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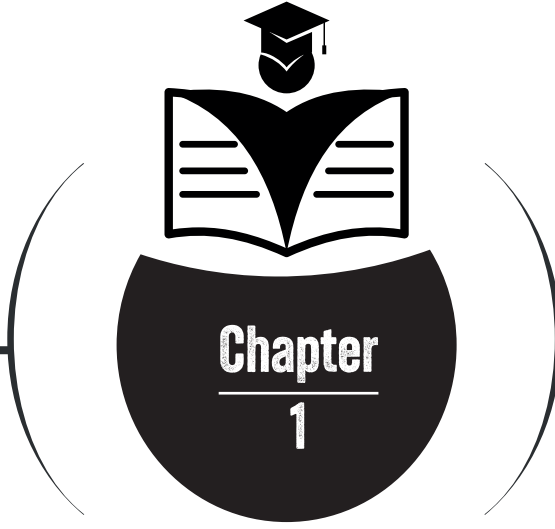
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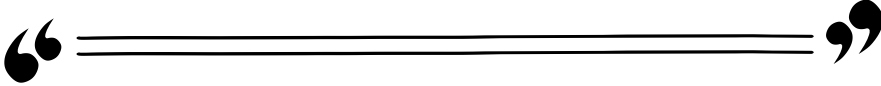
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# THE OTHER GARDEN: DIALOGUE AND SHARED SPACE EXPERIENCE THROUGH THE ART PRACTICE OF IŞIL EĞRİKAVUK<sup>1</sup>



*Çiğdem TANYEL BAŞAR<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> This study was previously presented as an oral paper (Title: ‘The Other Garden: Dialogue and Shared Space Experience Through the Art Practice of Işıl Eğrikavuk’) at the V. International Art-Design Conference & Exhibition on December 12, 2025.

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## Introduction

Contemporary art practices have increasingly diverged from traditional models that regard the artwork as a static object, instead embracing participatory approaches centred on process, experience, and social interaction. This shift emphasises art's capacity to strengthen social bonds, facilitate dialogue among participants, and foster shared spatial experiences, rather than prioritising aesthetic value. In public and institutional contexts, the creation of a sense of belonging and the pursuit of shared space have emerged as central concerns in contemporary art. Artists now aim to move beyond the confines of self-expression, positioning themselves as active agents within their social environments and continuously initiating new dialogues with their surroundings.

Artist-academic Dr. Işıl Eğrikavuk, known for her socially and environmentally engaged performance projects, initiated "The Other Garden" in the backyard of UdK Berlin in 2017. The project, which continues in various forms, serves as a significant case study illustrating the social potential of art. Eğrikavuk reports that, as the only non-European at her institution, she encountered language barriers and bureaucratic challenges, leading to a sense of not belonging, which she likened to being a non-native plant in an unfamiliar environment (Eğrikavuk, n.d.). To address this alienation and foster a sense of community, she developed a series of artistic strategies. Accordingly, the project was conceived as a dialogic, shared space, drawing parallels between the presence of non-native (wild) plants and her experience of alienation. What began as a personal process, including efforts to learn German, evolved into a collective initiative. Initially limited to a small group, the project expanded over time into an intellectual platform for ecological and environmental discourse and the exchange of everyday experiences.

The primary objective of this research is to examine Işıl Eğrikavuk's artistic practice within the framework of dialogue and shared space, and to analyse both the project's social outcomes and its art-based research methodology. Distinct from conventional community-based art projects, this initiative uniquely emphasises not only interpersonal dialogue but also the visibility of relationships between humans and other forms of life. The study investigates how this approach, which redefines the artwork as a dynamic process of discursive change and negotiation, contributes to the development of social bonds and shared spaces. The analysis begins with an overview of the creation of participatory and shared spaces in art, followed by a discussion of comparable international art-based projects. The Other Garden project is presented as a case study to demonstrate the production of shared space and to assess the impact of art-based projects on social cohesion.

## Method

This research employs the case study method, a qualitative research approach. The case study strategy investigates contemporary phenomena within their real-life contexts, particularly when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly defined, and focuses on addressing “how” or “why” questions (Yin, 2018).

The central aim of this study is to present an in-depth case analysis of artist-academic Işıl Eğrikavuk’s “Other Garden” project, focusing on dialogue and shared space. In this context, the research also examines other international art-based projects that emphasize participation and the creation of shared spaces in the public sphere, situating the case within a broader comparative framework. Data collection and analysis draw on project documentation, the artist’s personal accounts, and records of social interactions, highlighting the social outcomes of art practice as a dynamic process rather than a static object.

## Participatory Art and Collaborative Space Production

The shift from viewing the artwork as a static object to understanding it as a dynamic process rooted in interpersonal relationships and social encounters underpins the development of relational aesthetics and participatory art. The artwork’s significance now extends beyond aesthetic value to encompass its social impact and the relationships it forges with its environment. Such art-based projects, which redefine the roles of both viewer and artist, have, according to Claire Bishop, contributed to a global increase in artistic engagement since the early 1990s. These practices are variously termed participatory art, community-based art, experimental communities, dialogic art, coastal art, interventionist art, collaborative art, contextual art, and social practice (2014, p. 5).

Grant Kester, noting the recent surge of interest in relational aesthetics and social network-related art practices in the art world, attributes this interest to art biennials, which are essential supporters of contemporary art projects that are, by their very nature, temporary or time-bound. (2011, p. 8). The key element in defining art as a social practice is that artworks exist through social interaction. Helguera (Burrough ve Walgren, 2022, s. 5). According to this approach, its distinguishing features are: using art as a method for social transformation and change; prioritising the creative process (and sometimes the work’s transience) over concrete material; and reliance on interdisciplinary collaboration.

In response to critiques of relational aesthetics on both aesthetic and ethical grounds, contemporary art has maintained its focus on people-centered projects, while shifting emphasis toward the communicative depth of the process. The defining feature of participatory art is that the meaning

or value of the artwork resides not in the object itself, but in the processes of interaction, dialogue, and collaboration between the artist and the community. This shift underscores the transition of the artwork's value from materiality to social interaction.

Miwon Kwon asserts that the foundation of socially engaged art rests on the belief that the meaning or value of the work lies not in the object itself but in the ongoing interaction between the artist and the community (2002, p. 95). This interaction is integral to the work and is regarded as equally significant as the artwork itself. Grant Kester, through his concept of Dialogic Aesthetics, emphasises the communicative depth of dialogue. He contends that art, as a vehicle for transformation and social change, should prioritise the creative process and the work's transience over materiality. Dialogic Aesthetics thus proposes that art be evaluated through ethical negotiation and the relationships it establishes with the community (Kester, 1998), thereby providing a foundation for the social outcomes observed in the Other Garden project.

### **Dialogue and Community Building in Similar Art Practices: Pioneering Examples**

To determine the place of the Other Garden project within the tradition of participatory art and to highlight its unique contributions, this section examines three pioneering projects centred on relational aesthetics, dialogue aesthetics, and the production of shared spaces. The projects examined share common characteristics, including a focus on community building through dialogue and shared experience, a valuation of social processes over artistic processes, and frequent use of ecological themes. The following analysis aims to identify the similarities between Other Garden and these pioneering projects, while also showing how the project diverges from this tradition and becomes unique by focusing on the problem of alienation in an institutional context and establishing a dialogue beyond anthropocentrism.

#### **1. Relational Aesthetics and Transience: Rirkrit Tiravanija**

Artist Rirkrit Tiravanija is one of the most important representatives of relational aesthetics, which replaces the art object with human interaction. Born in Buenos Aires as the son of a Thai diplomat, Rirkrit Tiravanija (b. 1961) spent his childhood between Thailand, Ethiopia, and Canada. One of the most critical influences on the artist's practice was his grandmother, who hosted cooking shows on Thai television and operated a restaurant in Bangkok. At the heart of Tiravanija's works, which centre on the act of cooking in art-related spaces such as museums and galleries, lies this personal connection to food culture and the time he spent with his grandmother during his youth. (Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, t.y.). In his projects, where he cooks and serves food to visitors in galleries, Tiravanija defines the fundamental

material of art as dialogue and shared experience. Rirkrit Tiravanija's first solo exhibition, *Untitled (Free)*(1992) (Figure 1), took place at 303 Gallery in Manhattan. In this project, the artist made his work visible by moving all materials from the gallery's back office to the exhibition space; he then converted the vacated office into a temporary kitchen, where he prepared and served visitors free Thai-style vegetable curry. With this action, she invited viewers to move from passive observers to active participants (MoMA, 2025).



**Figure 1.** Rirkrit Tiravanija, *Untitled (Free)* (1992-1995). Source: MoMA PS1 (n.d.).

Tiravanija explains that his emphasis on the everyday, another fundamental indicator of relational aesthetics, stems from the influence of Buddhism in his childhood, and emphasises that his interest in human relationships is “a characteristic of Thai people.” The artist expresses this cultural structure with the following words:

Furthermore, Tiravanija explains that his emphasis on the everyday, another core indicator of relational aesthetics, is derived from the Buddhist influences of his childhood, insisting that his preoccupation with human relations is a Thai thing. Thai society, he explains, is very communal. Everybody is brother and sister, everybody is mother and father, everyone is family. Our attitude toward life is that you exist in a kind of family. The lady who sells you groceries is like your aunt, the man who sweeps the floor is your uncle, the attitude is one of respect as the other is always somebody who's in your world (Herrmann, 2003, cited in Dohmen, 2013, p. 41).

This communal understanding culturally grounds Tiravanija's practice, distinguishing it from the individualistic aesthetic perception in the West, by using social bonds as a tool for institutional critique.



## 2. Fritz Haeg – Edible Estates: Critique of Suburban Aesthetics and the Transformation of Private Space into Collective Productivity

Edible Estates, initiated in 2005 by American artist and landscape architect Fritz Haeg, is a globally implemented project that radically intervenes in suburban aesthetics. The project involves removing unproductive, uniform front lawns—symbols of suburban culture in North America and Europe—and replacing them with food gardens planted with regional edible plants (Walker Art Centre, 2012). This practice constitutes the second part of the comparative analysis, demonstrating how collective action becomes a political and social expression on the most visible surface of private property (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** View from Fritz Haeg's Edible Estate Project. Source: Walkerart.org

Fritz Haeg's book *Edible Estates: Attack on the Front Lawn*, written in connection with his ongoing project, is a manifesto that surprises readers. This book criticises the wastefulness, social segregation, and environmental toxicity inherent in American lawn culture and advocates replacing this institution with organic food gardens (Frieze, n.d.). The Edible Estates project has transformed the private living spaces of its participants not only



aesthetically or ecologically, but also experientially and socially. As a result of the project, the routines of suburban life have changed, giving way to partnership and social flow rather than alienation. Rosalind Creasy, one of the participating families, describes this transformation in a way that strikingly illustrates the project's impact on the lived environment:

From a few vegetables in the front yard to a living paradise, how my life has changed! Every morning I wake up and can't believe my good fortune. This morning, I made my usual cup of tea and headed out to see what had changed in my Garden of Eden. Are the strawberries ripe enough to pick for breakfast? What flowers shall I pick for the vase on my desk? And how are my dear chickens? It's June, and it must be almost time for the senior prom, I know, because my neighbours just asked if their daughter and her boyfriend could have their portrait taken in my garden. And a toddler across the street called out the front window, "Ros, Ros, chickens. It's going to be another great day! (Haeg, 2005 p. 45).

This experiential transformation illustrates how the daily routines of neighbourhood residents shifted from passive consumption to active, collective engagement characterised by harvesting, neighbourly dialogue, and productive activities.

### **3. Shared Space Production and Sustainable Ecological Practice: Flatbread Society**

Futurefarmers' Flatbread Society project offers a powerful model for long-term, shared-space production by establishing a permanent community bakery and grain field in the Oslo harbour. This project embodies a cultural and ecological collective production process through food production and the sharing of local knowledge. Through this project, the Futurefarmers collective aims to bring together individuals from diverse fields, including farmers, artists, astronomers, soil scientists, and bakers, to create a shared vision. According to Arte Útil (n.d.), the project's primary goal is to use grain to analyse the relationships among food production, knowledge sharing, cultural production, and socio-political formations.

The Flatbread Society Grainfield is at the heart of a long-term public art project that includes a bakery and an art program that has been running for over 10 years (Figure 3). Grainfield connects Norway's agricultural heritage to the present day, expanding the metaphor of sowing to encompass broader concepts such as self-determination, land use, social relations, and the prominence of organic processes in the development of cultural forms. The presence, openness, and fluidity of this grain field, set against the backdrop of Oslo and the Barcode, create a sharp cultural and physical contrast with the rational, rigid development in the surrounding areas of Bjørvika (Futurefarmers, n.d.).



**Figure 3.** *Photo of Bakehouse by Monica Løvdaahl. Source: Futurefarmers.*

The ecological transformation initiated by the Futurefarmers collective in Loallmenningen redirected the region's narrative from traditional associations, such as fjords and sports, toward collective practices like farming and baking. Myrvold (2014) describes this shift, noting that place narratives, much like place images, are essential tools for organizing the complexity of a location. Drawing on urban theorist Robert Beauregard (2005), Myrvold highlights that place narratives serve as strategic instruments, especially for professional developers, to structure complexity and resolve ambiguities in discourse (p. 9). In this context, the Futurefarmers' intervention established an alternative narrative centered on self-determination and organic processes, challenging the prevailing discourse of rigidly planned development.

### **“The Other Garden” as a Case Study: Co-Production of Shared Space in an Institutional Setting**

İşıl Eğrikavuk, an artist recognized for her participatory projects in contemporary art and her engagement with institutional critique, has garnered significant attention for her work. After earning a degree in Western Literature from Boğaziçi University, she completed a master's in performance art at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago with support from a Koç Foundation scholarship. From 2009 to 2017, she pursued studies in art and media at Istanbul Bilgi University. She contributed a weekly column, Güncel Sanat Kafası (Contemporary Art Mind), to the national newspaper Radikal, exploring the intersections of current events and contemporary art. Currently

based in Berlin, she serves as a faculty member in the Media Department at the University of the Arts (UdK) (Arts Souterrain, n.d.). Her diverse academic and media background has fostered a nuanced understanding of institutional structures and mechanisms of visibility. Within this context, the Other Garden project (Figure 4-5), the central focus of this research, aims to challenge traditional notions of artistic legitimacy and spatial hierarchy through collective production and dialogue, translating these insights into practice.



**Figure 4-5:** A view from Işıl Eğrikavuk's "Other Garden" project. Source: Münihinsesi, 2025.

The primary motivations behind Işıl Eğrikavuk's Öteki Bahçe project were the language and bureaucratic barriers she faced while living in Germany, the lack of diversity and inclusion programs at her faculty, and the absence of shared spaces where people could gather and socialise. An examination of the artist's article describing her project reveals that she constantly felt like an "other" in her work environment. Eğrikavuk states that this feeling stemmed not only from her having migrated from another country but also from the fact that individuals from that region who felt they were not adequately represented within the institution shared a similar sentiment. Motivated by this shared sense of 'otherness', the project was implemented to create a critical collective space outside the institutional structure that would bring together all students and academics in disadvantaged positions (Eğrikavuk, 2021, p. 84). With this motivation, the artist aimed to revitalise the university's empty backyard as both a teaching and a social space (Figure 6). The project's central metaphor is the connection between human migration and plant migration. The types of 'weeds' (dandelions) grown in the garden and considered

unwanted by traditional agriculture are treated as unwanted entities, much as secondary-position migrants are treated in a new society. The artist aims to draw attention to the pluralistic nature of these plants, which contribute to biological diversity, and to establish a connection between human and non-human species around themes such as putting down roots, nurturing culture, being wild, and being wanted/unwanted (Kültür ve Ekoloji, 2024).

Eğrikavuk defines the Other Garden project as a green space that cultivates specific wild plants (neophytes) year-round, as well as an intellectual space hosting regular conference series addressing issues of diversity and ecology (UdK Berlin, n.d.). The artist conveys the fundamental components of his research with the following statements:

Our research consists of several key components: a. Conducting interdisciplinary research that brings together social sciences with artistic and creative practices around critical and current issues such as the climate crisis and social participation in art; b. Conducting research with an understanding that goes beyond gender-based, patriarchal, colonial, and monocultural representations, recognising and giving space to the experiences of groups whose voices are often unheard or unrepresented. Establishing an intersectional understanding between art and research and relating it to ecology, diversity, and biodiversity; d. Being open to innovative methods such as artistic research that brings together theoretical knowledge and practice; e. Being open to non-hierarchical, collaborative research methods and contributing to society; f. Viewing conflicts, problems, or difficulties that may arise when collaborating with others as part of the research process and including them in the process rather than excluding them (Eğrikavuk, 2021, p. 85).





**Figure 6.** *Işıl Eğrikavuk is teaching in the Other Garden. Source: Gezginçi, D. (April 25, 2025).*

Eğrikavuk's project extends beyond human dialogue by fostering relationships and awareness between humans and other species, including plants and animals. Through this approach, the artist advances the concept of relational aesthetics, facilitating new forms of partnership across species. Consequently, the project holds particular significance within the field of art-based research.

### **Collective Practices in Art-Based Research**

The transition in art from an object-oriented to a relational, process-oriented framework since the late twentieth century is fundamental to understanding contemporary practices. This evolution has heightened interest in the social dimensions of art and facilitated the emergence of ecological approaches. The Other Garden project exemplifies this intersection,

integrating dialogue-centered social aesthetics with ecological perspectives that promote interspecies collaboration.

Within art-based research, collective practices prioritise creative processes, social change, and knowledge production, moving beyond the notion of individual genius to emphasise collaborative action among multiple participants or communities. These practices extend beyond traditional artistic boundaries, intersecting with social, political, and cultural domains. Such formations are recognized as art as social practice in contemporary art (Burrough & Walgren, 2022) and are also referred to as community-based art, experimental collectives, dialogue art, coastal art, interventionist art, participatory art, collaborative art, and contextual art (Bishop, 2014, p. 1). Collective practices serve purposes of artistic creation, social transformation, and community building. Burrough & Walgren (2022) define the artwork as a process of dialogue, exchange, and collaboration between the artist and participants, while Kester (1998) emphasises that the value of art now resides in the social interactions it generates. Kester's concept of "dialogical aesthetics" offers a theoretical framework for this transformation (Kester, 2011).

A further characteristic of collective art practices is the rejection of authority and individualism. As Walter Benjamin noted during the modernist period of the 1930s, there was resistance to the myth of individual genius and creative mastery (Burrough & Walgren, 2022). Techniques such as automatic drawing, collage, paint splattering, and dripping—central to modernist art—contributed to the transformation of the artist's individual identity (Kester, 2011). After the 1960s, collective forms of art production became increasingly prominent.

### Conclusion

The "Other Garden" project by Işıl Eğrikavuk, as analyzed in this study, offers a comprehensive model that underscores contemporary art's capacity to assume social and ecological responsibilities. The findings indicate that the project functions not only as a platform for dialogue that strengthens social bonds, but also as an example of art practice representing a shift from an anthropocentric perspective to one of ecological interdependence. By treating the artwork as a living, evolving process rather than a completed object, the project illustrates art's transformative potential in shaping social bonds and shared spaces. This approach also prompts a reconsideration of the artist's role in the modern era, framing it as an ongoing learning process.

The Other Garden encourages a re-examination and reconfiguration of human relationships with the world by fostering connections among participants, the earth, plants, and other living beings. In this context, Işıl Eğrikavuk's project aligns with Donna Haraway's concepts of "staying with the trouble" and "making kin" (Haraway, 2016).

The project demonstrates the significance and potential of participant-centred methodologies in art-based research. The Other Garden departs from traditional models in which the researcher or artist unilaterally collects data from participants, adopting a non-hierarchical co-production model in which all participants contribute experiences, knowledge, and emotions, and knowledge is generated collaboratively through dialogue. This approach transforms the research process from a hierarchical structure into a collective journey of discovery. The study's success is measured not by academic texts or abstract findings, but by tangible social outcomes such as participant and community transformation. Strengthened neighbourly relations, heightened ecological awareness, and the development of a new sense of community emerged as primary results. Thus, the research shifts from an abstract exercise to an action-oriented endeavour that produces real-world change. As noted in works such as *Art as Social Practice*, documenting the process itself can serve as a valuable output in such projects. The artist's reflective writings, participant testimonies, workshop notes, and visual records constitute a rich archive that captures the project's dynamic and multilayered character. These materials position the research process itself as a significant source of knowledge. Ultimately, the project underscores the value and potential of participant-centred approaches in art-based research.

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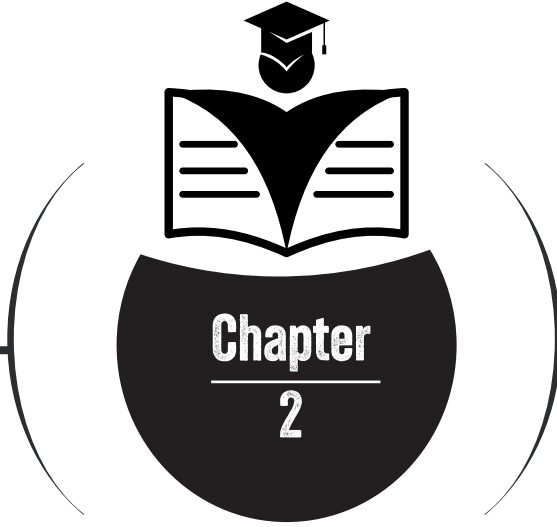
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## Visual Resources

- Figure 1.** Gezginci, D. (2025, April 25). *Meaningful project by a Turkish academic in Germany: The Other Garden* [Photograph]. <https://www.odatv.com/dunya/almanyada-turk-akademisyen-dr-isil-egrikavuktan-dikkat-ceken-proje-ote-ki-bahce-120096062?sayfa=12>
- Figure 2.** Haeg, F. (t.y.). *A view from Fritz Haeg's Edible Estate Project* [Photograph]. Walker Art Center. <https://walkerart.org/magazine/fritz-haegs-edible-estate-15-twin-cities-minn/>
- Figure 3.** Løvdahl, M. (t.y.). *Bakehouse* [Photograph]. Flatbread Society. <https://flatbread-society.net/actions/35/bakehouse>
- Figure 4-5.** Münih'in Sesi. (2025, April 25). *A View from Işıl Eğrikavuk's "The Other Garden" Project in Germany* [Photograph]. <https://www.munihinsesi.com/haber-almanyada-kendini-yabani-ot-gibi-hisseden-akademisyenin-oteki-bahcesi-5528.html>
- Figure 6.** Tiravanija, R. (1992-1995). *Untitled (Free)* [Photograph]. MoMA PS1. <https://www.momaps1.org/en/events/361-rirkrit-tiravanijas-untitled-1992-1995-free-still>





## THE INTERSECTION OF ARCHITECTURE, HISTORY AND ART

“=====”

*Firdevs SAĞLAM<sup>1</sup>*

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## INTRODUCTION

Architecture is among the most important disciplines that reveal the multifaceted nature of human history. A society's political, cultural, and economic transformations often find concrete reflections in its urban fabric and architectural formation. Buildings are not merely functional entities; they are also historical documents reflecting the ideological preferences, power relations, and social memory of specific periods. Therefore, as a discipline directly intertwined with history, both preserving and transforming the traces of the past, architecture holds a central position in understanding the dynamics of continuity and change in space.

This historical meaning architecture carries offers a much broader field of interpretation when intersected with art. Art considers architecture not merely as a physical object but as a form of cultural representation with the potential to generate meaning. Thus, architectural forms become central to aesthetic, political, and social interpretations. Art's intervention goes beyond the mere material reality of space, providing the opportunity to question how memory is shaped through structures, which stories are made visible, or which traces are erased. In this context, the relationship between architecture, history, and art provides a powerful analytical framework for analyzing urbanization processes, social memory, and ideological structures.

Positioned at the intersection of these three fields, Cuban artist Carlos Garaicoa is a prominent figure in contemporary art, employing architecture as a tool for both witnessing and questioning. Garaicoa's work, particularly centered on Havana's unfinished, demolished, or threatened architectural fabric, reveals historical discontinuities and the traces of political interventions in the urban fabric. Using a combination of techniques such as photography, installation, and drawing, he analyzes both the physical and symbolic dimensions of architectural forms. In this respect, Garaicoa's artistic practice reveals the critical potential of the architecture-history-art relationship, offering an interdisciplinary reading that examines how urban memory is represented, transformed, and shaped by the mechanisms of power.

### 1. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ARCHITECTURE AND HISTORY: A HISTORICAL, SOCIOLOGICAL, AND CULTURAL EXAMINATION

From the past to the present, humankind has created spaces for its basic needs such as protection and shelter, as well as for its cultural, social, religious, and political needs. According to Sağlam (2017: 2882), humans, as part of nature, experience their first spatial experience in the womb; the womb is the first space in which they are formed and will gain continuity. After birth,

humans both contribute to the spatial nature of their environment and create new spaces in line with their basic needs and perceptual processes. These spaces, whether natural or human-created, are fundamental reference points for understanding the sensible world. Over time, individuals begin to perceive the surroundings and the spaces associated with them, transforming these into conscious perceptions. Human-created spaces have evolved in different ways due to the innovations and changes brought about by the age, creating the field of architecture. Architecture is one of the most important material indicators that make visible the lifestyles, economic organizations, technological capabilities, and cultural values of past societies. As Adıgüzel Özbek (2016: 2) notes, Führ argues that space bears traces of life as a whole, with its physical, social, psychological, philosophical, historical, environmental, and ideological dimensions. He emphasizes that people not only reside in architectural space but also live there; that space is also a living organism through which society's social relations unfold. Therefore, it is argued that spaces contain and bear traces of both human life and lived experiences; all of these qualities are among the fundamental determinants of architecture.

An examination of the historical process reveals that architecture is not merely a technical production activity but rather a phenomenon in constant interaction with social structures. Therefore, evaluating architecture within the context of historical sociology allows us to understand not only the aesthetic or engineering aspects of structures but also their complex connections to social relations, power structures, and cultural practices. According to Şensoy and Yamaçlı (2015: 330), the concept of architecture is as old as human history itself, and people have designed living spaces using environmental data to meet their basic needs. With the agricultural revolution, architecture became a profession practiced by specific individuals within the framework of the division of labor. With the industrial revolution, architecture gained a new meaning by separating itself from civil engineering. Over time, architecture evolved into sub-disciplines such as urban planning and urban design. With the increasing emphasis on space, it became a profession and established a strong relationship with the concept of design.

Historical sociology, when examining the transformation of social structures over time, positions architecture as both an indicator and a determinant of this transformation. In this context, architecture is not merely an outcome of historical phenomena but also an element intervening in the processes of historical production. According to Ergül, Lefebvre views space as both the outcome of social life and a tool through which this life is constantly reproduced. Similarly, Ruskin emphasizes that architecture is not merely an aesthetic element but rather that meanings and messages are conveyed through structures, warning us that buildings carry interpretable narratives. From this perspective, buildings are symbolic elements that express various concepts

and social attitudes; sometimes they express a democratic or aristocratic understanding, and other times, they express emotions such as openness, arrogance, friendship, aggression, hope for the future, or longing for the past (Ergül, 2015: 1073). Societies' economic organization, class relations, and power structures directly influence architectural formation. For example, during periods of static and extended family structures in agricultural societies, centralized political organization, and strong religious legitimacy, monumental, hierarchical, and symbolically charged structures were produced. Palaces, temples, and monuments that legitimized state power are considered elements that express the sociological reality of this historical period. In contrast, in the modern period, processes of industrialization, bureaucratization, and urbanization have led to the transformation of architecture into a more functional, modular, and rational form. Thus, the formal transformation of architecture makes the historical transformation of social structure traceable; in other words, architecture produces the spatial projection of sociological change. As Arslan Avar (2009: 8) states, space cannot be considered merely as an abstract idea or a physical object; rather, it is a social phenomenon with both conceptual and real dimensions. Space consists of the coexistence of relationships and forms and is not static, but rather constantly changing, vibrant, and fluid. Interactions, combinations, and conflicts occurring at different times articulate upon each other, reproducing the existing space. In this sense, social space is a multi-layered production area that emerges through the intertwining of various experiences, perceptions, practices and theoretical processes.

Evaluating architecture from a cultural perspective requires examining societies' belief systems, rituals, aesthetic understandings, and life practices. Culture is one of the most important factors determining both the production process and the ways architecture is used. From the orientation of buildings to the materials used, from ornamentation to spatial organization, many elements are shaped by cultural accumulation and symbolic meanings. For example, in Islamic architecture, courtyard layouts and introverted spatial configurations are associated with privacy, community relations, and daily life practices. Similarly, the vertically emphasized structures of Gothic architecture in Europe are linked to the metaphor of religious belief ascending to heaven. These examples demonstrate that architecture is a tool for carrying and embodying cultural codes. According to Koyuncu (2011: 31), throughout history, cities have been spaces that have both transmitted the cultural and social experiences accumulated by humanity to subsequent generations and, through the civilizational legacy they embody, have played a decisive role in shaping the future. From this perspective, the emergence of civilization and the process of urbanization are considered to proceed in parallel, and a widespread view is that civilization emerged with cities and continued through their existence. Changes in cultural practices, in turn, directly trigger spati-

al change, making architecture a readable archive of cultural history throughout history.

From a historical sociological perspective, architecture also plays a critical role in the formation of social memory. Space is a memory space that stores the collective experiences of individuals and communities. City squares, monuments, religious buildings, or public buildings place past events within a spatial context and ensure the continuity of social memory. Therefore, architecture is not only a physical entity but also a symbolic one; it functions as a crucial component of how societies define themselves. The observation of significant shifts in social identities in the modern era, when spatial memory is disrupted by urban transformation, wars, or economic restructuring, clearly demonstrates the sociological impact of the architecture-history relationship. The destruction or reconstruction of structures leads to reconstruction not only in the physical environment but also in social memory. Consequently, architecture should be considered both a carrier and a shaper of historical and cultural processes. According to Şensoy and Yamaçlı, history is not merely the chronological ordering of past events, but also a discipline studied with accuracy and consistency across diverse sources and disciplines. By comparing data obtained through books, inscriptions, documents, and testimonies, the science of history can develop interpretations and different perspectives in relation to other disciplines. In design-focused disciplines such as architecture, history is viewed as a value that must be preserved and carried into the present by preserving the unique characteristics of structures and artifacts reflecting the past (Şensoy and Yamaçlı, 2015: 332-333). While the historical sociology perspective explains the role of architecture within social structure, the cultural perspective reveals the symbolic and meaning-generating nature of architecture. Therefore, the relationship between architecture and history is not a one-way reflection, but a dynamic process based on mutual interaction. Buildings not only bear the traces of the past; they shape social relations, cultural identities, and historical consciousness, becoming spaces where history itself is produced. Therefore, architecture is an indispensable field of study for both historical research and cultural analysis.

According to Arslan Avar (2009: 11), spatial practices are the set of actions that shape a society's space and make it perceptible; therefore, they are directly related to perceived space. These practices possess a dialectical function that both produces and, to certain extents, limits society's space. Understanding a society's spatial practices is possible through analyzing its space; for these practices form the basis of social continuity and spatial stability by bringing together processes of production and reproduction, intellectual frameworks, and everyday experiences. They also find their reflection in the flow of daily life, connecting the individual's daily world to the broader spatial order at the urban scale. Within this framework, perception is central to spa-

tial practices and, while a fundamental concept of phenomenology, is always tied to a subject. However, Lefebvre opposes viewing perception solely as a mental activity of the subject; for him, perception emerges within material conditions and the concrete contexts produced by spatial practices. Therefore, he emphasizes that perception cannot be located solely in thought but rather takes shape within material space. According to Castells (1983: 103), the fundamental way to analyze a city is to examine how its spatial order emerged and the dynamics through which it changed over time. The architectural structures and planning choices of cities and neighborhoods actually reveal the tensions and power struggles between different social groups. For example, skyscrapers are not only structures chosen to increase economic returns; they also symbolize capital's dominance over urban space through elements such as technological capacity and security. Therefore, Castells argues that these giant structures can be viewed as monumental structures specific to the rise of the capitalist system.

## 2. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ARCHITECTURE AND ART

The relationship between architecture and art is multilayered, both historically and conceptually. While architecture is often viewed as a technical and functional discipline focused on shaping the physical environment, it is in constant interaction with art due to its aesthetic, representational, and interpretive dimensions. This interaction is not limited to aestheticizing architecture as a design object; it also enables the rethinking of the cultural meanings, social experiences, and historical references of architectural space through artistic practices. Therefore, architecture can be considered both the subject matter and the production ground of art, and this two-way relationship expands the conceptual boundaries of both fields. According to Tunalı (1984: 96), architecture can be defined as art that emerges from a relationship with space; architectural production means organizing space in a specific form. Therefore, every architectural structure is the expression of a formed space, and the process of architecture's formation emerges as the product of the interaction between form and space.

To understand the relationship between architecture and art, it is crucial to emphasize that architecture is not merely a functional construction activity but also a symbolic and aesthetic form of production. Tunalı (1984: 96–97) states that when an architectural structure qualifies as a work of art, it possesses both a real object existence and an abstract realm of existence that carries aesthetic meaning. According to him, an architectural work is a unified art entity that combines these two levels of existence. Therefore, when an architectural structure achieves the necessary formal harmony and aesthetic order, it attains the same status as other works of art, such as painting or sculpture; there is no difference in quality between them. From ancient temples to medieval cathedrals, from Renaissance palaces to modernist housing



blocks, architectural structures have been considered cultural expressions representing the intellectual, political, and artistic orientations of their respective eras. Therefore, a significant portion of art history can be read parallel to the evolution of architecture, as architecture is often considered the largest and most enduring form of art. This historical perspective demonstrates that architecture and art are not distinct but complementary fields of expression. In the modern and contemporary period, the relationship between architecture and art has evolved into an even more complex and interactive network. Avant-garde movements, particularly those that emerged in the early 20th century—such as Cubism, Futurism, Dadaism, and De Stijl—reinterpreted architecture in both formal and intellectual terms, radically questioning the concept of space. For example, the De Stijl movement argued that the pure geometric order seen in Piet Mondrian's paintings could also be reflected in architecture; Gerrit Rietveld's Schröder House, a concrete example of this understanding applied to space, blurred the boundaries between art and architecture. Similarly, Bauhaus pedagogy positioned art and architecture not as separate disciplines but as components of an integrated design approach; this model remains one of the fundamental principles guiding architectural education today. The influence of art on architecture is not limited to the formal; it also redefines the architectural experience by transforming the perception of space. Minimalism, conceptual art, and site-specific installations, in particular, have produced works that question and transform the viewer's relationship with space. Akdemir (2019:57) emphasizes that when artists detach architectural elements from their contexts and engage with them within new relationships, these objects create new layers of meaning in their respective spaces. This transformation bears a reference not only to the structure itself but also to the viewer's position within that space. Just as a building establishes a sense of belonging with its geography, the artist's works convey messages about current issues and the lived environment to the viewer through architectural elements. According to Özertural (2007: 3-4), in discussions of sculpture approaching architecture, architectural elements such as sculpture's potential to create space, its construction techniques, and its scale, which approximate the architectural scale and thus acquire a public character, are prominent. Therefore, the Constructivist understanding of sculpture at the beginning of the 20th century and the public sculptures of the post-1960s are considered examples of sculpture approaching architecture. On the other hand, when architecture approaches sculpture, it is defined as the designer prioritizing shaping the outer shell of the building in order to create a strong plastic effect and transforming this shell into the desired "absolute" form with the opportunities provided by technology.

Donald Judd's geometric volumes placed in space brought a new sensory dimension to fundamental elements of architecture such as scale, rhythm,

and void-fullness; while Gordon Matta-Clark's sectional interventions in urban structures opened up discussion of architecture as both a physical and political object. Such interventions reinforce the idea that architecture is not a static and closed system, but rather a mutable and critical field open to artistic interpretation. Furthermore, architecture's contribution to art is at least as evident as art's influence on architecture. Architecture provides a context that directly shapes the spaces in which artists work, the themes they produce, and their intellectual orientations. The history of a space, its texture, light, scale, and the social relations it embodies become elements that influence the conceptual framework of artworks. Especially with the rise of site-specific art production from the 1960s onwards, architecture began to be viewed not merely as a background but as an integral component of the work. This perspective has enabled art to move beyond the neutral exhibition spaces historically defined as white cubes and toward urban spaces, public areas, and historical structures. Thus, architecture has become an active element that expands art's critical potential. This interplay between architecture and art offers a particularly important analytical tool in contemporary urban studies. Cities are cultural scenes constantly reproduced through both architectural arrangements and artistic interventions. While power structures, political ideologies, and economic dynamics are embodied through architectural forms, artists can intervene in these spaces to reveal stories that have been rendered invisible and reinterpret the memory of the space. In this respect, art functions as a practice that not only represents but also transforms architecture. Artists' critical approaches to urban space offer powerful tools for interpreting the city's historical layers and make visible its social dimensions. In this context, the relationship between architecture and art goes beyond mere formal aesthetic harmony; it becomes a field that questions how social memory, cultural representation, and political power are produced. Architecture functions for artists as both material, subject, and a tool for critical analysis. Art, on the other hand, invites us to rethink architecture not merely as a physical structure but as a site of representation where social experiences, historical ruptures, and cultural tensions materialize. Thus, the relationship between the two disciplines becomes one of the fundamental dynamics of cultural production. Consequently, the intersection of architecture and art creates a multidimensional field of interaction that transforms ways of thinking about space. This relationship reveals both the aesthetic and symbolic aspects of architecture and deepens art's relationship with social and spatial contexts. The interdisciplinary nature of the architecture-art relationship is particularly crucial in the analysis of contemporary cities, the analysis of social memory, and the examination of cultural policies. Therefore, architecture and art should be considered two fundamental fields of cultural production that not only nourish each other but also transform each other's world of meaning.

Art disciplines have influenced each other throughout history, and space-oriented fields such as architecture in particular have transformed the form and function of other branches of art. This mutual interaction has led to works of art ceasing to be merely independent forms of expression and becoming structures that integrate with the space they are in. According to Ülger (2024: 130), as architectural structures began to require the use of painting in space, works of art also tended to adapt to this physical environment. Thus, while painting became a part of the space, it can be said that this branch of art was influenced by the formal imperatives of architecture. It is not possible to see this situation limited to painting only; a similar transformation has also occurred in sculpture. The relationship between architecture and sculpture has changed throughout history, and each period has created a new field of interaction in line with its own understanding of art. According to Özertural (2007: 6–7), the relationship between architecture and sculpture can be explained through the sculpture being either placed on the surface of the structure in relation to it or existing in the space independently of the structure. Historically, architecture has used sculpture as a means of symbolic expression; By adorning structures with sculptures, the architect capitalized on their representational power. These sculptures, generally positioned to be viewed from the front, did not have their own independent spaces but utilized the architectural space. Thus, sculpture ceased to be a merely decorative element and became integrated with the structure, transforming into a figurative means of expression that symbolically conveyed religious narratives, tales of war and victory, rulers, gods, and the power of the state. These historical examples demonstrate that architecture not only transformed sculpture, but also became an element that gave meaning to architecture. Over time, as the purpose of artistic production, the materials used, and forms of expression changed, the interaction between the two disciplines became more flexible and reciprocal. Özertural (2007: 5) states that intellectual transformations are the fundamental factor determining the change in the relationship between sculpture and architecture; as understandings of thought and art changed, the bond between architecture and sculpture also shifted. Sculpture, long used figuratively in conjunction with architecture, became abstract in the 20th century; as architecture shifted towards a more sculptural design, sculpture acquired an architectural character. Thus, a new unity emerged between the two disciplines, different from that of previous periods.

### **3. CARLOS GARAICOA'S ART AND WORKS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE INTERSECTION OF ARCHITECTURE, HISTORY AND ART**

Carlos Garaicoa is a significant artist who combines architecture, history, and social criticism within the context of contemporary art. Through cubic-scale models, photographs, and spatial installations, Garaicoa interrogates the historical and political contexts of urban spaces. His work focuses on

processes of change, particularly in Cuban cities, and the relationship between architectural heritage and collective memory. In this context, Garaicoa considers architecture not merely as a physical structure but as a medium through which historical events, political power relations, and cultural values are embodied. According to Kovach (2016: 72), Carlos Garaicoa opens up a conceptual space on urban memory by juxtaposing photographs of buildings in ruins in Havana with drawings of the same structures created using thin threads. These diptychs, which combine photography and drawing, reveal both the physical traces of the collapsed structures and the historical and ideological transformations they represent.

Garaicoa's production alludes to the dissolution of the utopian foundations of revolutionary ideology, along with Cuba's "Special Period" policies of the 1990s, while also pointing to the complex and fragile nature of modernity. The vague structural lines created from thread offer a narrative symbolizing unfulfilled architectural promises and the social tension created by the economic crisis. In the artist's works, abandoned buildings, demolished structures, and gaps in the urban fabric simultaneously demonstrate historical continuity and rupture. Garaicoa presents the viewer with the social functions and symbolic meanings of architecture by combining them with visual narrative. The spaces he creates through photography, video, and models make visible the social, economic, and political dimensions of cities. As Nollert (2002: 128) notes, Carlos Garaicoa is an artist who explores the extent to which imagination can play a role in the reconstruction of history. Focusing particularly on Havana, he examines unfinished socialist architectural projects as indicators of a collapsed political and social program. By reconstructing the potential states of these unfinished structures through drawings and models, the artist ensures their continued existence on the mental plane. Thus, Garaicoa's architectural productions begin beyond the boundaries of concrete reality and continue within the realm of possibility opened up by the imagination.

The artist's first work, which we will examine in the context of our research topic, is *Continuity of Somebody's Architecture*. In this work, Garaicoa first examines original architectural plans and produces models from them. He then presents these models with a "utopian" vision that adheres to the plan while also allowing for a degree of fictional freedom. Thus, he poses the question "what would have happened?" and "what happened?" regarding the historical process of buildings. The contrast between photographs depicting real, decaying, or unfinished structures and models representing their completed, idealized state reveals the fragility of architectural utopias. This comparison also concretely reveals the spatial implications of political and social transformations.



*Image 1. Carlos Garaicoa, How Neoclassical Architecture Gave Birth to Socialist Architecture, 2002.*

These works (Image 1, Image 2), exhibited in the Documenta 11 exhibition in 2002, document the architectural reality in Cuba at the time—structures whose construction had been halted, abandoned, or abandoned to decay—and reconstruct them in idealized forms. Thus, the viewer is strongly reminded of the “deep gap between utopia and reality” that emerged with the collapse of Cuba’s socialist utopia, economic ruptures, and unfinished architectural projects. This work offers the opportunity to consider architecture not merely as an aesthetic or technical field of production, but also as a spatial projection of society’s ideals, political projects, and historical ruptures. Therefore, in academic discussions, through themes such as “urban memory,” “utopia and collapse,” and “the relationship between architecture and political projects,” it serves as a powerful example that can be linked to socialist experiences, global modernization processes, and urban transformation efforts.





*Image 2. Carlos Garaicoa, Somebody's Architecture, 2002.*

Carlos Garaicoa's installation *No Way Out* (2002) combines paper, light, and architectural forms, offering both a poetic and political reading (Image 3). The work depicts a model of a city composed of illuminated paper volumes; while reminiscent of the forms of modern architecture, its fragile material gives it an image of ephemerality, fragility, and destined for collapse. The "tension between utopia and collapse," a theme Garaicoa frequently explores, is a central theme in this work as well. The city shines, but the source of the light is artificial; the city exists, but its substance is almost nonexistent. Thus, the artist reveals how fragile architecture can be, not only physically but also ideologically. The work's spatial placement deepens its layers of meaning. Because the work is often displayed within historical or dilapidated structures, it allows the viewer to perceive a "temporary utopia promising a bright future" as a ghost trembling within a decaying reality. The glossy paper structures depict the ideal of the modern city while simultaneously hinting at how today's political and economic conditions have suspended these ideals. Instead

of guiding the viewer, the illuminated grids, which appear like urban plans, present a kind of dead-end order; thus, the title “No Way Out” creates a sense of closure, both physical and metaphorical.

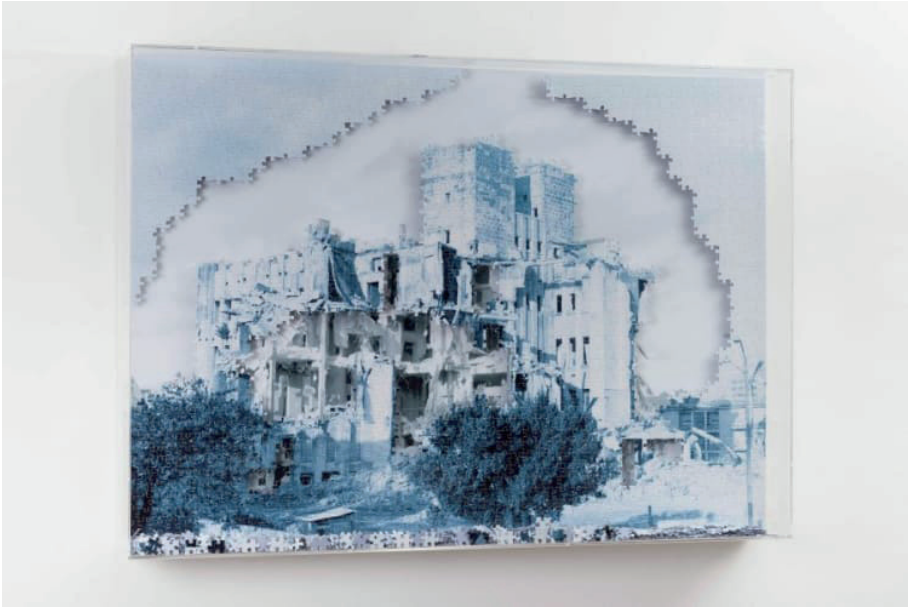


*Image 3. Carlos Garaicoa, No way out, 2002.*

With this work, Garaicoa reminds us that cities are composed not only of architectural elements but also of political expectations, social dreams, and traces of failures. Paper structures, being both constructible and destructible, represent the fragility of ideological projects. As the viewer wanders around this imaginary city defined by light, they are invited to question why the future envisioned by modernity has not materialized, or how it has collapsed. In this context, *No Way Out* is a critical installation that strikingly exposes architecture's relationship with collective memory, political imagination, and the collapse of urban utopias.

Other works by Garaicoa that we will examine include examples from his puzzle series (Image 4, Image 5). The puzzle pieces placed on the photograph serve as a powerful metaphor, demonstrating the deliberate fragmentation of the image and the fact that the whole can no longer be fully preserved. This method renders visible dichotomies such as permanence and impermanence, structure and decay, and presence and absence, thus questioning architecture both physically and conceptually. In Garaicoa's words, the dichotomy of “permanence/impermanence” transforms into an intellectual discussion th-

rough art. This approach transforms the viewer from a passive observer into an active participant. The effort to mentally assemble the puzzle pieces raises in the viewer an awareness of the fragility of both the represented building and the collective memory of the city. Thus, architecture is considered not merely a physical object but a carrier of social continuity and collective memory. The Puzzles Series offers a critical reading that addresses the states of decay, abandonment, and oblivion, particularly prevalent in cities with rich historical layers like Havana.



*Image 4. Carlos Garaicoa, Puzzle Hospital, 2019.*

Garaicoa takes photographs of demolished or abandoned buildings and transforms them into puzzles; this transformation metaphorically represents the process by which these structures are erased from collective memory. Thus, the puzzle renders visible the fragmentation of both an architectural remnant and a vanishing urban memory. This approach opens up discussions of issues such as spatial memory loss, the transformation of the urban fabric, abandonment, and the devastation of architecture by political and economic structures. Puzzles can be considered a production that critiques the disappearance or deliberate disregard of architectural heritage and urban memory. In this respect, they are extremely suitable for use in academic discussions on phenomena such as global urban transformation, neoliberal urbanization, gentrification, and the loss of memory spaces. They also provide a productive framework for examining the relationship between visual culture, collective memory, the political construction of space, and practices of forgetting.





*Image 5. Carlos Garaicoa, Honda, 2022.*

## 1. GENERAL EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

The multilayered relationship between architecture, history, and art renders visible not only the aesthetic qualities of physical structures but also the memory, ideological transformations, and political tensions of societies. The fact that architectural space is both a product and a determinant of social life transforms this field into a powerful field of debate, particularly for contemporary art. This context becomes a striking critical tool in Carlos Garaicoa's artistic practice. The artist not only documents Havana's unfinished, abandoned, or collapsing architectural fabric, but also renders visible the utopian dreams, historical ruptures, and social traumas associated with these structures. Thus, architecture becomes a representational space for both political reality and imagined alternative futures in Garaicoa's work.

The fundamental approach seen in works such as *Continuity of Somebody's Architecture*, *No Way Out*, and *Puzzles* is to interpret architectural structure through the tension between "what should be" and "what was." The contrast between photography and model, the fragility of paper light installations, and the structure of puzzle pieces symbolizing the erasure of memory offer the possibility of interpreting architecture as the material traces of both social hopes and social collapses. The aesthetic language emerging in these works functions not only as visual representation but also as political critique, sociological reading, and spatial memory analysis. Garaicoa's imaginatively

reconstructed architectural models and photographs of crumbling structures produce a powerful narrative that questions architecture's connection to history. This narrative can be read particularly through the failures of Cuba's post-revolutionary political programs, economic crises, and ideological ruptures, but also feeds into general discussions on global urbanization, modernization, and the collapse of architectural utopias.

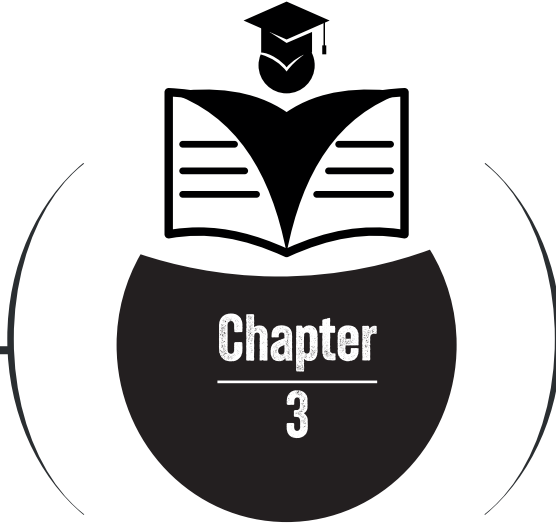
Overall, Garaicoa's artistic practice removes architecture from the confines of a technical discipline and transforms it into a critical field of social memory, political power relations, and the dynamics of historical continuity/rupture. His work reminds us that space is not merely a physical entity; it is also a narrative, an ideology, and a practice of remembering and forgetting. In this respect, the artist's work provides an interdisciplinary perspective on the relationship between architecture and art, offering an alternative reading of the ways cities collapse, transform, and reimagine. Ultimately, Carlos Garaicoa's work should be considered a powerful contemporary artistic practice that exposes the vulnerability of not only Havana but all modern cities to political-economic processes, the disintegrating foundations of imagined futures, and the increasingly fragmented nature of spatial memory.

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- Image 1. Carlos Garaicoa, How Neoclassical Architecture Gave Birth to Socialist Architecture, 2002. <https://universes.art/en/documenta/2002/binding-brauerei/carlos-garaicoa-1>, Access Date: 28.10.2025.
- Image 2. Carlos Garaicoa, Somebody's Architecture, 2002, <https://universes.art/en/documenta/2002/binding-brauerei/carlos-garaicoa-4>, Access Date: 21.10.2025.
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Image 5. Carlos Garaicoa, Honda, 2022, [https://goodman-gallery.com/store/shop?ref\\_id=50839](https://goodman-gallery.com/store/shop?ref_id=50839), Access Date: 28.10.2025.



## **CONSUMED BODIES: THE OBJECTIFICATION OF WOMEN IN BEVERAGE POSTERS**

“=====”

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## INTRODUCTION

Advertising has always been one of modernity's most powerful propaganda and ideological tools. Poster art, in particular, became one of the media that shaped the consumer society with the emergence of modernism and the influence of advertising, both as an artistic and commercial element. From the 19th century onwards, most people in industrialization, modern urban life, and working life, as a consumer society, met their housing, food, and beverage needs through the advertisements they saw on these posters. Thus, "Posters were an ideal way to educate consumers about what they should want [...]" (Gold, 1998, p. 1). Furthermore, when designing their posters, artists sought to promote the product being advertised through colorful and vibrant images like women. For example, consider a beverage poster by Jules Cheret from the Art Nouveau period, illustrated by a woman. This poster marketed not only the product itself, but also the lifestyle, desire, and identity of the time. Thus, the female body, while a sign constantly reproduced under the umbrella of modernization, has become a body consumed even in a simple beverage poster. Often, the representation of women in these posters has become more prominent than the advertising product itself. Jacques Sequela has stated the following on this subject:

"Advertisers' inability to restrain themselves has always amazed me. Their products are their mothers, daughters, wives, and mistresses. Their products so preoccupy and fill the lives, thoughts, and conversations of advertisers that they end up becoming a double, a mirror image of their products. Therefore, when an advertiser bares their soul on the first day they meet their advertiser, it's no laughing matter. Shamelessness is the first dimension of communication" (Sequela, 2014, p. 60).

Therefore, the fact that women's representation is more prominent in posters than in the advertised product is a sign that women are losing their individuality and becoming objects in a communicative sense. However, it can also be argued that the main reason for the objectification of women in posters is the perspective of the target audience and the designer. Ulus Baker made the following statements about perspective in her book *Art and Desire*: "As I just said, when we pose this problem of perspective with a hermeneutic approach, as a problem of 'understanding,' or, beyond hermeneutics and in a more modern framework, as a problem of 'communication,' when we discuss it with themes such as communication, I don't think we can reach much conclusion." (Baker, 2015, p. 19). In this context, based on Ulus Baker's comment, this chapter will attempt to argue that the representation of women in poster designs cannot be explained solely through the concept of perspective as a problem of understanding or communication, and that this situation must be examined from the perspectives of philosophy, politics, culture, and art history. Indeed, when examining the evolution of poster art over time, wo-

men, while symbolizing modernity and elegance in early posters, have come to represent an identity that ensures domestic peace in the post-war period, joins the working class after the Industrial Revolution, and, from the 1960s onward, is associated with individual freedom. Therefore, the female figure has served not only as an aesthetic element in advertising history but also as a carrier of social ideologies.

When examining the representation of women in poster designs, it becomes clear that they are increasingly commodified in every era, becoming a tool in the circulation of desire. This chapter will explore the visual representation of women through beverage posters, making this phenomenon more striking and visible. Consequently, this study will analyze the visual representation of women through beverage posters through the concept of “consumed bodies,” exploring the visual implications of both the history of graphic arts and approaches to gender mainstreaming.

### **1. The Visible Face of Advertising and Consumer Culture: Poster Design**

Poster designs, the visible face of advertising and consumer culture, became one of the first graphic communication media with high visual persuasive power, used in the public sphere long before the proliferation of mass media. Today, poster designs, with all kinds of technological and digital possibilities, are an important communication practice that can be displayed in both physical and virtual environments, guiding consumption habits and reproducing culturally specific visual codes. For these reasons, “posters are printed communication tools used for advertising or announcement” (Ambrosse & Harris, 2010, p. 203). In their article “Effective Poster Design,” Jan Van Delen et al. describe poster design as follows: “A poster is a summary. The most common mistake is to include too much information. A poster should be eye-catching, containing a concise message that can be understood at a glance” (Dalen, Gubbels, Engel, & Mfenyana, 2002, p. 79). To increase this attention-grabbing, poster designs have aimed to create visuals that align with or cater to the desires of consumer culture. In consumer culture, the value of objects is determined by the symbolic meanings they represent rather than their functions. In his book, *Consumer Society*, Baudrillard states: “The world of objects and needs gradually transforms into a realm of social hysteria. Just as the body acquires different meanings through symptoms, consumption transcends objects and creates a different language and system of meaning” (Baudrillard, 2008, p. 90). Poster design functions as a visual tool of this very symbolic production; it not only displays the product but also imbues it with a social identity. In other words, poster design is an ideological construct that constitutes the visual language of consumer culture: sometimes desire, happiness, youth, success, pleasure, and social status are normalized and disseminated through poster aesthetics. This can sometimes be achieved through “the use

of visual metaphors in poster design to concretize abstract concepts (desire, happiness, etc.) and convey the message more effectively and clearly” (Uyan Dur, 2015, p. 21). Undoubtedly, poster design, as an advertising medium, is a field of “visual discourse” where cultural codes are circulated, shaped by societal expectations. In his book *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Michael Foucault defined discourse as follows: “It is necessary to send discourse back to the very distant existence of the source; it is necessary to examine it within the play of its resistance to existence” (Foucault, 1999, p. 39). It is precisely at this point that the concept of discourse, which also finds its place in poster design, moves away from words and takes on the visual aspect. Based on Michel Foucault’s conceptualization of discourse, poster design, as an advertising medium of consumer culture, is part of the visual discourse of the male gaze and the power mechanism that governs desire. In this context, poster designs, brought to life through the visual, typographic, and linguistic elements employed by the designer, construct a semantic architecture that unconsciously directs the target audience. Furthermore, “every designer has a responsibility to use texts, images, and materials that the audience will understand and relate to” (Tokgöz Gün and Özkartal, 2020, p. 2882).

Indeed, looking back historically, while poster design served as the visual showcase of industrial production in the 19th century, it became the habitat of propaganda and commerce in the 20th century. In fact, with these poster designs, the consumer did not merely purchase a product, but a lifestyle, a form of belonging and an emotional experience based on the person they wanted to be. Therefore, poster designs not only direct the target audience to purchase, but also direct them to create “an identity through anything they purchase” and to form a “sense of self.” Thus, when Ulus Baker’s thoughts on “point of view” at the beginning of the chapter are reinterpreted through poster design, the necessity of looking at the concept of point of view from different perspectives rather than just a single point is confirmed. According to Ulus Baker, point of view;

“I think that we can see leaps in the form of historical leaps, not only in the field of philosophy or political structures, but also in the scientific field, in the field of aesthetics, in the field of art; I see these leaps not as the emergence of a brand new concept, but as moments when a concept that has always existed begins to have very different political references, philosophical references, moral references” (Baker, 2015, p. 21).

Just as society, culture, and politics guide humanity through perspectives, poster designs are also driven by identity, perception, and the politics of the same gaze. Especially in the digital age, individuals are exposed to an intense visual flow through their smartphones and social media, driven by algorithmic manipulation. In this context, mass and consumer culture, as well as visual and linguistic policies, emerge as decisive factors shaping individual



perception through both poster designs and video content. Indeed, poster designs continue to exist as a significant tool in modern society, shaping the circulation of desire and the transformation of cultural values, to the extent that they direct consumption behavior by establishing an emotional and symbolic bond between the advertised product and the target audience. In this context, “posters, today’s leading examples of modern art and design, have become a part of the cultural language” (Gedik and Taşcıoğlu, 2018, p. 106). In light of all this, poster design as an advertising medium is not only a commercial promotional product but also the visible face of cultural elements, identity politics, and consumer culture.

## **2. Consumed Bodies: The Visual Representation of Women in Beverage Posters**

The female body is often the most frequently used metaphor in the world of advertising and design. Whether in modern or primitive times, the aesthetics of the female body have become an object that drives consumption and arouses desires. Beverage advertisements have been one of the most intensely observed media reflecting these forms of representation. When examining beverage advertisements from the perspective of women, they range from soda to lemonade, from beer to alcoholic beverages like wine. For instance, “posters for alcoholic beverages provide a good example of art leading the way to break a taboo. In the 19th century, drinking by women was regarded with scorn. Although consumption was no doubt wide, women had to conceal it as best they could. A gentleman could get away with being seen intoxicated in public now and then, but for a woman it was simply socially unacceptable” (Gold, 1998, p. 29) (Figure 1). Looking at the poster design in Figure 1, women are not drinking but merely serving the male king his beer like a waiter. Thus, throughout history, the female image has sometimes represented concepts such as refreshment, energy, youth, and vitality within the symbolic meaning of the drink, while at other times it has also represented pleasure, power, and desire, acting as an “affective carrier” or an erotic figure that fuels the desire for consumption.



**Figure 1.** *Buck Beer, 1880.*

([https://www.vintag.es/2025/04/1800s-alcohol-ad-posters.html#google\\_vignette](https://www.vintag.es/2025/04/1800s-alcohol-ad-posters.html#google_vignette)).

The fact that women were able to physically appear on posters in an era when even drinking alcohol was concealed is entirely related to social contexts. “There is no biological characteristic that ensures the transmission of predispositions and behaviors, or that would justify the superiority of one sex over the other. Differences are individual. Differences considered typical for one sex or the other have largely been passed down through culture” (Heritier, Perrot, Agacinski, and Bacharan, 2018, p. 5). Indeed, Jean Baudrillard’s observation that consumer objects function through their sign value rather than their use value provides an important theoretical framework for explaining the representation of women on beverage posters. According to Baudrillard:

“Consumption behaviors that appear to be oriented toward objects and

pleasure actually serve entirely different purposes. They are the metaphorical or indirect expression of desire, the production of a social code of values through differentiating signs. Therefore, the determining factor is not the function of individual self-interest through a collection of objects, but the direct social exchange, communication, and distribution of values through a collection of signs” (Baudrillard, 2008, p. 91).

In beverage posters, sign value is produced by incorporating it into the female body, thus transforming the woman’s body into a signifier that enhances the symbolic capital of the commodity. This transformation enables the reorganization of seemingly natural and spontaneous desires through visual language. Thus, rather than fulfilling a biological need, the presentation of the beverage creates a field of affective investment through cultural values such as sexuality, youth, dynamism, and social prestige. For example, “According to Oscar Lewis, in Pigeon society, when a strong daughter marries a wealthy man and has a son, she is described as a post-menopausal ‘man-hearted woman.’ These women attain the same status as men; they can drink and speak in public...” (Heritier, Perrot, Agacinski and Bacharan, 2018, p. 17). Furthermore, the positioning of female images in beverage posters is often constructed through figures that are “seen,” not “doers.” Here, the concept of “doer” can be characterized as actional. Therefore, female characters in poster designs are designed as objects of male desire rather than active consumers. Bodily postures, clothing details, use of lighting, and gaze directions reinforce the viewer’s sense of encountering an object of aesthetic pleasure. At this point, the woman is framed within a romantic, energetic, or erotic trope that reinforces the qualities of the beverage; rather than being a subject, she becomes a bearer of the codes of desire represented (Figure 2). For example, Figure 2 shows an advertising poster for Foster’s beer transformed into an object of desire. The slogan in this poster design reads, “You wouldn’t want a warm beer, would you?”, a metaphor for the woman’s large breasts keeping the beer cold. The poster features two women; one holds her beer (the action) like a man, while the other woman stands there, her face unseen. To keep her beer cold, the woman pours her beer from the other woman’s chest, as if from a refrigerator. This situation stems from the cultural codes that transform women into objects of desire in poster designs and reflects the male perspective. Because “these specific depictions in alcohol advertisements reflect the culture and more likely the ‘norm’ of how people accept the reality of breweries, alcoholism, and drunkenness” (Benonguil, 2022, p. 67).



**Figure 2.** *Fosters Beer Campaign and Poster Design.*

(<https://www.popsugar.com/fitness/jennifer-aniston-pvolve-workout-review-49369312>)

Undoubtedly, the situation is no different for beverages like soda, soda, and other alcoholic beverages. Two dominant strategies for positioning the female figure, particularly in ads for soda, energy drinks, soda, and alcohol, are striking: the first is an aesthetic of innocence based on the imagery of “coolness and freshness”; the second is an erotic and glamorous presentation based on the axis of “power and attractiveness” (Figure 3). Just as in Figure 3, in both cases, the woman serves as nothing more than a visual tool that enhances the symbolic value of the drink. In this poster design, although Fanta is a soda, the woman is positioned in terms of both innocence and beauty.

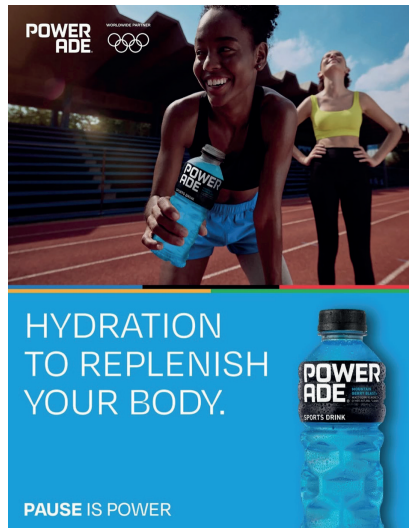


**Figure 3.** *Fanta advertising poster.*

(<https://tr.pinterest.com/pin/74731675060266207/>)

Today, due to global advertising communication and gender perspectives, women are increasingly featured in beverage advertisements as exemplary or pioneering female figures. Some contemporary campaigns have tended to present women as active, self-identified, athletes, or socially responsible figures. However, even these new representations often re-commodify the “strong woman” narrative, producing a new consumption aesthetic associated with bodily control, fitness culture, and ideal body norms. Therefore, even if the representation shifts, the focus of consumption and visual power relations have not completely transformed. For example, in Figure 4, two athletic girls, as leading figures, hold Power Ade energy drinks. When viewed from a positive perspective, the poster design in Figure 4 reveals that women are no longer objectified as sexy women in beverage posters as they once were. Instead, the ad portrays the image or affirmation that every woman who wants to stay physically fit should drink this energy drink. This situation, in essence, reflects a paradox of post-feminism. For instance, Rosalind Gill argues that “post-feminism can be understood as a sensibility that characterizes various

contemporary depictions of femininity within popular culture” (Rivers, 2017, p. 16). This is because feminism today, unlike the discursive and practical frameworks of previous eras, is being repositioned within a context determined by the media and cultural industries. In this context, the image of the “strong woman” and beauty norms are being reconstructed, circulated, and marketed in consumer-focused formats through various communication channels such as television and social media platforms.



**Figure 4.** *Powerade energy drink advertising poster.*

(<https://www.instagram.com/p/C9SPRiHxfh1/>)

In light of this information, a visual examination of women’s representations in beverage posters from past to present reveals that each era has been shaped by existing cultural and societal influences. Naturally, this has led to the transformation of women into the bodies consumed in beverage posters.

### **2.1. The Ideal and Ornamented Female Image: Art Nouveau**

The ideal and ornamented female image was evident in poster designs from the last quarter of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century. During this period, when the Industrial Age emerged and urbanization accelerated, consumer culture gained momentum in social life. Therefore, advertising posters became a fundamental tool both for promoting new products and for creating the visual codes of idealized modern life. In beverage posters, in particular, the aesthetic understanding shaped by the Art Nouveau movement brought the female figure to the center, making the theme of “feminine elegance” visible. Thus, “Art Nouveau, a decorative art and design style, influenced the entire world between 1890 and 1910” (Becer, 2011, p. 100). During



this period, when Japanese graphic style was reflected in Art Nouveau, poster designs focused on women, and these women were often depicted with curly and long hair and excessive floral and plant motifs. Prominent figures from this period include Alphonse Mucha, Jules Cheret, Henri de Toulouse Lautrec, and Eugène Grasset. Artists of this period portrayed women as symbols of modernity and femininity without objectifying them. Jules Cheret, one of the notable artists of this period, stated, “His consistent use of the same beautiful young woman in his posters, regardless of the subject, was admired by the public, and this woman type was dubbed ‘Cherette’” (Erdal, 2020, p. 14).

In his lithographically printed posters, Cheret portrayed cheerful women with vibrant colors and rhythmic lines. For example, Figure 5 shows a poster design for Vin Marini, a tonic wine brand. In this poster design, Cheret depicted a woman in a vibrant yellow dress, seemingly dancing while holding an alcoholic beverage. However, the decorative aesthetics of Art Nouveau during this period also overlapped with cultural structures that envisioned women as decorative objects. While the women depicted in the poster design were not objectified sexually, they were nonetheless portrayed as decorative ornaments or objects that adorned the posters and further enhanced the product being sold.





**Figure 5.** Jules Cheret, *Vim Marini*, 1894, Paris. (Gold, 1998, s. 30).

Another poster designer from the Art Nouveau period is Alphonse Mucha. “His posters and graphic works often display great mastery, with their excessive hair and bold decorative ornamentation” (Weil, 2008, p. 21). For example, in Figure 6, he once again demonstrated his distinctiveness in his poster design for a beer brand called “Bières de la Meuse.” The flower figures used, the woman’s graceful gaze and her central positioning of the poster, and the depiction of a beautiful woman drinking Bières de la Meuse beer all harmonize. Consequently, along with the cultural and social implications of

the Art Nouveau period, women were idealized on beverage posters, creating an ornate portrait of a woman.



**Figure 6.** Alphonse Mucha, *Bières de la Meuse*, 1897, Paris.

(<https://www.muchafoundation.org/en/gallery/browse-works/object/46>)

## 2.2. 1950-1970: Erotization and Attractiveness

Advertisements, from the 1950s to the 1970s, were shaped by the sexualization of women's visual representation, based on themes of eroticization and attractiveness. The increased visibility of women in the public sphere, particularly after World War II, and the resulting social and cultural freedoms, led to a shift in women's status. While these themes continue to resonate throughout society, the use of women's attractiveness in the visual sense continues. "The sexualization of women and beauty pageants in America began after World War II. Many women were assigned tasks such as cleaning, cooking, and caring for veterans returning from war" (Stoliarchuk, n.d.). Furthermore, while women's working lives within the home were associated solely with the role of "good wife/mother," poster designs reflected the opposite. One study emphasized that newspaper and magazine representations of women between

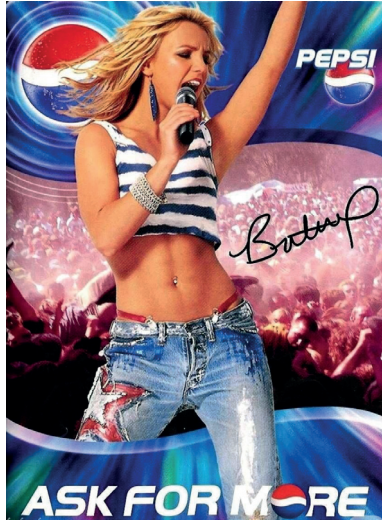
1955 and 1960 shifted from “moral force to mother/housewifery,” and then evolved into the “new eroticized woman” image (as cited in Wilson, 2011, p. 19). Particularly during this period, beverage brands established a connection between physical attractiveness and the product in beer and soda advertisements, depicting women in bikinis for soft drinks and as sexy women serving beer to their husbands and preparing their drinks for alcoholic beverages (Figure 7). In many poster designs during this period, women’s bodies were eroticized by using fragmented images such as lips, waistlines, and cleavage.



**Figure 7.** Coca-Cola Poster, 1954 (Left), Budweiser Beer Poster, n.d. (right) (<https://tr.pinterest.com/pin/21603273193707885/>, <https://i.pinimg.com/736x/8d/d0/e1/8dd0e17e1aa375535f8932d6ce050efe.jpg>)

### 2.3. 1980-2000: Masculine Energy in the Context of Pop Culture

In the period from the 1980s to the 2000s, the rise of pop culture, the proliferation of computer games and mobile phones, and the shift in gender perception worldwide led to a diversification of the use of female imagery in poster designs. For example, poster designs no longer focused solely on sexually explicit advertising, but also began to feature self-supporting, challenging female figures. Thus, the transformation women experienced in advertising posters was reimagined not as passive objects of beauty but as active, empowered identities. As seen in Figure 8, poster designs between 1980 and 2000 attempted to portray female pop artists with their masculine stances and free spirits. Advertising campaigns began to be created around the idea that anyone who drank Pepsi could become Britney Spears, or that fans could reach anyone who drank the beverage.



**Figure 8.** *Pepsi, Ask for more, 2001.*

(<https://tr.pinterest.com/pin/914862402528748/>)

#### **2.4. The Digital Age: Filtered Perception and Objectification**

The rapid development of technology and the ability to present oneself differently offered by the virtual environment have led to the visual representation of women being affected by this situation. The opportunities provided by social media accounts, such as filtering capabilities, the desire for likes, and algorithmic following, have both made the image of women more visible and placed them more widely within objectification mechanisms. For example, according to Walter Lippman, who laid the intellectual foundations of modern media theory and the concept of “public opinion,” he argued that what he defined as “a revolution in the art of democracy” could be used for “manufacturing consent,” that is, to impose something the public does not want by applying new methods of propaganda (Chomsky, 2016, p. 3). Because “throughout the historical process, every power; “It has used communication tools as a propaganda instrument to impose its own ideology, to make the masses obey the current social system and to reproduce the dominant discourse” (Önder, 2022, p. 9). Although this situation is not directly carried out through propaganda as a political discourse today, it is reflected through social media, advertisements and poster design, as Lippman stated in the concept of “production of consent”. Undoubtedly, when we look at the female identities that are tried to be created on social media, either pornographic elements such as objectification are highlighted or posters and advertisements that the target audience encounters without their consent are imposed through propaganda such as the idea that women will always be fit and sporty. For example,



women can fictionalize any subject that they do not like in their daily lives on social media with the filters and arrangements they want. This woman can present herself as if she has many friends, or if she does not like her body, she can post as if she constantly exercises... Therefore, the female body has been standardized and idealized, perfected with digital interventions, filtered and now placed into the production of a “completed” perception. In fact, beverage advertisements are no longer only in printed posters, but also in digital. It reaches consumers through personalized visual campaigns that are constantly circulating on platforms. For example, in 2020, Short’s Brewing Co. ran an advertising campaign with an association called The Pink Fund to support breast cancer patients (Figure 9). The Pink Fund is a national nonprofit organization that provides financial support to breast cancer patients to help them meet their basic needs, reduce stress, and focus on recovery while they are fighting for their lives. However, although this campaign, organized by Short’s Brewing Co. and The Pink Fund, was created for charity, the representation of women on the beverage can is objectified, as seen in the poster design in Figure 9. The colors are the first thing that catches the eye when looking at the poster. Therefore, the poster may have been designed in a pink hue, which is also appropriate for the campaign’s name, to raise awareness of breast cancer or to highlight sexism. The slogan, “Real Help Now,” was also chosen, supported by an image of a glass and can. However, the woman illustration positioned on the can in the poster was completely objectified, preventing the creation of content that aligns with the campaign. This The campaign leverages a marketing technique based on emotion rather than empathy, supporting the sale of the beverage’s theme of charity. Thus, while the poster doesn’t directly portray women as sexual objects, it can be argued that objectification is present due to the marketing and feminization strategy. In this context, the digital age presents a two-way paradox for the female image: On the one hand, women have had the opportunity to be represented more visibly and “freely” than in previous eras; on the other hand, this visibility has been subjected to largely visualized norms, aesthetic pressures, and processes of objectification. While the female body functions as an arena of filtered and selected representations, subjecthood has tended to give way to the “performance of visibility.” For example, Erving Goffman explained the values of female representations that reflect today’s world precisely through the concept of “presentation of self.” According to him, “Sometimes the individual acts in an extremely calculated manner, expressing himself in a certain way solely for the purpose of creating an impression likely to evoke the specific reaction he wishes in others” (Goffman, 1956, p. 3). Therefore, Goffman’s “self-presentation is the conscious/unconscious activities carried out to determine and shape others’ impressions of the person” (Zengin Demirbilek, 2021, p. 67). When interpreted in today’s digital world based on Goffman’s theory of “presentation of the self,” this representation of women creates a hybrid semiotic space where the female body

is reconfigured by both social and technological norms. Consequently, whether in poster designs or advertising campaigns, the female body is no longer merely a visual tool for consumption but also an active element of the digital interaction economy.



**Figure 9.** *Pink Fund and Short's Brewing Co advertising campaign poster design, 2020.*  
(<https://www.brewbound.com/news/shorts-brewing-co-announces-partnership-with-the-pink-fund-to-support-breast-cancer-patients/>)

## CONCLUSION

In advertising and design, the representation of women as consumable bodies has always been a preferred visual strategy. The transformation of the female image in poster design, shaped by social and cultural contexts, has sometimes reached the point of propaganda, leading to a policy of representation. From ancient times to the present, the female body has become the most effective symbol in advertising, carrying a transformed identity that encompasses desire, elegance, and the presentation of self. In this context, the visibility of women in poster designs has been shaped by objectification rather than their representation as individual beings. These objectification approaches, particularly regarding the female body, focused on pornographic marketing strategies in the 1950s, while by the 1980s, they were marketed as “free” yet commodified figures through the dynamics of popular culture. In the digital age, the representation of women has been repeatedly reproduced, whether in virtual media or on a television screen, transforming them into both a link

in a chain of consumption and an object of desire. For example: The Ancient Greeks thought that beings were composed of a “succession of transcendent forms.” In other words, beings “pose” in a way. There are ideal, privileged moments, for example, of a movement, a mechanical movement. Among these privileged moments, there is also the “most” privileged one, which they call *telos*, that is, the target goal; “the actualization, activation, and realization of a form” (Baker, 2016, p. 22). When considering this situation in terms of women’s representation, women are often portrayed in poster designs as passive forms consumed solely through their bodies or as inert. The actions that need to be taken in relation to this situation in terms of poster design can be listed as follows:

- \* More egalitarian and inclusive strategies should be developed in advertising and design to counter the objectification of the female body.

- \* Designers who specialize in gender should be trained and who do not view the female body solely as a body to be consumed.

- \* In beverage posters, the presentation of women’s selves should be both aesthetically pleasing and reflect their strengths, avoiding stereotypical indicators.

Based on all this information, the representation of women in beverage posters from past to present has been subject to social and cultural stereotypes, and is essentially an unchanging visual communication strategy of advertising campaigns. Naturally, women are still constructed as “consumed bodies”; their bodies are reduced to a symbolic value equivalent to the attractiveness of the beverage (product). Over time, as expertise in design has increased, Visual and structural inequalities in the representation of women under the umbrella of modernity will be eliminated.

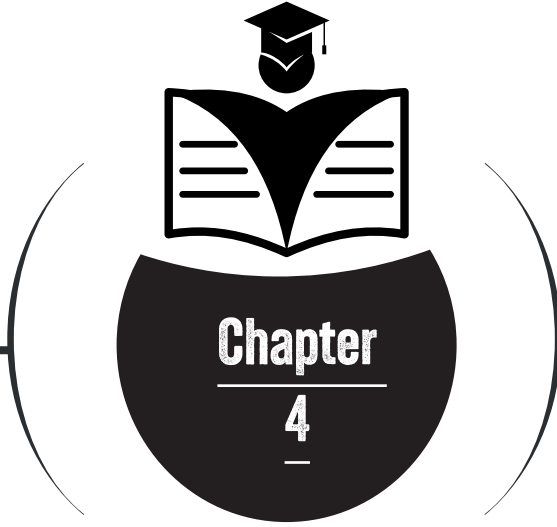


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## **PHOTOVOICE: VISUAL EXPRESSION AND PARTICIPATORY ART PRACTICE**

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## Introduction

Contemporary research increasingly employs innovative methodologies that integrate multiple media, offering greater versatility and flexibility than traditional approaches. Within this paradigm shift, Art-Based Research (ABR) positions art as both a mode of inquiry and a distinctive medium for knowledge production, thereby expanding opportunities in the social sciences. Among these methodologies, Photovoice stands out as a dynamic and transformative approach that merges visual aesthetics with the political agency of community-based participatory action research (PAR).

The photovoice method, embedded within PAR, is grounded in Paulo Freire's Theory of Critical Consciousness (*Conscientização*) and feminist theory (Jarldorn, 2019; Wang & Burris, 1997). Its association with feminist theory originates from Wang and Burris's research involving women in rural China. This theoretical foundation enables photovoice to serve as both a data collection instrument and a tool for empowerment. The method's origins can be traced to the 1990s, when Caroline Wang and Mary Ann Burris conducted research among women in rural China. Rather than delegating photography to assistants, the researchers empowered participants to document their own experiences. Initially termed "photo novel," the method was later renamed photovoice to avoid confusion with the term "photo novel" (Nikitina, 2025, pp. 29, 30).

Photovoice is a qualitative research method based on visual documentation, used to raise awareness and increase visibility for underrepresented communities or on a specific issue. This method enables participants to directly document their experiences, thereby translating the resulting visual information into actionable policies that meet community needs. According to Wang and Burris (1997, p. 369), "Photovoice is a process through which people define, represent, and develop their communities through a specific photographic technique." This method enables participants to record their experiences visually, reflect critically on them, and take action to effect social change (Langdon et al., 2014).

This study aims to analyse the photovoice method as a transformative practice within ABR and to elucidate the integration of its theoretical principles into practical applications. The analysis will address photography's role as a catalyst for dialogue, its capacity to democratize power relations between researchers and participants, and the transformation of individual narratives into documents of social action. Theoretical discussions will be supported by field examples from diverse geographical and cultural contexts to illustrate the method's multidimensional structure and flexibility of application.

## The Theoretical Identity of Photovoice

The identity of the photovoice method is defined by its robust theoretical foundations and its utilisation of visual art forms. Lu et al. (2023) characterise photovoice as both an art-based qualitative research approach and a community-based participatory research method (p. 2492). As an art-based and par-

ticipatory approach, photovoice seeks to empower individuals through photography and storytelling (Lu et al., 2023). Jarldorn (2019) further describes photovoice as a qualitative, community-based PAR method that foregrounds the experiences and insights of marginalised or excluded groups through participant-generated photographs. The method’s transformative potential arises from participants’ engagement, learning, and the development of ownership over the knowledge produced. Technological advancements have made cameras widely accessible and reduced the expertise required for photography, thereby enhancing photovoice’s status as a democratic research tool (p. 3).

Within this framework, PAR serves as a platform for researching, implementing, and advancing transformative ideas. The method has the potential to redefine the traditional roles of researchers, positioning them as both scientists and agents of change. This dual role is facilitated by PAR’s integration of social analysis and social action, resulting in knowledge production that directly supports practical problem-solving (Lawson et al., 2020, p. 19).

A defining characteristic of the Photovoice method is its methodological flexibility, which adapts to the purpose, scope, and dynamics of the participant group. Latz and Mulvihill (2017) observe that researchers employ a framework that maintains structural integrity while allowing adaptation to the specific process, rather than adhering to a rigid procedure. They conceptualise this dynamic process in eight fundamental stages: definition, invitation, training, documentation, narration, idea generation, presentation, and validation (p. 61). These stages ensure coherence and integrity in practice, as outlined in Table 1.

*Table 1. Photovoice implementation stages.<sup>1</sup>*

Stage No.	Stage Name	Scope and Key Activities
1	Identification	Determining the location where the research will be conducted, the individuals to be included, the purpose of the project, and the policymakers who may influence the process
2	Invitation	The selection of participants who meet the specified criteria (usually purposive sampling) and their inclusion in the study
3	Education	Explaining the project’s objectives to participants, discussing ethical rules (consent, confidentiality, etc.) and teaching basic photography techniques.
4	Documentation	Participants are photographing their own life realities in response to the open-ended instructions or questions presented to them
5	Narration	The interpretation of photographs through individual interviews or focus groups, and the attribution of meaning to images from the participants’ perspective
6	Ideation	Synthesising visual and verbal data, identifying key themes, and generating academic or practical findings

<sup>1</sup> This table has been compiled by the author based on the theoretical frameworks presented by Latz and Mulvihill (2017) and Nikitina (2025).

7	Presentation	Presenting the findings to stakeholders, community leaders and policymakers through an exhibition, website or report
8	Confirmation	Evaluating the impact of the presentation phase, examining changes from the participants' perspective, and planning the sustainability of the project

Studies employing the photovoice method demonstrate its use both as a standalone approach and as part of mixed-methods research. Latz and Mulvihill (2017) highlight that photovoice can be integrated with other methodologies, such as case studies, and is often complemented by surveys, participant observation, and document analysis, depending on project requirements (p. 62). This versatility underscores photovoice’s structurally diverse and inclusive framework, which accommodates various data sources. Since its inception in the 1990s (Wang & Burris), photovoice has gained pedagogical depth through the systematic application steps outlined by Latz and Mulvihill (2017) and continues to demonstrate efficacy in addressing emotional and situational contexts, as evidenced in recent studies (Nikitina, 2025).

**The Artistic Identity of Photovoice: Creating Meaning Beyond Representation**

Photovoice surpasses the limitations of basic photographic documentation by addressing social issues through participants’ subjectivities, making it a vital methodological tool within the ABR framework. Its capacity to reveal implicit meanings and deep structures offers new perspectives. Arts-Based Research (ABR) is gaining prominence in academic and social science discourse as both an alternative and a complement to traditional methodologies. Garoian (2011) notes that contemporary academia increasingly values research methods that reflect the creative processes of artists, poets, and musicians, providing a counterbalance to the rational inquiry models prevalent in the sciences and social sciences. Although Eisner introduced ABR in the early 1990s, its mainstream adoption was facilitated by earlier developments, including advances in creative arts therapies, neuroscience-informed understandings of art in learning, and innovations in qualitative research (Leavy, 2018, p. 6). Against this historical and methodological backdrop, Photovoice, rooted in the PAR tradition, integrates both the imagery processes highlighted by Garoian and the interdisciplinary foundations identified by Leavy.

Photovoice functions as a hybrid methodology that bridges theory and practice, integrating PAR’s emphasis on social change with ABR’s focus on the production of aesthetic and symbolic knowledge. Its multifaceted structure is defined not only by its ability to document reality but also by its identity as an art practice that generates embodied knowledge through aesthetics, symbolism, and creative processes, thereby advancing social change. The artistic dimension of photovoice elevates it beyond a data-collection tool, granting it transformative potential. This identity is explored through three primary dimensions: art form and medium of expression, emotional and physical impact, and aesthetic activism and visibility. An examination of these aspects

demonstrates that photovoice serves as an empowering and expressive tool for participants.

### **1. Art Form and Means of Expression**

Photovoice constitutes an artistic approach that enables individuals to communicate their daily practices, emotions, and concerns through photography, thereby rendering these experiences tangible. Its creative identity is rooted in utilising photography not solely as a data-collection instrument, but as a profound medium for expression and communication.

A fundamental characteristic of the photovoice method within ABR is its capacity to visualise experiences and amplify their expressive power. This dual function allows photovoice to operate as both an art form and a potent mode of expression. By enabling individuals to narrate their lives and address pressing social issues through photography, photovoice combines artistic expression with participatory engagement, thereby democratizing awareness and fostering a productive research approach (Lu et al., 2023).

The application of photovoice to capture complex emotional narratives offers researchers significant opportunities. Photography is particularly valuable for documenting intricate emotional and physical experiences that are often challenging to articulate verbally. However, as Susan Sontag (2001) cautions, photography should not be viewed as an objective representation of reality. Each photograph reflects conscious choices and may convey different meanings based on the photographer's intentions and interpretations. The material and symbolic significance of a picture is shaped by subjective factors, such as the photographer's identity, the perspectives and relationships depicted, and the inclusion or exclusion of specific subjects (as cited in Lu et al., 2023). This subjectivity enables photovoice to capture nuanced emotional and complex narratives, making it a valuable tool for deepening understanding.

The artistic dimension of photovoice not only produces tangible products but also cultivates a dialogic environment. Mooney, Bhui, and the Co-Pact Project Team (2023) assert that photographs produced through photovoice offer detailed insights into how participants perceive, interact with, and interpret their environments, allowing viewers to access events from the participants' perspectives. Additionally, photographic data transcends the visual, conveying emotions and experiences that are difficult to articulate, often through metaphor. This process reveals aspects of expertise that may remain unnoticed, unaccepted, or unshared within a group due to prevailing societal norms (p. 2). In summary, within the photovoice technique, photography functions as an artistic communication tool that engages viewers emotionally and cognitively, fosters critical awareness, and facilitates dialogue on social change.

### **2. Emotional and Physical Impact**

A significant effect of Photovoice is its capacity to foster emotional and physical engagement, enabling both participants and viewers to perceive ex-



periences with greater depth and multidimensionality. By integrating photography and storytelling, the method provides unique access to individuals' emotional and physical realities.

The photovoice method extends beyond traditional research approaches by granting greater agency to both researchers and participants and by supporting individuals in coping with trauma and adversity. Numerous studies indicate that photovoice offers emotional and psychological support to communities facing significant challenges. For example, Fairey, Cubillos, and Muñoz (2024) examined the impact of photovoice on the healing process of communities affected by conflict in Colombia. In this study, photovoice provided participants with a safe and reflective space to process their losses and envision future possibilities. The photographic process facilitated the internalisation of experiences and contributed to a sense of calm, even in the presence of enduring pain (Fairey et al., 2024, p. 35). Similarly, Herrera et al. (2023) investigated the experiences of minoritised engineering students, using photovoice to identify and address the barriers imposed by a competitive academic culture, thereby enabling students to resist stress-inducing norms (Herrera et al., 2023, p. 13).

Employing photovoice in research enables individuals and communities to recognise and articulate the implicit emotional intensity they may otherwise experience in silence. Making these issues explicit and concrete can mitigate the effects of pain or stress. Mooney and colleagues (2023, p. 1) observe that photovoice facilitates nonverbal expression and helps reduce power imbalances between researchers and participants. This method is particularly valuable for individuals who lack trust, fear institutional harm, or experience diminished psychological safety, such as those engaged with mental health services.

### **3. Aesthetic Activism and Visibility**

The impact of Photovoice derives not only from the documentary function of photography but also from the narratives that communicate participants' emotions and experiences. This aesthetic dimension amplifies the effectiveness of the messages conveyed, establishing Photovoice as a vital component of ABR practice. Art, and photography in particular, uniquely expresses the depth, complexity, and emotional intensity of experiences that are often beyond the reach of language (McNiff, 2008).

Photovoice serves as a potent instrument for aesthetic activism and visibility, leveraging aesthetic qualities for political and social objectives. This approach positions photography at the core of socially and politically engaged practice, extending its function beyond artistic creation (Etmanski et al., 2022). In arts-based research, aesthetics are not confined to visual beauty; rather, the primary aim is to evoke empathy and reflexivity in viewers (Leavy, 2020, p. 21, citing Dunlop, 2004). The exploration of the 'inner landscape,' as emphasised by Eisner, is fundamental to empathy, since understanding another's experience requires an initial connection with one's own emotional world.

Photovoice's primary contributions to aesthetic activism and visibility lie in uncovering hidden realities and catalysing social change. By challenging conventional research methods, photovoice renders critical aspects of community life visible. Lu et al. (2023, p. 2490) argue that photovoice democratises the act of "noticing" by bridging the gap between design researchers and communities. This method exposes inequalities embedded in sociotechnical infrastructures and stimulates community learning and capacity-building, thereby generating new social possibilities.

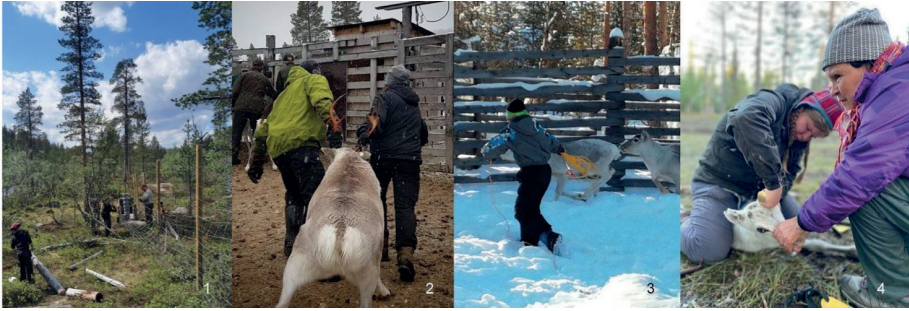
Visual imagery can catalyse social justice, a central objective of many art-based studies. In this context, visual materials prompt critical reflection by challenging entrenched stereotypes and motivating collective action (Holm et al., 2018). Within the Photovoice process, the integration of participant-generated photographs and accompanying personal narratives results in a "powerful artistic product" (Fitton, 2019, p. 20, citing Capous-Desyllas, 2014). This integrated output effectively amplifies participants' voices, reaching both academic and broader audiences. The aesthetic dimension is a key factor underpinning the method's potential for social visibility and activism.

### **Field Experiences: Project Examples on the Transformative Power of Visual Narrative**

Examining field applications is essential for understanding the theoretical depth and philosophical origins of the photovoice method. In practice, photovoice transcends its role as an academic data-collection tool, functioning as a dynamic platform through which participants publicly share their daily practices, cultural resistance, and systemic challenges from their own perspectives.

#### **1. Cultural Resilience and Ecological Awareness: The Daily Life of Sami Reinde Herders (Korsström-Maggas)**

This project, exemplifying ABR, was conducted in Finland by Korinna Korsström-Magga in 2019 as part of her doctoral research. The study, titled "Daily Life of Sami Reindeer Herders in Finland," aimed to raise awareness of the daily experiences of reindeer herders, a topic selected due to the intrinsic connection between reindeer herding and Sami cultural identity. The research focus also reflects concerns about the exploitation of the Sami region resulting from globalisation and increased resource interest. Sami reindeer herders in northern Finland have long contended with competing demands for pasture, leading to a gradual reduction in untouched grazing areas (Korsström-Magga, 2023, p. 1).



**Figure 1.** *The Sámi reindeer herders are hardworking outdoor people. From the left: Photographs 1-2, 2021 by S.*

*Kustula, photograph 3, 2017, by K. Ukkonen and photograph 4, 2022, by E-M. Hetta (Korsström-Magga, 2023, s. 11).*

The study sought to inform regional decision-makers by highlighting the daily realities of reindeer herders through art-based interventions and the photovoice method. Participants documented aspects of their daily lives using photovoice, and, under the researcher's guidance, these photographs were curated into a public exhibition and installation. The exhibition, titled "Boazoeallin" (meaning reindeer life), was accompanied by a book of the same name featuring the collected photographs (Korsström-Magga, 2023, p. 13).



**Figure 2.** *An agamograph (Photograph: Korinna Korsström-Magga, 2017) of a picture of a reindeer herd (Photograph: Petri Mattus, 2016) that turns into a picture of a reindeer killed by a predator (Photograph: Petri Mattus, 2017). Retrieved December 19, 2025, from <https://nacerteam.weebly.com/korinna-korsstromlm-magga.html>. Copyright [2017] by Korinna Korsström-Magga.*

The conversion of research photographs from mere data collection instruments into 'pedagogical exhibition objects' exemplifies the dynamic potential of the photovoice method. This process extends beyond cultural representation, creating an anti-colonial space for knowledge exchange. Korsström-Mag-

ga (2019) underscores that successful collaboration with Indigenous communities requires partnerships that are ethically grounded, highly sensitive, and aligned with decolonisation principles.

## **2. Activism and Spatial Transformation: The Kutloano Papermaking Mural Project (Mphapho Christian Hlasane)**

The Kutloano Papermaking Mural Project, directed by Mphapho Christian Hlasane, represents a comprehensive PAR initiative investigating how visual arts strategies can enhance the economic sustainability and social cohesion of small craft enterprises. Located in Thabong, near Welkom, South Africa, the project focused on the Kutloano enterprise, whose name signifies “togetherness.” Hlasane (2011) integrated visual tools such as photovoice, community resource mapping, and mural painting, an innovative combination at the time. According to Berman (2013, p. 10), the project’s primary objective was to increase the Kutloano Paper Production group’s visibility within their community, thereby supporting the sustainability of their small business.

The initial phase of the project involved Kutloano members mapping their daily routes, identifying local markets, and cataloguing available resources. Participants used coloured bands and stickers on a large map to mark paths from their homes to workplaces, highlight key locations, and identify potential collaboration opportunities. This exercise enabled the group to rediscover their local geography and resources, serving as a foundational step in addressing their sense of isolation (Hlasane, 2011).

The resource mapping phase revealed that the Kutloano group’s most pressing need was increased visibility. To address this, members approached local hardware stores for donations and discounts on materials such as sheet metal, poles, and concrete. They contextualised their efforts within a narrative of cultural empowerment, drawing parallels to Zola 7, a well-known advocacy television program in South Africa (Hlasane, 2011, p. 48). Using the materials acquired, participants collaboratively created a sign for their workplace. This tangible achievement reinforced the group’s confidence in their collective agency and provided essential motivation for the subsequent mural project.

Hlasane (2011) outlines several critical stages in the project’s implementation. Initially, Photovoice studies identified crime and environmental pollution as central themes, leading to the selection of Zuka Baloyi Stadium as the intervention site (Figure 3). The adoption of a black-and-white aesthetic was motivated by both budgetary considerations and the goal of maximising participant involvement. During the collective painting phase, supported by Artist Proof Studio students, the process evolved into an act of empowerment (Hlasane, 2011, pp. 58-65). This artistic intervention transformed previously invisible community narratives into prominent visual statements, reimagining the stadium as a site of social memory and dialogue.



**Figure 3.** *Sechaba Sejake and Irene Ramokhoase, Take Care, 2009. (Photograph: Mphapho Christian Hlasane, 2009). (Hlasane, 2011, s. 69).*

Hlasane's (2011) study illustrates how art can function as a tangible intervention in addressing the economic and spatial challenges confronting disadvantaged communities. The process established a symbolic space for marginalised groups and facilitated measurable socio-economic advancements.

### **Conclusion: The Future of Photovoice at the Intersection of Art and Politics**

Photovoice, a visual methodology that shifts research power from researchers to communities, has gained prominence in health, environmental, and social research. It is regarded as a “small method that can change the world” by facilitating social change at the intersection of artistic expression and political activism (Evans-Agnew and Strack, 2022). The method's future is shaped by technological transformation, methodological flexibility, and a focus on co-research oriented toward social justice. The transition of photovoice into virtual environments in the digital era has introduced both new opportunities and methodological debates regarding the documentation of participants' experiences (Holm et al., 2018; Oliffe et al., 2023).

The widespread adoption of smartphones has transformed photography from an exclusive activity into a universally accessible tool (Leavy, 2020). This technological shift has altered the conduct of photovoice projects. While clear boundaries have yet to be established, it is anticipated that future projects will increasingly incorporate platforms such as social media (e.g., Instagram, Snapchat) and augmented reality for data collection and dissemination (Latz and Mulvihill, 2017).



A significant innovation in the future of photovoice is the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies to analyse extensive photographic datasets. AI can identify patterns that may elude human observation by leveraging visual-label combinations (Herrera et al., 2013). The ongoing development of AI software tailored to research needs is streamlining researchers' tasks. In photovoice, AI applications are expected to enhance the method's utility by facilitating the compilation, archiving, and analysis of large volumes of participant-generated photographs. However, this technological advancement introduces new responsibilities, including preserving participants' original narratives and safeguarding their data privacy.

The public exhibition and discussion of images produced through photovoice transform individual narratives into social evidence, generating civic momentum for change. Herrera et al. (2023) argue that Photovoice should function not only as a tool for raising social awareness but also as a strategic mechanism to prompt concrete policy action. Due to its methodological flexibility, photovoice is adaptable across disciplines and is increasingly applied to address urgent global challenges. Bagge-Petersen et al. (2024) advocate a "think globally, act locally" approach for future photovoice projects, linking local issues, such as the climate crisis, to their global origins. This perspective positions individual visual narratives as both local testimonies and components of broader social resistance to international crises.

In summary, photovoice converts the aesthetic capacities of art into methodological instruments for data generation, thereby establishing a new epistemological domain within the social sciences. Visual expression serves to democratise the relationship between researcher and participant by facilitating the articulation of subjective experiences and tacit knowledge that are often inaccessible through conventional textual methods. The methodological flexibility inherent in artistic processes functions not only as a representational strategy but also as a means for analysing and reshaping social reality. Consequently, Photovoice is poised to remain a transformative research approach that systematically integrates visual arts with social action and policymaking, prioritising participant subjectivity in knowledge construction.

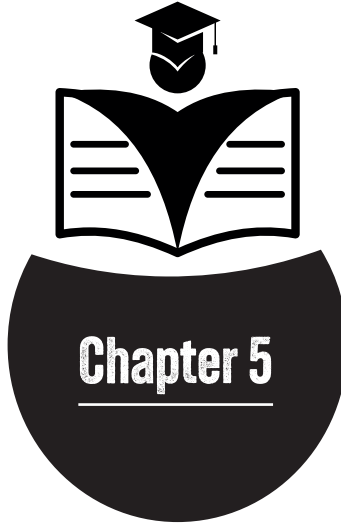
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## THE TRANSFORMATION OF HISTORICAL DECONSTRUCTION INTO ART

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## INTRODUCTION

The twentieth-century modernist narrative produced a historical discourse shaped around ideals of progress, rationality, and aesthetic integrity. However, this discourse also carries its own internal contradictions, both ideologically and representationally. American artist Josiah McElheny develops an artistic practice that makes these contradictions visible. Using materials such as glass and mirrors, he questions modernism's myths of "transparency" and "perfection," subverting the authority of historical objects and forms. McElheny's art simultaneously deconstructs historical forms while reconstructing them—revealing that history operates not as a fixed, linear narrative, but as a construct shaped by ideological preferences and forgetfulness. In this respect, his practice replaces belief in modernism's aesthetic ideals with a critical reading that exposes their own fragility and exclusionary aspects.

McElheny's work is defined by both his technical admiration for modernist formal language and his distance from the cultural power structures these forms represent. While reconstructing historical references such as Bauhaus aesthetics, scientific modeling, and museum display cases, he analyzes the claims of progress, order, and universality hidden behind these forms. In this respect, his works, rather than simply reproducing historical objects, open the door to discussions of the ways in which history is represented. The transparency of glass is considered here not merely a formal choice but a metaphor for the tension between "visibility" and "concealment." McElheny's historical deconstruction reframes the dualities within modernism—reason and emotion, progress and loss, center and periphery. While preserving the beauty that shines on the surface of the modernist object, the artist reveals the ideological fissures operating beneath that surface. In this way, his works both constitute an archaeology of past forms and interrogate how these forms recirculate in contemporary cultural memory. In this context, McElheny's art can be considered a form of critical thinking that uses history as aesthetic material. Because while it ostensibly reproduces the aesthetics of modernism, it actually constitutes a practice of historical deconstruction that reveals how that aesthetic collapses itself.

### 1. HISTORICAL NARRATIVE AND IDEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF MODERNISM

From the beginning of the twentieth century onward, modernism constructed its historical narrative through a narrative of linear progress in art and culture. By linking aesthetic and technological development, this narrative transformed modernism into both a civilizational ideal and a regime of knowledge. According to Ünal (2025:156), contemporary artistic practices and technological innovations enable the emergence of the sublime in diverse forms while also enabling a critical reevaluation of the fundamental paradig-

ms of modern thought. In this context, rather than a complete rejection of the modernist structure, the sublime is repositioned as a conceptual tool through which intellectual boundaries are made visible and their transcendence is encouraged, thus providing new depth to the critical aspect of contemporary thought.

Modernist aesthetics not only aims for perfection of form and function, but also promises to correct the errors of the past and establish a universal line of progress toward the future. Within this framework, works of art function as concrete indicators of the historical process and reinforce the notion of linear progress. While the narrative of linear progress forms the ideological foundation of modernism, it also places certain social and cultural values at the center. Aesthetic values, technical expertise, and functionality are considered the holy trinity of modernism, while forms falling outside these are either ignored or marginalized. Thus, modernist historical and aesthetic discourse assumes not only an aesthetic preference but also an ideological organizing function. This ideological function reinforces both the visible and symbolic authority of modernist objects. Modernist objects are not merely functionally or aesthetically valuable; they also carry cultural and ideological power. According to İpşiroğlu and İpşiroğlu (2011), the function of art within the tradition of naturalism cannot go further than reflecting reality. However, for art to play an active role in the construction of a new world and the transformations that would provide living spaces for larger societies, this tradition needed to be broken down and a new understanding of form and language developed. Authors argue that this transformation began with Cubism in the 1910s and was subsequently completed by abstract art. Bauhaus designs, modern scientific models, or works displayed in museum displays generate this authority and convey to the viewer the message that modernism is universal and objective. These objects offer the illusion of historical continuity while representing the truth of modernist ideals as a natural reality.

This holistic and progressive structure of modernism began to be questioned by various thinkers and artistic practices by the mid-twentieth century. Technological progress, not as an inevitable liberation for humanity, but as a mechanism that generated new forms of power, undermined the fundamental assumptions of the modernist narrative. This necessitated a rethinking of art and knowledge not only through formal innovations but also through a critical orientation that questioned the very conditions of their own legitimacy. Thus, theoretical approaches developed to counter modernism's claims of universality, objectivity, and progress paved the way for a radical paradigm shift in both art and thought. This transformation process was particularly marked by the contributions of postmodern thinkers who redefined the concepts of knowledge, truth, and representation.

Postmodern thinker Jean-François Lyotard questions the validity of the

“grand narratives” that form the foundation of modernism. According to him, modern thought established its legitimacy through universal ideals such as progress, reason, and liberation, but these narratives, by excluding diverse forms of experience and local discourses, created a singular regime of truth. Lyotard challenges such totalizing and universalizing claims of knowledge production, arguing that in the postmodern condition, knowledge exists in fragmented, local, and plural forms. This approach intersects with Foucault’s emphasis on the inability of knowledge to be independent of power relations and Derrida’s notion that meaning is constantly deferred. According to Lyotard, the task of contemporary thought is to make visible the plurality of “small narratives” instead of grand narratives, that is, to center pluralism and difference in the production of knowledge and truth. Thus, Lyotard strengthens the epistemological basis of postmodernism by dismantling modernism’s claim of universality. Foucault’s approach emphasizes that knowledge cannot be independent of power, and that every “truth” functions to protect a certain social order. Jacques Derrida, on the other hand, opposes structuralist thought’s search for a central and fixed meaning, redefining the nature of language and text. According to Derrida, meaning is never fixed; every expression is part of a process that is constantly deferred in relation to other expressions. This approach enables texts to be read through the contradictions, gaps, and deferred meanings they carry within themselves. Thus, Derrida emphasizes the plurality of meaning and the constant reconstruction of meaning by dismantling modernism’s claims of “singular meaning” and “totality.” In conclusion, the joint contribution of Lyotard, Foucault, and Derrida is the By dismantling the universal, holistic, and rationalist discourse, they opened the concepts of knowledge, meaning, and truth to a rethinking within their historical and cultural contexts. This intellectual transformation formed the philosophical basis of postmodernism and paved the way for the pluralization of forms of representation in fields such as art, literature, and architecture.

## 2. DECONSTRUCTION

Jacques Derrida’s deconstruction approach created a radical transformation in the philosophical and critical thought traditions of the 20th century. Sim (2006: 245) states that Derrida’s concept of *différance* is derived from the French verb “différer”, and that it evokes the meanings of both “to differ” and “to postpone” at the same time. For this reason, the concept, which is intentionally left ambiguous, makes the inherent uncertainty of language visible. Sim states in this context that meaning is never definite, but exists in a process that is always deferred and forever undecidable. Derrida (1994: 21–22) positions the concept of *différance* outside of traditional logical patterns, stating that it represents a “double register” structure that is both active and passive. According to him, this concept involves an ambiguity in which meaning or existence cannot be fixed. Derrida utilizes the French prefix *dé-* to



explain this structure; for this prefix describes the process by which a concept or structure is broken down and new relationships are established among its elements, thus transforming the old form. Therefore, for Derrida, there are only differentiations in the world; no structure exists entirely or disappears entirely; it comes into being only in a continuous process of differentiation.

One of the fundamental concepts of deconstruction is the critique directed at binaries and hierarchical oppositions. Throughout history, Western philosophy has been constructed on binary oppositions such as being/nothingness, center/margin, and reason/emotion. Derrida questions and reverses the natural or universal status of these binaries. Thus, deconstruction demonstrates that conceptual and philosophical categories are ideologically and historically constructed, transcending traditional methods of intellectual analysis that rely on fixed and absolute concepts. Derrida's concept of *différance* determines the logic of deconstruction. *Différance* states that meaning is constantly produced with delays and through differences; no concept reveals itself with a complete and final meaning. This concept emphasizes that texts and concepts can be constantly reinterpreted and that each context produces different layers of meaning. *Différance* rejects the fixity of meaning and places the principles of continuity and plurality at the center of philosophical and critical thought. Deconstruction is not limited only to language and textual analysis; It can also be applied to the critique of cultural and historical objects. Derrida attempts to reveal the power relations, social norms, and ideological codes that lie behind the surface meaning of an object or text. In this respect, deconstruction offers not only an intellectual tool but also an effective method for cultural criticism. In artistic and aesthetic studies, this approach reveals the historical context and ideological functions of objects. Derrida's deconstruction centers on the processes of deferral and multiple production of meaning. A text or concept never produces a final or complete meaning; each interpretation creates new differences and delays. This challenges the search for fixed meaning in traditional philosophical and critical approaches and reveals the continuity of the production of meaning. In this respect, deconstruction functions as a critical tool at both epistemological and ontological levels.

Structuralists approach the text as a self-contained system operating by its own rules; they place language at the center of all meaning production and exclude the role of the subject (writer or reader). According to this approach, a text is the product of linguistic structures, not individual creativity. According to Gür (2005: 12), structuralism focuses on examining the organizing rules and laws underlying superficial phenomena. This approach treats each structure as an internally consistent and closed system, evaluating it independently of external factors and historical context. A structure achieves integrity through the interrelationships of its constituent units and exists like a living

organism operating by its own internal rules. The aim of the structuralist approach is to analyze this network of relationships and uncover the fundamental principles that determine the structure's functioning. Poststructuralists reject this understanding, arguing that a text has no single meaning and that each reader reinterprets the text within their own context. Thus, meaning is constantly reproduced in the interaction between text and reader. Poststructuralism questions the authority of the author, making visible the role of different readers, cultures, and texts in constructing meaning. However, this approach also rejects adherence to a specific method for the production of meaning. According to Koz and Türk (2022: 325), deconstruction, considered one of the thought orientations that has most influenced interdisciplinary studies after the legacy of Existentialism, nourished by Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, is associated with poststructuralist thought within Derrida's general philosophical framework. Although Derrida maintains a stance against categories, his thought is often discussed within the context of poststructuralism. To understand his philosophical orientation, it is necessary to consider the distinction between two fundamental paradigms: objectivist and constructivist on the ontological plane and positivist and interpretivist on the epistemological plane.

According to Koz and Türk (2022: 328), Derrida deliberately avoids providing a precise definition of the concept of deconstruction and does not characterize it as a specific method or system of thought. However, some clues about deconstruction are found in Derrida's texts. Rather than being a destructive act, deconstruction expresses an approach that seeks to understand how a totality is constructed and to rethink this structure. Derrida emphasizes that deconstruction can be defined neither as a fixed essence nor as a specific methodological procedure. Deconstruction argues that meaning and conceptual structures are not fixed, universal, or natural; it emphasizes that meaning is always shaped by historical, linguistic, and cultural contexts. According to Derrida, the text is not merely composed of written expressions; it should be considered as a structure encompassing all symbolic and meaning-production processes. This perspective directs philosophical inquiry to rethink the relationship between language, concepts, and cultural context. According to Uzunoğlu (2019: 22), the deconstruction approach has provided new insights not only in literary theory and criticism but also in many aspects of social sciences and cultural studies. This method has contributed to the development of feminist theory and paved the way for alternative readings of art history. As a method of analyzing and interpreting a text, deconstruction has also influenced artistic production over time; from the 1970s onward in the West and from the 1990s onward in Turkey, it has been transformed into a means of expression by numerous artists. Within this framework, contemporary artworks produced with a deconstructive approach question the

relationships between signs, transforming established patterns of seeing and interpreting. Such works sometimes seek to analyze the formal dynamics of art itself, while at other times, in an iconoclastic manner, they aim to reveal gender roles and their inherent ideological codes.

### **3. JOSIAH MCELHENY'S WORKS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE TRANSFORMATION OF HISTORICAL DECONSTRUCTION INTO ART**

Modernism's narrative of linear progress was based on perfection in form and function, the harmony between technology and aesthetics, and the ideals of civilization accumulated throughout history. However, this narrative also served to establish power, knowledge regimes, and interdisciplinary hierarchies. Josiah McElheny's artistic production can be considered a practice of historical deconstruction, exposing modernism's own internal inconsistencies. The artist reconstructs modernist aesthetics' claims to formal perfection, transparency, and universality through glass, mirrors, and light; however, this reconstruction process also involves dismantling the historical narrative. Earnest (2015: 32) suggests that Josiah McElheny is recognized for his conceptually rich and precisely crafted works that often incorporate glass—whether as a physical material, a symbolic element, or a political medium. His installations draw on historical moments in art and design, reexamining overlooked figures and artifacts to reveal alternative ways of imagining the future. According to Pincus-Witten (2009: 229), Josiah McElheny's artistic practice situates him well beyond the traditional Craft versus Art divide. While he possesses the technical mastery to produce ornate Venetian-style glass objects, his interest in such forms arises only when they align with his historically and conceptually driven projects. Pincus notes that McElheny's work often draws upon the obscure histories of glassmaking, art, and political theory, and that in one exhibition, he reimagined a historical rivalry between two visionary German modernists—Mies van der Rohe and Bruno Taut, the latter remembered for his 1914 Glass Pavilion at the Cologne Werkbund Exhibition. Using fragile yet reflective materials such as glass and mirror, Josiah McElheny deciphers the aesthetic and ideological boundaries of modernism. He combines traditional glassblowing with contemporary art practice while examining the narrative of modernism—e.g., design, architecture, and scientific ideals. In this context, McElheny critiques modernism's fundamental paradigms, such as “progress,” “universality,” and “objectivity,” and aims to reveal how these paradigms are produced at both aesthetic and ideological levels. According to Scanlan (2001), McElheny's Measurement Theory, unlike Duchamp's Ready-Made Object approach, reminds us that objects do not acquire their status as works of art simply by being incorporated into a museum context, but rather are products of complex social and cultural traditions that determine their meaning. While Duchamp, by transforming a urinal into a “Fountain,”

emphasizes the authority of museums and the decisiveness of art institutions, McElheny focuses on the object itself and the labor of the people who produce it. Therefore, while Duchamp's interest is directed at the object's "destination," the moment it attains art status, McElheny's interest is directed at the process by which the object reaches its destination, that is, the historical and cultural journey. McElheny's approach should be interpreted not as a populist quest for truth against the dominant culture, but rather as an acceptance of the inevitability of narrative and representation. For him, what makes a culture "dominant" is its ability to tell its own story in the most effective way. Just as the Catholic Church used material splendor and ritual magic to spread Christianity, McElheny emphasizes the importance of understanding the relationship between faith, beauty, and myth in art.

McElheny's practice is based on the deferred and differentiated nature of meaning, as defined by Derrida's concept of *différance*. In his hands, the modernist object never attains a final form; on the contrary, it is constantly reread within its historical contexts. In this respect, the artist subverts modernism's search for "singular meaning" and "totality," both reproducing past forms and questioning the ideological order they represent. The transformation of deconstruction in the field of art emerges from the following perspectives: The art object is not merely an aesthetic object but also a manifestation of relations of knowledge and power. For example, ideals of the past, such as modernist architecture, 20th-century design, and cosmology, are reinterpreted and become boundaries for the reader/viewer to transcend.

One of Josiah McElheny's best-known works (Image 1) was Adolf Loos' Ornament and Crime, created in 2002. This work examines the anti-ornamental ideology of modernist thought through a historical critique. The work takes its title from Loos's famous 1908 text, but this serves as an ideological re-reading rather than a historical homage. Holt and Skov (2007:44) explain that the origins of this debate can be traced back to the provocative architect Adolf Loos, who, in his early twentieth-century essay Ornament and Crime, condemned decorative traditions as decadent and regressive. Loos contended that ornament hindered human progress—intellectually, aesthetically, and socially—and viewed it as a waste of labor, health, materials, and capital. Through the elegant, crystalline objects he produced from glass, McElheny points to the aesthetic contradictions inherent in Loos's ideal of "simplicity." According to Siegel (MoMA Projects 84), McElheny expressed discomfort with Adolf Loos's conviction that ornamentation was immoral and that aesthetic purity represented moral progress. He suggested that the modernist effort to eliminate difference in the pursuit of progress might itself constitute modernism's greatest fault. Through works such as Kärntner Bar, Vienna, 1908, Adolf Loos (2001) and Ornament and Crime (2002), McElheny explored and exaggerated Loos's modernist ideas, exposing how they could lead to a total erasure of

imperfection, deviation, and individuality in favor of an austere and reductive purity. While Loos's text characterizes ornament as a "moral crime," McElheny suggests that this prohibition may itself have become a form of ornament. The glass forms in the work represent modernism's formal ideology of superficial purity and purity; but the fragility of the glass also reveals the weakness of this ideology. McElheny's work thus analyzes Loos's modernist dogma at both formal and conceptual levels. In this context, Adolf Loos's *Ornament and Crime* embodies the "inversion" strategy identified by Derrida in his deconstructionist approach: the central concept (simplicity) is subverted, making visible the opposing concept it excludes (ornament). In this work, McElheny exposes the power relations operating beneath the surface purity of modernism. The suppression of ornament is not merely an aesthetic choice but also a mechanism of social discipline. Therefore, the artist's reproduction is not merely an aesthetic experiment but a critical gesture that questions the power structure of modernist historiography. Here, history is treated not as a fixed narrative, but as a text constantly rewritten and shaped by ideological choices.



*Image 1. Josiah McElheny. Adolf Loos' Ornament and Crime, 2002.*

Another work by McElheny that we will examine, *An End to Modernity* (Image 2), links modernism's cosmological metaphors to cosmology, rendering visible a historical turning point. This large-scale installation, composed of glass spheres, metal rods, and light sources, pits modernism's ideals of order, center, and rationality against the notion of randomness in the formation of the universe. The work's formal structure evokes the ideals of "light and clarity" that became emblematic of modernist architecture in the 1950s, but McElheny collides these ideals with scientific uncertainty. *An End to Mo-*

dernity references Georges Lemaître’s “Big Bang” theory; each glass sphere represents a galaxy within the universe’s expanding timeline. Through this metaphor, the artist disrupts modernism’s narrative of linear progression. The transparent surface of light represents not the openness of knowledge but the endless deferral of meaning. At this point, McElheny transforms Derrida’s concept of *différance* into an aesthetic strategy: every reflection of light signals both the emergence of one meaning and the disappearance of another. This work also deconstructs the representational forms of modernist science. Rather than demonstrating absolute truth, the work’s scientific model exposes the historically and culturally constructed nature of knowledge. Thus, while reproducing the visual language of modern science, McElheny also questions its epistemological authority. *An End to Modernity* visually and conceptually embodies the point at which modernism’s quest for “universal knowledge” has reached its limits.



*Image 2. Josiah McElheny. An End to Modernity, 2005.*

His work *An End to Modernity* (2005) is modeled on the 1960s Metropolitan Opera House chandeliers by the Viennese company Lobmeyr. Adams (2011: 37) notes that during his Wexner Center Residency, Josiah McElheny collaborated with Ohio State astronomer David Weinberg to create *An End to Modernity* (2005), a sculptural model representing the universe’s expansion after the Big Bang. McElheny interprets this cosmic event as a metaphor for the fragmentation of modernism—suggesting that the outward explosion from a single point symbolizes modernism’s final image, after which it fractured into countless new beginnings and narratives. Drawing inspiration from the chandeliers of the Metropolitan Opera, McElheny envisioned the work



as a “pop image” of the Big Bang, merging artistic expression, design aesthetics, and scientific inquiry into a single interdisciplinary project. By linking chandeliers to a scientific theory, namely the Big Bang Theory, McElheny deconstructs the grand narratives of modernism (progress, ultimate civilization, universal science). For example, in *The Last Scattering Surface*, the visual model of the beginning of space-time is used; the chandelier form appears as a carrier of modernism, yet it is not functional. Thus, the art object is read both as a reference to modernist aesthetic language and as its dysfunctionalized form. According to Adams (2011, p. 39), *An End to Modernity* features clusters of glass spheres that symbolize groups of galaxies, their increasing scale and complexity illustrating the universe’s evolution from its dense center toward later cosmic stages. Illuminated lamps within the structure stand in for quasars—the brightest celestial bodies—which gradually diminish in luminosity closer to the present era. Suspended a few inches above the ground, the sculpture also reflects McElheny’s craftsmanship: he personally shaped each glass orb, while the accompanying discs were individually cast by hand in a glass foundry in Queens. In this work, McElheny achieves the artistic transformation of deconstruction by combining modernist design (the Lobmeyr chandelier), scientific theory (the Big Bang), and reconstructing the art object. In this chain, the triad of aesthetic value, functionality, and the ideal of progress is broken, replaced by the visibility of historical layers and different levels of meaning.



*Image 3. Josiah McElheny. An End to Modernity, 2005.*

The last work we will examine by Josiah McElheny, *The Alpine Cathedral and the City-Crown* (Image 4), was made in 2007. According to Siegel (MoMA Projects 84), Josiah McElheny's Projects 84 presents a large-scale sculptural installation composed of crystalline glass, metal, painted wood, Plexiglas, and colored lights. In this immersive work, which reaches nearly ten feet in height, McElheny uses the physical and symbolic qualities of glass to reinterpret a past vision of utopia within a contemporary context. The piece continues McElheny's broader exploration of how modernism's notions of transparency and reflectivity have shaped human perception, language, and metaphysical understanding. Siegel (2007: 3) explains that in *The Alpine Cathedral and the City-Crown*, McElheny takes inspiration from the utopian visions of Paul Scheerbart and Bruno Taut, interpreting them through a contemporary lens. Rather than adhering strictly to their modernist ideals, he embraces the sensual, theatrical, irrational, and transcendent qualities inherent in their work. The installation transforms their conceptual "glass utopias" into tangible, three-dimensional forms—two crystalline architectural models, *The Alpine Cathedral* and *The City-Crown*—set within a carefully constructed wooden landscape and illuminated by vibrant, shifting lights. Through this, McElheny revisits Scheerbart and Taut's spiritual and social ambitions while questioning the very nature of visionary creativity.



*Image 4. Josiah McElheny, The Alpine Cathedral and The City-Crown, 2007.*

While Taut's glass city and cathedral designs reflect modernism's ideals of spiritual and social liberation, McElheny simultaneously reconstructs and questions this vision. This glass architectural model, shimmering with light, bears an ironic reference to Taut's utopian belief now reduced to a mere "museum object." Here, McElheny reasserts modernism's historical memory, deconstructing it from an object of faith. While the transparency of glass aligns with modernism's ideal of "visibility," it also represents an ideological invisibility: the power relations within modernism itself. In this context, *The Alpine Cathedral* and *The City-Crown* create a surface upon which historical forms acquire contemporary ideological meanings. McElheny's reconstruction is not merely a historical reconstruction but also a "deconstructive representation." In the work, history is not organized around a fixed center, as Derrida describes, but operates as a plural surface where different epochs, forms of thought, and belief collide. Thus, McElheny both preserves and dissolves Taut's modernist utopia—creating a tension between the forms of the past and the politics of memory in the present.



*Image 5. Josiah McElheny, The Alpine Cathedral and The City-Crown, 2007.*

**Aesthetic Strategy as Historical Deconstruction** These three works by McElheny converge around a common aesthetic strategy: historical deconstruction. The artist engages with the formal legacy of modernism as a "material archaeology," but this archaeology is not a restoration of the past but a process of analyzing its ideological constructs. Glass and mirror are both formal and intellectual tools for this analysis. The transparency of glass represents the illusory nature of visibility, while the reflectivity of the mirror represents modernism's self-view. McElheny does not fix historical forms while reproducing them; each reproduction creates a new context in which meaning is deferred. This attitude is a visual counterpart to Derrida's principle of *différance*. Modernist form is neither completely destroyed nor completely repaired in the artist's hands—it exists only in a continuous process of "differentiation." Thus, McElheny's art, rejecting the fixity of historical forms, reads and rewri-

tes history itself like a text. In this respect, McElheny's practice represents the critical aspect of contemporary art: without rejecting modernism outright, he makes its internal contradictions visible; while preserving the formal beauty of the past, he reveals the ideological structure behind that beauty. McElheny's historical deconstruction is concerned not only with modernist aesthetics but also with how historical consciousness is constructed. His glass sculptures reveal the fractures accumulating on the "transparent" surface of modernism; thus, through an aesthetic language, he exposes the power relations hidden behind modernist ideals.

#### 4. GENERAL EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

Josiah McElheny's art possesses a unique intellectual depth that can be interpreted through its complex relationship with the historical legacy of modernism. While formally the artist's work re-evokes modernism's aesthetic ideals—transparency, order, progress, perfection—conceptually, it attempts to analyze the ideological orders operating beneath these ideals. Using materials such as glass, mirrors, and light, he both reproduces and questions modernism's visual language. In McElheny's hands, these materials transcend mere formal preferences; they become philosophical tools that redefine concepts such as "visibility," "reflection," and "transparency." Thus, the artist transforms the claims of rationality and universality that shine on the surface of modernist forms into a fragile narrative within the complexities of historical contexts. McElheny's practice can be directly linked to the concept of historical deconstruction. In this approach, which can be considered an aesthetic reflection of Derrida's concept of *différance*, meaning is never fixed; each reproduction creates a new context, a new possibility for reading. While preserving historical forms, the artist questions the intellectual systems they represent; instead of repairing the past, he pluralizes its narrative. This stance is a form of aesthetic resistance to modernism's pursuit of "wholeness" and "singular truth." McElheny's work reveals the illusory nature of historical continuity, reminding us that behind every form lies a repressed or forgotten historical rupture. Thus, art becomes not merely a site of aesthetic production but a site for reckoning with historical consciousness. Works such as *An End to Modernity* (2005), *The Alpine Cathedral and the City-Crown* (2007), and *Adolf Loos' Ornament and Crime* reveal three distinct aspects of this historical deconstruction. *An End to Modernity* questions modernist science's pursuit of "universal knowledge" through a metaphor about the formation of the universe. The glass spheres representing the expansion of the universe offer both an aesthetic reproduction of the scientific model and a conceptual structure demonstrating the historical construction of knowledge. Here, McElheny rereads the representations of science not as indicators of absolute truth, but as ideological constructs. The transparency of glass represents not the openness of access to knowledge, but the constant deferral of meaning.

Thus, the artist aesthetically stages the moment when modernist science reaches its own limits. The Alpine Cathedral and the City-Crown, on the other hand, proposes a historical rereading through the glass architecture of modernist utopias. In McElheny's hands, the vision of spiritual and social liberation constructed through glass by Paul Scheerbart and Bruno Taut becomes a contemporary field of inquiry. This work suggests that modernism's utopian spirit has become a museumified, aestheticized object of belief. Glass's relationship with light creates a metaphor oscillating between visibility and concealment; thus, modernism's ideal of transparency renders visible its inherent ideological opacity. In reconstructing Taut's glass cities, McElheny transforms them from belief to critique, from ideology to representation. Adolf Loos's work, *Ornament and Crime*, reverses modernism's myth of formal purification. In contrast to Loos's modernist stance, which characterizes ornament as a "crime," McElheny exposes the internal contradictions of modernist aesthetics by making ornament visible again.

Here, the ideal of simplicity transforms into a new form of ornamentation; the desire for aesthetic purification becomes the indicator of an ideological disciplinary mechanism. The elegant forms the artist creates from glass embody the fragility of modernism's pursuit of "pure form." In this context, McElheny applies the "reversal" described in Derrida's deconstruction strategy on an aesthetic level: by bringing the excluded concept (ornament) to the center, the authority of the central concept (simplicity) is undermined. Throughout McElheny's production, history is constructed not as a linear progression but as a layered and multifaceted narrative. In reproducing the forms of the past, the artist treats them as a kind of "material archaeology," but this archaeology is not the glorification of the past but the analysis of its ideological structure. In McElheny's hands, modernism's discourse of "universal aesthetics" yields to a plural and critical aesthetic language. The use of glass and mirror points to both the desire for formal perfection and the fragile structure underlying that perfection. Consequently, McElheny's art can be read as a kind of visual philosophical proposal addressing the historical foundations of modernist aesthetics. His works do not reject modernism outright; on the contrary, they transform it by making its internal contradictions visible. This stance defines the critical potential of contemporary art: reproducing the forms of the past while simultaneously analyzing their ideological functions. By transforming historical form into a means of representation, McElheny also makes history itself a problem of representation. Thus, by blurring the boundaries between art, knowledge, ideology, and aesthetics, he creates a plural and open-ended field of thought in which meaning is constantly deferred. McElheny's historical deconstruction offers an important conceptual framework for understanding both the legacy of modernism and the critical aspect of contemporary art. By revealing the cracks that appear on the magni-

ificent surface of modernism, his works develop an aesthetic proposal for how history can be rewritten. Therefore, McElheny can be considered a contemporary thinker-artist who shows how not only formal perfection but also critical thought can be constructed through art.



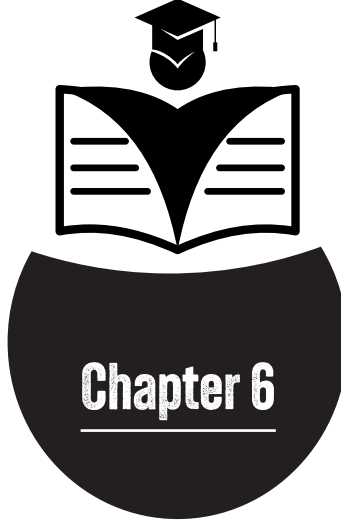
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Image 5. Josiah McElheny, The Alpine Cathedral and The City-Crown, 2007. <https://art21.org/read/josiah-mcelheny-architecture-and-modernism/>, Access Date: 01.09.2025.



## THE IMAGE OF BIRDS IN TURKISH ART: MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY APPROACHES

“=====”

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The bird image has held a privileged place in the symbolic language of art since the earliest visual expressions of human history. Looking at art history, the bird image is frequently used in both mythology and visual forms of expression (Karaduman and Özdemir, 2022: 1). In this long process, extending from cave paintings to ancient mythologies, from medieval iconography to modern painting, the bird has existed not only as a creature belonging to nature but also as a visual representation of the relationship that humans establish with themselves, the universe, and the invisible. Especially its connection with the sky through its ability to fly has transformed the bird into a figure that detaches itself from the material world and turns towards spiritual, intellectual, and metaphysical realms. In this respect, the bird has often been intertwined with concepts of freedom, spirit, messenger, transition, transformation, and time in art history; and has been reproduced with different layers of meaning in accordance with the artist's individual style and worldview.

In the context of contemporary art, the bird image is approached without completely abandoning its historical symbolic meanings, but also without reducing them to a fixed iconography. On the contrary, within the pluralistic and interdisciplinary structure of contemporary art, the bird becomes a constantly transforming means of expression, both formally and conceptually. This transformation is directly related to the artist's style. Because the artist creates their style by combining their artistic creation with their way of thinking. Style is the form of expression given to the manner of expression in the artwork, a method and language use unique to the artist (Yönsel, 2019: 2). Style is not merely a formal choice; it is a holistic field of expression reflecting the artist's worldview, social positioning, and personal memory. The bird image is precisely reshaped at this point through the artist's subjective language.

The relationship between the artist's style and the symbolic world of the bird is not based on a one-way understanding of representation in contemporary art. Sometimes the bird appears as a clearly recognizable figure, while at other times it exists as an implication of movement, rhythm, or emptiness. In minimalist approaches, the bird is often reduced to a silhouette or an abstract line; in abstract art practice, its presence is felt through dynamic brushstrokes reminiscent of wingbeats or the overall flow of the composition. In this context, the bird becomes an image that is "suggested" rather than represented in contemporary art.

The bird's powerful presence in contemporary art is also fueled by its role as a direct, observational source of inspiration. In nature, birds, with their variety of colors, rich patterns, rhythmic movements, and relationships with space, create an extremely powerful visual memory space for the artist. The superficial texture of the feathers, the opening and closing movement of the wings, and the patterns created by flock flights become fundamental elements that nourish the contemporary artist's understanding of composition. At this

point, the bird is both a figure and a visual way of thinking that shapes the structural elements of the painting.

From the perspective of color, movement, and pattern, the image of a bird is directly related to the formal explorations of contemporary art. The natural color palettes of birds allow the artist freedom in their use of color, while the movement of flight creates a dynamism that breaks the stillness on the painting surface. Especially in abstract and semi-abstract works, the movement of the bird becomes one of the fundamental elements that determine the direction of brushstrokes, the linear flow, and the rhythm on the surface. This shows that the image of the bird is considered both as a subject and as a “thought of movement” that determines the internal structure of the painting.

The powerful presence of the bird image in contemporary art is closely linked to the transformation of humanity’s relationship with nature. Industrialization, urbanization, and ecological crises have transformed the representations of nature in art. Thus, the bird image has become one of the symbolic carriers of this transformation. For many contemporary artists, this image embodies a critique of disappearing nature, threatened habitats, and the anthropocentric world. In this context, the bird ceases to be a romanticized image of nature and becomes part of a critical discourse.

On the other hand, the bird image is frequently associated with issues of individual memory and identity in contemporary art. Migratory birds are discussed alongside themes of borders, belonging, and displacement; while the cage metaphor makes visible the tension between freedom and restriction. In such interpretations, the bird functions as a bridge between the artist’s personal experiences and social reality. Thus, the bird image, in addition to being a universal symbol, acquires a structure open to highly subjective expressions.

This research aims to examine bird imagery in contemporary Turkish art, considering the artist’s style, formal preferences, and conceptual approach. The relationship between the symbolic world of the bird and contemporary art practice will be explored through examples from modern and contemporary artists; the diversification of interpretations of birds within the contexts of minimalism, abstraction, and nature observation will be revealed. Furthermore, the research will detail how the bird, in terms of color, movement, and pattern, has become a source of inspiration for artists, within the framework of the bird image’s position in contemporary painting.

### **1. The Image of Birds in Contemporary Turkish Art: Between Tradition, Nature, and Individual Style**

In contemporary Turkish art, the bird image holds a powerful place, not only for its universal symbolic meanings but also as a carrier of Anatolian culture, oral traditions, and collective memory. In this context, the bird is both

a historical legacy and a visual and conceptual tool that expands contemporary expressive possibilities for Turkish artists. Especially since the modernization process, Turkish artists have gone beyond using the bird image as a folkloric motif, placing it at the center of their individual styles and contemporary art practices.

The treatment of bird imagery in contemporary Turkish art often revolves around concepts such as the intrinsic relationship with nature, the search for freedom, migration, memory, and place. This is directly related to Turkey's geographical location, its historical role as a transit zone, and its layered cultural structure. The bird becomes a visual metaphor for this multifaceted nature.



Image 1. "Turquoise Bird Figure"  
Ceramic, from the Birds Series  
9 x 19 cm. 2017



Image 2. "Dove-shaped  
Ceramic Candlestick Holder",  
28 x 10 x 8cm.



Image 3. "Birds"  
Ceramic, 31 x 31 cm.

Examples of Füreyâ Koral's ceramic bird series.

One of the early and influential examples of the bird image in contemporary Turkish art is found in the ceramic works of Füreyâ Koral. The bird figures in Koral's wall panels and ceramic surfaces represent both herself and her art, expressing a new understanding of Anatolia itself. Füreyâ Koral skillfully shaped her heartfelt emotions, cultural background, and the past experiences of Anatolia in her own style (Büyükkaragöz & Yayan, 2019: 5). Her birds are not so much directly descriptive as they are treated as rhythmic and symbolic forms integrated with the surface. For Füreyâ Koral, the bird image is a part of daily life and nature. However, it also symbolizes hope, movement, and life energy. The durable yet fragile structure of ceramics creates a conscious contrast with the delicate nature of the bird. This contrast holds a significant place in the artist's style. In Koral's works, the bird figure transforms into a means of expression that connects with the space, surrounds the viewer, and integrates with the architecture.



Image 4. "Sandpiper"  
45 x 55 cm.



Image 5. "Peacock"  
52 x 22 cm. Printmaking



Image 6. "Birds"  
Gouache on paper  
30 x 20 cm.

The images show examples of Bedri Rahmi Eyüboğlu's works produced using various techniques.

In Bedri Rahmi Eyüboğlu's paintings, stylized bird figures are positioned on organic forms surrounded by geometric patterns. Eyüboğlu's birds reflect his deep connection to Anatolian culture and his desire to blend traditional motifs with a modern aesthetic (Özmen, 2025: 7). These birds evoke Anatolia's fairytale narratives and oral culture, while also directly relating to the artist's poetic language. In Eyüboğlu's works, the bird is not so much a symbol of individual freedom as a visual representation of collective joy and zest for life. The bold use of colors and the repetitive structure of patterns spread the bird's movement across the painting surface. This approach transforms the bird from a singular figure into an energy that permeates the entire composition.



Image 7. "Self-portrait", 2020  
Oil painting on canvas,  
180 x 140 cm.

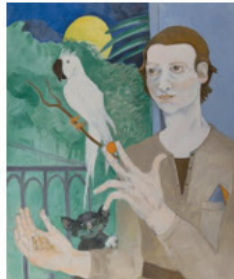


Image 8. "The Parrot on the Side Balcony", Oil painting on canvas,  
120 x 100 cm., 2015

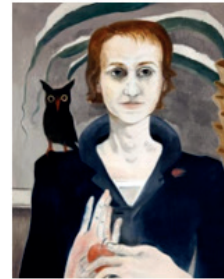


Image 9. "Self-Portrait with Owl"  
Oil painting on canvas  
100 x 80 cm.

The images showcase Neşe Erdok's figurative works depicting the themes



of birds and human loneliness.

In Neşe Erdok's figurative paintings, animals such as cats, dogs, and birds are often positioned on the painting surface alongside children, women, or elderly figures, adding dramatic and narrative depth to the scene. This is considered an element that adds meaning and enriches the content of the artist's paintings (Çakmaklısoy M., 2025: 5). Although the bird image is not directly at the center, it gains a strong symbolic meaning through its relationship with human figures. In Erdok's paintings, birds often appear in cages or as beings sharing the same space with humans. This makes the tension between freedom and confinement visible. With the artist's strong understanding of deformation and psychologically profound figures, the bird becomes a metaphor reflecting the inner world of humanity. In Erdok's style, the bird ceases to be a creature belonging to nature and transforms into a silent witness questioning the existential condition of humanity.



Image 10. "Cicada"  
Screen Printing, 2006  
70 x 45 cm.



Image 11. "Bee"  
Printmaking, 2015  
70 x 55 cm.



Image 12. "Dragonfly"  
Printmaking, 2013  
79 x 53 cm.

The images are examples of Ergin İnan's work on insects and birds, produced using various techniques.

In Ergin İnan's works, the bird image is intertwined with the artist's metaphysical approach, which brings together Eastern and Western thought. In İnan's paintings, birds, insects, and human figures are placed on the same plane; this consciously eliminates the hierarchy between beings. The bird here represents a spiritual transition and the multifaceted structure of existence. The artist's detailed and symbolic language makes the bird a part of a mystical narrative. In İnan's style, the bird opens up a silent but profound intellectual space; it invites the viewer not only to a visual but also to a philosophical reading.

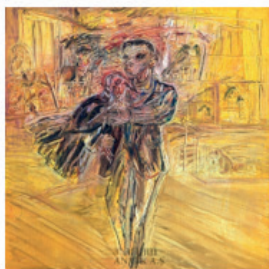


Image 13. "Bird Gang", 2006  
Oil painting on canvas,  
100 x 100 cm.



Image 14. "Avril", 2018  
Ecoline on paper, 57 x 77 cm.

Images show examples of Mehmet Gülerüz's works on irony, movement, and bird imagery.

In Mehmet Gülerüz's expressive paintings, the bird often appears as part of the movement and irony. Within the artist's strong lines and dynamic compositions, the bird serves as a narrative element that is sometimes grotesque, sometimes humorous. This approach presents a contemporary stance that questions the traditionally exalted symbolic meanings of the bird. In Gülerüz's works, the bird may possess a bodily expression similar to that of a human; this blurs the lines between human and animal. The bird's movement, combined with the artist's gestural approach to painting, creates a powerful dynamism on the painting surface.

## 2. The Image of Birds in Contemporary Young Artists

In contemporary Turkish art, the bird image, without entirely abandoning the mythological, folkloric, and symbolic layers of meaning it carried in the past, but without reducing these meanings to a fixed and singular iconography, continues to exist by being reshaped within the pluralistic expressive possibilities of contemporary art. In this context, the bird, in contemporary art practice, often transforms from a directly represented figure into an image that dissolves within the artist's style, sometimes abstracted, sometimes fragmented, or only perceived as a movement, rhythm, or a sense of emptiness. The bird's flight, its directionlessness, and its transience are reconsidered in contemporary painting through lines, stains, color fields, and compositional arrangements, creating a conceptual field of expression intertwined with the artists' individual narratives. Especially in today's young generation of artists, the bird image is addressed in relation to contemporary issues such as freedom, fragility, loneliness, ecological concerns, and spatial belonging, thus gaining both formal and intellectual intensity. For these artists, the bird is often not a romanticized representation of nature; It continues to exist as a silent but

powerful metaphor for the existential condition of contemporary man, both on the painting surface and in various mediums of contemporary art.

This approach, evident in Mahpeyker Yönsel's paintings which simplify bird figures and construct them through emotion and emptiness, offers a silent, internal, and intuitive interpretation of the relationship with nature in contemporary Turkish painting. In these works, the bird is not treated as a singular narrative element or a directly symbolic figure, but rather as a form of existence that determines the overall structure of the painting. The artist's birds neither produce a dramatic discourse of freedom nor represent a romanticized ideal of nature; on the contrary, they are the visual equivalent of a calm and timeless stance existing within nature's own rhythm.



Image 15. "Three Birds"  
Acrylic paint  
on canvas  
25 x 25 cm. 2022



Image 16. "Bird on"  
the Branch", Acrylic paint  
on canvas  
25 x 25 cm. 2022



Image 17. "Blue Bird"  
Acrylic paint  
on canvas  
25 x 25 cm. 2022



Image 18. "Bird on the  
Branch", Acrylic paint  
on canvas  
25 x 25 cm. 2022

Images show examples of Mahpeyker Yönsel's works focusing on bird imagery.

In Yönsel's paintings, the bird is often depicted alongside flowers, branches, leaves, and the texture of the earth. This juxtaposition consciously blurs the distinction between figure and ground. Instead of standing out as a figure detached from the background, the bird image is integrated into the texture and color layers of the surface. The artist's use of dense surface textures creates a sense of natural erosion and time in the paintings. This removes the bird image from being a representation of momentary movement and associates it with the idea of continuity and cyclicity.

From a formal perspective, Yönsel's birds are depicted through simplified forms, stripped of detail. Round bodies, short and prominent beaks, and clear contours make the bird recognizable while demonstrating a conscious avoidance of excessive description. This simplicity can be interpreted as an aesthetic choice that brings the artist's figurative expression closer to the border of abstraction. Here, the bird is less a living creature than a carrier of a pictorial rhythm. The use of color stands out as a significant defining element in Yönsel's bird images. Bright yellows, purples, greens, and blues make a direct reference to nature while simultaneously creating an emotional atmosphere. The colors

are used not as a direct copy of nature, but as a reflection of the artist's inner perception. This approach removes the bird from being an objective subject of observation and transforms it into a subjective visual experience.

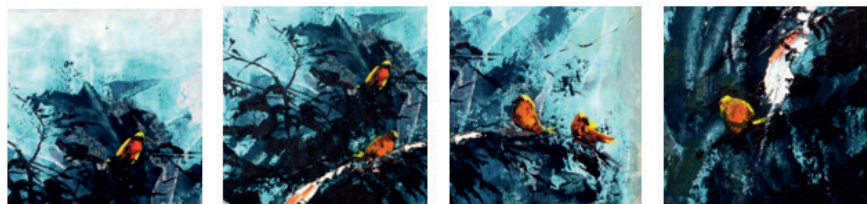


Image 19. "Bird"  
Acrylic paint  
on canvas  
25 x 25 cm. 2022

Image 20. "Two Birds"  
Acrylic paint  
on canvas  
25 x 25 cm. 2022

Image 21. "Two Birds"  
Acrylic paint  
on canvas  
25 x 25 cm. 2022

Image 22. "Bird on the Branch"  
Acrylic paint  
on canvas  
25 x 25 cm. 2022

Images show examples of Mahpeyker Yönsel's works focusing on bird imagery.

Another striking element in the compositions is the depiction of birds mostly in a stationary state. Instead of flight, bird figures are preferred, showing them waiting, resting, or quietly interacting with their surroundings. This stillness can be interpreted as a conscious suggestion of slowing down in response to the pace of contemporary life. The bird image here is not that of a fleeing or ascending creature; it is a figure that gains meaning in its place. Conceptually, Yönsel's birds present a stance that questions the hierarchical relationship between nature and humanity.

The bird image is not positioned above or at the center of nature; it sits on an equal plane with flowers, branches, and the earth. This state of equality points to a perspective that aligns with the ecological awareness discourse of contemporary art. Here, the bird image is represented as a living being existing within nature's own order, stripped of its anthropocentric meaning. In Yönsel's paintings, the bird image demonstrates that a quieter, more introspective, and poetic narrative about nature is possible in contemporary Turkish art. The artist makes us think about the bird not through loud symbols, but through the relationships of form, color, texture, and composition. This approach makes the bird image not only a conceptual metaphor in contemporary art, but also a fundamental element that establishes the structural and aesthetic integrity of the painting.

In İnci Eviner's artistic practice, the bird image appears not as a directly descriptive or aesthetic element of nature, but rather as a field of intellectual leap, a metaphor for mental movement, and an intermediate form in which bodily-social boundaries are questioned. These works, which can be grouped under

the title “Bird Mind,” approach the bird not through associations of freedom, naturalness, or pastoralism, but through fragmentation, transformation, transition, and threshold states. In this respect, Eviner’s bird images offer powerful examples representing the critical and conceptual dimensions of the bird theme in contemporary art.



Image 23. “Bird Mind”  
Ink and screen  
printing on paper  
140 x 108 cm. 2017



Image 24. “Explosion”  
Acrylic and screen  
printing on paper  
107 x 140 cm. 2022



Image 25. “Bird Mind”  
ink and screen  
printing on paper  
140 x 107 cm. 2017



Image 26. “Parliamentary  
Patterns”  
Ink on paper  
30 x 30 cm. 2010

Images show examples of İnci Eviner works focusing on bird imagery.

In these compositions dominated by black and white, the bird often appears as a form intertwined with the human body, sometimes derived from it, sometimes fragmenting it, or sometimes articulated with it. The boundary between the figurative and the abstract is constantly violated through Eviner’s linear language. The bird’s wing, beak, or body transforms into a human arm, spine, skirt, or mental extension. This transformation removes the bird from being a “living being” and turns it into the embodiment of thought. Here, the bird is not a flying creature; it is a consciousness that thinks, objects, resists, or flees. Eviner’s use of fluid ink stains, harsh brushstrokes, and controlled scrapings establishes the idea of movement in the bird at an iconographic level and directly on the surface. The bird is not fixed in the composition; it disperses, multiplies, leaves traces, and is erased. These traces also relate to the gestural abstraction tradition of modern and contemporary art. The bird figure suddenly loses its recognizability, transforming into a stain, a line, a rhythm. This allows the bird to cease being a “represented” object and become the intellectual driving force behind the image.

The fact that human figures are often depicted headless, faceless, or in fragmented form shows that the relationship with the bird is not hierarchical. The bird is not a symbol of freedom positioned above the human; it occupies the pictorial space as an equal, or sometimes even more dominant, being. This equality also aligns with Eviner’s practice, which is open to feminist and political interpretations. Here, the bird is not a romantic symbol of escape; it is an alternative way of thinking for the oppressed body. The use of emptiness is



also important in this context. The white spaces are not a sky for the bird to fly in; they are a space of uncertainty, suspension, and directionlessness. The birds do not glide in this emptiness, they drift. This state of drifting is directly related to the political, social, and mental constraints experienced by the individual in today's world. Eviner's birds do not belong to nature; they are beings trapped within the systems created by humans, yet still possessing the potential for resistance.

In this context, İnci Eviner's bird imagery transcends romantic, decorative, or nature-centered interpretations of the bird theme in contemporary Turkish art. The bird becomes not a metaphor, but a method in the artist's style. The movement of thought, the fragmentation of the body, and the constant transformation of images reveal an approach that focuses not so much on the bird's flight, but on its mental capacity. In this sense, "Bird Mind" is not merely a series title; it is a powerful conceptual proposal regarding the way contemporary art thinks through images.

### **Conclusion**

This study aims to demonstrate that the bird image is not merely a historical symbol but also an active component of contemporary artistic thought, by examining its continuity, transformation, and multiple layers of meaning within contemporary Turkish art. The artist examples and artwork analyses conducted show that the bird image is not treated within a singular and fixed framework of meaning in contemporary art practice; rather, it is constantly redefined in accordance with the artist's style, formal language, and conceptual orientation.

In contemporary Turkish art, the bird image maintains its connection to traditional iconographic meanings without completely severing this legacy, transforming it within individual narratives and contemporary aesthetic explorations. In the works of artists like Füreya Koral and Bedri Rahmi Eyüboğlu, the bird appears as a carrier of collective memory, referencing Anatolian culture and folk art; while in the works of Neşe Erdok, Ergin İnan, and Mehmet Güleriyüz, the image is linked to the human existential condition, bodily confinement, and metaphysical questioning. These diverse approaches reveal that the bird in contemporary art is not merely a figure belonging to nature, but a visual projection of the relationship that humans establish with themselves and the world.

In contemporary young artists, the bird image appears as a more introspective, silent, and intuitive space for expression. In Mahpeyker Yönsel's paintings, the bird is far from being a dramatic or glorified symbol of freedom; it is represented as a being on an equal footing with nature, integrated with time and space. This approach can be read as a visual expression of ecological sensitivity, slowing down, and the desire to reconnect with nature



in contemporary painting. In İnci Eviner's "Bird Mind" series, the bird image becomes a conceptual tool for bodily and mental transformation. In Eviner's practice, the bird is associated with concepts such as the movement of thought, resistance, and boundary transgression, making a powerful contribution to the political and critical dimension of contemporary art.

In this context, the bird image in contemporary Turkish art is not treated merely as an aesthetic element of nature or a romanticized metaphor for freedom. On the contrary, the bird functions as a formal building block, an intellectual tool, and a conceptual method within the artist's individual style. By offering possibilities in terms of color, movement, and pattern, the bird image determines the internal dynamism of the painting surface and provides important clues about how contemporary art thinks through images.

In conclusion, this research reveals that the bird image creates a multi-layered narrative space in contemporary Turkish art; offering a flexible visual language that encompasses historical, cultural, individual, and political interpretations. The bird continues to exist in contemporary art not so much as a represented image, but rather as an image that is "thought about," "suggested," and "transformed"; it opens up to new meanings each time through the artist's style. This clearly demonstrates the importance and continuity of the bird image within contemporary art.

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Image 13. “Bird Gang”, Oil painting on canvas, 2006, 100 x 100 cm. <https://artam.com/muzayede/372-modern-ve-cagdas-tablolar/mehmet-guleryuz-1938-kus-cetesi>

Image 14. “Avril”, 2018, Ecoline on paper, 57 x 77 cm. [https://www.instagram.com/p/DSpdwxQisDC/?img\\_index=1](https://www.instagram.com/p/DSpdwxQisDC/?img_index=1)

Image 15. “Three Birds”, Acrylic paint on canvas, 25 x 25 cm. 2022, Mahpeyker YÖNSEL “Spring Branches” Exhibition Catalogue

Image 16. “Bird on the Branch”, Acrylic paint on canvas, 25 x 25 cm. 2022, Mahpeyker YÖNSEL “Spring Branches” Exhibition Catalogue

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Image 20. “Two Birds”, Acrylic paint on canvas, 25 x 25 cm. 2022, Mahpeyker YÖNSEL “Spring Branches” Exhibition Catalogue

Image 21. “Two Birds”, Acrylic paint on canvas, 25 x 25 cm. 2022, Mahpeyker YÖNSEL “Spring Branches” Exhibition Catalogue

Image 22. “Bird on the Branch”, Acrylic paint on canvas, 25 x 25 cm. 2022, Mahpeyker YÖNSEL “Spring Branches” Exhibition Catalogue

Image 23. “Bird Mind”, Ink and screen printing on paper, 140 x 108 cm., 2017 <https://incieviner.net/tr/work/kus-akli/>

Image 24. “Explosion”, Acrylic and screen printing on paper, 107 x 140 cm. 2022 <https://incieviner.net/tr/work/infalak/>

Image 25. “Bird Mind”, ink and screen printing on paper, 140 x 107 cm. 2017 <https://incieviner.net/tr/work/kus-akli-2/>

Image 26. “Parliamentary Patterns”, Ink on paper, 30 x 30 cm. 2010 <https://incieviner.net/tr/work/parlamento-desenleri/>