who love art. It is through art education that all mental faculties and processes, powers such as sensation, sensation, perception, imagination, thinking and association, which are activated in the person who is engaged in art and who encounters and evaluates the work of art, can be trained.

The visual arts course is organized in three main areas: *Visual Arts Culture, Formation and History in Visual Arts, Environment and Museum Awareness. Art criticism, art history, aesthetics and application* disciplines are combined and integrated in the fields (Demirkale, 2015: 14). The student is active in the process, learning by doing and experiencing. It is aimed to reach the information by himself/herself. We can talk about a constructivist approach. In this sense, individual differences are emphasized.

#### 2.1.3. Specific Objectives of the Visual Arts Curriculum

The aims and principles of the visual arts course aim to develop the individual in psychological, sociological and psychomotor areas as well as cognitive concerns such as visual literacy, art history and aesthetic sensitivity. Because art is one of the forms of communication with oneself and others. In addition, the individual’s hand-eye coordination skills are also developed while producing a work of art. In addition to these, individuals who express themselves through

art can also find the opportunity to relax by experiencing an emotional release, catharsis. The Visual Arts Curriculum aims to bring about the following changes in students (MoNE, 2018: p. 11):

1. To have knowledge about art,
2. To have knowledge about art practices,
3. Creating original products using traditional and contemporary materials,
4. To comprehend the elements and principles of art and to use them in their works,
5. Gaining aesthetic sensitivity through art education practices,
6. Developing visual perception in line with the studies to be realized by observation,
7. Reflecting his imagination in his work,
8. To gain the skills of using basic terms, techniques and methods related to Visual Arts,
9. Expressing themselves through art by transforming their feelings, thoughts and impressions into original artistic designs,
10. To comprehend the place and importance of fine arts in the development of societies as an individual who knows the contributions of art to human history and has universal thought,
11. To follow innovations with the awareness of the richness of expression brought by different techniques and to benefit from technological possibilities in their artistic works,
12. Analyzing and evaluating works of art with the methods of description, analysis, interpretation and judgment,
13. To have a personality that loves nature, is sensitive to the environment, respects human rights, and can evaluate national and spiritual values with a universal perspective,
14. Understanding the importance of taking measures for occupational health and safety

Since each child has a unique potential, the importance of individual development was emphasized. In fact, the program started with the assumption that every child is creative. The importance of the course is repeated by emphasizing the development of the individual in all aspects.

#### **2.1.4 Characteristics of the Visual Arts Curriculum**

While preparing the visual arts curriculum, it is important that students are made active rather than passive, that individual differences and potentials are taken into consideration, and that it has a structure that develops students in a multidimensional way. In the curriculum, differences such as students' individual learning speed, interests, wishes and needs are taken into consideration. In this sense, it has a flexible structure. Students' artistic interests and orientations are taken into consideration and art practices that can attract their attention and are suitable for their developmental periods are included in the program (Demirkale, 2015: 16-17). The program was prepared based on individual differences in a structure that involves the student actively and at the center of the process. In summary, the program is student-centered, interesting, flexible, and suitable for the characteristics of the student's developmental period.

#### **2.1.5. Structure of the Visual Arts Curriculum**

Developed for grades 9,10,11,12, the program focuses on a *learning area-based approach*. There are three learning areas in the program: *Art Criticism and Aesthetics, Cultural Heritage and Formation in Visual Arts*. Theoretical and practical activities and practices related to these areas (MoNE, 2018: p.15).

#### **2.1.6. Visual Arts Curriculum Field Specific Skills**

The program has various objectives such as students following the developments in the field of visual arts, participating in activities and programs in this field, developing a consciousness and sensitivity to cultural diversity, knowing and using the language well, participating in cultural artistic activities, developing the ability to look at works of art from various aspects and transforming their impressions into specific works of art (MoNE, 2018: p.12). In addition to the objectives of the program to develop interest and awareness in art, it is very important that the program focuses on the psychosocial development of the student and the acquisition of values.

#### **2.1.7. Visual Arts Lesson Outcomes**

Outcome is a behavioral change in the student gained through experiences as a result of the program. There are also discipline-specific outcomes in the visual arts course. If the 2018 Visual Arts Curriculum outcomes are examined,

it is seen that they are in 3 learning areas. Art Criticism and Aesthetics, Cultural Heritage, and Formation in Visual Arts (MoNE, 2018: p. 14). Lesson outcomes are categorized according to secondary education levels (Demirkale 2015: pp. 22-24), who investigated the relevance of the outcomes to creativity, reached surprising results. In Grade 9, *8 out of 79 objectives are aimed at developing creative thinking skills*. Aesthetic concerns and the ability to produce original works by using dots and lines were tried to be developed. In Grade 10, *8 out of 51 objectives* emphasize creativity. The program, which tries to raise awareness about Turkish decorative arts, also develops the techniques of using watercolor, gouache and pastel paint. The program aims to inspire students to produce three-dimensional works inspired by museums, historical artifacts and art galleries. In 11th grade, it is aimed to create relatively more original productions. *7 out of 36 outcomes* prioritize creative thinking skills. Graphic works and printing techniques are taught. Students apply artistic editing techniques. In Grade 12, *12 out of 42 objectives* develop creative thinking skills. Activities such as transforming a given subject into humorous cartoons, space-figure relationship in composition, making transitions between forms, observation and analysis studies are included in the program. High-level complex results such as painting from the mind, taking photographs with aesthetic concerns, creating original works for the selected art movement are achieved. As can be seen, many opportunities are given to students to create products with activities and original ideas in order to increase their creative thinking skills by focusing on individual differences. It is seen that it is aimed to reach more original and complex designs, assuming that knowledge and originality will increase as the level of the student increases. If the 2018 Visual Arts Curriculum outcomes are examined, it is seen that they are in 3 learning areas. Art Criticism and Aesthetics, Cultural Heritage, and Formation in Visual Arts (MoNE, 2018: p. 14).

### 2.1.8. Necessity and Function of Visual Arts Education

Art is not only a part of the individual's school life, but also a large part of his/her life in which he/she will be in constant interaction throughout his/her development. In this long-term relationship of the individual with art and creativity, the main purpose of educational institutions is to ensure the full adaptation of the individual to life through the curriculum. Art is an individual's communication skill both with the society and with himself/herself. Individuals with high communication skills are more successful in solving problems in their own lives, and it is a great strength for individuals to have this skill in terms of the general health of the society. Considering that most of the problems in

society stem from a lack of communication skills, we can grasp the importance of the subject.

Art brings a different perspective to one's life, and the Visual Arts course has a special place in learning and transferring our cultural consciousness and heritage. It is vital for children to participate in art activities in order to continue their development in a healthy way, because art is one of the ways in which children express themselves. Art education is important in terms of developing the individual and realizing his/her own sensations, feelings and impressions, as well as adapting to the changes of the age. Every society prioritizes developing its individuals in as many ways as possible. As the world globalizes, art has also taken its share from this. The understanding of art has become common and the importance of art education has become more and more important in modern times.

### 2.2. Creativity

In the Turkish Dictionary of the Turkish Language Association, creation is defined as “making, producing, realizing or revealing something that has not been done before by using intelligence, thought and imagination” (TDK, 2025a); creativity is defined as “the ability to design, find and realize something new and original, which is accepted to exist in everyone” (TDK, 2025b). Creativity is doing what has not been done before, thinking what has not been thought, and producing what has not been produced with one's own interpretation.

The concept of creativity is thought to come from the Latin word “**creare**”. It is also thought to include meanings such as “giving birth, creating”. According to (Çam and Turgut, 2015: p. 79) *creativity is the expression of self-actualization skills*. We can say that creativity is a talent that exists in every period of human life and a process in which an unknown original result is reached from the known. In other words, we can say that creativity is the process of producing something that does not exist, thanks to the potential brought by the individual. However, it should also be noted that creativity has a developable side.

Creativity enables a person to adapt to new conditions and solve unexpected problems. He stated that the concept of creativity includes many characteristics such as divergent thinking, introversion, self-esteem, tolerance for ambiguity, willingness to take risks, flexibility, emotional variability, imagination (the ability to design a situation in the mind). To summarize, we can say that creativity exists even in solutions to unexpected problems at unexpected moments.

### 2.2.1. Creative Thinking

Creative thinking is the process of analyzing a problem faced by an individual, bringing an original solution to the situation, creating suggestions and predictions outside the usual patterns. The concepts of creativity and creative thinking are often confused and used interchangeably. While creativity is a process that includes a performance, creative thinking is a more mental, cognitive activity. The concept of creativity also includes creative thinking. There are various theories that examine creative thinking. Especially various psychologists have conducted deep research on this subject.

### 2.2.2. Theories of Creative Thinking

#### 2.2.2.1. Psychoanalytic Theory

Psychoanalytic theory emphasizes the impact of the individual's experiences especially in the 0-6 age period. Another important concept of the theory is the unconscious. Impulses, desires, the underwater part of the iceberg that we are not aware of is our unconscious. Sigmund Freud is the pioneer of the theory. According to this theory, which attaches great importance to unconscious processes, it is possible to find traces of the unconscious behind everything that seems meaningless. According to this theory, the muse, who seems to come unexpectedly, had a clear path ahead of time. Unconscious processes constitute the source of creativity. This source can sometimes be a wish, desire or fears and anxieties. Thoughts that are unacceptable to the society or unacceptable to the individual may be quite determined to find a source to express themselves, even in works such as art.

#### 2.2.2.2. Gestalt Theory

The founders of Gestalt psychology are Max Wertheimer, Kurt Koffka, Wolfgang Kohler and Kurt Lewin. Tanju says that according to Gestalt theory, creative thinking is the rediscovery of a situation within the whole. Gestaltists argue that when looking for a solution to a problem, it would not be correct to specify the elements in order of steps and follow these steps. Because Gestaltists think that the whole is more than the elements that make it up and is a special process. For this reason, it is obvious that the process is seen as much more complex, considering that creativity or the product of creativity is much more than the steps and grains that make it up.

Gestaltists see the problem as a process that needs to be completed and focus on the concept of generating ideas. One should see the problem as a whole and solve it in its entirety. Because every unfinished task occupies the human mind

and causes discomfort. When the unfinished work is completed, the gestalt is complete.

#### 2.2.2.3. Humanistic Theory

The humanistic approach believes that human beings are innately good and values the potential, special interest and motivation of the individual. The two pioneers of humanistic theory are Rogers and Maslow. Humanistic theory also stands out with its high belief in the individual. The aesthetic level in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs has often included elements related to art and beauty and has found a special place in the theory. Maslow must have thought that being intertwined with art was one of the important steps in realizing one's potential, for he placed this step in his hierarchy.

#### 2.2.2.4. Multiple Intelligence Theory

Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences emphasizes that our intelligence is multifaceted by mentioning different types of intelligence. Although the types of intelligence he defines have been gradually increased in recent years, the ones that are desired to be used primarily in this research are as follows: Visual-spatial, social, verbal, logical-mathematical, bodily kinesthetic, musical rhythmic, natural and intrinsic intelligence. "When the relationship between multiple intelligences and creativity is considered, it is quite remarkable that the theory evaluates the individual as unique and different, allows children to recognize themselves, and helps them develop their creative thinking" (Yuvacı, 2017: p. 17).

### 2.2.3. Dimensions of Creativity

The dimensions of creativity can be interpreted in various ways by different researchers. However, this study aims to explain the 4 dimensions most commonly found in the literature by the researcher: Fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration.

#### 2.2.3.1. Fluency

It is the rapid use of information in the mind at the time it is needed. Another important point in fluency is to be able to produce more and different solutions in a short time. For example, if one of two students listening to the same story makes 10 inference sentences while the other makes 8 sentences, we can say that the first child is more fluent. Fluency is mental free movements.

#### 2.2.3.2. Flexibility

In short, it is the individual's ability to adapt to new situations. Flexibility

means being able to easily get out of rigid thoughts and habitual patterns. It means being able to move easily from one situation to another.

“When solving a problem encountered, it emphasizes free thinking by breaking the existing patterns in the mind” (Yeşilyurt, 2020: p. 3884). Flexibility is an essential factor for creativity. Because it is almost impossible to have a new creation if one is afraid to go beyond the known, the cliché. If one is afraid to take a different path, it is difficult to reach a better one. The ability to move into the unknown is not developed in everyone. Lack of mental flexibility can lead to many problems. Indeed, many psychological disorders are also caused by a lack of flexibility. If the individual always stands in the same place, it is not possible to move in another direction. In the context of creativity, lack of flexibility hinders the process of producing something new. Courage may be a necessary factor for flexibility in this sense.

#### **2.2.3.3. Originality/Originality**

Originality is doing what has not been done before. It is to be different, unique. “It is bringing unusual or different solutions to a problem” (Dere, 2017: p. 1193). The emphasis on the ability to react in an uncommon way is important. It is also possible to explain this situation as divergent thinking skill. It is an interesting, clever, unthought-out response related to the situation.

#### **2.2.3.4. Elaboration (Embellishment-Enrichment)**

The ability to develop, enrich and embellish an idea, a draft. The details that emerge are meaningful and have the strongest ideas. It is the most detailed and developed form of a draft.

### **2.2.4. Stages of Creative Thinking**

Creative thinking has been a topic of interest to various researchers. According to the common understanding, creative thinking consists of 4 stages: Preparation, Incubation, Enlightenment and Realization.

#### **2.2.4.1. Preparation Stage**

This is the stage where the problem is defined and research is done about the problem. Information is gathered and it is necessary to mentally focus on the issue. In the preparation phase, inspiration is drawn from a variety of sources and the necessary resources are mobilized for an in-depth understanding of the problem. According to Graham Wallas, “During the preparation period, the problem, need or what is to be achieved is identified and defined.” (Çimşir, 2019: p. 287).

#### **2.2.4.2. Incubation Phase**

The preparation phase is followed by a mental break or a period of not working directly on the problem. In other words, during this period of time, the problem is not actively worked on or thought about. However, during this time, the subconscious and the mind continue to process and associate various information without being aware of it. This process can even take years. Even if the problem is solved, the mind continues to try to solve the situation in the box it keeps deep inside.

#### **2.2.4.3. Enlightenment Phase**

After the incubation phase, a solution or a new idea suddenly and unexpectedly appears in one’s mind. This can be the most obvious and exciting moment of the creative process. Like a burning light, the solution suddenly appears in the mind and surprises the person. The moment of enlightenment provides a solution to the problem or discovers a new perspective.

#### **2.2.4.4. Realization - Verification Phase**

In the realization phase, the idea is tested or developed. At this stage, the realism and feasibility of the idea are examined. If necessary, the idea is revised or improved. The result is a product.

### **2.2.5. Processes of Creativity**

#### **2.2.5.1. Perception**

It is a concept that can be characterized as the reflection of the reality in the external world in the individual. There are many factors that affect a person’s perceptions. These can be psychological, sociological, social, environmental, individual, cultural, etc. A person experiences differences in perception and perception processes under the influence of the social group, age, gender, interests, etc. One’s past experiences, prejudices and ideas may be the reasons for interpreting perceptions differently. From another perspective, perception refers to making sense of the external world through our senses. First we perceive with our body and senses, then this experience leaves an impression on us. Perceptions such as touch, hearing and hearing also affect interpretation and appealing to different senses to develop creativity in education can be important in terms of sensitivity to individual differences.

#### **2.2.5.2. Image**

“Imagery is defined as spontaneous sensations that appear in the mind without any stimulus from the outside world” (Yuvacı, 2017: p.19). Imagery

means spontaneous sensations. They are perceived spontaneously at the level of consciousness. Images are of great importance in creativity.

### **2.2.5.3. Emotion**

Human beings are a whole inseparable from their emotions. While education aims to develop the individual as a whole, it should also use the connection of art with emotions. Emotions have an important place as a source of creativity. When people get emotional, they can experience an emotional discharge by engaging in productive creative activities to get rid of the intensity of their feelings. This is a very healthy process. When emotions are well directed, they can become an important source of creativity.

### **2.2.5.4. Symbols**

It stands for sign. It can be an abbreviation related to a situation, event, object, concept. According to Yuvacı (2017, 21) symbols emerge *after the child distinguishes the difference between the two by making the product created by the child comprehensible to the child's eyes.*

### **2.2.5.5. Imagery (Richness of Imagination)**

It can be defined as establishing a new connection between images. It has found a place in psychology as the process of visualizing the objects previously given in the sense of perception in what the mind perceives.

### **2.2.5.6. Metaphor**

Figurative language is a form of using a word in a way other than its original meaning. Here the word is completely removed from its literal meaning. There are also various creative products that have emerged by associating this concept with the concept of humor. As mentioned, creativity has a strong connection with figurative meanings as it involves thinking outside the box and out of the box.

## **2.2.6. Factors Playing a Role in Creativity**

When creativity is explained in terms of “being talented”, it may be thought to be innate. However, it is a known fact that creativity is a phenomenon that can be developed. In other words, we can also take steps to improve our creativity with external factors.

### **2.2.6.1. Developmental (Internal) Factors**

They are processes that consist of individual factors and have more psychological effects.

#### **2.2.6.1.1. Heredity**

We can call genetics heredity, the inheritance that an individual receives

from his/her parents through genes. As mentioned, if we perceive creativity as a talent, most researchers believe that talents are known as an “innate potential”. However, this potential can be enhanced or blunted by the influences of the environment.

#### **2.2.6.1.2. Gender**

It can be said that gender is distinct as two different types that are innate and constructed by societies. There are two types of gender: biological gender, which is formed according to chromosomes, and social gender as a sociological concept. When we look at the relationship between gender differences and creativity, there is no serious difference in the literature, especially at a young age. However, it can be said that the effect on creativity increases as age increases, perhaps as a pressure mechanism of societies. Especially in developmental psychology, it is stated that women are generally more successful in small motor and men are generally more successful in large motor activities. Although it is seen more as an individual factor, it is obvious that creativity is more or less affected by gender stereotypes. As a matter of fact, many factors such as individuals' interests and the choice of activities they spend their time are affected by gender roles. These factors can also affect the formation and emergence processes of creativity, especially in terms of subsequent development or not.

#### **2.2.6.1.3. Birth Order**

This concept, which has found its place especially in Alfred Adler's Individual Psychology, names first-born, middle-born and last-born children according to birth order and attributes different meanings to each position. However, sometimes the birth order loses its effect and, for example, the middle child may take on the role of the firstborn child and be perceived as such by his/her family. Since each child's position in the family is different, their creative thinking skills also differ. The opportunities created by the family during the child's development, the genes passed on to the child or the degree of role modeling vary. Since first-born children generally interact more with the authority figures of the family and are considered to be problematic, there may be a high likelihood of not creating spaces for them to engage in artistic activities. Therefore, first-born children who grow up with a more authoritarian family style are generally less creative than middle and last-born children. To summarize, the change in the family's child-rearing style affects the child's creativity.

#### **2.2.6.1.4. Intelligence**

Whether there is a link between intelligence level and creativity has been a subject of curiosity for many years. Especially since the 1950s, this link has

been examined by various researchers. “*In the end, Sternberg stated that there is no relationship between high intelligence and high creativity*” (Yuvacı, 2017: p. 24). There are studies claiming that the creativity potential of individuals who are highly praised for their intelligence will decrease. It may be important to emphasize the difference between creativity and labor. A child who thinks that he/she does not need much mind-straining activity to produce something creative will not make an effort.

#### **2.2.6.1.5 Personality**

We have already mentioned the impact of being flexible in artistic activities. A flexible personality structure can be innate with the temperament that makes up the personality. However, if the person has unhealthy inflexible rules, he/she can replace them with flexible rules through cognitive processes acquired later. In addition, we can say that the personalities of people with a high tendency to be independent and original, the original individuals we call “artist spirited” are also related to creativity.

#### **2.2.6.1.6. Age**

Age is another variable that affects creativity. Childhood is one of the periods when imagination is at its peak. As we get older, we can observe that the originality and creative thinking observed in childhood are replaced by the anxiety of conforming to rules and norms and the frequent experience of being stuck on the function of the object. In this sense, the establishment of new schemas can be a problem, especially when the inflexible personality is formed with age. However, the opposite situation can also be observed. Individuals who acquire new knowledge as they get older and learn to use and develop their creativity may develop this skill. *Based on the researches; it is seen that creativity increases as the age of creativity programs applied to children increases* (Yuvacı, 2017: p. 25).

#### **2.2.6.2. Social Factors (External Factors)**

##### **2.2.6.2.1. Environment**

The child is born into the social structure from the moment of birth. It is quite open to being influenced by external factors. It is obvious that environmental factors as well as inborn factors have an impact on the individual. Developing children’s creativity is an issue that both institutions such as families, schools and governments should pay attention to. First of all, it is important to support the original ideas of the child in the family, educational policies in schools should be interested in revealing and developing this skill, and governments should make the individual more creative and productive and even provide facilitating

opportunities in this sense. Creating environments and materials that foster inquiry, openness to innovation and flexibility, and imagination is necessary in this sense. Our environment has an undeniable influence on the atrophy and development of creativity. Especially in societies that attach importance to individualism, paving the way for the freedom of individuals can be beneficial in terms of creativity.

##### **2.2.6.1.2. Socioeconomic Level**

Another factor that develops an individual’s creativity is the presence of an environment full of rich stimuli. Yaşar and Aral (2010) examined the creative thinking skills of children with and without preschool education and found that families and educational institutions that organize their home environments to develop creative thinking skills make a great contribution to supporting creativity.

When children are provided with environments that enrich their creativity from an early age, the development of creativity can be faster and easier. However, a factor that can turn the situation into the opposite is the fact that we can hinder creativity by not giving the child time to be bored and by putting them in an environment with too many toys/stimulants. Because creativity sometimes means coming up with a solution and thinking differently without getting stuck on the function. For this, it is important to create moments when these factors can be mobilized.

##### **2.2.6.1.3. Family**

The family is the first place where a child experiences life and is likely to be the most influential institution throughout his/her life. The child learns many things from the family: habits, attitudes, behaviors, hobbies, knowledge, prejudices... In an environment where creativity is supported or there is a positive attitude towards art, it will be easier for the child to adopt these factors. Family members, especially those with whom the child spends the most time, are role models for the child. “*The quality of the environments offered to the child at home will help the child to become a useful individual as it affects the child’s ability to create different ideas, to create original products by imagining, and to be self-confident*” (Yuvacı, 2017: p. 27).

##### **2.2.6.1.4. School**

After the family, school is the environment where children and young people spend the most time, perhaps even more. For this reason, it is inevitable that the environment, setting and stimuli at school have a great influence on the child. In schools, children learn and develop many things from school, either consciously through curricula or through non-targeted instructive factors in school, either

consciously or unconsciously. Opportunities that support creativity, an environment or program that fosters positive attitudes, and appropriate materials are important.

### 2.2.7. Characteristics of Creative People

Creative people can be independent, flexible, original and not afraid to experience the new. In fact, it is common in society to see that extraordinarily creative individuals are usually artistically inclined, extreme personalities, and therefore ostracized by society. However, it is also possible that people who develop this aspect by transforming creativity into socially acceptable forms may become a craftsman, a product design expert, or a respected artist. In addition, Ross (1980) stated that creative people have some similar characteristics: *Sensitivity to problems, Fluency of ideas, Flexibility in mental strategies, Originality, Capacity to identify situations, Having effective mental processes* (Yuvacı, 2017: p. 30).

### 2.2.8. Factors That Develop and Support Creativity

It is possible to mention that creativity is a potential that can increase when supported. Yıldırım stated that examining creative people and identifying and applying some of the methods they use can increase creativity (Demirkale, 2015: p. 31): *Risking to be different and thinking flexibly, delaying judgment and associating concepts, thinking quickly, focusing on the subject, using imagination.*

It can be said that there are individual and environmental factors that support creativity. Some of these factors include the fact that the individual is born with a personality or talent suitable for creativity, and that the individual has the opportunity to develop with the influence of the environment, for example, with appropriate non-oppressive environments and sufficient stimuli. It can also be considered that the individual is given appropriate opportunities, that the individual has role models, and that the individual is flexible and independent. Having the opportunity to receive appropriate and supportive education or experiencing one's emotions can also be included in the factors that develop creativity.

There are techniques that can be used to develop and support creativity, and education has a great place in these matters. Brainstorming, divergent thinking, comprehensive thinking, note-taking technique, synthesis technique, travel and observation are some of them. Techniques such as analytical and critical

thinking, creative problem solving, six hat technique and case studies can also be useful, especially among the methods used by educators.

### 2.2.9. Factors Hindering Creativity

These factors can be individual or environmental factors, just like the factors that develop creativity. The opposite conditions to the ones just mentioned will hinder creativity. In other words, a personality that is rigid and afraid of originality, a lack of role models, a lack of suitable environment and opportunities, or a negative social attitude may be effective. Tahir explains these factors as *perceptual, emotional, cultural, individual, social, learned and programmatic* (Demirkale, 2015: p.33). In fact, it can be said that all systems that hinder the individual's originality and try to make societies uniform like a garden lawn hinder creativity. According to Bauman, *"According to the modern state, which acts from the utopia of a perfect order and seeks to create a new "morality", it is necessary to remove the pests of the garden that do not fit the patterns of this culture, that is, in a more common definition, "others", from the center and, if necessary, "destroy" them* (Kineşçi, 2017: p. 64). In this context, one of the ways to combat macrosystems that strive to make the individual uniform may be to develop the individual's creativity.

### 2.2.10. Visual Arts Lesson and Creativity

When we start with the assumption that all students taking visual arts courses are born with potential and creativity, we can also think that an individual's creativity can be further developed with the influence of the environment or individual psychological factors and effort. As a result of hereditary and environmental factors, an individual's creativity can emerge and develop, or it can remain undeveloped. Considering that young people spend most of their time in school from childhood onwards, we can grasp the importance of shaping them in this important period of time and making them healthy and beneficial to society and their country. *"According to Bessis and Jaqui, the first years of primary education are a suitable period for students who come with a certain creativity potential to develop and use this potential"* (Erdoğan, 2006: p. 96). Therefore, especially the first years of educational life are of vital importance for individuals to gain orientation and interest in certain fields. It is essential that the curriculum addresses the individual as a whole while fulfilling these tasks, and that the visual arts course, which can develop factors such as art and emotions that are often ignored, is given the necessary importance. Here, part of the task

falls to the program preparers and the state, another part to the teachers who are school stakeholders, and an important part to the family where the individual spends most of his/her time.

It should be aimed for the individual to be sensitive to art, to believe in the benefits of visual arts and to improve his/her life, creativity and maybe even mental health through this course. When all factors come together and work together, it will be inevitable that the whole society will change and develop with the change in the individual.

It is seen that the visual arts course includes many achievements and activities involving creativity. However, another factor is the problem of how much this theoretically appropriate program can be implemented in schools during the exam process. The belief of students, teachers, school administrators and parents in the usefulness and necessity of this course will significantly affect the efficiency of the process. The benefits of this course to the individual and society are quite high. Because the visual arts course has a structure that can affect life, exams, and perhaps even the future career choice of the individual. According to Dikici, *the Visual Arts course is a process that matures the creative ability of children and young people* (Demirkale, 2015: p. 37). The Visual Arts course, which is aimed to develop many skills such as creativity, productivity, flexibility, originality, protecting cultural heritage, aesthetic perception, critical and divergent thinking, is an interdisciplinary branch due to its structure, so it is affected by different fields and affects different fields. In these interaction processes, it aims to develop the individual in many ways. However, most of the time the difference between the theories, i.e. the goals, and the actual situation is significant.

### 2.2.11. Related Research

In the literature, there are many articles on the concept of creativity. However, there are not many studies that combine creativity and visual arts lessons. Most of the studies that were found include the views of visual arts teachers on the subject. Studies conducted at the high school level generally examined the visual arts course with different concepts. Demirkale, O. C. (2015): *“Examining the contribution of the visual arts course to creative thinking skills.”* is quite similar to the subject of this study, but the difference of our study is the people to whom the question is directed. In the study, the perspective of teachers was examined. However, it is an important contribution that the study explains the subject in detail.

Tan, Y. (2021): *“Investigation of the relationship between secondary school students’ attitudes towards visual arts course and study habits”* also benefited our study in terms of the findings related to visual arts course and art education.

Yuvacı, Z. (2017): The study *“Investigating the creativity levels of 6-year-old children receiving pre-school education according to the creativity of their teachers and classroom environments”* also chose kindergarten students as the study group and may make a significant contribution to the fact that creativity in early childhood may be higher than in later years.

## METHOD

In the study, between December 18-19, 2024, Tekirdağ Marmaraeğlisi OPET Anatolian High School students were determined as the main mass. Due to time constraints, 5 people were selected as the sample. Literature review, text review and internet research were conducted, and interview technique was used to ask questions to the individuals and to investigate what this course contributed to them and their creativity. In our technique, which we can also call semi-structured interviews, 10 questions were standardized, and the last 1 question was prepared as open-ended. The first step in the study was the content of the visual arts course and the aims and contributions of the program. Another point is creativity. The effect of the course on students’ creativity was investigated. Finally, by applying the interview method to the students, we will see the results of what the visual arts course has contributed to them.

## FINDINGS

In this study, the interview technique was used. It was important that the individuals had taken visual arts classes. Five students from Tekirdağ Marmaraeğlisi OPET Anatolian High School participated in the interview.

The first question asked to the participants was: “Do you consider the visual arts course you took to be important?” Two people answered yes, while three answered no.

The second question asked to the participants was: “Would you say that the visual arts course you took contributed to your creativity?” All five participants answered yes.

Another question asked to the participants was, “Do you think that the visual

arts course contributed to your creative thinking skills?” Four people answered that it did contribute, while one person answered that it did not.

Another question asked to the participants was, “Do you think that the visual arts course program was organized in a way that supports your creativity?” One person answered that they thought it was organized in a way that supported creativity, while four people answered that they did not think it was organized in a way that supported creativity.

The next question was, “Do you think that taking visual arts classes in high school will make it easier for you to come up with creative ideas in the future?” One person answered that they thought it would make it easier, while four people answered that they did not think it would make it easier.

Another question was, “Do you think that visual arts classes increase your sensitivity and interest in art?” All 5 participants answered that it does.

Another question was, “Do you think that visual arts classes contribute to your ability to find creative solutions and develop new, original ideas?” Four people answered that it did contribute, while one person answered that it did not.

Another question asked to the participants was, “Do you think this course has helped you develop your visual perception and imagination by correctly perceiving the visual world?” All five participants answered that it had contributed to their development.

Another question was: “Do you think this course enables you to express yourself through art by transforming your feelings, thoughts, and impressions into original artistic designs during or after the course?” Three people answered that it did, while two people answered that it did not.

Another question asked to the students was: “Do you think this course has made you more aware of the topics of ‘art criticism’ and ‘art history’?” Three people answered that it had made them more aware, while two people answered that it had not.

In this study, which examined the importance of visual arts courses in high school and their contribution to students’ creativity, the final question asked of participants was, “What did the visual arts course contribute to you?” The question was open-ended, and answers were expected. The answers received were generally statements that it did not contribute much. Some of the answers were as follows: “My drawing skills had deteriorated, so I had given up. This class gives me hand training and reduces the intensity of other classes a little, strengthening my mental state,” and “This class allows me to think differently. The combination of differences creates more beautiful things.”

## CONCLUSION

As a result of interviews conducted with five individuals, the findings regarding the importance of visual arts classes and their contribution to creativity among students at Tekirdağ Marmaraereğlisi OPET Anatolian High School are as follows:

**Table 1. Interview Results Table (%)**

	Yes	No.
Do you consider the visual arts course you take important?	%40	%60
Would you say that the visual arts course you took contributed to your creativity?	%100	%0
Do you think the visual arts course contributes to your creative thinking skills?	%80	%20
Do you think that the visual arts curriculum is organized in a way to support your creativity?	%20	%80
Do you think that having taken a visual arts course in high school will make it easier for you to acquire creative ideas in the future?	%20	%80
Do you think that the visual arts course has increased your sensitivity and interest in art?	%100	%0
Do you think that the visual arts course contributes to finding creative solutions and acquiring new and original ideas?	%80	%20
Do you think that this course develops visual perception and imagination by perceiving the visual world correctly?	%100	%0
Do you think that this course enabled you to express yourself through art by transforming your feelings, thoughts and impressions into original artistic designs during or after the course?	%60	%40
Do you think this course raised your awareness about “art criticism” and “art history”?	%60	%40

According to the results, the first question revealed that students did not consider visual arts classes important, the second question revealed that the class contributed to creativity, the third question revealed that the class contributed to creative thinking skills, and the fourth question revealed that the class program was not considered to be organized in a way that supported creativity. The fifth question revealed that taking the course does not facilitate the acquisition of creative ideas in the future, the sixth question revealed that the visual arts course increases sensitivity and interest in art, and the seventh question revealed that the visual arts course contributes to finding creative solutions and acquiring new, original ideas. The eighth question determined that this course develops visual perception and imagination by correctly perceiving the visual world, the ninth question determined that the course enables individuals to express themselves through art during or after the course, and the tenth question determined that the visual arts course raises students' awareness of "art criticism" and "art history."

Looking at the results, it can be said that students think the course adds little or no value to them. Nevertheless, the course is not considered important. Why is the course labeled as insignificant even though it is considered useful? It may be important to find out what causes this gap. Indeed, the aim of this study is not to prove that the course contributes, but to reveal what students think about the course and the extent of the relationship between the course objectives and what actually happens. Perhaps if the problems in the system are revealed in this sense through visual arts education to create more conscious citizens and supported by academic research, they can become part of the solution. In this research, a literature review was followed by field interviews. Art education, visual arts courses and education, the program, and the course's outcomes and functions were investigated. Then, the other dimension of the research, creativity, was examined, including creative thinking and theories, dimensions and processes of creativity, stages and processes of creative thinking, and factors that play a role in creativity. The interview results were combined with all the literature findings to reach some conclusions specific to Anatolian High School students, which were explained and discussed in the findings and conclusions sections.

In this study, we sought to determine Anatolian High School students' perceptions of the importance of the Visual Arts course and the course's contribution to creativity. In future studies, it may be beneficial to conduct research with high school students from different school types, such as science high schools and vocational high schools, or to develop more effective programs.

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### SECTION 3

## MORAL RESPONSIBILITY IN ART: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ARTISTIC AND PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVES

**Büşra OZEN<sup>3</sup>**

### INTRODUCTION

The human being's relationship with existence is not something that remains only at the level of awareness; the human being does not mentally exclude any sphere of existence with which he or she has not come into contact. The concern to recognize, understand and make sense of the world of existence is one of the most fundamental qualities of human beings. From the depths of space to the lowest layer of soil, every single being has an ontological, epistemological, religious, ethical or aesthetic value for humans. Although nature is a field of pure reality, in the human mind it sometimes acquires a mysterious, sometimes beneficial, sometimes cruel or sublime quality. These values are shaped in the human mind and reflected in nature. Thus, human beings make nature more intimate, understandable and simple.

The search for beauty is an important bond in the relationship that human beings establish with existence. This bond is embodied in the work of art as an aesthetic expression of man's effort to give meaning to the sphere of existence. A work of art created with the concern for beauty is not only an individual creation, but also a social phenomenon. This sociality gives the work of art moral, legal, educational and religious dimensions. This study will examine whether art has a moral dimension beyond being an aesthetic object; the question of whether

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the work of art has ethical responsibility will be discussed in the context of philosophical and art sociology.

In this study, the relationship between ethics and aesthetics will be discussed within the framework of the interaction between morality and art. Both morality and art are two fundamental values produced by human beings and have acquired a social character. These two fields are the carriers of “good” and “beautiful”, the most ancient concepts of the human world. The concepts of “good” and “beautiful”, which are sometimes used carelessly interchangeably in daily life, have been discussed and compared in detail by many philosophers in the history of philosophical thought. In this study, “the good” will be discussed as a moral value and “the beautiful” in the context of a work of art. The reason why the concept of “beauty” is analyzed by focusing on the work of art rather than aesthetics in nature is that the work of art has a social aspect. However, since the beauty of nature does not contain this sociality, it is more difficult to associate it with a moral responsibility. This study examines whether the artist has a moral responsibility based on the social aspect of art and the limits of the obligation of the work of art to exemplify what is “good” from a philosophical and artistic perspective within the framework of the disciplines of ethics and sociology of art.

In the study, firstly, the relationship between art and society and morality is discussed, followed by a literature review on how the concepts of “beautiful” and “good” are related by philosophers. In this context, Aristotle, Plato and Kant’s views on the relationship between the beautiful and the good are evaluated in detail.

Secondary sources were utilized in order to address the subject from multiple perspectives; in addition, in-depth interviews were conducted with some painters in order to examine how the relationship between the beautiful and the good is established in the artistic context. In line with the answers given by the artists, philosophers’ and artists’ approaches to the relationship between the beautiful and the good were analyzed comparatively.

## **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ART AND MORALITY**

### **1. Art and Society**

According to Aristotle, man is a social being by nature. Human beings, who need others to survive, develop both physically and socially and psychologically through solidarity and cooperation. Processes such as meeting needs, establishing

a safe and orderly life, the continuation of generations and education are only possible through social structures and division of labor.

For a group of people to qualify as a society, it is possible not only by being together, but also by having a common world of meaning and emotion. Art and culture are the primary elements that nourish this common feeling, that is, the social spirit. Singing along enthusiastically to the same song, celebrating the same success together or shedding tears over the same poem makes individuals not just a community but a society. In this respect, it cannot be denied that art has a social dimension. Cultural products such as national anthems, flags, architectural structures (palaces, pyramids, cathedrals, mosques), religious music, mythologies, epics, temples, sculptures, folk songs, lullabies, picture books and stories are common values that emerge in areas where art and social fabric intertwine. By expressing social values in aesthetic forms, such works both create identity and enable cultural transmission between generations.

The Renaissance movement, which laid the foundations of the modernization process, first manifested itself in the field of art. This movement paved the way not only for an artistic awakening but also for radical transformations in many social fields such as knowledge, morality, politics, education and production. The Renaissance is a historical case that concretely demonstrates the power of art to transform society. However, this transformation is not unidirectional; while art transforms society, the established values of society also profoundly affect the production and perception of art.

As a matter of fact, it is no coincidence that with the rise of the idea of humanism in the West, there was a great increase in artistic activities. The adoption of a human-centered thought liberated art and expanded its field of production. As Erinç (2013: 41) points out, it is not meaningful to expect sculptors to be trained in a cultural environment where art forms such as sculpture are perceived as sinful or shameful. However, with the influence of humanist thought, human beings were placed at the center in the West, replacing God as the source of truth, goodness and beauty. With this shift in focus, it was no longer God who set the boundaries of sin and shame, but man himself. This situation made it possible to liberate art and redefine aesthetic values.

There is a reciprocal and dynamic relationship between art and culture. While the rise in the level of culture allows art to develop in terms of both quantity and quality, the progress of art raises the cultural level of society (Erinç, 2013: 41). In this context, art is an effective tool in the formation and transformation of the social fabric as well as being a field of individual expression. At this point, the following questions gain importance: What role does art play in terms of social

solidarity and coexistence? Does art have a social duty? Does the artist have to take social norms into account when producing his/her work, or do these norms limit artistic freedom? More importantly, if a work of art propagates inhumane themes such as violence, suicide, chaos, fascism or racism, can it still have artistic value? Does the artist have unlimited freedom of expression, or should this freedom be conditioned by the ethical limits of society? These questions reveal that art is not only an aesthetic matter, but also an ethical one. The balance between the freedom of art and its social responsibility constitutes one of the most controversial areas of aesthetic thought.



Figure 1. Picasso, Guernica Painting, 1937

Source: <https://guernica.museoreinasofia.es/gigapixel/en/#2/67.9/-123.0>

A dialog that is rumored to have taken place during the interrogation of the famous painter Pablo Picasso, who lived in Paris during World War II, at his home by the Gestapo reveals the social dimension of art in a striking way. It is told that when a German officer pointed to one of Picasso's works and asked "Did you paint this?", the artist replied "No, you did!". The work in question is *Guernica*, completed in 1937 and considered an anti-war masterpiece. Adorned with disturbing images such as a bullfight, a weeping woman, and a mother holding her dead child in her arms, *Guernica* reflects the collective consciousness and pain of the period as one of the most striking works of art of the 20th century, although at first glance it seems like an individual expression of the inner world

(Kinam, 2020: 1616). This painting has become a universal symbol of the Spanish Civil War and, more broadly, the destruction caused by the war. This example reveals that the artist is not only a product of his/her individual creativity; he/she is an entity in direct relation with social events, values and norms. Artistic creation is not only an aesthetic expression; it is also a social discourse shaped by historical, cultural and political influences. Therefore, *Guernica* shows that art is not only an effort to produce beauty, but can also function as a place of conscience and memory.

In conclusion, art is not only an individual aesthetic creation but also a social discourse and a means of cultural transmission. The artist's imagination and creative freedom are not independent from social values, norms and historical conditions. From the Renaissance to modern times, it is seen that art has the power to transform society as much as society has the power to shape art. As in the case of *Guernica*, art can assume not only an aesthetic but also an ethical function by reflecting the common pain of an era. In this context, it should not be forgotten that art is a field that carries both freedom and responsibility.

## 1. ART AND MORALITY

Aesthetics gained independence as a philosophical discipline from the 18th century onwards and separated the concept of "the beautiful" from the concept of "the good", with which it had previously been considered mostly identical. This distinction led to a sharp separation of the fields of ethics and aesthetics on the philosophical level; in particular, it drew a clear boundary between art and morality. This approach has made it necessary to discuss whether the artist has moral responsibility or not. In this context, the following questions gain importance: Does the artist have a moral obligation in the process of creation? If there is such a responsibility, does it have a limiting effect on the artist's freedom and creative potential? These questions require to be addressed within the framework of the historical and theoretical foundations of the relationship between aesthetics and ethics.

A work of art is considered a work of art if it evokes aesthetic pleasure or conveys a meaningful message; it is considered a quality work of art when it possesses these two characteristics together (Erinç, 2013: 61). This situation reveals that in a good work of art, not only beauty but also content is decisive. In some cases, a work that does not find a response in the meaning world of the audience may not even be considered a work of art.

The artist, the receiver and the work of art are products of cultural institutions; these three elements are so intertwined with the cultural structure to which they belong that it is not possible for them to think and produce completely independently of this structure, or to accept a work that is completely contrary to cultural values as a work of art (Erinç, 2013: 73). The fact that these three basic elements of art are closely linked to society and culture leads to a natural affinity between art and morality. Human beings, who always want “what is good” for themselves and their environment, also desire “what is beautiful”. For this reason, art is not only an aesthetic experience; it can also contain a moral orientation.

Some works of art may not be glorified by society on the grounds that they contradict social norms and values. In such cases, the moral dimension of the work may overshadow its aesthetic value. For example, movies such as *Midnight Express* and *Lawrence of Arabia* (Lavrens, the Arab Spy) were not welcomed in Turkey due to their negative representation of Turkey in international public opinion; therefore, their screenings were banned. These examples show that societies may develop reactions against certain artistic productions depending on their historical and cultural sensitivities. However, social sensitivities are not fixed and universal; they may vary periodically or culturally. A work that is met with a reaction in one period may be accepted in another. As a matter of fact, while Giovanni Boccaccio’s *Decameron* was once banned in many countries on the grounds of obscenity, today it is taught in educational institutions in many countries (Erinç, 2013: 60). This situation clearly reveals that works of art are evaluated not only aesthetically, but also in a moral and historical context.

The reduction of art to moral judgments weakens the audience’s ability to evaluate aesthetically and may also suppress the originality of artistic production (Erinç, 2013: 96). Indeed, a work of art may contain disturbing themes such as violence, obscenity, hate speech or racism. How such content is interpreted depends largely on the cultural, educational and economic level of the society. In societies with low levels of education and culture, it is possible that the artist’s message may be distorted and understood as a direct encouragement of violence, brutality or obscenity. For example, the character Meursault in Albert Camus’ *The Stranger* (1942) has almost no emotional reaction to the death of his mother; he continues to drink his coffee in front of the television. On a superficial reading, this can be interpreted as disrespect for social values. However, when analyzed from an existentialist perspective, behind this behavior lies the alienation of the individual from social norms, the sense of meaninglessness and the indifference of modern man. Camus does not propose a norm such as “this is how they greet

the death of their mothers “; on the contrary, he describes the inner emptiness of the individual who has lost the search for meaning.

In the historical understanding of art-especially in Ancient Greece, the Renaissance and the Age of Reason-nudity was seen as a representation of values such as innocence and purity; it was not associated with sexuality or shame. Today, the perception of nudity as obscene or immoral content is, according to Erinç (2013: 102), an indication of a deterioration in the social structure or an obsessive approach to sexuality. In this context, a viewer who does not know the meaning of a nude sculpture and who is not educated about this cultural and aesthetic heritage will probably consider the work as obscene. This situation clearly reveals that the viewer’s cultural background, aesthetic education and value world are decisive in the reception of works of art. A work of art can only be interpreted in the closest way to its true meaning by a receiver who has the knowledge and sensitivity to understand it.

The meeting of a work of art with the right receiver can only be possible through a qualified cultural education. One of the main tools of this education is the works of art themselves. According to Erinç (2013: 92), *good art does not take shape according to existing demands; on the contrary, it pioneers the formation of new demands with its very existence*. In other words, the understanding of “responding according to the pulse” is not the principle of good art. In order for art to create new buyers and aesthetic sensibilities, the artist must have a deep knowledge of the social structure, cultural tendencies and the world of taste of the society. This knowledge makes it possible for the artist to realize a production that not only appeals to the audience but also transforms it. Thus, art both educates and creates new forms of taste by raising the aesthetic level.

## PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS OF THE VALUES OF THE BEAUTIFUL AND THE GOOD

The value of “beauty” can be defined in a general sense as the quality of situations or beings that are pleasing and worthy of admiration. By nature, human beings seek beauty in their daily lives; while meeting many of their basic needs, from eating and drinking to dressing, from shelter to spatial organization, they generally prefer the aesthetic. While the chaotic, disharmonious and ugly are generally shunned, the orderly, harmonious and aesthetically pleasing are admired. Just like the beautiful, the “good” is a fundamental value that human beings tend towards and desire. The relationship between these two concepts has

been at the center of philosophical debates from Ancient Greece to the present day. In the intellectual tradition from Plato to Kant, the points where the “good” and the “beautiful” overlap or diverge have constituted one of the main problem areas of ethical and aesthetic thought.

### 1. Values of the Good and the Beautiful in Ancient Greece

In ancient Greek philosophy, “the beautiful” and “the good” were analyzed not only as aesthetic or ethical concepts but also as metaphysical entities. These concepts were attributed an ontological value and the relationship between them was questioned in the context of the philosophy of being. As a matter of fact, the concept of “beauty” was systematized for the first time in the history of philosophical thought by Plato and the metaphysics of beauty was initiated with the following basic question: *Ti esti to kalon?* - “What is beautiful?” (Arlher, 2019: 5). In this line of thought, which developed under the influence of Plato and Socrates, the beautiful and the good are considered to be identical concepts. The basis of this approach lies in the philosophers’ definition of beauty as a form of spiritual virtue, rather than a physical characteristic. According to them, the beauty of the soul is nourished by virtues such as justice, honesty and generosity; therefore, a virtuous soul is also a beautiful soul. This understanding is embodied in the concept of *kalokagathia* in Ancient Greece. *Kalokagathia* expresses the unity between beauty (*kalos*) and goodness (*agathos*) and forms the basis of the conception of the ideal human being. According to this idea, goodness, truth and beauty are identical. Therefore, in the First Age understanding of art, the artist is positioned not only as an aesthetic producer but also as an ethical subject with social responsibility (Arlher, 2019: 8). The artist should not ignore the good while revealing the beautiful in his/her work, because the beautiful is the good.

The common basis of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle’s ethical thoughts is the concept of happiness (*eudaimonia*). For this reason, their ethics is often described in the literature as the ethics of happiness. According to these thinkers, the ultimate goal of human beings is to be happy; however, true happiness lies not in pleasure or external success, but in leading a virtuous life. Virtue is possible through knowledge. In Socrates’ words, “man does not knowingly do evil” because evil is caused by lack of knowledge. Socrates associates goodness with order and harmony. According to him, what is good is orderly; what is bad is complex and disharmonious. This view also applies to the human soul. If the human soul is in harmony, the individual is happy. This harmony is achieved under the guidance of reason (Arlher, 2019: 11-12). According to this perspective,

the inner order and harmony of the soul also determines its beauty. Therefore, spiritual beauty is the expression of moral goodness; aesthetic and ethical values become identical at this point.

Although Plato sees “beauty” as an ideal form, as an ultimate truth to be attained, he does not accept art as a means of attaining this ideal. According to him, art is not an activity that leads to truth, but one that distracts from it. He does not include artists in the ideal society model he created in his work *The State*; he even argues that art can harm the social order. The basis of Plato’s approach lies in the idea that matter is considered as an inferior type of being and that human beings should move away from the material and towards the rational. Art, on the other hand, imitates the material world, which is already a reflection of the “idea”, by imitating objects in nature. For this reason, according to Plato, art is the imitation of the imitation of the imitation of truth (*mimesis of mimesis*), which distracts people from reason and puts them under the influence of passions. In this context, art can harm the rational nature of the individual; therefore, it cannot find a place in the ideal state.

In Plato’s *State*, it is argued that every citizen should have a virtue specific to the class to which he belongs: Diligence is essential for workers, courage for protectors, and wisdom for rulers. In order to maintain this virtuous order, the individual must be guided by reason and not be influenced by emotions. However, according to Plato, art, by its very nature, appeals to the emotions; in this respect, it pulls the individual down, away from rationality and virtuous action. This effect of art is criticized especially through the understanding of *mimesis* (imitation). In the *State*, Plato evaluates art as an element that corrupts the structure of the soul and weakens the courage of the guards. He says the following: “*In the land of Hades, one should also discard the things that make one shudder, such as Kokytos, the river of groans, Styks, the river of fears, ghouls, and ghosts. They may be useful in other ways. But they are dangerous for our guards. This chill may soften and loosen them, and we do not want that*” (Plato, 2020: 76). Therefore, according to Plato, arts based on the imitation of beings in the sensory world should be abandoned. True knowledge and beauty are found in the ideal, not in the sensory. In this context, fields such as mathematics and geometry are more effective in achieving *formal* beauty that reflects the ideal order. This is because true beauty is hidden in intangible qualities such as harmony, symmetry, proportion and harmony that can be grasped with the intellect.

Although Plato is skeptical of art, he does not consider it completely worthless. According to him, a work of art has value only if it can bring the intellect closer to the world of ideas and guide people to the truth. In other words, art is meaningful

to the extent that it can guide the intellectual away from imitation. While Plato points to the limited value of art, he does not reject the concept of beauty; on the contrary, he positions beauty as a high value belonging to the universe of ideas. Beauty is not a quality of sensory beings; it is a property of ideas, that is, of forms that are immutable and perfect. In fact, according to Plato, the supreme beauty is *the idea of the good*, which is the source of all ideas. In this context, the true source of truth and beauty is “the good”. The beings in the sensory world are shadows distanced from this absolute beauty. Just as sensory knowledge is incomplete and temporary compared to the knowledge of ideas, sensory beauty can only be evaluated within the framework of this incompleteness. Therefore, seeing a being or a work of art as the bearer of truth by looking only at its apparent beauty is a mistake according to Plato. For to claim that the shadow or copy is more true, more beautiful, or more real than the original is to deviate from the truth.

According to Aristotle, “beauty” is not a transcendental entity belonging to the world of ideas, as Plato argued, but a quality that can be directly observed in individual beings in the sensory world. In this context, Aristotle argues that beauty can be manifested in material reality and thus reduces the concept of beauty from an abstract plane to a concrete ground. According to him, the beautiful is found in beings that can be grasped with the senses and have certain criteria. Aristotle defines beauty in terms of objective criteria such as order, harmony, limitation, clarity, proportion and symmetry. These characteristics are largely expressed through mathematical forms. Therefore, Aristotle considers the work of art not only as an emotional object but also as an ontological entity consisting of the combination of form and matter (*hyle*). In contrast to Plato’s idealist approach, Aristotle’s approach points to a synthesizing and experience-based aesthetic understanding in line with his general philosophical stance. In this framework, beauty can emerge not only in thought but also in sensory and material reality.

According to Aristotle, art is based on imitation (*mimesis*). Art imitates objects through certain means and forms. Aristotle explains this idea in his work *Poetics* as follows: “In general, there seem to be two reasons that give birth to the art of poetry, and both of them are natural reasons. Starting from childhood, human beings are both prone to imitation (human beings are distinguished from other animals by their tendency to imitate and acquire their first knowledge through imitation) and they enjoy imitation very much” (Aristotle, 2007: 18). This quote shows that human beings are innately open to learning through imitation and that artistic production is an extension of this innate tendency. Imitation in art is not only a visual or formal repetition; it is an activity intertwined with the desire to

know and the ability to enjoy. Through imitation, humans both understand their environment and derive aesthetic pleasure from this process of understanding. At this point, the relationship of the beautiful with both the “good” and the “true” becomes evident. Beauty includes not only what is pleasant, but also what is virtuous (*good*) and in accordance with the truth (*right*). Thus, in Aristotle’s understanding of aesthetics, the triangle of art-morality-truth is inseparably integrated.

The basic object of art is man and his actions. According to Aristotle, the artist represents man in two basic ways: through tragic and comic characters. The human being in tragedy is the tragic hero who is in conflict between moral values and who will face a negative outcome no matter which choice he makes. The tragic character is often caught between a virtuous attitude and another value. For example, the individual may be caught between two values such as *friendship* and *honesty*.... if he tells his friend a bitter truth, he risks losing his friendship; if he does not, he will deviate from the principle of honesty. In both cases, there is a kind of loss and destruction for the individual. Comedy, on the other hand, deals with the minor flaws, weaknesses and shortcomings of human beings through satire. The comic character is a person who does not consciously do evil but is ridiculed because of his mistakes or excesses. In this respect, comedy, unlike tragedy, is lighter and more entertaining; however, it still contributes to understanding human nature.

Beauty can be considered as an aesthetic value as well as a means of expressing “what is good”. Aristotle’s statement “*The purpose of tragedy is to purify the soul from its passions by arousing feelings of fear and pity*” (2024: 44) makes it clear that beauty can serve a moral purpose. According to this approach, art transforms the passions of the individual and leads him to a virtuous and balanced state of mind. According to Aristotle, this purification process (*katharsis*) is not unique to the audience. The artist also purifies himself by externalizing his inner conflicts and passions in an artistic way during the creative process. A tragedy writer reflects his feelings of fear and pity; a comedy writer reflects his inner tensions through flawed and ridiculous characters. Thus, art is not merely seen as an activity that corrupts society - contrary to Plato’s claim - but rather as a process of purification that brings both the artist and the audience to moral maturity. In this way, art becomes part of an ethical-aesthetic unity that makes it possible to achieve the good through beauty. Aesthetic experience is both a sensory pleasure and a possibility of spiritual and moral transformation.

Aesthetic thought, the foundations of which were laid in Ancient Greece, was continued in a similar manner in medieval philosophy; however, in this

period, beauty was associated more with the divine order and the idea of God. Aesthetic concepts were considered not only with sensory pleasure but also with metaphysical and theological dimensions. For this reason, beauty in the Middle Ages was considered not only as a pleasure derived from aesthetic objects, but also as a reflection of the order of the world of being and the perfection of God. According to medieval thinkers, beauty is the manifestation of divine light and order. The proportion, measure, symmetry and harmony used by God in creating the universe reflect his absolute perfection. In this context, beauty is the aesthetic projection of the highest reality that the human mind can perceive, namely the divine being. Therefore, in medieval philosophy, aesthetics became an inseparable component of metaphysics and theology.

In medieval philosophy, Plato's influence is clearly felt in the way he maintained the close relationship between beauty and goodness. According to this idea, what is beautiful also represents what is moral or good. Therefore, beauty is not only a quality that arouses sensory pleasure, but also an indicator of moral and spiritual sublimity. Within the framework of this understanding, beauty is positioned as a tool that detaches human beings from the sensory world and directs them towards the divine. Rather than being a property inherent in being, beauty acquires a transcendent and mystical quality that is manifested in the aesthetic object and carries the human soul to the sublime. Therefore, for medieval thinkers, beauty is one of the ways to reach God; aesthetic experience is seen as a process of spiritual ascent and approach to divine truth.

## **2. The Values of the Good and the Beautiful in Kant's Philosophy**

Humanism, which has been influential in shaping modern thought, is a movement of thought that places human beings at the center of the universe and moves the source of the good, the true and the beautiful from God to human beings. In this context, humanism emphasizes human reason, will and creativity against the God-centered understanding of the Middle Ages. According to the Turkish Language Institution, humanism is a view of philosophy, science and art born in the 14th century as a reaction to the scholastic thought of the Middle Ages, which accepts Ancient Greek and Latin culture as the highest example of culture.

The Middle Ages have often been characterized as a "dark period" in the history of Western thought. The main reason for this is that, with the dominant influence of church authority, individual human creations - productions in fields

such as knowledge, art and morality - were considered worthless. According to this understanding, man is a sinful and imperfect being by nature; therefore, any product he produces will be a reflection of this imperfection. Humanism, on the other hand, rejected this perception and glorified human intellectual and artistic production as a meaningful and valuable activity.

The understanding of humanism, which emerged with the Renaissance, led to radical transformations in social fields such as knowledge, art, morality, politics, education and production by putting the human at the center in every field. With this transformation, the functions of institutions were radically redefined: Educational institutions no longer aimed to teach the word of God, but to enable the individual to dominate nature; law tended to regulate social relations shaped according to the needs of earthly life, not divine commands. Politics, on the other hand, ceased to serve as God's representative on earth and focused on ensuring that human beings live an orderly, just and harmonious life in this world.

With the Renaissance and the humanist process, God-centered thought was replaced by a human-centered understanding, and the concepts of "good" and "beauty" were detached from a transcendent reality and moved to the material and livable world. The human being has become the new criterion and source of the good, the true, the right and the beautiful. In this context, "the good" has become an ethical criterion determined by social norms and common values, while "the beautiful" has come to be understood as the quality of the sensuous that arouses pleasure and contentment in humans.

The classical philosophical idealists' view of the "good" and the "beautiful" as concepts derived from the same essence reappeared after the Renaissance, especially in the philosophy of Shaftesbury (1671-1713) with his conception of the "harmonic man". According to Shaftesbury, beauty is not only an aesthetic quality but also identical with virtue and goodness. The understanding of *kalokagathia* in ancient Greek philosophy was reshaped this time in the concept of "harmonic man". This approach is similarly continued in the ideas of the German philosopher Friedrich Schiller. Schiller interprets beauty as a symbol of the moral. According to him, beauty is embodied in the concept of the "beautiful soul" (*die schöne Seele*), where the sensuous and the moral are harmoniously united. In Schiller's words, beauty is "freedom in appearance". Here, "appearance" represents the sensory dimension, while "freedom" represents the intellectual and moral dimension (Tunalı, 2007: 133). Shaftesbury and Schiller's understanding of aesthetics can be considered as the reflections of Ancient Greek thought in the modern world, in a line that extends back to the Enlightenment. These approaches represent a philosophical continuity that

continues the tradition of thinking of beauty not only in terms of what is pleasing but also in terms of what is moral.

In the 18th century, with Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten's definition of aesthetics as an independent discipline of philosophy, the concept of "beauty" was separated from values such as "good", "true" and "sublime" with which it was previously associated or equated. As a result of this distinction, "the beautiful" was positioned as the fundamental concept of aesthetics and "the good" as the fundamental concept of ethics. In this new approach, "beautiful" refers to the pleasing sensory qualities of aesthetic objects, while "good" reflects the positive value of moral actions. The concept of aesthetics is rooted in the Ancient Greek word *aisthesis*, which means "sensory perception, sensation" (Tunali, 2007: 13). In this context, the term "anesthesia" used in medicine today can be considered as the negative of this root; that is, the state of not feeling. Since aesthetics is based on sensory perception, the concept of "beauty" in this period also moved away from its transcendental and metaphysical meaning and gained a meaning more related to sensory experience.

In his Critique of the Power of Judgment, Kant tries to ground the concept of "beauty" independently by separating it from values such as "good", "true" and "sublime". According to him, what is good is concept-based and evaluated through reason. He makes this distinction clear with the following words: "What is pleasing through reason by means of mere concept is good. What is pleasing as a mere means we call 'good for something (what is useful)'; but what is good in itself, what is pleasing for itself, is something else." (Kant, 2020: 42). According to Kant, beauty is not based on any concept; nevertheless, it is a universally valid feeling of pleasure. However, in order to judge "good", it is necessary to have a prior conceptual knowledge of what the object is and how it should be. Kant expresses this distinction as follows: "In order to find something good, I must always know what kind of thing the object should be, I must have a concept of it" (Kant, 2020: 42). At this point, the fundamental difference between aesthetic judgment and ethical judgment becomes clear. In order to judge the perfection of an object, it is necessary to have knowledge about its function or purpose; whereas finding an object beautiful does not require prior knowledge or concept (Bozkurt, 2020: 149). This distinction shows that Kant positions aesthetic judgment as a unique type of judgment that has universal validity beyond subjectivity but is based on non-conceptual foundations.

In order to attribute a "good" value to an action in the moral sphere, it is necessary to have conceptual knowledge of the action in question. As Gönüllü states, "In order to be able to call a particular thing good and to feel pleasure in

this thing called good, it must first be known what it should be like" (Gönüllü, 2021: 47). In this context, the judgment of "good" rests on a conceptual basis, because determining the ethical value of an action requires knowledge of its purpose, context and normative orientation. However, aesthetic judgment, that is, the judgment of "beauty" does not work in this way. According to Kant, the judgment of taste about beauty arouses a sense of liking in the subject without any a priori knowledge of the object (Kant, 2020: 58). For example, we may like a melody without any knowledge of music theory; we may find an abstract painting aesthetically pleasing even if we cannot identify the figures. In this case, the object is liked through direct sensory experience, not according to an ideal form or definition. The feeling of liking is not based on conceptual knowledge, but on sensory perception and an intersubjective sense of liking. On the other hand, in order to ethically prefer a just behavior, it is necessary to know the meaning of the concept of "justice" and to have the intellectual equipment to distinguish just from unjust actions. This distinction shows that the judgment of the good is based on knowledge, while the judgment of the beautiful is based on sensory intuition and subjectivity.

According to Kant, every action, regardless of whether or not it conforms to the conditional imperative (hypothetical imperative), has a kind of purposiveness; that is, every action is directed towards a goal. In this context, a "good" or "useful" action always serves a certain end. In Kant's conception of morality, however, moral action begins with the intention of wanting what is intrinsically good, not merely result-oriented. Such action is performed out of a sense of duty, regardless of whether it brings pleasure or happiness. Therefore, moral behavior is an obligation that the individual performs in line with the principle of "good intention" and "duty", not in line with his or her own inclinations or interests. In this respect, the "good" is not an object of pleasure or enjoyment in the Kantian context; on the contrary, it is independent of the feeling of pleasure. On the other hand, "the beautiful" is directly related to pleasure. This is because beauty arouses a sense of pleasure in the subject without any concept or purpose. Therefore, according to Kant, the good, as a duty-based moral value, is conceptual and purposive, while the beautiful is a pleasure-based, conceptless and purposive aesthetic value. This distinction constitutes one of the fundamental philosophical distinctions Kant makes between ethical and aesthetic judgments.

According to Kant, "beauty" has a purposiveness with a purpose in itself; in other words, beauty is approached with a "purposeless purpose". The individual who makes an aesthetic judgment experiences a sense of pure appreciation in the face of beauty without any benefit or utility. For this reason, Kant grounds

beauty in the concept of “disinterested enjoyment” (interesseloses Wohlgefallen). Disinterested enjoyment means that the feeling of pleasure that the aesthetic object creates in the individual is not related to any expectation of interest or function. In Kant’s words: “Everyone must admit that a judgment on beauty in which the slightest interest is involved is a very ‘biased’ judgment and not a judgment of pure taste” (Kant, 2020: 40). For example, when looking at a sunset view, if one is only interested in its visual aesthetics, this is an aesthetic judgment; however, evaluating the same view in terms of hotel investment shows that interest is mixed into the sense of taste, and in this case, the aesthetic judgment ceases to be “pure”. At this point, the fundamental distinction between the good and the beautiful becomes clear: According to Kant, the “good” is always related to interest; ethical judgments are related to the utility, function, or value of something. In aesthetic judgment, on the other hand, the pleasure felt in the face of “beauty” does not depend on the existence or purpose of the object. Whether the aesthetic object exists or not does not affect the validity of the judgment (Gönüllü, 2021: 65). This shows that for Kant, although beauty is a form of liking that can be shared between subjects, this liking does not originate from the object, but from the subject’s disinterested judgment.

In Kant’s philosophy, the “good”, like the “beautiful”, should be desired only for its own sake; for when the “good” is desired with the expectation of any interest, it loses its ethical value and ceases to be a value that promises eternal happiness. Kant grounds the good not in desires but in the moral law, and thus aims to establish a universally valid understanding of morality. The “good” should be desired without self-interest; however, when put into practice, moral action, by its very nature, can indirectly benefit the individual in some way. Therefore, although Kant emphasizes the purity of good intentions, “good” and “beautiful” are ultimately distinct. However, Kant attributes such universality and purity to the concept of “beauty” that it gains the power to evoke moral values. In Gönüllü’s words: “Kant’s elevation of beauty to a profound purity, his transformation of beauty into something that everyone can see through the same window, free from subjectivity, has given beauty the power to evoke the moral good” (Gönüllü, 2021: 67). Kant expresses this affinity clearly in the following words: “Beauty is a symbol of what is morally good” (2020: 154). This definition represents the point in the philosophical framework where Kant makes a clear distinction between the “good” and the “beautiful”, bringing these two values closer to each other from time to time. Beauty is not an ethical norm; however, it has a power of representation that makes the moral intuitable and shareable on the sensory plane.

Although Kant sees beauty as a symbol of the moral good, this symbolization is especially valid for the beauty of nature. According to him, humans experience pleasure in the face of beauty in nature without any interest or conceptual expectation, and this pleasure can lead to the awakening of moral ideas in their minds (Gönüllü, 2021: 68). This kind of beauty is based on a purposeless, disinterested, conceptless and universal sense of enjoyment. Kant does not find the beauty of the work of art as pure and reliable as the beauty in nature, because the beauty of art has a fictional nature that has the possibility of deception and manipulation (Gökgöz, 2018: 138). For this reason, Kant prefers to give examples from nature, not art, when justifying the idea of “beauty as a symbol of the good”. Since this approach is on a different plane from the ethical-aesthetic debates on the work of art, it is left out of the scope of this study.

Kant recognizes that an indirect relation can be established between the beautiful and the good; however, this relation is not a direct identity, but an indirect connection through the concept of “the sublime”. Natural landscapes such as an insurmountable mountain or a vast sea can create a transitional space between the sensuous and the moral by arousing a sense of the sublime in the individual. In this case, aesthetic experience can lead the individual to moral reflection. However, this relationship does not reflect an understanding in which “the beautiful” and “the good” are considered identical, as in Ancient Greek thought. In Kant’s aesthetic theory, the beautiful and the good are considered in separate categories, and the beautiful is defined as a non-conceptual liking, while the good is defined as a conceptual and disinterested will.

## **ANALYZING BEAUTIFUL AND GOOD VALUES FROM A PAINTER’S POINT OF VIEW**

### **1. Purpose and Method**

This study is a qualitative research and the aim of the study is to evaluate the relationship between the values of the beautiful and the good within the scope of whether the aesthetic dimension and the moral dimension of works of art are related or not by comparing the perspectives of painters and philosophers. In the study, painters were selected as the population and 5 people were selected as the sample due to time constraints.

Literature review, text analysis, library and internet research were conducted. Using the in-depth interview technique, questions were asked to the individuals and their thoughts on the relationship between the beautiful and the good were

examined. The questions asked in the in-depth interview were prepared in advance.

The painters whose opinions were consulted in the study are artistically active. Two of the five painters' interviews were audio recorded, two of them were contacted by e-mail and the questions were answered in writing, and one of them was interviewed by note-taking method and the interview process was completed. Interview forms and audio recordings were transcribed and analyzed qualitatively. Direct quotations were made from what the individuals said by remaining faithful to the original of the data obtained and these data were subjected to content analysis. The answers were grouped under categories and themes.

## 2. Findings

The findings were first analyzed by dividing them into headings on the basis of the following questions as a result of the answers:

1. *Does a work of art have a social duty (representing what is morally good, being a good example, informing the public, enlightening the masses, etc.)?*

Participant A: "The artist is art-oriented. The artist sheds light on the point that no one wants to look at. Maybe the work of art may attract a lot of reaction or even nausea. Especially in radical works of art, the artist aims to attract attention. However, the task of art is not to be taken as an example directly by society, to be "for society"; art exists by being art. But the artist does not neglect social norms while performing his art."

Participant C: "The work of art should have a social mission. When the artist sheds light on political, environmental, human rights, inequality and similar issues in his/her work, it encourages the masses to think."

Participant G: "Art is an act of sensation. For this reason, the quality that makes something a work of art is related to the way of expression rather than what is expressed, that is, it is formal. Subjecting this form to a content restricts the creative freedom of artistic expression. Therefore, in my opinion, a work produced with the sole concern of conveying a message may not qualify as a work of art. The duty of enlightening the society belongs to institutions such as public institutions and non-governmental organizations, the work of art does not have such an obligation."

Participant K: "The artist should not be shaped according to society, he has no such duty. An intellectual artist can of course address these. No artist

has to be the epitome of goodness based on religious and social norms. When we look at Baroque art, for example Caravaggio, he committed the greatest immorality. While the artists depicting Jesus and Mary in the Renaissance period portrayed them in red and blue mighty dresses, Caravaggio portrayed Jesus in a completely everyday outfit and defined Jesus as a human being. When we look at Caravaggio's life, we see that he was a rapist, gambler, brothel owner, murderer, alcoholic. As a person, we can judge him as a depraved criminal, but this does not affect his being an artist and the quality of his works. Picasso had illegitimate children with many people, yet this does not detract from the value of his art."

Participant Ö: "The answer to this question depends on the understanding that art is for art or for society. For those who think that art is for society, they may have an idea like 'We are inspired by society and we lead the way. I am not someone who thinks that art is for society. I think that art is for art, the important thing is the progress of art. Therefore, the artist has no responsibility to set an example for the society. Of course, those who think that art is for society also add something of themselves to their art. But it is debatable to what extent a society-oriented art is effective. I am not impressed by a work of art with a message, the message given there does not affect me.'"

2. *Can art and morality be related?*

Participant A: "Is the purpose of art and the artist to guide society towards morality, in other words, should art have a didactic aspect? I think it should not. But there are two other functions of art that indirectly touch morality. One of them is not to inspire individuals in society who have the potential to go in the wrong direction. Because after the catharsis or identification they may experience, individual or social insanity, a part of the responsibility for bad actions may unintentionally belong to the artist. The other is that the artist often undertakes the mission of revealing unpleasant realities that society ignores, rejects or does not want to look at. In this respect, it is social and of course we need to consider morality as a whole. Art defends the right and demonstrates it in radical ways in order to respect living in accordance with human nature. It cannot be expected to be apolitical."

Participant C: "The work of art and morality are a whole and complement each other. An artist can handle good and bad, right and wrong in his/her work in accordance with the rules of society."

Participant G: "Although morality is associated with universal values, I think that the basic abilities that make people moral subjects are that they have moral affect and sensation. However, our ability to sense the good is actually related to our ability to sense the beautiful. Therefore, I think that "good", "right" and

“beautiful” are interrelated values. Aesthetic maturity should accompany moral maturity. Or we can say that both of them are abilities that reinforce and enable each other.”

Participant K: “When you look at the excavations in Göbeklitepe in Urfa, we see a statue of a man holding his penis. Wasn’t this a shame or a sin at that time? In one of my studies during my university years, I made pictures on the pages of an old Arabic algebra book, turned them into a collage and exhibited them. A group of people from the part of the society that is sensitive to the Qur’an threatened me by raiding my exhibition because they thought I was insulting the Qur’an. They did it for their values, but I had to convince them that it was a book of algebra because they couldn’t read Arabic. This is a kind of violence against the artist. Who gives him the right to interfere in my life and my art? He thinks it is his right. This is also a big problem.”

Participant Ö: “According to the view that art is for art’s sake, art has no direct connection with the moral field.”

### 3. Can violent paintings/sculptures be exhibited in public places (schools, parks, hospitals, billboards, etc.)?

Participant A: “There are some situations that need to be considered when presenting works of violent art to the public. Some works of art have a certain audience. Especially in societies with low levels of education, violent paintings or sculptures can be a source of motivation for violence. Some artists’ works contain ritualistic or even pornographic elements, which can be dangerous for society.”

Participant C: “Sometimes yes and sometimes no. Was there so much violence against women in the past or are we hearing and learning about it now thanks to technology? I am confused about this. Yes, sometimes it can raise awareness and prevent such situations. And sometimes I say no, it should be published because such normalization can start and there can be an increase.”

Participant G: “Violence is an integral part of human existence. Violence as well as production can be seen as a way of transcending nature. Therefore, if art is to offer a deeper understanding of ourselves as a human activity, violence should also be the subject of art. Which it already is. However, exhibiting such works in public space is a different discussion. Self-recognition requires maturity. Therefore, for example, it may not be healthy for children to come into contact with such works. Art assumes freedom of expression. However, every freedom is only meaningful in its own context.”

Participant K: “For example, a sport in which two boxers punch each other

and get bloodied is not considered as violence. When an artist paints this, he/she cannot be immoral or support violence. The artist can reflect the physical and psychological violence he sees, witnesses or experiences in his daily life in his work.”

Participant Ö: “The artist does not make his/her work for the society. Therefore, works of violence should not be in the public eye, a large part of the society can be affected by them. According to the understanding that art is for art, works of art should meet with the audience in special halls and galleries. Because art is not an effort to inform or set an example for society. Nevertheless, in order not to encourage people to violence in a social sense, works of violence may not be exhibited in public places.”

### 4. Can obscene paintings/sculptures be exhibited in public places (schools, parks, hospitals, billboards, etc.)?

Participant A: “Obscenity is a relative concept, it can vary from society to society, from person to person. From an anatomical point of view, learning the structure of the naked body is necessary for an art student. But today we are doing this kind of work, the concept of obscenity is a variable structure, however, the aesthetic norm is determined by society. Maybe even a skirt below the knee can be considered obscene in a society. As a matter of fact, if we consider what is obscene in a society, the subconscious of the society will begin to reflect this in some way. For example, it is not coincidental that the areas that women prefer in aesthetic operations today are the private parts of the body such as breasts and hips. The exhibition of obscene works can of course be subject to certain conditions. The developmental stages of children and the opinions of psychologists will play a decisive role in the exhibition of such works. Where they will be exhibited and how they will be exhibited can be decided accordingly and visiting such works can be left to the decision of parents for children under a certain age.”

Participant C: “I am not in favor of exhibiting them. I think our society may feel pleasure in a different way rather than aesthetic pleasure. Since the West has overcome this situation, society can look at the work they watch with aesthetic pleasure. However, I think our society will approach an obscene work of art differently.”

Participant G: “We should consider this question in the same context as the previous question. Therefore, I can point to the answer above. However, especially for our society, it is an interesting phenomenon that sexuality and violence are not evaluated in the same way. Even non-artistic expressions of violence are taken for granted. The same cannot be said for sexuality. A highly abstract work

that resembles sexuality is likely to get more reaction than a straightforward scene of violence. But both are human phenomena. Art is important because it can show us human nature from a certain distance.”

Participant K: “In Tik-tok videos, we witness little girls and boys in unbelievable clothes doing unbelievable things and saying unbelievable things. While people in their fifties and sixties are kissing on TikTok, we can see the same people criticizing other people’s clothes on the street, claiming that it is “obscene”. On the personal Facebook page of many individuals who have committed heinous crimes, there are statements like a person who does not exist in areas such as morality, law and education. There is inconsistency. Morality is also changing form, we are entering a new era and we are floundering in this process. The biggest discomfort of society from obscenity is that sexual desires cannot be satisfied, they cannot have healthy sexuality and therefore they cannot be at peace with themselves in this sense. We don’t hear about the painters of some societies such as China, India or even Turkey. There are some cultural reasons why we mostly hear about European painters. There is a path that is tried to be imposed on us and it is imposed on us as if we have to be a traveler of that path. In the gallery I opened in Ürgüp, there was a work that showed a skeletonized human being and the only organ of the skeleton was the testicles. This was a work that drew a lot of reaction, especially from the public. But many of those who reacted had the same organ. There is a mass of people who claim that whichever is supreme, valuable or good, this mass of people tries to trivialize and devalue works that do not conform to their values. Violence actually starts here. Ignoring, trivializing, ignoring, making nothing is also a kind of violence.”

Participant Ö: “I think it can be exhibited, in fact, violence comes to what I think about its content, nothing changes when it comes to obscenity. The society’s reception of the work considered obscene is related to the level of education. If the society has a high level of education, they will look at these works not with shame or sin, but with aesthetic pleasure.”

##### *5. Should a work of art be censored? What are the reasons for censoring a work of art?*

Participant A: “The masses that will be confronted with the work of art are variable. Naturally, their readiness will be different. Children, adolescents, adults, etc. It should be open-closed to presentation accordingly. As you said above, uneducated people or people with mental distress / perceptual problems may not be identified. For this reason, censorship should not be applied to the work. Either the place of display or the time should be regulated. Nevertheless, it is not the responsibility of the artist to have isolated incidents. A variable changes

in a person’s life and the wheels turn and darken another life. Some things cannot be predicted.”

Participant C: “I don’t find it right that it is censored, but if we don’t want it to be called censored, we need to change some accepted norms in society, in short, in our society, art is or can be done up to a certain point.”

Participant G: “Censorship of artworks restricts freedom of artistic expression. Today, we are exposed to such policies. However, the moral norms of a society should not deny the freedom of art. As a result, social norms are changing. Art plays an important role in this change. Ideally, instead of censorship, people should develop their aesthetic maturity through education. Then, I hope that “sensitive” issues such as violence and sexuality will become more easily expressible. Even if a work is seen as very disturbing, it should not be forgotten that what is expressed and the way it is expressed has value in itself. Otherwise, for example, we could say that history should also be censored.”

Participant K: “The state’s art policy is important. I try to establish an art group and open exhibitions wherever I go, but I have had many political difficulties and lack of support. Artists should not be interfered with while exhibiting their works. Since the artist’s view of the world and lifestyle is different, suppressing him/her will greatly affect his/her art and himself/herself.”

Participant Ö: “Especially when we look at the series and movies on digital platforms, we see both obscene content and violent content. Incestuous relationships, substance abuse, etc. There is objectionable content on many issues. But there should still be no censorship. Because the more we suppress and prohibit something in society, the more attractive it will become. People who do not obey the ban will be disturbed by drawing attention to themselves. Therefore, censorship should not be practiced.”

##### *6. Do social norms restrict the freedom of the artist?*

Participant A: “There is no possibility that the artist’s work does not fit into any of the molds of social norms. The artist is a part of the society and the artist is an individual who is responsible for the problems of the society he/she comes from. Social norms may restrict the artist. The artist can risk not being accepted or being less accepted.”

Participant C: “Yes, unfortunately, it restricts a lot. If we want to be free, if we want to make art for art and sometimes art for society, we need to break some molds and walls.”

Participant G: “Social norms can restrict the freedom of the artist. In my opinion, one of the most powerful aspects of art is its capacity to transcend the

boundaries of social norms and envision beyond what society offers. Therefore, the relationship between social norms and the artist creates a dynamic that makes art deeper and more meaningful.”

Participant K: “Even in art exhibitions, artists can experience problems. People who do not visit the exhibition even once can lynch the artist just because they see them as marginalized. Artists can go to jail, be subjected to violence and even be killed because of their works. I was reported to the police by my neighbor for being a Satanist. In fact, many people in society are subjected to limitations and artists are also subjected to these limitations. We experience violence and sometimes even obscenity, and when we show this in our art, we get reactions. Society cannot keep up with the speed of change of the artist. The artist may attract reaction at first with his/her work, but after a while, society starts to adapt to it.”

Participant Ö: “The artist is in a free production while creating his/her work. However, he may experience various obstacles in its exhibition.”

#### *7. Does the artist have to take into account social norms while performing his/her art?*

Participant A: “People are trying to survive in traumatic and difficult living conditions. Everyone has different areas of sensitivity. We are in wars, and when society is in this state, the artist does not have the option to be apoliticized. He expresses his opinion with his art and stance. But while doing so, he does not prefer a form and content that will hurt people.”

Participant C: “If he is doing art for art, he does not have to take it into consideration, but if he is doing it for society, which is the value our society gives to art, I think he does not have to take it into consideration.”

Participant G: “The artist is not obliged to take social norms into consideration while performing his/her art. Because art is both a mirror of society and a power that transcends its boundaries. Conforming to norms may lead the artist to become a kind of “social official”, reduce diversity and restrict creativity.”

Participant K: “The artist perceives the world differently than other people and this is reflected in both his/her art and lifestyle. The artist lives social problems within himself and is aware of what is going on in the world. I draw creatures and deformed creatures in my paintings because people deform themselves. We move forward by experimenting whether the rules we set ourselves will conform to human values. The concept we call violence also goes through a process of experimentation. When an artist works, he moves from what exists or what could exist. All the women painters I have worked with have said, ‘I painted the reality

of my own life’.”

Participant Ö: “I think it shouldn’t, but the artist is affected by social conditions. In order to sustain his/her life, to be able to hold on and make a living, the artist may sometimes need to change his/her art and sometimes even listen to the wishes of the society. But this situation is sad for the artist.”

#### **a. Relationship Between Art and Morality**

There is a clear difference of opinion among artists regarding the relationship between art and morality. While some artists believe that art bears moral responsibility and should coincide with social values, others argue that art is an autonomous field and that individual expression should not be limited by moral norms. In this context, the ongoing tension between the social function of art and its aesthetic autonomy continues to be one of the main topics of debate in art theories.

According to Participant A, the purpose of art and the artist is to guide society towards morality, in other words, being a didactic aspect should not have a didactic aspect. However, she states that art has two different functions that indirectly touch morality. He states as follows:

“But there are two other functions of art that indirectly touch morality. One of these is not to inspire individuals in society who have the potential to go in the wrong direction... The other is that the artist often undertakes the mission of revealing unpleasant realities that society ignores, rejects, and does not want to look at. In this respect, it is social, and of course we need to consider morality as a whole. Art defends the right and demonstrates it in radical ways in order to respect living in accordance with human nature. It cannot be expected to be apolitical.”

The work of art and morality are a whole. Participant C states that the work of art and morality are a whole and complement each other. She states that an artist can process good, bad, right or wrong in his/her work in accordance with the rules of society.

According to Participant G, although morality is associated with universal values, the basic abilities that make people moral subjects are that they have moral affect and sensation. She thinks that being able to feel good is related to being able to feel beautiful and therefore “good”, “right” and “beautiful” are interrelated values. He states that aesthetic maturity should accompany moral maturity, or that both of them are abilities that reinforce and enable each other.

Participant K argues that the artist should not be shaped according to

society and has no such duty. He explains with examples that the immoralities or contradictions in the personal lives of Baroque artists such as Caravaggio or modern artists such as Picasso (such as being a rapist, gambler, murderer, alcoholic or having illegitimate children) do not affect their being artists and the quality of their works. He considers social intervention against the artist's own artistic expression as a form of violence. For example, in a reaction to his own work, he states that people mistook the drawings in an algebra book as an insult to the Qur'an because they could not read Arabic. He also observes that in today's society, morality has changed form and there is an inconsistency; he states that the same people who display obscene content on platforms such as TikTok can criticize others on the street over their clothes. She thinks that society's discomfort with obscenity is related to the inability to satisfy sexual desires and to have healthy sexuality.

According to Participant Ö, the answer to this question varies according to the understanding of "art is for art" or "art is for society". For those who adopt the view that "art is for art's sake", art has no direct connection with the moral field. They think that it is the artist's expression of what comes from within with imagination and that the progress of art is important. They state that they are not affected by a work of art equipped with message concerns.

The evaluation of the relationship between art and morality based on the participants' views shows that this relationship is not absolute, obligatory or universal; it is contextual, interpretative and multidimensional. Whether art produces moral values or not depends largely on the understanding of art, the artist's intention, the normative structure of society and the interpretation of the receiver.

Art can sometimes be a field of subjectivation that nourishes moral intuitions, and sometimes an autonomous creation that is the subject of aesthetic experience only. In this context, the relationship between morality and art should be considered as a potential bond, not a necessary one: can be, but does not have to be, established.

### **b. Public Screening of Violent and Obscene Works**

In the context of the relationship between art and morality, there are different views on the public display of works of violence and obscenity.

In some cases, care should be taken when displaying works of violence in public: According to Participant A, there are situations where care should be taken when presenting works of violence to the public. Especially in societies

with low levels of education, such works can be a source of motivation for violence. Some works that contain ritualistic or pornographic elements can be dangerous for society.

According to Participant C, such works can create awareness or normalize it: C gives both "yes" and "no" answers on this issue; he states that sometimes they can create awareness and prevent violence, and sometimes they can normalize it and cause an increase.

According to Participant G, violence is an integral part of human existence and can be the subject of art. However, exhibiting such artworks in public space is a different discussion, because self-recognition requires maturity; therefore, it may not be healthy for children to come into contact with such artworks. Although art assumes freedom of expression, it is stated that each freedom is meaningful only in its own context.

Participant K gives the example that sports such as boxing are not considered violence, and states that an artist cannot be immoral or support violence when he/she paints a picture of it. The artist can reflect the physical and psychological violence that he/she sees, witnesses or experiences in his/her daily life in his/her work.

Participant Ö thinks that the artist does not make his/her work for the society and therefore states that works with violent content should not be in the public eye and that a large part of the society can be affected. According to the understanding that "art is for art's sake", she argues that artworks should meet with the audience in special halls or galleries. He adds that they should not be exhibited in public places in order not to incite people to violence.

Regarding the public display of obscene works, Participant A argues that obscenity is a relative concept, it can vary from society to society and from person to person. She states that learning the structure of the naked body is necessary for an art student, but society determines the aesthetic norm. The exhibition of obscene works may be subject to certain conditions; especially the developmental stages of children and the opinions of psychologists should play a decisive role. Where and how such works are exhibited should be decided accordingly, and visitation may be left to parental discretion for children under a certain age.

Differences in social perception: C states that he is not in favor of exhibiting works of obscenity. He states that society may feel pleasure in a different way rather than aesthetic pleasure, that Western societies can look at it with aesthetic pleasure because they have overcome this situation, but that he thinks our society

will approach an obscene work of art differently.

Participant G states that this question should be considered in the same context as the previous question on violence. It is emphasized that especially for our society, sexuality and violence are not evaluated in the same way, even non-artistic expressions of violence are taken for granted, whereas the same cannot be said for sexuality. It is stated that a highly abstract sexual work is likely to receive more reactions than a straightforward scene of violence. It is stated that both are human phenomena and that art is important because it can show human nature from a certain distance.

Participant K draws attention to the inconsistency where people who display obscene content on platforms such as TikTok can criticize others on the street based on their clothes. She states that morality has changed form in society and that there is a floundering. He thinks that the discomfort with obscenity is related to the inability to fulfill sexual desires and experience healthy sexuality. He also gives the example of a skeletal work in his own exhibition with testicles as its only organ, which drew public reaction, whereas many of those who reacted had the same organ. She states that society tries to devalue works that do not conform to its values and that this is a form of violence.

Participant Ö states that her opinions do not change when it comes to obscenity, such as violent content, and defends that it can be exhibited. He thinks that the society's reception of works considered obscene is related to the level of education, and if the level of education is high, the works will be viewed with aesthetic pleasure, not by saying "shame, sin".

It is seen that there is a line of tension between art as a form of individual expression and its impact in the public sphere. In this context, participants agree that the principle of appropriateness to the place, context and audience should be prioritized, not censorship. The expectation that with the development of education and cultural infrastructure, the way society evaluates works of art will also transform is one of the common themes expressed by many participants.

### c. Censorship and Freedom of the Artist

The issue of censorship of works of art and the freedom of the artist has been addressed with different views and justifications in the sources. In general, there are debates on whether artworks should be censored or not.

Participants G, K, and Ö state that censorship of artworks restricts freedom of artistic expression. Participant K argues that an artist should not be shaped according to the society and that they do not have such a duty.

Participants G and Ö state that the ideal is to improve people's aesthetic maturity through education instead of censorship. It is thought that if the education level of the society is high, they will look at the works considered obscene not by saying "shame, sin" but by taking aesthetic pleasure. In this way, it can be hoped that "sensitive" issues such as violence and sexuality will become more easily expressible. Participant Ö stated that censorship should not be applied, arguing that the more something is suppressed and prohibited, the more attractive the forbidden thing will become in society and people who do not comply with the ban will attract attention and be disturbed.

According to Participant A, the readiness of the masses who will encounter the work of art will be different, but censorship should not be applied to the work. It is stated that the responsibility for individual events (such as a person being influenced by a work of art and committing a bad act) does not belong to the artist and that some things are unpredictable.

Participant K considers interventions against the artist as "a kind of violence". She emphasized that no one has the right to interfere in the life and art of the artist. She states that artists should not be interfered with while exhibiting their works, because the artist's view of the world and lifestyle are different, and suppression would negatively affect her art and herself.

Participant G stated that social norms have changed over time and art plays an important role in this change. According to her, one of the most powerful aspects of art is its capacity to transcend the limits of social norms and envision beyond what society offers.

Participant K draws attention to the inconsistency in society where morality has changed form and there is a floundering, where people who display obscene content on platforms such as TikTok can criticize others on the street over their clothes. According to K, the society's attempt to trivialize, devalue and ignore works that do not conform to its values is also a form of violence.

### **Opinions that certain conditions may be necessary even if there is no censorship (Regulation Approach):**

Regulating the Space and Time of Display: Participants A and G suggest that instead of censoring the work of art, the place or time of display should be regulated. Taking into account the developmental stages of children and the opinions of psychologists, it is stated that it should be decided where and how works containing obscenity should be exhibited, and that the visit can be left to the decision of parents for children under a certain age.

The Need to Change Social Norms: Participant C stated that if censorship is

not desired, some of the accepted norms in society should be changed, because art can only go so far in our society.

Not Encouraging Violence: Participant Ö thinks that although art should be exhibited in private halls with the understanding that “art is for art’s sake”, works with violent content should not be exhibited in public places in order not to encourage people to violence in a social sense.

#### **Additional Comments on the Freedom of the Artist:**

“Although the artist is in a free production while creating his/her work, he/she may experience various obstacles in exhibiting it” (Participant Ö).

“The social problems experienced by artists may include the risks of being imprisoned, being subjected to violence and even being killed because of their works” (Participant K).

“The artist may be affected by social conditions and sometimes he/she may need to change his/her art or even listen to the wishes of the society in order to survive, to hold on and to make a living, but this situation is sad for the artist.” (Participant T).

“Social norms may restrict the freedom of the artist. However, art is a power that transcends the limits of social norms.” (Participant A, C, G, K).

## **CONCLUSION**

Art is a social and moral discourse as much as it is an individual aesthetic experience. In the intellectual tradition from Ancient Greece to modern philosophy, the concepts of “good” and “beauty” have sometimes been identified and sometimes distinguished from each other. While philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle associated art with virtue, Kant emphasized the subjectivity of beauty and its independence from moral values. However, all three thinkers recognized that aesthetic experience can create an intellectual and moral transformation in the individual along with pleasure. In this context, it is seen that art is not only a field of expression belonging to the artist, but is also shaped in close interaction with the audience, society and culture. The work of art both reflects the social values of the period in which it is produced and has the potential to transform these values. For this reason, the question of whether the artist has an ethical responsibility should be addressed not only as a matter of individual conscience, but also as a social issue.

The interviews with the artists confirm this multidimensional structure. While

some artists do not see art as a social duty, others argue that art has responsibilities such as raising awareness and making visible realities that society ignores. It is understood that the relationship between art and morality cannot be determined by a universal or absolute formulation; this relationship is shaped on the basis of context, cultural background, social norms and individual sensitivities. The issue of public display of controversial content such as violence and obscenity necessitates a rethinking of the boundaries between the freedom of art and the ethical sensitivity of society. The cultural and educational level of society plays a key role in determining how a work of art will be received. This shows that art education should be considered as a holistic process that develops aesthetic, ethical and cultural awareness in addition to technical knowledge.

In conclusion, the question of whether art has a moral obligation is an area of debate that has no definitive answer but enriches intellectual production. The existence of art in a balance that protects both individual freedom of expression and social responsibility will continue to be one of the most current issues in contemporary aesthetic and ethical debates.

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## SECTION 4

# THE ARTISIC AND SOCIO-CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION OF CERAMIC WORKSHOPS: THE CASE OF TEKİRDAĞ

CEMRE DOLU<sup>4</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

Art is a way for people to express themselves by using their imagination and creativity. Throughout history, the scope of art has been shaped by the value judgments and aesthetic understanding of societies, which has led to various limitations and new meanings being attributed to the concept. When art is mentioned, fields such as literature, visual arts, performing arts, and architecture generally come to mind; this is one of the most widely accepted definitions (Adajian, 2014).

According to Kant, art is not a direct imitation of nature, but an original creation that emerges from the artist's mental creativity. A work of art is a creation that has no equivalent in nature and is a product of human aesthetic judgment. In his work *Critique of Judgment*, Immanuel Kant states that aesthetic judgment is based on a "disinterested pleasure." In this context, a ceramic work is valuable not only because it is functional, but also because it evokes visual and sensory pleasure (SARI, 2024). Ceramics has been an important art form throughout history, both aesthetically and functionally (Yalçın, 2025).

Ceramics, whose main material is clay, can be defined in its simplest form as earth shaped and fired at high temperatures. Since the early periods of human history, ceramics have become an indispensable part of daily life and have

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continued to exist in various forms from the first civilizations to the present day. While ceramic art originally emerged out of necessity, today it continues to exist for various purposes as well (Erman, 2012). This study has been conducted to understand the artistic and sociocultural transformation of ceramic workshops from past to present.

Ceramic art has been one of the oldest and most enduring forms of human-made production. In this context, ceramics play an important role in transmitting knowledge and resources that help us understand and evaluate the past. The development of ceramics has progressed in parallel with the socio-cultural and economic processes of the societies that shaped it. Therefore, ceramics are among the most valuable historical sources, providing unique insights into the art and techniques of the civilizations and periods to which they belong (Erman, 2012).

## 1. THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSFORMATION OF CERAMIC ART

From the 1950s until the period now called the “Plastic Age,” clay was one of the most commonly used raw materials in the production of various objects and tools. Its natural and easily moldable properties, along with its transformation into durable ceramics after firing, made clay a primary raw material throughout history (Yoleri, 2023).

Archaeological findings show that clay has a history dating back approximately 30–32 thousand years. Especially in Central Europe, some objects shaped like lumps and cones, whose firing status cannot be determined with certainty, are considered the earliest experimental examples of clay processing. Archaeological evidence indicates that about two thousand years after the first lump- and cone-shaped clay forms, anthropomorphic (human-shaped) and zoomorphic (animal-shaped) figures were intentionally fired, and this practice became widespread (Yoleri, 2023).



*Photo 1: Human and animal-shaped ceramic figures from Paleolithic settlements*

Ceramic art is one of the oldest and most enduring production activities carried out by human hands. In this context, ceramics play an important role in transmitting knowledge and resources that allow us to understand and evaluate the past. The development of ceramics has progressed simultaneously with the socio-cultural and economic processes of the societies that shaped it. Therefore, ceramics are among the most valuable historical sources, providing unique insights into the art and techniques of the civilizations and periods to which they belong (Erman, 2012).

Since ceramics are made from fired clay, their use and production began only after the discovery of fire. Archaeological evidence shows that the origins of ceramic production date back to the 10th and 9th millennia BCE, with the earliest examples emerging during this period. The earliest ceramic samples have been found in various archaeological sites, such as the Aşkava region in Turkestan around 8000 BCE, the Jericho settlement in Palestine around 7000 BCE, the Hacilar Mound in Anatolia around 6000 BCE, and in the Mesopotamian region located between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. In historical excavations, the earliest examples of ceramic materials are generally found in these areas (MEB, 2007).

Below are examples of vessels, figures, and sculptures made from fired clay in various periods:

### 1.1. Mesolithic Age (10.000 – 8.000 BCE)

This period is also referred to as the Middle Stone Age (Mesolithic Period). It is characterized by symbols representing fertility, water, and women (MEB, 2007).



**Photo 2:** Earthenware vessel (Hacilar)

### 1.2. Neolithic Age (8.000 – 5.500 BCE)

Among the archaeological findings that indicate the spread of agricultural activities are stamp seals made of fired clay and sickles made from horn. In addition, female figurines made of fired clay and ornaments produced from ceramics are examples that reflect the cultural and aesthetic understanding of the period (MEB, 2007).



**Photo 3:** Terracotta Mother  
Goddess Figurine, Çatalhöyük

**Photo 4:** Terracotta, Hacilar  
(7500–3000 BCE)

Female figures described as ‘steatopygous’ in archaeology, reflecting the plastic art style of the period, are considered the earliest examples of the ‘Mother Goddess’ depictions frequently encountered in later cultural phases in Anatolia

(Photo 3). Used for votive purposes, this goddess figure was depicted not only in figurine form but also as anthropomorphic vessels. A pottery piece from Hacilar, designed in female form with eye details made of black obsidian (Photo 4), is one such example of these works (MEB, 2007).

### 1.3. Chalcolithic Age (5.500 – 3.000 BCE)

This period is considered a continuation of the Late Neolithic Age. The ceramics of the era show a more advanced structure in terms of both form and technical craftsmanship compared to earlier phases. During the Chalcolithic Age, in addition to shiny, monochrome pottery, colorful and decorated vessels were also produced. Ornamented and eye-catching vessels are typical artworks of early Anatolian Chalcolithic culture (MEB, 2007).



**Photo 5:** Painted pottery, Hacilar

### 1.4. Bronze Age (3.000–2.000 BCE)

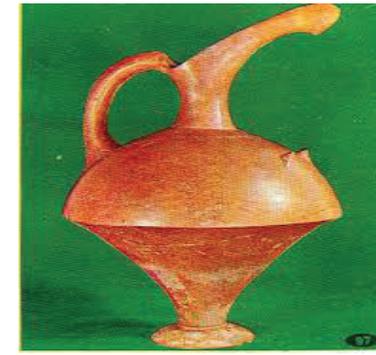
During this period, ceramics exhibit a shinier appearance and more distinct lines compared to previous eras. Decorative embellishments created with cord impressions can be seen on ceramic forms. The cord decoration on ceramic surfaces consists of hollow and horizontal stripe patterns made by pressing or drawing cords onto wet clay. Ceramics decorated using both incising and painting techniques mostly feature geometric patterns. Notable ceramic forms from this period include spouted jugs, teapots with spouts, single-handled bowls, double-handled vases, and jugs designed in the shape of human faces (MEB, 2007).



**Photo 6:** Bronze God Symbol,  
*Alacahöyük*



**Photo 7:** Two-headed goddess  
figure, *Kültepe*



**Photo 10:** Spouted earthenware vessel

### 1.5. Assyrian Trade Colonies Period (1950–1750 BCE)

During this period, ceramic forms showed significant development both in variety and quality. Monochrome ceramic vessels gained a metallic appearance thanks to the glossy slip and burnishing applied to their surfaces. Wide-mouthed vessels acquired a more defined shape (Photo 8). Painted pottery was decorated with reddish-brown and black geometric motifs on a cream-colored background. Wavy lines and waterfowl were used as decorative elements, while figures of lions, bulls, and rams were also depicted. Vessels called “ritons” were used to offer drinks to the gods (Photos 9–10). Large storage jars, decorated hearths, and grape cluster-shaped lamps designed for lighting are among the typical forms of the period (MEB, 2007).



**Photos 8–9:** Rhyton drinking vessels (shaped like a shoe and an antelope),  
*Kültepe*

### 1.6. Hittite Civilization (1750–1200 BCE)

Among the ceramic forms of this period, large bath vessels, flask-shaped containers, strainer vessels, kantharoi, and cult vessels featuring goddess figurines placed inside bowls stand out. Additionally, elegant spouted jugs, often found as grave goods, were used in religious rituals (Photo 11). Most ceramic pieces were coated with orange or red slip (Photo 12) and carefully burnished (MEB, 2007).



**Photo 11:** Fired clay drinking

**Photo 12:** Spouted vessel  
vessels, *Boğazköy*

### 1.7. Phrygian Civilization (1200–700 BCE)

Based on ceramics found in tombs, they are typically wheel-thrown with black or gray slip and influenced by metal vessels. Decorations often include geometric patterns such as zigzags, triangles, and squares. Some vessels also feature animal figures. In Phrygian ceramics, patterns were stamped onto the

surface before firing (MEB, 2007).



*Photo 13: Duck-shaped vessel*



*Photo 14: Fired clay vessel*



*Photos 17–19: Ceramic artifacts from the Hellenistic period*

### 1.8. Lydian Civilization (700–300 BCE)

Two main types of ceramics have been found in the region. The first are Lydian vessels produced by local craftsmen for cream production; the second are figurative ceramics reflecting the influences of Hellenistic art (MEB, 2007).



*Photo 15: Lydion, fired clay*

*Photo 16: Example of a bowl*

### 1.9. Hellenistic Period (333–309 BCE)

During this period, Greek influence was predominant in ceramic forms. Vessels produced using traditional techniques were decorated by imitating Greek painting styles. Small figurines, especially those shaped like heads, were commonly found (MEB, 2007).

## 2. CERAMIC ART IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

In the 15th century, with the Ottoman Empire gaining control over much of Anatolia, the balance of power shifted, and this period came to be known as the “Beyliks and Early Ottoman Era (Camibek, 2020). The changes and developments in the artistic understanding during the Early Ottoman period laid the foundation for Classical Ottoman art. While Konya was the center of tile and ceramic production during the Seljuk period, from the 15th century onward, new production centers such as İznik primarily along with Kütahya, Bursa, and Istanbul came to the forefront (Öney & Çobanlı, 2007).

## 2.1. İznik

In the second half of the 16th century, İznik ceramics stood out with their white bodies, smooth surfaces, and colorful glazes. In surviving pieces, original patterns, fine brushstrokes, and detailed decorations are particularly striking. Excavations have also revealed previously unknown motifs and remnants of kilns (Canibek, 2020).



*Photos 20–21: Ceramic plates, İznik*

## 2.2. Kütahya

Due to its rich clay deposits, Kütahya has been a settlement area for many civilizations throughout history and emerged as an important ceramic production center after İznik during the Ottoman period (Öztürk & Önder, 2018). Kütahya began ceramic production around the same period as İznik. Examples from this era are characterized by deep bowls and wide plates, while closed forms are less commonly seen. Kütahya ceramics were made using white clay and the underglaze technique (Canibek 2020).



*Photo 22: Ceramic vase,  
Kütahya*

*Photo 23: Ceramic delight bowl  
Kütahya*

## 3. CONTEMPORARY TURKISH CERAMIC ART

Ceramics, which have a wide range of use in daily life both functionally and aesthetically, have remained one of the fundamental elements of material and spiritual culture since the beginning of human history (Hoşnut, 2006). Ceramic art has become a versatile form of expression that brings together different art disciplines today. Although the interpretation of traditional elements through contemporary approaches remains a common method, artists are also exploring new forms and modes of expression. In this context, new explorations in contemporary ceramic art are shaped sometimes by the application of different techniques, sometimes by the addition of other materials alongside ceramics, or by integrating with other art disciplines (Ülkü & Şençiçek, 2021).

In contemporary ceramic art, some artists approach pictorial expression by using ceramics almost like a canvas, while others prefer to express the malleable nature of ceramics through pictorial representation. Ceramics has been a material valued not only by artists specialized in this field but also by many artists working in different disciplines throughout history (Ülkü & Şençiçek, 2021).

With the Republican Era, the balance between traditional art understanding and abstract and figurative forms of expression in Anatolia began to change; this process brought new modes of expression in Turkish ceramic art and initiated the formation of its unique identity (Özen, 1993). Since the Republican period, new formal and decorative explorations have emerged in Turkish ceramic art alongside a turn toward Europe; over time, these explorations have contributed to the development of an original artistic identity (Ülkü & Şençiçek, 2021).

Developing in parallel with human history, ceramics stand out as a material that was shaped and enriched with decorative elements, initially used to meet daily needs. Over time, it evolved from being merely a functional tool to an artistic discipline expressing cultural values, emotions, and beliefs. Although it appears simple and plain from the outside, ceramics are considered one of the most complex and technically challenging art forms in terms of formal design and aesthetic quality (Sönmez, 2001).

Ceramic art, which has preserved its natural qualities and fundamental characteristics up to the present day, holds an important position within the plastic arts. Throughout history, it has developed alongside other established art disciplines such as painting and sculpture, becoming richer in terms of aesthetics and form. In Turkey, the development of contemporary ceramic art gained momentum particularly with the Republican Era (Ülkü & Şençiçek, 2021).

#### 4. ART WORKSHOPS: CERAMIC WORKSHOPS

The concept of a workshop today is regarded as a learning environment applied in many different fields where participants engage in knowledge sharing and interaction. Workshops generally focus on reciprocal communication between a presenter (instructor) and individuals who participate to acquire knowledge (listeners), serving as dynamic processes that reveal different perspectives. Fundamentally, they are based on a sharing and production process that relies on the active participation of the group. In workshops where participants take an active role, knowledge transfer occurs not only verbally but also through sensory means. This process, reminiscent of a master-apprentice interaction, allows students to internalize the subject by seeing, touching, and feeling it, making the learning environment more effective (Arslan, 2019).



*Photo 24: Ceramic workshop*

Art workshops organized at national and international levels provide opportunities for artists from diverse cultural backgrounds to come together for production, interaction, and experience sharing. These workshops can be seen as open studio environments in terms of art education and offer participants hands-on learning opportunities (Arslan, 2019).

As mentioned, ceramic workshops are quite common in our country. This study will examine the ceramic workshops in Tekirdağ.

#### 5. PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to examine the artistic and sociocultural transformation of ceramic workshops over time. It investigates how traditional ceramic approaches have changed through contemporary workshop practices

and the effects of this change on individuals and society. In this context, the function of ceramic art today is evaluated based on participant experiences from a ceramic workshop held in Tekirdağ.

#### 6. METHOD

In this study, a qualitative research method was used. A ceramic workshop held in Tekirdağ was taken as the basis to examine the artistic and sociocultural transformation of ceramic workshops. Interviews were conducted with participants attending the workshop, and data based on their experiences were collected. The obtained data were analyzed, and the effects of ceramic workshops on individual expression and aesthetic perception were evaluated.

#### 7. RESULTS

Participants were coded as P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, and P10.

Name	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10
Gender	F	M	F	F	F	F	F	F	M	M

*Table 1: Profiles of the Participants*

Seven of the participants are female, and three are male. The questions asked during the interview and the responses given are as follows:

##### 1. What is your reason for participating in this workshop?

P1, P2, P5, P6, P8, P9, and P10 stated that they participated because they wanted to try something new.

P3, P4, and P7 stated that they participated to acquire a new hobby.

##### 2. Have you worked with ceramics before?

P1, P2, P4, P5, P6, P8, P9, and P10 stated that they had not participated before, while P3 and P7 stated that they had participated before.

### **3. Did you participate in this workshop for hobby purposes or for educational purposes?**

All participants stated that they joined for hobby purposes.

### **4. How much importance did you give to the concept of beauty when shaping the ceramic form?**

P1: I paid attention to making it beautiful.

P2: I paid attention to its beauty because I made it as a gift for someone.

P3: I paid attention to making it beautiful since I will use it as a decoration in my home.

P4: I paid great attention to every detail.

P5: I paid attention to its beauty because I will use it as a cup.

P6: Yes, I paid attention to making it beautiful.

P7: I paid attention to its beauty because I will use it as an item.

P8: Yes, I paid attention to making it beautiful.

P9: I paid attention to its beauty because I will use it as an item in my home.

P10: I didn't pay much attention; I made it as I felt like.

### **5. How did you find the work you created?**

P1: I liked it very much; it turned out very beautiful.

P2: I couldn't make exactly the form I had in mind, but it turned out well.

P3: Shaping it was a bit difficult, but I liked it.

P4: It turned out very beautiful.

P5: I liked it; it turned out well.

P6: It turned out exactly as I wanted.

P7: It turned out very beautiful.

P8: It turned out exactly as I thought.

P9: I liked it; it turned out well.

P10: It turned out well.

### **6. How was the experience of working with ceramics for you?**

P1: It was a nice experience; I really enjoyed it.

P2: It was a different and fun experience.

P3: It was challenging but equally enjoyable.

P4: It was difficult at first, but once I got used to it, I enjoyed it a lot.

P5: It was an experience where I felt very creative.

P6: I lost track of time; it was very nice.

P7: It was very fun; I never got bored.

P8: I was afraid of making mistakes while working, but then I relaxed and it turned out well.

P9: It was the first time I made something entirely by myself, and it was a very beautiful feeling.

P10: It was a time when I could clear my mind; it felt like therapy.

### **7. Did this workshop teach you something new about yourself?**

P1: I realized that I love creating.

P2: I didn't think I was this creative, but I made beautiful things.

P3: I learned that I shouldn't give up immediately when I struggle.

P4: Yes, I realized that I can actually be a patient person.

P5: I saw that my imagination is broader than I thought.

P6: I learned that when I relax, I can produce better work.

P7: I learned that making something from start to finish with my own effort brings me happiness.

P8: Yes, I realized how much I focus on details.

P9: I saw that producing without being perfect is good for me.

P10: Even though I couldn't make exactly what I imagined, I learned that I can still enjoy it.

### **8. After this workshop, has your interest in art increased?**

All participants stated that their interest in art increased after this workshop.

### **9. Would you like to participate in this kind of workshop again?**

All participants definitely stated that they would like to participate in this kind of workshop again.

### **10. Do you think these kinds of artistic activities should be made more**

## widespread?

P1: Yes, I think everyone should experience something like this.

P2: Yes, but it should be accessible to everyone and not just appeal to a very exclusive circle.

P3: Definitely, it should reach more places and more people.

P4: I think yes, working with art can be good for everyone.

P5: Yes, it supports creative thinking.

P6: Yes, people get to know themselves better through these kinds of activities.

P7: Art is not just something to watch; everyone should experience it.

P8: Definitely yes, I think it is very beneficial spiritually.

P9: Yes, these kinds of workshops develop both the social and creative sides of people.

P10: Yes, these kinds of events are not only about art but also like therapy.

## CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Based on the participants' responses, it is evident that the aesthetic quality of the products created in the ceramics workshop was an important factor for them. The vast majority of participants stated that they paid attention to making their ceramics "beautiful." This care was not only driven by aesthetic concerns but also rooted in functional or emotional reasons, such as gifting the items to someone, using them in daily life, or displaying them at home.

Some participants expressed that they would use their products as cups or decorative items, indicating that aesthetic considerations are directly connected to practical use. On the other hand, one participant mentioned approaching the production process intuitively, acting more according to momentary feelings rather than concerns about appearance. This highlights that each individual's understanding of aesthetics and approach to creation is unique.

Overall, the ceramics workshop can be seen not only as a technical production space but also as a functional environment for personal expression, aesthetic experience, and cultural meaning-making. The participants' efforts to give meaning to their products demonstrate how multi-layered the artistic process is on an individual level. In this context, it is notable how an art form based on a physical material like ceramics can intertwine with emotional and symbolic meanings.

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## VISUAL RESOURCES

- Picture 1: [https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Anthropomorphic-and-zoomorphic-ceramic-figurines-from-the-Upper-Palaeolithic-Gravettian\\_fig5\\_313109549](https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Anthropomorphic-and-zoomorphic-ceramic-figurines-from-the-Upper-Palaeolithic-Gravettian_fig5_313109549)
- Picture 2: <https://www.cahilim.com/pdf/seramik/antik-form-tasarimi.pdf>

- Picture 3: <https://ozhanozturk.com/2019/01/17/ana-tanrica-mitoloji/>
- Picture 4: [https://es.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archivo:Istanbul\\_Sadberk\\_Han%C4%B1m\\_Museum\\_Female\\_formed\\_vessel\\_Early\\_Chalcolithic\\_Age\\_Late\\_6th\\_milennium\\_BC\\_3248.jpg](https://es.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archivo:Istanbul_Sadberk_Han%C4%B1m_Museum_Female_formed_vessel_Early_Chalcolithic_Age_Late_6th_milennium_BC_3248.jpg)
- Picture 5: <https://www.mediastorehouse.com.au/uig/art/prehistoric-art/turkey-anatolia-amphora-hacilar-9560673.html>
- Picture 6: <https://museumofwander.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/DSC05034.jpg>
- Picture 7: <https://tarihtenfotograflar.blogspot.com/2016/09/anadolu-medeniyetleri-muzesi-4-asur.html>
- Picture 8: <https://aktuelarkeoloji.com.tr/kategori/bir-uygarlik/kultepe-kanis>
- Picture 9: <https://aktuelarkeoloji.com.tr/kategori/arkeoloji/antik-anadolu-hititlerde-sarap>
- Picture 10: <http://mtod.mebnet.net/sites/default/files/Antik%20Form%20Tasar%C4%B1m%C4%B1.pdf>
- Picture 11: [https://megep.meb.gov.tr/mte\\_program\\_modul/moduller\\_pdf/Geleneksel%20Desen.pdf](https://megep.meb.gov.tr/mte_program_modul/moduller_pdf/Geleneksel%20Desen.pdf)
- Picture 12: [https://www.instagram.com/p/CWsM8\\_GMJw2/](https://www.instagram.com/p/CWsM8_GMJw2/)
- Picture 13: <https://www.hoshhmuzayede.com/urun/7800178/antika-terakota-vaso-pismis-toprak-malzemedem-kus-formunda-20-yy-basi-uretimi-u>
- Picture 14: [https://antikforever.com/gordion/#google\\_vignette](https://antikforever.com/gordion/#google_vignette)
- Picture 15: <https://sardisexpedition.org/tr/artifacts/latw-146>
- Picture 16: <https://sardisexpedition.org/tr/artifacts/latw-148>
- Picture 17-18-19: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/sinandogan/32745153818/in/photostream/>
- Picture 20: <https://www.artiummodern.com/urun/1055387/amel-i-faik-iznik-seramik-kase-20-yuzuil-eski-turkce-imzali-29-x-8-cm>
- Picture 21: <https://www.eskicidukkani.com/iznik-eserleri/>
- Picture 22: <https://antiktesvikiyemuzayede.com/urun/9189510/kutahya-seramik-vaso-duz-agizli-govde-kismi-balik-pulu-desenli-firuze-kobalt-m>
- Picture 23: <https://havzasanat.com/urun/4984420/eski-kutahya-seramik-lokumluk-19-yuzuil-sonlari-uretim-siralti-elboyama-kutah>
- Picture 24: <https://atolyedally.com/seramik-atolyesi/>

## SECTION 5

### PREFERRING ART IN DIGITAL: A STUDY ON THE EXPERIENCES OF INSTAGRAM USERS

Feyzanur MELEK<sup>5</sup>

#### INTRODUCTION

With the birth and development of technology in the 20th century, communication technologies have brought significant changes to our lives, as well as to the field of art (Papila, Özsoy, Yetim, 2024: p. 42). In this context, digitalization has taken over many aspects of life, and it has also caused changes in our relationship with art, the way artists produce and present their works, and how audiences experience art (Aldemir, 2023: p. 37). Traditionally, art was experienced in physical spaces, where people could touch, feel, and use their senses. Today, however, with museums, contemporary art galleries, and artists sharing their works on social media, it has become possible to experience art in digital environments.

The main purpose of this study is to examine why individuals prefer to engage with art in digital environments, especially through Instagram, instead of physical spaces. In this context, the research focuses on how the perception of art is reshaped in digital settings, how people make sense of digital art consumption, and what dynamics lie behind the preference for experiencing art digitally. The central research question of this study is: *“Why do individuals prefer to experience art through social media platforms like Instagram rather than in physical spaces?”*

In this context, the study aims to analyze individuals' digital art experiences

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through interviews with Instagram users, and the data obtained will evaluate the transformation of the digital age on art today and the impact of this transformation on the individual's perception of art.

## **1. DIGITALIZATION OF ART**

Art has historically emerged in different areas in parallel with social and technological transformations. Technological developments emerged with globalization, which began towards the end of the 20th century, and some changes occurred due to globalization. With globalization, consumer habits have changed, trade and economy have been digitalized, and information and communication technologies have been digitalized (Öksüzömer & Barlak 2021). The phenomenon of art has also changed with this digitalization process. However, art has become a concept that is not only produced and experienced in physical spaces, but has also become accessible in digital environments. This transformation has caused significant transformations not only in the presentation of art, but also in the access of art, artists and artworks to the audience and in the audience's perception of art.

Digital transformation means the integration of digital technology into all areas (Özsüzömer & Barlak, 2020). With digital transformation, artists have begun to use electronic devices and communication technologies (computers, the internet, social networks, etc.) to produce and present their works (Papila et al., 2024). With this, the concept of digital art has emerged and some changes have occurred in the creation and presentation of art. Art has evolved into a field where what exists in the digital world is reshaped and shaped, and the passive viewer role in traditional art has changed, and instead an active viewer position has emerged that contributes to and shapes the work of art. In this context, digitalization has freed art from the limitations of time and space and made it accessible through online platforms. Thus, art has become timeless and spaceless, faster and more accessible, which can be produced and presented without the need for museums and galleries.

In order to reach larger audiences, museums and art galleries created their own virtual pages. Two- and three-dimensional artworks were photographed and shared in two-dimensional form on gallery websites. Later, with the advancement of technology, the opportunity for 360-degree virtual tours enabled galleries and museums to be visited in a more immersive way through the internet (Laçınbay, 2019). In the 2000s, with the emergence of Web 2.0, the concept of social

media appeared, and the process of moving art into digital media began. During this period, art became more visual, turning into a format that could be seen, perceived, and liked in a shorter time (Laçınbay, 2019).

In this context, digitalization and the developments that have emerged in this process, such as the concept of social media, have led to significant transformations not only in the exhibition of art but also in its societal and aesthetic functions. Social media platforms like Instagram, which are examined in this study, have altered not only how art is presented but also how it is consumed. As a result, this transformation has necessitated an exploration of the central question of the study: "Why do individuals prefer to follow art in digital environments rather than experiencing it in physical spaces?"

## **2. SOCIAL MEDIA AND INSTAGRAM**

The concept of social media has been defined in many ways since its emergence. The concept of social media is a concept that has dimensions such as media, user and technology, therefore it has been addressed in a multifaceted way (İşlek, 2012). The concept of social media emerged with the use of the internet and the use of web.02 (Karagöl & Kaplanoğlu, 2022).

One of the definitions for the concept of social media is as follows: "Social sharing networks are web-based platforms that include different media, information and communication technologies, allowing users to explain/create their own contact lists, communicate with each other, display their contact lists and create profiles containing their information" (Fuchs, cited in Uluç and Yarı, 2017, p.89). Another definition is as follows: "A group of internet-based applications built on the ideological and technological foundations of web 2.0, which enable the production and sharing of user-generated content" (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010: 61 cited in Alçınbay).

Social media has millions of user accounts worldwide. It is known that the pioneers of social media in the period when it emerged were blogs and forums, where users gathered around certain topics and these environments could provide users with things like discussions and exchange of ideas. With the transfer of the internet adventure that started with this to mobile phones, applications such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, which are called social media, which are a new step after blogs, can appeal to a wide audience (Karagöl & Kaplanoğlu, 2022).

The feature of social media that appeals to a wide audience has also affected art institutions and art professionals and has made the use of these applications

widespread in art. With this use, artists reach a wide audience, while art viewers can access the artworks they want without any space or time and can comment and share as they wish. In this context, this study will focus on the phenomenon of accessing art through Instagram, a social media where art, artists and users can access art.

Instagram is an online photo and video sharing site founded in 2010. It is composed of the English words “instant” and “telegram” (Türkmenoğlu 2014, p. 96). At the time it was founded, the application could only be used on the IOS operating system, later on in 2012 it became available on Android phones.

When looking at the Instagram website (2025); the application is defined as a free photo and video sharing application that can be used on Apple IOS, Android and Windows devices. Instagram can offer its users features such as instant stories, photos, videos, and live broadcasts. Here, users can share their photos and videos with their followers and also have the ability to view, like and comment on these posts.

Since its launch, Instagram has attracted users’ attention and has become an application that successfully reaches large audiences. According to the Digital 2024 October Global Statistics Report, internet usage in Turkey is 86.5%, 65.7% of the population uses social media, and there are 303.97 million active accounts in the country. It is also noted that users spend an average of 2 hours and 37 minutes per day on social media.

Several factors have played a significant role in Instagram’s widespread popularity among users, including its ability to allow users to share their daily lives, its interaction-oriented structure, and its fast and easy accessibility. As a platform that emphasizes visual content, Instagram particularly facilitates the spread of aesthetically based content such as art. In this context, Instagram has become an important tool for enabling the circulation of art in the digital sphere.

### **3. INSTAGRAM AND ART**

With the advancement of technology, social media has transformed from merely being platforms for socialization into spaces where information, culture, and art are also shared. Especially with Web 2.0 technology, users have become not only content creators but also publishers of their own productions. Along with these changes and transformations, traditional institutions such as art have also evolved, and the production, presentation, and consumption of art have undergone parallel transformations. In this context, today’s art-making practices

are no longer confined to traditional settings like museums and galleries; rather, the media dynamic of the virtual environment has become a kind of workshop for contemporary artists working with new materials. The workshop space has now become a part of the digital domain’s internal memory, allowing artworks to be viewed by millions through simple digital actions, without any physical barrier—thanks to a few lines of code (Kırmızıgül, 2019).

One of these environments is Instagram. Instagram offers its users the opportunity to share, like and comment on whatever they want, and does not impose any restrictions on the access of these shares to the masses. These features of Instagram make it attractive for artists in terms of presenting art. The prevalence and influence of Instagram create an important environment for the visual display, announcement and marketing of works of art. Artists use Instagram for this reason in presenting art, and viewers and ordinary people also contribute to the presentation of art through this platform (Papile vs. others, 2024).

There are many reasons why Instagram is attractive to artists. Instagram provides many opportunities for artists in terms of visibility, artists can share their works from every angle, and the fact that Instagram reaches a wide audience and transcends time and space limits also increases the attractiveness of the presentation of art (Ballı & Cantekin, 2023).

As a result, Instagram has transformed today in terms of the presentation and sharing of art. This transformed environment for artists has also become an environment where the relationship with art is shaped for the audience and where the limitations of time and space are eliminated.

### **4. ART PERCEPTION IN SOCIAL MEDIA**

Perception can be defined in its simplest form as the individual’s meaning and interpretation. At the same time, perception has a multidimensional structure that develops in a social, cultural, and societal context. Art perception, on the other hand, expresses the individual’s aesthetic evaluation process of a work of art, and has a structure that is affected by social norms, culture, and technology. Art perception is not fixed; it is a structure that constantly transforms with social change.

In this context, social media has become a structure that has transformed the production, presentation and perception of art today. It is thought that with the digitalization of art and its transfer to the digital environment, the individual’s

perception of art has also changed. In this context, platforms such as Instagram have become new channels in terms of the presentation of the work of art. Art has become a phenomenon perceived with the dynamics of liking, sharing and interaction in these channels.

The changing perception of art and the artist has also changed for the viewer/receiver. In this context, viewers now have the opportunity to experience art not only in physical spaces but also in digital environments. Thus, the way viewers perceive and experience art has been deeply affected, making artworks more accessible and have a broader perspective (Tan, 2024).

One of the effects of digitalization on the perception of art is the transformation of the interaction between the work of art and the viewer. In particular, the establishment of a tactile, auditory or physical relationship with the works allowed the viewer to become an active participant. In this way, the work of art was experienced individually by the viewer and thus the perception of art was formed on a personal basis. With the transfer of art to social media platforms, this interaction gave way to accessibility to large audiences and removed temporal and spatial limitations. In this context, digital art restructures not only the ways of viewing but also the ways in which art is perceived, interpreted and even given meaning; it functions to radically transform the traditional perception of art (Tan, 2024).

However, works of art are often experienced as visual content on Instagram, which leads to art being reduced to a superficial perception. Due to its structure, the digital environment has stripped the relationship established with the work from time and space, and placed it on a structure based on interaction and visuals. As a result, social media, especially Instagram, is transforming the way art is perceived in a multidimensional way. This transformation both leads to the redefinition of aesthetic values and reshapes the accessibility and circulation of art in society. As a result, the digital environment transcends the contexts of time and space, while transforming the relationship established with art into a form based on visual and fast consumption.

## 5. METHOD

In this study, the reasons why individuals prefer art over social media will be investigated, and individuals who use Instagram as a social media network were preferred. In this study, interview technique was used with Instagram users, and questions such as why individuals prefer art over Instagram rather than in

physical places, whether this preference is like this in today's conditions, and how individuals perceive art digitally, etc. were investigated.

## 6. PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

The main purpose of the research is to understand why individuals prefer to follow art on digital platforms rather than physical spaces. At this point, the relationships, interactions and motivations underlying the reasons for preference of Instagram users with art content were investigated.

The study aims to reveal the impact of art consumption on social media on individual perception, aesthetic preferences and attitudes towards art. It also analyzes how the role of digital media on art experience and the differences between physical art experience are evaluated from the user's perspective.

## 7. WORKING GROUP

The sample group of the study consists of 8 people selected from among active Instagram users. The frequency of individuals' exposure to artistic content on Instagram and their interaction levels with these contents were taken into consideration in the sample selection. In-depth interviews were conducted with individuals. These interviews aimed to obtain qualitative data to understand individuals' digital preferences towards art.

## 8. DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

In this study, interview method was used for data collection. Interview questions were prepared according to the field scan. In line with the permission received from the participants during the interview, the interview process was transferred to a word document and converted into written form.

## 9. FINDINGS

**Table 1: Interview Question 1**

Participant	Question 1: Do you follow art-related content on Instagram (artist accounts, art galleries, digital exhibitions, etc.)? What kind of art content interests you the most?
Participant 1	I follow artists who work with oil paintings and acrylics.
Participant 2	There are a few accounts that I follow, nature photographers and cartoonists.
Participant 3	I don't follow it but I come across it in the discover section, the music interests me.
Participant 4	I follow visual art related content on Instagram (painter, cartoonist, digital artist).
Participant 5	I follow very few accounts that tell stories about art history and paintings.
Participant 6	I follow art exhibitions.
Participant 7	Yes. I'm following the picture.
Participant 8	Yes, I follow content in various branches of art.

When Table 1 is examined, it is seen that the majority of the participants are interested in visual arts. It is understood that among the participants, painting exhibitions and painters' accounts are followed in visual arts. This situation shows that the visual structure of Instagram causes art to be seen more in this field.

**Table 2: Interview Question 2**

Participant	Question 2: How often do you come across art-related content on Instagram? What are your reasons for following this content?
Participant 1	I come across artists as they share, easy accessibility.
Participant 2	Accounts that use cartoons or digital drawings convey emotions well.

Participant 3	It appears every 10 posts, and content that I like attracts my attention.
Participant 4	I come across it daily, I want to see aesthetics.
Participant 5	I don't come across it very often, if it looks nice I follow it.
Participant 6	I come across this often.
Participant 7	Since I am interested in painting, I come across it very often.
Participant 8	I come across content on a daily basis.

When the participants' answers are examined, it is seen that most of them frequently come across art content on Instagram. It is understood that these contents are usually encountered on the discover page, thanks to the accounts that are followed. It is noteworthy that the reasons for following the content are easy accessibility, accessibility and aesthetics.

**Table 3: Interview Question 3**

Participant	Question 3: Do you engage in interactions such as sharing, liking or commenting on art content on Instagram? Do you think such interactions contribute to you?
Participant 1	Yes, I like and comment.
Participant 2	I like it from time to time. I like interacting.
Participant 3	I usually just watch it, but sometimes I like it.
Participant 4	I like and save it, and sometimes I comment on it. It inspires me.
Participant 5	I rarely like. I don't comment much.
Participant 6	Yes, I'm sharing.
Participant 7	Yes.
Participant 8	Yes, I comment and sometimes share content.

When looking at Table 3, it is stated that most of the participants interact with art by liking and commenting. Participants stated that they communicated with artists, established connections and were inspired by them through these interactions. It is seen that a few participants were passive viewers.

**Table 4: Interview Question 4**

Participant	Question 4: Do the artistic contents you come across on Instagram make you think, influence you, or do you just like them visually?
Participant 1	It's both thought-provoking and visually appealing to me.
Participant 2	Some are very impressive, some are just aesthetic.
Participant 3	I generally like the visuals.
Participant 4	Digital arts are more influential.
Participant 5	I like it for the most part, but some of the content makes me think.
Participant 6	I think it's nice.
Participant 7	I like it visually.
Participant 8	Some content makes you think when it comes to social issues.

When looking at Table 4, it is seen that the visual satisfaction feature of art content comes to the fore. It was observed that some participants found these contents thought-provoking, had a social aspect or aesthetically impressive. However, it is noteworthy that art is experienced both superficially and more deeply in digital environments and that there are differences between individuals.

**Table 5: Interview Question 5**

Participant	Question 5: Do you think the art content you encounter on Instagram gives you a real art experience? Why?
Participant 1	It's not like the real experience, but it's still impressive. The visuals are enough.

Participant 2	No, it doesn't feel like a real art experience.
Participant 3	Sometimes, but it would make more sense to see it physically.
Participant 4	It partially makes you live. Especially if there are detailed explanations.
Participant 5	No, it just gives an idea.
Participant 6	No, I don't think it provides a true artistic experience.
Participant 7	No, I don't think so. Because it's not the same as actually seeing and feeling.
Participant 8	It's not the same as the physical experience, but digital exhibits are helpful.

The majority of participants stated that art content on Instagram does not replace a real art experience. It was emphasized that accessing art on Instagram is easy, but it does not provide the same feeling as the physical environment, and that the digital environment is lacking in terms of space and emotion.

**Table 6: Interview Question 6**

Participant	Question 6: How do the art accounts or artists you follow on Instagram affect your understanding of art?
Participant 1	Thanks to some artists, I discovered new techniques and subjects.
Participant 2	I started to see art as a more everyday experience.
Participant 3	It didn't work, it just seems more visually appealing.
Participant 4	It helped me get to know new styles and artists.
Participant 5	It provided different perspectives.
Participant 6	Yes, I follow it, it made me think that art is different in the digital environment.
Participant 7	I haven't had a very different experience.
Participant 8	I realized that art is multidimensional.

Most of the participants stated that art content helped them shape their understanding of art and that the visibility of new artists and new styles increased. One participant stated that he had no different experience, while another participant emphasized that art had become more everyday.

**Table 7: Interview Question 7**

Participant	Question 7: Is it enough for you to access works of art via Instagram? Why?
Participant 1	Generally adequate but not a substitute for physical exhibits.
Participant 2	No, I would like to see the original work.
Participant 3	Sometimes it is enough, but most of the time it is not enough.
Participant 4	Not enough, details are lost.
Participant 5	No, the experience of the place is important.
Participant 6	No, it is not enough as the space.
Participant 7	No, it is not enough.
Participant 8	It is not sufficient but it is advantageous in terms of accessibility.

Most participants emphasized that digital access is not enough and that art integrated with space is much more satisfying. However, it was also stated that digital content is more accessible and more visible.

**Table 8: Interview Question 8**

Participant	Question 8: Has the art content on Instagram changed your perception and tastes of art over time? What kind of change did you experience?
Participant 1	Yes, my interest in contemporary art has increased.
Participant 2	I moved more towards digital art.

Participant 3	My likes haven't changed.
Participant 4	Over time, I turned to more creative and experimental works.
Participant 5	My perception of art has become flexible.
Participant 6	Yes, it did. It made me prefer digital art more.
Participant 7	No, it had no effect.
Participant 8	My understanding of aesthetics has expanded

The majority of participants stated that Instagram caused them to turn to different types of arts, that they became interested in these arts, and that their understanding of aesthetics expanded.

**Table 9: Interview Question 9**

Participant	Question 9: What do you think are the differences between encountering art on Instagram and experiencing a work of art in a physical environment?
Participant 1	The physical environment is much more impressive. Digital remains superficial.
Participant 2	Things like color and texture are more impressive physically.
Participant 3	Looking at it from a screen is not the same as seeing it in person.
Participant 4	It's easier to connect with art physically.
Participant 5	Digital access is practical but the sense of reality is low.
Participant 6	I think there is less sense of reality.
Participant 7	I think that physically the work of art is better understood.
Participant 8	I think there is less sense of reality.

All participants emphasized that there is a difference between encountering art on Instagram and physically touching the work of art. They stated that the physical environment creates an emotional bond and that aesthetic and spatial

connections are important. They stated that it is easier to experience digitally but emotionally weaker.

## CONCLUSION

This study investigates how the relationship with art has changed in the digital world and why buyers prefer to follow art on digital platforms instead of physical spaces, specifically on Instagram. As a result of the interviews, it was seen that individuals have an easier time accessing art on digital platforms, that this is considered practical, and that art can be accessed without any time or space restrictions.

Despite this, the majority of participants stated that encountering art in the Instagram environment does not provide a real art experience and does not have the same meaning as the physical environment. It was emphasized that the art content presented in the Instagram environment is more superficial and lacks reality and emotional connection. Nevertheless, in the interviews, it was also stated that the works of art encountered in the Instagram environment expand individuals' understanding of art and cause them to be interested in different types of art.

As a result, digital platforms such as Instagram have affected and transformed art, the artist and the recipient in many ways. The ways of encountering art on such platforms, the relationship established with art have become more individual, fast and practical. However, it is seen that this accessibility has caused some negativities in terms of both emotional and real art and that they do not coincide. This situation shows that the perception of art has been reshaped both formally and contently today and that digitalization has a strong effect on this perception.

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## SECTION 6

### **A STUDY ON THE PERCEPTION OF SOCIETY TOWARDS SCULPTURE: THE EXAMPLE OF TEKİRDAĞ COASTAL FILLING AREA SCULPTURES**

**Mahir DEMİRHAN<sup>6</sup>**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Sculpture is one of the oldest forms of art in human history and has been recognized as a reflection of aesthetic and cultural values in various societies. However, the public perception of artistic works varies depending on time, place, and individual perspectives on art. The fact that sculptures in public spaces are viewed by some as cultural treasures, while others consider them artistically incomprehensible or unnecessary, reveals the diversity of perceptions of art.

This study examined in depth the perception of sculpture among local residents, based on sculptures in the Tekirdağ Coastal Landfill. The primary objective of the study was to understand individuals' positive and negative attitudes toward sculpture and to identify the factors influencing these attitudes. The study analyzed the meanings individuals attribute to art based on their cultural backgrounds, educational levels, and personal experiences. Structured, in-depth interviews were used, and participants' opinions about sculptures were evaluated in detail. The findings aimed to identify differences in individuals' artistic perceptions and understand the role of sculpture within society. This study makes a significant contribution to fostering artistic awareness and better understanding the impact of public artworks on society.

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## **Sculpture Art**

Art, in its simplest form, is the effort to create pleasing and aesthetic forms. These forms appeal to our senses, evoking our sense of beauty. Beauty, however, is the result of the formal harmony between our different senses, and the existence of this harmony creates an inner harmony (Read, 2014: p. 11). Art is a way of externalizing one's inner world; through art, an emotion, thought, or dream becomes visible and tangible. In this sense, art not only offers aesthetic pleasure but also establishes a deep connection between our emotions. Beauty, however, arises from the union of elements of the external world in inner harmony. Art, like a language capable of creating this harmony, touches our soul. The sense of beauty is a result not only of forms but also of how these forms interact with us. In other words, art is not merely the creation of something "pleasant" but also a tool that shapes the way we perceive the world.

The true nature of art is not limited to producing objects that meet practical needs or expressing specific religious or philosophical ideas. Art lies essentially in the artist's power to create an internally coherent, original world. This world is not merely a reflection of everyday desires, dreams, or practical needs; it is a structure where all these elements come together, where contradictions are integrated. Art convincingly represents the wholeness of life and offers a profound perspective on the individual's perception of universal reality. It is, in essence, a dialectical process; by bringing reason and imagination into opposition, it creates a new synthesis through which these opposites can be reconciled (Read, 2023: p. 20).

Art is the most original way humans perceive and express the world. It is not limited to simply fulfilling a need or conveying specific ideas; on the contrary, it creates an internally consistent and complete reality born from the artist's inner world. In this respect, art is not merely the product of imagination, but also a balance between reason and emotion, the concrete and the abstract. By bringing contradictions together, it offers a new perspective and reflects the multidimensional nature of life. Therefore, art is not merely an imitation of something, but an effort to discover its deeper meaning and offer the viewer a different perspective.

Most debates about art stem from the mistaken confusion between the words art and beauty. When we recognize this, perhaps the most consistent aspect is our misuse of these two words. Many of us think: Everything beautiful must be art, or that all art must be beautiful. There's a belief that something devoid of beauty cannot be art. We think that ugliness and art are mutually exclusive.

However, accepting the fact that art is not simply beauty is actually one of the biggest obstacles we face in understanding its value. In fact, while it's often easy to see art in something beautiful, we struggle to find art in something that isn't. However, art doesn't necessarily have to be beautiful; this should be emphasized frequently. From both historical and contemporary societal perspectives, it's clear that art isn't always associated with beauty (Read, 2014: p. 12).

While the relationship between art and beauty is often confusing, many of us believe that art must be beautiful. In fact, this narrows the meaning of art. Beauty may be only one aspect of art, but this doesn't make it the sole criterion. Art can sometimes manifest itself even in ugliness and chaos. In fact, accepting that art can be independent of beauty requires believing that it possesses a broader and deeper meaning. While beauty is generally more readily accepted by society, art doesn't have to be simply beautiful. Art can sometimes be disturbing, sometimes extraordinary, but this doesn't mean it isn't art. Therefore, associating art solely with beauty can actually prevent us from understanding its true power. Precisely because we understand that art cannot be reduced to beauty alone, we begin to understand its diverse manifestations. Sculpture is one of the oldest and most impressive examples of this diversity. When we look at human history, we see that sculpture emerged not only for aesthetic purposes but also for religious, ritual, or social needs. In this respect, sculpture reveals the universal power of art as a form of art that carries both beauty and deep meaning.

When people realized that some shapes they encountered in nature could transform into familiar faces or figures with a simple touch, they began laying the foundations for sculpture. The lines they saw in tree trunks, mud, or other materials inspired them. So they thought, experimented, and patiently worked to make these forms more distinct. By completing what was missing and removing what they perceived as excess, they attempted to make images in nature almost lifelike, thus creating the first examples of sculpture (Alberti, 2015: p. 75).

The birth of sculpture stemmed from humankind's ability to observe and shape nature. Humans not only saw the random shapes in nature, but also imbued them with meaning and transformed them with their own touch. Sculpture existed as an aesthetic dialogue with nature, rather than an imitation. Artists refined or refined these forms, adding or subtracting these elements to make them their own. This demonstrates that art is not merely a technical skill, but also a process shaped by patience, observation, and creativity.

"Sculpture is a three-dimensional, touchable, space-occupying form that can be studied under the subheading of plastic arts within the fine arts, for example, by carving from stone, by piling up clay, or by building up materials chosen by

the artist in accordance with his purpose, side by side or on top of each other in one way or another” (Yılmaz, 2006, p. 14). Sculpture and painting are known as branches of the plastic arts. They are named after plastic materials. The concept of “plastic” here carries a much broader and more artistic meaning than the term “plastic” we use in everyday language. First of all, the term “plastic material” used in sculpture and painting refers to a “material or substance that can be shaped.” For example, stone, wood, clay, metal, plaster, bone, and polyester are all plastic materials. In fact, as the boundaries of contemporary art have expanded, any material that fits the artist’s purpose can be considered a plastic material. (Yılmaz, 2006: p. 15)

Sculpture is a three-dimensional and tangible art form; in other words, sculpture is giving substance to a void and shaping it meaningfully. In this sense, sculpture is not merely the creation of a physical entity, but also the process of embodying a thought, feeling, or message. The artist has unlimited freedom in choosing materials, as the substance of a sculpture is shaped by the artist’s imagination and purpose. This allows for the constantly evolving and changing dynamics of sculpture. Today, artists not only create aesthetic value but also convey social, cultural, and conceptual messages. In this sense, sculpture transcends aesthetic language, offering the viewer a profound narrative, an intellectual exploration, or an emotional experience. By combining the language and forms of the materials they use, artists possess the power to communicate powerfully with the viewer. This freedom is one of the fundamental elements that makes sculpture a vibrant, dynamic, and versatile form of expression in modern art. Therefore, sculpture continues to exist in the art world as both a means of individual expression and a reflection on social changes.

One of the fundamental characteristics of sculpture is its three-dimensional nature, allowing the viewer to move around it and examine it from different angles. Touching a painting once completed is generally prohibited, as this can damage its structure and distort or contaminate the colors. Sculpture, on the contrary, invites one to touch and approach it. Physical contact, such as a handshake or a hug, evokes emotions far different from simply saying “hello” in words. Because sculpture possesses real volume and depth, it affects the viewer not only visually but also through a tactile experience. In painting, depth is an illusion; this feeling of depth is created on a flat surface by lines, colors, and the play of light and shadow. Painting gives us a sense of distance and closeness with shapes arranged on a deceptive plane. However, in sculpture, this depth and volume are real. Since the sculptor lacks the color possibilities offered by painting, he turns the concreteness and material reality of the form to his

advantage. For this reason, sculpture is sometimes described as the art of volume (Yılmaz, 2006: pp. 15-16).

While sculpture, with its three-dimensional structure, offers the viewer not only a visual but also a tactile experience, painting creates the illusion of depth on the surface. While in painting, one must believe in the artist’s illusion, sculpture asserts itself directly through its material presence. The viewer can walk around the sculpture, touch it, and establish a physical connection with it. Therefore, while sculpture is defined as volumetric art, it represents a different dimension of art with the concreteness and sense of reality it offers.

Throughout the historical development of sculpture, sculptors have adopted diverse methods. Some have attempted to reveal the hidden figure within the marble by carving away excess within a shape; others have embraced the art of revealing what already exists by shaping the material with their hands; others, working with materials such as clay, wax, or plaster, have added to their shapes, striving to perfect every detail. Another group, like silversmiths, has achieved their desired form by shaping metal, hammering it, lengthening, or expanding it. Thanks to these diverse techniques in sculpture, the art of sculpture has evolved over time and taken its current form (Alberti, 2015: pp. 75-76).

The development of sculpture through diverse techniques and the way artists approach the material have shaped the art of sculpture. These diverse techniques demonstrate that sculpture is not merely a process of shaping, but also a personal relationship and form of expression between the artist and the material. Different techniques have increased the diversity of art and broadened the boundaries of creativity.

The most striking examples of ancient Egyptian art are seen, particularly in sculpture. Egyptian sculpture possesses a free artistic sensibility. The origins of sculpture in ancient Egypt begin with papyrus stalks tied in bundles and plastered with mud. Papyrus stalks, being both durable and flexible, made them a suitable material for these early sculptures. However, despite the gradual use of stone in sculpture, the use of papyrus stalks continued as a tradition. These Egyptian sculptures have survived for thousands of years, creating an aesthetic understanding that transcends time. This long-term existence of the sculptures is a testament to the enduring and aesthetic power of ancient Egyptian art. Egyptian sculptures appear not only as aesthetic symbols but also as symbols reflecting the social and cultural structure of the period (Read, 2014: pp. 45-46).

Ancient Egyptian sculpture is more than just an art form; it is a time capsule reflecting the spirit and depths of its culture. The survival of sculptures in Egypt for thousands of years exemplifies the permanence and universality of Egyptian

sculpture. This creative sculptural art, which began with papyrus stalks, merged with stone over time, leaving significant traces of both the technological limitations and aesthetic sensibilities of the time. Even the introduction of solid materials like stone did not sever ancient Egyptian art's connection with nature. Ancient Egyptian sculptures offer much more than aesthetics. They embody the values, religious beliefs, and sense of power of Egyptian society. Each sculpture is not merely a figurative representation but also a profound narrative of its time. These works demonstrate the powerful communication tool art can serve and how it can preserve traces of human history from ancient times. The longevity of works of art from that period is proof that art is not only an aesthetic but also a cultural and historical legacy.

In ancient Egypt, sculpture was seen not only as an art form but also as a sacred profession associated with the preservation of life. Pharaohs and the people believed that the primary purpose of the pyramids was to ensure the pharaoh's posthumous ascension to the gods. Therefore, the pharaoh's body had to be preserved with great care. The Egyptians not only protected the body from decay through mummification but also prepared for the afterlife by decorating tomb walls with reliefs. In the early periods, the deceased pharaoh and his servants were killed and placed in the tomb so that they could continue to serve him in the afterlife. However, this practice was abandoned over time, likely due to the recognition of its cruelty. Instead, statues or paintings of the servants began to be made. Thus, examples of sculptural art began to appear. Furthermore, monumentality, geometric order, and durability were among the most distinctive characteristics of Egyptian art (Yılmaz, 2006: p. 19).

Throughout history, sculpture has been not only a form of aesthetic expression but also a concrete reflection of beliefs, social order, and humanity's relationship with death. As seen in ancient Egypt, sculpture was considered not only an element of decoration but also a tool that opened the door to immortality. The bringing to life of human figures in stone is not merely a physical representation; it is an act that carries the past into the future and perpetuates memory. In this respect, sculpture is one of the most resistant traces left by humans against the erosive effects of time. By shaping a form, the sculptor actually makes visible a life, a belief, or a society. Therefore, sculpture carries profound meaning not only within the history of art but also in cultural and sociological contexts.

Since ancient Greece, people have sought a certain geometric order and harmony in art. At the heart of this lies the belief that art is based on beauty, beauty on harmony, and harmony on specific proportions. From this perspective, the idea that proportion in art has immutable rules makes sense. This is why

the mathematical balance known as the golden ratio has been considered the mysterious key to art for centuries (Read, 2014, p. 15).

The golden ratio has had a profound influence, particularly in sculpture and drawing, since the earliest civilizations. This ratio has manifested itself in works ranging from the measurements of the ideal human body to architectural designs. This stems from humanity's desire to reflect the order inherent in nature in art. The harmony and symmetry found in nature have always captivated the human eye, and art has sought to capture this natural balance. However, it would be wrong to reduce art solely to mathematical rules. Sometimes, the most impressive works of art can be found in works that deviate from these very rules and offer a distinct aesthetic. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that principles like the golden ratio hold a significant place within the universal language of art.

Although the Greeks learned sculpture from the Egyptians, they transformed this art form over time with their own unique approaches. In both societies, sculpture appears to have carried religious significance, but the content of this meaning differs. In Egypt, rulers were imbued with a divine identity, while in Greece, gods were depicted in human form. Therefore, Greek sculpture emerged as images reflecting perfection and ideal beauty. Male and female figures were shaped in accordance with the era's ideal human conception (Yılmaz, 2006: pp. 19-20).

Sculpture is not merely the act of creating form; it is also the act of carving out a society's beliefs, values, and aesthetics. In ancient societies, sculpture was seen not only as an object of art but also as a way to connect with the sacred. While the Egyptians deified their kings through sculpture, the Greeks approached their gods by humanizing them. This difference in perspective reveals a profound difference in perspective regarding the function of art. While Greek artists masterfully reflected what they observed, bringing the human body to life, Egyptian artists perpetuated patterns that symbolized the sacred. This demonstrates that sculpture is not merely a form creation; it is also a way of expressing the world.

Initially inspired by Egyptian artists, Greek sculptors gradually laid the foundations for a completely new understanding of art. While Egyptian artists were forced to apply what they learned while adhering to traditional patterns, Greek artists incorporated not only what they learned but also what they observed into their works. In other words, while Egyptian artists produced with knowledge, Greek artists reflected their visual experiences in their art. Egyptian sculptures have a more massive, geometric, and majestic structure, while Greek sculptures are more elegant, lightweight, and dynamic. However, the aim here is

not to privilege any artistic approach over the other. Both cultures successfully expressed what they wanted to express within the framework of their own aesthetic values. Therefore, rather than making comparisons, it is more accurate to evaluate each within its own context (Yılmaz, 2006: p. 20).

Sculpture is a powerful tool of expression that reflects the worldview, aesthetics, and relationship between humanity and nature of its society. The differences between Egyptian and Greek sculpture are not merely technical or formal, but also a reflection of a different mentality. While the Egyptian artist's effort to celebrate the sacred and immutable highlighted a symbolic and monumental language in his works, the Greek artist's admiration for the human body, movement, and nature made his art more dynamic and intertwined with life. In this context, sculpture is not merely a process of creating form, but also a way of thinking and perceiving the world. Each culture's understanding of sculpture must be evaluated within its own historical and cultural context, for the value of art is measured by the extent to which it reflects the spirit of the world to which it belongs.

Baroque sculpture stands out as a dramatic and dynamic form of expression that aims to establish an emotional connection with the viewer. The sculptures of this period not only offer a visual aesthetic; they also possess a powerful content, compelling the viewer to think and feel. The fluid and organic processing of the material gives the sculptures a sense of vitality; the figures appear to be in motion, and the influence of time and space is reflected in the sculpture's form. Theatrical poses, exaggerated facial expressions, and emotionally charged expressions convey powerful messages to the viewer. During this period, artists prioritized not only inner expression but also physical realism, successfully depicting the complex anatomy of the human body. Thus, Baroque sculpture offers a holistic artistic experience that engages both the mind and the emotions (Öndin, 2018: p. 124).

When we examine Baroque sculpture, we see a movement not only in form but also in content. During this period, there was a clear attempt to break the stasis of sculpture and give it a movement and emotional intensity that competed with time. The transformation of matter into a storyteller in the artist's hands successfully reveals the theatrical nature of the Baroque. Baroque sculpture highlights an artistic approach that not only compels the viewer to look, but also to feel and think.

Towards the end of the 18th century, sculpture's close connection with religion in the West began to gradually weaken. At the heart of this change lay the bourgeois class's struggle for power, aimed at removing the Church from

social life. In this process, accelerated by the French Revolution and nourished by Enlightenment thought, art in general, and sculpture in particular, began to break free from the oppression of religious rules and authority, gaining a freer space of expression. From the second half of the 19th century onward, sculpture, in parallel with transformations in social and cultural spheres, experienced profound and comprehensive changes (Yılmaz, 2006, p. 21).

Towards the end of the 18th century, sculpture became more than just a form of aesthetic expression in the Western world; it also mirrored a social and intellectual transformation. As religious themes lost their decisive power, sculpture became a free medium through which individuals could express their emotions, thoughts, and social critiques. During this period, sculpture ceased to serve the divine solely and instead focused on human existence, reason, and social reality. Freed from the authority of the church, this art form became a tool reflecting the mood, expectations, and transformation of an increasingly secular society. Thus, sculpture gained significance not only as a visual representation but also as a form of intellectual resistance and expression.

In the 20th century, sculpture gained greater freedom in artistic expression under the influence of the secularization process, paving the way for formal and conceptual transformations. Sculpture ceased to be merely an aesthetic object or the product of traditional techniques; it transformed into a powerful medium of expression that reflected not only the artist's individual feelings and thoughts but also social realities and historical ruptures. In this century, artists sought to make visible through sculpture the devastation of wars, the legacy of colonialism, the impact of industrialization on nature and humanity, the alienation created by urbanization, and the existential questions of modern humanity. Sculpture often emerged as a manifesto of thought, a political stance, or a form of inquiry reflecting the individual's inner conflicts. Thus, 20th-century sculpture not only gave form to matter; it also revealed the spirit of the era, its crises, ideological tensions, and artistic quests through a layered narrative. This transformation enabled sculpture to evolve into an art form not only visible but also experienced through thought.

### *Aesthetics and Sculpture*

“The science we call aesthetics is given this name in relatively recent times. Alexander G. Baumgarten (1714-1762), a student of Chr. Wolff, founded and named the science we call aesthetics. With his work *Aesthetica*, published between

1750 and 1758, A. G. Baumgarten first established the foundations of such a science, defined its subject matter, and drew its boundaries” (Tunalı, 1998: p. 13). “The word aesthetics comes from the Greek word “aisthesis” or “aisthanesthai.” While “aisthesis” means sensation or sensory perception, “aisthanesthai” also means perception through the senses. In this sense, aesthetics is considered a science concerned with the knowledge provided by sensory perception” (Tunalı, 1998, p. 13) “The philosophical discipline that deals with the study of things that give us an excitement or feeling that we call pleasant or pleasurable is called aesthetics” (Arslan, 2009: p. 236-237).

Based on these definitions, aesthetics can be viewed as a field built upon the perceptions we acquire through our senses and the information these perceptions provide. Aesthetics is a discipline concerned with the experiences our senses offer us and how these experiences acquire meaning. Aesthetics is a meaningful reflection of our relationship with the world through our senses. Humans generate aesthetic experiences from sensory stimuli such as shape, color, texture, and sound. These experiences are not merely physical perceptions but also possess emotional and intellectual depth. By bringing these perceptions together, aesthetics offers a field of thought that reveals how people perceive the world, give it meaning, and find cultural value. Ultimately, aesthetics is not merely visual beauty; it is also a process of discovery that touches the depths of the human psyche.

When an aesthetic subject perceives and derives pleasure from an aesthetic object, they are, in fact, adopting a specific stance toward that object. In other words, aesthetically grasping a natural landscape we find beautiful or a work of artistic value means developing a specific approach toward it. This approach, that is, the aesthetic attitude, is shaped by the subject’s perspective. If the aesthetic subject engages with art within this conscious attitude, aesthetic pleasure ensues (Tunalı, 1998: p. 23). The aesthetic excitement or feeling an aesthetic subject experiences when approaching an aesthetic object with an aesthetic attitude is also aesthetic pleasure (Arslan, 2009: p. 237). A subject who approaches an object with an aesthetic gaze not only experiences pleasure during this encounter; they also evaluate whether the object possesses value. In other words, the subject reaches a conclusion regarding the object as beautiful or pleasant. This evaluation is called aesthetic judgment (Arslan, 2009: p. 237).

An aesthetic attitude is not simply an appreciation of an object; it is also a conscious, emotional, and intellectual relationship with that object. Through this attitude, the aesthetic subject attempts to understand the object’s form, content, and spirit, and makes an aesthetic judgment. This connection with art or nature

transcends everyday perception, creating a deeper awareness. Aesthetic pleasure arises from this depth, for here, the meaning is not merely visible but also felt with the soul.

Aesthetic emotion, while based on an objective foundation, stems from a spiritual faculty that distinguishes humans from other living beings and is shaped over time through social practices (Doğan, 1975: p. 33). The artist, however, aims to express this aesthetic emotion through artistic images rather than direct expression. The value of the reality reflected in the artwork is inherently contained within this image. The artist strives to convey their message to the viewer or listener not through logical or verbal argument, but through the artistic image they create (Doğan, 1975: p. 34).

In this context, the power of art lies not only in conveying a thought, but also in evoking it on an emotional and intuitive level. The artistic image establishes a direct connection with the viewer, leading them not only to contemplation but also to feeling and intuitive understanding. Therefore, the artwork evokes not only cognitive but also profound emotional resonance in its recipient. Aesthetic experience thus transforms the individual’s perception of the world, transforming them from mere observers to subjects engaged in the creative search for meaning.

Works of art are not merely objects of aesthetic appreciation that appeal to the sense of enjoyment; they are also meaningful objects awaiting interpretation and analysis by the viewer. This process of interpretation requires the individual to detach from their ordinary perceptions in daily life and develop a different way of judging art. Appreciating an aesthetic object requires a special way of seeing beyond the ordinary gaze. A work of art is not merely a material object; it is a reflection of the intellectual journey and experiential experiences of the artist who created it. Therefore, the art object appears as an embodied product of human cognition and life experience. The viewer, participating in this intellectual and emotional process, must accurately grasp and interpret the work’s inner language (Ölçener, 2019: p. 1).

Approaching a work of art in this way transforms the viewer from a passive observer into an active seeker of meaning. Aesthetic experience is not merely a visual pleasure; it is also a process of mental interaction and internal inquiry. In this context, art becomes a multilayered field of communication established between the individual and the work. Each viewer approaches the work with their own experience and perceptual world, reproducing the meaning presented by the artist or adding their own interpretation to it. Thus, art ceases to be a static object and becomes a dynamic narrative that reshapes with each viewing.

According to Kant, a judgment of taste is aesthetic. A judgment of taste is a decision we make about whether something is beautiful, and this decision is not based on direct knowledge or the object itself. Instead, it is shaped by a person's imagination and sensory perceptions. In other words, whether something is aesthetic depends on whether the perceiving subject experiences pleasure or displeasure. Therefore, a judgment of taste is not a judgment of knowledge; it is an aesthetic rather than a logical evaluation (Kant, 2016, p. 39).

An object's design or appearance can sometimes contain elements that can be objectively defined. For example, an object's color, shape, or texture may be the same for everyone. However, the perception of something as beautiful or ugly is entirely subjective. This is because beauty or ugliness arises not from the object itself, but from the perceptions of the perceiver. Consequently, aesthetic judgments are shaped by the meaning the subject assigns to it, rather than by the object's nature.

“According to Kant, taste is the ability to judge an object or type of design through a disinterested liking or disliking. The object of such a liking is called beautiful” (Kant, 2016, p. 45). According to Kant, taste is an evaluation of an object or design based solely on a feeling of liking or disliking, without any self-interest. If something evokes such a feeling of liking, it is called beautiful. In other words, beauty depends on the emotional response of the person experiencing it, rather than on the object itself, and it emerges without any consideration of benefit or necessity. In this respect, although the judgment of taste may seem like an individual experience, for Kant, it claims universality because personal liking bears the traces of a common sense that everyone can judge in the same way. In this context, the concept of the faculty of judgment extends beyond aesthetic experience to encompass a more general mental function. “The faculty of judgment is generally a way of thinking that aims to understand the universal under the surface of particular cases. If a universal rule or principle has already been established, then the faculty of judgment that places the particular case within this universal rule becomes decisive. However, if only a particular case is given and a universal rule suitable for it must be found, then the faculty of judgment requires deep thought” (Kant, 2016: p. 23).

According to Kant, this explains how the faculty of judgment connects universal and particular situations and how it functions in both situations. As with aesthetic appreciation, the faculty of judgment establishes a bridge between abstract principles and concrete experiences. This relationship plays a crucial role not only in theoretical thought but also in creative fields like art. For example, in sculpture, an artist creates a work utilizing universal aesthetic

principles; however, because each sculpture is a unique, particular situation, they must reinterpret these principles. The balance established between a universal aesthetic understanding and a particular expression in every detail of a sculpture is an example of the faculty of judgment in action. In this respect, as Kant defines it, sculpture is both based on established rules and requires the creation of new principles; therefore, the capacity of judgment for aesthetic and creative thinking is embodied here.

### ***Society's Perception of Art and Sculpture***

Our response to a work of art varies from person to person. When we encounter a work, we perceive it through our senses and form a judgment based on the impression it leaves on us. In this process, we develop an aesthetic attitude and attempt to understand the source of the emotions that arise in us. Then, we express our thoughts about the work from a completely subjective perspective; this constitutes our aesthetic judgment. As a result of this evaluation, the work can evoke either positive or negative emotions in us. As our connection with the work deepens, we may sometimes be filled with positive feelings such as beauty, affection, tolerance, hope, friendship, and romance; at other times, we may encounter negative feelings such as ugliness, fear, hatred, anxiety, tragedy, or pessimism. All of these feelings are reflections of our individual reactions and are unique to us (Düz, 2017: p. 31).

This individual relationship with art is also a way to explore one's inner world. What we pay attention to in a work, and which details evoke strong associations in us, are actually a reflection of our own emotions, thoughts, and values. Therefore, aesthetic experience serves not only to understand the work of art, but also to understand ourselves. The fact that each individual finds different meanings in the same work demonstrates that art is both a universal and a personal experience. This unique connection we form with art has the power to add depth and awareness to our lives.

An individual's aesthetic approach to a work of art is directly linked to their cultural background, knowledge, traditions, emotional intensity, lifestyle, and outlook on life. Just as the artist's narrative power, expressiveness, and formal skills constitute an aesthetic attitude, how the individual who perceives the work interprets it and whether they like it is also an aesthetic judgment. Consequently, the creative individual who creates the work and the individual who perceives it, who evaluates the work with their own knowledge, education, traditional codes,

and social experiences, are not disconnected from one another in the artistic creation process, but rather complementary elements (Düz, 2017: p. 35).

In this context, the meaning of a work of art is not limited solely to the artist's intention; it is enriched by the meanings attributed to it by the viewer, taking on a pluralistic structure. The receiving subject reproduces the work by projecting their own experiences, values, and sensibilities onto it. Thus, art ceases to be a fixed object and becomes a dynamic process, constantly changing and reborn with each viewing. Aesthetic experience, in turn, is shaped by the unique relationship established between the individual's inner world and the work of art in these encounters.

The purpose of art is to express emotions and provide the viewer with understanding. The ancient Greeks masterfully accomplished this, and Aristotle also meant this when he said that drama purifies emotions. Humans carry many emotions in our daily lives; however, true art, rather than fueling these emotions, provides inner peace and serenity. Artworks affect our nervous system with rhythm, harmony, and unity. Artworks soothe us rather than disturb us. The emotion felt by the artist and the emotion experienced by the recipient are different; the artwork engages the recipient in a process of fascination or interpretation. The recipient draws conclusions from the artwork based on their own emotions. Art is not merely a reflection of emotions; it is also a force that shapes them. A true work of art exists not to shock the recipient, but to create a profound awareness in the recipient (Read, 2014: p. 122).

This assessment of art's purpose illustrates its power and impact beautifully. The idea that art is not merely a mirror reflecting our emotions, but also a tool that directs and transforms them is quite powerful. A true work of art, rather than disturbing its audience, provides them with inner balance and meaning. However, thinking of art as merely peaceful may be an incomplete perspective. Art can sometimes be peaceful, while at other times disturbing; provoking thought, shaking, and offering new perspectives are among its important functions. What the artist feels and what the viewer perceives may not always be perfectly aligned; a work of art possesses a multilayered world of meaning that varies from person to person. Therefore, the impact of art is not limited to providing inner peace; it also offers a journey that confronts us with our own feelings and thoughts.

How sculpture is perceived and interpreted can vary depending on individuals' level of knowledge and their worldview. Most people tend to view sculpture as a formal object, typically standing in an open space. Sculptures can be abstract or figurative, but it is generally the figurative structures containing natural elements such as heads, torsos, and hands that capture people's attention

(Yılmaz, 2006: p. 23).

This demonstrates the influence of habits and visual familiarity on a viewer's approach to an artistic object. Figurative sculptures, because they present familiar forms, are easier to interpret, making them more understandable or meaningful. Abstract sculptures, on the other hand, force the viewer to think and create their own world of meaning because they don't offer a clear narrative. This can sometimes lead to discomfort or apathy. Therefore, a sculpture's public acceptance depends not only on its aesthetic qualities but also on the viewer's receptiveness to art, symbols, and associations. A perspective that views sculpture solely as a decorative element can overlook its historical, cultural, or intellectual depth. Therefore, the interpretation of a sculpture is often directly related to the viewer's cultural background, artistic sensitivity, and intellectual aptitude.

Sculpture is a silent yet powerful form of expression that transcends a society's collective memory, values, and emotions. A sculpture that appears to be composed solely of stone or bronze on the surface actually reflects, deep down, the spirit of an era, the artist's perspective on the world, and the meanings the viewer attributes to this form. Sculpture is an idea frozen in time; sometimes it immortalizes a hero, and sometimes it embodies and visualizes an abstract concept. Figurative structures are more easily understood by people because they present familiar forms; in this way, they establish an immediate connection with the viewer. However, the true power of sculpture lies in its potential to generate new meanings with every viewing. In this respect, sculpture is not merely an aesthetic object but also a carrier of cultural narrative. It is in constant dialogue with society, both influencing it and transforming as it is influenced by it. Each sculpture redefines the identity of its location, establishes a connection between the past and the present, and keeps social memory alive.

Thanks to its static nature, sculpture appears as an entity open to constant re-perception and re-interpretation. When first encountering the sculpture, the subject may not grasp all its aspects at a single glance; however, this visual deficiency can easily be compensated for by moving within the space. This demonstrates the sculpture's constant presence across time and space, and the subject's ability to re-evaluate it with each encounter. Thus, despite being a fixed entity, the sculpture acquires new meaning each time thanks to the dynamic relationship it establishes with the subject (Ölçener, 2019: p. 115).

This constant presence of the sculpture allows it to offer a timeless space of experience. A new detail can be discerned with every glance, and a different meaning can emerge from every angle. This transforms the sculpture from a mere object into a space of encounter that invites the viewer to contemplate, feel, and

interpret. By shifting their position and perspective, the subject transforms their relationship with the sculpture; thus, each encounter acquires a layer of meaning that embodies both past experiences and the sensory intensity of the moment.

Works of art acquire meaning and value only to the extent of their relationship with the recipient's cultural background, knowledge, traditions, and social habits. Regardless of the aesthetic value of a work of art, if this connection between the recipient and the work is not established, the expected aesthetic impact on the viewer will not occur. This is because art reception depends not only on the work's formal or content qualities but also on the way the viewer interprets it. No matter how unbiased the recipient tries to evaluate the work, a work of art that does not align with personal and social codes may not resonate sufficiently in their minds. This demonstrates that art reception is not merely an individual experience but also a social and cultural process. Therefore, every work of art should be evaluated and interpreted within its cultural context and the context of its relationship with society (Doğan, 2001: p. 54-55).

In this context, the function of art in the social sphere is not limited to providing aesthetic pleasure; it also shapes how individuals perceive the world, nourishes collective memory, and contributes to the reproduction of cultural identity. The meaning of an artwork is constructed not only by the artist's intention but also by the values of the viewer who interprets it. Therefore, rather than being a static object, art is a dynamic field of communication that is constantly reread, reinterpreted, and re-acquired within the social context.

The foundation of a work of art lies in the individual's consciousness; however, the work only achieves its true value when it integrates with the cultural fabric of its society or period. Two fundamental elements are present in every artistic endeavor: the artist's personal will and society's expectations. The artist presents the work as a reflection of their inner world and may do so for personal satisfaction. However, for art to attain full meaning, the work must be reciprocated by society. However, society does not accept works of art through a conscious evaluation process. As a part of daily life, they either engage with them for their aesthetic pleasure or their usefulness, or they ignore them (Read, 2023: p. 112).

The artist's inner world and creative will give birth to the work, but the work cannot attain full value until it interacts with society. A crucial point here is that society accepts or rejects art based on its daily experiences, rather than consciously screening it. In other words, a work of art is embraced by society when it provides direct aesthetic satisfaction or carries functional meaning. This demonstrates that art is not only a product of the artist but also of society, and

that individual creativity is intertwined with social dynamics.

The general sentiments and sensitivities of society have a significant impact on art. Therefore, a distinct harmony is observed between the artist's productions and the tastes of society during a given period. This harmony is not limited to a specific time period or geography, but is also linked to a specific stage of economic development. At this point, shared understandings of art, such as style and tradition, emerge. We can speak of two fundamental psychological states that shape art: The first is the artist's mental structure, which influences the individual creative process. The second is the social influence, which is not limited to aesthetic elements but also encompasses style, technique, and subject matter. These elements demonstrate that art is a social phenomenon as well as an individual form of expression (Read, 2023: p. 112).

Art is not merely an individual creative process; it is also shaped by social conditions. While the artist's individual perspective and mental world form the foundation of the work, society's general trends, economic structure, and cultural sensitivities also influence the style and reception of art. Especially during certain periods, a natural harmony emerges between artists and society. This, in turn, crystallizes a particular understanding of art, that is, style and traditions. At this point, it is possible to see that art is shaped not only by aesthetic concerns but also by social needs. In other words, art emerges as a space where individual creativity and collective consciousness intersect.

The strong bond between artists and society is impossible to ignore. Artists are nourished by the society they live in, and its values, dynamics, and mood are reflected in their art. At the same time, art is a force that influences and transforms society. An artist's style, tempo, and expression are a reflection of the social structure within which they operate. However, other factors also determine the personal dimension of art. An artist's originality arises from their desire to shape their work and their creative power. Art is a mirror of society and also an expression of individual creativity. The artist's inner world and imagination, combined with social influences, give their work its originality. True art is a balance that both connects with society and reflects the artist's personal world (Read, 2014: p. 122).

Artists and society are two elements that influence each other. While artists draw inspiration from society, art shapes society. However, art is not merely a reflection; it is also an expression of the artist's individual creativity. Art should neither be entirely social nor merely an individual reflection. True art gains meaning when it combines the artist's unique perspective with the collective memory of society.

## METHOD

This study aims to examine society's attitudes toward sculpture and how its presence in public spaces is perceived. Structured, in-depth interviews were used as the primary data collection technique. Additionally, various methods, including literature review, text analysis, library resource utilization, and internet searches, were utilized to strengthen the study's theoretical foundation. This multifaceted research approach aims to provide a more comprehensive and multidimensional assessment of social perceptions of sculpture. The study presents a qualitative effort to deeply understand individuals' thoughts, feelings, and approaches toward sculpture in public spaces.

The interview form was designed to include six open-ended questions to ensure participants could freely share their experiences and thoughts. The same questions were asked of all participants in the same order, ensuring systematic and comparable data. The questions were designed to allow participants to express their experiences in detail, and the forms were completed in writing and returned to the researcher. This method allowed for the collection of data that was both qualitatively rich and analyzable. The participants' candid and sincere responses during the interview process increased the depth and reliability of the information obtained.

The research was conducted on a voluntary basis, and no identifying information was requested from participants. Participants were asked to choose a pseudonym, thus ensuring both anonymity and adhering to ethical principles. The data collected was evaluated solely for scientific purposes, and the principle of confidentiality was meticulously observed. The research sample consisted of individuals who actively visited the Tekirdağ coastal landfill, examined the marble sculptures there, and developed an understanding of sculpture. This enabled the collection of high-quality and meaningful data in line with the sociological context of the study. Ethical sensitivity and data security were prioritized at every stage of the research.

## FINDINGS

In the findings section of our study, the statements of 36 participants who responded to the interview form were evaluated using thematic analysis. The data obtained from the interviews were analyzed based on the responses given to each question, and these responses were grouped under meaningful themes

based on commonalities. When identifying themes, similarities and differences in participants' thoughts and approaches were taken into account, allowing for a more in-depth interpretation of the data to create a meaningful whole. This method allowed us to examine participants' opinions more systematically and draw inferences appropriate to the study's objectives.

### **Question 1: What is your general impression of the sculptures in the Tekirdağ Coastal Filling Area? (Beautiful, meaningful, meaningless, unnecessary, etc. – Please explain.)**

1. Theme of Finding the Sculptures Beautiful and Aesthetic: 25 participants stated that they generally found the sculptures beautiful. Aesthetic appreciation was emphasized in a significant portion of the responses. These views were supported by expressions such as "Beautiful," "Very stylish, suits them," "Beautiful and aesthetic," "They look nice. There are some interesting ones," and "Aesthetic, different, stylish, innovative."
2. Theme of Being Meaningful: 10 participants stated that the sculptures contain meaning and are artistically valuable. These statements demonstrate a positive perception of the artistic content. These views were supported by the following expressions: "I find them beautiful and meaningful," "Beautiful, meaningful, visionary, artistically worthy," "Meaningful and necessary," and "Meaningful and beautiful."
3. Theme: Lack of Meaning and Criticism of Meaninglessness: Six participants stated that the sculptures were deemed meaningless, inadequate, or superficial. These criticisms centered on the failure to convey an artistic message or the perceived simplistic workmanship. These views were supported by statements such as, "It's meaningless and unaesthetic," "It's simple in terms of subject matter and workmanship," "It could have been done with more detail," and "It has meaning but insufficient; there could be deeper, more beautiful sculptures."
4. Theme: Lack of Information: Three participants emphasized that although the sculptures were aesthetically pleasing, they did not provide sufficient information about their meaning. These views were supported by statements such as, "It would be good if there was only information about their meaning," and "The sculptures are beautiful, but it's difficult to make sense of them."
5. Economic and Workmanship Criticisms Theme: Four participants criticized the cost, workmanship, and purpose of the sculptures. Specifically, they

expressed doubts about the use of public resources. These views were supported by statements such as, “It’s beautiful, but I’m prejudiced because of its cost,” and “The sculptures on the beach lack these qualities... they lack fine workmanship and convey no meaningful message.”

6. Theme: Contributing to Urban Aesthetics: Four participants emphasized that the sculptures positively contribute to Tekirdağ’s urban aesthetics, cultural identity, and artistic appearance. These views were supported by statements such as, “I think they add beauty to our city,” “They contribute to the city’s artistic richness in open spaces,” and “All forms of art should be open to the public.”

In conclusion, the majority of participants found the sculptures in the Tekirdağ Coastal Landfill beautiful, aesthetically pleasing, and meaningful. However, alongside these positive comments, criticisms were also voiced, including a lack of meaning, inadequate workmanship, economic concerns, and a lack of information. Some participants also emphasized that the sculptures contribute to the city’s cultural identity and aesthetic appeal. These findings suggest that the public is generally satisfied with the sculptures, but that this satisfaction could be strengthened with more meaningful, high-quality, and informative projects.

**Question 2: Do you think statues should be placed in public spaces? Why? (Explain cultural, aesthetic, historical, religious, etc. reasons.)**

1. Theme of Aesthetic Contribution and Visual Richness: 22 participants stated that the presence of sculptures in public spaces provides visual aesthetic richness. It was frequently emphasized that sculptures enhance the environment, create an artistic atmosphere, and provide aesthetic satisfaction. These views were supported by statements such as, “It should be included; it provides aesthetic value.” “It should definitely be included; I see it as having aesthetic value.” “If it is aesthetically beautiful and meaningful, there is no problem in displaying it in public spaces.” “It should be included. It is important for aesthetic reasons.” “It should be included; it looks aesthetically pleasing.” “It should be included for aesthetic reasons.” “Aesthetic.” “Yes, aesthetic.” “I support all forms of art being open to the public.”
2. Cultural and Artistic Value Theme: 18 participants commented that sculptures reflect cultural heritage, reveal society’s cultural values, contribute to cultural promotion, and raise artistic awareness. Participants stated that sculptures are important tools for communicating art and culture

to the public. These views were supported by the following statements: “Sculpture is very important for reflecting the cultural presence and artistic perspective of public spaces, and for tourism.” “Cultural.” “Of course, it should be included. It contributes to the development of artistic perception.” “Absolutely cultural and aesthetic.” “Works of art that are of great importance in terms of art, history, and culture are cornerstones of cultural heritage.” “Yes. Artistic awareness, cultural heritage, aesthetics.” “It should be in every field. It provides cultural promotion and education.” “It adds culture and aesthetics to its area.” “I think art should be included in every field.”

3. The Integration of Society with Art and the Theme of Educational Function: 14 participants emphasized that art should be integrated with society and that placing sculptures in public spaces would facilitate individuals’ access to art and foster aesthetic awareness. These views were supported by the following statements: “Society should be engaged with all forms of art.” “People should be integrated with art to prevent art from appealing to a specific segment of society.” “Sculpture can be used to convey the message to local and foreign visitors, such as those traveling for business.” “People engaged in art have high levels of education, culture, and intelligence. These individuals have high spirits.” “From a social perspective, works of art should reach society to enhance the public’s aesthetic tastes.” “I believe art should be present in every field.” “People should see and be impressed by quality works in public spaces.”
4. Theme of Historical Meaning and Memory: Eight participants commented that sculptures keep social memory alive by referencing historical events, individuals, or periods, and that they create a city identity. These views were supported by statements such as, “There can be sculptures that reflect the history of public spaces.” “They should definitely be included. They are a historical and cultural richness.” “Yes. They are historically and artistically valuable.” “They are a social memory.” “They are a cornerstone of cultural heritage.”
5. Conditional Acceptance and Criticism Theme: Four participants gave limited or conditional approval to the placement of statues in public spaces, while some stated that certain statues could be disturbing in terms of their content or form. These views were supported by the following statements: “They should be in public spaces if they don’t interfere with other situations.” “It’s possible.” “It can be placed. It shouldn’t conflict with society’s values. There should be no nudity, etc.”

In conclusion, the vast majority of participants agreed that statues should be placed in public spaces. While aesthetic value was the most frequently cited justification, themes such as cultural value, artistic awareness, engaging the public with art, and fostering historical memory also featured strongly. A small number of participants expressed limited approval for this practice, citing its value judgments.

**Question 3: What kind of contributions do you think these statues make to society? (Educational, aesthetic, social awareness, no contribution, etc.)**

1. Theme of Aesthetic Contribution and the Development of Artistic Taste: 26 participants stated that sculptures contribute aesthetically to society, are visually appealing to the eye, contribute to the development of artistic taste, and enrich urban aesthetics. Opinions supported by statements such as, “A taste for art is acquired.” “They can contribute to the development of aesthetic sense.” “They are aesthetically appealing to the eye.” “I find them meaningful in terms of aesthetics and social messages.” “Aesthetic perspective.” “Aesthetics, historical awareness.” “Aesthetics, social awareness, art.” “Aesthetics.” “They are beneficial for becoming familiar with art.” “They will develop society in terms of aesthetic values and aesthetic tastes.” “They will be beneficial in every respect.” “They should be for the aesthetic beauty of the city.” were expressed.
2. Theme of Social Awareness and Intellectual Interaction: 18 participants stated that sculptures encourage individuals to think, talk, and realize social issues, art perception, urban identity, and social issues. These views were supported by the following statements: “Social awareness.” “Social awareness and aesthetics.” “Seeing that such art exists and encouraging conversation about it.” “Awareness culture, art.” “It contributes especially in terms of aesthetics and social awareness.” “They will develop society... If we use art as a social tool... we can bring social problems to light and raise awareness.” “Awareness.” “It brings about a sense of curiosity, research, and evaluation in those who view sculptures.” “It broadens people’s perspective on life, and people with high tolerance and awareness increase.”
3. Educational and Cultural Contribution Theme: 14 participants emphasized that sculptures contribute educationally to society, raise historical and cultural awareness, and introduce art and cultural values to younger generations. These views were supported by statements such as: “Educational, aesthetic, historical, and awareness.” “I believe they

contribute in the context of education, culture, art, and aesthetics.” “They make educational and aesthetic contributions.” “They emphasize history.” “They demonstrate the importance society places on art and history.” “I believe sculptures should have an educational aspect for society, considering the city and location where they are located.” “The value of a work of art... can be measured by its social impact.”

4. Theme of Identity, Locality, and Urban Culture: Six participants commented that the statues are identified with their locations, reflect the cultural fabric of the city, and contribute to social memory. These comments were supported by the following statements: “These statues are identified with Süleymanpaşa.” “They raise awareness about the place where they live.” “They contribute to the development of history, social relations, and artistic thought.” “They contribute to cultural, religious, historical, or social awareness.” “They emphasize history.” “They should be for the visibility of the city and art within society.”
5. Theme of Holistic and Multifaceted Contributions: Five participants expressed a holistic approach, stating that sculptures contribute not only aesthetically or educationally, but also in many artistic, cultural, historical, social, touristic, and intellectual ways. These views were supported by the following statements: “Educational, aesthetic, social awareness, artistic, historical, and tourism.” “I believe they contribute in all the areas mentioned above.” “They are beneficial in every respect.” “They contribute to perspectives on art. Especially high-quality works...” “Fine craftsmanship, meaningful imbuing, social reflection... if it can’t be a sculpture, it’s just rubble.”

In conclusion, participants generally believe that sculptures offer multifaceted contributions to society. Aesthetic development, social awareness, educational contributions, and cultural identity formation are particularly prominent. While a few participants emphasized only one aspect, the majority stated that sculptures offer intellectual and artistic contributions at both individual and societal levels.

**Question 4: How do you think your personal background (education, family, environment, etc.) affects your perception of the sculptures?**

1. The Determining Role of Education Theme: 29 Participants stated that their education had a direct and positive impact on their perception of sculpture. It is emphasized that higher education, art education, intellectual knowledge, and reading in particular developed their sensitivity to

sculpture and their aesthetic perspective. “The Contribution of Education” “It had a positive impact on me” “Increasing the level of education... placing importance on aesthetic beauty... has improved my perception of sculpture.” “My education and intellectual knowledge determine my perspective on sculpture.” “My university studies and documentaries have had a positive impact.” “I studied at an art school.” “My education and my own interests influence my perspective on sculpture.” “Being born and raised in an educated environment” “The educational system doesn’t really allow for this... I learned through my own efforts when I started my undergraduate education.” Opinions supported by the following expressions were expressed: “Education, the environment we grew up in”, “Education, environment (ranked 1st)”, “The education I received positively affected my perspective”, “It has educational and aesthetic contributions, so we would be happy to see it”, “The education I received... was effective in the formation of my perception.”

2. The Influence of Family and Social Environment: Twelve participants emphasized that their family environments and the social environment they grew up in influenced their sensitivities towards art and sculpture. It appears that families’ perspectives have either a direct impact or the intellectual efforts the individual develops outside of this environment have an impact. These views were supported by statements such as, “I think the books I read, my family, and my perspective on life... have been influential.” “My family and the environment in which I received education have positively contributed to my perception of sculptures.” “My family and the education I received have positively influenced my perspective.” “Art makes me happy.” “My family and education... have a positive influence.” “My education and my family’s perspectives on life... have been influential.” “I gained knowledge not from my family, but through my own research and life experience.” “The environment and family we live in have been influential.”
3. The Development of Aesthetic and Artistic Sensitivities Theme: 10 participants stated that they gained a more profound and positive perspective on sculptures through the development of their aesthetic perception, love of art, and intellectual thinking skills. These views were supported by the following statements: “I have an aesthetic perception.” “I think it is aesthetically effective.” “As someone trained in sculpture... I think awareness is important.” “Aesthetic contribution and artistic perceptions develop.” “The meaning created by the manifestations

in sculptures is important for individuals.” “It develops knowledge, conversation, examination, questioning, and appreciation.” “I think it adds artistic and cultural richness to cities.”

4. Cultural and Local Interactions (Environment, Travel, Urban Culture) Theme: Eight participants stated that their living environments, city culture, the visibility of artworks, and especially domestic and international travels raised their awareness of sculpture. These views were supported by statements such as, “It affects the beauty of our environment,” “It’s nice that artists from many countries have left their mark on our city,” “Domestic and international trips have had a significant impact,” “While visiting the Istanbul Archaeological Museum in Turkey... my aesthetic and historical knowledge increased,” “Environment, education,” and “I established an artistic bond with the city.”
5. Critical Approach and Prioritization Theme: Two participants adopted a critical approach to sculptures, stating that basic human needs are paramount and that art can sometimes be seen as an unnecessary investment. These views were supported by the following statements: “I often think sculptures are unnecessary investments... there is a need to meet basic human rights.” “Yes, I do, but the priority is different.”

As a result, the majority of participants stated that factors in their personal history, particularly education and family, were decisive in their perspectives on sculpture. While education stands out as a factor that enhances an individual’s aesthetic sensitivity and artistic awareness, family and environment were considered factors that support or guide this process. Some participants stated that they developed their perception of art not through direct education, but through their own individual efforts, cultural trips, and museum experiences. A small number of participants with a critical approach stated that art ranks lower among societal priorities.

**Question 5: How do you define sculpture and what does it mean to you? (It could be art, cultural heritage, decorative element, etc.)**

1. The Theme: Art and Aesthetics as a Form of Expression: 27 participants primarily define sculpture as a form of art. In this context, sculpture is considered as a reflection of aesthetics, visual pleasure, emotional expression, creativity, and the artist’s inner world. The uniqueness and timeless nature of artworks are emphasized. “It is art, abstract sculptures that reflect the human inner world...” “Art and cultural heritage”

“Artistic” “Art, cultural heritage, aesthetics...” “Art, culture” “A work of art” “Like all forms of art, there is a labor...” “It is art. It is far beyond time...” “The expression of emotions... the reflection of dreams...” “I see sculpture as one of the first art forms that comes to mind when speaking of the visual arts.” “Sculpture is a three-dimensional form of expression.” “The artist has mastered stone or marble with his hands... he envelops us with his magic.” Opinions supported by the following statements were expressed: “Art, aesthetic pleasure and cultural richness”, “Art, heritage and aesthetics”, “I do not think that sculpture is a reflection of a person’s creativity”.

2. Theme of Cultural Heritage and Historical Identity: The cultural heritage, social memory, identity transmission, and historical narrative aspects of the 19 sculptures throughout history were frequently emphasized. Participants stated that sculpture serves an important function as a carrier of meaning extending from the past to the present. These views were supported by statements such as: “Both artistic and cultural heritage,” “A valuable work of art, socially meaningful,” “Important from both cultural and architectural perspectives,” “Important in terms of cultural heritage...” “I believe it is an element of cultural identity,” “It defines the sociological structure and period within history... it is instructive when passed on to future generations...” “I see it as a cultural and historical work of art.” “What makes a city a city... are sculptures with historical and cultural narratives.” “It quickly establishes a feeling between the past and the present.” “Cultural heritage,” “It is an important tool in the transmission of culture to future generations.”
3. Theme: Aesthetics and Environmental Contribution: Thirteen participants evaluated sculpture’s place within the visual arts, its ability to enrich the aesthetic appearance of cities and raise spatial awareness. It stands out as a contributing element to urban aesthetics. Opinions supported by phrases such as, “I think it makes cities more eye-catching...” “It is a visual art form... it enhances the aesthetic perception of our environment.” “Visual aesthetics adds a different atmosphere to the environment.” “An art form that enhances aesthetic perception.” “It strengthens our visual perception with its three-dimensional physical effect...” “It serves as an ornamental element,” “It can be pleasing to the eye,” “Art and aesthetic pleasure...” were expressed.
4. Theme of Symbolism, Representation, and Expressive Power: Six participants stated that sculpture carries a depth of meaning, has a strong

symbolic or expressive aspect, and has the power to represent an idea or period. Some participants stated that sculpture can become an icon for cities or nations. These views were supported by the following expressions: “A sculpture can become the symbol of a city or country.” “A sculpture carries an idea that the artist necessarily wants to reflect.” “A sculpture... has a historical and cultural narrative...” “An artist... dominates a stone with their hands... envelops it in their magic.” “Everyone who looks at it sees and thinks different things every time.” “As long as sculpture is used as material for ideological propaganda, it is repulsive... but it caresses the human soul... makes one say, ‘Man made it.’”

5. Critical and Religious Perspectives Theme: Two participants expressed a critical approach to sculpture based on their religious beliefs or cultural backgrounds, or expressed their belief that it was introduced to Turkey through Western influence. These views were supported by statements such as, “It’s a branch of art that contradicts the Muslim Turkish understanding and came to us through Western influence...” “As long as sculpture is used as a tool for ideological propaganda, I find it repulsive...”

As a result, participants’ perceptions of sculpture exhibit a rich and multifaceted structure. The most dominant themes were sculpture’s artistic and aesthetic value and its role as a carrier of cultural heritage. For many, sculpture is seen not only as decoration but also as a tangible expression of emotions, thoughts, historical memory, and cultural identity. Its contribution to urban aesthetics, its ability to add meaning to space, and its symbolic expressive power are also noteworthy highlights. However, a small number of participants pointed to negative aspects of sculpture, such as its religious-cultural incompatibility and ideological instrumentalization.

**Question 6: In your opinion, what is the general perception of sculpture in society? What do you think are the reasons for this perception? (Explain with positive/negative examples.)**

1. Religiously Based Negative Perception Theme: 28 participants stated that there is a negative perception of sculpture in society, and that the source of this perception is religious concerns based on the prohibition of idolatry in Islam. These views were supported by the following statements: “It is perceived as an idol because of religion,” “Because the introduction of sculpture into the Islamic world was due to Western influence, it is not accepted by society and is ostracized,” and “It is seen as an idolization of family life.”

2. Theme of Traditional-Modern Polarization: Seventeen participants stated that society's perception of sculpture is divided into two; those who embrace traditional/religious values have a negative approach, while those focused on art and aesthetics have a positive one. These views were supported by the following statements: "If we consider society as two poles... one sees it as an idol, the other as art and aesthetics." "Reactionary and bigoted societies call sculpture a sin, while modern societies view it as art."
3. Theme of Lack of Education and Aesthetic Awareness: Fifteen participants cited the public's low level of education and insufficiently developed aesthetic and artistic awareness as reasons for the negative view of sculpture. These views were supported by statements such as "ignorance," "public's lack of aesthetic values and low level of education," and "I hear negative criticism from time to time; it has to do with education and cultural levels."
4. Theme: Seeing Sculpture as Unnecessary and Expensive: 13 participants, a significant portion of society, view sculptures as an economic burden and an unnecessary expense rather than their aesthetic or cultural contribution. These views were supported by the following statements: "Society sees sculpture as a waste of money and effort." "They generally see it as unnecessary. Perhaps it will attract the attention of those who are interesting." "Sculptures should not be built with public funds."
5. Theme: Art and Culture Not Being Given Enough Value: Nine participants emphasized that not only sculpture but art in general is not given the value it deserves in society, and therefore sculpture is not given enough importance. These views were supported by statements such as, "Interest in art is not sufficiently met in society," "Art cannot be embraced by many people in our society," and "Physical needs are prioritized, and sculpture is seen as a luxury."
6. Theme: Aesthetic Sculptures and Perception Issues: Six participants stated, "The unaesthetic nature of some sculptures placed in public spaces reinforces the public's negative views of sculpture. These views were supported by statements such as, "Some sculptures are ugly and absurd. Some aren't even sculptures." "The sculptures are made to encourage consumption and have deviated from aesthetics."
7. Theme: Positive Approach and Those Who Attribute Artistic Value: Five participants argued that sculpture has artistic value and that society should become accustomed to this art form and evolve towards a more positive approach

over time. These views were supported by statements such as, "Society should get used to it, statues should remain in their place," and "If a beautiful work evokes positive emotions in people, why should it be an idol?"

As a result, a generally negative perception of sculpture prevails in society. The primary reasons for this perception are religious prejudices, lack of education, economic concerns, and a lack of cultural infrastructure for art. Furthermore, the inadequate attention to aesthetic and artistic values in public spaces where sculptures meet the public leads to sculpture becoming trivialized or belittled. Conversely, there appears to be a growing appreciation for this art form among educated individuals with developed artistic sensibilities. This dual perception in society can be transformed over time through art education, aesthetic sensitivity, and cultural development.

## CONCLUSION

This study aimed to examine public perceptions of sculpture, specifically the sculptures located in the Tekirdağ Coastal Landfill, through the perspectives of 36 participants using structured in-depth interviews. The primary objectives of the study were to understand individuals' attitudes toward sculpture, to identify the factors influencing these attitudes, and to reveal the role of sculpture within society.

The research findings indicated that participants' overall impressions of the sculptures in the Tekirdağ Coastal Landfill were largely positive. A significant portion of participants found the sculptures beautiful and aesthetically pleasing, while others viewed them as meaningful. Opinions were also expressed that the sculptures contribute to the city's aesthetics and cultural identity. However, there was also negative feedback, including a lack of clarity about the sculptures' artistic meaning or information, criticisms of the quality of workmanship, and economic concerns regarding their cost.

There was strong consensus among participants that sculptures should be included in public spaces. The most frequently cited reasons for this were the aesthetic value and visual richness they provide, their cultural and artistic value, their integration of art into society, their educational function, their historical significance, and their contribution to collective memory. Participants generally believed that sculptures offer multifaceted contributions to society, particularly in the areas of aesthetic development, social awareness, educational contributions, and the formation of cultural identity.

It has been revealed that individuals' personal backgrounds play a decisive role in shaping their perceptions of sculpture. The majority of participants stated that their educational background (higher education, art education, and reading) positively influenced their aesthetic sensitivities and artistic awareness. Factors such as family and social environment, cultural outings, and museum experiences also play a role in the development of perception. This demonstrates that the perception of art is directly related to an individual's knowledge, cultural background, and life experiences. A small number of participants tend to view art as a secondary priority to basic needs.

Participants often define sculpture as a form of art and aesthetic expression, while also seeing it as a carrier of cultural heritage and a part of historical identity. Sculpture stands out for its three-dimensionality, tactile appeal, diversity of materials, and its unique expressiveness. Furthermore, the contribution of sculptures to urban aesthetics and their symbolic significance were frequently emphasized. Sculpture is perceived not only as a decorative element but also as a tangible expression of emotions, thoughts, historical memory, and cultural identity.

On the other hand, the study participants noted that a generally negative perception of sculpture prevails in society as a whole. The most prominent underlying reasons for this negative perception are religious prejudices based on the Islamic prohibition of idolatry, as well as a lack of education and aesthetic awareness. The perception of sculptures as an unnecessary expense and cost, and the general undervaluation of art and culture, are also significant factors contributing to this negative perception. This suggests a significant polarization between traditional and modern perspectives on art. The lack of aesthetic quality and depth of meaning in some sculptures placed in public spaces may also reinforce this negative perception. However, educated individuals with a developed artistic sensibility appear to have a more appreciative approach to this art form.

Ultimately, the public perception of sculpture is complex and dependent on a variety of factors. As in the Tekirdağ example, sculptures in public spaces are generally perceived as aesthetically pleasing and meaningful, and these works are perceived as making a cultural contribution to city life. Participants believe in the importance of the presence of sculptures in public spaces and associate this presence with educational, cultural, and aesthetic benefits. It is clear that education plays a critical role in shaping individual perception. However, at the broader societal level, negative stereotypes based on religious, cultural, educational, and economic reasons remain prevalent.

In light of these findings, it is believed that steps can be taken to better understand and accept sculpture by society. Consideration should be given to the aesthetic quality, social significance, and compatibility with local values of sculptures placed in public spaces. Information should be provided about the artist's intention, the meaning of the work, and its historical/cultural context through informative texts or panels about the works. Most importantly, expanding art education and developing individuals' aesthetic sensitivities from an early age will play a key role in positively transforming society's perspective on art. Beyond being merely an art form, sculpture holds the potential to be a powerful cultural tool that fosters social dialogue, keeps collective memory alive, and enriches urban spaces. Awareness of this potential will facilitate the connection of art with society, contributing to a more inclusive and art-appreciating society.

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## SECTION 7

### THE INFLUENCE OF THE WORKS OF RENAISSANCE ARTISTS ON THE ARTISTIC CONCEPTION OF THE PERIOD

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#### INTRODUCTION

The term “Renaissance,” meaning “rebirth,” refers to a significant period in the cultural, artistic, and intellectual history of Europe between the 14th and 17th centuries. The term “Renaissance” was used to describe the innovations that emerged in Europe during the early modern era, in the fields of fine arts (architecture, sculpture, painting), literature, and science.

The Scholastic Period constitutes the second phase of medieval Christian philosophy, lasting from the 8th to the 15th centuries. The name “scholastic” refers to the educational institutions and systematic teaching activities developed to teach the Christian faith. The word “scholastic” means “school path” or “schooling process.” During this period, religiously based philosophical approaches were brought into the field of education, giving rise to the Scholastic form of thought. Scholastic thought, shaped by the influence of the church, centered on religious beliefs and aimed to ground and defend these beliefs through reason.

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The works of Renaissance artists bear the traces of a profound transformation not only aesthetically, but also socially, culturally, and philosophically. During this period, artists portrayed the human figure and nature in an accurate and idealized manner, profoundly altering the aesthetic understanding of Western art. The emphasis on human physical perfection, individual identity, and intellectual strength in these artists' works were key elements shaping the artistic understanding of the period. The impact of Renaissance artists' works on the artistic understanding of the period constitutes the subject of this study.

The Renaissance was a major cultural revolution that developed in the West from the 14th century onward. The scholastic thought of the Middle Ages was replaced by a cultural understanding based on human reason and individuality. During this period, art returned to the aesthetic understandings of classical Greece and Rome, reshaping humanity's relationship with nature, society, and God. The works of Renaissance artists had significant impact not only from a technical perspective but also from social, philosophical, and religious perspectives. Artists such as Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Raphael, and Botticelli made significant contributions to the aesthetic and intellectual dimensions of Renaissance art.

The study first examines the fundamental characteristics of the Renaissance period and its artistic perspectives. It then examines the influence of the period's artistic perspectives through the works of Renaissance artists. The study examines the documentation technique of qualitative research and explains how Renaissance works shaped the artistic perspectives of the period. It also examines the influence of Renaissance artists' works on the artistic perspectives of the period. The aim of this study is to explain how the works of Renaissance artists influenced the artistic perspectives of the period.

### **Basic Characteristics of the Renaissance and its Understanding of Art**

The Renaissance movement, which emerged in Italy in the 15th century, began to take shape with admiration for the classical artistic understanding of ancient Greece and Rome. During this period, artists, inspired by the aesthetic values of antiquity, developed a perspective centered on humanity and nature. Classical art's understanding of symmetry, proportion, and beauty was revitalized, and significant advances were made in sculpture, architecture, and painting. Over time, this cultural awakening transcended Italy and spread throughout Europe, leading to profound transformations in art, science, and thought. The Renaissance heralded not only an artistic revival but also an era in which human intellect and individual creativity came to the fore (Bakır, 2003: p. 2).

One of the most distinctive characteristics of the Renaissance is the break with the church and the return to ancient Greek and Roman culture. During the Renaissance, the church failed to meet the needs of the time and was inadequate. This led to criticism of the church. The artistic understanding of the period reveals a concern for a return to ancient Greek and Roman culture. Works produced during this period often reference ancient Greek and Roman culture.

Renaissance art was shaped by two fundamental sources. The first was the rediscovery of elements from ancient Greek and Roman art, which had been relegated to the background during the Middle Ages, and the desire to preserve this classical heritage. Artists brought the aesthetics of the past to light and refocused on the concepts of ideal proportion, form, and beauty. The second source was the technique of perspective, developed to enhance the effect of depth and reality in works of art. Used particularly in architectural structures, figural compositions, and spatial depictions, this technique allowed art to remain more true to nature. The combination of these two elements transformed Renaissance art from a mere repetition of the past and laid the foundations for a new aesthetic understanding and visual realism (Bakır, 2003: p. 2).

Drawing on these two sources, artists based the artistic understanding of the period on works from the Ancient Greek and Roman periods and perspective studies.

The Renaissance marks a period that moved away from the scholastic thought and religious dominance of the Middle Ages and celebrated human reason, nature, and individual freedom. The artistic understanding of this period is defined by elements such as the idealization of the human figure, the discovery of perspective, the detailed depiction of nature, and an interest in classical ancient Greek and Roman culture. Artists sought to explore the individual, the human soul, and nature more deeply than in previous periods. This led to the emergence of an artistic approach that was not limited to religious themes but also encompassed secular and individual themes. This artistic approach resulted in works of art that centered on the human and naturalistic depictions. Thus, the artistic understanding of the period was shaped.

### **The Understanding of Realism and Human-Centered Art**

“Understanding the Renaissance is possible only through understanding the systems of thought inherent in the human nature of the period...” (Eroğlu, 2018: p. 17). One of the most significant innovations of the Renaissance was the emergence of an understanding that placed humanity at the center and valued it.

Unlike the God-centered art of the Middle Ages, Renaissance artists recognized humanity as the center of the universe. This brought about both religious and social change. Art not only reflected religious or metaphysical truths but also sought to accurately represent humanity and nature.

During the Renaissance, under the influence of humanist thought, humanity became central to art, and interest in the individual's value, physical, and spiritual qualities increased. This human perspective led artists to move away from religious themes and emphasize worldly elements. Thus, portraiture, which reflected the individual characteristics and character of a person, developed and gained importance as a new genre in painting. Portraits were no longer limited to the nobility or clergy, but also to individuals from diverse social backgrounds, leading to a more personal and realistic dimension in art (Krausse, 2005: p. 11).

The Renaissance was a period that emphasized the importance of humanity and aimed to unlock its potential. The interest in Ancient Rome and Greece during this period gave rise to anthropocentrism. The humanism of the Renaissance focused on the pursuit of knowledge, the constant search for information, the exercise of creativity, and the discovery of one's talents.

### ***Discovering Perspective and Realistic Reflection of Art***

From the early 14th century onward, painters radically changed the direction of art, leaving behind the stereotypical forms of the Middle Ages. By developing the rules of perspective that redefined visual perception, they laid the foundations for modern art. Until this period, art had largely been confined to religious themes. However, as people became more interested in this world, everyday life, and human experiences rather than the afterlife, art accordingly turned to new subjects. Artists began to address not only the sacred but also humanity, nature, and individual life. With this transformation, painters, over a long period, shed their artisan identity and became individual artists who freely expressed their ideas and emotions. Thus, art underwent a major transformation in terms of both content and form (Krausse, 2005: p. 6).

Thus, a generation of artists, freed from the shackles of medieval religious authority, began to emerge. During the Renaissance, artists developed significant technical innovations in accurately representing space and depth. Perspective techniques enabled the depiction of space in three dimensions, allowing artists to more accurately reflect visual perception. This technique presented a more realistic world to both artists and viewers, while also paving the way for art to acquire a mathematical and scientific dimension.

The new pictorial spaces organized using the central perspective technique developed during the Renaissance became a narrative language reflecting the mindset of the time. This method responded to the desire to see and understand nature realistically in an age when people's attention was increasingly shifting from the afterlife to this world. Art had become a field that represented not only the sacred but also the profane. Through central perspective, the artist became a subject who not only depicted but also organized nature. Taking on the role of "organizer of the world," the artist grasped reality on an intellectual level and reshaped this reality according to mathematical principles. Thus, art, not only as an aesthetic pursuit but also as a form of intellectual understanding, served the Renaissance ideal of understanding the world (Krausse, 2005: p. 9).

In this context, painting becomes not just a visual representation but also an intellectual construction. The artist's gaze is no longer random or intuitive; it is based on a measurable, calculable order. This reinforces the dominance of the human mind over nature. The linear precision of perspective is a projection of the rational and centralized structure that Renaissance man sought to establish for the universe. Thus, the painting surface becomes a mental map of the transition from a God-centered cosmology to a human-centered world.

### ***The Individual Identity of Man and the Rise of the Artist***

Painting, considered merely a craft until the Renaissance, was now seeking to emerge from the category of mechanical arts and be recognized as an independent and free artistic discipline. While music, rhetoric, and poetry had already achieved a high social and cultural status, it became inevitable that painting would also attain this respected position. This change brought about not only the transformation of a profession but also the redefinition of the artist's place in society. Artists no longer merely consulted existing scientific knowledge but also contributed to scientific thought through their own observations and experiences. In fact, many artists surpassed the scholars of the time in the ways they observed nature and the conclusions they reached. They derived their knowledge not from age-old books sanctioned by the church, gathering dust on library shelves, but directly from nature itself. This approach heralded a new mindset in which art and science were intertwined and creative thought took center stage (Krausse, 2005: p. 11).

Before the Renaissance, the guilds held status in the social sphere. With the Renaissance, the identity of the artist emerged as the living spaces of artists were reflected in the artistic world. This marked a period in which the artist reshaped both their social status and their individual identity. While artists in

the Middle Ages were generally viewed as anonymous workers, during the Renaissance, artists began to be recognized as the creative minds behind their works. Artists were recognized not only as craftsmen but also as intellectuals and creative individuals. Innovations introduced by Italian and Flemish artists in the early 15th century generated artistic vitality and excitement throughout Europe. During this period, painters and patrons realized that art was not limited to telling sacred stories in a compelling way, but also possessed the power to reflect a slice of the real world, almost like a mirror. This understanding initiated a radical transformation in the understanding of art, leading artists to experiment with new narratives, develop different techniques, and create astonishing effects. This creative spirit, characterized by experimentation and a quest for innovation, left its mark on 15th-century art. Thus, the individual perspective and observation-based understanding of reality gained importance in art, becoming the fundamental element that defined the break from the traditional patterns of the Middle Ages (Gombrich, 1997: p. 247). With the Renaissance, artists underwent a significant enlightenment in their artistic lives. Realizing that they could perceive the real world, these artists began to create works that emphasized individualism. Thus, a new understanding developed in which the artist's own ideas and desires gained prominence as the most fundamental element of any work of art. The artist was no longer seen as a mere craftsman but rather as a knowledgeable and intelligent intellectual within society. This transformation marked the beginning of a new era for art in terms of both its content and its place in society (Conti, 1982, p. 5).

### ***Return to Ancient Rome and Greece (Classicism)***

From the 14th century onward, ancient Greek and Roman culture became a source of profound influence on Italian life, seen not only as a cultural foundation but also as the purpose and ideal of existence. The influence of this classical culture, in fact, spread far beyond Italy's borders, making its presence felt intermittently in various parts of Europe throughout the Middle Ages. The cultural revivals, particularly in the 7th and 8th centuries, can be considered a kind of rebirth, a renaissance, against the barbarism of the period. The influence of this cultural awakening is also clearly visible in architecture; the building styles of the northern countries began to incorporate not only the basic principles of Roman architecture but also direct classical forms. Similarly, monastic education was significantly informed by the works of ancient Roman writers, and these works became integral to the teachings. Moreover, classical works were modeled not only in content but also in style, and the style of writing was shaped accordingly. In short, classical culture revived in medieval Europe, exerting a

powerful influence in both content and form (Burckhardt, 2011: pp. 214-215).

Renaissance art was nourished by two fundamental sources. The first was the rediscovery and reintroduction of classical forms from ancient Greek and Roman art, which had been overlooked for nearly a thousand years. This classical understanding allowed artists to reshape their aesthetic standards in line with the ideal of beauty in antiquity. The second fundamental source was the development of the groundbreaking technique of perspective in art history. This innovation enabled artists to use mathematical principles in their drawings to depict space realistically and in three dimensions. Thus, art ceased to be a mere form of aesthetic expression and became an endeavor based on scientific accuracy and observation. Through these two fundamental elements, Renaissance artists both preserved the legacy of the past and laid the foundations of modern visual perception (Conti, 1982: p. 3).

The Renaissance marked a return to ancient Roman and Greek culture in Europe. In Renaissance art, artists rediscovered the aesthetic concepts of ancient Greece and Rome and began to apply them to their own art. Renaissance artists viewed themselves as heirs to classical artistic traditions. They strove to revitalize their time and transform the relationship between art and society. For them, art was based on the works of ancient Roman and Greek artists. They rejected any prior understanding of art. This return to ancient Roman and Greek culture manifested itself in the exaltation of the ideal human form, admiration for the perfection of nature, and the integration of mythological themes into their artwork.

### ***Aesthetics in Renaissance Art***

The word "aesthetics" derives its origin from Ancient Greek. The term derives from the words "aisthesis" and "aisthanesthai." "Aisthesis" means sensation, or something perceived through the senses, while "aisthanesthai" means to perceive or feel through the senses. Both concepts demonstrate that the basis of aesthetics lies in experiences perceived through the senses. Therefore, aesthetics should not only be considered a reflection on beauty but also a form of sensory awareness and perception (Tunalı, 1998: p. 13). Alexander G. Baumgarten, considered the founder of aesthetics, gave the discipline the name "aesthetics" not by chance, but with a conscious choice. For him, aesthetics is a field of knowledge directly grounded in human sensory perception. Baumgarten viewed aesthetics not only as a body of thought on beauty but also as a component of epistemology. For him, aesthetics complements logic; in fact, in his own words, it is "logic's little sister." Just as logic examines conceptual and rational knowledge, aesthetics

explores sensory and perceptual knowledge, which stand in opposition to it. In this context, aesthetics emerged as a field of knowledge that seeks to understand not only the intellectual but also the sensory aspects of the human mind (Tunalı, 1998: p. 15). A large portion of the aesthetic problems of the Middle Ages originated in Antiquity. However, these problems were revisited and interpreted from a different perspective within the framework of Christianity, the dominant intellectual structure of the period. The ancient understanding of humanity, the world, and beauty was integrated with a God-centered worldview in the Middle Ages, thus establishing aesthetic concepts on a sacred foundation. In this process, the classical heritage was not only preserved but also transformed by blending it with the values of Christian thought. Consequently, medieval aesthetics offered a unique interpretation that combined both the rational foundations of Antiquity and the spiritual dimension of Christianity (Eco, 2015: p. 21). Medieval aesthetics possessed an inherent originality in line with the demands of the age. On the one hand, it modeled itself on the ancient period without breaking away from traditions, and on the other, it referenced the ancient period from a medieval perspective. Medieval aesthetics, in fact, laid the foundations for the aesthetics of the Renaissance. When we examine Renaissance aesthetics, we see that philosophers sought aesthetics in concrete terms, as well as abstract elements. This concern for a concrete aesthetic during the Renaissance is reflected in the medieval understanding of beauty as follows: When medieval philosophers discussed beauty, they were not merely referring to an abstract and isolated concept; they also defined beauty by associating it with concrete and observable forms. For them, beauty was not merely an intellectual ideal but also a real quality found in nature, art, or sacred texts. Therefore, they considered beauty both a reflection of the divine order and grounded it in concrete examples of aesthetic harmony, proportion, and order. Thus, the understanding of beauty carries both metaphysical meaning and is supported by realities observable in daily life. (Eco, 2015: p. 22).

“...Another aspect of the New Renaissance paradigm is that the scholar’s understanding, which seeks to penetrate the mysteries of God and become like Him, also leads to a revaluation of the beauty of the body and life. One of the interesting paradoxes of the Middle Ages is that, despite writing countless pages on the beauty of nature, the medieval theorist never reaches the conclusion that the way he treats his own body and his environment constitutes part of the ideal of beauty. In contrast, while the Renaissance theorist appears to be oriented toward a dematerialized idea of beauty, he actually acts as if the aesthetic problem involves not only the contemplation of the world but also his own daily

practice, the enjoyment of his own body and the places where he celebrates his earthly adventure with great pleasure, using all his senses but with a measured approach” (Eco, 2015: p. 248).

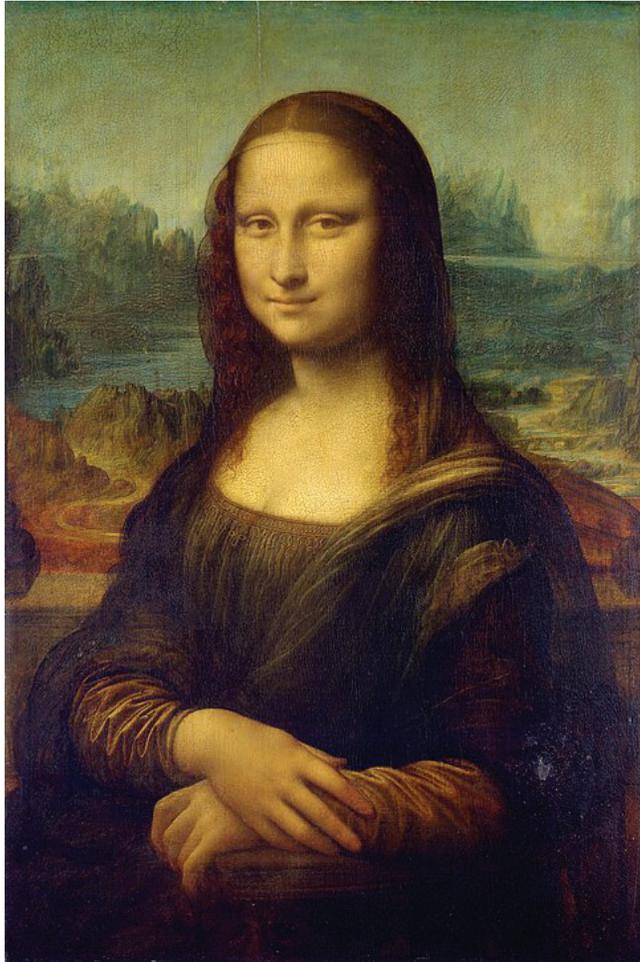
With this perspective, Renaissance people not only turn to the divine but also begin to see their own existence as a reflection of the sacred. The body ceases to be a sinful shell; it becomes an aesthetic object defined by measure, proportion, and harmony. Even the mundane aspects of daily life gain value with this new aesthetic awareness. While contemplating the world, people simultaneously observe themselves, attempting to shape their own existence as a work of art. This signifies a re-sanctification of both the senses and the intellect.

When considering the modern understanding of aesthetics, defining it solely as a branch of science or a philosophy of beauty means narrowing the scope of this discipline from the outset. However, even if aesthetics is considered solely as a philosophy of value, it encompasses aesthetic values other than beauty. For example, values such as the sublime, the tragic, the comic, the elegant, the interesting, the childlike (naive), and even the ugly are just as relevant to aesthetics as beauty itself, each possessing its own unique aesthetic meaning. Therefore, reducing the field of aesthetics to only the beautiful would be to ignore its richness and diversity. Aesthetics addresses the philosophical examination of all values experienced by humans through sense and emotion. Therefore, the science of aesthetics encompasses a much broader range of values and attempts to understand the sources of diverse aesthetic responses. Given this reality, reducing aesthetics solely to beauty would unnecessarily limit it (Tunalı, 1998: pp. 15-16).

In this context, it should be remembered that aesthetics is a field of inquiry that delves into the depths of human emotional and perceptual relationships with the world. Aesthetic experience can be shaped not only by what is pleasant and beautiful, but also by what is disturbing, shocking, or thought-provoking. Therefore, aesthetics is a multilayered discipline that seeks to understand human meaning responses within existential, cultural, and historical contexts. The aesthetic is not merely visual beauty; it is also a reflection of every human search for meaning.

## **Renaissance Artists and Their Works**

### **Leonardo Da Vinci's Mona Lisa**



*Figure 1. Leonardo Da Vinci "Mona Lisa" 1503-1507*

It is known that Leonardo da Vinci painted the Mona Lisa around 1503. Many questions have been raised about the Mona Lisa, one of Leonardo da Vinci's most important works, to this day. For example, the identity of the woman in the painting and the creation of the work have been widely speculated and interpreted throughout art history. When we consider Leonardo and the meaning of the work, we see that, as in his previous works, Leonardo da Vinci did not merely depict nature literal in his portrait. His aim was to transcend external appearance and reach the depths of the human soul. The young woman's soft smile and peaceful eyes reveal not just a superficial expression but a spiritual

state reflected from her inner world. Therefore, when we look at the Mona Lisa, we encounter a narrative constructed not from the outside in, but from the inside out. The rugged mountain landscape in the background reflects this inner depth, establishing a parallel between nature and spiritual state. The sfumato technique employed in the painting—the avoidance of sharp lines and the use of soft, dim lighting—imbues the work with a magical atmosphere. Mona Lisa's face, in particular, acquires an extraordinary vitality and mystery thanks to this technique. Whatever emotion the viewer directs towards this face, the portrait seems to respond with the same emotion. This allows the work to interact beyond time and space (Krausse, 2005: p. 16).

The Mona Lisa is one of the most important works of Renaissance art. It depicts human portraiture and the way we view people. Through portraiture, the Mona Lisa demonstrates the value and respect we can find in our own gaze, and the importance of the human being as a captivating figure within a work of art.

“...The smile adorned on the Mona Lisa demonstrates both the artist's distinction in portraiture and his contribution to his time, so much so that this smile continues to be debated today...” (Eroğlu, 2018: p. 77). Leonardo da Vinci had a unique understanding of expression in his works. With the Mona Lisa, da Vinci breathed new life into the harsh and expressionless nature of 15th-century portraiture. The meaning deepens as one looks into the alluring eyes of the smiling woman in the portrait. This gives this portrait a mysterious meaning. The perspective art Leonardo da Vinci employed in the Mona Lisa is one of the finest examples of the Sfumato technique. Sfumato means that the lines in a painting blend together like smoke, softening the lines. Sfumato is a technique used to give paintings a more realistic atmosphere. The landscapes with rivers and mountains in the background harmonize perfectly with the portrait. This work, one of the most beautiful examples of human anatomy, is a work of art in which the Renaissance portrait art style is masterfully crafted.

### Leonardo Da Vinci's Vitruvian Man

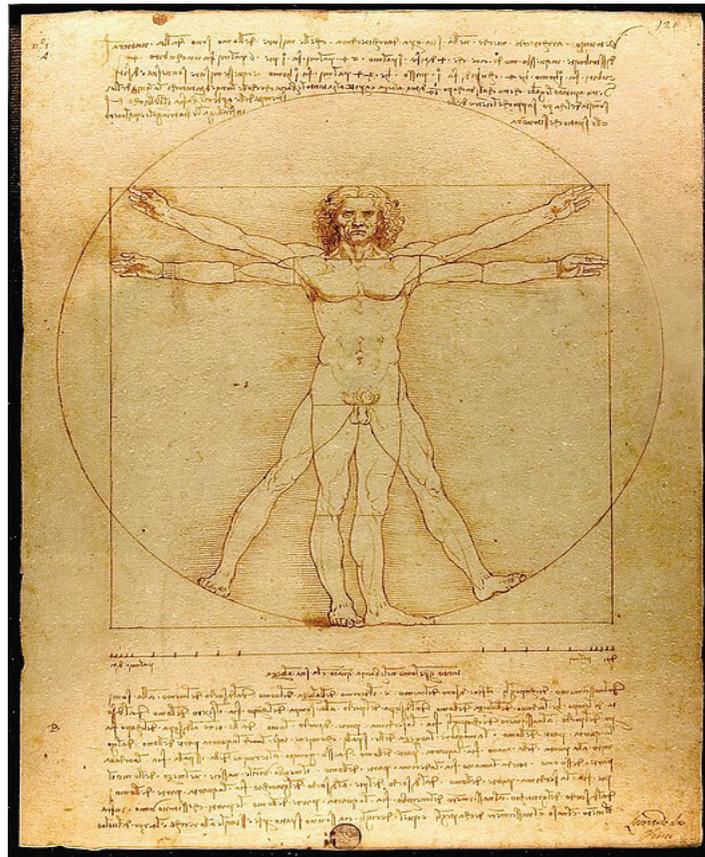


Figure 2. Leonardo Da Vinci "Vitruvian Man" 1492

Leonardo da Vinci's "Vitruvian Man" is a significant work that illustrates his understanding of the beauty and proportionality of the human body. Vitruvius was an architect during the Ancient Roman period. In this work, da Vinci sought to convey the perfect proportionality of the human body through the architect Vitruvius. In this work centered on the human being, da Vinci's drawing demonstrates the importance the Renaissance placed on human nature and the figure. In this drawing, the human body is placed both within a square and a circle, symbolically depicting the body. In this work, Leonardo da Vinci explores both the aesthetic and mathematical proportions of the human body and raises new questions regarding the understanding of humanity's place in nature.

During the Renaissance, art and science intertwined within Leonardo da Vinci. He was both an artist and a scientist. In his drawing of Vitruvian Man, da

Vinci blended human anatomy with art and mathematics, effectively integrating art and science. The study of both art and science on humanity brought the value of humanity to the forefront during the Renaissance.

### Michelangelo Buonarroti's David



Figure 3. Michelangelo Buonarroti "Statue of David" 1501-1504

Michelangelo viewed humanity as the center of divine creation and believed that sculpture could express this idea most powerfully. For him, sculpture was the most appropriate artistic medium for reflecting the spiritual and physical sublimity of humanity. Therefore, in his works, he was careful to depict the human body not merely as a physical entity but as a symbol connecting with the divine. For Michelangelo, sculpture was the most effective way to reveal the inner

depths and sublimity of humanity, created in the image of God (Krausse, 2005: p. 17). Therefore, Michelangelo considered himself a sculptor. He also made significant contributions to the art of architecture as an architect. He also wrote poetry. These characteristics of Michelangelo demonstrate his compatibility with the multifaceted human type of the Renaissance. "...Although Michelangelo seemingly continues to address religious themes, the artist himself continues by asking a Renaissance-specific question: 'How do I define a sculpture or a sculptural project?' Such a question is crucial. Asking a question opens up the opportunity to re-examine the field, its shortcomings and excesses. In every sculptural work, Michelangelo explored the subject by seeking answers to these questions. Therefore, each of the artist's projects suggests a different existence. This is the behavior of a creative artist." (Eroğlu, 2018: p. 78).

Michelangelo's artistic approach is not limited to formal mastery; every work embodies a profound inquiry into human existence. He views sculpture not merely as a means of external representation, but also as a field of exploration where inner truth and intellectual depth are revealed. Therefore, his works are like living beings that constantly question the meaning behind form and engage the viewer in this inquiry. For Michelangelo, sculpture is the product of a constant effort to unravel the inner meaning of man in the image of God.

During the Renaissance, the fascination with the human body, combined with his knowledge of anatomy, ushered in a new era in art. The most intense and impressive expression of this fascination reached its zenith in the works of Michelangelo. In his figures, musculature is depicted with extraordinary naturalism and, at times, exaggeration. This approach profoundly influenced subsequent artists; so much so that many painters filled their canvases with exaggeratedly muscular human bodies. However, Michelangelo not only mastered anatomy but also mastered composition. His works combined technical perfection and artistic balance; the beauty of the human body was both idealized and vividly portrayed with a sense of reality. Therefore, Michelangelo's works marked a turning point in Renaissance art, both technically and aesthetically (Conti, 1982: p. 44).

"...The Statue of David reveals the result of how an artist, possessing a solid classical formal language, manipulates the volume of this language, leading to its distortion..." (Eroğlu, 2018, p. 80). As a result of this work, it is clear that Michelangelo's style is not the style of Renaissance sculpture. This situation led to the formation of a new sculptural language. "With Michelangelo, another Renaissance emerged within the Renaissance, and Mannerism emerged, and with this attitude, Baroque art was prepared" (Eroğlu, 2018, p. 80). The Statue

of David was seen by its contemporaries as an unwavering symbol of freedom and independence. This work not only reflected Florence's identity as a city-state but also made a strong reference to the civil rights applicable within the city. Like an unyielding guardian protecting the city, the statue embodied the Florentines' devotion to the values of freedom and independence. Thus, David became not only an artistic masterpiece but also an expression of Florence's social and political ideals (Krausse, 2005: p. 17).

### *The School of Athens fresco by Raffaello Sanzio*



Figure 4. Raffaello Sanzio's "School of Athens fresco" 1509-1511

Along with Raphael, Michelangelo, and Leonardo, he is one of the most important artists of the Renaissance. Having established his own unique artistic approach, the artist "...appears to be the type who most frequently incorporates literary emotion and thus imbues his paintings with a sympathetic atmosphere. His knowledge of mathematics and geometry in painting has been well-established, most problems regarding the relationship between color and pattern have been resolved, the relationship between background and foreground in a painting has been questioned, and he has experimented with various forms in the dialogue between figures, paving the way for great artists in this field..." (Eroğlu, 2018, p. 70).

In the painting "The School of Athens," scholars and artists are gathered in a free discussion environment beneath domed halls depicted in central perspective.

These figures symbolize the seven liberal arts, representing the unification of diverse fields of knowledge under a single roof. The contrast between the dull, regimented structure of the monumental and heavy architecture and the lively, lively discussions of Greek scholars gives the work a unique dynamism and depth. Thus, the painting successfully conveys both the grandeur of the architecture and the vibrancy of intellectual interaction (Krausse, 2005, p. 18).

“Each figure in the School of Athens, each layer, is in a different state of action. This emphasizes the existence of a state of theory, and therefore, each figure in the composition is presented in the same way as in ancient times, in the act of thinking and debating. And one cannot help but think that such a realistic reflection of antiquity could only be conveyed in this way through a work of art.” (Eroğlu, 2018, p. 72).

One of the aims of Renaissance art was to purify art from religious and mythological elements and render it secular. The goal was to purify art and ensure that art was created solely for art’s sake. Important Renaissance artists such as Raphael, Michelangelo, and Leonardo believed in the necessity of surrendering art to art itself. These artists attempted to address questions such as “What can be done for art?” “What can be said about art?” “How can art be secularized?” and were highly successful in this endeavor. Their works shaped the Renaissance understanding of art into its own unique form. With this new understanding of art, art became a true art form, a humanist approach emerged, art was created for art’s sake, and religious and mythological elements were viewed as tools, not ends.

### *The Birth of Venus by Sandro Botticelli*

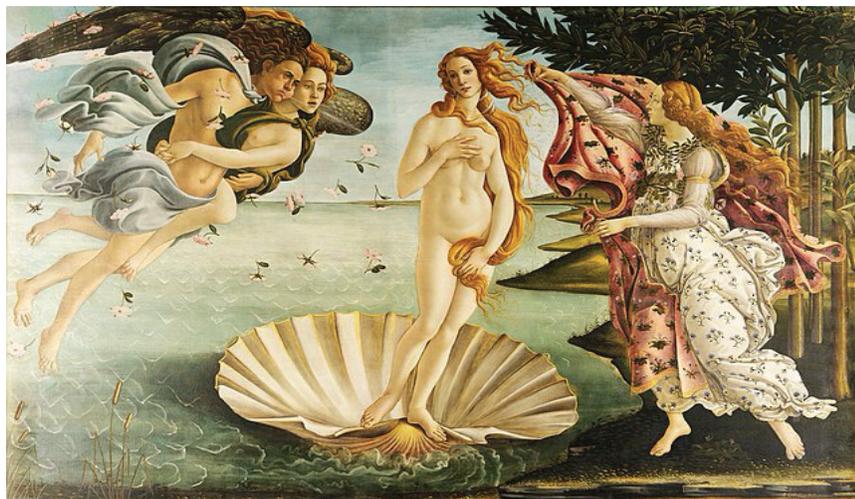


Figure 5. Sandro Botticelli “The Birth of Venus” 1482–1486

Developing a distinctive style with a fluid understanding of the human figure, the artist adopted a radically different approach from the rigidity of the figure-ground relationship seen in early Renaissance works. His interest in mythological themes enabled him to successfully reflect the creative dimensions of creating a symbolic language in his paintings. Furthermore, by utilizing the relationship between anatomy and costume in a transparent, or permeable, manner, he created a unique visuality in the figures. The artist’s method of foregrounding the subjects along the horizontal axis is particularly striking, while the backgrounds served as backdrops, ensuring the integrity of the scene. In essence, he aimed to establish a theatrical stage setting in his works, a practice most clearly demonstrated in “The Birth of Venus” and “Spring.” Both compositions developed a unique compositional language by presenting vertical lines within a horizontal arrangement. Thus, the artist broke away from traditional spatial understanding and combined the stage-figure relationship with a theatrical narrative (Eroğlu, 2018: p. 61).

In his paintings, Botticelli favored imaginary, fairytale-like, and mythological settings over the traditional realistic settings of the period. His vision was shaped by the understanding of a painter writing visual poetry. The figures’ feet being slightly off the ground makes the viewer feel as if they are immersed in a world of imagination through their eyes and heads. In this respect, Botticelli created a distinct distinction in his time by exhibiting a symbolic romantic attitude. The figures in his compositions, at times, convey a melancholic mood, adding emotional depth to his works. Thus, Botticelli’s paintings represent a unique aesthetic approach that both distances itself from the real world and reflects an inner dream (Eroğlu, 2018: p. 61).

After the 15th century, the understanding of Antiquity began to be viewed from a different perspective. Antiquity was attempted to be grasped within its own context within its own history, and its reproduction began in the 15th century. In addition to religious subjects, art began to depict mythological elements such as Greek legendary heroes and gods. Botticelli’s *The Birth of Venus* is a significant work depicting the goddess known as Aphrodite in Greek mythology and Venus to the Romans. In this painting, Venus emerges from an abstract and divine realm and steps onto the real world, namely land. This first monumental nude female figure, depicted in a measured human scale with grace and erotic naturalism, had a decisive influence on the art world following the Classical period. The magnificent bodily form featured in the work is seen as a powerful and moving reaction against the disembodied and abstract art of the Gothic period. This beautiful figure, emerging from the foam and washing ashore, also symbolizes

the rebirth of the human from the legacy of Antiquity, the most fundamental ideal of the Renaissance. This profound and multilayered meaning can be fully grasped when the work is approached not merely as an aesthetic image but as the embodiment of ideas. Thus, Botticelli's Venus becomes a symbolic figure that most powerfully reflects the spirit of Renaissance art, both mythologically and philosophically (Krausse, 2005: p. 13).

### **Method**

The study was conducted using the documentation technique of qualitative research. Literature review, text analysis, library and internet research were conducted during the preparation of the study. The study first examines the fundamental characteristics of the Renaissance period and its artistic approach. The influence of the period's artistic approach is explored through the works of Renaissance artists. Finally, this study will explore how Renaissance works shaped the artistic approach of the period.

### **Conclusion**

The Renaissance not only represented a radical break from the dogmatic scholastic thought patterns of the Middle Ages, but also triggered a revolution in mentality based on a humanistic worldview and rationalism based on nature and reason. In this context, the Renaissance was not only an aesthetic transformation but also a multifaceted phenomenon that pioneered the establishment of new paradigms in intellectual, philosophical, and social spheres.

The research has revealed that the classical aesthetic heritage of Ancient Greece and Rome and the discovery of perspective played a primary role among the fundamental sources of inspiration for Renaissance art. During this period, art gained significance through technical mastery and formal perfection, as well as its social and intellectual dimensions; representations of the human figure and nature were reinterpreted with new approaches based on idealization and anatomical accuracy. Humanism, by emphasizing the ontological value and unique identity of the individual, encouraged the development of the portrait genre in art and paved the way for the reflection of individual expression in artistic representation.

Renaissance artists' efforts to render spatial depth with mathematical precision, particularly through the systematic use of central perspective, endowed artworks with scientific and spatial accuracy, which in turn strengthened the viewer's interaction with the work. Simultaneously, artists during this period began to

be defined as intellectual and creative individuals, unlike the anonymous and professional craftsmen of the Middle Ages. Their ability to express original ideas and emotions enriched the intellectual foundations of art. The boundaries between art and science blurred, and observation of nature and the study of anatomy became fundamental elements shaping artistic production.

Leonardo da Vinci's "Mona Lisa" became the symbol of psychological and technical pursuits aimed at unraveling the mysterious depths of the human psyche; "Vitruvian Man" revealed the mathematical and aesthetic proportions of the human body, becoming a concrete expression of the mutual nourishment between art and science. Michelangelo's "David," while standing at the pinnacle of anatomical knowledge and aesthetic perfection, became a powerful symbol exalting the ideals of political freedom and independence of the city of Florence. Michelangelo's artistic inquiries played a pioneering role in the development of Mannerism and initiated the evolution of the post-Renaissance artistic language. Raphael's "School of Athens," on the other hand, successfully reflected the synthesis of ancient knowledge and different intellectual disciplines, contributing to the rise of worldly themes and the concept of "art for art's sake" in art. Sandro Botticelli's "Birth of Venus," on the other hand, reinterpreted the beauty of the human body in imaginary and idealized spaces imbued with mythological elements; It symbolized the rebirth of classical aesthetics against the disembodied art approach of the Gothic period.

Ultimately, Renaissance art was not merely an aesthetic and technical development; it was also a process in which art underwent an epistemological transformation, where scientific methods and individual creativity deeply permeated artistic practice. Through their works, artists during this period guided the intellectual and cultural transformations of the period and laid the foundations for modern art and visual realism. Aesthetic understanding began to be considered as a broader, multilayered value system, transcending the concept of mere beauty and encompassing diverse values such as sublimity, tragedy, and comedy. The Renaissance brought with it a profound understanding that embodied aesthetic perception in everyday life and redefined the relationship between art and life. In all these respects, the Renaissance became a cornerstone of Western art history, providing a solid intellectual and aesthetic foundation for the artistic and intellectual movements that would develop in the centuries that followed.

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## SECTION 8

### THE REASONS WHY DIGITAL DRAWING IS PREFERRED BY FINE ARTS STUDENTS IN THE CASE OF TEKIRDAG NAMIK KEMAL UNIVERSITY

Senanur BAYRAK<sup>9</sup>

#### INTRODUCTION

Digitalisation is a comprehensive and radical transformation process that we are experiencing in our age with massive advances in information, communication, recording and imaging technologies. This process refers to the transformation of information, art and cultural products that traditionally exist in physical or analogue form into digital data through digital technologies. Digitalisation, which permeates every aspect of our lives from health to education, from entertainment to business life and art, is so deep and far-reaching that it can be compared to historical turning points such as the French Revolution, the Industrial Revolution and the Cold War. This change is not only a technical innovation, but also fundamentally reshapes social structures, production relations and cultural practices.

One of the main features of digitalisation is the transformation of information and media. Data in different forms such as text, sound and images have been transferred to digital media and can be stored, processed and disseminated on a global scale within seconds. Traditional printed works and analogue media contents are converted into digital format and are both protected and made accessible to much wider audiences. While the fact that digital content is no longer fixed but constantly changeable allows information to be updated and reshaped with different interpretations, it may also bring the risk of information

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pollution. Furthermore, the linear text structure has been replaced by hypertext, where the reader can switch between texts through different links, providing a richer and more interactive reading experience. Digital imaging technologies have made it possible to record audio and video in much higher quality than analogue recordings. This transformation has radically changed not only the way information is presented, but also the ways we access, interpret and share it.

Although the field of art has always been affected by technological advances throughout the historical process, it has gained a brand new and groundbreaking dimension with digitalisation. Just as turning points such as the widespread use of oil painting in the Renaissance and the invention of photography with the industrial revolution profoundly affected artistic expression, digital technologies have sparked a similar, even more far-reaching transformation. Computers and software have become more than just brushes or canvases for artists; they have become essential components at the centre of the creative process. These tools offer artists unlimited opportunities for experimentation, undoing, reproduction and transformation, opening the doors to visual and auditory experiences unimaginable with traditional methods.

The Internet has become a huge digital exhibition space where artworks are exhibited and circulated on a global scale. Artists can instantly share their works with audiences around the world without being dependent on physical galleries, which makes art accessible and democratised. Digital technologies have enabled the emergence of countless new art forms, from multimedia installations to software art, from net-art to artificial intelligence and virtual reality (VR)-supported art applications. While these new forms push the boundaries of art, they also force us to rethink traditional definitions of art. Especially with the NFT (Non-Fungible Token) technology that has recently entered our lives, the production, ownership and valuation processes of art have experienced a radical transformation. NFTs have revolutionised the digital art market by providing digital works with a unique identity and proof of ownership.

The transfer of art from the physical world to the digital environment has fundamentally changed the relationship between the viewer and the work. Instead of the traditional passive observer, an active subject has emerged who interacts with the work, experiences it and even becomes part of the process. Through interactive art installations, virtual reality experiences or augmented reality (AR) applications, viewers can be drawn into the artwork and experience personalised and unforgettable moments. The perception of space has also been profoundly affected; the places where art is presented are no longer limited to physical exhibition halls, but have expanded to environments that are reconstructed with

digital elements or completely virtual, such as the Metaverse. These virtual spaces offer unlimited and imaginative new platforms for artists to present their work, while allowing audiences to visit global exhibitions from the comfort of their own homes.

Digitalisation has also revitalised debates about the originality and ‘aura’ of artworks. The fact that a work of art can be easily copied and reproduced thanks to digital technologies has questioned its originality value. However, NFT technology, which is presented as a digital solution to this situation, has ensured that the work remains “unique” in the digital environment by assigning a unique identity and ownership to each digital work through the blockchain system. This technology is one of the main reasons why digital artworks are bought and sold at high prices.

The digitalisation of artwork production and the rapid increase in the number of digital works in the fields of graphic design and painting constitute one of the main focal points of this study. Going beyond traditional art practices, these disciplines are undergoing a radical transformation with the opportunities offered by technology. Accelerated developments in technology have been integrated into the design and painting processes as a catalyst, leading to the emergence of brand new drawing techniques and forms of expression.

Nowadays, not only professional graphic designers but also artists working with traditional methods use advanced design and drawing software as the most important tools for creating their works. These software offer artists an unlimited palette of colours, a variety of brushstrokes and layering, allowing them to realise their artistic visions more freely than ever before. This technological transformation also leads to the introduction of new professional definitions such as ‘digital artist’ or ‘digital designer’, opening the doors to new identities and career paths in the world of art and design. This situation necessitates new approaches and curriculum updates in art education.

This study examines the reasons for the preference of digital drawing among fine arts students. Compared to drawing by hand, digital drawing offers the advantages of being less costly in terms of materials, more practical and more technical in terms of correcting mistakes. In addition, the wide colour palettes and various brush options offered by digital drawing provide artists with a flexible working space, saving both time and money. The fact that the drawings made in the digital field can be easily shared in digital media and that the designs produced can be marketed as an additional job are also among the important reasons for preference. However, the experience of the students studying in this field is of great importance.

The main purpose of this research is to examine the relationship that students studying at Tekirdağ Namık Kemal University Faculty of Fine Arts have with digital drawing tools, the reasons for preferring or not preferring these tools, and the advantages and disadvantages of these tools through their own experiences. The research aims to understand the perceptions and tendencies of graphic design and painting students towards digital drawing tools and the reasons why these tools are preferred. In order to achieve this goal, in-depth interviews were conducted with graphic design and painting students using semi-structured interview technique from qualitative research methods.

## WHAT IS DIGITALISATION

Digitalisation, or in other words digitisation, is a concept used to express the changes in many areas of society due to rapid developments in information, communication, recording and imaging technologies (Yılmaz, 2016). This transformation has settled in all areas of our lives, including health, education, entertainment, business life and various fields of art. Digital applications, the number of which is increasing day by day, direct human life. Discussions on digitalisation are carried out in different ways in different fields. When the studies are examined, on the one hand, the convenience created by digitalisation is emphasised and on the other hand, new problems are pointed out. These discussions go beyond the subject and scope of this study and necessitate a separate study.

Digitalisation is a comprehensive change process that is shaped by the rapid advances in information and communication technologies and profoundly transforms many aspects of society. This process refers to the transformation of information, art and cultural products that traditionally exist in physical or analogue form into digital data through digital technologies (Turan & Dokak, 2024). Digital transformation is not only a technical change, but also has profound effects on social structures, production relations and cultural practices. In terms of its effects, there is a deep and comprehensive transformation process that can be compared to historical breakthrough moments such as the French Revolution, the Industrial Revolution and the Cold War.

The main characteristics and effects of digitalisation can be summarised as follows:

### 1. Transformation of Information and Media:

Thanks to the digitalisation of different types of data (text, audio, image,

etc.), information can now be stored, processed and disseminated on a global scale within seconds.

- Traditional printed works and analogue media contents are converted into digital format and are both protected and made accessible to wider audiences.
- Digital content has ceased to be fixed and has become constantly changeable. While this situation allows information to be updated and reshaped with different interpretations, it can also pave the way for information to be quickly forgotten and information pollution.
- The traditional linear text structure has been replaced by a hypertext layout where the reader can switch between texts with different links. This provides the user with a richer and more interactive reading experience.
- Digital imaging technologies enable higher quality audio and video recording compared to analogue recording devices.

This transformation leads to radical changes not only in the way information is presented, but also in the ways of accessing, interpreting and sharing information (Karakulakoğlu & Demir Askeroğlu, 2018).

### 2. Transformation in the Relationship between Art and Space:

Art has been continuously affected by technological developments in the historical process and has gained a completely new dimension with digitalisation (Selçuk, 2022). Today, computers and software have become not only tools for artists, but also essential components at the centre of the creative process. The Internet functions as a new digital space where artworks are exhibited and circulated (Tulan, 2024).

Digital technologies have paved the way for the emergence of a wide range of new art forms, from multimedia installations to software art, from internet (network) based productions to virtual reality and artificial intelligence supported art practices. With NFT (Non-Fungible Token) technology, the production, ownership and valuation processes of art have radically changed (Karakulakoğlu & Demir Askeroğlu, 2018).

The transfer of art from physical to digital media has also transformed the viewer's relationship with the art object. While the traditional art viewer was a passive observer, in digital art environments, the viewer has now turned into an active subject who can become a part of the work, interact with it and participate in the process (Sağlam, 2024).

This transformation has also fundamentally affected the perception of space. The space where art is presented is no longer limited to physical

exhibition spaces; it has shifted to spaces that are reconstructed through digital elements and even completely virtual. Concepts such as virtual reality applications and the Metaverse have transformed the space where art is exhibited into new virtual environments in which the viewer can travel or experience (Selçuk, 2022).

Another important consequence of digitalisation is that it has brought the debates on the originality and ‘uniqueness’ (aura) of artworks back to the agenda. As Walter Benjamin argued, the fact that a work of art can be easily copied and reproduced thanks to digital technologies has brought the originality value of the work into question (Karakulakoğlu & Demir Askeroğlu, 2018).

However, NFT technology, which is presented as a digital solution to this problem, has made it possible for the work to remain ‘unique’ in the digital environment by assigning a unique identity and ownership to each digital work through the blockchain system (Turan & Dokak, 2024). This technology has also been one of the main reasons why digital artworks are bought and sold at high prices (Tulan, 2024).

### 3. Social and Humanitarian Impacts:

The widespread use of the Internet has enabled individuals to develop new forms of communication through social media and to come together with people they have not had the opportunity to meet before (Karakulakoğlu & Demir Askeroğlu, 2018).

A generation gap has emerged between ‘digital natives’ (those who were born into the digital age) and ‘digital immigrants’ (those who adapted later); digital natives have become able to teach their parents with their technological skills. Generation Z was born with technology and has the highest rates of participation in digital art activities (Karakulakoğlu & Demir Askeroğlu, 2018).

Digitalisation has changed daily life habits, reading practices and it has even affected their way of thinking. It is observed that it leads to shortened concentration periods and ‘attention deficit syndrome’ (Karakulakoğlu & Demir Askeroğlu, 2018).

However, digitalisation has also brought new problems such as cyber addiction, security paranoia, digital profiling, cybercrimes and information pollution. The possibility of anonymity can lead to malicious use and moral damage. Social media can increase narcissistic tendencies by

causing people to reproduce their ‘selves’ through content such as ‘selfies’ and to focus on seeking likes and appreciation. While technology provides many benefits, it also carries the risk of isolating people and distancing them from reality (Karakulakoğlu & Demir Askeroğlu, 2018).

Digital art has the potential to create emotional reactions in the viewer and offer new experiences, which allows the subject to discover themselves (Sağlam, 2024).

### 4. Conceptual and Technological Components:

Digitalisation is part of the technological transformation of information systems and mass media (Tulan, 2024).

**Technique:** It is emphasised that art and technology (techné) have developed intertwined throughout history, especially with the Industrial Revolution, engineers and artists merged (Sağlam, 2024).

**New Media:** With digitalisation, new media concepts have entered our lives and enabled cultures to reach wider audiences (Tulan, 2024). New media art emerges with the use of technology as a tool and medium in the field of art (Karakulakoğlu & Demir Askeroğlu, 2018).

**WEB 3.0 and Metaverse:** The concept of ‘meta’ has emerged with WEB 3.0 technology, which refers to new digital environments (Metaverse) to be created in the virtual reality world (Tulan, 2024). Metaverse is seen as the future version of the Internet and enables users to interact with their avatars in a virtual universe (Turan & Dokak, 2024).

**Artificial Intelligence (AI):** AI is one of the basic components of the digital universe and redefines the design and production processes of artists with its ability to make sense of data and interpret information (Dokak & Turan, 2024). AI-supported art has the potential to realise the non-existent and create alternative spaces (Selçuk, 2022).

## DIGITALISATION AND ART

As the above studies show, digitalisation has been effective in the field of art, especially with virtual reality and artificial intelligence-supported applications, and even led to the emergence of new art forms. These new art forms include multimedia installations, software art, internet (network) based productions, virtual reality and artificial intelligence supported art applications

(Karakulakoğlu & Demir Askeroğlu, 2018). Artificial intelligence (AI) is one of the basic components of the digital universe and redefines the design and production processes of artists with its ability to make sense of data and interpret information (Turan & Dokak, 2024). AI-supported art has the potential to realise the non-existent and create alternative spaces (Selçuk, 2022).

On the other hand, this situation has brought important discussions and developments on issues such as the production of art, ownership and value of the work. The digitalisation of both the production and exhibition environment of art also changes the relationship between the artist, the work of art and the audience. While the traditional art viewer is a passive observer, in digital art environments, the viewer has turned into an active subject who can become a part of the work, interact with it and participate in the process. The uniqueness of the work produced has also become a subject of discussion with the digitalisation of art. Thus, the originality of the work of art becomes questionable.

Moreover, the perception of space has also been fundamentally affected. The space where art is presented is no longer limited to physical exhibition spaces; it has shifted to spaces that are reconstructed through digital elements and even completely virtual (Selçuk, 2022). The Internet functions as a new digital space where works of art are exhibited and circulated (Tulan, 2024). Concepts such as virtual reality applications and the Metaverse have transformed the space where art is exhibited into new virtual environments in which the viewer can travel or experience (Selçuk, 2022).

Another important consequence of digitalisation is that it has brought the debates on the originality and ‘uniqueness’ (aura) of artworks back to the agenda (Karakulakoğlu & Demir Askeroğlu, 2018). As Walter Benjamin argued, the fact that a work of art can be easily copied and reproduced thanks to digital technologies has brought the originality value of the work into question (Karakulakoğlu & Demir Askeroğlu, 2018). However, NFT (Non-Fungible Token) technology, which is presented as a digital solution to this problem, has made it possible for the work to remain ‘unique’ in the digital environment by assigning a unique identity and ownership to each digital work through the blockchain system (Turan & Dokak, 2024). This technology has also been one of the main reasons why digital artworks are bought and sold at high prices.

Another important point for our subject is the digitalisation of artwork production in the fields of graphic design and painting, and the rapid increase in the number of digital works and products. Rapid developments in technology have led to the integration of technology into design and painting, and new drawing techniques have emerged. Today, design and drawing software are among the

most important tools used by graphic designers as well as painting artists. These technological developments give rise to new definitions such as ‘digital artist’ or ‘digital designer’. These artists are the artists who push the limits of technology in the production of their works and lead to new developments (Kanmaz & Pehlivan, 2024).

The digital drawing tools used today are tablets and software that connect with computers, digital pens, sensitive screens and pens that appeal to professionals in the most general form. With the developing technology, mobile phones and tablet computers have also joined these drawing tools. Thus, digital drawing tools have become accessible and can be used by a wider audience (Sivri & Çınar, 2018). This situation provides a context that shows on which devices your sample paintings are produced and how they can be easily exhibited on digital platforms.

Studies on the subject mention the advantages as well as disadvantages that digitalisation brings to visual arts. The advantages brought by digital tools are listed as follows (Sivri & Çınar, 2018).

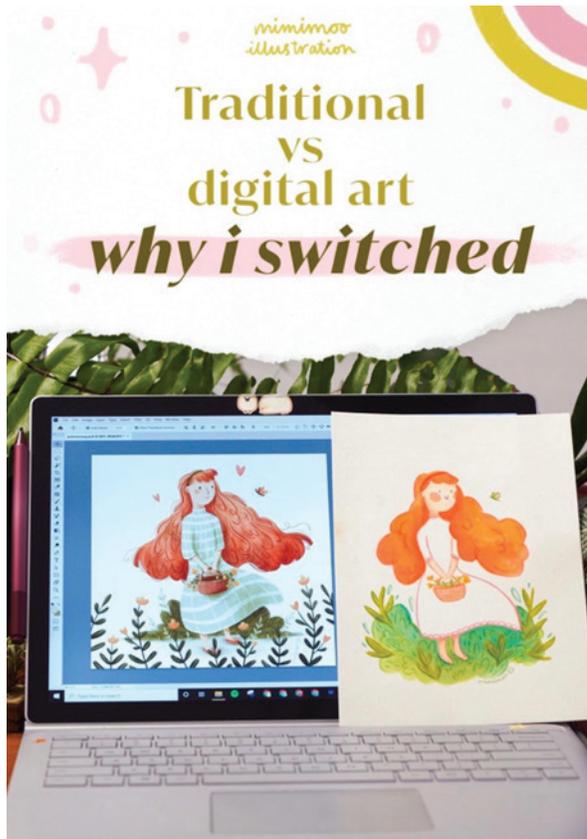
- The necessary materials for visual arts are together in the digital environment. Thus, the necessary material is always with the artist.
- Digital tools make it possible to add and remove unlimitedly, and thus the artist gets rid of the limitation of material and surface. This situation allows the artist to make changes to his work without the need for material.

To these two items, it is necessary to add that the product reaches the art lover more easily and quickly. Digital artwork can meet its audience without time and space limitations. Thus, it also provides an economic convenience to the art audience.

The disadvantages of digital drawing tools are listed as follows (Sivri & Çınar, 2018):

- Digital drawing tools and software are not economically accessible to everyone.
- The computers connected to these tools must have a certain hardware.
- There is a relationship between the quality of the drawing and the quality of the tools used, and these tools affect the artist’s production process.
- The artworks produced are in the form of data, which can be copied unlimitedly or deleted and destroyed.

It should be added to these items that the digital drawing tools should have a certain lifespan and should be constantly updated.



Source: (Purnell, 2025).

### Findings: Reasons for Preference and Experiences of Digital Drawing Tools by Fine Arts Students

This study aims to examine the way fine arts students relate to digital drawing tools, the reasons for their preference or not, and the advantages and disadvantages provided by these tools through their experiences. For this purpose, in-depth interviews were conducted with five graphic design and five painting students studying at Tekirdağ Namık Kemal University Faculty of Fine Arts using a semi-structured interview form. The interview form was based on the interview form created in the interviews, but the interview form was expanded with new questions that emerged during the interview process.

### The Subject of the Research

The subject of this research is the reason for the use of digital drawing tools in the fields of graphic design and visual arts and the opinions of students in these fields about digital drawing tools.

### Problem of the Research

The main problems of this research are the perceptions and tendencies of graphic design and visual arts students about digital drawing tools and the reasons why these tools are preferred.

### Research Method

In this study, interview technique, one of the qualitative research methods, was used. In-depth interviews were conducted with five graphic design and four painting students using a semi-structured interview form.

### Reasons for Choosing a Department

The reasons affecting the participants' choice of department are their love of drawing. Participants such as P3 and P4 stated that they had been drawing since childhood and wanted to progress in the field of art. Another factor is family influence and the formation of role models. E3 stated that she was influenced by her mother's drawing. In terms of professional expectation, K1 stated that she thought that the painting department had no future and preferred graphic design, which is a more commercial field.

E3: 'My mother used to draw, I started by emulating her. Her dream was to become an art teacher, and now I am realising her dream.'

P3: 'I want to develop in the field of art. I also like both drawing and using computers. I chose graphic design as a combination of these two.'

### Drawing Experiences Before Higher Education

Almost all of the interviewees stated that they were interested in drawing before university. Their acquaintance with drawing usually dates back to early ages (P1, P3, E2, P4). While some participants supported this process with individual endeavours (P2), others supported it by studying at fine arts high school (P3).

P3: 'Yes, I have been drawing since I was little and then I went to fine arts high school.'

E2: 'Yes, I have been doing it since I was eight years old.'

#### First Drawing Tools

All participants stated that they first started drawing with traditional tools. The most common starting tool was paper and pencil (P3, E1, E2, E3, P5). Materials such as canvas and watercolour paint indicate informal art experiences at an earlier age (P2, P4). P1 presented a different experience by stating that he switched to digital drawing at a very early age.

P1: 'I started with paper and pencil, but I started digital drawing very quickly. I have been drawing digitally almost since primary and secondary school.'

P2: 'I first started with canvas. I was trying to do charcoal on canvas, then I switched to paper and pencil.'

### OPINIONS ON DRAWING WITH DIGITAL TOOLS

Utilitarian and critical approaches to digital drawing were observed. Participants such as P1, P3 and E2 stated that it is a requirement of the digital age and that it is more functional in terms of the permanence of the product. P2 and E3 stated that digital drawing made them forget traditional values. Although some participants found digital drawing technically useful (e.g. ease of error correction), they considered the meaning and labour of traditional drawing more valuable. (P2, P4, E3).

P1: 'I am in favour of giving more weight to digital drawing, both in terms of producing clean work and in terms of the proper use of the work produced. Because what is on paper returns to paper. Yes, they are permanent, but it is important to somehow turn them into products. Therefore, digital drawing should attract more attention.'

P2: 'Creative, beautiful and realistic works are produced. I like the development of the drawing industry. Although I make digital drawings, I am a pen and paper artist. I think the essence should not be lost. There are very beautiful works in digital drawing, but it should not be forgotten where it came from.'

E3: 'As technology develops, such things become easier. It is good that it is developing, but fast access makes it a little difficult for traditionalists.'

#### Preferred Drawing Tools

Most participants prefer and actively use digital tools. P1, P2, P3, E1 and

E2 use digital tools because they find them cleaner, more efficient and faster. Participants such as K4 and E3 stated that they use digital tools because of the courses, but they normally prefer traditional drawing. Participants such as P4 and P5 stated that they never use digital or do not need to use it.

P1: 'Yes, I do, because I hate drawing. Sometimes I do charcoal drawings, but even they do not make me feel that I am drawing. Mostly I transfer them to digital, because digital helps me to break away from that charcoal environment. The dirt does not come out, everything stays clean, it is easy to correct, it is more practical and useful, so I like it.'

P2: 'I prefer it. First of all, if I am going to use colour, more realistic drawings emerge. You cannot achieve such realism with any paint.'

### ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF DIGIAL DRAWING

The advantages of digital drawing, according to the participants, can be produced faster with digital tools in terms of time and practicality (P1, P3, E2). The comfort of tools such as undo, erase, colour correction (K1, K2, K3), the fact that digital tools are less costly than paint and paper in the long term (E1, E2, K2) and that they can be easily shared on social media or professional platforms (K3) are stated as advantages by the participants. The disadvantages are that it can lead to lazy hands (P2, E1, E3), threatens creativity (E3, E4) and the fact that anyone who uses digital tools can design threatens the field professionally (P2, E2).

P3: 'It is more permanent in the digital environment and it is easier to recycle the error. You can even put it on your social media. Due to the majority of colours, I use digital in colour drawings and paper in pencil drawings.'

E2: 'Everyone becomes a graphic designer thanks to digital tools, which is a disadvantage. However, it looks cleaner to me in terms of appearance. It saves time and costs less.'

#### Factors Affecting the Use of Digital Drawing Tools

According to the participants, high material prices make digital drawing more accessible (E1, E2, E4). Access to these tools also increases in terms of ease of access to new technologies and job opportunities (P2, P1). P4 states that the fast

production and consumption cycle makes it more attractive. At the same time, P4 stated that artificial intelligence plays an increasing role in art production. For P5, the fact that digital tools can be used easily everywhere is also presented as a reason for preference.

P4: “It is preferred because of the convenience thanks to artificial intelligence. At the same time, I think it is due to consumption. Since they want to consume things very quickly, they think about where they can produce it the easiest and turn to digital.”

E1: “The cost is cheap. It makes more sense to buy a tablet instead of paying 3-4 thousand for a pen every year. You can use colours as you like and save time.”

### **RELATIONS WITH PAPER AS A DRAWING TOOL**

The majority of the participants say that paper, one of the traditional tools, can never be completely replaced by digital. It was stated that paper offers ‘freedom’ and ‘organic line’ (P2, P4, E3, E4). According to some participants, it was emphasised that the brain is stimulated differently with paper and the first contact with the picture always starts with paper and pen (P1, P5). P5 and participant E1 stated that they still made sketches on paper before working digitally.

P2: “I think the paper era will not and should not end. I enjoy paper more. Digital drawing feels like torture to me. Paper makes me feel more free. In digital, you have to fit in a small area, but on paper, you are freer, whether you want to do 50x70 or 70x100. It supports your imagination. The lines you draw on digital are not organic, but not on paper. You create more organic works on paper. You can also add lines that will tell you. Everyone has their own line and you can understand who did it.”

P1: “It will not be closed, it should not be closed. Because they researched it. They have seen that the human brain does not react the same way to what is drawn digitally and what is drawn on paper. It is more important to sketch some things on paper. Even if the paper era does not end, digital drawing should be given more importance. “ Some things don’t work with paper, some things require something bigger than paper.”

### **CONCLUSION**

Digitalisation has created a radical and irreversible transformation that has profoundly affected the world of art and design as well as all areas of life. This transformation is not only a technical progress, but also redefines the forms of artistic creation, perception and consumption. The findings of this study show that the proliferation of virtual reality (VR) and artificial intelligence (AI)-supported applications has had a unique impact on the field of art, even leading to the emergence of new forms of art that transcend the traditional perception of art. From interactive installations to algorithmic art to 3D models displayed in virtual worlds, artists have previously inaccessible opportunities to express themselves. This has led to important debates and developments on fundamental issues such as the production of art, ownership and value of the work. For example, the question of how the absence of a physical counterpart to a digital work affects its ‘authenticity’ has long preoccupied philosophers of art and collectors. The digitalisation of both the production and exhibition of art has fundamentally changed the relationship between the artist, the artwork and the viewer; the transformation from a traditional passive viewer to an active participant is now clearly visible. The viewer has become a subject who not only looks, but also interacts, experiences and even becomes a part of the work. Moreover, the issue of the ‘uniqueness’ or ‘aura’ of the work of art has gone beyond Walter Benjamin’s predictions and has come to the agenda again with the digitalisation of art, thus the originality of the work has become questionable. However, innovative digital solutions such as NFT (Non-Fungible Token) technology have added a new and important dimension to this debate by ensuring that works remain ‘unique’ in the digital environment thanks to the transparency and immutability provided by blockchain technology. This has paved the way for the emergence of a digital art market and the sale of digital works for millions of dollars.

This research, which focuses on the experiences of fine arts students, has clearly revealed the reasons for the preference of digital drawing tools and the advantages and disadvantages behind this preference. The majority of the students of Tekirdağ Namık Kemal University Faculty of Fine Arts actively prefer and use digital tools. The main advantages behind this preference can be summarised as follows:

- Practicality and Time Saving: Digital tools allow for much faster production than traditional techniques. Artists can focus directly on the creative process without wasting time on the preparation of physical materials, drying times or cleaning. This makes it much easier for students, especially those in intensive

training programmes, to complete their projects on time, and also gives them the freedom to experiment more.

- **Ease of Error Correction and Flexibility:** Perhaps one of the greatest blessings of digital drawing is the ‘undo’ feature. With this feature, artists can easily correct their mistakes, change colours, reposition objects or rearrange the composition on the fly. This provides a great psychological comfort especially for students in their trial-and-error processes, allowing them to exhibit experimental approaches without restricting their creativity. Considering the cost and time loss of a mistake made in a physical work, this flexibility offered by digital is invaluable.

- **Cost Effectiveness:** Although there are initial costs, in the long run digital tools offer a much more economical alternative to traditional consumables such as paint, canvas, specialised papers, brushes, permanent markers, etc., which need to be constantly replenished. As one participant rightly pointed out, ‘It makes much more sense to buy a tablet once instead of spending thousands of liras on pens every year.’ This is an important reason for preference, especially for students with limited budgets and constant need for materials.

- **Cleanliness and Organisation:** Digital drawing eliminates the mess of physical materials, paint stains or paper scraps. Since all the work is stored in the digital environment, as emphasised by participants such as K1, ‘Keeping everything tidy and not creating physical pollution’ is an important living space and working comfort factor that makes digital drawing attractive.

- **Wide Possibilities and Freedom from Material Limitations:** Digital platforms offer unlimited colour palettes, hundreds of different brush options (including those that mimic effects such as watercolour, oil, charcoal), various texture effects, layering features and filters. This frees the artist from the limitations of traditional materials and surfaces, allowing them to use their imagination more freely than ever before. It offers the flexibility to experiment and combine different techniques.

- **Easy Sharing and Marketing:** Digital drawings can be shared easily and in high quality on social media platforms (Instagram, Behance, ArtStation, etc.), personal portfolio sites, and other professional platforms. This makes it easier for artists to instantly share their work with wider and global audiences, receive feedback, establish new collaborations, and even generate additional income by marketing their work through online stores. It provides new career opportunities and visibility for young artists.

However, the widespread use of digital drawing tools and their integration

into art education brings with it some disadvantages and significant concerns:

- **Potential Threat to Dexterity Development and Creativity:** Some participants believe that the overuse of digital tools can lead to ‘hand laziness’ in fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination developed in traditional drawing practices. They also expressed the concern that the ready-made tools and effects offered by the software may restrict the artist’s original problem-solving ability and creative thought processes, and may cause the loss of the sense of ‘organic line’ and spontaneous creativity.

- **Professional Threat and Competition:** The fact that digital tools are accessible and learnable by everyone increases professional competition for professionals in the field of graphic design and visual arts and may create a false perception that ‘everyone can be a graphic designer’. This situation has the potential to question the value of qualified professionals in the sector and the importance of artistic competence. It is also a source of concern that people who use digital programmes without a licensed education may lower prices in the market.

- **Start-up Cost and Technical Requirements:** Digital tools such as high-resolution drawing tablets, computers with powerful processors and licensed design software require a significant initial investment, especially for students. These equipment are not at an affordable level that is easily accessible to everyone. In addition, there is a direct relationship between the quality of the drawing and the technical specifications of the hardware and software used. Inadequate hardware or software may adversely affect the artist’s creative process. The fact that digital tools have a certain lifespan, are subject to technological obsolescence and require constant updates also creates additional costs in the long run.

- **Authenticity and Risk of Loss:** Since artworks produced in digital media exist as data, they carry the risk of being copied an infinite number of times without a physical copy or being irrevocably erased and destroyed. This situation deepens philosophical and practical debates about the ‘uniqueness’ and permanence of the artwork. While NFT technology offers a solution to this problem, issues such as the cybersecurity risks of digital storage and format compatibility remain.

The research also revealed that the role of artificial intelligence (AI) in art production is increasing and that digital tools are becoming more attractive, especially in the fast production-consumption cycle. AI’s ability to make sense of complex data, interpret it and even generate new data is redefining artists’ design and production processes, acting as an assistant that inspires them or fulfils automated tasks. While AI has the potential to realise the non-existent, it also raises deep philosophical questions such as ‘who is an artist?’, ‘what is a work of art?’ and ‘to whom does creativity belong?’.

Despite all this digitalisation process, the majority of the students stated that traditional drawing tools, especially paper, can never be completely replaced. This is one of the most striking findings of the study. According to the participants, paper offers a sense of ‘freedom’, the unique texture of the ‘organic line’ and a surface where the brain is stimulated differently through direct physical contact. It was strongly emphasised that the first contact with painting begins with the moment when the pen touches the paper. Some students even stated that they still made their sketches on paper even before they started digital works, and that paper was indispensable to concretise their ideas. This situation points to a hybrid future where traditional and digital will coexist and complement each other in art education and practices. No matter how much digital tools develop, the artist’s manual dexterity, aesthetic perception, imagination and the ‘organic’ relationship established with paper will continue to form the basis and originality of artistic expression. The artist of the future will create versatile and innovative works by combining the best of both worlds.

In conclusion, while digitalisation creates new and exciting possibilities for fine arts students, it also brings with it a number of challenges and ethical debates. Students’ experiences in this transformation process show that they tend to embrace the practical advantages offered by digital tools, but retain a strong commitment to the authentic values and ‘manual labour’ of traditional art. These findings have important implications for the need for art education and practice to take this dynamic balance into account, both to develop digital competences and to preserve traditional artistic values. The potential of digital art to create emotional responses and offer new experiences. The potential of digital art to create emotional reactions and offer new experiences allows the subject to discover himself/herself, thus taking the effect of art on human beings to different dimensions. For this reason, it is of great importance for the future of art and the relationship between human and technology to consider the problems and potential negativities that digitalisation brings along with the conveniences and innovations it provides. Art education should both encourage mastery of traditional techniques and support digital literacy and technological adaptation to prepare students for this hybrid future.

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## SECTION 9

### THE AESTHETICS OF WASTE: FROM CONSUMPTION TO SUSTAINABILITY IN UPCYCLED ART

Tanya GUYUK<sup>9</sup>

#### INTRODUCTION

Although art is as old as human history, upcycling studies in art date back to recent history. Neoliberal policies, which emerged especially in the 1970s, are not limited to the economic practices of capitalism. With neoliberalism, everything is becoming marketed and commodified. With these practices, modernism is also entering a new phase, opening the door to a postmodern world. Consumption has become more important than production, and production has become done for consumption. These transformations in the social, political and economic fields also affect art.

When we look at recent history, it has been observed that some artists have developed upcycling art practices with a critical attitude towards the consumer society they are in and that the consumer society they live in is no longer sustainable. It is noteworthy that the materials used in upcycling art are waste materials. These trends have paved the way for this article.

This article consists of three main sections. First of all, in order to create the theoretical framework of the article, basic concepts are explained by examining the sources in the existing literature. First, the concepts of waste and aesthetics are discussed, and then a relationship is established with the concept of upcycling. Then, the main context of the article was created with the concepts of “consumer society and culture industry, sustainability and critical aesthetics”.

In the second part of the article, a case study was conducted and artists who gave examples of upcycling art and their works were discussed. Here, it was focused on the purpose for which artists created such works and the materials used to produce the works.

In the third part of the article, a discussion was established. According to this discussion, two basic approaches emerge; Does car upcycling art emerge and continue as a counter-stance to the current system, or does it progress as a fashion in the capitalist market? These two approaches were discussed both with the literature review and with artist examples.

As a result, this study opened up a discussion on what upcycling art is, why it is needed today, and for what reasons artists produce works in this field. In doing so, it was aimed to concretize the subject by giving examples from artists who produce in this field.

## **2. METHOD**

This study was prepared based on the preservation of upcycling in art. The resources in the relevant field were scanned and the products of the artists who produce in the upcycling field were evaluated by focusing on the content analysis method. Content analysis is a technique used as a qualitative research method in Social Sciences. The aim is to make an objective analysis of the literature study on subject relations. This information was examined and explained objectively in the obtained data.

## **3. CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This section will focus on the conceptual content by focusing on the theoretical part of the article. In this context, concepts such as waste, aesthetics, upcycling, culture industry, critical aesthetics will be discussed and explained on a theoretical level.

### **3.1. Transformation of Waste into Aesthetics**

According to the Turkish Language Association (TDK), two similar definitions of waste emerge. The first of these is “any substance that has been used in places such as hospitals, homes, factories, etc., that can no longer be processed or that is

harmful to the environment.” Another meaning is “all substances that emerge in all stages from production to consumption and are no longer useful to the user.” (TDK, 2025). As can be understood from both definitions, waste is the totality of substances that are harmful to the environment and cannot be reused. Among the public, it is more commonly used synonymously with the word “garbage.” Garbage, on the other hand, includes meanings such as dirty, worthless, and ugly. In fact, garbage is everywhere, but on the other hand, it is invisible. Garbage waste is something from which all that is nutritious and valuable is taken, so it is an indirect expression of rejection (Scanlan, 2005, pp.10-20). Garbage is also a state of formlessness where form flies away. So how do these formless, worthless, and ugly wastes turn into aesthetics? The word aesthetics comes from the Greek word “aisthesis.” This word means “sensation”, “sensory perception”. Therefore, it is known as the science of sensory knowledge. When we say aesthetics, the word “beautiful” usually comes to mind. However, the word beautiful is not sufficient to describe aesthetics. There are four basic elements of the aesthetic phenomenon. These are; aesthetic subject, object, value and judgment. For example, just as “beautiful” is an aesthetic judgment, “ugliness” also expresses an aesthetic judgment (Tunali, 1998, pp.11-21).

It now has different meanings than it used to, because it meets art. Art takes the meaningless, worthless, and ugly, attributes a value to it, and transforms it into art. For example, it is the right place to talk about Duchamp’s “urinal” example, known as his criticism of modern art. Marcel Duchamp, in 1917, creates a situation that shapes art history. He turns a urinal he bought upside down and sends it to an art gallery with a different name, calling it a “fountain.” The gallery does not accept this. In fact, this work that Duchamp made to emphasize that the use of ready-mades in modern art is the ‘end of art’, finds its place in art galleries after 30 years. In other words, the ready-made aesthetic artworks that Duchamp criticized have begun to gain a place in the art world. From here, the following conclusion can be drawn: no matter what the material used in a work by an admired artist is, the meaning he attributes to it can make that thing a work of art. In other words, the transformation of a piece of land with a bad, dirty image in the human mind into a work of art is possible with the value attributed to it (Gökgöz, 2023, pp. 372-373). Therefore, even if waste objects are deprived of all their values and sent to the trash, they can return to the world with a new meaning. This transformation of waste reveals the potential of art to not only produce beauty, but also to nourish critical thinking and ecological sensitivity. Thus, objects that are seen as trash and devalued gain new meaning through art and offer art lovers both an aesthetic and ethical field of inquiry. Ecological

Art has an important place in the transformation of waste materials into a work of art. The main motivation of Ecological Art, which emerged in the 1970s, is the environmental destruction caused by human intervention in nature and the anxiety felt about this. The aim of Ecological Art is the approach towards the improvement of the damage done to nature (Tan, 2022, pp. 29-31).

### 3.2. Upcycling

The fact that humans see nature as an endless field of exploitation plays a decisive role in their relationship with nature. Especially in today's postmodern era, everything has become a subject of consumption. The increase in unconscious consumption brings with it the problem of waste. Such a consumption-oriented behavior of humans is no longer sustainable for nature. The concept of "sustainability" that comes into play at this point is, in the ecological sense, the recycling of something after use (İlden, 2022, p.83). However, this transformation is not recycling. Recycling is the reuse of used or discarded products with new functions by subjecting them to some physical or chemical processes. Upcycling, on the other hand, is the recovery of products that no longer have value and are useless. (Bıyıklı, 2024, p.274-276). The difference between upcycling and recycling can be defined as follows;

*Upcycling is the process of reusing a product that has fallen into waste by adding value to it through a new process. Upcycling is a translation that is true to the source of the word, but it seems more accurate to use it as a concept, as this process works in two directions. A waste or a material that is in waste status or a product that could be a material is redesigned and gains value, that is, an upcycling is performed and it is recycled by being put back into use. While the recycled material is recycled in a lower quality or with some losses compared to the original, in upcycling, the aim is to preserve the value of the original material through design or to give it a higher value (Yıldırım, 2017, p.488).*

Upcycling saves the object from becoming waste without turning it into raw material. Thus, while recycling is a costly method, upcycling is a method that provides a quick solution (İlden, 2022, p.83). For example, converting used, scrap paper to be used as paper again is recycling, because it continues to be used with the same function. But instead of throwing away a used toilet paper roll, turning it into a pencil holder is upcycling.

### 3.3. Consumer Society and Culture Industry

Adorno, one of the leading representatives of the Frankfurt School (Critical school), put forward the theory of the "culture industry" in the 20th century and it is still being adopted and discussed by many disciplines today. Representatives of the critical school adopted a Marxist line in their time and these ideas were reflected in their works.

The culture industry developed when technical details such as effects and retouching became dominant in the work of art and therefore art became dependent. So much so that art, which is no different from any other work, is a tool used to legitimize the existing ideology like everything else. Think about it, if a branch of art uses the same methods as another branch of art that is different from itself in terms of its tools and materials, the effort to meet the spontaneous demands of the audience turns into an excuse. In other words, all industrialized cultural products - art comes first among them - mockingly declare the dream of all arts uniting in a single work (Adorno, 2011, pp.48-56).

When Adorno criticized the culture industry, the focus of his criticisms was undoubtedly on capitalist modernists. According to him, the culture industry is a culture in which capitalist monopolies determine the compass. For example, mass media such as television and radio turn everyone into listeners in a seemingly democratic manner, to listen to the voices they want. There are no response or objection mechanisms here. Therefore, the message given to the masses is given directly and easily. Adorno expresses the purpose of the mass media as follows; "to engrave the absolute power of capital in the hearts of the dispossessed masses looking for work as the power of their masters." (Adorno, 2011, pp. 48-56).

The power of industrial society will always have an effect on people. The products of the culture industry will be consumed vividly, even if people are miserable. In the culture industry, consumers become statistical material (Adorno, 2011, pp. 50-56). Thus, a person who consumes everything will eventually be exhausted.

The culture industry has helped define the modern capitalist period clearly and explicitly. Today, the society we live in is called post-industrial society, late capitalism or postmodernism, but the common point is that it is now a huge consumer society. People now define their existence through consumption.

You consume, so be it. The speed and pleasure of running to the other without finishing one creates a huge pile of "leftovers" (Şimşek, 2016, pp. 121-125). In other words, the wastebasket civilization, as Baudrillard puts it. Baudrillard

states that this type of person who engages in the act of consumption can be recognized by the trace he leaves behind in the garbage civilization that he throws away; “Tell me what you threw away, and I will tell you who you are” (Baudrillard, 2008, p.40).

Consumption society is a society of people who are ready to throw away and things that are ready to be thrown away. Now, it is necessary to talk about a new identity; the consumer identity and the value attributed to it (Vatandaş, 2022, p. 55). The consumer individual feels incomplete when he does not consume. In other words, he is caught in a consumerist syndrome. This syndrome goes beyond the pleasure and entertainment that will save the day and having a good time. Everything from happiness imaginations to value judgments is consumed (Bauman, 2020, p. 109-111). The consumer society creates needs even if there is no need. This consumption hunger created in people reaches an insatiable level. So much so that people, who are essentially producers, cannot produce anything other than surplus in today’s world.

In the consumer society, people are forced to confront what they throw away. With what they consume and the piles of garbage they create, humans leave a mark on nature. This mark returns to humans by creating important crises. For example, the reckless consumption of nature and humanity’s progress leaving piles of garbage behind create a series of problems such as climate crisis and environmental disasters. They have to look for ways out of these crises. Art is only one of these ways out. The consumer society has created a social ethic in which all values have lost their meaning and everything has become a commodity. In other words, a consumer ethic. Art is only one of the commodities that have lost their meaning and become commercial. In the postmodern era we are in, the commodification of art has not sufficed, and art products produced as commodities have emerged (Boratav, 2016, p.101).

### **3. 4. Sustainability, Art and Critical Aesthetics**

Adorno, while talking about the industrialization of culture, also approaches aesthetics critically. According to him, aesthetics is a barbarity that neutralizes culture and threatens mental creations. Because aesthetics is also an attitude that serves the current system. When describing aesthetics, Adorno defines it as “this way of thinking that aims to fully utilize the existing capacity for mass consumption, part of an economic system that rejects the use of existing capacities when it comes to eliminating hunger” (Adorno, 2011, pp. 60-72). Foucault also

addresses art by associating it with power. According to him, art is not only about aesthetic value, it is also an expression of social and power relations. However, art is not only a functional apparatus of power, but also a tool for the critique of power (Aytimur, 2024, p. 292). Critical aesthetics arises from these very ideas.

Unlike modernism, postmodernism lacks structure. Artists no longer base their own works on any logic. In the postmodern era, artistic productions have given way to piecemeal and often contextless productions. Artists produce their works without basing them on any historical, cultural or intellectual integrity, and this form of production empties the aesthetic. Art has also experienced a shift in meaning as aesthetics has been equated with “beautiful.” According to the current system, works are given in a monotonous manner, according to what is beautiful. However, critical aesthetics does not only prioritize form and form, or does not only seek beauty. Art is also a field that questions and produces solutions with a political stance. The aim in critical aesthetics is not just to please a product. On the contrary, the work of art must question the current structure, disturb it, and produce solutions to problems. In this consumer society where art has become commercialized and standardized, some artists who think that consuming is no longer the solution have brought a new breath to art with waste materials as a counter-stance. The concept of sustainability lies at the core of this new art movement, also called upcycling art.

In fact, it is possible to look at the concept of sustainability from two different perspectives. First of all, sustainability, in its clearest sense, is to ensure the continuity of nature and its resources, of which living beings are a part. Because in the system created by capitalism, the natural resources that living beings need to sustain their lives are depleted, and production has largely stopped. The concept of sustainability has emerged in line with the continuation of production in agricultural areas and the meeting of raw material needs (Budak, 2023, p. 29). The concept of sustainability, just like the industrialization of culture and art, has become a strategy for the dominant classes to maintain their profits. On the other hand, environmental movements emerged as a result of the environmental destruction caused by capitalism in the late 1960s, and sustainability was presented as a search for a solution to environmental problems and capitalist growth. The unlimited consumption and unequal distribution of natural resources, and man’s hunger for consumption have indicated that these resources may have an end (Akdoğan, 2023, pp. 44-46). The consumption of a large part of natural resources in line with the interests of a limited minority threatens not only humanity, but all living beings and the future of the planet. In this sense, it can be read as a criticism of the current system.

The meeting of sustainability with art constitutes the process leading to upcycling practices in art. Realizing that there is nothing left to consume in nature, some artists have discovered that waste materials can also be transformed into art. In fact, upcycling practices are a reflection of critical aesthetics. The transformation of materials seen as garbage into art represents a reconstruction process in terms of both material and meaning. Thus, art exists not only to be watched and admired; but also to question, to make others question and to transform.

#### 4. CASE STUDIES: ARTISTS AND THEIR WORKS

This section presents examples of artists and their works that produce in the field of upcycling art. Thus, it will contribute to the concretization of the existing conceptual framework.

##### 4.1. El Anatsui

World-renowned African sculptor El Anatsui produces works from many waste materials. In particular, his bottle-top installations, thousands of aluminum pieces obtained from alcohol recycling stations and sewn together with copper wires, and his transformation into metallic fabric-like wall sculptures that establish connections between consumption, waste and the environment, have attracted international attention (Arts Observer, 2013).

Bringing together discarded drink bottle caps, his colorful and densely patterned areas narrate the history of colonial and post-colonial economic and cultural change in Africa in the history of discarded materials. The sculptures made of wood and ceramics offer ideas about the function of objects in everyday life (their destruction, transformation and reproduction) and the role of language in deciphering visual symbols (Arts Observer, 2013).



*Figure 1: Waste Paper Bags*



*Figure 2: Waste Paper Bags Detail*

Figures 1 and 2 show the installation and detail views of the work Waste Paper Bags. In this work, the artist used materials such as aluminum printing plates, paint, and copper wire to reveal an example of upcycled art. In 2013, he opened his first solo exhibition, “Gravity and Grace,” at the Brooklyn Museum. Exhibiting more than 30 works, the artist included both his current practices—

wall works assembled from found bottle caps and sculptures made of tin can lids—and his previous wood works (Arts Observer, 2013).



*Figure 3: Lo*



*Figure 4: Lost Continents Detail*

Figures 3 and 4 show one of the artist's works exhibited in the Brooklyn Museum. The artist created this work by bringing together colored bottle caps, copper and wires (Arts Observer, 2013). El Anatsui's use of waste materials in his art has an important relationship with his own culture. The artist, who studied in Ghana, criticized the education he received at university by saying, "everything we do is Western." According to him, art should have local and cultural codes. Therefore, the waste materials he uses bear traces of his own culture (Wikipedia, 2025).

#### 4.2. Subodh Gupta

Subodh Gupta, an Indian artist, creates his works by bringing together steel objects such as pots and pans found in Indian kitchens. These everyday objects have a special significance for Gupta. By using these kitchenware, Gupta emphasizes the socio-economic level of the city he lives in and transforms them into a work of art. Gupta used the critical aesthetic dimension of art while creating his works (Nature Morte, 2025).



*Figure 5: Cooking the World*

Gupta is known for bringing together everyday objects found all over India. These objects are steel tiffin boxes, thali plates, milk buckets, etc. that millions

of people in India use to carry their lunch. Gupta creates sculptures from these ordinary items that reflect the economic transformation of his homeland. He said the following about his works: “All these things were part of the way I grew up. They were used in rituals and ceremonies that were part of my childhood.” As can be seen, Gupta also combines his works with his own culture (Wikipedia, 2025). An important indicator of Gupta’s deep embrace of his own culture and homeland is that his oil on canvas painting Saat Samundar Paar was sold for 34 million rupees at a Saffronart auction in 2008, and this money was donated to a fund set up for the victims of the flood disaster in his home state of Bihar (Wikipedia, 2025).



*Figure 6: Ray*

He has made huge works of art from stainless steel kitchenware as seen in Figures 5 and 6. These works play an important role for upcycling applications.

#### 4.3. Thomas Hirschhorn

Swiss artist Thomas Hirschhorn exhibits his sculptures in public spaces. Hirschhorn uses common materials such as cardboard, foil, duct tape, plywood,

and plastic packaging in his works. He describes his choice of materials as “political”. He states that he uses materials that are “universal, economical, inclusive, and do not carry any added value” (Wikipedia, 2024).



*Figure 7: Nail Sculpture*

Hirschhorn’s work, which he calls “Nail Sculpture” in Figure 7, consists of wood, packaging tape, nails, screws, coins, plastic, metal hinges, metal door number plates, stickers, wire, a wooden bowl, a metal bowl screwdriver, a power adapter, a hammer, and colored photocopies (Artsy, 2025).

Hirschhorn exhibits his works in exhibition spaces such as museums and galleries, as well as in “public spaces” such as urban spaces, sidewalks, and vacant lots. He has always aimed to include the “Other” and appeal to a “non-exclusive audience” (Wikipedia, 2024).

Hirschhorn exhibited his famous works in a public space at the bottom of a building bar in a popular suburb of Paris, thus developing an almost unprecedented project to bring museum art to populations that do not have the opportunity in their own spaces (Wikipedia, 2024).

#### 4.4. Artur Bordalo

Portuguese artist Artur Bordalo, known by his nickname Bordalo II, is known for his upcycling works. Bordalo developed the practice called “trash art” today

by making striking animal sculptures using street garbage to warn people about pollution and all kinds of species that are at risk of extinction. (P55 Art, 2022).

Artur Bordalo aims to contribute to urban life and sustainable living with his three-dimensional works made using garbage and waste materials, which he exhibits in public spaces (Gülüm, 2016, pp.85-86).



*Figure 8: Half Chimpanzee in Lisbon, 2017*



*Figure 9: Iberian Lynx in Lisbon, 2019*

Animal figures can be seen in Bordalo's two works in figures 8 and 9. He emphasized that he preferred to use these materials, which are the product of excessive consumption and capitalism, in his works made with garbage, scrap and all kinds of waste materials in public areas of the city and on the faces of abandoned and demolished buildings (Gülüm, 2016, pp.85-86).

## **5. DISCUSSION: AN AESTHETIC OPPOSITION OR A NEW FASHION?**

Upcycling in art can be considered as an attitude against the industrialization and commodification of art in the context of critical aesthetics. According to this perspective, while the artist evaluates waste materials with an aesthetic interpretation, he actually exhibits a critical approach against the consumer culture and the unsustainable structure of the capitalist system. Waste materials obtained from garbage and unused objects are works of art, and they aim not only to appeal to the eye, but also to disturb society and make it think.

On the other hand, upcycling art practices can also make a sustainable contribution to the capitalist market and become fashionable. Because although some artists reveal the political side of art with a critical aesthetic understanding of art, it is appropriate for the age we live in for the artist to act in accordance with market conditions and to have commercial concerns. As a result, works of art produced from garbage have the potential to contribute to the continuity of the system in art galleries and exhibitions that appeal to the upper class. Thus, upcycling art can become instrumental by becoming fashionable.

There are examples above that are suitable for the field of upcycling art made by different artists. For example, El Anatsui and Subodh Gupta create a work of art using kitchenware such as pots and pans and waste materials such as bottle caps and plastics. The common feature of both artists is to reflect the cultures they are in. El Anatsui used materials and motifs with local elements in his art, claiming that Westerners distorted African culture. Similarly, Subodh Gupta used objects used in some invitations or religious rituals in India.

While Thomas Hirschhorn also stated that his art is political, he emphasized that he chose the materials he used from materials that are “universal, economical, inclusive and do not carry any added value”. As Hirschhorn emphasized, the meaning of the materials he used being universal and inclusive lies in the fact that he does not target his works of art only to a high socio-economic level audience. Because he exhibits his works in public spaces. On the other hand, his emphasis on the fact that the materials he uses do not produce economic and added value shows that he adopts a critical attitude towards the current structure and capitalist values.

Artist Artur Bordalo, like Hirschhorn, presents his art as a counter to capitalism. However, unlike other artists, Bordalo places excessive consumption and endangered species at the center. In fact, his works called “garbage art” reveal this difference by making animal figures from waste materials. Thus, he clearly emphasized environmental destruction as well as capitalism. The idea that upcycling art has become a fashion in the hands of capitalism cannot be ignored. Although artists perform their works in a way that does not reproduce the current system, it is not possible for artists to act independently of current market conditions. The commercial concerns that artists are involved in can also limit the critical field of art.

## CONCLUSION

Finally, this study has been prepared based on upcycling studies in art. In the society we live in, consumption has reached such a level that it has brought many crises such as the destruction of nature and the depletion of resources. Artists are among those who continue to search for alternatives to get out of these crises. Aesthetics is known to include not only what is beautiful and pleasing to the eye, but also criticism against the system. This situation is explained by the concept of “critical aesthetics”. In the face of the dimension that consumption has reached, artists who prioritize critical aesthetics in the field of art have produced artistic works for a more sustainable world. These works are upcycling art works.

In upcycling art, artists produce using waste materials. The aim here is to emphasize that production can be made with limited consumption by presenting a critical attitude towards the consumer society. On the other hand, the risk of upcycling art works being commercialized by capitalism and turned into a fashion cannot be ignored.

As a result, the theoretical framework of upcycling art works has been established by conducting a relevant resource review within the framework of this study. Examples from the works of artists producing in this field have been presented and evaluated using the content analysis method. Based on the discourses of the artists in the case study, it is possible to infer that waste can also be transformed into aesthetics and that aesthetics has a critical content.

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## SECTION 10

### A STUDY ON THE AESTHETIC PERCEPTIONS OF MUSEUM VISITORS: THE CASE OF TEKİRDAĞ MUSEUMS

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#### INTRODUCTION

Art is a crucial element that enhances individuals' aesthetic sensitivity, reinforces their cultural identity, and enables societies to connect with their artistic heritage. Museums, as venues where works of art are exhibited, not only provide visitors with historical or cultural knowledge but also offer the opportunity to experience aesthetic pleasure. Museums play a critical role in discovering the meaning of art, strengthening artistic sensitivity, and contributing to the shaping of aesthetic perception. In this context, understanding how the aesthetic perceptions of museum visitors are formed and how the museum experience influences this perception constitutes an important area of study for evaluating the impact of art on individuals.

The way museums interpret and present art has a direct impact on visitors' artistic and aesthetic perceptions. The connection visitors establish with the artworks, the atmosphere of the space, the manner in which the pieces are displayed, and the narratives presented regarding art history are among the fundamental elements that shape the aesthetic experience.

In this study, the impact of the artworks exhibited in the museums of Tekirdağ on visitors' aesthetic perceptions was examined, and how individual experiences with art influence aesthetic perception was explored. Tekirdağ, with its rich cultural heritage, hosts various narratives of art and history. Museums located in the city—such as the Tekirdağ Archaeology and Ethnography Museum, the Rakoczi Museum, the Photography Museum, the

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İbrahim Balaban Painting Museum, the Museum of Music Technologies, the Namık Kemal House, and the Provincial Museum of Educational History—offer a wide perspective on art and history. This research was conducted with the aim of understanding how the aesthetic perceptions of individuals visiting these museums are shaped and revealing the impact of art on personal experiences.

Within the scope of the research, in-depth interviews and content analysis methods were used to conduct comprehensive evaluations of visitors' artistic perceptions. The findings of the study are expected to provide valuable insights into the role of museums in the development of aesthetic sensitivity and to reveal the contributions of museums to art education and the evolution of societal aesthetic perception.

### Aesthetics

The concept of aesthetics originates from the Greek words “aisthesis,” “aisthanesthai,” and “aisheton.” *Aisthesis* refers to perception, sensation, and sensory impression, while *aisthanesthai* denotes perceiving through the senses. *Aisheton*, on the other hand, defines what can be apprehended and felt through the senses, and it is associated with knowledge obtained through sensory experience. Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1714–1762), a student of Christian Wolff, is considered the founder of the discipline of aesthetics. In his work *Aesthetica*, published in 1750, Baumgarten defined the fundamental principles, scope, and boundaries of aesthetics. According to him, aesthetics is the science of knowledge acquired not through reason but through the senses. He expresses this idea in *Aesthetica* as follows: “Aesthetics is the science of sensory knowledge” (Tunalı, 1998: 14). The term “sensory knowledge” here refers to knowledge gained through direct experience and perception—non-rational, yet meaningful and aesthetically valuable.

Over time, the conceptual world of aesthetics has expanded beyond a narrow theory of art, gaining a broader interpretive framework. This expanding scope of aesthetics has led to the understanding that aesthetic value is not confined solely to art, but can also be attributed to objects and experiences encountered in everyday life. Emotions and states such as beauty, ugliness, elegance, fear, sublimity, and even irony have come to be viewed through an aesthetic lens. Thus, aesthetics has evolved from being merely a field focused on understanding works of art to a comprehensive domain of thought that examines how individuals perceive their surroundings, respond emotionally, and engage in intellectual evaluations. This transformation has made it possible to regard aesthetics as an integral part of the human experience. In this context, limiting aesthetics to a concept based solely on “beauty” may fall short of reflecting the depth and diversity of the field.

Indeed, thinkers such as Immanuel Kant, Friedrich Schiller, Karl Rosenkranz, and Ludwig Wittgenstein have included not only beauty but also elements like the sublime, the tragic, the comic, the elegant, the interesting, and even the ugly within aesthetic categories. For example, Kant, in his *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, elaborated extensively on the concept of the “sublime” alongside beauty, while Rosenkranz positioned “ugliness” itself as an aesthetic value (Tunalı, 1998: 13–16). This diversity demonstrates that aesthetic perception is not only associated with what is pleasing or beautiful, but also with all human experiences that carry emotional depth.

Within this diversity of thought, contemporary approaches have rendered the structure of aesthetics even more flexible and inquisitive. According to Erinç (2004: 127), aesthetics does not merely question “the beautiful,” but also traces relative concepts such as “more beautiful” and “most beautiful.” Therefore, aesthetics should be regarded not as a fixed standard of taste, but as a constantly evolving and developing process of inquiry. This approach redefines aesthetics not as a static concept, but as a dynamic intellectual field in constant interaction with social and cultural contexts. From this perspective, art and aesthetics are not rigid structures but rather formations that are responsive to time, space, and cultural changes. Moreover, aesthetics not only examines existing notions of beauty but also represents a critical process that questions future aesthetic values, norms, and forms of perception. This reveals that aesthetic thought is not a pursuit of finality, but rather a continuous orientation toward novelty, discovery, and redefinition. Each era and culture reconstructs its own aesthetic understanding, and in doing so, aesthetics itself expands, diversifies, and re-evaluates earlier approaches through a critical lens.

Aesthetics is not merely the product of objects or perception; it is also a mode of reflection on the human mind's own process of creation. According to contemporary aesthetic theorist Etienne Souriau, aesthetics is a form of reflexive thinking. In other words, aesthetics refers to an individual's contemplation of their own artistic production process and their mental grasp of that process. In this context, aesthetics involves the recognition of the mental processes that empower the creation of all forms of art, from temples to symphonies (Doğan, 2001: 17). In Souriau's definition, aesthetics is not limited to the evaluation of finished works of art; it also encompasses the understanding of the mental activities that accompany the artist's creative process. This approach reveals that aesthetics is not based on a universal and immutable theory of art but instead takes different forms depending on cultural contexts and historical periods. For instance, the aesthetic understanding developed in Western art diverges in many ways from

traditional artistic perceptions of the East. Therefore, aesthetics is not a fixed set of norms or universal standards, but a dynamic intellectual and experiential field that continually evolves through social and cultural transformations. From this perspective, the aesthetic perception shaped in art spaces such as museums is not static either; rather, it presents a structure shaped by temporal and cultural contexts.

Amid all this theoretical diversity, debates on the definition of aesthetics have also exhibited variation within a historical context. Aesthetics is one of the disciplines that, throughout history, has been shaped by different philosophical and theoretical approaches, yet has failed to reach a consensus regarding its definition. Thinkers working in this field have at times equated aesthetics with art, while at other times treated it as a broader system of perception and values. At the center of these evolving debates lie questions concerning the scope, purpose, and relationship of aesthetics with art. Theoretical differences in defining the concept of aesthetics stem primarily from two opposing approaches. The first view sees aesthetics solely as a field that examines the evolutionary processes of art and the essence of artistic creation. In this approach, aesthetics is directly identified with general art theory. The second view, however, positions aesthetics as a discipline independent from general art theory. Within this framework, while general art theory focuses on the laws of artistic evolution and the process of creation, aesthetics is defined as a field of knowledge that explores beauty not only in artistic works but also in natural or social reality (Ziss, 2009: 1). This distinction provides an important theoretical basis for current discussions on whether aesthetics is limited solely to art or encompasses a broader perceptual and cultural domain.

### **Aesthetic Perception**

Aesthetic perception, one of the fundamental components of aesthetic theory, plays a decisive role in understanding the relationship established between the individual and the work of art. This concept encompasses a multi-layered structure involving the individual's process of interpreting and making sense of sensory data. Perception is not limited to the apprehension of objective reality; it also involves a subjective process shaped by the individual's cultural background, emotional experiences, and cognitive framework. Within Nicolai Hartmann's theoretical framework, perception transcends physical reality and transforms into a universe of meaning that integrates with the individual's spiritual world. In this context, aesthetic perception offers a multidimensional understanding—not only of the form and physical features of an artwork but also of its symbolic meanings, historical context, and cultural references. Such a deep

perceptual process in the reception of an artwork enhances the impact of art on the individual and becomes one of the core components of the aesthetic attitude (Tunalı, 1998: 35–37).

Within this comprehensive structure, aesthetic perception is seen to have different functions in both the production and reception processes. It can be said that aesthetic perception operates on two distinct levels: the aesthetic perception of the artist in the creative position and that of the perceiving subject evaluating the artwork. While the artist's perception shapes the creation process of the artwork, the perception of the receiving subject enables the interpretation and understanding of the piece. According to Tuna (2007: 126), aesthetic perception is critical not only for artistic production but also for the reception and evaluation of the artwork. The perceiving subject assigns meaning to the artwork through their own aesthetic perception; although this process is independent of the artist's creative act, it forms the basis of the interaction established with the work of art. Therefore, the meaning carried by the artwork is not fixed but emerges in a variable and subject-dependent manner.

In this context, not only the subjective nature of aesthetic perception but also its structure that gains continuity and depth is noteworthy. In determining the aesthetic value of a work of art, the individual's mode of perception and experiences play a decisive role. Through the artist's aesthetic perception, the object becomes aestheticized, while the perceiving subject, guided by intuition and experience, interprets the artwork and attributes new meanings to it. Aesthetic perception is not merely a momentary sensory process; it also requires intellectual and emotional continuity. According to Timuçin (2013: 59), the process of aesthetic perception differs from the random perception of objects and events; it demands conscious effort, a selective perspective, and critical evaluation. The relationship established with a work of art can deepen over time, creating new layers of meaning and enriching the individual's aesthetic experience. Therefore, the development of aesthetic perception is directly related not only to an individual's interest in art but also to their cultivation of conscious effort and a critical perspective.

Within the framework of aesthetic theory, the art object transforms from being merely a physical entity into a realm of experience imbued with meaning. The aesthetic object is an activity that arises from aesthetic interaction, and this interaction occurs between any object and the subject who perceives it. Aesthetic or artistic activity refers to a cognitive event that emerges from the relationships between the subject and the world of objects. "An object is everything toward which any subject directs itself and establishes a connection—through acts such

as thinking, comprehending, intuiting, designing, or perceiving” (Yetişken, 1991: 19).

At the same time, the work of art—that is, the aesthetic object—emerges through specific sensibilities, and the distinction between art objects and natural objects reveals the very nature of art. Formations that occur as a result of natural processes—such as crystals, stalactites, stalagmites, honeycombs, or corals—may indeed be aesthetically pleasing, yet they are merely natural landscapes from an aesthetic perspective. This category may also include animals and plants that are perceived as beautiful. However, despite their beauty, these elements cannot be considered works of art. What distinguishes art is that it arises from a design or fiction intended to produce a specific aesthetic object, and this process is based on the artist’s creative power. Two of the main characteristics that differentiate a work of art—that is, the aesthetic object—from natural formations are its originality and its unique, one-of-a-kind nature (Bozkurt, 2004: 15–16).

In line with this theoretical framework, museums stand out as spaces where aesthetic objects are presented to the public, and where artistic meaning is expanded and reproduced. A museum is an institution that preserves and studies culturally valuable works and presents them to the public while evaluating these works through various means. Museums organize exhibitions and make them accessible to the public with the aim of enhancing aesthetic appreciation, contributing to education, and serving the interests of society (Koyuncu Okca & Elibol Tüfekçi, 2018: 251). Başaran (1988: 35) defines a museum as “an institution administered in the public interest, with the purpose of preserving, studying, and evaluating a collection of items with cultural value, and especially exhibiting them to enhance public aesthetic taste and education through various means.”

Within these definitions, museums can be described as spaces where art objects gain meaning not only through their physical presence but also through processes of aesthetic perception. In this context, a museum goes beyond being merely a collection site for artworks; as aesthetic objects are presented to visitors, they initiate interaction within the visitors’ perceptual and emotional worlds. The way an artwork is exhibited in a museum guides the viewer’s sensory and cognitive experience, thereby shaping aesthetic perception within a specific framework. Exhibiting a work of art in a museum allows it to be meaningful for the viewer not only visually but also emotionally and intellectually. Indeed, art is not merely a process of formal arrangement; it is also a mode of expression that integrates emotion and thought. Evaluating art solely from an aesthetic concern would be incomplete, as the art object gains different layers of meaning depending on the

emotions and thoughts of the individual experiencing it. From this perspective, museums are not only venues for displaying artworks but also dynamic spaces that guide viewers’ aesthetic perceptions and enable artistic communication (Read, 2014: 14).

When evaluated from an aesthetic perspective, museums are not limited to their function of display; they also serve as learning environments that cultivate artistic sensitivity and nurture the aesthetic abilities of the viewer. Museums function not only as spaces where aesthetic objects are physically presented but also as educational settings that contribute to the development of visitors’ aesthetic tastes. As places where art meets the viewer and transforms into an aesthetic experience, museums promote aesthetic perception while also enabling meaningful communication about art. In this context, museums are not merely venues for exhibiting artworks; they are spaces where cultural and aesthetic values are presented to society.

### **Tekirdağ Museums**

The museums located in Tekirdağ are not merely structures that carry the traces of the past into the present; they are also cultural spaces offering visitors an aesthetic journey. These museums enrich individuals’ cultural memory while nurturing their aesthetic sensitivity by presenting history, art, literature, and music in an integrated manner. Each of the museums included in this study offers an artistic experience through its unique collections and thematic structures, revealing the influence of factors such as the atmosphere of the space, the presentation of the works, and the narrative style in shaping aesthetic perception. In this section, the Tekirdağ museums examined within the scope of our research will be introduced in terms of their content, presentation style, and thematic characteristics.

### **Ethnography and Archaeology Museum**

The Ethnography and Archaeology Museum in Tekirdağ is a significant structure reflecting the city’s historical and cultural heritage. Established in 1967, the museum took its current form in 1992 after the restoration of the former governor’s mansion. In the entrance section, burial findings from the Thracian civilization and stone artifacts brought from the ancient cities of Perinthos, Heraion Teichos, Byzante, and Apri are exhibited. On the upper floors, prehistoric artifacts are displayed, including stone tools and flint cutters uncovered in excavations conducted in Malkara, Ergene, and surrounding areas, as well as findings from the Toptepe Mound. Additionally, amphorae found along the Tekirdağ coastline shed light on ancient maritime trade in the region. Among the ethnographic artifacts are Ottoman-era ceramics, silver jewelry, traditional

clothing, hand embroideries, and handwritten Qur'ans. A circumcision room and a model of a traditional Tekirdağ house, designed to reflect local life, offer visitors a tangible experience of the past. In the museum garden, sarcophagi, columns, gravestones, and architectural fragments spanning from the Hellenistic period to the Ottoman era are displayed. The garden also houses the Ottoman-era Hacı Sayyid Said Fountain and the Liberation Monument, symbolizing Tekirdağ's liberation from enemy occupation (Süleymanpaşa Municipality, 2025a).

### **Rakoczi Museum**

Hungarian Prince II. Frenc Rakoczi lived between 1720 and 1735 at house number 32 on Barbaros Street in the Ertugrul neighborhood of Tekirdag. This house was purchased by the Hungarian government in 1932 and converted into a museum. Rakoczi's family was known as one of the wealthiest landowners in Hungary at the beginning of the 17th century, and Frenc Rakoczi himself led the Hungarian uprising against Austria. Proclaimed ruler in 1705, Rakoczi ultimately failed in the struggle for independence against Austrian occupation. In 1717, he took refuge in the Ottoman Empire, settled in Tekirdag, and died there in the house gifted to him by Sultan Ahmed III. In Tekirdag, 24 houses where Rakoczi had lived were combined to form a large mansion, but today only the dining hall of this structure remains. Although there were plans to establish a museum in Hungary after his death to honor his legacy, these plans were never realized due to wars. Between 1931 and 1932, the Hungarian government restored the house in Tekirdag and turned it into a museum. It underwent another restoration in 1981–1982, during which copies of the reliefs from the demolished dining room were placed in their original locations. Inscriptions at the museum's entrance explain the purpose of the restoration, and a large portrait of Rakoczi is also displayed in the museum. On the second floor, there are portraits of participants in the Hungarian War of Independence. This house is also regarded as a symbol of Turkish-Hungarian friendship and reflects the characteristics of a traditional Ottoman house in Tekirdag (Suleymanpasa Municipality, 2025b).

### **Namik Kemal House Museum**

The Namik Kemal House Museum in Tekirdag is a site dedicated to the life and memory of Namik Kemal, one of the prominent figures of Tanzimat-era literature and known as the "Poet of the Homeland." Namik Kemal was born in Tekirdag in 1840 as a member of a family originally from Istanbul. A memorial house was built in 1994, modeled after old Tekirdag houses surrounding his birthplace, through the contributions of the Tekirdag National Education Foundation, the Provincial Special Administration, Tekirdag Municipality, the Namik Kemal Association, and several other organizations. The Namik Kemal

House in Tekirdag was constructed in accordance with 19th-century Ottoman residential architecture and features a large garden. The basement floor has been arranged as an exhibition hall, while the ground floor is covered with marble and includes portraits of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and Namik Kemal, along with oil paintings of Namik Kemal's tomb and Frenc Rakoczi. In the garden, there is a viewing area and an open-air stage. The house, made of wood and containing a total of six rooms, features photographs, documents belonging to Namik Kemal's family, and old images of Tekirdag in the central hall. Additionally, the interior of the house is decorated with ethnographic items representing the Tekirdag kitchen, the main room, and the bedroom, and also includes works written by and about Namik Kemal (Suleymanpasa Municipality, 2025c).

### **Old Tekirdag Photographs Museum**

The Old Tekirdag Photographs Museum is located in a mansion once inhabited by the Mavradis family, who migrated from Tekirdag to Greece during the 1922 Lausanne Population Exchange. This mansion was transformed into the Old Tekirdag Photographs Museum by the Suleymanpasa Municipality. One of the family members, Dimitrios Mavridis, resides in Athens, and his collection—comprising over 1,500 photographs of Tekirdag with a history spanning 150 years—was donated to the Suleymanpasa Municipality and is now exhibited in this museum (Suleymanpasa Municipality, 2025ç).

### **Museum of Music Technologies**

The "Museum of Music Technologies," the first of its kind in Turkey, was opened by the Suleymanpasa Municipality on May 20, 2017. Designed as a workshop, the museum was established with the aim of reflecting the city's musical culture through the careful collection of both traditional and modern musical instruments. The museum features a wide range of instruments including the ney, guitar, qanun, classical kemenche, violin, baglama, flute, drum, viola, darbuka, oud, and tambourine, and showcases the stages of how these instruments are crafted. In addition, the museum building also hosts events such as talks and mini concerts (Suleymanpasa Municipality, 2025d).

### **Ibrahim Balaban Painting Museum**

The museum featuring the works of painter Ibrahim Balaban—who began painting at the age of 16 while in Bursa Prison as a student of Nazim Hikmet—was opened to visitors on September 7, 2018. In addition to displaying Balaban's paintings, which made significant contributions to Turkish art with his distinctive style, the museum also exhibits his personal belongings, offering a profound insight into his life and artistic journey (Suleymanpasa Municipality, 2025e).

### **Tekirdag Provincial Museum of Educational History**

The Tekirdag Provincial Museum of Educational History is a venue where numerous archival materials related to education—from the Ottoman Empire to the present—have been collected through the efforts of various commissions. Educational materials such as documents, publications, books, magazines, guides, brochures, photographs, catalogs, videos, films, and slides have been gathered and incorporated into the museum's collection. Additionally, thousands of items from the province's historic schools—such as diplomas, student files, and petition samples—have been scanned and digitized for display in a digital format. Located in the large hall on the ground floor of Namik Kemal High School, the museum was prepared in line with a contemporary museology approach and officially opened on Teachers' Day, November 24, 2017 (Suleymanpasa Municipality, 2025f).

#### **Research Method**

This research was designed as a qualitative study aimed at examining the aesthetic perceptions of visitors through various museums located in Tekirdag. The study employed a structured interview technique to understand individuals' relationships with artworks, their aesthetic experiences, and the influence of the museum environment on these experiences. This method provided a communicative setting in which participants could express their thoughts in depth, allowing for the collection of subjective and multidimensional data related to aesthetic perception.

The sample of the study consists of a total of 25 adult individuals who have visited museums in the province of Tekirdag and vary in terms of age, gender, and education. Participants were selected using the purposive sampling method, ensuring the inclusion of individuals who possess artistic experience and are familiar with museum environments. Data were collected through a structured interview form prepared by the researcher, which included seven open-ended questions. The interviews were conducted individually, each lasting approximately 15 to 25 minutes. With the consent of the participants, the interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed for analysis.

The questions included in the interview form were designed to explore participants' personal definitions of the concepts of art and aesthetics, the meanings they attribute to aesthetic objects, how they evaluate the artworks encountered during their museum experience, the impact of the physical characteristics of the space on their aesthetic perception, and the contribution of acquired knowledge to this perception. In this way, it was examined in detail how aesthetic perception is not limited to individual taste but is shaped by multidimensional factors such

as space, presentation style, and contextual information.

The data obtained were analyzed using the content analysis method. During this process, the interview transcripts were carefully examined, and recurring expressions, thematic patterns, and notable divergent views were identified and categorized. The findings derived from these themes were then interpreted and structured in line with the research questions. This analysis process enabled the presentation of the data in a meaningful and coherent manner, contributing to a better understanding of how aesthetic perception is shaped within the museum environment.

Throughout the research process, ethical principles were meticulously observed. Participants were provided with preliminary information about the purpose of the study, and informed consent was obtained based on voluntary participation. In all interviews, the principle of confidentiality was upheld; participants' identities were kept anonymous, and only pseudonyms were used. The data collected were used exclusively within the scope of this study and were not shared with any third parties.

#### **Findings**

In the findings section, the results of in-depth structured interviews conducted with 25 randomly selected museum visitors who agreed to participate will be presented. These interviews were conducted to understand participants' perceptions of art and aesthetics, their museum experiences, and their views on the exhibited works. The participants' responses provided in-depth data on how museum visits shape aesthetic perception, how the presentation of artworks, spatial arrangement, and access to information influence that perception. This section will explore not only the participants' thoughts on art and aesthetics but also how the museum environment transforms their perception of artworks and what kind of experience it offers to visitors. The findings will reflect the diversity of participants' responses regarding different artworks, their aesthetic understanding, and their experiences within the museum setting..

#### **Question 1 – What do you think art and the art object are?**

The majority of participants (18 individuals) defined art as a way for individuals to express their emotions and thoughts. The art object was generally seen as the tangible product of this expression. Some participants (such as G5 and G18) drew attention to the diversification of art objects in contemporary times, emphasizing that this concept cannot be limited to classical forms alone. Participants like G5 approached art from political and economic perspectives, highlighting the contested nature of the art object today. G21, using a metaphorical expression,

emphasized the universality and abstract nature of art. Interviewees such as G13 and G14 described art as a universal structure that appeals to broad audiences. Overall, there was a general consensus that art involves the original creation of the artist and aims to create an aesthetic impact on the viewer.

### **Question 2 – In your opinion, what is aesthetics?**

The concept of aesthetics was interpreted in various ways among participants. The majority (20 participants) associated aesthetics with “beauty.” For some participants (G2, G3, G14), this perception of beauty was explained through technical elements such as symmetry, proportion, and order, while others (G12, G18, G25) evaluated aesthetics in a subjective context, emphasizing the emotional connection between the artwork and the viewer. G5 and G18 highlighted the subjectivity of aesthetics, with G18 in particular offering a philosophical perspective by defining aesthetics as “a bond that emerges from the relationship between object and subject.” These differences reveal that the concept of aesthetics is perceived as both individually and socially variable.

### **Question 3 – In your opinion, what characteristics must an object possess to be considered aesthetic?**

Most participants (17 individuals) stated that for an object to be considered aesthetic, it must “be pleasing to the eye,” “leave an emotional impact,” and “carry meaning.” Elements such as symmetry, proportion, color harmony, simplicity, and technical mastery were frequently emphasized in these responses (e.g., G2, G3, G14). Participants like G12 and G25 did not limit aesthetic qualities solely to the physical attributes of the object; they emphasized that the emotion, spirit, and originality embedded in the work by the artist and its resonance with the viewer are also decisive. Some participants (e.g., G5, G18) drew attention to the idea that aesthetics is not inherent in the object but rather arises from the relationship established with the individual, evaluating aesthetics as a form of subjective perception rather than a value judgment. Interviewees such as G9 focused on concrete formal features and proposed specific criteria for aesthetics, such as “fewer than three colors” and “simple design.” In this context, it can be said that aesthetic judgment is shaped both by personal tastes and cultural norms.

### **Question 4 – In your museum experience, did you find the artworks you examined to be aesthetic?**

In the responses to this question, the majority of participants (20 individuals) evaluated the artworks they encountered during their museum visits as “aesthetic.” Participants such as G1, G2, and G3 provided short and clear affirmative answers, indicating that the artworks were considered aesthetic due to their appearance,

form, and emotional impact. However, a small number of participants (e.g., G4, G10, G16, G19) adopted a more critical or selective stance. For instance, G4 stated that the artworks in museums are shaped by a tourism-oriented approach and therefore do not offer aesthetic satisfaction. G10 and G16 emphasized that not all artworks, but only some, were aesthetically appealing. Participants like G18 argued that the very act of an artwork being displayed in a museum already gives it aesthetic value, as this selection is made by experts. These differing perspectives indicate that the aesthetic perception of artworks exhibited in museums is directly related to personal expectations, level of knowledge, and individual understanding of art.

### **Question 5 – In your opinion, which types of artworks are more aesthetic? (For example: paintings, sculptures, photographs, etc.)**

The majority of participants (18 individuals) expressed that they find painting and sculpture to be more aesthetic forms of art. Sculpture, in particular, was evaluated as impressive and rich in aesthetic value by many participants (G2, G7, G9, G14, G17) due to its three-dimensional structure and the physical space it occupies. However, some participants (G5, G15, G18) argued that it is not accurate to prioritize one particular art form, emphasizing that each type of art carries its own aesthetic value. Among individual preferences, certain participants showed distinct inclinations—such as toward oil paintings (G8), photography (G25), or archaeological artifacts (G21). This variety demonstrates that aesthetic preference can differ based on personal experiences, cultural background, and individual taste.

### **Question 6 – In your opinion, does the physical structure of the museum (spatial layout, lighting, arrangement of space) and the way artworks are presented affect their aesthetics?**

In response to this question, the vast majority of participants (23 individuals) stated that the physical structure of the museum and the presentation style of the artworks influence their aesthetic perception. Participants such as G2, G3, G6, G14, and G17 especially emphasized that lighting plays a decisive role in the perception of artworks. G18 addressed the topic in depth, stating that lighting, spatial arrangement, and the placement of works directly affect the value of an art object. G4 expressed that audio and environmental arrangements positively impact the visitor experience. Participants like G12 and G6 acknowledged the contribution of physical conditions but emphasized that the true determining factor is the emotional connection established with the artwork. In contrast, only two participants (G19 and G22) argued that spatial factors do not affect the aesthetic qualities of an artwork, claiming that a genuine piece of art retains

its value under any condition. However, the overall trend indicates that spatial arrangement and presentation techniques can directly enhance the aesthetic impact of an artwork.

**Question 7 – In your opinion, does gaining information about the artworks exhibited in a museum alter your aesthetic perception?**

This question also received mostly positive responses. A total of 21 participants stated that gaining information about an artwork has a direct impact on their aesthetic perception. Interviewees such as G2, G7, G18, and G25 noted that obtaining information helps them better grasp the layers of meaning within a piece, thereby deepening its aesthetic impact. G18, in particular, provided a strong example by referencing Albrecht Dürer's *Praying Hands*, illustrating how knowledge can alter the emotional effect of a work. Participants like G12 and G23 also stated that acquiring information better reflects the spirit of the artwork and expands the imagination. On the other hand, 4 participants (G11, G15, G19, and to some extent G4) expressed the view that gaining information has no impact—or in some cases a negative one—on aesthetic perception. Overall, the responses to this question indicate that the aesthetic experience is shaped not only by visual engagement but also by cognitive processes.

## CONCLUSION

This research was conducted with the aim of understanding the impact of various museums in Tekirdağ on visitors' aesthetic perceptions, and it presents a qualitative analysis based on in-depth interviews with 25 individuals. The findings indicate that museums are not merely venues for exhibiting artworks but are experiential spaces that shape individuals' aesthetic relationships with art.

The majority of participants defined art as an expression of personal emotions and thoughts, and they viewed the art object as the tangible manifestation of that expression. Aesthetic perception was described by participants both in terms of formal elements (such as symmetry, proportion, and simplicity) and the emotional impact evoked by the work. This demonstrates that the concept of aesthetics is not limited to visual appeal alone but is enriched by meaning, context, and interpretation.

In regard to whether the artworks encountered during the museum visits were considered aesthetic, the responses generally showed a positive trend. While painting and sculpture were especially favored, some participants argued that

art should be evaluated based on the connection it establishes with the viewer, regardless of the type.

One of the significant findings of the study is that the physical conditions of museum spaces (lighting, layout, spatial atmosphere) have a direct influence on aesthetic perception. Most participants stated that artworks are perceived as more effective and aesthetic under such conditions. This shows that the aesthetic experience develops not only through the artwork itself but also through its presentation. In addition, responses to the question of how acquiring information about the artwork affects aesthetic perception were noteworthy. Most participants indicated that gaining information allowed for a deeper understanding of the work and enhanced its aesthetic value. Some noted that such information personalized the aesthetic experience and, at times, even transformed its effect.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that museums play a significant role in the development of aesthetic perception. The way artworks are presented, the organization of the museum space, and the information conveyed to visitors are among the key factors influencing the aesthetic experience. In this context, museums should not be regarded solely as exhibition venues but as cultural learning environments that cultivate individuals' aesthetic sensitivity. Therefore, developing recommendations regarding museum design, artwork presentation, and interactive processes with visitors aimed at enhancing aesthetic perception is of importance for art education and cultural planning.

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