

**T.R.
YILDIZ TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES M.A. PROGRAMME**

MASTER THESIS

**CONTEMPORARY ART IN URBAN TURKEY:
RELIGIOUS MOTIVES AND NEW TRENDS
IN PAINTING**

**GÜLŞEN İPİÇÜRÜK
12728004**

**THESIS SUPERVISOR
Assoc. Prof. Dr. KEREM KARAOSMANOĞLU**

**ISTANBUL
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ÖZ

KENTSEL TÜRKİYE’DE ÇAĞDAŞ SANAT: RESİM SANATINDA DİNİ MOTİFLER VE YENİ TRENDLER Gülşen İpiçürük Aralık, 2017

Her ne kadar seküler, bilimsel ve teknolojik gelişmeler ile aydınlanmış olsa da, çağdaş dünya toplumu modern çağın açmış olduğu manevi boşluğu doldurma çabasındadır. Özellikle son on yıldır daha da derinleşen bu boşluk, toplumları dini ve milli değerlerine yeniden sarılmaya yöneltmiştir. Bu eğilim, Jürgen Habermas’ın öne sürdüğü post-modernizmin devamı ve sekülerizmin kaçınılmaz sonucu olan post-sekülerizmin günümüzde yaşanmakta olduğunu göstermektedir. Bu tez, Türkiye’de de böyle bir eğilimin yaşanmakta olduğu gerçeğini, çağdaş sanat piyasasını inceleyerek ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu çalışmada, Türk sanat piyasasının son on yılında sergilenen yağlı boya resimler incelenmiş ve araştırmanın amacına uygun örneklerin görsel söylem çözümlemesi yapılmıştır. İncelenen resimlerde, tıpkı geleneksel el sanatlarında olduğu gibi çağdaş yağlıboya resim sanatında da İslami semboller ile geleneksel Türk motiflerine rastlanmıştır. Bu inceleme sonucunda, yağlıboya resimlerde dinin ve geleneğin yeniden doğuşu yönünde gözle görülür bir eğilim olduğu kanaatine varılmıştır. Çağdaş Türk sanat piyasasında çoğunlukta olan bu tür resimlerdeki dini ve geleneksel söylemleri daha iyi okuyabilmek için Pierre Boerdieu'nun Sanat Teorisine ve Eric Hobsbawm’ın Geleneğin Yeniden İcadı adlı çalışmasına başvurulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Türk Resim Sanatı, Çağdaş Sanat Piyasası, Post-Sekülerizm, Jürgen Habermas, Pierre Bourdieu, Sanat Teorisi, Eric Hobsbawm, Geleneğin İcadı, Görsel Söylem Çözümlemesi.

ABSTRACT

CONTEMPORARY ART IN URBAN TURKEY: RELIGIOUS MOTIVES AND NEW TRENDS IN PAINTING Gülşen İpiçürük December, 2017

No matter how enlightened with secular, scientific and technological developments, the contemporary world society has been striving to fill the spiritual gap created by the modern era. This gap, especially deepened in the last decade, has led societies to re-embrace their religious and national values all over the world. This tendency verifies the concept of Post-Secularism, proposed by Jürgen Habermas, as the inevitable consequence of secularism and the continuation of post-modernism. The aim of this study is to examine whether this tendency has also been experienced in today's Turkey through a thorough research in the contemporary art market. In this research, hundreds of oil paintings exhibited during the last decade of the Turkish art market are examined and the most appropriate samples are selected for visual discourse analysis. During the analysis, it is observed that there is an increasing tendency in prevalence to revive the Islamic symbols and traditional Turkish motifs within the contemporary oil paintings in Turkish art market. In order to understand how to read these religious and traditional discourses in the paintings, this thesis is based on the Art Theory of Pierre Bourdieu and the study of Re-invention of Tradition by Eric Hobsbawm.

Key Words: Turkish Paintings, Contemporary Art Market, Post-Secularism, Art Theory of Pierre Bourdieu, Eric Hobsbawm, Re-invention of Tradition, Discourse Analysis.

FOREWORD

In the decision process of my dissertation topic, I have a personal story to talk about. In 2013, I was not only studying the master courses to pass the exams but also doing the pre-research for my master thesis. I was pretty sure that I was going to write about art. However, I was not that much sure about the content or from which aspect of art I should narrow the title to be analysed within a sociological perspective. Fortunately, my head of department announced that there would be a summer school programme for graduate students to be held in Coventry, the UK. This programme was organised by the Institute of Social Studies at Warwick University, in 2013. The Institute would not only give the opportunity for foreign students to present their researches but also provide scholarship for the chosen ones. Before presenting my research at my university, I took the advantage of exchanging ideas in such an international platform and get some objective feedbacks of the academicians participating from the USA to India. The main topic of the seminar was the issue of 'Post-Secularism' which I had closely been experiencing the ever increasing impacts in urban Turkey. In order to detect the recent trends and traits of post-secularism in the art world, I embarked on my field research in Istanbul Modern Art Museum. By the time I entered the exhibition hall, I coincided with such a post-secular painting that could be a spot-on sample for my research. Then, I found myself in Coventry, presenting the pre-researched version of my thesis before the precious academicians and doctorate students around the world. My presentation aroused interest and gained a new perspective with the comments and criticism of the participants. Thanks to the precious academicians' contributions, my draft research has taken its final form and now you are able to read this dissertation. In the future, I hope that this study will contribute to literature of art and social studies both in Turkey and the world. All in all, I would like to explain my gratitude to my head of department, Prof. Dr. Mehmet Sait Özervarlı for raising my awareness to such an opportunity and the Institute of Social Studies at Warwick University for welcoming despite having PhD. Apart from the institutional support, I would like to thank my honourable instructor, Prof. Dr. Ayşegül Baykan for enlightening me about the art theory of Pierre Bourdieu which fits well for my thesis. I also owe my gratitude to Ass. Prof. Dr. Teyfur Erdoğan for his enlightening lectures. During the writing process of my thesis, I owe my thesis supervisor Ass. Prof. Dr. Kerem Karaosmanoğlu a debt of gratitude for his patience, understanding and kind support. Last but not least, special thanks are due to my beloved family; to hero of my life, my first art teacher and painter idol, my father Adil İpiçürük; to my source of inspiration, my devoted mother Elmas İpiçürük; to my considerate lifeguards, my brothers Murat and Ebubekir İpiçürük. I thank you all who support me with true love and also my future readers.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In this dissertation, I will present a comprehensive study of painting art in contemporary Turkey from a sociological perspective. All began with a glance at the painting of Erol Akyavaş¹ exhibited in Istanbul Modern, which is one of the most important contemporary art museums in Turkey, in 2013. Until that day, I had never seen such a painting including the Arabic letter ‘و’ (waw)², which is one of the most noteworthy symbols of Islamic calligraphy. To my knowledge, it was unusual to exhibit such a painting including religious motives in such a museum under the title of ‘Modern’. What surprised me at first were the technique and the material of the painting. That was an unusual situation to eyewitness the letter ‘و’ applied via oil paints and brushes onto a giant canvass, instead of application via ink and calligraphy pen onto a calligraphy paper. In fact, this cannot be regarded only as the matter of appliance of art materials in an unusual way onto different surfaces. There must be something more to be analysed in detail rather than the issue of artistic techniques. As a matter of course, the fact that an art exhibition including religious symbols yet held in a modern museum arouses interest about the new trends in the contemporary art of urban Turkey. This is not only the matter of appearance of the letter ‘و’ on an oil painting but also may refer to the tendency for the reappearance of traditional and religious symbols in Turkish art scene. Therefore, it constitutes an interdisciplinary problematic which interests not only art but also sociology. According to my own observations in the artistic field of Turkey in 2004, it was extraordinary to coincide with such oil paintings including religious motifs in the art

¹ Erol Akyavaş (1932-1999) produced a series of abstract paintings including the references to Islam, miniatures and calligraphy. His works can be found in various prestigious institutions including the Museum of Modern Art in New York and Berlin and Stuttgart Art Museums as well as in numerous local and international private collections. (For more information, see the article on <http://ebruduvenci.blogspot.com.tr/2017/04/erol-akyavas-18-olum-yldonumunde.html#/2017/04/erol-akyavas-18-olum-yldonumunde.html>.)

² “The letter ‘و’, called as ‘waw’, is the sixth letter in Arabic abjadi order and the twenty-seventh letter in modern Arabic order. The letter ‘و’ also functions as conjunction mostly ‘and’, sometimes ‘but’ as well as it means ‘I swear to...’ when it is used with the word ‘Allah’ as in ‘والله’ (Wallah) meaning ‘I swear to God!’” Fatih Özkafa, “Kültürel ve Estetik Bakımdan Vav Harfine Analitik Bir Yaklaşım” **Turkish Studies - International Periodical for the Languages, Literature and History of Turkish or Turkic**, v.7, i.4 (2012): 2579.

galleries, fairs, biennales or exhibitions in the capital city, Ankara, and in the capital city of art, Istanbul. Of course, it was possible to come across with such examples in some specific exhibition halls and museums which organized only the works of cultural and traditional Turkish arts or handicrafts with various techniques, materials, style and so forth. For instance, in the art of calligraphy, the materials totally differ from those in oil painting art; calligraphers use special ink, pen and paper while painters use oil paint, brush and canvas.

The most appropriate explanation for the situation of contemporary art in today's Turkey could be the rising existence of 'Post-Secularism'. In recent days, the reflections of post-secularism could be experienced in the streets of the newest urban residential areas of Istanbul. According to my own experience of five years (2011-2016), in one of these areas, Başakşehir, the reflections of post-secular trend were so explicit that whenever I went out, even at the very moment of leaving the apartment. With this study, the questions arousing in my mind began being answered and what was going around me started to make sense. All could be explained as the personification of post-secularism within the rising number of women with black chadors which cover the whole body from head to toes and men in maxi skirts with long beards in the streets of urban Turkey. Despite being the closest district to Europe, Başakşehir has become the public sphere for those who display a lifestyle close to the Muslim countries in the Middle East, and also live the religion of Islam in such a way that could be observed mostly in the Islamic States like Saudi Arabia. Comparing with the years of my childhood (1980s and 1990s), I discuss that there has been a visible shift from so-called secular or modern regulations of those days to the post-secular or post-modern ones of these days, especially in the public sphere of the urban Turkey. For instance, witnessing to a woman wearing black chador in the street was infrequent during my childhood which includes the years of 1980s and 1990s. Now, the frequency has risen and this change has become visible in relatively more secular districts of Istanbul; like Nişantaşı, Beyoğlu, Beşiktaş and so forth. The shift can be observed via what is in and out on streets, TV channels, billboards and so forth. That is the upcoming fashion in every aspects of life from wearing styles, furniture, jewellery, film sector to painting art market. For instance, the calligraphic symbol of 'و' has become so popular and fashionable that it can be seen not only as a figure applied on an oil painting but also as a tattoo on the neck of a young woman

wearing a super mini skirt. After having personally witnessed to the post-secular impact on the field of painting art, there would be no hesitation to generate a thesis statement as “there has been a visible tendency to post-secular art productions in contemporary Turkey for the last decade”. This fact enables me to analyse the influence of religious and traditional elements in oil painting art in Turkey today, as a research topic. What my hypothesis draws attention to is the problematic of how come the motives and figures peculiar to the art of calligraphy or Islamic art has begun to appear on the oil painting canvasses and display in the contemporary art market of Turkey since 2007.

This research is carried out with the guidance of the following questions: “What is the tendency in the contemporary art market of Turkish paintings?”, “Who are the leading actors responsible for the change in the art market of Turkey?”, “How and why oil paintings including religious symbols could be exhibited in such prestigious galleries and modern museums of Turkey today?”, “Apart from religious symbols, are there any other trendy symbols applied in oil paintings?”, “Is it possible to say that the tendency in art market refers to the existence of the signals of post-secularism in Turkey today?”

As the methodology of this thesis, one of the qualitative research techniques ‘discourse analysis’ is employed. The methodology of discourse analysis is defined as one of the social constructionist approaches.³ However, it may seem as a field of linguistics, discourse analysis is commonly preferred by so many researchers from various fields of social sciences, including art. As a sub-branch of discourse analysis, ‘visual discourse analysis’ is applied in my thesis to perceive the signs, images, figures and motives in paintings. In this sense, it is better to analyse what a painting tries to say and how it conveys the artist’s messages. Analysing an artwork and decoding the hidden message is a complicated process which requires a systematic study. If one knows how to translate the signs in the painting then it starts to communicate well. To understand the idea of the painter, this method is also useful inasmuch as language is not only for communication but also for the production of the thought. In the book “An Introduction to Sociolinguistics”, language is defined as social action in that if there is a change in linguistic production, it is possible to

³ Louise Phillips and Marianne W. Jorgensen, **Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method** (Sage Publications, 2002), 4.

experience its impact on social change.⁴ In another words, producing an artwork as a discourse can be regarded as not only an individual act but also a social act. According to Phillips and Jorgensen, discourse is a form of social action which has a role in constructing the social world.⁵ This means that by analysing the discourse in an individual painting, it is likely to make an inference about the tendencies of social world. Adapting this method in this study, possible discourses in some selected paintings from the contemporary art market are analysed to have an idea about the collective tendency in the public sphere. In this method, it is also aimed to pinpoint the trends, myths, and beliefs of the society as the keywords of social reality which are coded or hidden.⁶ Discourse evolves depending on the linguistic production by whom, where, in what context, for what purpose. The steps of discourse analysis are perception, interpretation, evaluation and explanation processes.⁷ The interpretation of an artwork depends on the perception of the era in which it is interpreted. What is important here is the painting's ability to reflect the most common components of the era and its connotation by the help of which the painter intends to say, contribute or criticize. In some paintings, the denotation and connotation are obviously related and described whereas some paintings are implicit and puzzling for the viewers.⁸

This dissertation aims to contribute to the field of social sciences as well as the field of art in Turkish literature which lack scholarly studies, especially written in English. No matter how rare scholar sources and how challenging to gather literal data from the field, the inductive procedure is applied to describe the general circumstances by using a number of selected sample paintings. This thesis is mainly carried out in order to clarify the possibility of a collective tendency to post-secular production. For the validity and reliability of my thesis, I searched for the samples from the art market in Istanbul, art journals such as Istanbul Art News, online databases such as Lebriz.com⁹. In the second chapter, the literature of art in relation with sociology is reviewed in two frameworks: conceptual and theoretical. In the conceptual

⁴ Ronald Wardhaugh, **An Introduction to Sociolinguistics**, 5th edn. (Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 331.

⁵ Louise Phillips and Marianne W. Jorgensen, **Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method** (Sage Publications, 2002), 5.

⁶ **Ibid**, 40.

⁷ Yıldız Kurtuluş, "Görsel Nesne Olarak İki Resim", **İletişim Dergisi** (2000), i.6, p.71.

⁸ Sezer Tansuğ, **Sanatın Görsel Dili**, 3rd ed. Ankara: Remzi Kitabevi (1993), p.45-48.

⁹ *Lebriz.com* is known as Turkey's art portal via which it becomes possible to visit the recent art exhibitions online, follow the contemporary art market and reach the newest articles relating artistic field. For more information see the website: <http://www.lebriz.com/default.aspx?bhcp=1>

framework, the relation between art and sociology is dealt with the concept of art comparing to craft and its relation with culture in terms of culture industry, mass culture and pop culture. In the second section, the thesis is based on two theoretical grounds: “Pierre Bourdieu’s Art Theory” and “Eric Hobsbawm’s Re-Invention of Tradition”. This theoretical grounding provides better understanding of what can be the reasons for the upcoming mass production of art works including religious and traditional motives. The art theory of Pierre Bourdieu enlightens the trend in the artistic production by analysing the concepts of ‘artistic field’, ‘habitus’ of the artists and ‘the capitals’ of art market. In the 3rd Chapter, I have analysed the new trends among the contemporary paintings in urban Turkey. In order to make clear the term ‘contemporary’, I narrowed the date of the paintings either the produced date or exhibited date between the years 2007-2017. After visiting as many as possible artistic events between the years 2013-2015 and reaching the paintings previously exhibited in Lebriz.com since 2007, I came up with a conclusion that there have been predominantly religious and traditional paintings for a decade. Consequently, I detected two main streams and called one of them as the renaissance of religious motives in Turkish painting art and the other one as the re-appearance of old traditional art of Turks. For this sake, I searched Istanbul art market by collecting data from the leading actors such as auction houses, art galleries, collectors, or even curators and the other actors following the leaders that is to say art events taking place at shopping centres or municipality halls. In the 4th Chapter, I classified the painting samples popular in the art market according to the discourses. Then, I divided the paintings into two main discourses; the paintings having a word to say about Islam and recalling the past values of Turkish tradition. From the aspect of Islam, I observed discourses of calligraphic motifs, mystic and sufistic figures and other religious symbols in most of the paintings. Even though, not seeing as many as religious discourses, I also detected traditional discourses such as Ottoman, Seljuk and other symbols from the history of Turks. These samples all had a word to say for the society to be deciphered and what I tried to do was to convey their messages to the readers by conducting discourse analysis method.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

*Art is the queen of all sciences communicating knowledge
to all the generations of the world.¹⁰*

Leonardo da Vinci

In this chapter, the literature of art and sociology is reviewed thoroughly in order to provide the reader with an understanding of the scope of the research, the types of resources that inspired me, and also the previous studies done so far. This chapter is based on the following research questions: What is ‘art’, what is it for and what is it like nowadays in Turkey? Under the shed of light of these questions, the sections of this chapter are shaped and divided into two frameworks: conceptual and theoretical.

2.1. Conceptual Framework of Painting Art

*I have never seen an angel.
Show me an angel, and, I will paint one.¹¹*

Gustave Courbet

As nothing is created without a reason, artists create art for one reason or another. One of the reasons is commonly known as meeting the personal needs. Artists have an individual effort to make artworks. Painting art is an individual act and painter’s hand uses the brush to shape, colour and reflect the inner world. Painter’s consciousness is a reflection of the ideas about his or her own life. That is absolutely true, however, while reflecting the ideas or senses he or she also attributes to other

¹⁰ This quote by Leonardo da Vinci is retrieved from the following webpage on September 16, 2015: <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/96241-art-is-the-queen-of-all-sciences-communicating-knowledge>

¹¹ The first painter to have said he was a realist was Gustave Courbet because he painted what he saw without hesitation or apprehension. Courbet concisely summarized the core principle of realist paintings as in his quotation above. See the source: Fred S. Kleiner, **Gardner’s Art through the Ages: The Western Perspectives**, 14th ed. (US: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2013), 664.

minds. There is no isolated place for artists or painters. They are living in a place full of others. They do not live on their own, as no one else does. Art often develops from everyday experiences and uncritical acceptance of other people's views and opinions. From this respect; it is acceptable to name artists as a group of talented people most of whom feel the responsibility to create artworks according to the wishes, tastes or preferences of the majority of the social world. Besides, doing art enhances the aesthetical needs of both individual and social entities.

Aesthetics can be defined briefly as a branch of philosophy which addresses questions of beauty and taste.¹² Aesthetics concerns can be traced back to the Greek origins of philosophy; both Plato and Aristotle were concerned with art and whether and how it might act as a carrier of truth and knowledge. For Plato, art could not be a vehicle for truth.¹³ As a branch of plastic arts, in painting, the aesthetic signs are also the forms constituting the artwork and they are effective tools for us in our understanding and interpreting capability towards both the painting and world. As painting art is based on the freedom of creation, the functions and processes of the signs are limitless. Signs in the artwork are not definite as the traffic signs or the alphabetic sign system which have definite functions for definite situations. Thus, one cannot limit the paintings or treat them as a normal concrete observable objects; in fact, it is not easy to understand, classify and analyze the paintings. Throughout its history, art has had a great number of different functions and purposes which have varied according to the period. In the book of "The Social History of Art", Arnold Hauser claims that social resources almost entirely shape the evolution of art.¹⁴

In prehistoric times, drawings or paintings were functionally created for purpose rather than aesthetic enjoyment. They were hidden away in some certain caves or on some specific parts of the walls in caves. Therefore, it is hard to mention about the existence of aesthetic concern or decorative intention. Inasmuch as it is necessary to analyze the humanbeing in the field of art, their social and artistic position in the creation and evaluation of an artistic activity to have a holistic analysis of art. Thus, artistic production has not got only personal function for pleasure and skill but also social function for development of society. It is admitted that there is a field of art in

¹² Michael Grenfell, Cheryl Hardy. **Art Rules: Pierre Bourdieu and Visual Arts**, (UK: Berg-Oxford University Press, 2007), 37.

¹³ **Ibid.**

¹⁴ Arnold Hauser. **The Social History of Art, Volume I: From Prehistoric Times to the Middle Ages**, (London: Routledge, 1999), 5.

which art creation is resulted by the meeting of culturally formed ‘status’ with socially formed ‘habitus’¹⁵ of the subject of art creation.¹⁶ What the matter here is to be able to enter the field of art at the first step. To be accepted as a member of this field prerequisites technical knowledge including history of art and humanities. In the world of artists, art is supposed to be only for those who have God-given ability and social perception of art to prevent the entrance of other rivals. There is already a struggle against each other for the agents or actors who have the capitals¹⁷.

In comparison with the other cultural fields, art is one of the most dynamic cultural elements because of its close relationship among artists, art market and society. According to Emin Bilgiç, the arguments about whether “Art for art’s sake” or “Art for society’s sake” will not cease as long as genuine artistic opinion and ideas are the tools of ulterior motifs rather than being the means of symbols reflecting the social opinion or social preferences.¹⁸ In as far as the artist performs or creates for the sake of society; the aim is to transfer what society wants to deduce ideas by reading the discourse or to see fine images carrying aesthetic beauty within the artworks instead of following the cliché of “Art for art’s sake.” This is valid for all forms of art from plastic arts to performing arts. For many years, art has been respected as an entity of high class society and higher/intellectual culture which also includes religion, humanities and science. The notion of ‘art’ was hardly related with material culture or capital which was regarded as the purpose of lower class. What can be considered as in material culture first is earning a living as the main purpose of an ordinary man dealing with ordinary/low culture issues. How about the artists? Which culture do/must they belong to? In “Introduction to Critical Theory” and the ideology of Frankfurt School¹⁹, the situation of today’s world is defined as the place where the every type of “capital is highly concentrated and where the economy and politics are

¹⁵ The term ‘habitus’ is discussed in detailed in the following section: “Art Theory of Pierre Bourdieu”.

¹⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, “The Social Space and the Genesis of Groups”, **Theory and Society**, v.14, i.6: (1985), 723-744.

¹⁷ The term ‘capital’ is discussed in detailed in the following section titled as “Art Theory of Pierre Bourdieu”. Also see the article of “Social Space and Symbolic Power” by Bourdieu (1989).

¹⁸ Emin Bilgiç, “Sanat ve Cemiyet”, **Kültür Bakanlığı Sanat Dergisi**, s.6 (1977), 138.

¹⁹ “‘Frankfurt School’ is defined as a group of German-American theorists who developed powerful analysis of the changes in Western capitalist societies that occurred since the classical theory of Marx within critical social theory of the importance of mass culture and communication in social reproduction and cultural production and political economy domination. ‘Culture Industry’ is called as the process of the industrialization of mass-produced culture and the commercial imperatives that manage the cultural system.” (For more information see the article on this webpage: <https://pages.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/essays/frankfurtschool.pdf>)

increasingly valued”.²⁰ The market and bureaucratic organizations are becoming the main actors of many areas of life. These inevitable actors decide how individuals assess their leisure time, what they believe in, how to live, what they buy, eat, dress and so on. Because of such an external penetration to the private realm, the individual life does no longer belong to the person in fact; the control is on the hands of the creators of popular culture. In “The Artist as Producer”, Walter Benjamin underlines the rising existence of the artists doing art by re-functioning as producers for the cultural production rather than creating.²¹ In its natural perception, ‘art’ is supposed to be a reflection of creativity not a tool of productivity which is the job of artisans as serial mass producers. What Frankfurt School stresses is the urgency of developing sociology of ‘Mass Culture’ defined as the set of ideas and values developing from a common exposure to the same media, news resources, music and art.²² Even though this cannot be accepted as a kind of communication, the role of individuals here is to react as consumers of what the mass culture has produced without taking any part in production. In the 19th and 20th centuries, the scope of mass culture dramatically expanded the rise of publishing and broadcasting. Especially since the 1990s with the growth in the technological developments and the birth of internet, it has become easier to promote the masses to consume more. In every minute even in seconds, every new thing becomes old; the change is so quick that it is hardly impossible to catch up with because of this created consumerism brought by the policy of mass culture. A theory of culture should include the process of production, reproduction, distribution, exchange and consumption. The conditions of labour, production and distribution must be examined for society expresses itself through its cultural life and cultural phenomena contain within themselves reference to the socio-economic whole.²³ Although the way and the content of production has changed, there are some examples that reject the idea of a means of mass production and meeting the needs or tastes of the popular culture. In the following quotation, Pierre Bourdieu exemplifies one of these:

²⁰ David Held, **Introduction to Critical Theory: Horkheimer to Habermas**, (United States: University of California Press, 1980), 77.

²¹ Walter Benjamin, “The Artist as Producer”, in **Collected Writings, Vol. II, Walter Benjamin, Cambridge**, (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999).

²² Meenakshi Gigi Durham, Douglas M. Kellner, **Media and Cultural Studies: Key Works**, rev. ed. (UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 30.

²³ **Ibid.**

Manet is an example: his painting upset the fundamental structure of all academic teaching of painting in the nineteenth century, the opposition between the contemporary and the traditional.²⁴

Here, there comes the question in mind: “Can an artwork be the exact reflection of the reality or the contemporary?” If the model and artwork are the same, it means that artist mechanically does copy the nature. Then, what is produced is not an artwork anymore; it is just an object or production like a craft. It is not accepted as a language since an artwork cannot be constituted like a language system, and language is a sign system which has not material relation with the things signified. Therefore, an artwork reproduces neither the nature nor the language. What is reproduced is not artwork, it is just an object. As a concluding remark, it is possible to underline that an artwork is not created with the symbols or forms which cut down the whole relation with the reality, because these are not meaningful units on their own. In this sense, the science of signs, ‘semiotics’²⁵ could help reading the visual signs. In his work, Pierre Guiraud analyses the aesthetic images and functions, as in the following:

Arts are the way of representing the reality; the aesthetic images are the objects that can be sensed. There is no way to talk about abstract painting; because all paintings are concrete. When it comes to the non-figurative painting art, it is a form and image of a reality which does not have a signifier or figure. Thus, aesthetic image has not got pure transitory function that brings us to the meaning; it is a value itself, it is an object itself.²⁶

In order to analyze a work of art, or a particular cultural artefact, we need to analyse and assess the way it is interpreted. Visual art has the inspiring power to provoke personal reactions, emotions and feelings. Art can take on an almost religious significance; it can provoke us to spiritual experience as we enter into a world of wonders. Art also offers a world of everyday life that you are living at that moment or you wish to be in whatever form or colour however mood you would like or imagine. One must read the painting in order to understand what it means, what it is representing for or suggesting, what the artist had in mind. However, if society needs art to form part of its necessity of distinction in social practice, the artistic field itself is ready and willing to create the aesthetic dispositions required for the functioning of this need. Artists themselves have an interest in the function of the art field.

²⁴This quotation is from the article: Pierre Bourdieu, “The Institutionalization of Anomie”, **The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature**, ed. Randal Johnson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 238-253).

²⁵ Pierre Guiraud, **Semiotics/Göstergebilim**, trans. Mehmet Yalçın, 2nd edn. (Ankara: Imge Publishing, 1994), 86.

²⁶ **Ibid.**

Producers and consumers somehow are related to each other; they need each other. There is both a generative empathy and a mutually constituting relationship. The adjustment between producers and consumers constantly play out in the artistic market between the space of production and the field of consumers.²⁷ To understand artistic production, therefore, it is not enough to look at the individual work of art, to understand the conscious decision made by the artist. Aesthetics and the ethics which guide them must be examined in terms of the broader socio-political history of the field. Painting art brings about the questions such as what it represents, what the underlying social forces are. The artistic production, in this case painting, must be understood in terms of its socio-cultural conditions of production. Art production needs to be understood as essentially immanent within the structures of society.

Artists are endowed with a special talent and charisma which make them unique individuals dedicated to art. This is the statement what must define the artists as in the Romantic period with their glamorous grace and importance on imagination and beauty. Unfortunately, nowadays they are simply seen as skilled workers or craftsmen. This makes the field of cultural production as an explanation of crafting meanings. This is one of the consequences of the process of modern life and its product; culture becomes the source of production and there comes cultural industry. The decision makers most of whom have the capital not only economic but also social or cultural determine what is going to be tomorrow's ins or outs. As one of the most valuable elements of culture, art is enabled as a visual means of popular mass culture. What artists cannot accept is being a means of mass production, not creating but reproducing. Some of the artists have to get used to be a part of this trend as being in need of money for survival, and if they cannot make a direct living from their art.

On the other hand, in the habitus of some artists, art should be done purely 'for Art's sake' not for economic profit as it used to be and there should not be a market in which it can be sold. Art could not be regarded as a field, if there were not creative agents eager to produce some artworks, to staff or serve for some institutions and to promote or believe the ideas or speeches. It is possible to define art as a mechanism

²⁷ Michael Grenfell, Cheryl Hardy, **Art Rules: Pierre Bourdieu and Visual Arts**, (UK: Berg-Oxford, 2007), 57.

which makes our imaginings ‘real’, beliefs and culture ‘visible’. This mechanism locates within the field of power, which is directly associated with the state.

As speaking of the state, it is not a new issue that the use of visual arts as a means of propaganda machine. Rather, it goes back to the periods of Napoleon within the French Revolution, Mussolini’s Italy, Hitler’s Germany, and so forth. For instance, The Bourbon Monarchs are known to have consciously applied the visual arts as tools of mass production in favor of the regime, especially during the reign of Louis XIV.²⁸ It is barely acceptable to relate these two seemingly distinct concepts: visual arts and state. However, here is right place to re-mention the functions of visual arts, especially the social function. One may assert that ‘art is something to be aesthetic, susceptible and noble’, while, ‘state is something to be known as institutional authority or power mechanism’. What is missing in both assertions is the social aspect within the consequential relation between art and state. An artist’s experience as an individual or group most probably affects the creation of art and here, it is necessary to underline the social function. In a way, the artwork reflects the society and this somehow represents the state; the reverse situation is also available. Via artworks, the state and its policies can indirectly manage the perception and opinion of the public sphere.

2.2. Theoretical Framework of Painting Art

As the first basement, the art theory of Pierre Bourdieu is employed in terms of capitals which are shaping not only the art market but also the tendencies of painters. For detecting the tendencies, some striking samples of paintings are selected and the visual discourses are analysed so as to be proofs of my hypothesis. (See, Chapter 4) What these visual data mostly represent could be well explained with the help of the article of Eric Hobsbawm who discusses the upcoming importance of re-inventing tradition including religious and cultural values. With these theoretical bases, it becomes less challenging to make sense of the ever-increasing tendency for the religious and traditional symbols on the oil paintings of contemporary art market in Turkey.

²⁸ David Dowd, “Art as National Propaganda in the French Revolution”, **The Public Opinion Quarterly**, 15 (1951): 535.

2.2.1. Art Theory of Pierre Bourdieu²⁹

In recent sociological theory, there has been a worldwide tendency of dealing with the possible links between individual and society, the micro and macro structures, or more practically agency and structure relationship.³⁰ Pierre Bourdieu built a theory of practice that was the effort to prove the practices of the agent were more than the acting-out of roles or the implementations of previously designed plans apart from the actor's intention.³¹ He argues that practices are not determined objectively or by individual free will. In this sense, the construction of the knowledge occurred within the process of a system of structure that subject gained by practice and would be employed for a function. As Bourdieu supports, this is the rule of the game in which you win if you are powerful.

There are social dynamics which define how powerful one is, depending on the field they are in. He explains the defining dynamics as capitals but not only as having economic value of which are called as economic capitals but also there are some other species of capitals such as cultural capital, social capital and symbolic capital.³² In order to understand the importance of capitals in individuals' life, it is necessary to perceive under which circumstances, what kind of practices, in what kind of fields they practice or not. There is one mechanism to decide all of these answers; it is 'habitus'. As each person has a different family, perspective, taste and habit, also has a habitus. One may resemble the concept of habitus to the perception of mind. Capital gains importance in the field in which habitus tries to survive. There are many species of capitals, lots of fields, various habitus and so many practices shaping our social world as well. For sure, the value of capital is so crucial that if the subject's capital does not meet the requirements of that field it becomes useless, as a Swedish krona does not buy even a bottle of water in Turkey.

²⁹ Pierre Bourdieu, one of the most influential French sociologists, was extremely well-known as being one of the world's leading social theorist in the second half of the 20th century. Bourdieu was both a theorist and a practitioner by applying his theory to empirical studies of French culture which would represent the general conditions across the world.

³⁰ George Ritzer, **Sociological Theory**, 8th edn. (United States: McGraw-Hill Press, 2011), 499.

³¹ Charles Lemert, **Social Theory: The Multicultural and Classical Readings**, (Oxford: Westview Press, 1999), 441.

³² Pierre Bourdieu, "A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste", **Distinction**, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 101.

When one utters the word ‘capital’, it is mostly supposed as economic capital such as cash money or assets which buy material things. This reminds the statement: ‘Economic capital talks.’ Is it that much easy? If we do not have economic capital, shall we not climb up the higher steps of the social ladder? Economic capital cannot determine how much we are loved by our families, friends, and neighbours in the social sphere³³; how much we learn and succeed; how much we are proud of ourselves.

Bourdieu claims that there are not only economic capitals but also other kinds of capitals such as cultural, social and symbolic capitals. Bourdieu states that any knowledge, experience and connections that one has had through the life course are also taken into account as capitals and these are all called as cultural capitals.³⁴ If one grows up in a ‘cultivated/cultured’ family, speaking a proper language which means a capital culturally gained is inevitable. According to Bourdieu, these are unequally distributed and these distinctions among people make them gain some capital more or less depending on how scarce it is. Supposing everyone earned the same quantity of money, there would be neither rich nor poor; if everyone had the ability to paint, there would be no art or no importance of painters. The scarcer your abilities are the more cultural capital you have. Bourdieu pays attention mostly on cultural capital without ignoring the other kinds of capitals such as social capital which is based on group membership, relationships and social networks; in addition, ‘symbolic capital’³⁵ which is based on individuals’ honour, prestige or recognition. Bourdieu elaborates the concept of symbolic capital by the state with its power which is recognized as authority. For the sake of social capital, people engage their duties and daily life practices no matter how complex the social relations are to cope within their social field. Bourdieu resembles this to the sense of game; this is the matter of win or loses. The position of an individual in the society or the field of social class has an intimate effect on his or her ability to play the game. The social structure and class stratification play their main role in Bourdieu’s works too. If a person from higher class says: “I love this song, this café, this artist and this and that.”, the others from lower classes are mostly affected and then objected to follow him since they

³³ Pierre Bourdieu, “Social Space and Symbolic Power”, **Sociological Theory**. v.7. i.1. (1989), 14.

³⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, “A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste”, **Distinction**, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 101.

³⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, “Social Space and Symbolic Power”, **Sociological Theory**. v.7. i.1. (1989), 21.

believe he has a good taste, he has had the chance to try many alternatives and choose. Therefore, the higher class people are more likely to have their tastes accepted and to disregard the lower classes' tastes. As in the example, taste is the definer of the objects which subjects should choose and this defines the cultural products. There is a dialectical relationship between the nature of cultural products and tastes.³⁶ Classification of the objects leads the process of classifying people, that is to say, their choices or tastes create social classes.³⁷ What unifies people who have the same or similar preferences is taste, as it is a tool to separate who has different preferences.

All in all, it is possible to say that taste is a practice as the outcome of the interrelationship of the individual's habitus within the field by using cultural capitals. What Bourdieu especially concerned was the variations in aesthetic taste which had to be seen as very distinctive, exclusive kind, unfortunately became an object of pop-culture.³⁸ With the modern life, the notion of 'new', the inevitable change has began in culture as it took place in all aspects of life. Actually, there is no longer a proper definition for 'new' since it is also objectified as a means or a part of changing process. Changes in cultural goods lead to alterations in taste and as the new thing is being replaced day by day our taste is also under mutation. What leads the change in the concept of new is somehow our taste changing constantly. This is also resulted in transformations in cultural products. That is not only the structure of the field what conditions the desire of the consumers of cultural products but also the structures what the producers create so as to be able to satisfy the demands. There are infinite combinations of power relations; dominant ones versus dominated ones, higher class versus lower class, educated ones versus uneducated and vice versa. In this power related world, agents need to keep their position in the given field of modern life such as economy, art, education, science and so forth. Whatever your social field is, you need to practice more to gain more social capital for both your occupational position and your social environment's judgement. For the sake of symbolic capital, individuals strive to maintain their affirmative characteristics peculiar to themselves

³⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, "A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste", **Distinction**, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 110.

³⁷ Pierre Bourdieu, **Artistic Taste and Cultural Capital. Culture and Society-Contemporary Debates**, eds. Jeffrey C Alexander, Steven Seidman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) 205-216.

³⁸ **Ibid**, 207.

or manage to fix unfavourable ones and by this way to create their own inner world apart from the outsiders' intervention.³⁹ Each individual develops his or her own habitus which is determined by his or her position in that social field. Bourdieu examines the interrelations among the species of capitals, habitus, field and practices in an empirical way. During his experimentations and researches he realizes that there is nothing called 'freedom of choice' or 'taste' which vary from person to person and challenge to be discussed.⁴⁰ For instance, in the artistic field, artists are supposed to produce artworks not only for their own taste but also for the taste of the recipients; buyers or gallery owners. If they only produce for the taste of the art market for economic and social capital, they might run the risk of becoming a craft or artisan.

My understanding of the world within its social context is totally different from my grandmother's. Her life was shaped according to her era's circumstances and my life has been shaped according to mine. These are all becoming the matter of 'habitus', the way you understand, perceive and interpret what is going around you and know your place in that social world. What makes you 'you' is the accumulation of your past, your history, your memory, your knowledge, your sub-conscious, your expectations, your habits, talents, skills, taste and lifestyle? The concept of habitus lies at the heart of Bourdieu's theoretical framework. It is a complex concept that takes many shapes and forms in its ability to adapt the constant change in the world around individual. According to Bourdieu, we are endowed with a series of schemes through which we perceive, understand, appreciate, and evaluate the social world. These schemes are defined as 'mental or cognitive structures' which help us to deal with the social world.⁴¹ Pierre Bourdieu generated the term 'habitus' to name the system that enables people to internalize the external social structures over the course of a lifetime. Everyone has a habitus which is shaped by their past experiences, acquired knowledge, perceptions and historical processes. We produce our thoughts and actions according to our habitus. Habitus varies depending on the nature of one's position in that world; not everyone has the same habitus. However, habitus also can be a collective phenomenon; for instance, those who occupy the same position within

³⁹ Pierre Bourdieu, **Artistic Taste and Cultural Capital**. **Culture and Society-Contemporary Debates**, eds. Jeffrey C Alexander, Steven Seidman (Cambridge University Press, 1990), 214.

⁴⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, **The Logic of Practice**, (California: Stanford University Press, 1980), 16.

⁴¹ George Ritzer, **Sociological Theory**, 8th edn. (United States: McGraw-Hill Press, 2011), 531.

the social world tend to have similar habitus. This is also explained by sharing the same history; having the experience of wars, victories, festivals or religious rituals. In another words, habitus is the outcome of a collective history. Although we are endowed with that system of knowledge which we apply or consult when we need, habitus cannot determine our thoughts and actions. It only suggests what we should think or how we should act; thus we had better not act blankly depending on the habitus as if we were fools. Although we are not conscious of habitus and its operation, it manifests itself in our most practical daily activities, such as the way we eat, walk, talk, wear, laugh and even blow our noses. We react reasonably in given situations. Despite habitus operating as a system of structure, there is not a mechanism of stimulus-response because of the fact that agents have some freedom to create strategies depending on their positions in the field by using the power of the capitals. Bourdieu exemplifies the importance of habitus by analysing this question: “Why do teachers’ children do better at school than working-class children?” That is so simple when we glance at the frame of habitus, teachers’ children are endowed with some schemes related with education, books, speeches on school, students, the other teachers, lessons, parents or parents’ friends in suits, and a formal environment which regards success and disregards failure.⁴² Even though, Bourdieu claims that habitus cannot determine our next practices, since it is shaped by our previous practices in the field, it functions a lot in the process of our preferences and decisions. It is better to summarize it as the habitus functions “below the level of consciousness and language, beyond the control by the will”.⁴³ Bourdieu argues that reality is a social concept to exist socially to relation to others. What is real is relational and everyone finds himself and the world around him by marking the differences between him and observed phenomena. Field is a network of historical

⁴² For example, my habitus has been shaped by such a surrounding, my family especially my father who is an art teacher. After studying Bourdieu, I believe that my habitus has been shaped by my perception of my outside world that is the field where my life takes place. My parents have never told me to study my lessons, rather they have still been insisting on me not to study any longer. However, that was my own perception and since then (I do not know exactly when; this unconsciousness is another issue of habitus) this has become my interpretation of being a girl of such respected family requires to be successful in all parts of life to deserve not only their love but also all of our acquaintances’. This notion has been one of my parts which have both given sorrow and happiness without my conscious, will or intention. If my habitus let me, I could be a very content child full of toys, games and friends; an irresponsible student; a spoilt daughter having fun at bars; or a super-responsible wife just dedicating herself to her husband, cooking, cleaning, doing ironing and so forth. Yet, it does not let me to choose the easier ways to put into practice.

⁴³ Pierre Bourdieu, “A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste”, **Distinction**, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 466.

and current relations between objective positions defined by capital. Agents who have a stake in the operation of field take the objective positions within fields. For instance, in the academic field, administrators and professors are two types of agents who have a stake in the operation of the academic field. The positions of the agents are determined by the amount and weight of the capital they have. Field is a space of conflict, an arena of battle, a field of struggles, and a type of competitive marketplace in which various kinds of capital play role. Agents compete to gain monopoly in the species of capital which is most effective in the particular field.

Bourdieu states that there are many varieties of fields such as scientific, religious, academic, and artistic and so forth. Each of these fields has its own internal logic, procedures and rules to govern the game on the field and to have the power as in football or the rules of a child game. For instance, let us think about football; there is a field where the play takes place and there are players to fulfil the goal by obeying the given rules. Players should obey the rules without knowing how, why and when those rules were determined. They are totally unconscious about the systematic being of the field; they just play their role. There is a network of relations among the players without their consciousness and will. Their coach tells them what to do, where to stay, whom to pass or support no matter the players get on well outside of the football field or not. Their friendship ties or interactions are not necessary during the match. Field is determined by the nature of the habitus of the agents who occupy the various types of positions. The structure of the combination of positions in the field is conditioned by both the quantity and quality of the capital the agents have got. Once again the matter is capitals; if you have the capital, you will have the power to control not only your own fate but also the others'. In the artistic field, agents may use social and academic capital to gain monopoly on cultural capital. The interrelationship between habitus and field is incontrovertible, that is, habitus constructs the field depending on how much it makes sense to the habitus. Field exists in the agent's habitus as in the form of not direct reflection but relatively valued parts which have profound effects, importance, or just perceptions. As long as the field changes, the habitus should adapt itself to this mutation as soon as possible in order to define his position in the new field. In this circumstance, habitus reconstruct or restructure the structure of its external world and then employ some practices to gain some capital for the sake of making the new field more meaningful

to the agent. For Bourdieu, 'culture' is the main base of the social world and art gains its importance in a cultural context. Something becomes art only when it is named or recognized as an artistic product. This is a kind of legitimization; if it is produced by a well-known artist, if it is exhibited at a museum or gallery, if it is accepted by some important curators, if it is sold for millions of economic capital and if it was done during the hardest times when artists were killed, then it is possible to be identified as an artwork. Even though it seems like a work of a five year-old kid and you do not regard it as an artwork, there is nothing to do with the legitimacy issue. Bourdieu gives the sample of art museums which offers free entrance. If one has no structure of an art museum in his/her habitus, it is hard to conceptualize the importance of free entrance to the museum, thus they hardly use this option. However, the agents, who have the conceptual idea of having fun of the experience by gaining some cultural capital, readily use this option. Social structures such as museums do not generally exclude the agents of lower class people, yet if working class people do not visit such museums, they must be excluding themselves from the artistic field. This is a proof of the distinction among people such as working-class, middle-class and elite class by not only society but also their taste and choices of practices in the field. The design and structure of cultural institutions tend to exclude people who do not have the appropriate background or capital and they perform this exclusion while giving the appearance of being available to everyone. The working-class people actually do not wish to exclude themselves but they are subjected to be like that because of not knowing how to behave in that field. Bourdieu indicates that the ability to appreciate art and possession of a taste for art are closely connected to one's education and class status.⁴⁴ He analyzes how the middle class people are doing better than working class people not only in the field of education but also art. Due to their close relations to the cultural institutions, they have acquired a conceptual knowledge, skills and social confidence coming from their families. For instance, my father's expertise of art helped me to realize the talent of drawing and gain the confidence of attending for the art competitions. By such social confidence, I dare to hold my individual exhibitions without formal art education. Of course, inheriting this ability is not enough but the idea that a taste for art is learned is recently recognised. In one of the

⁴⁴ Bourdieu shows the importance of education on art besides ability both in his most famous works, *The Love of Art* and *Distinction*. Pierre Bourdieu, "A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste", *Distinction*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984).

assumptions of Bourdieu, 'education' is the separating factor among the social classes.⁴⁵ Those who have been educated to perceive fine arts are always closer to obtain more symbolic capitals and cultural capitals. For example, I have difficulty in gaining those capitals in the artistic field since I have never been such a field of artistic school, networks of art students or competitions. This is in a way my preference, my perception of taste, my struggle to be distinct, original and different from the others. In my opinion, those who have trained by the same master have the same taste of art, no matter how much they struggle to keep their own style the master's intervention or destructive criticism may lead those slaves of cultural mass production.

In the artistic field, there are lots of power struggles among the agents about whether some of them are real artists or just tradesperson resulting of that mass production process with the aim of achieving commercial success. What most of the population demands is the only inspiration for the so called artists in that artistic field? The habitus of artist is trying to adapt itself to this changing system for its master's sake and well-functional practices. Bourdieu had argued that the popular aesthetic needed to reduce the things of art to the things of life, allowing for no distance between form and function.⁴⁶ He concluded that for something to be considered a work of art, it needs to have a place in the art world; in a museum, gallery, public space, publication, performance and so forth. He stated that this is a common definition of art within this consuming world. As a famous saying denotes, there is no accounting for tastes because there are so many human beings with so many ideas, feelings and characteristics peculiar to them.

According to Bourdieu, taste is a means of social distinction and a means of social labelling.⁴⁷ This is explained as when something has become so popular it cannot mark distinction and is therefore abandoned by middle and upper classes, which instead turn to a less known piece which therefore has sufficient rarity value to confer superior taste. Artists are functioning like producers of the field regardless of their will, demand or conscious systems. However, the works which are produced by those artists under this logic are still regarded as a piece of art because they are part

⁴⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, "A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste", **Distinction**, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 466.

⁴⁶ **Ibid.**

⁴⁷ **Ibid.** 464.

of the artistic field of the modern world. Thanks to the dominant powers, artists have the opportunity to put their abilities into practice in a field created as art. In the future, it is more likely to observe the disappearing of art concept from most of the habitus of mankind. This is another reality to be taken into consideration since everything tastes the process of mutation.

2.2.2. Theory of Eric Hobsbawm: ‘Re-invention of Tradition’

In my thesis, I explore a range of relationships between ‘art’, especially painting art and ‘tradition’, especially religion. My starting point for this exploration is that all forms of arts can be analyzed as the proving instances of what Eric Hobsbawm has referred to in his theory of “Re-invention of Traditions”. This concept can be defined as “cultural practices, framed by implicit and explicit sets of rules that are enacted symbolically or by ritual with the intention to socialize particular values, norms and dispositions through repetitive behaviour.”⁴⁸ While all of these practices make reference to creating continuity with a historic tradition, they are rather a materialized ‘imagery’ of preferred and desirable historical past tradition and thus invented. These are generally constructed as a reaction to new situations, “response to external threat, need for social cohesion, identity, etc.”.⁴⁹

What should be taken into consideration is the interconnections between the past and today in which there is a constant shift in the process of reinvention. While dealing with the inter-connectional relations with the tradition and the contemporary painting art in Turkey, it is necessary to analyze the discourses from the aspects of ‘what it was’, ‘what it is’ and ‘what it will be’. After the period of modernism, the decline in the appearance of religious acts or events has recently replaced with the re-appearance or re-invention of religion. Hobsbawm proclaims that there is a close relationship between ‘art practice’ and ‘religion’. He supposes that artists practice art “as a gateway to re-establish religion adapted to the contemporary world, as a spiritual exercise and also as a version of post-secular religion”.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ David Brown, George Jennings and Andrea Molle, “Exploring Relationships Between Asian Martial Arts and Religion”, **Stadion:International Journal of the History of Sport**, i. 35 (2009), p.47. (Retrieved on 18 October 2016, from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/259641798>)

⁴⁹ **Ibid**, 48.

⁵⁰ **Ibid**, 49.

The creation of traditions was enthusiastically practised both practised officially and unofficially, the former - we may loosely call it 'political' - primarily in or by states or organized social and political movements, the latter- we may loosely call it 'social'- mainly by social groups not formally organized as such, or those whose objects were not specifically or consciously political, such as clubs whether or not these also had political functions.⁵¹

The creation of tradition in the nineteenth century was profound and rapid. The social transformations in social groups, environments and social contexts show the need for new devices to ensure or express social cohesion and identity and to structure social relations. At the same time a changing society made the traditional forms of ruling by states and social or political hierarchies more difficult or even impracticable.”⁵² Although the hierarchies conduct all possible means of collective actions such as new public holidays, ceremonies, heroes or symbols, they might still fail to mobilize the citizen volunteers if they lacked genuine resonance.⁵³ As it is stated by Hobsbawm in the following words, 'We have made Italy: now we must make Italians.'⁵⁴; one may adapt this into the discourse of the men in power during the early Republican Period of Turkey, “We have just made the Republic of Turkey: now we must make modern Turkish people.”

According to Hobsbawm, this challenge could be only overcome by the political mobilization of masses with class consciousness, and nationalism, or at least xenophobia.⁵⁵ To enable this, there has to be an alternative civic lifestyle with an alternative art, alphabet, costume, culture, tradition, and even an alternative religion. He claims that the public ceremonies, the mass production of public monuments, buildings are the most visible forms of establishing a new interpretation of the most powerful symbols.⁵⁶ The gap between the symbols of the old city which is full of religious, cultural and traditional traits and the new one which is invented by the political decision-makers has become obvious. In the works of Eric Hobsbawm, it is indicated that 'the historically valuable stamps'⁵⁷ are vitally important to understand the process of the invention of traditions. Here helped me fill the gaps and combine the non-related parts in my thesis. By this way, I associate the importance of

⁵¹ Eric Hobsbawm, “Mass-Producing Traditions”, **Representing the Nation: A Reader: Histories, Heritage and Museums**, eds. David Boswell and Jessica Evans, (London: Routledge, 1999), p.61.

⁵² **Ibid.**

⁵³ **Ibid.**, 62.

⁵⁴ **Ibid.**, 63.

⁵⁵ **Ibid.**, 64.

⁵⁶ **Ibid.**, 61.

⁵⁷ David Brown, George Jennings and Andrea Molle, “Exploring Relationships Between Asian Martial Arts and Religion”, **Stadion: International Journal of the History of Sport**, i. 35 (2009), p.67. (Retrieved on 18 October 2016, from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/259641798>)

‘paintings’ with that of ‘stamps’ as being the visual symbols which are the true data to have reflected and eye-witnessed the past. In the following figures, it is possible to perceive the re-inventioning process by the given samples of Turkish stamps and see what they have witnessed first:



Figure 1: Tughra^{58 59}



Figure 2: The Republic⁶⁰



Figure 3: Atatürk⁶¹

Respectively analyzed, in Figure 1, ‘Tughra’ is designed in the middle top, over a crescent inside of which is full of some transcriptions in Ottoman Turkish whose writing is entirely in Turkish using Arabic script.⁶² As it is perceived from this sample, even though the symbols seem transformed, their historical origins remained the same and visible. Despite its disappearance for many years, it is the fact that the Arabic script was an element of Turkish culture and tradition. The first attempts to make such elements disappear began with the fall of the Ottoman Empire and rise of the Republic of Turkey. And then, there must be a standardization process in the country.

⁵⁸ This stamp is the emblem of the sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire, published in by the General Directorate of Turkish Post (PTT). (Figure 1 is retrieved on October 20, 2016 from: <http://www.pttpulmuzesi.org.tr/PageDetail.aspx?PID=4>)

⁵⁹ The term ‘tughra’ is defined as “an outstanding calligraphic imperial design, monogram or a kind of signature of the Ottoman Sultans. It bears the names of the sultan and his father and the prayer ‘el muzaffer daima-ever victorious’ in most of them.” (Ercan Mensiz, “Tughras in Turkic World and Ottoman Sultan Tughras”, retrieved on October 20, 2016 from <http://www.tugra.org/en/hakkinda.asp>)

⁶⁰ This stamp is the first issue of the Republic of Turkey, published in 1923 by the General Directorate of Turkish Post (PTT). (Figure 2 is retrieved on October 20, 2016 from: <http://www.pttpulmuzesi.org.tr/CategoryDetail.aspx?CID=3>)

⁶¹ This stamp was issued in 1932 by the General Directorate of Turkish Post (PTT). (See; Scott Catalogue:750) (Figure 3 is retrieved on October 20, 2016, from: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/82/Turkey_750.jpg)

⁶² David Brown, George Jennings and Andrea Molle, “Exploring Relationships Between Asian Martial Arts and Religion”, **Stadion: International Journal of the History of Sport**, i. 35 (2009), p.51.

According to Hobsbawm, this is only possible with system of national state education transformed people into citizens like ‘peasants into Frenchman’⁶³. This phrase reminds the conditions of peasants leaving their villages and moving to cities, turning into workers or Turkishman in Turkey around 1980s. How about the consequences of this flow of migration? In the article “Fatal Attractions”, Rojek focuses on the issue as in the following quotation:

The tendency of modernity undercut the divisions and dissolve the boundaries which it initiated; back regions are turned into front regions, hidden areas of life become items of exhibition, the past which is lost, is recreated in the present. The action of modernity, it might be said, destroys traditional crafts only to restage them as objects of display in the heritage industry.⁶⁴

In Figure 1, you see the republic’s first stamp issued in 1923. As being the symbols of the national flag of the new country, ‘a star and a crescent’ is designed. From this stamp, it is obviously realized that there are signs of re-inventing a new nation by employing the most appropriate means. The third stamp issued in 1931 is more modern than the previous one (Figure 2). It gives the message of having initiated the fundamentals of modernization with the depiction of Atatürk’s profile as the other western countries do for their leader. This may be normal but not for a country nearly 97% of which is Muslim. According to Islam, depicting a portrait is accepted equal with the act of creating which only peculiar to God. Despite of this fact, what must be done was done for the sake of the foundation of the republic and legitimizes it before the public who was accustomed to the traditional version. A new tradition was created at once without having the public got used to. The changes started with the written alphabet, the wearing style, and even the artistic style. Let alone ‘portraits’, the painters began drawing ‘nude’ figures in order to catch up with the western contemporary artists of that age. These were some of the practices of the invented tradition of 20th century.

How about today? Can one define what kind of tradition we experience: invented, re-invented or in the process of re-invention? To what degree are we aware of it? These questions are the core of my study and will be dealt in detailed with examples in the following chapters. As it is observed from these figures, the General Directorate of

⁶³ Eugen Weber, **Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914** (California: Stanford University Press, 1976).

⁶⁴ Chris Rojek, “Fatal Attractions”, **Representing the Nation: A Reader: Histories, Heritage and Museums**, eds. David Boswell and Jessica Evans, (London: Routledge, 1999), 194.

Turkish Post (PTT) has designed the visual message and then produced the stamps according to the time period and the policies of the governmental powers. By this way, one of the steps for institutionalising the policies has been taken and the message is delivered by the public. Next step is to convey these to the next generations since the purpose is not only inventing traditions but also creating their place in history. For this sake, public museums are constructed and the mission is completed at the very time the public visits and give the opportunity to the museums serve. Another issue is to attract the civil society to the exhibitions in the museums via appropriate media. With the realization of the importance of the issue in invention of tradition, I also keep in mind their role in history making and keeping them in the museums. Right after the foundation of the Republic of Turkey, a number of museums were built so that there would be a collective memory of the nation and young generations would have the opportunity to have some kind of visual experience of Turkish history.⁶⁵ Turkish policy makers have been working hard to elaborate ‘public sphere’ and govern ‘public mind’ via visual media presented before ‘public eye’. In the following speech, Hobsbawm points out the issue of ‘public sphere’ in general and in non-western nations one of which is Turkey according to my deductions:

While the public sphere has been the mostly discussed in terms of the three hundred years in Europe, there are now a host of non-western nations that are elaborating their public spheres- not necessarily ones that emerge in relation to civil society, but often ones that are the result of state policies in tandem with consumerist interests.⁶⁶

The notion of ‘public sphere’ is mostly related with Jurgen Habermas’s studies. Here, it is a must to place his thoughts right now. Habermas also believes that a “certain sense of belonging together culturally and politically against the rich background of shared traditions, as well as on the basis of the overlapping interests and dense networks.”⁶⁷ Up to now, I conduct the ‘stamps’ issue within Hobsbawm’s theory with the help of the sample stamps and analyzing their discourses. Eric Hobsbawm identified an invented tradition as “a set of practices normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour and by repetition, which

⁶⁵ For instance, the original samples of stamps have been exhibited in the Stamp Museum of PTT since 2013. (see, www.pttpulmuzesi.gov.tr)

⁶⁶ Arjun Appadurai, Carol A. Breckenridge, “Heritage on View in India”, **Representing the Nation: A Reader: Histories, Heritage and Museums**, eds. David Boswell and Jessica Evans (London: Routledge, 1999), 405.

⁶⁷ Jürgen Habermas, **The Inclusion of the Other**, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998), 152.

automatically implies continuity with the past”.⁶⁸ As in the definition of the “invention of tradition” by Eric Hobsbawm, these practices are nothing more than replacement of old traditions with new ones which no longer serve the state’s policy. In general, this occurs when a rapid transformation corrupts society and weakens or destroys social patterns, it is high time to find asylum under the shelter of the ‘old’ tradition and restore it to survive in.

There is an unavoidable dilemma between the notion of ‘tradition’ and ‘change’. In spite of the fact that, ‘change’-lessness is both characteristics and purpose of traditions including the invented ones, ‘change’ is a pre-requisite in re-inventing a tradition. Invented traditions are also included because once they have been created; they need to survive for a long time. Therefore, any kind of change is not acceptable for the survival of newly-invented traditions.

Change is not accepted or is partially accepted by the community or a few of its members and efforts of recovering the old tradition are made: now, embracing local traditions, “people react to the new by returning to the old, scanning the past to imagine the future”.⁶⁹

The rapid transformation might destroy or cure the structure of society. Sometimes, almost exact tradition changes work, sometimes revival of the traditions our grand-grandparents experienced rather than parents. Reviving tradition is a process whose main feature is the reference it makes to the past.⁷⁰ As I have observed, contemporary Turkey has been experiencing the times of revivals since the beginning of 21st century. Henry Glassie supports this assumption as in these words: “Specific to the contemporary world, this process implies the resuming and reaffirmation of what is considered essential in the local collective cultural aspects”.⁷¹ One cannot just accept and pass the next step without asking how genuine the reconstructed version of our grand-grandparents tradition would be and how the reviving tradition would assist their grand-grandchildren in such a totally different era. Fortunately, Handler and Linnekin came to my help with the following statement:

⁶⁸ Eric Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions”, **The Invention of Tradition**, edn. Eric Hobsbawm & Terence Rangers, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1.

⁶⁹ Henry Glassie, **Material Culture**, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999), 32.

⁷⁰ Eric Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions”, **The Invention of Tradition**, edn. Eric Hobsbawm & Terence Rangers, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 4.

⁷¹ Henry Glassie, “Tradition”, **The Journal of American Folklore**, v.108, i.430 (1995), 405. It is also available via www.jstor.org.

Traditions are lived in the present; they are reiterated, altered or abandoned, proving their power and viability. Tradition itself is, in a constructivist vision, a process “that embodies both continuity and discontinuity”.⁷²

In the sense, traditions would be neither re-invented nor revived if there were a place in which the old ways were purely alive without external threat of interruptions, today maybe only the Amish people manage to do this. It is suggested that where the traditions are invented it is often not because old ways are no longer available or viable, but because they are deliberately not used or adapted. The national identities founded on collective memories and on forgetness, on traditions and myths, on a common history, collective and individual behaviours morally and legally standardized.⁷³ That doing observations and marking the differences between old and new trends is the way to decide whether the tradition in your era is original, invented or re-invented. While doing the observations, it is necessary to look for the crucial elements which are emotionally and symbolically invented. Hobsbawm defines the most crucial elements as in the following:

The national flag, the national anthem and the national emblem are three symbols through which an independent country proclaims its identity and sovereignty and as such they command instantaneous respect and loyalty. In themselves they respect the entire background, thought and culture of a nation.⁷⁴

As concluded from the quotation above, a nation is symbolized by the following key concepts: the language as a means of communication, the consciousness of belonging to a certain historical territory, a fatherland, traditions, myths, collective memories, historical personalities, collective behaviours, own culture, ethnics and religion”.⁷⁵ These are also called as pre-requisites and pre-existed identities of a nation. Many types of invented traditions encounter the years followed by the Industrial Revolution. Hobsbawm divided these invented traditions into three overlapping types:

1. Those establishing or symbolizing social cohesion or the membership of groups, real or artificial communities
2. Those establishing or legitimizing institutions, status or relations of authority
3. Those whose main purpose was socialization, the inculcation of beliefs, value systems and conventions of behaviour.⁷⁶

⁷² Richard Handler, Jocelyn Linnekin, “Tradition, Genuine or Spurious”, **The Journal of American Folklore**, v. 97, i.385 (1984), 273. It is also available via www.jstor.org.

⁷³ Eric J. Hobsbawm, “A Life in History”, **Past and Present**, no.177, (2002): 3-16, 4.

⁷⁴ Eric Hobsbawm, **Gelenegin İcadı**, ed. Eric Hobsbawm, Terence Ranger, trans. Mehmet Murat Şahin (Istanbul: Agora Kitaplığı, 2006), 203.

⁷⁵ Anthony Giddens, **Sociology** (Bucharest: ALL. Publishing House, 2000), p.33.

⁷⁶ Eric Hobsbawm, “Giriş: Gelenekleri İcat Etmek”, **Gelenegin İcadı**, ed. Eric Hobsbawm, Terence Ranger, trans. Mehmet Murat Şahin (Istanbul: Agora Kitaplığı, 2006), 12.

Hobsbawm made this classification according to his analysis of the traditions invented in 19th and 20th centuries. However, I apply his theory to the traditions invented in 20th and 21st centuries of Turkey. In my analysis, I realized that the Republican era of Turkey exactly fits to the first type of tradition. On the other hand, the era we live in seems to fit to the third type of tradition. To understand invention and restoration process, it is important to distinguish the habits of the past from the habits of present which is a modification of past. Eric Hobsbawm mentions two paradoxes here: “the more rapid and sweeping the pace and scale of modernization, the more conservative and unchangeable the new traditions tend to be” and “the stronger the continuity with the historical past and emphasis on traditional values, the more selectively the past is usually presented”.⁷⁷ After being enlightened with the scientific and technological developments within the process of industrialization and secularization in the nineteenth century, people were in need of moral and spiritual meaning of life. This need resulted in the transition from ‘secular’ into ‘post-secular’ in which people look for self-realisation.⁷⁸ However, this might increase the tendency to individual choices, internal motivations, individual preferences, taste, value and belief as means of belonging, which are not exclusively based on ethnic or national principles.

With the newly recreated practices, the political manipulations work well in re-establishing social cohesion, a sense of security, and an obedient relationship to authority.⁷⁹ All of mentioned motivations and practices have to be balancing demand or supply, adaptable and flexible enough or are otherwise condemned to be eliminated. If the traditions are unadaptable, it is inevitable to become rapidly unviable first, and then ‘new’ traditions will be born soon. If the new-born tradition faces inability to use or adapt the old one, the end will be the same for it, too. Adaptation took place for old uses in new conditions and by using old models for new purposes. To exemplify this, I will analyze the case of contemporary Turkey in terms of its art market being shaped by not only the capitals but also the elements of re-invention of traditions in the era of post-secularism. There have been re-constructions of institutions with established functions, references to the past and

⁷⁷ Eric Hobsbawm, “Giriş: Gelenekleri İcat Etmek”, **Gelenğin İcadı**, ed. Eric Hobsbawm, Terence Ranger, trans. Mehmet Murat Şahin (Istanbul: Agora Kitaplığı, 2006), 14.

⁷⁸ Benedict Anderson, **Imagined Communities** (New York: Verso Press, 1991), 11.

⁷⁹ Eric Hobsbawm, “Giriş: Gelenekleri İcat Etmek”, **Gelenğin İcadı**, ed. Eric Hobsbawm, Terence Ranger, trans. Mehmet Murat Şahin (Istanbul: Agora Kitaplığı, 2006), 13.

religious discourses, rituals and practices, new political and ideological challenges and major changes in the composition of the faithful society. Each attempt has been done for the sake of preserving a living past.

3. CONTEMPORARY ART MARKET IN URBAN TURKEY

In this chapter, I will describe the art market in contemporary Turkey, with all the actors leading, playing or serving to the market. Those are the artists, curators, collectors, art-lovers, media, art galleries, auction houses, art museums, fairs, and bienniales. I will not study the economical issues or statistics, what I will do is to describe how is the art market nowadays, what are the new trends, who are the leading actors, whether artists care about the capitals as Bourdieu mentions and so on. In this chapter, the established theory of Eric Hobsbawm will be applied in order to understand the change in painting art market and the tendency of painters, today. In addition, researching the contemporary art market provides me to answer whether there are signs of post-secularism, revival or re-invention of tradition in Turkey for the last ten years.

Before dealing with the present condition of art market, I will define what is contemporary in Today's Turkey from the respect of painting art. Then I will readily structure the art market in Turkey since 2007. Since the early 1990s, international art discourse has focussed on non-European or non-western art contexts with a growing interest day by day. Therefore, art in Turkey has taken its position on this competitive platform and been under the spotlight thanks to its geo-political presence between the east and the west.

It has already become widely known that Turkey, and especially Istanbul, is a new art center, or, better to say, a kind of hub in the contemporary arts' world map. We can observe the rapidly growing attention paid by the international art world to the Turkish scene in recent years. Art lovers and professionals started to pay particular attention to the MENASA (Middle East, North Africa, South Asia) scene from 2000 on.⁸⁰

In this chapter, I will focus on the art market for Turkish paintings for the previous decade from 2007 till 2017. For this search, I make use of a verified database for the results of art objects, auctions dating back to 2005 available on the art website

⁸⁰ Zoltán Somhegyi, "On the boom and value of contemporary art scene in Turkey", *Contemporary Art Practices*, (2015), p.66. This essay is retrieved on 26 September 2016 from <http://www.contemporarypractices.net/essays/volumexii/ontheboom.pdf>

lebriz.com⁸¹. In the post-modern era, in artistic field as already in the other fields, it becomes more and more challenging to find a job, a place to exhibit artworks, to be accepted as an artist and sell the productions. In this challenging arena, it is ascendant that an artist has to create an artwork which is able to commercialize itself in the art market. What most of the contemporary artists do is producing according to what art market wants.

3.1. What is ‘Contemporary’ in Art Market of Turkish Paintings?

This study aims at the analysis of the discourse of oil painting art in contemporary Turkey. This is a descriptive research based on the samples of oil paintings selected from the credible resources such as art fairs, art museums, art galleries and individual or group exhibitions held by municipalities. First of all, it is necessary to describe what is ‘contemporary’ to carry out this descriptive research. In short, the word ‘contemporary’ means what is on ‘now’, ‘today’, ‘recently’, ‘lately’ or ‘in our time’ and involves what is ‘new’, ‘fashion’, ‘trendy’ and ‘popular’. Therefore, I base my study on what I recently see on the canvasses of Turkish painters and what is trendy, popular or new. According to my searches on the field, the following picture is one of the most striking samples that could directly discourse what is contemporary in Turkish artistic scene. Besides, there is no need to analyse its discourse as it is titled as “Kontemporari Art” and clearly shows ‘what is contemporary art in Turkey’.

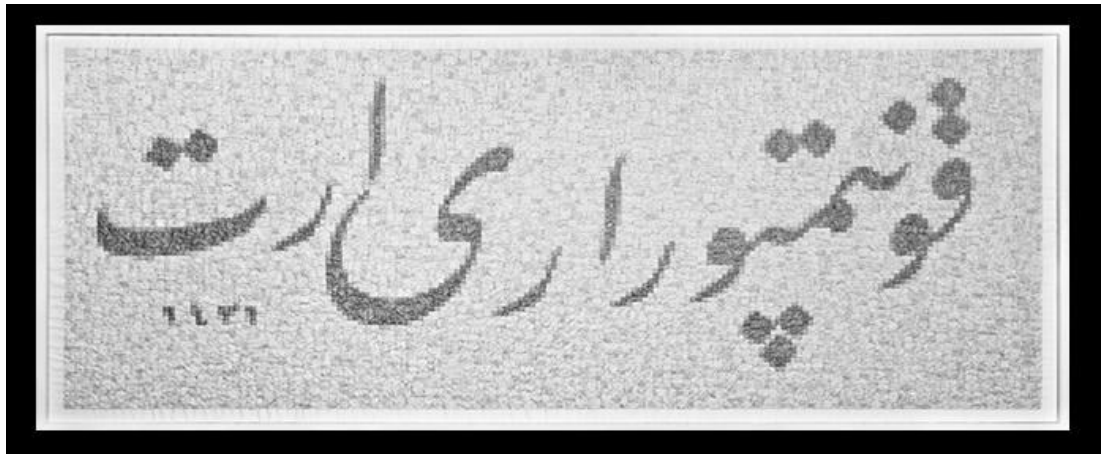


Figure 4: Kontemporari Art

Sabire Susuz, Kontemporari Art⁸², 2010 (written in Arabic, read in English)

⁸¹ Lebriz.com is reserved on 15 October 2000 by Lebriz Internet Services, (LLC, 2000-2016). Link is “<http://lebriz.com/Default.aspx?lang=ENG&bhcp=1>”

⁸² <https://www.themaggar.com/galeri/sabire-susuz/sabire-susuz-kontemporari-art-2010/>

Since the birth of art, world's dominant actors have managed the art movements and then the others have followed the identified art movement by introducing to the local scene. For example, Turkish artists met Impressionism in 20th century even after European art had already experienced in the late of 19th century. Since its foundation the Republic of Turkey has always aimed to reach the 'contemporary' defined by the highest civilizations not only in art but also in every fields yet it was unable to catch up with them. However, following what was called as 'contemporary art' was the situation in the past. At present, it is questioned what is 'contemporary art' because of the fact that there is hardly any movement left to be followed. Instead of struggling for or waiting anew movement, artists tend to re-create what their ancestors had created in the very past.

After the historical analysis, I defined the fundamental traits of Turkish art as traditional and religious. As in the history, today's art reflects the early Turkish traditional art and Islamic motifs according to my observations. Such subjective views should be fortified and proved with objective researches and analysis. Therefore, I started with collecting data out of the wide sample pool of 'contemporary' art. It was for sure the field of art would be painting yet the date was uncertain since the notion of contemporary was not definite. While some experts assume that the period since 1970s is contemporary, others have it started from 1980s up to now. In order to determine which period should be taken as contemporary in art concept, the website lebriz.com is applied as having the most confidential database on painting art in Turkey.⁸³ In this online exhibition hall, I searched the archive and collected samples of paintings related with my hypothesis. Lebriz.com exhibited paintings from 1991 that was fourteen years before I actively took part in artistic field. I think that the beginning of my active participation into art world perfectly fits into the period for the notion of 'contemporary' art in Turkey. This thought help me to narrow the period from 2007 to 2017, that is to say, last 'decade' which is commonly used to identify the art trends. In addition, after the thorough data research, I realized that there was hardly any sample painting related to my concern from 1991 to 2007. According to my understanding of

⁸³ My research database, "www.lebriz.com" is a network based on a strong technological infrastructure of an artistic archive of numerous collections, auctions, events and reading materials as well as being an online meeting point for artists, art lovers, art historians, art researchers, art galleries, art institutions and actors of art market in Turkey. It began operations in June 2000.

‘contemporary’, I narrowed the date range to the last ten years as the most suitable paintings became dense after 2007. The following years the new trends that I will mention in detailed gradually increased. When it comes to the year 2010, Turkey had the chance of being the centre of contemporary art in Europe. However, it is argumentative whether art market in Istanbul put this opportunity to good use or not. In short, the consequences clearly display in today’s art market before the professional eyes. Anyway, what I am trying to explain is there are new trends in paintings involving the motifs belonging to traditional Turkish arts including Islamic effects. Therefore, I collected samples of such paintings from a narrowed date range between 2007 and 2017. Consequently, thousands of paintings since 2007 until today are taken as the potential data to be classified into specific discourse types and analysed in their contextual meaning.

Artistic field is an insecure and uninsured field. Artists are always in doubt of suddenly being unemployed without insurance. For these circumstances, there is a newly common term called ‘pre-carity’⁸⁴. It includes being subject to someone else’s will, praying, begging, endeavouring, working hard without expecting something in return, showing tolerance and understanding. Moreover, pre-carity means the probability of losing whatever possessed at once, uncertainty and unsteadiness. Being an artist is the best fit example of such a precarious work in such a precarious world.

According to Donald Kuspit, the end of art has come and it has been replaced by the term ‘post-art’ in which the aesthetic importance and creativity has disappeared while cleverness and economic calculations take place in artworks.⁸⁵ In his book ‘The End of Art’, Kuspit mentions there is one possible way to save the future of art that is to create original works only when the artist avoids being a part and slave of capitalistic loop, fame and success matters and pop-culture.⁸⁶ Although I agree with the ideas of Kuspit, as far as I observe the contemporary art world in urban Turkey, it seems impossibly ideal for now maybe in the future that is because of the existing artworks repeating the others, copying not only the symbols but also the ideas of the copied one that has copied from another one.

⁸⁴ Süreyya Evren, “Yaygın Biçimde Sanat Olduğu Kabul Edilen”, **Journal of Istanbul Art News**, i.20, (2015), 14.

⁸⁵ Donald Kuspit, **The End of Art**, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 143.

⁸⁶ **Ibid**, 144.

What is my concern in this study is detecting and presenting you what kind of symbols, themes, figures and signs are mostly applied and copied in paintings to have a better understanding of today's art world in Turkey. For centuries, the relationship between art and politics has been proceeding in the direction of various trends and perspectives. Since the 18th century, artists and their productions have shown that art is actually political even if it is said that politics should not involve in art. It is foreseen that the involvement of politics in art world leads to the censorship mechanism which is directly seen nowadays.

The fact that art and politics have interlaced each other for ages is also valid for the modern era and there is no district borderline between them. History gives us clues about this issue, for instance, the process of nation building in which political power not only influenced but also institutionalized art. Like religion and language, it is incontrovertible that art has an undeniable potential power over politics and artistic production has been returned to one of the means of political uniformity. Whereas Kant argues that art has some main principles such as having the aesthetic value, delight of the beauty's taste, creating without accounting interest or aiming the payment.⁸⁷ This notion leads to the 19th century in which the statement of 'Art for art sake' is based on the art production. After some trials which are not feeding the family and enough to make a living, things have changed. When the artists suffer from the economic crisis, they open their eyes and arise the question 'Art for what sake?' In 20th century, it becomes striking that if there is no profit, there is no interest to create an original work of art; therefore the notion replaced as 'Art for capitals sake'. The actual political structure has maintained to evolve in accordance with the capitalist neo-liberal economy and global system signified by international relations. However, human race still faces chaos, social turmoil and as a result war in addition to the natural disasters, health problems, starvation and poverty in global concept. The main reason for these circumstances is derived from the material concerns and anti-humanistic interests. As it is observed by many social scientists, there is a great movement or shift from secularism to post-secularism in all over the world. The need for religious or spiritual feelings has been emphasized more frequently. Religion and the need for spiritual feelings have taken the place of the mentality of science and modernism. However, the post-secular needs better definitions in its central features

⁸⁷ Fırat Arapoğlu, "Politik Sanatın Sonu II", **Journal of Istanbul Art News**, i.20 (2015), 36.

and supposed contrast with the secular. Post-secular concept expresses not a sudden increase in religiosity following its decline, but rather a shift in the consciousness of those who had previously felt that religions completed their role. This relation or balance between the visibility of religion and its affects in the feelings of different groups of society needs to be explored through new evidences.

Post-secular age of transformation to the religious and traditional domains has not only affected the public sphere of Turkey but also the rest of the world. The social significance of religion is becoming even more clearly apparent from a global perspective, for today religious communities play an important public role in very many regions of the world.⁸⁸ According to Habermas, religion proves to be an important moral resource, because religious citizens have special access to a potential for justifying moral questions.⁸⁹ They shape the individual practical attitudes of human beings in a variety of cultural ways, they influence cultural life, and they are part of public discourses and political processes. As a result, religions represent an important factor which merits attention when analyzing social developments in many parts of the world.⁹⁰ In fact, this is not a new statement; for centuries, art has always taken the form of the era controlled by the powerful majority and artists ought to shape their works according to the era. This is a kind of historical cycle theory and the actor, who has the power whether physical, political or social, influences the psychology of the masses of people in a positive or negative way or both. Therefore, I work on how the masses are being affected by the same item at the same time, what creates the fashion and whether art becomes a tool of the pop-culture. Actually, I would like to draw attention of the masses onto the problematic of the ungovernable fate of art. The question of “Art for ‘what’ sake?” is answered by the very prolific works of Pierre Bourdieu. By the help of Bourdieu, the importance of the capitals very well explains the cumulative tendency of artists to produce what the majority of society wants. The species of capitals such as economic, social, symbolic and cultural ones are also the key concepts to solve the problematic of the social-psychological processes of artists.

⁸⁸ Michael Reder, Josef Schmidt, “Habermas and Religion: Starting Point: The Renewed Visibility of Religion”, is in the book of Jürgen Habermas, et al., **An Awareness of What is Missing: Faith and Reason in a Post-Secular Age**, trans. Ciaran Cronin, (UK: Cambridge, Polity Press, 2010), 4.

⁸⁹ **Ibid**, 6.

⁹⁰ **Ibid**, 7.

The revival of Islam also affects the perception of art, social psychology of artists and attitudes of art-lovers in Turkey. It would be helpful to understand this problem through the tendencies of Turkish artists in producing works of art mostly related to the Islamic value. Lately observed among the most of the contemporary Turkish artists, it is given as the proof of post-secular movement as being the most attractive samples, the increasingly re-awakening of the Islamic symbols and the Arabic signs on the artworks most interestingly on oil paintings exhibited in the most popular galleries in the megacity in Turkey. For example, the Arabic letter “vaw” as in “ و ” is so popular nowadays that you can see it almost everywhere, most of the teenagers as tattoo, most of the paintings, most of the necklaces, and so on. Even an Arabic letter is a very clear example of a flow into post-secular era and neo-conservatism in Turkey. That being the case, artists have the feeling of the pressure and responsibility as if they have to reflect the era as a mirror and follow the fashionable movement. And then culture industry works to create a pile of sameness hence nothing new or different would dare to be produced. It has always been like that, and in this inevitable vicious cycle, artists need to adapt themselves to the dominant ideology of the well-esteemed community of the era. It is clear that art is not for ‘art’ sake!

Artists need to have much more capitals to survive when they are compared to the other people from other professions. The psychological process of the artist community depends on the quality and the quantity of the capitals. The social-psychology of the artist world is rotated to a more conservative way in order to gain not only cultural, artistic or social capital but also economic capital as being a prerequisite which is not only to be able to survive in the arena of art world but also in the real world. There is no absolute reality in the post-modernist life and there is no referring to the real objects and materials. Yet, there is inconsistent seeking for the inner reality searching for the truth. This pursuit aims to reach immaterial things, values, feelings, free will and belief system. During the transition from one era to the other, it is inevitable to observe and experience the change from an artistic perspective. Besides, it is vital to analyze the relation between art history and politics. The arguments about re-invention of tradition and religion in art have been experienced nowadays with de facto samples in the artistic field concluding auctions, art galleries, exhibitions, art fairs, etc. In her latest article, Sıldır stated that Mustafa Isen has risen up these arguments with his speech: “We are in the responsibility of

structuring the conservative art and aesthetics on the base of the policy of conservative democracy.”⁹¹ This speech approves the support of high bureaucracy for the revival of conservative art with the newest trends such as religious and traditional discourses in oil painting art. With the mentioned policy, it is more obvious that Turkish painters have the tendency to produce trendy paintings for the sake of capitals as stated in Bourdieu’s art theory section. Since 1980s, culture policy of Turkish state has been constituted according to the local, political and ideological interests rather than the global requisites of culture industry. Investments have been done onto the quantity of buildings, events and facilities instead of creativity of artists. As proved by most of the historical samples, ‘culture’ is a notion rotated according to the interests of politicians, ideologists, governors and private sector.

In this chapter, I also analyze how these powerful actors play important role in art market. When the word ‘market’ is uttered, the ideology of ‘capitalism’ comes into minds as the mechanism of producing and consuming culture in every fields of social life. In the market of contemporary art, capitals play great role in co-operation between the artists and capitalists. With the transition to liberal economy, culture has become industry and gained monetary importance. That is why businessmen get more interested in artistic productions. By huge amounts of capitals, they have the power to lead not only the business world but also the cultural events as in art world.

Contemporary art addresses the local and cultural societies. New trends are strengthening the link between the past and the present. Thus, while the artworks are introduced to people, everyone will be informed about the works and the artists. Everyone includes those who cannot afford to pay for a painting. In terms of contemporary art, it is also issued that there would be no standardization of the style or technique or theme of an artwork. Contemporary artists would be free to create, recreate, purchase or collect according to their will. That is why, it is hard to accept some discourses such as ‘Past is past, thus there is no need to get back to those days and revive their art and culture in these days.’ However, such discourses even rejecting the ideas of the others should be respected in this contemporary world. Within the era of reinvention of traditions, not only Turkish art market is following

⁹¹ Silay Sıldır, “Ne Oldu Da Ortadoğu Sanat Aşığı Oldu?”, **Journal of Istanbul Art News**, i.24 (2015), 8.

the trend of post-secularism instead of secular westernism, but also the Western art market is getting more and more interested in Eastern art.

Auction sales of modern and contemporary Middle Eastern art went up by 85.5 % in 2013 to 18.5 million USD, from 10 million USD in 2012. This growth was driven by increased demand for Iranian, Egyptian, Lebanese and Turkish modern and contemporary artists.⁹²

Even the rise of post-secularism could be related with the new order of the contemporary world. In my point of view, the circumstances lead artists to seek for the ‘known’ among the field of unknowns. For instance, that a painter’s creating a painting full of old traditional and religious symbols may evoke the idea that s/he has been lost in the complexity of infinite number of alternatives, so that apply what s/he knows best which is forgotten and unusual in contemporary art. Thinking in such a way may help us understanding the creation process of contemporary art works especially under the effect of post-secularism. Even the concept of post-secularism may have arisen due to the same reasons. More comprehensive studies should be done on this issue. For now, I had better present a political discourse supporting these assumptions from the perspective of Turkish contemporary art:

There will be paid special attention to the development of Turkish-Islamic arts. In the organization of all kinds of art events, local authorities will become prominent. All the projects displaying the cultural and artistic wealth of our country and contributing to the development of art and culture will be supported.⁹³

There was an experienced path to be followed as in 1950s. Under the title of liberalism, the issue of social ‘conservatism’ played very important role in those days against modernism. With this inspiration, new projects of art and culture have been presented as the new forms of ‘conservatism’ similar to those in 1950s. In this kind of conservatism, there are new trends in painting art for example returning to Ottoman style of art and religious motifs as in traditional Turkish-Islamic art. Therefore, the idea of neo-Ottomanism has become as the base of politics and culture policy. In order to create popular culture of neo-Ottomanism, art has been employed as the forerunner of this policy. Under the title of art policy, it is stressed the importance of re-inventioning the traditional and religious concepts as stated in the quote from one of the recent programs of the government:

⁹² This from <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/global/Documents/Finance/gx-finance-art-and-finance-report-08092014.pdf>.

⁹³ See, the text of the Government Program about Turkish Art Policy on the following webpage: <https://web.akparti.org.tr/tbmm/program.asp?dizin=38&hangisi=2>

Our main purposes are to contribute to the universal culture by conserving our cultural and artistic values thereby recreating them; to strengthen the social unity and solidarity in the framework of national culture and common values; to transfer cultural diversity and richness to the next generation by protecting and developing Turkish art and culture; to encourage the attendance of the public to the cultural and artistic events.⁹⁴

With the support of a conservative society, there has become a new version of conservative art. Besides, such artistic productions have been purchased by this society at very high prices. For instance, the calligraphic works of Erol Akyavaş have been sold at record amounts in the museums and auction houses. In the capitalist world of art, no matter how conservative the society is about their women, the representation of women in veil or headscarves has been used as a symbol in an artwork or goods of commodity fetishism in an advertising material that target conservative people. Here, I am talking about the art in Islamic culture in which all kinds of human representations were prohibited. This issue will be analysed from the perspectives of painters within their paintings and possible discourses in the next chapter in detailed to have a better understanding of contemporary art market in Turkey. In an interview with Isabella Icoz who is an independent art curator and adviser, she objectively evaluates the art scene in contemporary Turkey and explains the rise of Turkish painting art in the global art market as in the following quotation:

The domestic Turkish art market has grown more than five fold with annual sales surpassing 100 million USD and auction prices increasing by over %350. Contemporary Turkish art still constitutes a relatively small part of this total, but over the past few years this has increasingly changed as international auction houses, notably Sotheby's⁹⁵ and Christie's⁹⁶ have taken an interest in the Turkish art market and art galleries have started participating at international art fairs with their artists entering museum collections and biennials. This has triggered international interest in a market that prior to 2008 had little exposure to international collectors and buyers.⁹⁷

From the aspect of market in contemporary art, it is claimed that to have an art work is not only a kind of expressing 'passion' but also a way of rational 'investment'. As I have mentioned in the previous part, I barely present some statistical findings only

⁹⁴ See, the page 64 in the text of the Government Program about Turkish Art Policy on the following webpage: <http://www.basbakanlik.gov.tr/docs/kurumsalhaberler/hprogram.pdf>

⁹⁵ Sotheby's is the first international auction house that has been leading the art market and uniting collectors with world-class works of art since 1744, in London and New York. Sotheby's Financial Service is the world's only full-service art financing company, as well as private sale opportunities in more than 70 categories, including Sotheby's Contemporary Art department. (For more information, <http://www.sothebys.com/en/inside/services/press/news/news.html>)

⁹⁶ The chief executive officer Patricia Barbizet defines Christie's as a global art business platform founded in 18th century London, giving the service of expertise, buying, selling and consulting in art market via various salerooms. (See, <http://www.christies.com/home/about-us/welcome-to-christies>)

⁹⁷ This interview is retrieved on December 2014 from: www.vibrantturkey.com/art-design-and-fashion.

for the illustrations to my suppositions. To illustrate the common situation in Turkish art market, I will focus on a few findings of some auction houses. According to the findings, the global art scene in 2014 has experienced an increase of 26% on the total sale of the auctions in 2013.⁹⁸ While the art market's volume has reached \$75 billion around the world, the number in Turkey is estimated to stand at \$300 million. However, \$300 million of the art market is deemed a good number considering Turkey's art market volume was only \$5 million in 2001.⁹⁹

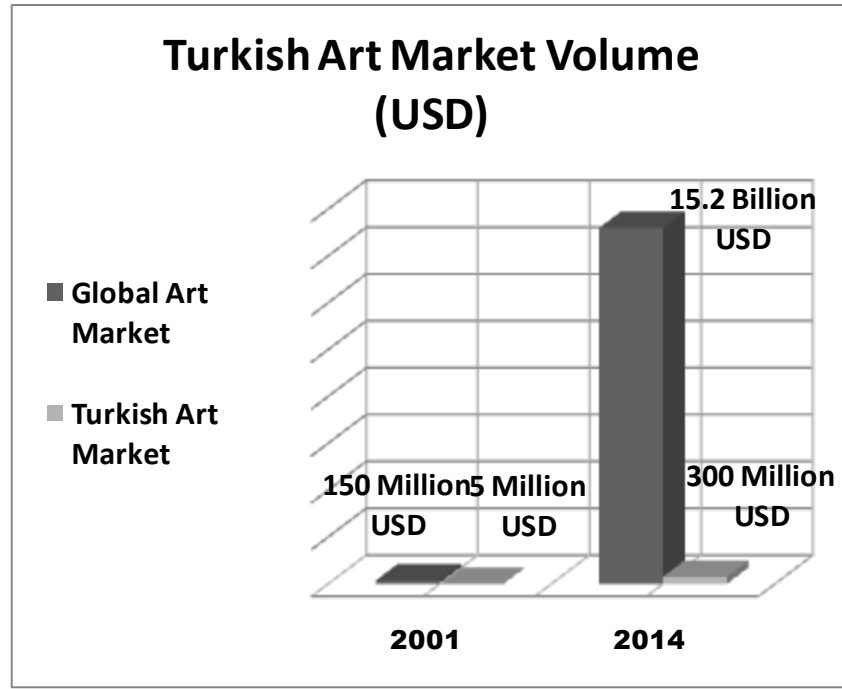


Figure 5: A Graphic about Turkish Art Market Volume

This research is not for some kind of financial or business field that is why I will be content with what I have collected so far and continue with the main interests of my field of humanities and arts. Art market is getting more and more expanded. For example, in 2010, the total amount of artworks' sale in the world was counted as \$52 billion dollar that equals with the gross national product of Etiopia.¹⁰⁰ Compared to art markets in the Middle East and India, the Turkish art market is defined as more developed infrastructure with the strong corporation, private patronage and support

⁹⁸ The verified statistical recorded data is taken from the article titled, "**Turkeys Art Market Booming**" on this webpage, <http://www.dailysabah.com/markets/2015/02/27/as-world-art-sales-hit-new-record-turkeys-art-market-booming>

⁹⁹ **Ibid.**

¹⁰⁰ Octavia Esanu, "Çağdaş Sanat Aslında Neydi? Neoliberalizm Döneminde Çağdaş Sanatın Örgütlenmesi", *Çağdaş Sanat Nedir?*, trans. Nursu Örgü (İstanbul: İletişim-SanatHayat, 2013), 95.

‘contemporary’, I narrowed the date range to the last ten years as the most suitable paintings became dense after 2007. The following years the new trends that I will mention in detailed gradually increased. When it comes to the year 2010, Turkey had the chance of being the centre of contemporary art in Europe. However, it is argumentative whether art market in Istanbul put this opportunity to good use or not. In short, the consequences clearly display in today’s art market before the professional eyes. Anyway, what I am trying to explain is there are new trends in paintings involving the motifs belonging to traditional Turkish arts including Islamic effects. Therefore, I collected samples of such paintings from a narrowed date range between 2007 and 2017. Consequently, thousands of paintings since 2007 until today are taken as the potential data to be classified into specific discourse types and analysed in their contextual meaning.

Artistic field is an insecure and uninsured field. Artists are always in doubt of suddenly being unemployed without insurance. For these circumstances, there is a newly common term called ‘pre-carity’⁸⁴. It includes being subject to someone else’s will, praying, begging, endeavouring, working hard without expecting something in return, showing tolerance and understanding. Moreover, pre-carity means the probability of losing whatever possessed at once, uncertainty and unsteadiness. Being an artist is the best fit example of such a precarious work in such a precarious world.

According to Donald Kuspit, the end of art has come and it has been replaced by the term ‘post-art’ in which the aesthetic importance and creativity has disappeared while cleverness and economic calculations take place in artworks.⁸⁵ In his book ‘The End of Art’, Kuspit mentions there is one possible way to save the future of art that is to create original works only when the artist avoids being a part and slave of capitalistic loop, fame and success matters and pop-culture.⁸⁶ Although I agree with the ideas of Kuspit, as far as I observe the contemporary art world in urban Turkey, it seems impossibly ideal for now maybe in the future that is because of the existing artworks repeating the others, copying not only the symbols but also the ideas of the copied one that has copied from another one.

⁸⁴ Süreyya Evren, “Yaygın Biçimde Sanat Olduğu Kabul Edilen”, **Journal of Istanbul Art News**, i.20, (2015), 14.

⁸⁵ Donald Kuspit, **The End of Art**, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 143.

⁸⁶ **Ibid**, 144.

What is my concern in this study is detecting and presenting you what kind of symbols, themes, figures and signs are mostly applied and copied in paintings to have a better understanding of today's art world in Turkey. For centuries, the relationship between art and politics has been proceeding in the direction of various trends and perspectives. Since the 18th century, artists and their productions have shown that art is actually political even if it is said that politics should not involve in art. It is foreseen that the involvement of politics in art world leads to the censorship mechanism which is directly seen nowadays.

The fact that art and politics have interlaced each other for ages is also valid for the modern era and there is no district borderline between them. History gives us clues about this issue, for instance, the process of nation building in which political power not only influenced but also institutionalized art. Like religion and language, it is incontrovertible that art has an undeniable potential power over politics and artistic production has been returned to one of the means of political uniformity. Whereas Kant argues that art has some main principles such as having the aesthetic value, delight of the beauty's taste, creating without accounting interest or aiming the payment.⁸⁷ This notion leads to the 19th century in which the statement of 'Art for art sake' is based on the art production. After some trials which are not feeding the family and enough to make a living, things have changed. When the artists suffer from the economic crisis, they open their eyes and arise the question 'Art for what sake?' In 20th century, it becomes striking that if there is no profit, there is no interest to create an original work of art; therefore the notion replaced as 'Art for capitals sake'. The actual political structure has maintained to evolve in accordance with the capitalist neo-liberal economy and global system signified by international relations. However, human race still faces chaos, social turmoil and as a result war in addition to the natural disasters, health problems, starvation and poverty in global concept. The main reason for these circumstances is derived from the material concerns and anti-humanistic interests. As it is observed by many social scientists, there is a great movement or shift from secularism to post-secularism in all over the world. The need for religious or spiritual feelings has been emphasized more frequently. Religion and the need for spiritual feelings have taken the place of the mentality of science and modernism. However, the post-secular needs better definitions in its central features

⁸⁷ Fırat Arapoğlu, "Politik Sanatın Sonu II", **Journal of Istanbul Art News**, i.20 (2015), 36.

and supposed contrast with the secular. Post-secular concept expresses not a sudden increase in religiosity following its decline, but rather a shift in the consciousness of those who had previously felt that religions completed their role. This relation or balance between the visibility of religion and its affects in the feelings of different groups of society needs to be explored through new evidences.

Post-secular age of transformation to the religious and traditional domains has not only affected the public sphere of Turkey but also the rest of the world. The social significance of religion is becoming even more clearly apparent from a global perspective, for today religious communities play an important public role in very many regions of the world.⁸⁸ According to Habermas, religion proves to be an important moral resource, because religious citizens have special access to a potential for justifying moral questions.⁸⁹ They shape the individual practical attitudes of human beings in a variety of cultural ways, they influence cultural life, and they are part of public discourses and political processes. As a result, religions represent an important factor which merits attention when analyzing social developments in many parts of the world.⁹⁰ In fact, this is not a new statement; for centuries, art has always taken the form of the era controlled by the powerful majority and artists ought to shape their works according to the era. This is a kind of historical cycle theory and the actor, who has the power whether physical, political or social, influences the psychology of the masses of people in a positive or negative way or both. Therefore, I work on how the masses are being affected by the same item at the same time, what creates the fashion and whether art becomes a tool of the pop-culture. Actually, I would like to draw attention of the masses onto the problematic of the ungovernable fate of art. The question of “Art for ‘what’ sake?” is answered by the very prolific works of Pierre Bourdieu. By the help of Bourdieu, the importance of the capitals very well explains the cumulative tendency of artists to produce what the majority of society wants. The species of capitals such as economic, social, symbolic and cultural ones are also the key concepts to solve the problematic of the social-psychological processes of artists.

⁸⁸ Michael Reder, Josef Schmidt, “Habermas and Religion: Starting Point: The Renewed Visibility of Religion”, is in the book of Jürgen Habermas, et al., **An Awareness of What is Missing: Faith and Reason in a Post-Secular Age**, trans. Ciaran Cronin, (UK: Cambridge, Polity Press, 2010), 4.

⁸⁹ **Ibid**, 6.

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The revival of Islam also affects the perception of art, social psychology of artists and attitudes of art-lovers in Turkey. It would be helpful to understand this problem through the tendencies of Turkish artists in producing works of art mostly related to the Islamic value. Lately observed among the most of the contemporary Turkish artists, it is given as the proof of post-secular movement as being the most attractive samples, the increasingly re-awakening of the Islamic symbols and the Arabic signs on the artworks most interestingly on oil paintings exhibited in the most popular galleries in the megacity in Turkey. For example, the Arabic letter “vaw” as in “ و ” is so popular nowadays that you can see it almost everywhere, most of the teenagers as tattoo, most of the paintings, most of the necklaces, and so on. Even an Arabic letter is a very clear example of a flow into post-secular era and neo-conservatism in Turkey. That being the case, artists have the feeling of the pressure and responsibility as if they have to reflect the era as a mirror and follow the fashionable movement. And then culture industry works to create a pile of sameness hence nothing new or different would dare to be produced. It has always been like that, and in this inevitable vicious cycle, artists need to adapt themselves to the dominant ideology of the well-esteemed community of the era. It is clear that art is not for ‘art’ sake!

Artists need to have much more capitals to survive when they are compared to the other people from other professions. The psychological process of the artist community depends on the quality and the quantity of the capitals. The social-psychology of the artist world is rotated to a more conservative way in order to gain not only cultural, artistic or social capital but also economic capital as being a prerequisite which is not only to be able to survive in the arena of art world but also in the real world. There is no absolute reality in the post-modernist life and there is no referring to the real objects and materials. Yet, there is inconsistent seeking for the inner reality searching for the truth. This pursuit aims to reach immaterial things, values, feelings, free will and belief system. During the transition from one era to the other, it is inevitable to observe and experience the change from an artistic perspective. Besides, it is vital to analyze the relation between art history and politics. The arguments about re-invention of tradition and religion in art have been experienced nowadays with de facto samples in the artistic field concluding auctions, art galleries, exhibitions, art fairs, etc. In her latest article, Sıldır stated that Mustafa Isen has risen up these arguments with his speech: “We are in the responsibility of

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In this chapter, I also analyze how these powerful actors play important role in art market. When the word ‘market’ is uttered, the ideology of ‘capitalism’ comes into minds as the mechanism of producing and consuming culture in every fields of social life. In the market of contemporary art, capitals play great role in co-operation between the artists and capitalists. With the transition to liberal economy, culture has become industry and gained monetary importance. That is why businessmen get more interested in artistic productions. By huge amounts of capitals, they have the power to lead not only the business world but also the cultural events as in art world.

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the trend of post-secularism instead of secular westernism, but also the Western art market is getting more and more interested in Eastern art.

Auction sales of modern and contemporary Middle Eastern art went up by 85.5 % in 2013 to 18.5 million USD, from 10 million USD in 2012. This growth was driven by increased demand for Iranian, Egyptian, Lebanese and Turkish modern and contemporary artists.⁹²

Even the rise of post-secularism could be related with the new order of the contemporary world. In my point of view, the circumstances lead artists to seek for the ‘known’ among the field of unknowns. For instance, that a painter’s creating a painting full of old traditional and religious symbols may evoke the idea that s/he has been lost in the complexity of infinite number of alternatives, so that apply what s/he knows best which is forgotten and unusual in contemporary art. Thinking in such a way may help us understanding the creation process of contemporary art works especially under the effect of post-secularism. Even the concept of post-secularism may have arisen due to the same reasons. More comprehensive studies should be done on this issue. For now, I had better present a political discourse supporting these assumptions from the perspective of Turkish contemporary art:

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There was an experienced path to be followed as in 1950s. Under the title of liberalism, the issue of social ‘conservatism’ played very important role in those days against modernism. With this inspiration, new projects of art and culture have been presented as the new forms of ‘conservatism’ similar to those in 1950s. In this kind of conservatism, there are new trends in painting art for example returning to Ottoman style of art and religious motifs as in traditional Turkish-Islamic art. Therefore, the idea of neo-Ottomanism has become as the base of politics and culture policy. In order to create popular culture of neo-Ottomanism, art has been employed as the forerunner of this policy. Under the title of art policy, it is stressed the importance of re-inventioning the traditional and religious concepts as stated in the quote from one of the recent programs of the government:

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With the support of a conservative society, there has become a new version of conservative art. Besides, such artistic productions have been purchased by this society at very high prices. For instance, the calligraphic works of Erol Akyavaş have been sold at record amounts in the museums and auction houses. In the capitalist world of art, no matter how conservative the society is about their women, the representation of women in veil or headscarves has been used as a symbol in an artwork or goods of commodity fetishism in an advertising material that target conservative people. Here, I am talking about the art in Islamic culture in which all kinds of human representations were prohibited. This issue will be analysed from the perspectives of painters within their paintings and possible discourses in the next chapter in detailed to have a better understanding of contemporary art market in Turkey. In an interview with Isabella Icoz who is an independent art curator and adviser, she objectively evaluates the art scene in contemporary Turkey and explains the rise of Turkish painting art in the global art market as in the following quotation:

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From the aspect of market in contemporary art, it is claimed that to have an art work is not only a kind of expressing 'passion' but also a way of rational 'investment'. As I have mentioned in the previous part, I barely present some statistical findings only

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for the illustrations to my suppositions. To illustrate the common situation in Turkish art market, I will focus on a few findings of some auction houses. According to the findings, the global art scene in 2014 has experienced an increase of 26% on the total sale of the auctions in 2013.⁹⁸ While the art market's volume has reached \$75 billion around the world, the number in Turkey is estimated to stand at \$300 million. However, \$300 million of the art market is deemed a good number considering Turkey's art market volume was only \$5 million in 2001.⁹⁹

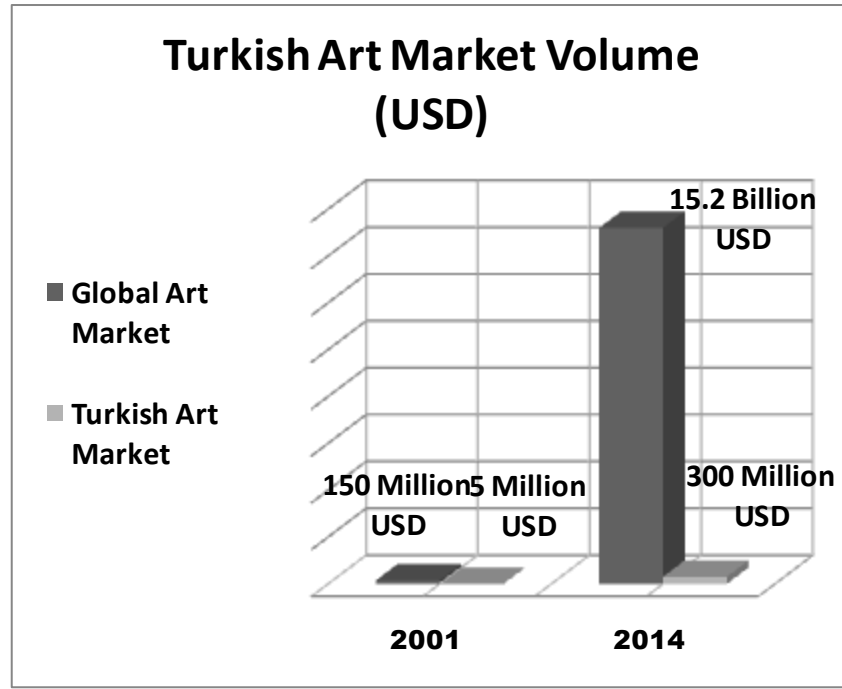


Figure 5: A Graphic about Turkish Art Market Volume

This research is not for some kind of financial or business field that is why I will be content with what I have collected so far and continue with the main interests of my field of humanities and arts. Art market is getting more and more expanded. For example, in 2010, the total amount of artworks' sale in the world was counted as \$52 billion dollar that equals with the gross national product of Etiopia.¹⁰⁰ Compared to art markets in the Middle East and India, the Turkish art market is defined as more developed infrastructure with the strong corporation, private patronage and support

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of sponsor banks leading art institutions in Istanbul. For international collectors, new generation Turkish painters offer fresh and almost nearly untouched art compared to Chinese and Indian art market damaged by speculations. Moreover, prices are still more affordable and reasonable than the other Middle Eastern countries' prices.¹⁰¹

What is necessary to illustrate in this section is the real numbers of paintings' pricing and sale prices in the end of Turkish auction houses. As recorded as one of the most striking work of Turkish contemporary art market and also pushed me to do this research, I would like to illustrate the famous and trendy oil painting, representing Turkish-Islamic tradition with calligraphic symbols and non-figurative elements conveying messages.



Figure 6: En'el Hak

Erol Akyavaş, **En-el Hak**, 1987- Oil Painting on Canvas- Original size: 190x350 cm. (Exhibition: Retrospective¹⁰², Istanbul Modern Art Museum, 2013.

In Figure 6, the record breaker oil painting of Turkey is regarded as the pure evidence of the existence of the tendency to the religious symbols and this trend is highly appreciated. This painting belongs to Erol Akyavaş who is accepted as one of

¹⁰¹ It is taken from: www.contemporarypractices.net/essays/volumexii/on-the-boom.pdf

¹⁰² http://www.Istanbulmodern.org/tr/sergiler/gecmis-sergiler/erol-akyavas-retrospektif_1169.html

the great masters of 20th century Turkish art. ‘En-el Hak’ is one of his most famous paintings and has broken a new record in contemporary Turkish art market. It is recorded as being the most expensive painting in Turkish art history by 2.780.000 TL. The curious eyes wonder who the buyer is and why that huge amount of money is paid. That name is the collector, Zafer Yıldırım, besides he is not only the collector of ‘En-el Hak’ but also ‘Hallac-ı Mansur’¹⁰³ the other masterpiece of Akyavaş by paying 1.262.000 TL in the auction of Antik A.Ş. in 2011. This record breaker painting is one of the valuable post-secular samples to be studied. The collector of this precious painting has enlightened the viewers with the explanation of what made him buy this painting within his following speech below:

Akyavaş is the painter I love so much because there is an awesome plainness in his paintings with full of love, respect, Islam and Anatolia. In his paintings, I see the values that I also attach great importance to.¹⁰⁴

3.2. Leading Actors of Art Market in Contemporary Turkey

*Making money is an art. The most amazing, art is trade.*¹⁰⁵
Andy Warhol

Producing artwork for the sake of art market has been one of the fundamentals. As Andy Warhol (1975) said, there is no inconveniency about earning capital; yet that to be able to earn money is an art itself and that makes artists businessman or tradesman. How about the value of art, how and why people pay for artworks? The underlying reason of the financial world’s rising magnetism to art is related with the thought of increase in value of the artworks which were once undervalued. As being the center of contemporary arts in Turkey, the urban city of Istanbul is analysed in this study. The rapid development of Istanbul’s art market, partly in connection with the economic improvement of the country, helped the institutionalization of the scene allowing both nonprofit and for-profit sectors to establish very important institutions.

Some cities or regions are attractive because of their rich cultural tradition, long history of artistic creation and patronage, their open socialpolitical ambience, international and cosmopolitan atmosphere. Istanbul is one of them with the overlapping history and culture of Greek, Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman Empires.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Hallac-ı Mansur (Mansur al Hallaj) was the one condemned as a heretic because of uttering the following: “I saw my Lord with the eye of my heart. He said, ‘Who are you?’ I said, ‘I am You’.” https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Mansur_Al-Hallaj

¹⁰⁴ <http://www.gazetevatan.com/en-el-hak-i-alan-ortaya-cikti-439378-kultur-sanat/>

¹⁰⁵ Ali Artun, “Sanat Piyasası ve Sanatın Özerkliği”, **e-skopdergi**, i.8 (2.9.2015)(www.e-skop.com)

¹⁰⁶ Zoltán Somhegyi, “On the boom and value of contemporary art scene in Turkey”, *Contemporary Art Practices*, (2015), 68. This is retrieved on 26 September 2016 from <http://www.contemporarypractices.net/essays/volumexii/ontheboom.pdf>

At the beginning of 1980s in which the notion of privatization and liberalization of art market came into being, it is verified that there were six faculties of fine arts, around three hundred living artists, in Turkish art market. When it is counted now, the number of fine art faculty has reached eighty-two; more than two thousand artists actively participate in the artistic field. In the beginnings of 2000s, there was such an economic stability that there was almost no hope for a really existing art market in Turkey. However, with the latest developments in 2008, leading actors have shown themselves in the art market struggling to readjust itself to the global art market. As stated in the theory of Hobsbawm (See, Chapter 2.2.2), there must be a collective act to describe a period with a specific tradition, fashion or trend. Therefore, I will focus on the real actors leading thoroughly, more effectively and comprehensively such as institutions, events and power mechanisms. Among the leading actors, I have narrowed my research up to four leading actors: (1) art museums, (2) art galleries, (3) art fairs/bienniales, and (4) auction houses/collectors all of whom are able to change the trend, create a new one, or recreate the old one. As a precaution of questions like “How about ‘artists’?, Why not mentioned here?, Aren’t they the real doers of the artistic action?”, let me inform beforehand: I have already analyzed ‘artists’ as being one of the most important actors in art market within the art theory of Bourdieu (See, Chapter 2.2.1) in terms of their habitus in relation with acts and practices in the artistic field in detailed.

3.2.1. Art Museums

In the development of modern art and art museums, Turkey has always been late comparing to the Western countries. In this delay, the conservative attitudes of Ottoman Empire on art and culture play an incontrovertibly important role until the late of the 19th century in which modernisation and westernisation attempts began in artistic field. In this modernisation process, some talented artists were sent abroad to learn the modern art and come back with the knowledge to hold exhibitions and to teach art students in Turkey. This mission worked a lot that was employed within the art policy of the Republic of Turkey. During the republican period, museums of painting art and sculpture were founded by the Turkish state; however, there could not be much improvement because of the economic problems. In the 20th century, there were slight changes in the development of art; Turkey was still following the global art movements a few decades later.

The economic, political and social instability intimately affected the improvements and investments in Turkish art world. The primary requirements of the society such as health, security and welfare were dealt with at the first step rather than the aesthetic needs. This was the fact not only for the other countries after passing through the first and second World Wars whether being an insider or outsider. Therefore, the issue of founding more art museums was put aside to be dealt with later on. In the Dictionary of Art, it is defined that the primary purposes of art museums are to protect art collections, exhibit art works and hold cultural events.¹⁰⁷ With the notion of contemporary art, there have been social activities that attract people to the museums and provide various kinds of art education, especially pedagogical ones for their kids. The term of ‘collection’ stems from the curiosity of mankind in collecting, gathering and saving since the ancient times. The main source of an art museum is ‘collection’ which is defined as ‘the job of collecting art works according to the collector’s personal taste and interest’.¹⁰⁸ When a personal collection is displayed on the walls of an art museum, then it turns into a source of communication with more and more people and becomes an entity in the public sphere. In return, the function of art museums is to make the art works in the collection privileged and valuable in art market. This transaction provides the collector and the artworks in the collection to gain all forms of capitals not only cultural but also economic and social capital as Bourdieu mentioned in the previous chapter. Affording an artwork means much more than affording a material wealth.

In the beginning of the millennium era, raising hope for the innovations as in every field, Turkish art world has also got its share. One of the most expected development in Turkish contemporary art has come into being with private art museums that have been founded since 2000s. To illustrate, it is necessary to mention Istanbul Modern Art Museum, Sabancı Museum, Pera Museum, santralIstanbul and Project4L/Elgiz Contemporary Art Museum. The visual arts exhibited in these museums are paintings, sculpture, photographs, video art, installations and performance art. What is interested in this study is the oil painting art rather than the other forms of art works. It would be helpful to give brief explanations about some of the most important leading art museums in contemporary Turkey as in the following subtitles:

¹⁰⁷ Jane Turner, **The Dictionary of Art** (New York: Macmillan Publishers, 1996), 354.

¹⁰⁸ Ara Altun, “Koleksiyon ve Müze Düşüncesinin Ortaya Çıkışı”, **Türkiye’de Müzecilik: 100 Müze 100 Eser** (Ankara: T.C. Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı Yayınları, 2007), 796.

- Istanbul Museum of Modern Art was founded in 2004 as by Eczacıbaşı with the support of Is Bank. This museum is recorded as Turkey’s first private art museum to organize not only modern art but also contemporary art exhibitions. In the museum, there are various noteworthy collections such as Nejat Eczacıbaşı and Oya-Bülent Eczacıbaşı Collections including the masterpieces of modern Turkish painting art from 1950s as well as Turkish İş Bank collection with impressionist paintings. In addition to the modern collections, Istanbul Modern has promoted contemporary art in Istanbul as well. In the fifth anniversary of its foundation, it received a special reward at the 32nd European Museum Forum.¹⁰⁹ Istanbul Modern is the first private museum of modern art in Turkey to host modern and contemporary art exhibitions. It is devoted to showcasing the unique history of Turkey and the surrounding region. Oya Eczacıbaşı of the Eczacıbaşı Group, which has sponsored the exhibition, is quoted in the press release as saying:

In the past ten years, Istanbul Modern has proved to be one of the foremost museums of modern art in the region. And, with this first comprehensive regional exhibition it brings together the contemporary art of the surrounding countries to reveal their shared memory and sensitivity as well as their deep-rooted ties.¹¹⁰

- Sabancı Museum was founded in 2002 by the collection of Sakıp Sabancı that began gathering Turkish paintings in 1970s. The collection of painting reflects the change in 19th century Turkish art. In addition to paintings, there is a collection of Ottoman Calligraphy Art. Sabancı Museum has contributed to the development of Turkish art by hosting the most famous artists’ works all around the world. It is aimed to advertise Turkish art to the world museums. There is also an agreement between Louvre Museum and Sabancı Museum.¹¹¹
- Pera Museum was established in 2005 by the foundation of Suna and Inan Kırac.¹¹² The museum has a permanent exhibition hall including a collection of orientalist paintings and periodic exhibitions displaying the samples of modern and contemporary paintings from Turkey and abroad. It provides opportunities for young artists selected by means of competitions and universities’ decisions.

¹⁰⁹ See, http://www.istanbulmodern.org/en/museum/about_760.html

¹¹⁰ Kriti Bajaj’s article “Contemporary visual culture from Turkey and beyond” in Journal of Art Radar, (2014) p.276 is retrieved from <http://artadarjournal.com/2014/03/01/contemporary-visual-culture-from-turkey-and-beyond-in-pictures/>

¹¹¹ See, <http://www.sakipsabancimuzesi.org/tr/sayfa/muze-tarihi>

¹¹² See, <http://www.peramuseum.org/About/8>

- SantralIstanbul was founded in 2007 as a platform of culture, art and education with its periodic exhibitions and art events. As in Tate Modern Museum in London, santralIstanbul was converted into a museum from an energy power plant called Silahtaraga Power Plant which produced electricity until 1983.¹¹³ The atmosphere of the museum attracts so many visitors and the electrical background of the building enables appropriate holders for the paintings. It plays a very dynamic and active role in contemporary art in Istanbul. In 2008, its first exhibition ‘Modern and Beyond’ was held Turkish artworks from 1950 to 2000.¹¹⁴ Instead of tending to re-invention of past traditions, it is aimed to prepare a base to rewrite Modern and Contemporary art in Turkey and provide an art platform for those painters.

After a brief overview to the prominent museums of Turkish art market in which economic capital talks, I would not have heart to say something about the ‘Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art Works’¹¹⁵ in which cultural and symbolic capital talk. As it is obvious from the title of the museum, the elements of the capitals are the tradition of Turks and the religious lifestyle of Islam. It is the first museum covering the Turkish and Islamic artworks wholly. Nazan Tapan Ölçer explains its importance for the art history and culture of Turkey in the following speech:¹¹⁶

If you live in a country where the majority of the population are Muslims, and where countless works of art from every area of Islamic culture have been created in the distant and recent past, then it is no surprise to encounter them at every step as an intrinsic part of life.

According to online data, the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Works is among the important museums of the world as consisting of almost all periods and all types of Islamic art. Exceeding forty thousand works, the collection consists of carpet from various regions of Anatolia, wool painting techniques, traditional ornamentation of clothes, house goods, hand arts, tools, and nomad tents exhibited in places special to them. It is possible to see the original samples of ceramic art, wall painting, Anatolian Seljuks tile art, Memluk candles; stone works from Emevi and Abbasi.¹¹⁷

¹¹³ **Exhibition Catalogue: Modern ve Beyond** (Istanbul: santralIstanbul, 2008), 12.

¹¹⁴ http://santralIstanbul.org/media/press_archive/medya_318.pdf

¹¹⁵ See, <https://www.kultur.gov.tr/EN,113954/Istanbul---turkish-and-islamic-arts-museum.html>

¹¹⁶ Nazan Tapan Ölçer, The Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts: Rebirth of a Sixteenth-Century Palace, **Journal of International Council of Museums (ICOM)**, v.36, i.1(1984), 42-48, 43. For more information, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1468-0033.1984.tb00485.x/full>

¹¹⁷ See, <https://www.kultur.gov.tr/EN,113954/Istanbul---turkish-and-islamic-arts-museum.html>

3.2.2. Art Galleries

In the late 19th century, the cells of the art market came into being with the name of ‘gallery’. Art galleries have been the exit gate of artists from which they could feel free to meet their aesthetical needs.¹¹⁸ Moreover, art galleries became the means of opportunity by which artists could gain autonomy by holding individual exhibitions before the public. However, this autonomy depends on the variables of art market. The system of gallery constitutes one of the most powerful means of selling in commercialism. As the term ‘gallery’ originally means the place of ‘car selling’, the term ‘art gallery’ is called as the place of ‘art selling’. No matter how unacceptable to place the word ‘art’ next to the term ‘selling’, it has become inevitable to talk about the monetary value of an artwork in contemporary art market. In order to understand the place and role of art galleries in Turkish contemporary art market, it is necessary to overview the development of the system of art galleries in Turkey. For a very long time, Turkish art world have experienced the rise and fall of art galleries which cast a vary eye on the past and future by reading the fluctuations of Istanbul art districts.

In Turkey, there was no place of art called ‘art gallery’ until the midst of 20th century. In 1910, Ottoman Artists’ Society founded an art centre in which collected paintings could be exhibited and sold.¹¹⁹ However, it was far from the idea of gallery in a professional sense because of promoting the paintings representing the society’s ideology. In 1939, artist Ismail Hakkı Oygar turned his workshop located at Istiklal Street into an art gallery called Gallery Oygar which was the first art gallery that held periodic exhibitions.¹²⁰ The first art galleries in Turkey were such foundations with the enterprises of artists that were far away from the professional sense of art gallery. When it comes to the year 1950, the first professional art gallery was on art scene of Beyoglu district in Istanbul. It was called ‘Gallery Maya’ in which periodic exhibitions were held; the gallery got a specific commission from the sale; coming exhibitions were advertised in journals or newspapers.¹²¹ In those days, Beyoglu was so popular in terms of art and culture. Even Turkish State founded its first art gallery

¹¹⁸ Octavia Esanu, “Çağdaş Sanat Aslında Neydi? Neoliberalizm Döneminde Çağdaş Sanatın Örgütlenmesi”, *Çağdaş Sanat Nedir?*, trans. Nursu Örgü (İstanbul: İletişim-SanatHayat, 2013), 97.

¹¹⁹ Oğuz Erten, *Türk Plastik Sanatında İlkler* (İstanbul: Artam Antik Kültür Yayınları, 2012), 84.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, 156.

¹²¹ *Ibid*, 138.

called ‘Gallery Sehir’ in Beyoglu district in 1954.¹²² In addition to Beyoglu Sehir Gallery, many exhibitions were held at Consulate of France, Turkish-German Cultural Centre and American News Centre. In 1960s, there was an increase in the number of private or state galleries and exhibition halls even banks such as Turkish Trade Bank and Halk Bank were the supportive places for artistic events.¹²³ Since 1980s, there has been almost no change in number of galleries in Turkey because of the fact that some of them open while some close. The number has always been around a hundred galleries in total. There are few exceptional galleries that have still survived since 1980s, namely, Teşvikiye Art Gallery, Maçka Art, Yahşi Baraz, and Artizan in Istanbul market and Siyah Beyaz in Ankara market.¹²⁴ Those were the days, the artists, the galleries exhibited such as Mehmet Gülerüz, Komet, Alaattin Aksoy, Erol Akyavaş, Burhan Doğançay, Neşe Erdok and so forth, could survive without support of galleries. It was a generation who worked hard enough to build up their careers by fighting against the standardization and economic capital which the galleries promised yet chose social and cultural capital instead so that they became well known and managed direct selling to the collectors.

What has changed recently is the position of the galleries who choose the artists and decide the tendencies in the market by directing the unexperienced collectors’ preferences. How about the number of art galleries is still around one hundred with only few exceptional surviving galleries? The most possible explanation for this can be the art collectors whose number was not more than ten in those days while the number reaches one hundred, the same as the gallery number. The matter of art collectors will be analyzed more detailed in the following section (Chapter 3.2.4). In the 2000s, especially after 2006, new and young galleries have shown up with a totally new perception. This is also the date of contemporary art market in Turkey which has experienced a serious change not only in the socio-political field but also the artistic field. This is related with the change in Turkish economy; income per capita dramatically increased from 3000 USD to 11000 USD.¹²⁵ Some people started to earn more than they used to so that their spending habits shifted from the

¹²² Oğuz Erten, **Türk Plastik Sanatında İlkler** (Istanbul: Artam Antik Kültür Yayınları, 2012), 156.

¹²³ Bora Gürdaş, **1960-70 Yıllarında Türkiye’de Kültür ve Sanat Ortamı**, Hacettepe Üniversitesi Sanat Tarihi Bölümü Yüksek Lisans Tezi, 2008, 44.

¹²⁴ Kerimcan Gülerüz, “The Empire Project”, **Journal of Contemporary Istanbul (CI Mag)**, Akbank Sanat, i.2 (2015), 48.

¹²⁵ **Ibid**, 50.

necessary expenditure to the luxury consumption such as buying paintings instead of buying a house or car. The more welfare increases in the country, the more art market gets into motion. In order to belong to the society of this dynamic world, people follow art events and auction houses, visit art galleries, fairs and biennials, buy paintings and invest on art.

3.2.3. Art Bienniales and Art Fairs

Art biennials propose alternative platforms and strategies for the artistic production, exhibition and mediation of art in Turkey and abroad. The institutionalisation process in art world began in 1990s and accelerated in 2000s with the negotiations of European Union.¹²⁶ The non-profit and non-governmental foundation of arts IKS¹²⁷ devotes itself to the future of Turkish national art and culture within international arenas, hence organizes international biennials and fairs. Every two years, the Istanbul Biennial is organized to set up alliances with foreign artists and experts of art from different disciplines in the focus of the international concepts and in extraordinary spaces and places.¹²⁸

The first international exhibition of Turkish contemporary art was held in 1987 in Istanbul. In 1990s art bienniales of Istanbul organized by creators from Europe lead the Turkish artists to advertise their works in an international arena. Contemporary Istanbul (CI) Art Fair first took place in 2006 in the gifted city Istanbul and started to have a word to say in the contemporary art market in the world.¹²⁹ According to New York Times news, it is reported that the fair is the fifth most visited art fair in the world.¹³⁰ The mission of the fair was to reflect the glory of the city and country at all and fortunately accomplished at the report. In 2015, the CI celebrated its 10th year with having the justified pride of a decade-accomplishment of the mission in a best way. It is expected to add new programs, new platforms for contemporary art and promote art education in Turkey. All in all, such events of painting art can be evaluated as one of the undeniable means of development and advertisement of the

¹²⁶ Ali Akay, **Sanatın Durumları** (Istanbul: Bağlam Yayınları, 2005), 47.

¹²⁷ IKS¹²⁷ is the name of Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts which has organised the biennials since 1987. (Visit the website, <http://www.iksv.org/en>)

¹²⁸ Contemporary Istanbul, Sanat Yatırımları, **Journal of Contemporary Istanbul (CI Mag)**, Akbank Sanat, i.3 (2015), 10.

¹²⁹ Kerimcan Güler, "The Empire Project", **Journal of Contemporary Istanbul (CI Mag)**, Akbank Sanat, i.2 (2015), 46.

¹³⁰ **Ibid**, 88.

country with their contribution to the culture industry, social attractions, economy, restoration of the city and the market in and out. Last but not least, these painting art fairs and biennials keep track of cultural change, record for cultural continuity and preserve for future generations of Turkey and the world in sum.

3.2.4. Auction Houses and Art Collectors

Auction houses are the prominent trustable instruments that highly contribute art market by identifying real market value of artworks. As there is such a dynamic instability in the financial market, experts recommend that “invest your capital on qualified artworks instead of real estate, gold or foreign exchanges by adding they do not know someone who pay for an artwork and then lose: art could only win.”¹³¹ Today, art market is led by some speculator ‘so-called’ collectors who enter the field to earn money in short term, go into the market to buy and sell without making a collection. These are not the real collectors with a collection of valuable series of artworks belong to one style, movement or artist. They have money and thus have a close material relationship with auction houses. Some auctioneers frequently visit young artists’ workshops, pay less and auction more without evaluating the quality of the artwork because the so-called collectors do not assess or expertise on the artwork. As a result of these kinds of auctioneers and collectors somehow integrate the system, the quality of Turkish painting art decreases and the foreign reporter companies degrade the art market of Turkey. However the irresistible existence of such collectors and auction houses, there are still some qualified ones to be proud of. According to an article from Hurriyet Daily News, the statistical data shows that the famous Turkish auction house Antik A.Ş. is one of the best of them.

Antik A.Ş. sold 255 of the 250 works that were put up to auction. The annual volume of Turkey’s art market stood at only \$7 million during the 1970s, but with free-market reforms in the 1980s, the market grew rapidly, and today the annual worth is predicted to be around \$200 million. Still, the figure comprises a meager part of the global art market, which commands an annual worth of around \$50 billion.¹³²

As it is mentioned in Art Galleries section (Chapter 3.2.2.), in 1980s there was no speculation environment where galleries artists and collectors knew each other and artists were the leading actors in Turkish art market. Therefore, the matter of collectors was the interest of only a small group consisting of around three hundred

¹³¹ Mustafa Doğulu, “Art-On Istanbul’u Anlattılar”, **Istanbul Art News (IAN)**, i.22 (2015): 11.

¹³² This article “Investors flock to art auction in Istanbul” in *Hürriyet Daily News* is retrieved on 27 December 2015 from the following link: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/investors-flock-to-art-auction-in-Istanbul.aspx?pageID=438&n=investors-flock-to-art-auction-in-Istanbul-2010-04-12>

artists, twenty art galleries and ten art collectors. Art collectors in Turkey are generally wealthy enough to value, support and buy art. Fortunately, as they did in Europe art market, they have given a hand to the Turkish art market and started to invest their capital to art and culture of their country since 2008, they empowered economic capitals to collect valuable artworks from the auction houses, museums or galleries. Thanks to the collectors, art market has come to life. This led opening up new galleries by art dealers, curators, art directors, etc.

As a means of prestige, paying the economic capital has become a matter of gaining social, symbolic and cultural capital. The zeal for prestige has triggered the society to invest more on art without questioning the quality but questioning the prices and then bargaining for an artwork as if it was an ordinary product of commerce. That has become fashion; people go to the auctions to fight for more enthusiastically despite lack of knowledge, education, love or interest, but for all kind of capitals. Art collectors do not pay without bargaining and these forces art creators double the prices. Contemporary art also opens the door of the social world. Therefore, it is possible to express that the collector buy paintings to gain prestige and position in high society. That is to say, joining to the art fairs, exhibitions' opening cocktails, parties, being a member of a high class society by putting enough distance to the lower classes. This tendency might be attained to the wish of show off, or 'joy of joining'.¹³³ In another words, the amount of the investor's economic capital might equal with the value of the social and cultural capital.

3.3. Art Market in Istanbul Public Sphere

This section again focuses on the notion of “market” gained importance not only in the field of economics but also in the field of art. The birth of art market in public sphere goes back to the 17th century, with development of trade in Netherlands which was the first in Europe.¹³⁴ The act of creating an artwork for the demand of public sphere became nothing than producing a craftwork. That is to say, most of the artists tended to produce for the sake of market and then art market was born. With the birth of art market, artists got rid of the compulsory obedience to the strict rules and the control of the palace and the church. However, there would be a more

¹³³ Donald Kuspit, **The End of Art**, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 144.

¹³⁴ Michael North, Hollanda Altın Çağında Sanat ve Ticaret, çev. Taciser Ulaş Belge (Istanbul: İletişim-SanatHayat, 2014) s.119.

effective mechanism to control over the artistic field as well as the commercial market; capital. As I have studied in art theory section (Chapter 2.2.1.), capital is such a powerful motivation for artists no matter how professional they are. Up to this section, I have dealt with the professional artistic platforms that mostly professional artists participate in and exhibit artworks.

In this section, my main concern will be the platforms in which less professional, more amateur painters in the public sphere of Istanbul contemporary art. In my public sphere analysis, I divide the most art exhibiting public scenes of Istanbul into two titles: exhibition halls at shopping malls and municipalities. Before studying the section in these two titles, let me give a brief description of ‘public sphere’ to comprehend well enough the conditions of Istanbul public sphere today. As ‘public’ means ‘citizens’, ‘public sphere’ can be shortly deducted as a realm of social life in which all the citizens have right to be, participate, shop, think and discourse freely. The founder of the theory of ‘Public Sphere’, Jürgen Habermas argues that the public sphere as a market, "free marketplace of ideas" in which goods are ideas and the currency is public opinion.¹³⁵ In such a sphere, all kind of public opinion can be formed. In fact, the dominant actors of the public sphere with the help of appropriate means, such as art, might shape the public opinion in accordance with their interests. Habermas emphasizes the role of the public sphere as a way for civil society as in the following statements:

The bourgeois public sphere eventually eroded because of economic and structural changes. The boundaries between state and society blurred, leading to the refeudalization of society. State and society became involved in each other's spheres; the private sphere collapsed into itself. The key feature of the public sphere - rational-critical debate - was replaced by leisure, and private people no longer existed as a public of property owners.¹³⁶

Another component Habermas used in his theory is ‘Post-secularisation’ which also fits my thesis while analysing the re-invention of tradition and religion within the art events in the public sphere of Istanbul. He argues that the secularization hypothesis has now lost its explanatory power, so that religion is re-born and feels the power in this post-secular age.¹³⁷ He claims that religion in once more secular and modern countries have been a process of transformation towards the traditional and religious

¹³⁵ Jürgen Habermas, “The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article”, *Media and Cultural Studies: Key Works*, rev.eds. Meenakshi Gigi Durham, Douglas M. Kellner (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 7.

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, 72.

¹³⁷ Jürgen Habermas, et al., **An Awareness of What is Missing: Faith and Reason in a Post-Secular Age**, trans. Ciaran Cronin, (UK: Cambridge, Polity Press, 2010), 4.

symbols and discourses. In the process, the semantic and symbolic potentials of Turkish tradition and Islamic religion are becoming the social source which not only the film producers, advertising directors and fashion designers but also artists apply to create artworks or do their productions.

This flow of change in every field in the public sphere open to every citizen from up to bottom shapes the public opinion and cultural life such as wearing style, artistic style, buying habits, taste and preferences, from whom to marry to whom to vote for. Therefore, such kind of governable public opinion will soon reshape or construct the future of the country and then one day they will also believe what they have reconstructed. How this is possible can be answered with the means of mass production and mass consumption cycle. To exemplify, it is enabled with the borrowings from religious traditions found in art market such as film, theatre, and advertisement and painting art in how mass events are orchestrated.¹³⁸

3.3.1. Art Market at Istanbul Shopping Malls

As being the most attractive places that meet masses of people at each minute, Istanbul Shopping Malls are the most possible resources to be studied under this title. According to my observations, the malls are well ahead of the other platforms of art market in the public sphere of contemporary Turkey. It is a well-known but unfortunate fact that doing painting art, reaching masses, showing off in the market and making a live is a quite challenging job in a life-span.

No matter how it is said that the fate of art has changed a lot during the last decade, the reality says it is not the same for the art market in Istanbul public sphere. What is meant by art market in public sphere is the market open to access of all citizens without classification and let them see what an art exhibition is, what an artist looks like, or realize even one of them can do art and be one of them. Here, I can give another example from my own life. While I was doing shopping at a mall, I saw an exhibition in the middle, happily rushed there and enjoyed a lot visiting an original oil painting exhibition at the same place I did my shopping. This was so practical for

¹³⁸ Jürgen Habermas, et al., **An Awareness of What is Missing: Faith and Reason in a Post-Secular Age**, trans. Ciaran Cronin, (UK: Cambridge, Polity Press, 2010), 5.

a person who is both shopaholic and ‘artoholic’¹³⁹. In this respect, I really appreciated the idea and arranged an appointment with the art director of the mall. In spite of my inexperience and age, the director took me into consideration as an aspiring talent just looking for a public scene to gain cultural and social capital let alone economic capital.

In 2007, I had the opportunity to hold my first oil painting exhibition at the shopping mall. In addition, this opportunity enabled me to gain not only cultural and social capital (by giving interviews to the local tv channels and newspapers) but also earned economic capital (by selling 4 of my paintings for 2750 Turkish Liras). This was my dream and came true thanks to the re-arrangement policies for the cultural developments in public spheres. Otherwise, showing your art in the professional art market would be impossible for me and the others like me having talent, working a lot, applying for and just waiting for a piece of positive reply. This is the very sample of this section that visualize how a hall separated for art in the middle of the shopping mall open to everyone can contribute the art market of a public sphere.

Today, it is expected from the shopping malls have the visitors to meet art before or after having done with the shopping. This idea is generated because of the decreasing number of both visitors and art galleries in Istanbul. How about the potential visitors? Where would they go instead? They go to the shopping centers and pay for clothes instead of artworks; then the trend must be followed. Based on this idea, the Education, Culture and Research Foundation (EKAV) has generated a project peculiar to the shopping centers to attract the visitors to the malls and meet them art. In February 2009, EKAV named this project as “Satellite Art Center” and presented to the Minister of State and the Minister of Tourism and Culture.¹⁴⁰ According to the draft law, it is a requirement to establish ‘an art gallery and workshop’ inside the shopping malls in the specified dimensions.¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ I wrote the word and doubted what if there isn’t a word like ‘artoholic’. Then I googled and found there is one even in the title of the book written by Charles Saatchi who is one of the famous art collectors. In front of the book, he says: **My Name is Charles Saatchi and I am an Artoholic**. (See, <http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/6712810-my-name-is-charles-saatchi-and-i-am-an-artoholic>)

¹⁴⁰ [http://www.tusev.org.tr/usrfiles/images/TUSEV_E-Bulten_Sayi_30\(1\).pdf](http://www.tusev.org.tr/usrfiles/images/TUSEV_E-Bulten_Sayi_30(1).pdf)

¹⁴¹ **Ibid.**

Culture-led strategies employed by urban authorities to drive economic regeneration are helpfully defined by Bianchini ¹⁴² as production or consumption oriented models. Investment in ‘production’ is geared toward the growing ‘cultural’ or ‘creative’ industries. Even though some of the artists and art lovers disagree with the idea of industry for art definitions, painting art is inevitably one of these industries as being both creative and cultural. Besides, promoting such consumption-based strategy for artworks is often supported with some form of investment in production. Through such a policy, municipalities and city authorities set up cultural activities which are sellable asset to make up city dwellers’ ‘quality of life’.¹⁴³ In this post-secular and post-industrial age, there is an undeniable interest in cultural and traditional heritage all around the world. This tendency can also be observed from the preferences of tourists and re-arranged tourist attractions. That is also underlined by the European Commission as one of the contemporary social issues to be dealt with as in the following quotation:

An attractive image is also thought essential for competition in that other post-industrial growth industry, tourism. Cultural heritage now accounts for 30% of the European tourism market with attendance at cultural sites doubling in the last twenty years.¹⁴⁴

There are more than one hundred malls situated almost every district of Istanbul (See, Figure 7). Here is a point of post-industrial age in which the industrial complexes are replaced by the luxurious thematic complexes and shopping malls are constructed on not only the remote areas of the cities but also the city centres by eroding the green areas.¹⁴⁵ What is unacceptable here is the acceptability of such attempts by the municipalities. David Harvey underlines what brings post-industrial age as a gift is the rising interest to culture industry in which cultural and artistic events become one of the most important policies of the municipalities.¹⁴⁶ Taken as a positive side effect of such re-constructions, there should be a sphere for art and culture that artoholics can breathe. By this way, the idea of building up shopping centers may mean building social capital and appraisal of social worth. Therefore, policy makers are to embark on culture-led regeneration strategies focusing on the

¹⁴² Bianchini & Parkinson, **Cultural policy and Urban Regeneration: the West European Experience** (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 3.

¹⁴³ **Ibid**, 4.

¹⁴⁴ It is stated in the documents of European Commission in 1998 and I found this in Bayliss, Creative Planning in Ireland: The Role of Culture-led Development in Irish Planning in: European Planning Studies Vol. 12, No. 4 (2003), 4.

¹⁴⁵ David Harvey, **A Brief History of Neo-liberalism** (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 7.

¹⁴⁶ **Ibid**, 8.

renewal from the bottom up. This would enable social actors to be more than passive consumers of shopping malls and also active players in the contemporary art market in Istanbul public sphere.

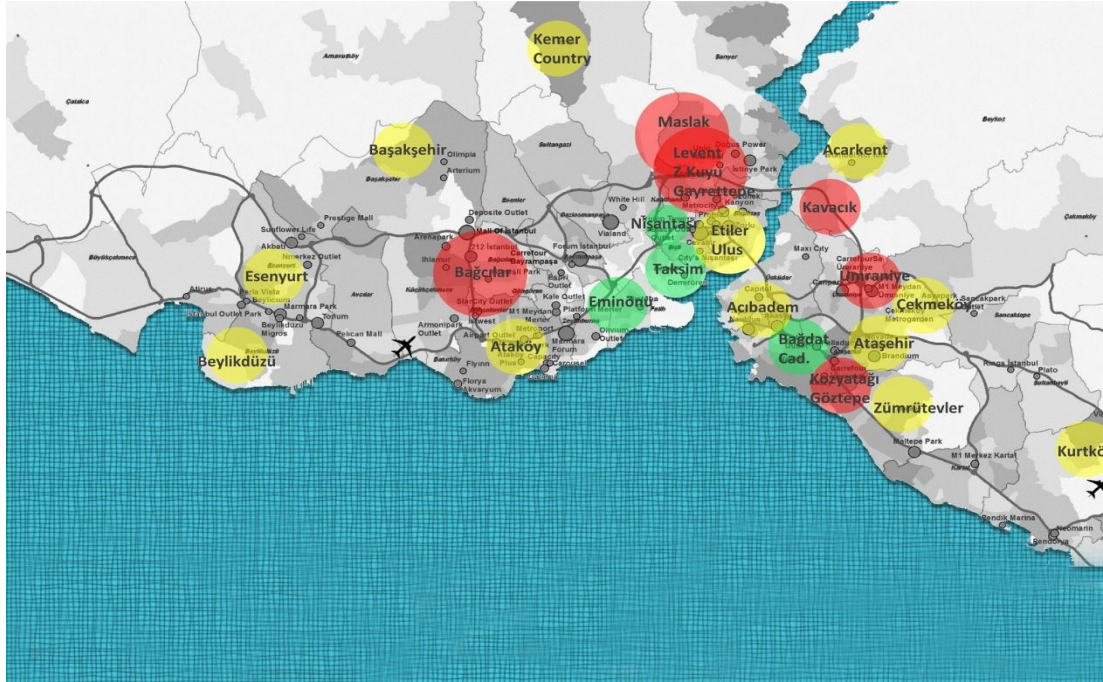


Figure 7: Map of Istanbul Shopping Malls¹⁴⁷¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ It is retrieved from <http://www.businessht.com.tr/emlak/haber/1063166-Istanbulun-avm-haritasi>

¹⁴⁸ The colours in the map indicates the frequency and the number of the shopping malls in the districts. The red circle indicates high frequency with the number of 10-15 malls, the green circle indicates the number of 5-10 malls, the yellow circle indicate less frequency but promising with the number of 2-5 malls.

3.3.2. Artistic Facilities of Istanbul Municipalities

Istanbul is not only the largest city in Turkey with a population over 12 million people but also one of the largest metropolises in Europe. It is unique in being situated on two continents, either side of the Bosphorus strait that forms part of the boundary between Europe and Asia. Due to internal migration after World War II the population of the city increased to a more diverse social mix within the city. Istanbul also became the industrial and commercial centre of the country during this period. Since the 1990s, Istanbul has reformed itself again with new communications infrastructure, greater environmental awareness and an increased role for cultural and artistic events in the every day life of the city.

Istanbul has the experience of being the European Capital of Culture in 2010 during which there were various cultural activities such as exhibitions, concerts, festivals, fairs, biennales, projects and etc. with the budget of 288.7 million Euros.¹⁴⁹ For this sake, Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (IMM) produced a number of regulations in order to create sustainable cultural, traditional, religious and historical values within urban renewal. With the help of the districts and municipalities' contributions, IMM has built platforms for various artistic facilities, cultural activities as a centre for the creation and exhibition of modern and contemporary culture, as well restoring its cultural heritage.

The public sphere of Istanbul is re-shaped for long-term with innovative programmes which build the city's capacity for modern and contemporary culture. During the development process, the municipalities worked hard for the restoration of cultural and industrial heritage as well as the international promotion of the city. The new artistic vision aimed to improve the previous situation, remind past, relive, revive and present the traditional and historical culture of Istanbul and of Turkey to a wider audience. These included the "Traditional Arts Projects", such as exhibitions focused on calligraphy and traditional Turkish book arts, as well as books devoted to mahyama-making and Ottoman headgear.¹⁵⁰ All of these efforts were also accepted as the

¹⁴⁹ See in detail, "European Capitals of Culture Report, 2010" from the following source, https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/sites/creative-europe/files/files/capitals-culture-2010-report_en.pdf

¹⁵⁰ "European Capitals of Culture Report, 2010" from the following source, https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/sites/creative-europe/files/files/capitals-culture-2010-report_en.pdf

practices for re-invention of tradition once upon a time lived by the early Turks, Seljuks, Ottomans and the public sphere full of Islamic events, practices and behaviours in the world's hub city, Istanbul.

Istanbul contemporary art market is mapped the same as this limited sphere centralised within the districts signed in red circles such as; Teşvikiye, Nişantaşı, Beyoğlu, Karaköy, Cihangir, Asmalı Mescid, Tünel and so forth. *İstanbul Art Map* (Figure 10) shows not only the art center of Istanbul but also defines the borders for artistic public sphere. That is to say, art from public sphere has no right to access into the sphere of those who have all kinds of capitals. Julian Stallabrass summarizes this situation in the following paragraph:

The wealthy buy themselves participation in this free zone through ownership and patronage, in part because such participation is a genuinely valued good; the state ensures that a wider public has at least the opportunity to breathe for a while the scent of freedom that works of art emit. The art market is regulated by dealers who control not only production but also consumption, vetting the suitability of buyers for particular works; the 'who are you?' question to buyers. There is less regulation in the so-called 'secondary market' of the auction houses, but even there the market is hardly free, being subject. This small world (which from the inside can appear autonomous, a micro-economy in which market feedback is produced by a few important collectors, dealers, critics and curators) produces art's freedom from the market for mass culture.¹⁵¹



Figure 8: Istanbul Art Map¹⁵²

This perception or the management of such perceptions are up to the great majority of the society in number who actually has the socio-political power in hand. Therefore, it is possible to change and re-ordinate such perceptions to the advantage

¹⁵¹ Julian Stallabrass, **Contemporary Art: A Very Short Introduction**, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 146.

¹⁵² <http://www.mandalsanat.com/harita/wp-content/uploads/sanat-haritas%C4%B1.jpg>

of public sphere. This point of view has also changed so far. Istanbul has been in a rapid re-construction process for the last ten years. The infrastructure of culture and art in Istanbul has been reshaped by the city planning policies of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality. Previously illustrated in Figure 10, the locations of shopping malls are in correlation with the new versions of art centers which provide limitless access and communication to the public sphere. In order to make the remotest areas closer to the cultural facilities, IMM have made investments on building “culture and art centers” since 2000 as in the following districts:¹⁵³

- ✓ Altunizade Culture Center (2002)
- ✓ Bakırköy Cem Karaca Culture Center (2004)
- ✓ Başakşehir Culture Center (2007)
- ✓ Fatih Ali Emiri Culture Center (2009)
- ✓ Güngören Culture Center (2009)
- ✓ Kartal Bülent Ecevit Culture Center (2005)
- ✓ Sultanbeyli Culture Center (2010)
- ✓ Tuzla İdris Güllüce Culture Center (2005)
- ✓ Ümraniye Atakent Culture Center (2007)
- ✓ Yeşilpınar Culture Center (2001)



Figure 9: Art of Calligraphy

Hüseyin Gündüz, “Harflerin Ötesi/ Beyond Letters”, Hüsn-i Hat Sergisi /Art of Calligraphy Exhibition (Zeytinburnu Art Gallery-IMM, May 2015)

¹⁵³ http://www.ibb.gov.tr/sites/kultur/kulturel_mekanlar/Pages/AnaSayfa.aspx

After forty years of hardworking in the artistic field, Prof. Dr. Hüseyin Gündüz held his first personal exhibition of calligraphy art with the support of one of these Culture Center, Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality of Zeytinburnu Art Gallery.¹⁵⁴ All of his efforts to have a solo exhibition finally reached its goal thanks to the artistic projects sponsored by the Municipalities of Istanbul. In another aspect, this could be accepted as a gifted process for those from the religious and traditional Turkish art education. That is a proving fact of the importance of post-secular age and re-invention of Turkish-Islamic tradition in the contemporary art market of Istanbul in the last decade.

¹⁵⁴ <http://www.212haber.com/harflerin-otesi-husn-i-hat-sergisi-11876h.htm>

4. VISUAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS: CONTEMPORARY PAINTING SAMPLES OF TURKISH ART MARKET FROM 2007 TO 2017

As I have foreseen, there are many sample paintings giving discourse of religious, traditional, spiritual, metaphysical and apocalyptical symbols. In the paintings of the last decade most of the discourses are recorded as religious and traditional contexts by conveying the messages from nostalgia to our time. Thus, the collected data of paintings are classified into two groups according to two discourses namely, traditional and religious discourses. The whole data is narrowed down to the most striking and representative paintings of these two discourses by passing the gradual election process. The study of art from discourse point of view means going beyond studying artistic styles. This view allows me to detect new trends in contemporary art in urban Turkey. In this frame, it is necessary to determine what the new trends in Turkish art are recently. As a result of my research, literature art review and my personal experiences in various art events, I come up with two main titles of trends in oil painting art; ‘religious’ and ‘traditional’ trends.

Under the title of religious trends, I observe the great tendency to Islamic symbols in oil painting art in Turkey as in the other Muslim countries, especially Middle Eastern countries such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Egypt. When I need to classify the stylistic features of the religious oil paintings, I appoint four Islamic discourses; discourse of calligraphy especially using the letter ‘waw’, discourse of Sufism, discourse of women in veil and discourse of other religious motives. Besides, under the title of traditional trends, I will deal with the issue of revival of the old style of Turkish art including Ottoman Empire and Anatolian Seljuk State. This period is called as neo-Ottoman because of the fact that the awakening of the old traditional Turkish art with Ottoman and Seljuk traditions is increasingly experienced in every aspect of life. For example, the rise in exhibiting the portraits of Ottoman Sultans in artworks interestingly shapes the fashion especially the appearance of men. As being one of the witnesses of this trend in daily life as well in art world, I comfortably present what I observe in the street. There have been an increasing number of young

men having long beard as if they are emulating the Ottoman Sultans. And also in this research, it is witnessed that oil paintings include the figures from Ottoman culture such as, women dancers, costumes and decorative elements in addition to the portraits of Ottoman Sultans. While collecting data, I recognized that there is not only a re-awakening of Ottoman culture but also Seljuk and the earlier Turkish culture. What is my concern here is the application of the motifs seen in carpets, rugs, embroideries and ceramics onto the contemporary paintings. By this way, I would like to prove with the following sample paintings and discourse analysis that “Yes, this period we have been witnessing is the age of post-secularisation, re-invention of traditions and capitals.” Let us see whether it will be proved or not.

Many scholars and social scientists agree that the historical period of modernism has come to an end since it has finished its job; its date of usefulness is over. That the process of the revival of conservative concepts such as religious values and traditional traits can be considered as a sign or main indicator of post-modernism or post-secularism which came into being by the consequences of modernism or secularism. According to many sociologists, this process has been recently observed in all over the world from eco-politics through artistic fields. Under these circumstances, it is indispensable for Turkey to experience this process, too. What I aimed in this dissertation is to prove there is such a tendency in Turkey as well by displaying the signs within the discourses of paintings in contemporary Turkey. In order to prove this tendency, I collect data from various artistic events held in the last decade including today, select the highly preferred kinds of artworks, classify them according to popular trends among the artistic environment and analyze them in terms of the most applied discourses. This may also show the geo-politics within the cultural scope of the Islamic art. It is also proved that art in today’s Turkey is not only a representative of Islamic art but also reflecting the art in the most Islamic countries. However, according to the recent art reviews in Islamic countries, it is claimed that artworks no more contain calligraphic or religious symbols.¹⁵⁵ Instead, Muslim artists create works with social and political messages and exhibit the cultural change started by the Arab Spring.

¹⁵⁵ Silay Sıldır, “Ne Oldu Da Ortadoğu Sanat Aşığı Oldu?”, **Journal of Istanbul Art News**, i.24(2015), p.8.

4.1. Revival of Religious Discourses within Contemporary Paintings

While conducting my research, I mostly came across with the artworks related with the religious discourses. In order to analyze the discourses, I meticulously selected the sample paintings especially those which were created with oil painting technique including the religious motifs. The religion based on my research is Islam as being the religion of 97% of the citizens of Turkey. Taken into consideration of Islamic motifs, I searched for the most common symbols that discourse the importance of Islam. For this sake, I focused on the calligraphic signs, whirling dervishes, praying tools, mosques, headscarves, veils, rose, tulip, the colour of green, and other Islamic symbols. After finding such samples of paintings, I divided them into two discourses: discourse of Islamic calligraphy and discourse of Sufism as being the most frequently appeared on the exhibitions from 2007 to 2017 in Istanbul art market.

4.1.1. Discourse of Calligraphy on Oil Paintings in Turkey Today

With the observable influences of post-modernism and post-secularism, there is a need of seeking for something not modern, western or usual but exotic, eastern and intriguing. Therefore, the western world is interested with the artistic styles, religious trends or wearing style of the eastern world especially, far-eastern and Middle Eastern countries attract a great deal of attention. For example, as a far-eastern style, Chinese calligraphy has been highly applied as tattoos by American people as well as the other western people. As the rising popularity of Chinese calligraphy in United States, Arabic calligraphy has been highly preferred by painters, tattoo artists, tattoo lovers and stylists as a means of pop-culture in Turkey. It is so common that anyone even slightly familiar with the established aesthetic vocabulary of Arabic Calligraphy would notice its numerous evocations within oil paintings. The tendency to talk about calligraphic characters using the terminology of Islam on oil paintings dates back to the beginning of millennium. However, the traditional calligraphy is applied on special papers by reed pens rather than oil paintings by brushes. The date of Turkish traditional art's meeting with calligraphy corresponds to the period of Turks' accepting Islam.

As analysed in the theory of Hobsbawm (Chapter 2.2.2), religion is re-invented as a result of the faulty process of secularization and modernisation. In this section, the painting samples reflecting that there is re-invention of religion are analysed. Islamic calligraphy has been one of the most visible examples. In this part, I mainly analyze the use of calligraphic discourses in the oil paintings of last decade in Turkey. Art of calligraphy has always taken part in Turkish art since the acceptance of Islam. There is no doubt that exhibitions related with calligraphy are not new in Turkey. What is noteworthy here is the upcoming new version of calligraphy in terms of the application techniques and materials used in recent oil paintings. I am questioning why painters tend to apply calligraphic signs onto canvasses by oil paints and brushes, how come such productions attract pretty much attention and what kind of discourses lead such paintings to be sold for extravagant prices in the contemporary art market of Istanbul. In order to find answers, I will give a brief overview about the features of calligraphy art, Arabic calligraphy and its relationship with Ottoman calligraphy art in terms of the traditional Turkish art. In the light of this feeding information, I will explain the revival of calligraphy in the artistic field of contemporary Turkey especially in terms of the appearance of calligraphy in oil painting art. In all over the world, calligraphy is widely applied especially during the centuries of hand writing until the invention of printing press. After the development of printing press, most of the calligraphers become unemployed and few of them prefer maintaining what they do best. In a traditional context, they do calligraphy and they become the artists of calligraphy. Art of calligraphy is a way of expressing oneself with written symbols rather than visual symbols. Traditional art of calligraphy is a kind of elaboration without elaborating itself by applying written symbols on a piece of special paper. The technique and the tools are so simple that one can do calligraphy with a pen, ink and a paper. In traditional calligraphy, it is unusual to see or experience an applied form onto canvas by oil painting in which the technique and tools are incomparably different. What is discussed in this research is the weirdness of the application of traditional calligraphic symbols onto contemporary oil painting artworks in Turkey. In this section, I will present the most striking samples of the recent oil paintings in urban Turkey and apply discourse analysis method for better understanding. The possible reasons about why there is a great tendency of the creating calligraphic oil paintings will be thoroughly discussed in the following sections of the next chapter.



Figure 10: Günümüz Yaşamından

Mustafa Ata, **Günümüz Yaşamından** (Exhibition: Zamanın Bedeni, Istanbul: Galeri Idil, May 2014, Oil Painting on Canvas-Original size: 170x220cm, Artwork Code: s4208-131471¹⁵⁶)

This painting represents the calligraphic trend in a pure writing style using the calligraphic effect of colour and light. This writing style does not belong to any language but just to symbolize body figures as mentioned in the exhibition's name: *Script-Body (Yazı-Beden)*. The painter resembles his calligraphy to the style of cuneiform script, hieroglyphics and far-Eastern calligraphy. In this style of art, meaning is loaded to the light, line and calligraphy represented by colour. That means once the painter is determined about the style then the artistic discourse comes into being. When looked at the earlier exhibitions, the visual quality and stylistic figures are highly applied rather than calligraphic representations. In one of his interviews, Mustafa Ata describes the course of change in art as in the following statements:¹⁵⁷

In dialectical philosophy, it is the subject that is changeable rather than the object. Conversely, Eastern philosophy supports the metaphysical world in which there is no subject or object. In my world, change in art is identical to social change and it is the human mind to decide where to stay.

¹⁵⁶<http://lebriz.com/pages/artist.aspx?artistID=588§ion=140&lang=TR&bhcp=1&periodID=&pageNo=0&exhID=4208>

¹⁵⁷ Elif Ekinci, "An Interview by Mustafa Ata", **Journal of Istanbul Art News**, i.20 (2015), p.34.

It is undeniable that technology enters the artistic life and the journey launched with the printing press leads legitimacy of the 'copy/paste' culture. Those who reject the system keep the tradition of calligraphy, and we can see the examples of language scripts from all over the world. Arabic language is one of the best examples of these scripts and as it is observed in all languages the hand-writings go back to the very beginning of the construction of the language system. And here, I will not give the historical development of calligraphy in Arabic language but it is good to know it goes back before the birth of Islam.¹⁵⁸ With the coming of Islam, calligraphy becomes the most highly regarded and fundamental element in art. It is because of the fact that Qur'an is transmitted in Arabic from God's revelations to the Prophet Mohammad. The employment of calligraphy as ornament had a definite aesthetic appeal in addition to its underlying components and contextual meanings.¹⁵⁹

Muslims have interpreted artistic harmony as reflection of virtue. Only the pure of heart are capable of purity in artistic creation, and the harmony of the art can in subtle ways instill moral discipline in the viewer. Qadi Ahmad's 16th century Persian treatise on calligraphers and painters, *Rose Garden of Art (Gulistan-i hunar)*, cites two related proverbs: "The essence of writing is in the spirit" and "Excellent writings clears the eyes." He also quotes a saying that he attributes to Plato, "Writing is the geometry of the soul." The translator explains in the introduction that 'the purity of writing is purity of soul'.¹⁶⁰

This quotation "The purity of writing is purity of soul"¹⁶¹ points the importance of writing beautifully in Islam as there are limitations in describing with visual art activities. Therefore, art of beautiful writing 'calligraphy' gains more importance in Islamic art. As being the language of the Qur'an, Arabic letters gain the characteristics of being the revealed sacred scripture in a great holiness and divinity accepted among Muslim communities. In this aspect, calligraphy artists pay attention to apply the letters, words and statements unity and aesthetic values in Qur'an as the fundamental source while creating their artworks. Islamic art is envisioned in terms of elaborate decoration and delicately detailed miniature paintings. Rarer are the realization of the skill and the sensitivity of the Islamic artist in the creation of figural drawing, portrait painting or sculptural creation of any living being as it is accepted as a kind of sin, a rebellion to God's creation by re-creating in different reflections of

¹⁵⁸ Stefan, Widany. "The History of Arabic Calligraphy: an Essay on its Greatest Artists and Development" (Germany: GRIN Verlag, 2011), 3.

¹⁵⁹ Sheila S. Blair, **Islamic Calligraphy** (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 23.

¹⁶⁰ John Renard, **Seven Doors to Islam: Spirituality and the Religious Life of Muslims**, (California: University of California Press, 1996), 126.

¹⁶¹ Jan Knappert, *Swahili Islamic Poetry*, (Leiden: Brill, 1971), 3:251.

what has already been created by the real Creator ‘Allah’. Islamic art is one of the finest manifestations of Islamic civilization. In art, there is no language barrier, as in the case of the various Islamic worlds as in Arabic, Persian and Turkish art. The human figure, although a subject of religious controversy, has played a widespread and diversified role throughout the long history of Islamic art. Human figures are shown on works of Iranian world under the domination of the Seljuk Turks in the 13th century.¹⁶² Islamic calligraphy has a rich repertory with a high simplicity easily applied flows with its aesthetical curving in the writing elements and motifs. It is not even necessary to be familiar with a complex theology or elaborate symbolism to enjoy this decorative art.¹⁶³ According to Ettinghausen, its immediate aesthetic appeal is the main reason why this art has always been readily acceptable to Westerners.¹⁶⁴

No other script has given rise to such a variety of high-art wrng styles as has Arabic language system, no single force affected the formation of Islamic art as much as the attitudes engendered by the religion of Islam itself. Although no official code was formulated with regard to artistic activities, certain principles were developed. The Prophet Muhammad regarded himself as an ordinary human being, so the most important religious motif was the divine message embodied in the language of the Qur’an. This caused the extensive use of pertinent Qur’anic sentences as decorative elements, as well as other religious and secular phrases. Since the Arabic alphabet was the universally used form of writing, and since its letters easily allowed artful variations, inscriptions were nearly always calligraphically composed.¹⁶⁵



Figure 11: Hallac-ı Mansur

Erol Akyavaş, **Hallac-ı Mansur**, 1989- Oil Painting on Canvas- Original size: 190x350 cm. (Exhibition:Retrospective¹⁶⁶, Istanbul Modern Art Museum, 2013.

¹⁶² Richard Ettinghausen, “Islamic Art”, **The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin**. v. 33, i.1 (1975), p. 20.

¹⁶³ **Ibid**, 21.

¹⁶⁴ **Ibid**, 23.

¹⁶⁵ **Ibid**, 18.

¹⁶⁶ http://www.istanbulmodern.org/tr/sergiler/gecmis-sergiler/erol-akyavas-retrospektif_1169.html

This painting ‘En-el Hak’ is one of the most effective masterpieces of Turkish painting art as reflecting the Islamic belief of religious mysticism from the perspective of Hallac-ı Mansur. In order to comprehend and analyze the discourse in this painting, it is necessary to look carefully at the painting from my point of view disregarding highly technical points. At the first sight, it makes me feel in a world of mysticism and I recognize the letter ‘waw’ in Arabic alphabet. I know the letter ‘waw’ symbolizes the first shape of human body called as ‘fetus’.

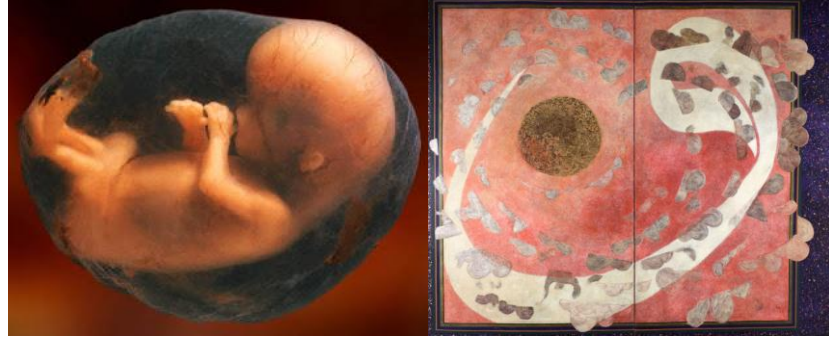


Figure 12: Fetus in the womb¹⁶⁷ in resemblance with ‘waw’

From this symbolism, the letter ‘waw’ refers to the birth, a new life, a change in the main body to give birth to the embryo. In the discourse of this painting, it can be inferred that there is an upcoming of a birth of something, a new life style and a change in the main body. The letter ‘waw’ also reminds the state of prostrating (sajdah) and the type of serf making peace with weakness to take refuge in Allah. It is such a kind of devotion of oneself to the God that believers’ bending down means waking up in a clear sense. When I look at the title of the painting ‘Hallac-ı Mansur’, the discourse is deepening in meaning. It is not only a calligraphic painting but it tells a religious story within history. ‘Hallac-ı Mansur’ is the name of a person who was killed because of having spelled the word ‘En-el Hak’ which means that ‘I am the God’.¹⁶⁸ The spelling is not a kind of rebellion or rejecting the existence of God; it is rather described as the mood or moment of devotedly accepting and deeply feeling the existence of God within integration with Allah and losing one self in love of Allah.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ <http://www.beginbeforebirth.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/fetusinwomb1.jpg>

¹⁶⁸ Niyazi Öktem, **Hallac-ı Mansur: Yaşamı, Felsefesi, Etkileri**, (İstanbul: Horasan Yayınları, 2006), p. 22.

¹⁶⁹ <http://www.sorularlailamiyet.com/qna/5972/hallac-i-mansur-enel-hak-demesi.html>

The background of this painting has a light pinkish colour in contrast with the dark colour of 'waw'. The light pinkish may remind the skinned colour referring to Hallac-ı Mansur who was tortured and killed. In this painting there are also fingerprints which may refer to the torturing people's fingers. Inside the letter 'waw', there is a circle in which the word 'Allah' is written in Arabic calligraphy again and again in a cyclic route. This representation must give the message of allusion within the word of 'En-el Hak'. Erol Akyavaş's paintings express the tendency to more conserved world, traditional stories, and religious mysticism by using geometrical lines, cyclic images and calligraphy. The descriptions of the letter 'waw' is strikingly increasing in numbers as being the well-known symbol after attributed by the painting named with record price value. This has recently become an inevitable part of pop-culture with its high popularity. Every part of social entity, it becomes ordinary to face an object with 'waw' letter in everyday life such as jewellerys, decorative materials, costumes and even tattoos among the young. Apart from the letter 'waw', it has become normal to see an artwork full of calligraphic representations calling for Islam and the statements from the holy book, Qur'an.



Figure 13: Dünü...Bugün Çizdim

Fahrettin D. Sepetçioğlu, **Dünü...Bugün Çizdim- Başarım Allah'tandır.** (Oil Painting on Canvas-Original size: 130x130 cm. Istanbul: MSGU-Tophane-i Amire KSM Tek Kubbe Salonu, 2014. Artwork Code: s4154-129958¹⁷⁰)

¹⁷⁰ <http://lebriz.com/pages/exhibition.aspx?lang=TR&exhID=4154>

In this oil painting, calligraphic elements are highly applied by the artist. In his own words and the title of this exhibition ‘I drew yesterday...today’, it is quite clear that the art of calligraphy is in yesterday and dated back to the years that Turks met Islam. Until the recent years, calligraphy in painting was not that much commonly appeared in Turkey let alone the art of calligraphy in traditional format. Therefore, it is understood that today is the day of freedom for the Islamic art as in the other Muslim countries. As an example, this painting presents the free brush movements as if the free social movements like practicing the religious acts. The painter has applied calligraphy freely by the confidence of knowing what was impossible yesterday is possible today. This is one of the striking examples in my research to prove the mentioned change in my thesis. The word combinations or statements are generally consciously or intentionally chosen such as the words ‘Allah’, ‘Bismillah’, or other prayers. In the following figures, I will focus on the oil-paintings including other calligraphic elements mostly faced in the exhibitions held during the last decade.



Figure 14: Love of Islam - Lale Kaligrafi

Ismail Acar, **Love of Islam-Lale Kaligrafi**
(Oil Painting on Canvas-Original size: 100x70
cm. Istanbul: Gallery Idil- Nişantaşı, 2013.
Artwork Code: s3627-114289¹⁷¹)

¹⁷¹ <http://lebriz.com/pages/exhibition.aspx?lang=TR&exhID=3627>

Ismail Acar, the painter of this painting has an international reputation among artistic world, creates artworks related with Islam. This painting belongs to ‘Love of Islam’ exhibition which is the first step of World Series starting in Turkey at Gallery Idil in 2013.¹⁷² As in this painting, Islamic symbols are so mainly used that it deserves to be a piece of work in this ‘Love of Islam’ thematic exhibition. Here, the painter reflects his love to his religion by placing calligraphy saying the name ‘Allah’ (الله) in the very central point of the painting within a circle covering the calligraphy. Placing an image in the middle of an artwork means a very particular importance is attributed to that image. As in this painting, the frequently used word in Arabic calligraphy, الله ‘Allah’ is situated in the centre of Islam and Muslims heart. The circle surrounding the calligraphy connotes the earth which is created by Allah and full with the love of Islam. The image ‘tulip’ placed before the calligraphy الله has a symbolic meaning. It is forbidden in Islam to picture portraits or realistic descriptions of Allah and the prophet Mohammad as well as the other chosen prophets. Therefore, in Islamic art, there chosen floral representations to show the beauty and purity of the religion. As in this artwork, placed before the name of God, tulip is chosen to symbolize ‘Allah’. By using light colours around the central image, the impression of peace and tranquillity in the love of Islam is very well reflected.

These paintings are intentionally choosen from exhibitions at the popular art galleries and verified art museums in Istanbul as the most urban environment in Turkey rather than the exhibitions held by municipalities or shopping malls. For instance, Nişantaşı is a place of art with full of art galleries in Istanbul and this painting is exhibited in one of those galleries. From this respect, it becomes more meaningful to analyze the discourse of the painting called ‘*Şimdiki Zamanların Güncesi*’ translated into English as ‘Diary of Present Times’. Even the title of the painting art itself underlines the importance of the issue of re-invention of religion that was once lived by heart in the past. It also pinpoints the issue of the present days by representing what is on prime time in Turkey from the view of painters. In this painting, it is the Arabic letters and calligraphic forms associating the Islamic belief on prime time mostly viewed and paid attention by not only the art lovers but also the art buyers. In addition to the previous samples, one can perceive the new trends by this next painting, too:

¹⁷² It is retrieved on 21st January 2013 <http://www.milliyetsanat.com/haberler/plastik-sanatlar/-love-of-islam--sergisi-turkiye-de/1196>



Figure 15: Şimdiki Zamanların Güncesi

Filiz Hatipoğlu, **Şimdiki Zamanların Güncesi** (Oil Painting on Canvas-Original size: 130x130 cm. Istanbul: Gallery Eksen-Nişantaşı, 2014. Artwork Code: s4391-137099¹⁷³)

¹⁷³ <http://lebriz.com/pages/exhibition.aspx?lang=TR&exhID=4391>

4.1.2. Discourse of Sufism on Oil Paintings in Turkey Today

Islamic revivalism, Turkish nationalism and popular Sufism are the three crucial aspects of the new Muslim identity discourse in the public sphere of Turkey. The term ‘new Muslim identity discourse’ refers to a new political climate that emerged against the formulation of secularism into the religious and traditional structure of Turkish nation for ages. Most of the painting samples illustrate that our national root is grounded on local culture, language, tradition, and complex historical processes. In this section, I mainly focus on the discourse which raised key ideas of “belonging and pride in local manifestations of Islam and Sufism that openly privilege the role of living Islamic and Sufi practices rather than a textual or global dependability of Islam”.¹⁷⁴ The main fundamental of Sufism is based on tolerance, forgiveness and love all of which also the requirement of peace.

The revival of religious discourses may recommend us that “The time has come!”, “People of Turkey had better tolerate, forgive and love your Past!”, “Make peace with your religion and tradition!”, “Proud of your Turkish and Muslim identity!”. To live in peace at the present, we need to make peace with the past and then get the key of happiness and the tranquillity in souls with other souls to unify the worlds of discrimination and intolerance to others. Analysis of the visual discourses of today’s Turkish art market, it is clear that all these messages and recommendations are received by the target people especially artists to send back or forward the received message to the public sphere. For instance, as being an important part of religious discourses, samples of Sufism will be illustrated and analyzed in detailed. Sufism is defined as “a mystical Islamic belief and practice in which Muslims seek to find the truth of divine love and knowledge through direct personal experience of God”¹⁷⁵. Mevlana Celaladdin-i Rumi is a 13th century Muslim saint and Anatolian mystic known throughout the world for his exquisite poems and words of wisdom, which have been translated into many languages.¹⁷⁶ The ‘dance’ of the Whirling Dervishes is called ‘Sema’ a part of the inspiration of Mevlana and has become part of Turkish custom, history, beliefs and culture.

¹⁷⁴ Afsar Mohammad, “A Garden of Mirrors: Retelling the Sufi Past and Contemporary Muslim Discourse”, **Islam, Sufism and Everyday Politics of Belonging in South Asia** (UK: Routledge, 2016), p.249.

¹⁷⁵ Definition of Sufism is taken from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Sufism> on 21 October 2016.

¹⁷⁶ **Ibid.**

Sema ceremony represents a mystical journey of man's spiritual ascent through mind and love to "Perfect". Turning towards the truth, his growth through love, desert his ego, find the truth and arrive to the "Perfect", then he return from this spiritual journey as a man who reached maturity and a greater perfection, so as to love and to be of service to the whole of creation, to all creatures without discrimination of believes, races, classes and nations.¹⁷⁷

The concept 'Sema' means the wedding day; in other words, 'Seb-i Arus'. This dance symbolizes 'revolution' which is the fundamental meaning of our existence the same as the revolution of the electrons, protons and neutrons in the atoms which also constitute the structure of each of them. The revolution of human being is explained with the birth, coming from earth; death, returning to earth and in the end revolving within earth. The following painting is an illustration of a Whirling Dervish. The painter's expression is a form of invitation that may be calling at everybody in the world, in the artistic world or just a call for the other painters to join the trend. When looked at the title of the painting 'Invitation', it requires a deeper analysis. Invitation for what? It is well-known there is a universal invitation in the philosophy of Islam and this is well expressed by Mevlana J. Rumi¹⁷⁸ in this quote:

“Come, come, whoever you are!
Wanderer, worshiper, lover or leaver!
It doesn't matter. Ours is not a caravan of despair.
Come, even if you have broken your vows a thousand
times. Come, yet again, come, come!”

In this example, what comes appealing is the title of the exhibition as it says 'Symbols from the Tradition to the Future' before coming to the title of the painting itself. My concern is the traditional and religious symbols and their revivals through the visual discourses in our time and the coming future which is shaped by today's trends. In the discourse of this oil painting, the figure of whirling dervish is so familiar that one can understand that it expresses the belief of mystics. What kind of familiar symbols can be appearantly described as the body language and wearing style of the dervish. Here, he is putting on a cony hat called as 'his ego's tombstone'¹⁷⁹ and a white skirt (his ego's shroud) as a reference to be spiritually born to the truth after whirling enough times which could only end he find himself in the end of his journey.

¹⁷⁷ This quotation is cited from Mevlana's grandson, Celaleddin Çelebi (<http://mevlana.net/sema.html>)

¹⁷⁸ <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/79822-come-come-whoever-you-are-wanderer-worshiper-lover-of-leaving>

¹⁷⁹ <http://mevlana.net/sema.html>



Figure 16: Davet (Invitation)

Mürüvvet Durak Bal, **Davet- Gelenekten Geleceğe Semboller** (Oil Painting on Canvas- Original size: 150x150 cm. Istanbul: ArtClub- Nişantaşı, 2011.)¹⁸⁰

When a dervish's arms are open it means that he is in a mood of feeling God inside in the deepest and being 'one' as unified with God. Salutation is one of the most important traditional and religious behaviour in Islamic belief. And in the following painting, the theme of salutation is worked on. The dervish figure not only symbolizes the peace in Sufism but also respect in salutation within a thorough covering, bending head blushing with shame and keeping on whirling in mood of praying by saluting the others. With the closed and crossed arms, it is also discoursed as 'love', being loved and love of both one self and the others. The positive energy of love is expanding everywhere even the universe as in the wave effect of the ocean. The following sample painting represents a kind of 'salute' which means 'Selam' (Greeting). In this representation, the dervish testifies by his appearance to God's unity. Salutation is in a way man's saying hello to the earth and also man's birth to truth by feeling and mind. This is a kind of realization one own self existence and the existence of God as Creator and his state of creature. In the following, One of Mevlana J. Rumi's grandsons expresses as in this speech below:¹⁸¹

¹⁸⁰ <http://lebriz.com/pages/exhibition.aspx?lang=TR&exhID=2952&bhcp=1>

¹⁸¹ **Ibid.**

At the onset and each stop of the Sema, holding his arms crosswise he represents the number one, and testifies to God's unity. While whirling his arms are open, his right hand directed to the skies ready to receive God's beneficence, looking to his left hand turned toward the earth, he turn from right to left around the heart. This is his way of conveying God's spiritual gift to the people upon whom he looks with the eyes of God. Revolving around the heart, from right to left, he embraces all the mankind, all the creation with affection and love. To praise them is praising God, who created all of them.



Figure 17: Dervish- Salutation

Gülcan Karadağ, **Dervish-Salutation** (Oil Painting on Canvas- Original size: 130x97 cm. Istanbul: Artist's Workroom, 2015.)¹⁸²

In this painting, the dervish is constantly turning around himself in a position of the figure number one (1) and the letter Elif (I) in Arabic. The dervish is pictured in such an expression of salute that one can easily discourse his rapture in front of God's greatness. In the process of this salutation, what is in the dervish's mind and heart is transforming into love. It is a discourse of complete devotion himself to the beloved one, 'Allah'. This submission can also be expressed by annihilation of the ego, and becoming unified and becoming one. While the dervish is whirling around, he is

¹⁸² <http://lebriz.com/pages/exhibition.aspx?lang=TR&exhID=4507>

losing himself, forgetting who and where he is, never minding anything as if he were under the effect of ecstasy. This state of ecstasy is defined as the highest grade in Buddhism, as "Nirvana" and in Islam as "Fenafillah."¹⁸³ Imagine that at the moment, this dervish is in the mood of salutation as if you were watching at the television, and the moment of termination, the dervish is crossing his arms as hugging his body symbolizing the unity of God and consciously approving the verse, "Allah, Bir'dir!" (God is One.).



Figure 18: Huzur

Yöntem Sunar, **Huzur** (Oil Painting on Canvas- Original size: 60x50 cm. Istanbul: Artı Mezat Gallery, 2007.)¹⁸⁴

The painter of this artwork is an expert on illuminated manuscripts which is a traditional art applied by very different techniques and materials from oil painting art like in calligraphy. However, the application of the style in illumination is repeated in an oil painting again by the message and the ornamentation figures. It is the re-appearance of illuminate in today's Turkish art applied onto canvas. In this painting, the title 'Tranquillity' is represented by the figurative work of a dervish with closed eyes, bending neck to the right side and binding arms within a mood of devotion, connoting Sufism.

¹⁸³ <http://mevlana.net/sema.html>

¹⁸⁴ <http://lebriz.com/pages/exhibition.aspx?lang=TR&exhID=906>

The floral representations in ornamentation are also surrounding the dervish and the calligraphy in the middle. In addition to these visible discourses, it is aimed to reflect that there would be such a peaceful mood if someone seize the taste of being a sufist or a believer of Islam. Sufism is associated with ‘healing’ and religious tolerance by ignoring the previous sins and faulty behaviours in a discourse of ‘healing’.¹⁸⁵ The dervish seems so healed, satisfied, calm and in peace with himself. Here, this painting so vividly reflects that one can easily received the message of healing, tranquillity in Islam within the discourse of Sufism.

4.1.3. Discourse of Covering

According to the religion of Islam, woman is supposed to be covered well enough; so that there would be no sinful part of body to be glanced at by the eyes of man. As in the following painting, it is clear to observe the reflection of protection via covering body of woman.



Figure 19: Plastik Korunaklılar-Eğilimler / Plastic Sheltered-Trends

Aydın Ayan, **Plastik Korunaklılar-Eğilimler** (Oil Painting on Canvas- Original size: 100x160 cm. Istanbul: Caddebostan Kültür Merkezi, 2007.)¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁵ Deepra Dandekar, Torsten Tschacker, *Islam, Sufism and Everyday Politics of Belonging in South Asia*, (UK: Routledge, 2016), p.6.

¹⁸⁶ <http://lebriz.com/pages/exhibition.aspx?lang=TR&exhID=1277>

In this painting, a woman is represented in veil sitting alone but conserved by a plastic covering which protects and isolate her from the sights and the touches of the men passing by and the attacks of the dogs around her. The woman looks safe and sheltered within her veil and chador coverage in isolation from the public sphere. There are two men pictured in the backstage while trying to get out of the plastic shelters. There are two dogs one of which lied down harmlessly and the other passing by in a sedated mood without touching the woman. This painting exemplifies one of the increasing rate of Islamic life style in terms of the wearing style and the physical appearance of woman as a way of expressing conservative atmosphere in most of the regions of Istanbul.



Figure 20: Susmak Yok / No Silence

Sibel Tetik, **Susmak Yok** (Oil Painting on Canvas- Original size:70x50 cm. Exhibition: Yaşam Öyküsü at Gloggnitz: Gallerie Karismus, 2008.)¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁷ <http://lebriz.com/pages/exhibition.aspx?lang=TR&exhID=1624>

Here in Figure 20, the women are not only head covered but also covered over mouths as if there was no way to open either heads or mouths both in real form or in metaphorical expression. As in the title of this painting 'No Silence' emphasizes the women's freedom of speech. Especially those who want to cover their head and body, in veil and chador according to their beliefs. This reminds the years once covering heads was prohibited in public space, schools and universities in Turkey. Whereas now the prohibition is abolished and this is the sign of post-secularism lived in Turkey. This artwork symbolizes no need to keep silence anymore. In creating this artwork, the painter must be inspired by the women by-passers in veil instantly crossing by here and there in the urban scene. This presents one of the most inevitable visual material 'women in veil' for the contemporary art world.

4.2. Revival of Traditional Discourses within Contemporary Paintings



Figure 21: Osmanlı Arması / Ottoman Arma

Afet Yayla, **Osmanlı Arması** (Oil Painting on Canvas- Original size: 70x90 cm. Istanbul: Artist's Workroom, 2014.)¹⁸⁸

Ottoman painting is unmistakable. Original in style, colour sensitivity, and iconography, it forms one of the most interesting chapters in the complex history of Islamic painting. Turkish painting has little to do with any other Islamic painting. It

¹⁸⁸ <http://lebriz.com/pages/exhibition.aspx?lang=TR&exhID=4299>

developed a style that is thoroughly and uniquely Turkish, combining an unparalleled sense of reality with an equally unparalleled sense of abstract design both in composition and colour. It also developed an original iconography, based on many contemporary historical events and texts, and has hardly any interest in lyrical, poetical aspects of life. In this it differs fundamentally from Persian painting. Ernst Grube (1968) defines Ottoman Turkish art with its bold, austere, and of extraordinary power, often large in scale, and of the highest technical and aesthetic quality.



Figure 22: Geleneksel Formlar IV/ Traditional Forms

Ismail Acar, **Geleneksel Formlar IV** (Istanbul: Antik Park Fine Art and Antiques, 2008, Oil Painting on Canvas- Original size: 105x71cm, Artwork Code: s1553-54517¹⁸⁹)

¹⁸⁹ <http://lebriz.com/pages/exhibition.aspx?lang=TR&exhID=1553>

Here in Figure 22, I want to underline that this is an oil painting and still not painted in the age of Ottoman Era. It is from the imagination of a contemporary Turkish artist bound to the traditional values in 2008. In his painting, the title tells us something about this concept: ‘Traditional Forms IV’. The choice of the theme and title may be because of the long for those years lived in Ottoman Empire or the need for conservation of the values of those periods.



**Figure 23: Osmanlı Sultanları Sergisi - II. Mehmet /
Exhibition of Ottoman Sultans – Mehmet the 2nd**

Ertuğrul Ateş, **Osmanlı Sultanları Sergisi- II. Mehmet** (Oil Painting on Canvas- Original size: 200x200 cm, Istanbul: Ayasofya Müzesi, 2006.)¹⁹⁰

In this painting, Fatih Sultan Mehmet, the conqueror of Istanbul, is represented in portrait and various Ottoman motifs are pictured. This recalls the new beginning after the conquest of the ‘dreamed city’ which is also attributed to ‘holiness’ in Islam by the words of the Prophet Mohammad. What was common in old Turks can be well analyzed in short, to explore, discover and conquer new lands and expand their motherland. This struggle was an indispensable part of Turkish lifestyle and survival well enough. This Figure represents the unbelievable victory of a young but

¹⁹⁰ <http://lebriz.com/pages/exhibition.aspx?lang=TR&exhID=830>

successful commander and a sultan of Ottoman Turks, who had been believed to be the one that the Prophet Muhammad had heralded as the conquerer of Istanbul. In the contemporary art market, the wealthy art-lovers prefer to refeel the greatness of their anchesters successes by gaining this cultural capital with such paintings. That is why the artists have had the tendency to produce such thematic paintings to address those art-lovers, art-buyers, collectors and galleries.

For instance, the successive seasons of “Muhteşem Yüzyıl” have still on screen of Turkish channels and still on the primetime lists. The media or the preferences of public sphere decide the trend of art; they re-invent the tradition and religion. For example, it has become a trend to go and make a tattoo of the Arabic/ Ottoman letter of “waw” or the word “Allah” in Arabic calligraphy onto one’s neck. The young have these tattoes done just because it is a fashion without knowing the sin of having one’s body tattoed. The young boys have their beards and moustaches longened as the attractive characters in the movies or such TV series to be as magnificent as the re-invented models of the TV shows.



Figure 24: Hürrem ve Kanuni / Hurrem and Kanuni

Yöntem Sunar, **Hürrem ve Kanuni** (Oil Painting on Canvas - Original size: 40x160 cm. Istanbul: Artı Mezat Art Gallery, 2007.)¹⁹¹

Apart from the Islamic art sense, Ottoman Empire has initiated portraiture in painting art by producing series of sultan’s portraits that in many aspects resemble to the portraits of their Western counterparts. They used the reality using perspective apart from the classical miniature style. In this sample, the miniature style is used but also the perspective is applied. When looked at closer, the figures of eye (as in the traditional symbol of Turkish culture; the evil eye bead), the Ottoman tulips which symbolizes the abundance and wealth of the Magnificent Ottoman Impire, and the

¹⁹¹ <http://lebriz.com/pages/exhibition.aspx?lang=TR&exhID=906>

embroideries in the Topkapı Palace. As read from the title “Hürrem and Kanuni”, this painting mainly discourses the undeniable impact of Hurrem Sultan on both Kanuni Sultan Süleyman personally and his governmental decisions indirectly. The placement of Hürrem Sultan’s portrait on the left and the first position on the canvas also indicates the prominence and the power of such a woman in such a man dominant society.

These are the well-known facts of historical discourses and mostly studied by the artists of those days in history; however, what relates us here is the reason of re-appearance of these figures in the year of millennium, 2007. The media might affect the trends in fine arts such as oil paintings, too. With the tendency of re-inventing the old traditions, the production houses have been competing with each other. In Turkey, this trend was initiated with the TV series of “Muhteşem Yüzyıl”, translated as “the Magnificent Century”. The orientalist costumes and scenes were so fantastic that it became popular in prime-time lists of not only Turkey but also in many countries once in the mood of either alliance or enemy to Ottoman Empire. This became the trend of every branch of mass culture and mass production.



Figure 25: Untitled

İsmail Acar, **Untitled** (Oil Painting on Canvas-
Original size: 115x150 cm. Istanbul: Artist’s
Workroom, 2011.)¹⁹²

¹⁹² <http://lebriz.com/pages/exhibition.aspx?lang=TR&exhID=2971>

The calligraphic element has always been an important factor in Ottoman Turkish art as well as Islamic art. Calligraphy and design go hand in hand in Islamic art, and the Ottoman period was no exception. Rather, it created a number of remarkable calligraphic designs, both in monumental scale for the decoration of buildings and in actual calligraphy, such as the seals of Sultans like the tughra of Suleiman the Magnificent (1520-1566).

The imperial edicts and the official signatures contain calligraphic elements written in Ottoman Turkish as shown in this painting. Such Ottoman traits are reappearing in today's Republic of Turkey in oil painting art not in an exhibition of miniature. Each imperial edict (ferman) was headed by the official signature of the ruling sultan. It was this signature, or tughra, executed not by the sultan himself but by an offer in charge of this function, that made the document official. In their magnificent movement of line and delicacy of floral pattern, they unite the power and finesse of Ottoman design. There is nothing comparable to the Ottoman tughra in other parts of the Muslim world. It is considered as one of the most typical and original creations of Ottoman art (Grube, 1968, 222).



Figure 26: At'nağme II

Süleyman S. Tekcan, *At'nağme II* (Oil Painting on Canvas- Original size: 100x140cm, İstanbul: Galeri Işık Teşvikiye, May 2015, Artwork Code: s4618-144592¹⁹³)

¹⁹³<http://lebriz.com/pages/artist.aspx?section=140&lang=TR&artistID=355&periodID=&pageNo=0&exhID=4618>

The artist of this painting has a great connection with Turkish culture, traditional arts like miniature, illuminate and calligraphy. He seeks how it is possible that these traditional arts reappear and revive in the new versions of contemporary art. He defines his journey of painting as a journey starts from the root of Ottoman culture, Anatolia. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze his works related with horses within the concept of the Anatolian culture. Horse not only associates nature and freedom but also it brings war to the mind with the discourse of “Empires founded on horses”.

5.CONCLUSION

Turkish contemporary art has recently attracted interests of the actors of art market from both the western and the eastern world. Especially, the contemporary art in the urban city of İstanbul transcends the borders of East and West and provides clues about the general trends of art and its trajectory. Therefore, this study focused on finding these clues hidden on the canvasses of contemporary oil paintings from the art market of Turkey since 2007. First of all, the artistic field was researched thoroughly beginning from the famous art museums, galleries and fairs to the exhibitions of municipalities and shopping malls. In the Introduction (Chapter 1), it was explained how and why the issue of frequency in exhibiting some kind of oil paintings and their record prices could be enlightening for describing the general trend and trajectory of contemporary life in Turkey. This research was embarked with the guidance of some research questions and a conclusive collection of visual data from the art market of urban Turkey for the last ten years. After introducing the study by answering how and why questions, it was necessary to be foreknowledgeled with ‘what’ questions; like, ‘what art was and what it is now in Turkey and the world’. While comparing its past and now, especially the visual data from the last ten years and the previous years, it became more meaningful to define the thesis statement and come to a conclusion.

In the second chapter (Chapter 2), the literature of painting art in relation with sociology is reviewed in terms of two frameworks: conceptual and theoretical. In the conceptual framework, the artistic and aesthetical concepts, specific to painting art and art market were discussed for the readers from the field of social studies. In the theoretical framework, this research was mainly based on the Art Theory of Pierre Bourdieu to understand why and how the painters tend to produce under the effect of some actors of popular culture and the control of the several types of capitals. After doing such a socio-psychological analysis of artists, the famous study “Re-invention of Tradition” by Eric Hobsbawm was employed in order to seek for the answers of

how come once devalued items such as religion and tradition could be the popular titles of today in every aspects of life. Most interestingly, within the paintings in the art market of Turkey could discourse to the public that there had been an accumulative tendency and shift from secularism to post-secularism as in the studies of Jurgen Habermas. Within the visual discourses of oil paintings, it was concluded that in the contemporary art market of urban Turkey there had been an upcoming and obvious tendency to the revival of religious symbols and traditional motifs since 2007.

After enlightened with the chapter Literature Review, there became the turn for the main chapters (Chapter 3 and 4). As the first step of the main issue of this thesis, the Contemporary Art Market in Turkey was studied in detail in the Chapter 3. First of all, what ‘contemporary’ means or what one should understand when said ‘contemporary art market’ were discussed in terms of the contemporary paintings in Turkish art market for a decade. As in all types of the market, it was necessary to pinpoint the leading actors of art market in urban Turkey. According to this field research in Istanbul art market, the leading actors could be listed as in the following; art museums, art galleries, art biennials, art fairs and auction houses. These were identified as the main actors able to decide and rotate the direction of the market. In addition to these leading actors, there were also detected the other actors known as not that much effective but only be effective on condition of following the determined trend. The other actors were the art directors for the art exhibitions or artistic facilities of municipalities and shopping malls. For this research, the other actors were as important as the leading ones because they were the ones who could feel the pulse of the public sphere and the art market of shopping malls and artistic facilities of municipalities in Istanbul. These two parts and the subsections were analysed in the title of art market in Istanbul’s public sphere as explained in Jurgen Habermas’s study.

As the second step of the main issue of this thesis, the last chapter (Chapter 4) dealt with the selected samples of contemporary oil paintings and their visual discourse analysis. In the chapter of Discourse Analysis, main focus was detecting the frequent discourses with the certain figures and common symbols on the selected paintings from the last decade art events of contemporary art market in Turkey. While conducting this research, it was realized that there were instilled some key symbols

reflecting the trend of the period. Moreover, these symbols were coincided within the discourses of the oil paintings exhibited not only in the artistic scene of famous galleries but also in the exhibitions of shopping malls and the municipalities which were open to public.

Within the analysed samples, it could be concluded that these symbols might be the proof of the revival of not only the religious discourses but also the traditional discourses. This would provide the convenience of the studies by Habermas and Hobsbawm. The visual discourse analysis chapter was divided into two sections: Revival of Religious Discourses within Contemporary Paintings which was composed of the discourses of Calligraphy, Sufism and Covering; and, Revival of Traditional Discourses within Contemporary Paintings which mainly focused on the Ottoman figures. All in all, it would be appropriate to conclude that urban Turkey has experienced the period of post-secularism with the rebirth of religious symbols on oil paintings and the traditional Ottoman figures on the oil paintings from the art market of contemporary Turkey since 2007.

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High School	1998-2004	Mustafa Özkan Anatolian High School (Highest Ranked Student)
Bachelor Degree	2004-2009	Hacettepe University Faculty of Literature Department of English Linguistics
Bachelor Degree	2013-2017	Anadolu University Faculty of Bussiness Department of International Relations
Erasmus	2008	Uppsala University World Languages
Master Degree	2012-2017	Yıldız Technical University Institute of Social Sciences/Humanities
Seminar	2013	Warwick University Social Sciences

Working Experience:

2009-2010	Atlas College, Kayseri
2010	3rd Mecra Advertisement, Istanbul
2010-2011	Amerikan Culture, Bodrum
2011-2012	British Culture Language School, Istanbul
2012-2016	Ministry of National Education, Istanbul
2016	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ankara
2017	Turkish Embassy, Ashgabat/Turkmenistan
2017	Turkish Embassy, Amman/Jordan
2017	Turkish Embassy, Gaboron/Botswana

Artistic Experience:

2006	Mixed Exhibition of Photography, Ankara
2007	Solo Exhibition of Photography, Ankara
2007	Solo Exhibition of Oil Painting, Kayseri
2008	Solo Exhibition of Oil Painting, Stockholm
2008	Solo Exhibition of Oil Painting, Bodrum