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A Research Experience on Reception and Audience Attitudes toward Ceramic Art

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ABSTRACT

Ceramic, began to be recognized as an art phenomenon at the beginning of the 20th century. Although having developed in a way similar to the development process of modern arts up to today, within the same span of time and with the same value, debates have continued about its recognition and being accepted as a true art form. This study, designed as an experimental research project, was conducted to counteract against biased approaches detrimental to the development of ceramic art and to acquire evidence on how to make ceramic art popular as an art function for individuals and social culture. Within the scope of the project, the interests in and knowledge of art in general and ceramic art in particular, as well as the aesthetic experiences of 168 audience members were inquired into via face-to-face questionnaires, which were administered at four solo ceramic exhibitions held in Istanbul and Ankara. Responses to the questionnaire – prepared based on art, ceramic art, reception theory, reception semiotics and art ontology perspectives – were important in terms of revealing the attitudes of audiences toward art and works of art and the problems between the work and audience response, the identification of which is valid for not only ceramic art but also other art branches. According to the results of the questionnaire that the audience members used to evaluate themselves, they had an interest in art in general and ceramic art in particular, but only a few of them actually had a reception experience.

Keywords: Arts, Art of Ceramic, Aesthetics, Audience, Reception Aesthetics.

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1. Introduction

The body of contemporary ceramic art can be classed under abstract expressionism, funk, super realist, minimalist, post-industrial 20th century and other formal styles from the 80s and the remaining half of the last century, and the works vary from personal expression and cultural narrative to social criticism (Brown, 2009). Although ceramic art has progressed in a manner similar to that of other plastic arts, the statement by John Pereault, “Ceramics it seems to me, suffers from a lack of criticism. It is still too much a folksy club, though a very large one indeed” (2005), adequately summarizes the state of ceramic art, whose presence has remained within its own closed borders, by

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explaining the underlying reasons for it. This statement applies to the state of ceramic arts within Turkey as well, with the reasons for this being various and complicated: Ceramic art is endowed with an archaeological memory, leaving behind its artistic functions from its material effect, which is generated from the various products produced by ceramics and its involvement in science and technology, from the most basic levels to the most advanced. Ceramics art education in Turkey started in 1929 at Sanayii Nefise (Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University), and industrial ceramic production has received sectoral investments since the early years of the Republic (Erman, 2012). The institutions providing ceramic art education have been affected from the production conditions of Turkey. Prospective artists who are receiving education in ceramic departments lack the pure art comprehension that the students studying in painting and sculpture departments have. The progress of ceramic art has followed that of modern art, with the exception that its progress does not go beyond the academic borders. This is the main reason inhibiting ceramic art from progressing as a pure art. Making ceramic art, which has aesthetic value and meaning potential, more widespread among people and society can be done by offering different channels whereby greater reception of its works can be offered to larger parts of society. According to James O. Young's suggestion, it is important to first consider the audience's appreciation for art and then work on improving it through education, as a well-educated audience is the first step in encouraging aesthetically valuable art production (2010). In the present study, applying Young's general art approach, a project² titled "Cultural Effect and Prevalence Analysis of Ceramic Works in the Context of Reception Theory", was developed to present the artistic function of ceramic arts and to provide audiences with information about it. The research method used for this project involved administering a questionnaire to determine and evaluate audience members' demographic data, artistic trends, knowledge, behaviors and attitudes, level of interest in art works in general and ceramic works in particular, and aesthetic experience. In four solo ceramic exhibitions that were held in 2014 in Istanbul and Ankara, face-to-face questionnaires were administered to 168 audience members. The inclusion of the reception theory within the context of this project was a factor in bringing audiences towards a greater understanding of art; however, the results of the quantitative and qualitative evaluations of the questionnaires showed that only a very limited number of audience members had aesthetic experiences at the reception level.

During the time designated for carrying out the research, there were only a few exhibitions being held, and some artists did not give their permission to participate in the research, both of which resulted in a limited study sample for questionnaire administration. On the other hand, the qualitative data able to be obtained was important considering the low number of critical publications and limited research about ceramic arts. In addition to the quantitative data, the audiences also expressed their opinions on the problems related to art and ceramic art that are in need of being investigated and solved. The eMotion project, which was carried out at the Fine Arts Museum in Switzerland and focused on measuring the artistic interest shown by and knowledge of audiences, the results of which were published in the literature, helped to identify the points missing from the present research (Tschacher, Bergomi & Tröndle, 2015; Tröndle & Tschacher, 2016). The project's research universe, theoretical foundations, "Art Affinity Index" (AAI) developed, and detailed analysis illustrate that similar studies should be carried out in coordination with art physiology, art sociology, and experimental aesthetics research.

This article includes a literature review that affected the research, the factors impacting reception conditions in ceramics, and semiotic reception examples, along with references. In the method and findings sections, the research process, questionnaire content and evaluation are fully explained and proportional data are presented. Recommendation policies were determined based on the study findings.

2. Literature analysis

The article titled, "Reception Culture", which offers the following thoughts, "...in the concert hall... mobile phones are turned off, but no one finds it odd when they see art-lovers talking on their mobile phones while visiting exhibition halls... while a book reader wades into reading a book... everyone avoids distracting them, but no one avoids bursting into loud laughter when hitting their glasses at

² No: 2011/153. Funded by Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University Scientific Research Project Commission.

exhibition openings... At the cinema... preventing the person behind you from seeing the screen can be grounds for a fight, but... for a person to take pictures and block the paintings is ordinary behavior. Such behaviors show our distance from... branches called plastic arts as well as that from a concept called 'reception culture'" (Acar, 2008), is the first to make reference to the common problems in the context of ceramic art and as such, led to the emergence of the research project. Two articles by Glenn R. Brown (2009), which were published a year after Acar's article and provided a more comprehensive understanding of in-area and non-area identity problems related to ceramic art, influenced the design of the research subject.

According to Brown, the most effective metaphor for social diversity in art is pluralism. The expression of pluralism through the style, technique, theme, and variety of practices related to the rhetorical potential of the ceramic art functions is the strongest aspect of contemporary ceramic art. Representing an untouched area for critical theory, ceramic art is seen as an underdeveloped art discipline in the art world due to criticisms not yet supported by field knowledge. A professional critical approach should be developed to introduce comprehensive changes in the application and reception of studio ceramics (2009).

In short, the term 'reception', defined as 'a dialogue which takes place during the aesthetic experience with art works and which exceeds the act of perception' (İpşiroğlu, 2001) and 'receiver', which refers to the audience, reader, listener, and subject, according to classical aesthetics, are two basic terms within Reception Aesthetics. As a theory, Reception Aesthetics, which emerged in the 1960s in Germany and addressed the meaning of the work of art and the function of the reader (Moran, 1994) asserts that the gaps in a work of art will be filled by the receiver and recreated in their imagination, and as such, it concerns an area that includes the artist, receiver, works of art and the relations existing between the three (Tunali, 2005; Eco, 1991; İpşiroğlu, 2001). The qualitative problems related to the reception process involve the conditions, styles, and consequences of grasping an artwork. A broad range of contributions went into the development of reception theory, including the Prague School, Ingarden ontology, Gadamer's science of interpretation, and Umberto Eco's concept of "open-work" (Tunali, 2005), and these contributions have served to enhance and reinforce artistic experience from different perspectives. In this context, the orientation of Umberto Eco, who deals with the reception theory from a semiotics perspective, influenced the theoretical framework for studies on the interpretation of ceramic works.

According to Eco, the 'open work' (opera aperta) aims to establish dialectic between the rights of the texts and the rights of their interpreters; however, it is important to note that the open-ended reading is revealed by the work, an issue which is not given enough importance (1997). In the conference text of Reception Semiotics (Appunti sulla semiotica della ricezione), it is stated that the history of aesthetics is the history of the effect the work arouses for the receiver. Moreover, according to Holub's, *The Book of Purchase* (1984), and Charles Morris's book, *On the Theory of Signs* (1938), reception and semiotics are historically related to each other, and in these two works, historical and contemporary interpretation approaches to artworks are evaluated. Under the term, 'expressive and critical reader', the process whereby the receiver ascribes meaning to a work of art as part of their relation to it is referred to as 'semantic interpretation', and the receiver's critical approach to the artwork in terms of the structural reasons responsible for generating the semantic interpretation is referred to as 'critical interpretation' (semiotic). It is stated that the semantic interpretation alone does not provide certainty, and that although the critical interpretation seems to be the best estimate of interpretation, it is not the only possible or mandatory way to interpret, and that aesthetically functional texts provide for both types of interpretation. Under the term 'interpretation and prediction', it is emphasized that the prediction of the purpose of the work of art should be approved by the whole of the organic structure (1991). The study's semantic interpretation approach, which is work-centered and based on the critical interpretation, is taken as a reference in determining the questions about the reception of ceramic works.

In a comparative interview conducted with Zehra İpşiroğlu, Nazan İpşiroğlu, an art historian, identified the reception conditions and styles and exemplified them with experimental reception practices. Furthermore, she highlighted the way the field of the art of painting views the works, the period of effect of the realist and abstract artworks on the reception process, and the extent of the

senses and the effects of the contexts on the work (2001). The author's picture reception practices are a reference in the extraction of the reception dimensions of ceramics and other plastic artworks.

3. Method

The experimental method applied in this research involved the determination of the reception conditions and styles of the ceramic art works, the preparation of the questionnaire (which was used as the main data collection tool), the selection of the exhibitions, the application of the questionnaires, and the evaluation of the findings from the responses to the questionnaire about ceramics.

Acar argues that the failure of reception activity will occur as a result of unknown theories. Referring to Rudolf Arnheim's book, *Visual Thinking*, Acar posits that to avoid neglecting the nature of human activity, an appropriate solution would be to consider "the active subject at work", suggesting "...let's examine the art as a constructive act... let's join the nature of the art, which is a 'phenomenon' not a 'thing'..." (2008). The author's concern for the audience was the main focus of the project. However, the idea of how the participation in the nature of art as a phenomenon will take place to establish the reception culture has not been addressed. One thought is that in the examples given by the readers of books and concert and cinema audiences, the active subject is at work, but the question of why still remains. This needs to be considered in the field of plastic arts, where the incomprehensibility of the language functions as the most basic issue. Each area and each work in the plastic arts presents dialects and texts derived from visual language. The words are similar to literary texts but with different pronunciations. The basic methodology of the study is to acquaint audiences to the nature of art by providing an explanatory, remarkable, evaluative, and conclusive process experience without developing a success and failure criteria. In this experience, the works, artists and audience are not on an operation table or under examination, but rather, the aim of the research is to prepare the conditions in which the words spoken with the language of ceramic art can be more understandable and livable.

3.1 Determination of reception conditions and styles of ceramic art works

The first difficulty experienced by audiences is not familiar with ceramics when they see ceramic artworks is the pluralism phenomenon, which Brown refers to as a challenging confrontation directed at the advantage of ceramic art and critical theory (2009). Pluralism is the richness of expression that emerges with the freedom of style in the art of ceramics, but it is also one of the main factors that make the evaluation of these works within art forms difficult. Certain ceramic works are excluded from being accepted as art, while there are certain ceramic objects produced for different purposes to which artistic value can be attributed. The second, according to ceramic artist Attila Galatalı (1936-1994) ceramic is a "non-illusionary abstract art" including the illusion of depth and surface in painting and the organic and mass illusions of sculpture" (Turay, 1996). Non-illusory abstraction falls within the structural aesthetic values, by which artists and audiences experience the synthesis effects of inorganic substances – the materials of ceramic art, which are constantly changing and transforming in nature – derived from the production processes that result in ceramic works. The pluralism and non-illusory abstract seen in the formal diversity are the result of the same source and material. Non-illusory abstraction creates the pluralism of meanings through the effects of materials, which take on an appearance shaped by the artist. This pluralism may coincide with the given form and/or may appear as orchestral accompaniment.

As is the case for every kind of product, the design process of ceramic products starts with the conceptualization of final results, followed by the design of materials and the manufacturing processes to be used, and the entire process follows a cognitive path that goes backwards, forward and sideways. However, in the production process of ceramics, it is more or less understood that the materials, techniques and technologies are responsible for the form, and that the ceramicist enthusiastically participates in this operation that takes place in each work. Fariello interprets Marshall McLuhan's "the medium is the message" vision to mean that there are bonds between the works, the nature of the materials and our aesthetic value system for ceramics (2005). According to Beittel, 'clay is elemental wholeness' (2017). Ceramic raw materials are diversified in and of themselves or with alternative combinations of multiple raw materials and help to form aesthetic value and meaning potential. This

potential, which includes the elements of visual arts, formatting, and evaluation, changes and evolves, perhaps even more than once, depending on the practitioner, the alternative methods, the technologies, and the historical and cultural contexts of the forming process. Plasticity, fluidity, mass, surface and volume, hardness, brittleness, coverage and transparency grades, nature's infinite colors and tones, brightness opacity grades, light diffraction, reflection, and absorption constitute the qualities forming both the technical and aesthetic values, and their proportional contrasts form a universe of infinite meanings. Philip Rawson explains the diversification of ceramic vessels through the modification of primary ceramic vessels by applying the biology theory of "Ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny" (1984), and the statement by Beittel, "A pot's a pot: Earth comes to stand as World to man" (2017) conveys the same theory on the presentation of primary vessels, and it transmits all the ceramics produced by the same core to the width and depth covering people and nature.

The transformation of the material activity into an aesthetic object, which is considered to be an important potential force for aesthetic value and meaning in ceramic art, is described by Wayne Higby, where he states, "Art arises from the catalytic heat of a reaction between idea and material. Look deeply, material or means may not be the message is delivered determines the important subtleties of its meaning: material matters" (2004) (see figs.1 and 2). The phrase 'The catalytic heat' draws attention to the consciousness process in the formation of artistic meaning, while Octavio Paz points to the sensory nature of this process, referring to the transformation difference of material to art as "poetry" (1995).

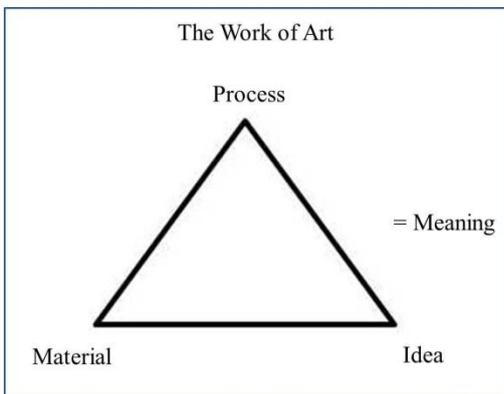


Fig. 1. Postscript by Wayne Higby (2008).

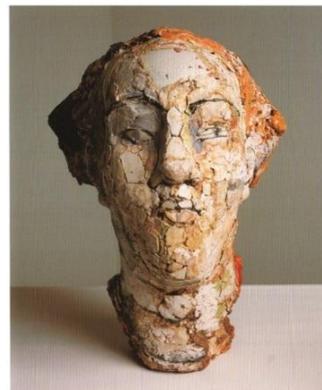


Fig. 2: Gertraud Möhwald. "Head with Colored Paper", 1989. Ceramic, paper. 17"hx15"w13"d. Collection of Helen W. Drutt English (*Material Matters*, 2008).

The text about Alev Ebuzyia's bowls (fig. 3), written by Garth Clark (1994), who is among the writers whose works contain the perfect examples of ceramic theory and criticism according to Brown (2009) goes beyond creating an example of reception by describing and explaining the original values of ceramic art in such a way that it includes both critical and semantic interpretation competently:

"...the bowls hang in the air and vibrate in a hypnotic feeling of emptiness. This is partly due to the fact that the bowls are made using the coiling technique instead of the wheel technique. The bowls shaped on the wheel give a sense of rotation as if they had saved the centrifugal power that gave them life... The slowness of the coiling technique gives a kind of vague shape and surface softness that cannot be obtained on the wheels... The volume outside the bowl is formal, clear and precise. The didactic boundaries of the outside of the bowl are subordinated by the dominance of its inner volume, which is non-formal and perceived larger than the dimensions of the bowl. The interior of the bowl is like an entrance to an endless space without borders. Looking into the dark-colored glazed vessels, stormy weather is sensed and it creates a slight sense of melancholy. In the turquoise bowls, one feels a sense of entering the vast underwater caves in the Aegean or the Caribbean." (Clark, 1994).



Fig. 3. Alev Ebuzziya Siesbye. (Clark, 1994).



Fig. 4. Kenneth R. Beittel (1922–2003). “Trees on Winter Fields,” (Palmer Museum of Art, 2018).

Clark's comments exemplify how form, material and processes, space-place relations and other design qualities affect our senses, our ways of seeing, our reading and understanding of works. The author first identifies the perceptual sense of the whole, “...the bowls hang in the air and vibrate in a hypnotic feeling of emptiness-” and then shows the reasoning behind the sensation. The process governs the realization of the reception process. In ascribing meaning to the form, he returns to the life evoked by the form, taking the idea of nature and the supremacy of nature he experiences in life and transcribes it to the form he is experiencing. In this conflict, the work is recreated at the moment the exaltation created by the sense of the supreme and the beautiful is felt.

The similarity of the process of objectivation, as put forward by Hartmann's ontology, and the reception process in the conception of artwork, which takes on existence via the receiver (Acar, 2008), can also be observed in the interview with İpşiroğlu on the concept of reception, particularly in her point of view concerning the works produced in the art of painting (2001). Based on the way they are presented, the various forms in the works of ceramic art and the way they are seen show similarities with the way of seeing the art of painting, sculpture, and architecture, which makes it therefore possible to engage in a methodological examination of ceramic works by referencing the different layers of existence of these arts. Panels, plates and sculptures, and the way they are formed in various dimensions offering different views, as seen in architecture and the art of painting, are all objectivated in the transitional heterogeneous layers between the real and unreal layers. Ontology, which is based on similar logic, in terms of the material structure and the content presented, provides a basis for the understanding of the existence of the branches of art and more detailed contextual data. Using Perception Semiotics (Eco, 1991) to understand the way we interpret and Hartman's Ontology to understand the conditions and styles of our understanding of the works of art (Tunali, 1971) can serve as guides to approaching the conditions and styles governing the reception of ceramics. However, this approach is stranger than the work itself for art lovers who do not know art at the academic level. It is seen as a solution to providing a cognitive orientation through information that can be understood by everyone, rather than simply presenting information in the theoretical context. For the survey questions, the audience was asked to focus on the work in general, and the points requiring their attention were highlighted so that the potential for reception could be developed.

3.2 Preparation of questionnaire questions and determination of the conditions for the exhibitions and questionnaire application

In preparing the questionnaire questions, the aim was to obtain data on art lovers' interest in the works using more general and simple questions, free of theoretical language, and to investigate the existence of the aesthetic experience at the reception level by asking the questions in a progressive manner. The questionnaire consists of three parts, with the first part including questions related to the general information of the participants, like age, gender, education and occupation, the second part including questions related to the participants' general artistic tendencies and behaviors, and the third part including questions on their tendencies and behaviors related to ceramic exhibitions and works.

Solo exhibitions were preferred in determining the type of ceramic exhibitions. The unity of style between the works of the artists was used as a reference to the interpretation and reception

process, which was examined with each work individually. For this study, the announcements for the exhibitions opened within the scope of the project schedule were followed, preliminary interviews related to the research were conducted for the exhibitions, the questionnaires were distributed, and studies were made during the period of the exhibitions. The exhibitions examined as part of this study were Alev Oskay's "Irony" Complicated Matters Exhibition, held at the Istanbul Culture University Art Gallery between February 05 – 26, 2014, Şirin Koçak's Ceramic Exhibition held in the Ziraat Bank Kuğulu Art Gallery in Ankara between February 10 – 28, 2014, Otar Sharabidze's Ceramics Exhibition held at the Nişantaşı Derinlikler Art Center in Istanbul between March 6 – 22, 2014 and Elif Aydoğdu Ağatekin's "In Vain" Ceramic Exhibition, held at the Nurol Art Gallery in Ankara between October 16 – 08 November, 2014.

The questionnaires were completed on the opening day of the exhibitions due to the high number of people touring the exhibitions. The questionnaires were presented by the interviewers to the participants, all of whom voluntarily agreed to answer the questions, following the viewing of the works exhibited. The interviews were graduates of the ceramic art field.

4. Findings and discussions

At the end of the study, the data derived from each exhibition were evaluated separately to arrive at overall results. Although the number and profiles of the participants who completed the questionnaires at the ceramic exhibitions varied according to the exhibition environment and galleries, the answers to the questions about general art and ceramic art did not show heterogeneous distribution in terms of the exhibitions.

Seventy-four audience members answered the questionnaire in Alev Oskay's Irony exhibition, 37 in Şirin Koçak's Ceramic Exhibition, 11 in Otar Sharabidze's Ceramic Exhibition, and 46 in Elif Aydoğdu Ağatekin's 'In Vain' Exhibition, bringing the total number to 168. The findings from these questionnaires are presented according to the total values obtained in the four exhibitions, not according to each exhibition, except in the case of the question on expressing the interest of the works of ceramics on the reception of the works of art.

4.1 Demographic data, artistic trends and behaviors of art-lovers

According to the data obtained on the first part of the questionnaire, 73.8% of the participants were from non-art disciplines, and 86% had undergraduate and graduate degrees. According to age ranges, there was a higher number of young people and middle-aged individuals than that of the middle-age group. The high number of young participants was influenced by the students' participation in the exhibition opened at the Istanbul Culture University Gallery. Considering the other three exhibitions, individuals over the age of 40 seemed to be more interested in exhibitions (Fig.5). There were no significant differences in the participants according to gender.

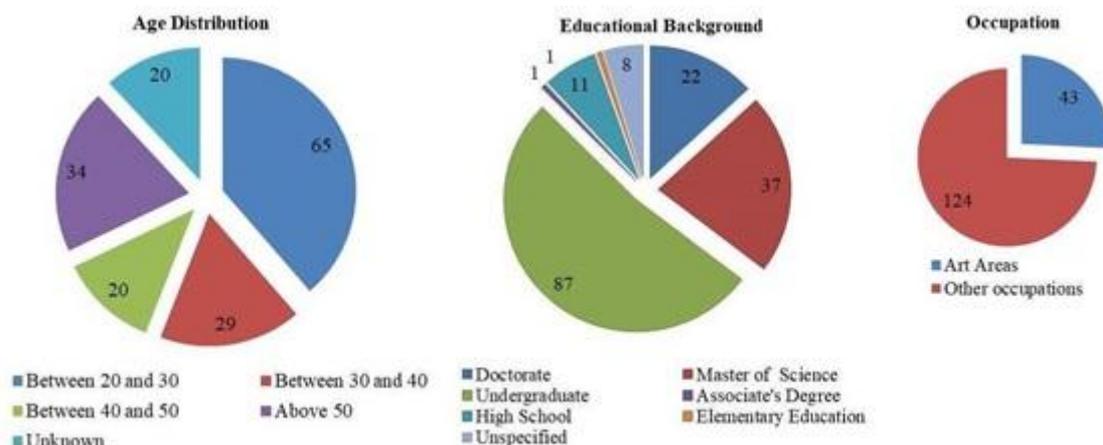


Fig.5. Demographic data.

In the second part of the questionnaire, the participants' general artistic trends, including the level at which they related to the art and the type of art they related to, their habits of attending

exhibitions, their favorite art works, and their general interest and knowledge levels, were investigated (Fig.6). It was found that 27% of the participants were professional artists, 52.9% were art-lovers, 24.4% were interested in art as a hobby, and 8.9% were collectors.

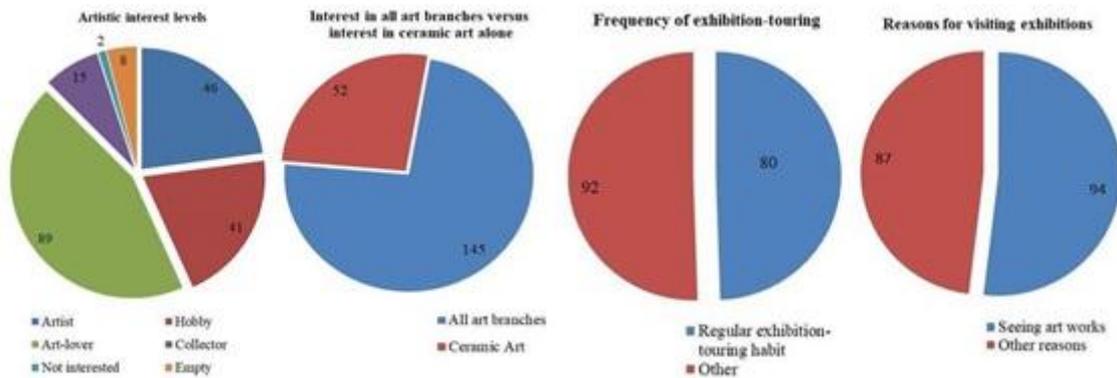


Fig.6. General artistic trends.

The distribution of artistic interests according to art branches showed that 26.3% of the participants had an interest in ceramic art at the art-lover, hobby, and professional occupation levels. A total of 46.5% of the participants had a habit of regularly attending exhibitions, and this figure was 20% in art lovers, 51.9% of the participants attended exhibitions for the sole purpose of viewing the works of art, and 18% of the participants felt the need to visit the same exhibition more than once.

As part of the study, determination of whether the participants had preferred art areas when viewing art exhibitions and the preference ratio of ceramic exhibitions was performed. While 51.95% of the participants stated that they attended all art exhibitions, the preference of seeing ceramic exhibitions was 16.75%, which was second to painting exhibitions (Fig.7).

The duration of the participants' mental interest in the works they saw at exhibitions and whether they bought artworks were explored, with the results showing that 25.9% had an interest in works of art outside of exhibitions and that 38.26% purchased artworks. In terms of the factors influencing the purchase of art work, 64.89% reported that it was aesthetic value and 29.48% that it was collection value.

Participants were given options to determine their approach to interpreting artworks. Although it was thought that the participants would make one choice from among the options of *what the artist meant*, *what the audience understood*, and *what the work was telling*, most of the participants answered yes to all the options. "I think about what the work is trying to tell" option was alone marked from among the other options by 27 participants, which included two artists (painter and theater and sculpture artist), an art critic-writer, a publisher-writer, a publisher, a journalist, a civil engineer, a pharmacist, and 19 students from outside the arts discipline. This is a thought-provoking finding for the field of art.

In terms of the participants' art knowledge, in addition to the semantic interpretations in their dialogue with art work, determination of whether they had any critical interpretations was also investigated. It was found that 52.38% of the participants used art history knowledge, 50.59% used knowledge on artists and their works, 50.59% used technical knowledge, and 36.9% used design knowledge.

According to the expectations of art work, 19.64% said that "I search for only meaning in the work", 23.8% said that "the formal beauty of the work is enough", 70.23% said that "I search for the beauty of the work in the association of form and meaning".

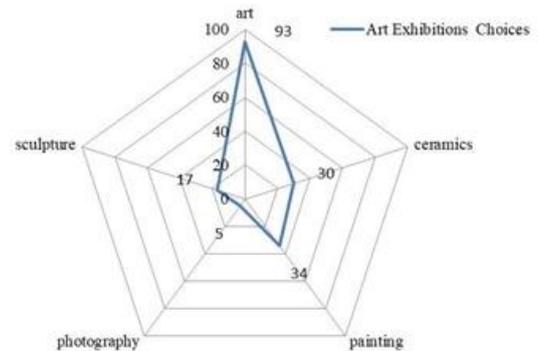


Fig.7. Preferences of the participants according to the art areas.

4.2 Interest levels of art-lovers in ceramic art and its works

In the third part of the questionnaire, participants' knowledge and approach to ceramic art, their interest in the works, and their reception experiences in the exhibition were investigated. The rate at which the participants regularly followed ceramic exhibitions was 48.8%. Among all the participants, it was found that 47.69% had medium and advanced levels of knowledge about ceramic techniques, 47.02% had medium and advanced levels of knowledge about ceramic history, 51.19% had medium and advanced levels of knowledge about ceramic art, and 37.5% had medium and advanced levels about the ceramic industry. Furthermore, 40.47% of them stated that they were familiar with the national and international ceramic artists and their previous works, and they were able to analyze the works, with 25% of them being able to analyze them in technical terms, 33.92% in terms of form and 51.19% in terms of content. The high number of participants who responded 'yes' to the question, "I can produce ideas about whether works express an idea and a feeling", with respect to technique and form indicates the existence of a more semantic interpretation approach in interests to the works. On the same question, 27.38% further responded, "it changes according to the work", which suggested the participant was able to evaluate both the work and himself/herself in qualitative terms regarding technique, form, and meaning.

The reasons affecting the reception process according to the approach of the participants to the ceramic works were determined. The results for the tendency to the work are as follows: 60.76% responded 'yes' to the statement, "The name of the work directs my ideas about the work", and 21.53% responded 'yes' to the statement "It depends on the work". The results for interpreting ceramic works are as follows: 36.78% selected the statement, "I try to understand what the artist means in the work", 34.78% selected the statement, "I try to understand what the work means to me", and 28.42% selected the statement, "I try to understand what the work tells". The difficulties the participants had in understanding art works and ceramic works in general were identified. Only 22 (13.09%) participants reported difficulties, the likes of which are as follows:

In general 'I have difficulty in understanding and creating an interest in art works': The reasons are {[Not interested], [limited number of opened exhibitions], [not able to relate to conceptual works], [do not have knowledge], [technique-perception-form], [visual reasons of art], [over abstraction], [lack of technical knowledge], [delivering the completion of the work of art to audiences], [formal-conceptual], [context, meaning and function-fiction-method], [being very abstract and far from its conceptual bonds], [inability to understand its origin points and philosophy], [not simple], [being relativist], [who they belong to], [lack of fundamental knowledge], [emotion-expression], [not understanding what is meant]}.

'I have difficulty in understanding and taking an interest in ceramic art works': The reasons are {[lack of experience with ceramic art], [not having too much knowledge], [purpose-context-background], [abstraction], [lack of technical knowledge], [formal-conceptual], [content-technical aesthetic background], [material-technique], [combination of techniques used together], [lack of fundamental knowledge], [not understanding]}.

The interest levels of the participants in the works they saw were investigated. Specifically, the participants were asked to indicate the names of the works they were interested in and whether they had any information about reception or had experienced reception with the artworks and exhibitions they visited. Many participants remembered the artworks they were interested in, while some had to re-examine the exhibition to look at the artworks or their names again before making their choices. The data showed that 41% of the participants stated that they had reception information, and 50% had experience with art works, 36.3% with ceramic works, and 41% with the artworks exhibited. The participants were asked to describe the works they viewed and their aesthetic experience with the works they mentioned. Only a few participants were able to give the name of the work, and eight participants (4.76%) stated their reception experiences.

4.3 Reception experiences of participants with respect to exhibitions

In a general, yet comprehensive and clear definition of the stylistic approach taken by Alev Oskay in her works, it states, "She is following the experimentalism that exists in the nature of Ceramics. On one hand, the form which was kneaded with soil, water and fire presents the power of colors and texture; on the other hand, it pursues the possibilities of new expressions by bringing

ceramics together with new materials in new forms. ... The artist, who sometimes does placements in nature, enriches the possibilities of expressions with the names that she gives to her works. She touches upon philosophy, literature, humor and nature with her experimental manner of art (Üstünipek, 2014). The synthetic views of these defined elements were witnessed in her exhibition titled, "IRONY" Complicated Matters, which was shaped in a complex form by ceramic and mixed materials and showed a critical approach by presenting a life-style related to women and the social status of women in life.

At the exhibition, 28 of the 74 participants involved in the questionnaire stated that they had a reception experience, and there were two participants who expressed their reception experience in writing: ['Frumpish', "Touching A Like a Shield Made of Soil: Istanbul" (Fig.8), 'Spur: Window Sill Flower': Objects, colors, the elegance of application style and its perceived feeling] (Fig.9); ["Hot Spot: Curiosity": Depth mess, way out]; ["Face to Face": Contrary opponent woman]; "Empathy": Stopping in life for a while].



Fig. 8. Alev Oskay. "Touching A Like a Shield Made of Soil: Istanbul" and its details, 2009. 145x65 cm, terra cotta and mixed material (Irony, 2014).

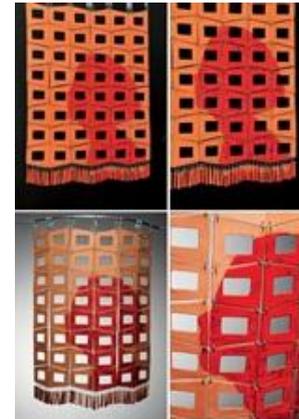


Fig. 9. Alev Oskay. "Spur: Window Sill Flower" and its details, 2010. 85x55 cm, vitrified ceramics, 1040 °C and mixed material (Irony, 2014).

In Şirin Koçak's ceramics, the traces of the past found a new unity and universal expression, all the possibilities of the clay were used to its fullest, and the clay's identity codes were reincarnated in her works; in this context, the artist challenged the classical expression of ceramics (Tizgöl, 2014). Koçak's works demonstrate Higby's idea that the reaction is caused by the catalytic heat. In a restoration work, Koçak, who stated that the fingerprints of her master were stamped on a ceramic vessel bottom piece (Güler, 2014, February 10), writes the poetry of clay and mankind into the memory of the clay with her imprints. The puritan approach in the ceramic works leads the historical man to timelessness, and the music of the clay is created in the form and its tactile values. At Şirin Koçak's Ceramic Exhibition, although 12 out of the 37 participants who took part in the questionnaire stated that they had a reception experience, there were only two who expressed their reception experience in writing: [Light Series I (Fig. 10): 1. Bottomless Well, 2. Infinity, depth, distance], [Circle series III (Fig.11): 1. Sink 2. Our world/Tropic rings], [White: Appeal me] [Woman III: Woman struggling].



Fig. 10. Şirin Koçak Özeskici. "Light Series I", 2012. H 11, Ø 26 cm. White stoneware mud, mold and hand forming, 1050 °C. Photograph: Şirin Koçak.



Fig. 11. Şirin Koçak Özeskici. "Circle Serie III", 2012. H 12 cm Ø 26 cm. Forming with casting and alkaline glaze 1150 °C. Photograph: Şirin Koçak.

Otar Sharabidze's works are cup forms, which are inspired by the forms of nature and geometric abstract, have a historical source, and do not lose their functional integrity or exclude our habits. According to the artist, "Ceramic art is first and foremost for use". He states that he paid close attention to making his works were convenient and aesthetic, and that there is nothing more flawless than nature, believing that his works benefit from the blessings that nature offers, and that the leaves in their teapots and vases are true and immortal (Derinlikler Sanat Merkezi, 2014). At the Otar Sharabidze's Ceramic Exhibition, 7 out of the 11 participants who answered the questionnaires had reception experience, with one participant expressing his experience as follows: [Leaves, bowls (fig.12), wall plates (fig. 13): associating with lavatory], [Teapots, animal-figured works, fish: associating with the life in nature].



Fig. 12. Otar Sharabidze. Bowl, 2014. Glazed terracotta. (Derinlikler Sanat Merkezi, 2014).

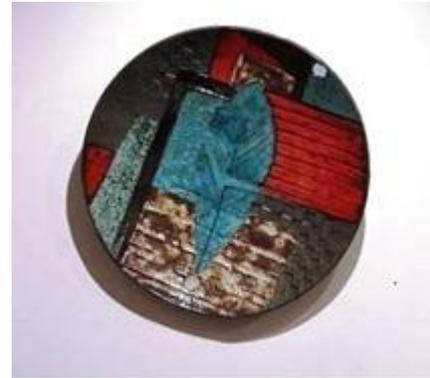


Fig. 13. Otar Sharabidze. Plate with a leaf, 2014. Glazed terracotta. Photograph: Ayşe Güler.

Elif Aydoğdu Ağatekin's In Vain exhibition is an expression of her critical look at vain life experiences in the works she created with waste ceramic pieces. The artist explained the conceptual ties between its contents as follows: "In Vain" represents the quest for a depiction of wasted lives using wasted ceramic materials... the wastedness of ceramic can be felt in pieces that are hidden in dumping grounds; that are discarded, abandoned, broken, or cracked; that are no longer valued by any soul; and the bodies of which are broken but the spirits of which are still quality... .. If all these pieces should become a trace of escaping from the captivity of wasted lives one day, then all this cruelty has not been suffered "in vain"... (2014). The following sentence was appended to the questionnaire form for Ağatekin's exhibition: "A novelty...The material used, the thought behind it, and the mastery are a contribution to ceramics..."(Ataöv, 2014). In her works, that the dialectic between concept and fiction is structured in space with astonishing insight is a situation wherein the artistic rhetoric is compelled to force audiences to break the boundaries of their senses, minds and souls.



Fig. 14: Elif Aydoğdu Ağatekin. "Irregular Parkisation", 2012. 52x80x38 cm, waste refractory, water jet cutting porcelain tile, raku. Photograph: Serhat Özdemir (Elif Aydoğdu Ağatekin, 2018).



Fig. 15: Elif Aydoğdu Ağatekin. "Immigrated Loves I", 2014. 31x20x12 cm, waste refractory, waste ceramics, raku. Photograph: Serhat Özdemir (Elif Aydoğdu Ağatekin, 2018).

A total of 22 of the 46 participants who attended Elif Ağatekin's exhibition stated that they had a reception experience, with 3 participants expressing it in writing: [Irregular Parkisation: Irregular Parkisation], [Irregular Parkisation (Fig. 14): 1. change-city-assimilation-globalization 2. crowd, enemy, loneliness, moment], [Pledge Lives: Pressure, Separation], [“Collapsed Loves” series (Fig. 15): Alienation Belonging/Lostness], [“Where do you sleep ?” : my disappearing freedom], [“Three children ?” : 1. Few children, real childhood, being trapped, 2. Joy of life].

5. Conclusion

Approximately 1/3 of the audience members attending the exhibitions that were the focus of this study were artists or individuals involved in the art environment; thus, the demographic data were not able to present a picture representing every segment of society. A majority of the audience members participating in the exhibitions held in Ankara had visited all the exhibitions, which limited the number of questionnaires able to be used for data collection. The art world of Istanbul presents a complicated art structure, in terms of the districts hosting galleries, gallery policies, exhibitions held, and audiences. The audience members who attended the exhibitions held at the Istanbul Culture University Gallery and those held in Ankara were part of a common art trend, whereas audience members who attended Otar Sharabidze's exhibition were limited to invited collectors, a situation contrary to the ideal of the research showing the full measure of the social prevalence of the reception level for ceramic art.

Understandably, artists tend to prefer large cities and private galleries to hold their exhibitions. However, it is still important that their works be experienced in each city and town of Turkey.

To encourage and facilitate greater visual thinking among the public, it would be helpful to open ceramic exhibitions and mixed contemporary art exhibitions periodically across a wide geography and to create outdoor and indoor galleries and permanent art works. Furthermore, comprehensive introductions to exhibitions and works of art and artist interviews would help to improve the public's knowledge and to attract greater interest in art. Individual initiatives by artists in developing the art policies of local governments and institutions are important as well. Pre-school and elementary education institutions should regularly take their students on exhibition tours to introduce them to the world of art and to help foster a positive attitude in them towards art exhibition at an early age.

“The primary justification for art in the contemporary world is its freedom and the symbolic value that this freedom possesses in relation to ideas of the individual and the broader social systems that individuals inhabit. Would it be advisable for ceramics, as an artistic field, to distinguish itself by aspiring to a less demanding *raison d'être*?” (Brown, 2009). On this basis, benefiting from art sociology, organizing studies of art that involve the looking at the relationship between production and consumption (Çağan, 2006), art physiology, and aesthetics and art history fields, and developing interdisciplinary research with a common approach would activate the aesthetic function of art works and spread the aesthetic experience phenomenon throughout social culture. A study that is similar to the present research and made to cover a broader geography with a broader scope and conducted at 5-year and 10-year intervals would serve to secure comprehensive, traceable data on ceramic art and its audiences.

The first principle in art education should be to train prospective artists to adopt a life- and human-sensitive approach under a universal philosophy. Secondly, content education should be taught alongside form education. There are numerous studies on form and content in the literature, and the field of visual arts should adapt these studies to their own field and evaluate them.

Work analysis should be included within a wider framework as part of the education curriculum, from elementary school to professional art education. According to the questionnaire results, in addition to the lack of knowledge being stated to be a fundamental problem, the research further stated that problems not related to ceramic art specifically but to art in general should be addressed. In this regard, the importance of statements written by artists has been recognized (Stiles, 2012).

Reception is a spiritual activity that enriches individuals' inner world in free and democratic ways and enables them to live in peace with the outer world by means of empathy and dialogue. Projects developed by artists that take into consideration their audiences would serve as a significant line of approach for people and humanity, for whom the importance of a values system has been smothered by the material world.

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