Experience Art in the Digital Age: Superficialization, Loss of Meaning and Instagram

Dijital Çağda Sanat Deneyimi: Yüzeyselleşme, Anlam Kaybı ve Instagram

Ayşe ALDEMİR*

ABSTRACT

New technologies in the digital age brought some transformations in the production, expression and experience of artwork. By integrating art and digitalization, artists and art galleries can use social media applications for promotion, marketing, interaction and participation purposes. Instagram is a prominent social network that art galleries and museums use so the audience experience art. Meanwhile, the audience can share their art experiences through photos and videos using the application. So, the user is focused on sharing on Instagram rather than having a real art experience in a physical environment, carrying the possibility of the superficialization of the art experience. This study focuses on examining the effect of social media on disrupting the art experience. To reveal the relationship between social media and the art experience, the perspectives of artists who are among the audience were consulted, and in-depth interviews were carried out with 10 artists. Although the art experience in the online environment is accepted, it has been concluded that the truly valuable experience is encountering the work in the physical environment.

Keywords: Instagram, Digitalization, Audience, Art Experience, Superficialization.

ÖZ

Dijital çağda yeni teknolojiler sanat yapıtının üretimi, ifade biçimi ve deneyimlenmesinde bazı dönüşümleri beraberinde getirmiştir. Sanat ile dijitalleşmenin entegre olmasıyla sanatçı, sanat galerileri ve müzeler tanıtım, pazarlama, etkileşim, katılım amaçlı olarak sosyal medya uygulamalarını kullanma imkânı elde etmişlerdir. Sanat galerileri ve müzelerin, izleyicinin sanat deneyimi yaşayabilmesi için etkin bir biçimde kullandıkları sosyal ağların başında Instagram gelmektedir. Aynı zamanda izleyici sanat mekânındaki deneyimlerini, uygulama üzerinden fotoğraf, video gibi kanallarla paylaşabilmektedir. Kullanıcının fiziki bir ortamda gerçek bir sanat deneyimi ve yapıtla bir süre baş başa kalarak estetik bir deneyim yaşamak amacından ziyade, Instagram'da paylaşım odaklı olması, sanat deneyiminin yüzeyselleşme ve anlam kaybına uğrama ihtimalini içinde taşımaktadır. Bu noktada, bu çalışma sosyal medyanın, sanat deneyimini bozuma uğratmada etkisini sorgulamaya odaklanmaktadır. Bu çerçevede, sosyal medya ile izleyicinin sanat deneyimi arasındaki ilişkiyi ortaya koymak amacıyla, kendileri de aynı zamanda bir izleyici konumunda bulunan sanatçıların görüşlerine başvurulmuştur. Bu amaçla 10 sanatçı ile derinlemesine görüşme yapılmıştır. Çalışmada çevrimiçi ortamda sanat deneyimi bir deneyim türü olarak kabul edilmekle birlikte, gerçek anlamıyla değerli olan deneyimin yapıtla fiziki ortamda yüz yüze karşılaşma deneyimi olduğu sonucuna ulaşılmıştır..

Anahtar Kelimeler: Instagram, Dijitalleşme, İzleyici, Sanat Deneyimi, Yüzeyselleşme.

Introduction

Affecting many areas of life today, digitalization has brought along a series of changes in the artists' production process, presentation of art practices and art experience of the audience. In the traditional sense, the audience's art experience takes place in the form of directly experiencing the features of the art object like colour, material and subject in the exhibition space by activating their senses. However, today, the audience has the opportunity to experience art in the digital environment as museums, contemporary art galleries and artists share their works on their social media accounts. At the same time, museums provide a digital art experience by using augmented reality technology. To enable them to experience art during the COVID-19 pandemic, art galleries have interacted more with them through social media applications (Choi & Kim, 2021). In this process, museums have conducted a virtual museum experience with activities such as live broadcasts and webinars (Karadeniz, 2020, p. 981). Even before the pandemic, museums had used different forms of social media such as podcasts and blogs to continue their work in the digital environment (Russo & Peacock, 2009, p. 28).

Museums tend to use social media for many purposes such as promoting events, reaching new audiences, and interacting with them (Özdemir & Çelebi, 2017, p. 106). The Frye Art Museum that created an exhibition called "#SocialMedium" in 2014 with the most liked works via votes from various social media applications can be considered as a step towards integrating art and social media. In this exhibition, the works were displayed in the galleries with the names and comments of 4500 voters (Sokolowsky, 2017). In addition, museums have had the opportunity to interact with large communities outside the museum walls. For example, the Brooklyn Museum has similarly created a photography exhibition titled "Click" by getting feedback from visitors and online environments (Hart, 2010).

The integration of art with social media is considered the entry of art into the era of social media (Nkosi, 2020). It can be said that Instagram has a significant role in such a characterization. The fact that this medium is especially visually oriented has been effective in the integration, and Instagram (Laçinbay, 2019) "has become an exhibition space for art". In exhibitions, the audience's ability to share their art experience with photographs and selfies on Instagram has also created great interest in art galleries (Budge, 2017). At the heart of this interest is the opportunity for galleries to engage with younger audiences, improve visitor engagement and deepen community connections (Baron & Leask, 2017). Undoubtedly, Instagram's effective role is related to new technologies because the audience shares independently of time and place on the internet through their smartphones, which can be considered as an extension of their body. As a result the museums, being aware of this and other reasons, have lifted the ban on photography.

Museums and galleries direct the audience to share their aesthetic experiences in location on Instagram as a primary medium (Luke, 2019). Some exhibitions are considered Instagrammable. Therefore, the way galleries and museums understand photography has also changed with new technologies. The audience is allowed to take photographs and encouraged to share their art experience in the museum on social media. This situation raises some questions: Can social media appear as an obstacle to a quality aesthetic experience in some cases? Does the sense of recognition, approval and pleasure provided by the photograph sharing, which has become the proof of being able to say "I was there" in an exhibition environment, prevent the aesthetic experience? Can we qualify online art experience as a real art experience? Actually, The Space Shifters exhibition of the Hayward Gallery in London confirms the necessity of asking all these questions. As critic Hettie Judah predicted, exhibitions have quite literally turned out to be a "selfie frenzy" (Luke, 2019). In this context, it is possible to talk about such selfie frenzy exhibitions as well (Kaymakçı, 2018; Miraç 2021).

The main point of this study is to reveal that although digitalization has positive features such as the audience becoming aware of the artwork in a short time and being able to interact with it, it also has negative effects on having a quality experience. Regarding art itself, we can observe art, artist and audience as the elements that make up a whole, and the audience is in an important position as an experiencer of art. In this context, this study focuses on questioning the relationship between social media and art experience.

While there is a transformation in experiencing art in the physical environment, the approach of individuals as viewers of the artwork has also undergone a transformation. Telephone cameras and social media are the main actors that partially disrupt the audience's unique and exclusive encounter with the artwork. Visiting the work to say "I was there" on social media disrupts the experience of interacting with the work in terms of content. In this context, in-depth interviews were conducted with artists in the digital environment to question the relationship between social media and audience's transforming art experience. The interviews with the artists will shed light on the questions of the study, as they are in both art production and the position of audience themselves. Considering the limited number of studies in the literature, it is hoped that this study will shed light on further studies that will contribute to the field.

The Aesthetic Experience Phenomenon

The art audience, who performs the act of encountering the work in a location such as a museum or gallery, is in a mutual cultural interaction with the work. In art galleries and museums, the audience is often encouraged to have an aesthetic experience. The process of encountering the work of art, concentrating on the work and trying to understand it is mostly expressed with the concept of "experience". Each viewer's experience of the work occurs in its own unique way, nourished by its own cultural world, and they try to establish a bond between the work and themselves.

Stecker defines aesthetic experience, which can be characterized as a meaningful and complex phenomenon, as "participating in the experience of distinguishing the forms, qualities or meaningful properties of things for themselves or for the sake of the experience itself" (Stecker, 2006, p. 4). Hagman, however, accepts that aesthetic experience is basically subjective but based on the objective qualities of the art object. It may include emotions such as joy, sadness, and curiosity, or a sense of calm silence. The quality of personal experience is also part of it (Hagman, as cited in Suess, 2020, p. 54). Learning something new is part of the aesthetic experience; therefore, aesthetic experience can be understood as "a complex and multifaceted knowledge experience" (Suess, 2020, p. 55). John Dewey emphasizes that the art experience is a whole and an individual experience in his book *Art as an Experience* (Dewey, 2005, p.41-42). It has a beginning and an end; it begins with stimulation and is followed by contacting objects (Dewey, 2005). The emotions that individuals feel during this experience are the qualities of the changing experience. There may be partnerships in the experience of different people. Unlike other experiences, it is an augmented state of our sensory experiences; "It has a beauty of its own and gives complete pleasure" (Kuspit, 2010, p. 49). According to Kuspit, "Aesthetic autonomy is the beginning of personal autonomy; it is actually a fundamental part of it. People cannot be human beings as a whole without it (Kuspit, 2010, p. 54).

It is possible for the audience to have an aesthetic experience by getting into contact with the work. However, it is difficult to establish a relationship with the artwork all of a sudden. The aesthetic object in front of the viewer is more slippery compared to its situation against any other object. Because according to Timuçin, "The aesthetic object is deep, full of contradictions and diversity, surrounded by subjectivity and requires a special predisposition and depth to be comprehended" (Timuçin, 2013, p. 215). Therefore, to relate to the artwork, the audience is expected to have such depth. Thinking that the communication between the art-work-audience trio is an important

phenomenon, artist Jeff Koons, also mentions that his art uses all kinds of ways to communicate with the audience. He states that even the most naive and superficial people do not feel threatened by his art (Antmen, 2008, p. 293).

At the point of seeing the aesthetic, the individuals closest to the object are artists themselves. They share the aesthetic experience with the audience through the work. The audience who encounters the work approach it from an aesthetic perspective, and it can only be grasped with this special sensation called aesthetics (Bolla, 2012, p. 18). First, the audience turns to the aesthetic in the work and then follows the thematic concept. This is within their cultural background. "The life experience, education and artistic knowledge of people who examine artworks in an exhibition will determine how they will interact and communicate with them. Communication may not be established with every work and not every work can be enjoyed. This is artistic communication." (Avcı, 2000, p. 23-24)

To experience a work aesthetically, the audience should have certain knowledge, experience and a perception of art (Gökçe, 2015, p. 82). The artwork provides an opportunity for them to experience the mental state called aesthetic experience (Carroll, 2012, p. 239). According to Carroll, who developed approaches to aesthetics, when the viewer encounters a work of art, he or she assumes that there is a special exchange between the work and the viewer. It encourages a state of mind that is unusual -unique- for the individual (Carroll, 2012, p. 233). In this sense, the artwork offers its viewer a unique opportunity.

The relationship between the audience and artwork is evaluated according to different periods. Before the 1960s, it was more distant and rigid; what was expected from the audience was to watch the work from a distance, think about it and try to grasp it. After the 1960s, a new practice in which a reciprocal relationship is essential between the audience and the work, the work

and the space, the space and the audience has emerged. Instead of looking at the work from the outside, it has become important to delve into it (Reiss, as cited in Çeber, 2017, p. 91). The new art paradigm, which incorporates the presence of the audience in the artwork, turns it into a bodily being from being a "cardboard eye". In the process from the 1960s to the present, this relationship has been researched by artists, and different applications have been tried. After the 2000s, the audience has had the opportunity to experience the artwork in online environments.

Online Art Experience and Social Media

Digitalization has been the pioneer of transformations in art by opening up many new possibilities and areas of existence for art and artists. As a result of the integration of art with new technologies, the art practice defined as "digital art" has emerged, and audience interaction with art has been carried out mostly through web-based environments. The online art market has also been on the rise in recent years (Kang et.al., 2019, p. 6). Being aware that digitalization is a fundamental paradigm today, museums have turned to digital opportunities to be more interactive and collaborative with the public by redefining the form of communication (Pulh & Mencarelli, 2015, p. 4). Museums have used social media, especially for promotion, marketing and interaction purposes in the context of new technologies (Suess, 2018, p. 107). During the pandemic period, museums have taken steps in digitalization and mediated the audience's art experience in the online environment. Even before the pandemic, museums used platforms such as YouTube and Instagram so that the audience could have an experience before visiting the museum (Akbulut, 2018).

As art connects with digital environments, the production of the work and the way it is presented have also changed. With the spread of digital art, various software programs have been used to reveal studies obtained from the data. Digital productions have gradually started to replace

mechanical ones. In addition to digital illustration, it has been possible to display the work in more than one gallery at the same time thanks to virtual reality and augmented reality technologies (Fırat, 2019, p. 461). Artists tend towards social media to convey their works to the audience rather than mediums like galleries or exhibitions. Moreover, artists prefer Instagram as a visual-oriented medium suitable for presenting their work and utilize it as a digital portfolio (Fırat, 2019). In the context of art production and presentation, today's art has acquired a new field of application and a new method of experience with virtual reality technology (Ballı, 2021, p. 64).

Pop-up art museums, which are called "new generation art experiences" in the USA, can also be evaluated within this scope. They are designed to include the audience in art, allowing them to post selfies on Instagram in the context of the transformation in art. Happy Hour and Rooms Ankara can be shown as examples of such social media museums in our country as the counterpart of the Museum of Selfies and Museum of Ice Cream in the USA. The existence of these museums also exemplifies the effectiveness of social media as a common medium today.

In a study conducted with 135 university students examining the art audience's experience in an exhibition in the context of digital media, it was concluded that those who visited the exhibition with a mobile augmented reality guide interacted better with the work (Chang et al., 2014). It is stated that museums also aim to reach more viewers through their social media accounts, and social media arouses curiosity and proves effective for people to take action to physically experience art (Akbulut, 2018).

Along with this transformation, approaches emphasizing that contemporary art no longer needs museums are expressed. For example, art critic Arthur C. Danto underlines in his book *After the End of Art* that we are witnessing a triple transformation as the production, institutions and audience of art; that contemporary art differs from that of the 1400s; its primary ambition is not aesthetics, and its primary field is not public institutions such as museums (Danto, 2014, p. 224). Unlike Danto (2014) who expressed, "What we see today is an art that aims at a more direct contact with people than the museum enables…", Tate Modern director Frances Morris stated that the idea that museums will disappear in the digital age is turned upside down. People are getting hungrier to experience something real; therefore, museums today are becoming even more important (Evren, 2022, p. 110). Unlike those who develop a positive view of the art transformation through technology, Morris speaks of a hunger for experience and states that art museums are "the cure for those who are tired of looking at Twitter." JiaJia Fei also tells in an interview that she has worked her entire career to use technology to make her art experiences more accessible to more people. Despite the opportunities the web provides, she emphasizes the importance of experiencing a work in its physical environment with her statements, "Art (made of physical objects) will always be about an interaction between the object, the space around the object, and the individual. The Internet cannot and will never replace this." (Nkosi, 2020).

Instagram as a Sharing Space of Experience

Instagram is a popular medium focusing on visual content with features such as instant photographs, videos, stories and live broadcasts and is becoming more attractive with day-to-day updates. The visual focus of Instagram has made it easier for art practices to integrate with this medium, and it has been effective for museums, galleries and artists to use it for promotions and interactions. Users create a personal profile, follow other users and create asymmetrical relationships on Instagram, which has an online photograph album function (Amanatidis et al., 2020, p. 40).

With the museums allowing photographs, smartphones have taken their place in museums as an extension of the body and provided a function for visitors to share their experiences. The art audience sharing their experience in

museums and galleries with images and videos sometimes seems like a "selfie frenzy" (Luke, 2019). The museum experience has become shareable thanks to social media (İçözü, 2018). Instagram, the most preferred social media platform, presents itself as a medium that visitors use to share their exhibition experiences (Weilenmann et al., 2013). In a study on Instagram shares related to museum visits, it was revealed that visitors mostly shared their experiences and focused on the objects of the exhibitions (Budge & Burnes, 2018). In another study conducted in 2018, it was revealed that while communicating with the objects through photography in their Instagram posts, visitors were also closely interested in the exhibition objects (Budge & Burnes, 2018). Social media is also adopted by the curators as a way for the audience to interact with art. Making the Instagram experience more democratic, Budge points out that it demonstrates the responsive capacity of the audience experiencing art. Instagram has a democratizing aspect to bring important works to a wide audience (Budge & Burnes, 2018). In a study conducted by Adam Suess regarding the Gerhard Richter exhibition, it was concluded that Instagram allows users to enhance their aesthetic experience by transcending the physical environment of the museum (Suess, 2018). On the other hand, Instagram is also one of the most used platforms by art critics such as Jerry Saltz (Akbulut, 2018).

In studies focusing on Instagram and aesthetic experience, it is stated that Instagram increases the interest in art and carries the art experience to different dimensions (Suess, 2018). Since Instagram is photographic and interaction-based, it carries the aesthetic experience beyond the spatial and temporal structure of a gallery (Suess, 2018). The basis of taking a photograph is triggering the memory. If an Instagram user is posting a photograph of a museum visit, here the aesthetic experience of the incubator can creatively find its way in posts on Instagram (Suess, 2018). Sharing has the potential to expand the aesthetic experience by bringing image, language, creativity and technology to a higher representational point. It is thought that it will guide the audience to improve the aesthetic experience by involving the users in processes such as imagination, visual editing and conceptual thinking (Suess, 2018). A 2015 study found that over ninety percent of Instagram posts on an exhibition are about the details of the exhibition, not the supposed flamboyant selfies (Budge, 2017). Thus, one can say that the visitors have a real experience. In a study on the transformation of digital media and art through the Instagram posts of contemporary artists, it was emphasized that Instagram has turned into both a gallery and a media tool to showcase their works; the artwork has become a part of popular culture rather than just appealing to the upper class; Instagram transforms the work into a product of the capitalist market, and the content of the work is also digitalized (Kayıhan, 2021, p. 21). However, in the same research (Kayıhan, 2021), there is a statement to be discussed "there is no need to visit museums and galleries to see the work of art." Because there is a difference between seeing the work in a digital environment and a physical one; the online environment does not deem it unnecessary to see the work in the museum.

While there are positive approaches to Instagram's contributions to expand the aesthetic experience, there are also some critical approaches on social media eliminating the ways of experiencing art. The basis of this is the selfie culture on Instagram, that is museum visitors spend their short time with the work mostly for selfie shooting instead of understanding the work. According to the article titled "Does social media distort art?" the shimmering chandelier and reflections in the mirror are suitable baits for Instagram. The article discusses the relevance of selfies taken by thinking about future tastes instead of the present moment, the risk of art becoming a tool of narcissism, and posts making Instagram users cooler and more attractive (Williams, 2016).

In the article titled "Instagram is killing the way we experience art", it is highlighted that visitors mostly pose for and take selfies next to the portraits while visiting the USA National Portrait

Gallery, but they do not use their eyes to look at the symbol-laden canvases in their spare time (Quito, 2018). The article mentions that this is not just about this exhibition; there are similar situations in many other exhibitions. However, this situation is not given much importance by art museums and curators, and visitors are even encouraged to take photographs in person. Museums and curators encourage photography and are overly eager to be displayed on social media.

It is also possible to look at selfie-focused posts on Instagram from another perspective: It is claimed that photographing a moment weakens our memory (Bakırcı, 2019). In a study, it was revealed that it is difficult to focus on the details of the observed object as the attention shifts to the phone while taking a photograph. In addition, people do not focus on the details themselves, as they feel that they are taking good photographs and can see the details better later. This situation is similar to the fact that those who go to a concert and do not take photographs or videos can "live in the moment better" (Bakırcı, 2019). Therefore, when the audience experiences a visit to an art venue by taking photographs, it neither produces a strong memory of that moment, nor can people fully immersed in the moment they live in. For this reason, it is not possible to be alone with the work which is something required to really experience the art, and the most essential effort and attention for the experience is spent on photographing.

In the age of consumption, the art itself has become an object of consumption. As instant sharing is possible and there is constant change in an endless flow on social media, it transforms the audience's art experience into fast and rapid consumption. Selfie-focused posts can also be considered as an indicator of this which interrupts individuals' experience of being alone with the work.

Aim and Methodology

In this study, the relationship between social media and art experience has been examined from the perspective of artists. The aim of the study is to reveal the effects of social media on the audience's art experience from the perspective of artists within the framework of digitalization. Meanwhile, the effect of the audience experience on artists' production practice was investigated. In relation to the aim of the study, answers to the following questions were sought:

1. How are artists evaluating the transformation in the way art is perceived and experienced in the age of social media?

2. Is the art experience being disrupted by the effective power of social media?

3. How do artists evaluate the fact that the audience in museums and galleries tend towards selfie-oriented sharing by establishing a superficial relationship with the work rather than experiencing the art?

4. Does this situation affect the artist's view of the audience and their production practice?

In this study, the in-depth interview method, which is a qualitative research technique, was used to obtain data. In-depth interviews allow a detailed analysis of the attitudes and thoughts of a focus group on a topic, providing qualitative data (Akarsu & Akarsu, 2019, p. 26). This method was adopted since revealing the relationship between social media and the audience's art experience in detail from the artists' perspective is convenient. The data obtained from the interviews were subjected to content analysis. Instagram, one of the social media platforms, was preferred as the sample in the study. Since this visual medium is a digital platform where artworks are shared, the audience has the opportunity to encounter the artwork here. The expression "an online art experience", which is mentioned as the research topic in the study, includes not only the experience of digital art but also the experience of artworks on social media.

A sample is a small set that is accepted to represent the universe from which it is selected from a certain universe, in a certain size and according to the rule of impartiality (Karasar, 2022, p.148). The general rule in determining the sample

size in in-depth interviews is to continue the interviews until the issues and problems obtained from the interviews are similar (Akarçay Ulutaş, 2018, p. 329). Therefore, ten artists, who were considered to provide data saturation in this study, were considered sufficient for the sample. The artists were chosen by the purposeful sampling method. Participants were considered to be active Instagram users who share their works with the audience on Instagram. Because this study focuses on the views of artists who actively use social media on online experience. There is no specific age range for the participants. Participants were asked structured questions in line with the objectives of the study. Structured questions were prepared in line with the objectives of the study. Therefore, the questions focused on how artists evaluate the transformation in the context of social media and art experience, the impact of online art experience on the artist's production and their views on the art experience. To keep the identities of the participants confidential, "S" was used as the first letter of the artist names, and they were coded in order. Six of the participants were women and the remaining four were male artists. Participants took part in the study voluntarily. For this study, ethical approval was given by Bolu Abant Izzet Baysal University Ethical Review Board (Protokol No. 2023/04).

Interviews with participants between 10.05.2022 and 20.05.2022 were conducted in a digital environment. The interview transcripts were read several times to familiarize with the content and then codes were sought for analysis. The codes formed the basis of the categorization process and in this process they were compared with each other and similarities and differences related to the content of the text were noted. As a final step, the findings of the study are presented around three main themes based on the data: Transformation in experiencing art and online art experience (1), the relationship between social media and art experience (2), selfie-focused sharing on Instagram and artists' view of the audience (3).

Findings

Transformation in Experiencing Art and Online Art Experience

The participants were asked about their thoughts on the transformation of the art is perceived and experienced in the age of social media. In terms of evaluating the online art experience as a real one, except for two participants (20.0%), the others (80.0%) drew attention to the differences between experiencing a work online and in its real environment. They stated that face-to-face encounters are more valuable in terms of experience. Participant S1 stated that online art can be for arts that can be adapted to the screen, but not for painting and sculpture, and said, "*Experiencing the painting on online art platforms gives a partial idea, but it is disconnected from the original. I have witnessed dozens of times that the original of a painting that looks good in a photograph is not actually satisfactory or that the photograph is insufficient to convey a good painting. Since staying offline is not an option, first impressions are often made through social media. However, if the shares do not reflect the originals, they will not bring real benefits,*" and drew attention to the inadequacy of the online experience. Participant S5 expressed, "*In the pandemic, especially in the beginning, online exhibitions were a very good solution for many people. It could reach a larger number of viewers in a universal sense. For me, online exhibitions cannot replace seeing an exhibition live. Or looking at an image of an artwork shared on social media and seeing the original artwork are very different experiences. It is possible to interact with the work on social media, but I could not describe it as a real art experience.*" Emphasizing that time has changed, participant S9 stated that social media gives the audience a new position in the process of perceiving and experiencing art and mentioned, "*I do not find a comparison between the online and real art experience appropriate.*" S9 stated that the feeling of encountering the artwork face-to-face in a gallery or a museum would be different, it was a transforming process, and he considered it normal.

Participant S2 focused on the online experience being informative and visiting museums being satisfactory, "*Online art experiences are only useful for artistic information, but it is still more satisfying to visit museums or galleries.*" Participant S3 stated that the artwork and the audience should come together: "*Today's cultural structure is fed with fast, striking and quickly consumed items. It is possible to see these elements in the production of advertisements in art, but I believe that the art experience requires meeting the audience one-on-one, as it was before the 20th century. This belief of mine is fed by the idea that this should be the case. Yes, our day is changing and transforming, but the artwork and the audience should still come together in visual and plastic fields. During the pandemic, this perception may have changed as a necessity of the period, but it is possible to see that online platforms are supported by conversations and symposiums while exhibiting works is gradually falling into the background. Art is a field of living experience with artists, I believe... As we change our daily life, our practice of art, its presentation and the way we see it as a viewer also changes, and most importantly, the most accurate way of communication for the artwork and the audience is waiting to get together.*" Participant S3 stated that the main reason for sharing her artworks via social media is because she sees social media as a communication field. S3 presents only a small part of her artworks to the audience, so even if it is only a certain segment, they are aware of them. Participant S6 also stated that as the methods in art production diversified, so did the ways of experiencing art. She added that the online art experience does not replace physical experience but still takes its place as a production and viewing space.

Additionally, artists were asked, "Does sharing the artwork on social media eliminate the desire of the audience to encounter the work in the physical environment from the very beginning?" Participant S5 answered, "*It may vary from person to person, but I think it would be more encouraging for people really interested in art,*

wanting to spend time on it." Participant S3 drew attention to the difference between the two experiences by stating, "*To present an example from my own works, the reaction of those who see my work in the digital environment and those who see the same work in the exhibition hall has been different, and my preference is to meet the artwork physically.*" Participant S4 answered, "*I usually do not share my paintings before exhibiting them. I try to get attention by sharing details. When I share something from the exhibition, I think it will arouse curiosity for the audience to see the original version. Because photography can never replace reality.*" Participant S10 was undecided about the effect but still expressed a negative opinion: "*It is an issue that needs to be addressed very broadly. Sometimes it can have a positive effect. Sometimes it can have a negative one. That's why I say no.*" Some participants also pointed out that sharing on social media could be intriguing. Participant S6 expressed, "*While some works should be experienced with physical encounters, the medium of others is now social media. In this fast-paced era, as a part of the community that cannot keep up with the metropolis, I follow most exhibitions on social media even in my own city - this at least gives me an opportunity to "be informed". But of course, I try to physically reach what I want to see. By the way, social media accounts provide a great chance to watch museums, exhibitions and fairs in other cities and countries; however, for most works, I would like to call it "to be informed" rather than "experiencing" it.*" It is also important that S6 distinguishes experiencing from being informed. The fact that she describes seeing exhibitions online as "being informed" shows that this does not equal an experience.

The Relationship Between Social Media and Art Experience: Is It a Kind of Disruption?

The participants were reminded of the effective power of social media today, and they were asked whether this situation somehow spoiled the art experience. While some of them think

that social media is an opportunity to reach the audience, others believe that it includes a market and manipulation. For example, participant S10 answered this question affirmatively and expressed that social media is not a reliable platform with its illusions: "*Social media is not a very reliable platform. It lacks truth and reality. Because everybody can manipulate whatever they want in exchange for money. You can show an unpopular product as highly liked, or vice versa; you can hold a bot and show it as unpopular. Instagram only shows likes. Therefore, more likes seem more valuable, and less likes seem less valuable.*" Participant S1 mentioned that speed ruins many things and continued, "*Time is our biggest luxury, and we should be able to use it as we wish. Museums and galleries exist for such luxury consumption, that is to slow down the time we spend alone with art. While the time spent quickly on social media often comes back as remorse, I have never heard the same said for the time spent in a museum or gallery. Based on these examples, I do not think that the art experience is in serious danger, but social media plays into the hands of the lazy.*" Participant S8 answered this question affirmatively and evaluated social media in the context of spirituality: "*Of course, with our experiences in the last years, maybe social media has become more active than ever, and its market has started to grow considerably. It also enabled new mediums to become widespread, but I am not sure if this is good. Online environments will always be devoid of spirituality, and this will create other disciplines. We can call this both a disruption and a change at the same time.*" Participant S7 put it this way: "*Absolutely. But it also fulfills today's conditions. As it always has, this is how it happens in this period.*"

Although S3 stated that she does not believe that social media is effective in art in general, she added that this may change for certain art practices: "*We can talk about the effect of social media on art practices such as illustrative patterns, which can be called digital drawings, pop art, photographic art, video, audio or documented video art works, and other similar fields of art.*

However, it would not be correct to defend the same view in painting and sculpture. It does not feel right to think that two-dimensional patterns or patterns painted on any supporting surface will provide a healthy expression in the digital field. I think that colour loss, photographic distortion and filter preferences that are used frequently today interfere with the expressive effect of the work. In the field of sculpture, it is very difficult to associate the relationship of the work with the spatial area in which it is located in a healthy way in the digital area. In addition, we can say the following for each work; it is very valuable to be faced with the work in the same area and to communicate with it one-on-one. The factors that I have tried to express above significantly degrade the art experience for the audience. Here, apart from their expectations, the artists' style of displaying the work also affects the whole art experience." Participant S3 underlined that although social media is effective as a medium in some art practices, meeting the work and the audience in the same space is very valuable. Participant S6 stated that the art experience did not deteriorate, but there was a kind of transformation: "*The art experience is actually transforming. The artwork can also receive support from the power of social media, or if its medium is only digital channels, it can exist entirely with social media; the contents can be manipulated and transformed, or on the contrary, word can reach the art buyer with more emphasis. But at least we know that social media has a great role in the visibility of the works being produced. I just think that the physical experience of watching art should always be present at the end of the day.*" S9 also pointed out that this is not a deterioration but an innovation, "*The old does not go away; let's just say that a new experience is created.*"

Selfie-Focused Sharing on Instagram and Artists' View of the Audience

Instagram, one of the media where selfies are shared most frequently and where photos of selfies or museum and gallery experiences are shared, identifies with selfie culture. Therefore, the participants were asked how they interpreted

being oriented towards selfie-focused sharing by establishing a superficial relationship with the artwork in museums or galleries. At the same time, it was also asked whether this orientation affects their views and what effects it has on their production practices. Most of the participants consider sharing selfies as an indicator of a superficial experience and think that it has no effect on their production. Participant S8 evaluated the viewer's selfie-focused posts with the words, "*Most times, it makes you think that it is far from intimacy and the work is pushed aside.*" He added that although an onlooker is always nurturing, experiencing it in this way does not affect the individual production of the audience. According to him, artists' production practice is quite individual, and they are alone in it. Participant S5 stated that events visited with selfie-focused sharing on social media will give a special experience to neither the person who goes there nor the people on the platform where that person shares, and that this style of experience does not affect his own production practice. Participant S6 mentioned, "*This situation has a starting point: The audience who hardly encounters art in contemporary life wants to visit the museum, gallery or especially the fairground to say, "I was here," and strive to be a part of the system with the intention of gaining social status and popularity or appearing knowledgeable. On the other hand, the mass, who are real art viewers, also attempt to share such posts with the intention of creating a visual archive for themselves. The artists may be somehow pleased and motivated by the sharing of his/her work, but as you say, the superficial sharing ignores the purpose of the artist's production. Nevertheless, even the audience whose intention is not to watch art or try to understand it, but only to be a part of this medium in appearance, can produce a small percentage of truly interested art buyers. I think it is a very good gain with five percent. Anyone who begins to ask questions and really look at the work is a candidate to be a true audience member of the art universe.*"

Participant S9, on the other hand, stated that the problem is not only today's selfie problem but also that the world would be much different if art were a field where everyone could communicate right from the past to the present: "*I think that art today is a cultural, social and political intellectual consciousness field. On the other hand, it is a democratic space in every respect. It is the duty of artists to reveal their work and leave their words to this world. After that, it is all about the audience's intention. There is no formula for the right communication with business. If the audience prefers to put on a show in their communication with a business, it will be their own decision. If they want to take more, it's there, and it can get as deep as they want.*" Participant S10, on the other hand, expressed that certain behaviors come forward in certain periods and this is the "spirit of the time", and added that in today's world dominated by capitalism, it is not essential to produce the best of something, but there is the "understanding of doing what is necessary as much as needed": "*The main problem is not about building a superficial relationship where the masses take selfies or not, but the understanding that art is made only for the masses is creating big problems. I think this negatively affects artists' production practice. Should art be determined by the taste of the masses or the value they give it? Is having more likes a kind of higher art? The main problem is that artists with an advanced vision do not find value in their art because they are not in demand by the mass of their era. The weakening of institutions and values is the main problem.*"

In this section, where the effect of likes and comments on the practices of artists on Instagram is also questioned, most of artists stated that they are not affected by likes and comments, and the number of likes cannot be a criterion for determining whether a work is good or bad. Participant S1 replied, "*Maybe if I was a young and indecisive artist, it would have happened, but for someone in my position, such an influence is very difficult. I look to maintain a standard in my posts*

with intense awareness. I share what is expected of me and befits me. As a result of this attention, I usually get similar numbers of likes. There are not many ups or downs that would surprise me. I believe that I have a strong relationship of trust with my followers. My profile is also private; it is not public." It was observed that few participants expressed this effect in different contexts. For example, unlike the other participants, participant S2 stated, "*It was definitely very positive; my first posts were incredibly cowardly as I hoped I was not doing anything wrong, but I believe that people liking it or saying encouraging things allowed me to develop my work more enthusiastically by producing more.*" Participant S10 also associated this effect with the economy, "*In these days when we are going through difficult economic times, insufficient support from official or private institutions naturally pushes artists to establish their own independent economic life. Positive or negative comments from social media therefore affect the production process.*"

Discussion and Conclusion

Integrating digital technologies in art has led to changes in the production and self-expression of the artwork as well as transformations in the way the audience experiences art. In particular, the existence of social networks that allow interaction and sharing plays an active role in promoting the artwork and sharing the art experience with countless people. Social media is becoming a popular medium in the promotion of artworks as it allows to interact with people, to share and to provide instant feedback. However, while the facilitation of interaction between the art location and the audience or between the artist and the audience, and the audience awareness of the exhibitions are considered as some of the positive reflections, some negative approaches of this medium are also mentioned.

Based on the findings, it can be argued that most of the participating artists are distant towards the online art experience, and they argue that encountering a work in a gallery or museum face-to-face is not the same as encountering it digitally. In the context of online art experience,

few participants provide such an experience, especially for digital arts. Some participants do not consider the online experience as a genuine one, especially for painting and sculpture, although it is possible to experience some digital works online. When the participants' views were analysed based on the responses about selfie-focused posts on Instagram, it was emphasized that such an experience does not mean a special one. It is important that one of the participants associates selfie-focused posts with today's capitalist system. He states that the understanding that art is produced for the masses is the main problem in a world where labor and value can be easily produced and he draws attention to the capitalist consumption approach which is also effective in today's art field. Another participant's statement about selfies that "it makes the artwork seem a bit pushed aside" is also thought-provoking. This statement also coincides with the idea that social media is for art, which is mentioned in the study. In selfies, the artwork is held back, and the audience poses at the centre of the stage, which shows that the artwork is used as an object in constructing their own self and identity. Because, in many studies on Instagram, it has been revealed that this medium undertakes the function of constructing an identity for oneself. Therefore, the subtext of the audience's selfie-focused posts about their experience in museums and galleries can be both the desire to say, "I was there; here's the proof," to look cooler and art-loving and to be a part of the intellectual world. At the same time, selfie-focused posts on Instagram have been evaluated as having a populist approach and show purposes. It has been concluded that since sharing the works on social media does not meet the experience of encountering them face to face, it is in fact effective in disrupting the art experience. It is thought that this study will contribute to other research studies that will be carried out using other methods by addressing the effects of social media on the audience's art experience from different perspectives. These studies will expand the literature and allow the effects of the integration between art and technology to be questioned in more detail.

References

Akarçay Ulutaş, D. (2018). Görüşme tekniği. Ş. Aslan (Eds.). Sosyal bilimlerde araştırma yöntemleri nicel, nitel ve karma tasarımlar için bir rehber, (p.325-341). Eğitim Yayınevi.

Akarsu, B. & Akarsu, B. (2019). Bilimsel araştırma tasarımı: Nicel, nitel ve karma araştırma yaklaşımları. Cinius Yayınları.

Akbulut, K. (2018, November 19). Instagram için sanat mı? Sanat için Instagram mı? https://bigumigu.com/haber/instagram-icin-sanat-mi-sanat-icin-instagram-mi/

Amanatidis, D., Mylona, I., Mamalis, P., & Kamenidou, I. (2020). Social media for cultural communication: A critical investigation of museums' Instagram practices. *Journal of Tourism, Heritage & Services Marketing*, 6 (2), 38-44.

Antmen, A. (2008). *20. yüzyıl batı sanatında akımlar*. Sel Yayıncılık.

Avcı, S. (2000). 3-12 yaş arası çocukların sanat eğitimi üzerine görüş ve öneriler. (PhD Thesis). Ankara University (Türkiye).

Bakırcı, Ç. M. (2019, March 11). Bir anı fotoğraflamak, o anıya dair hafızanızı zayıflatıyor! https://evrimagaci.org/bir-ni-fotograflamak-o-aniya-dair-hafizanizi%20zayiflatiyor-7676

Ballı, Ö. (2021). Dijitalleşen sanat bağlamında sanal gerçeklik teknolojisinin sanatsal üretim sürecinde kullanımı. *İdil Dergisi,* 77, 63–78.

Bolla, De P. (2012). *Sanat ve estetik*. (K. Kuş, Trans.). Ayrıntı Yayınları.

Budge, K. (2017). Objects in focus: Museum visitors and Instagram. *Curator the Museum Journal,* 60(1), 67-85.

Budge, K. (2018). Visitors in immersive museum spaces and Instagram: Self, place-making, and play. *The Journal of Public Space*, 3(3), 121-138. https://doi.org/10.32891/jps.v3i3.534

Budge, K., & Burness, A. (2018). Museum objects and Instagram: Agency and communication in digital engagement. *Continuum Journal of Media and Cultural Studies,* 32(2), 137–150.

Carroll, N. (2012). *Sanat felsefesi çağdaş bir giriş* (G. Korkmaz, Trans.). Ütopya Yayınevi.

Chang, K.E., Chia-Tzu, C., Huei-Tse, H., Yao-Ting, S., Huei-Lin, C. & Cheng-Ming, L. (2014). Development and behavioral pattern analysis of a mobile guide system with augmented reality for painting appreciation instruction in an art museum. *Computers & Education,* 71, 185–197. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2013.09.022

Choi, B., & Kim, J. (2021). Challenges in museum management after the COVID-19 pandemic. *J. Open Innov. Technol. Mark. Complex,* 7(2), 1-18. https://doi.org/10.3390/joitmc7020148

Çeber, T. (2017). İzleyiciyi izlemek: Sanat eseri, sanatçı ve izleyici ilişkisi üzerine. *Atatürk Üniversitesi Güzel Sanat Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 38, 87-97.

Danto, A. C. (2014). *Sanatın sonundan sonra*. (Z. Demirsü, Trans.). Ayrıntı Yayınları

Dewey, J. (2005). *Art as experience*. New York: Penguin Group.

Evren, S. (2022). *Günümüzde sanat ve deneyim*. Hayalperest Yayınevi.

Fırat, M. (2019). Sosyal medyanın yeni nesil sanatçılara etkisi. *Ulakbilge Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi,* 7(37), 460–483.

Gökçe, S.(2015). Sanatsal yaratma sürecinde estetik kaygının işlevi. (Master Thesis) Pamukkale University. (Türkiye).

Hart, H. (2010, December 1). Citizen curators. https://www.artnewp.com/art-news/news/citizen-curators-364/

İçözü, T. (2018, October 22). Instagram sanatı nasıl şekillendiriyor? https://webrazzi.com/2018/10/22/instagram-sanati-nasil-sekillendiriyor

Kang, X., Chen, W., & Kang, J. (2019). Art in the age of social media: Interaction behavior analysis of Instagram art accounts. *Informatics,* 6(4), 52. https://doi.org/10.3390/informatics6040052

Karadeniz, C. (2020). Müzede dijital teknolojilerin kullanımı ve salgın sürecinde dijital katılım. *İdil Dergisi,* 9(70), 975–984.

Karasar, N. (2022). *Bilimsel araştırma yöntemi kavramlar ilkeler teknikler*. Nobel Yayıncılık.

Kaymakçı, K. (2018, September 27). Contemporary İstanbul'da selfie çılgınlığı. https://www.haberturk.com/contemporary-istanbul-da-selfie-cilginligi-2158312

Kayıhan, B. (2021). Dijital medya ile sanatın dönüşümü: Çağdaş sanatçıların Instagram paylaşımları üzerine Bir İnceleme. *Akademik İncelemeler Dergisi,* 16(1), 1-25. https://doi.org/10.17550/akademikincelemeler.838162

Kuspit, D. (2010). *Sanatın sonu*. (Y. Tezgiden, Trans.). Metis Yayınları.

Laçinbay, K. (2019). Plastik sanatlarda değişen mekân algısı ve sosyal medya. *Sanat ve Tasarım Dergisi,* 24, 261-279.

Luke, B. (2019, March 27). Art in the age of Instagram and the power of going viral. https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2019/03/27/art-in-the-age-of-instagram-and-the-power-of-going-viral

Miraç, Z. (2021, April 9). Küçümsemelerine dayanamadım. https://gazeteoksijen.com/yazarlar/kucumsemelerine-dayanamadim/

Nkosi, L. (2020, May 31). Data is the oil of the 21st century', says digital art consultant JiaJia Fei. https://www.news24.com/channel/arts/data-is-the-oil-of-the-21st-century-says-digital-art-consultant-jiajia-fei-20200526

Özdemir, G. & Çelebi, D. (2017). A social media framework of cultural museums. *Advances in Hospitality and Tourism Research,* 5(2), 101-119. https://doi.org/10.30519/ahtr.375248

Pulh, M. & Mencarelli, R. (2015). Web 2.0: Is the museum-visitor relationship being redefined? *International Journal of Arts Management*, 18 (1), 43-51.

Quito A. (2018, February 24). Instagram is killing the way we experience art. https://qz.com/quartzy/1212385/instagram-is-killing-the-way-we-experience-art/

Russo, A., & Peacock, D. (2009). Great expectations: Sustaining participation in social media spaces. In J. Trant, & D. Bearman (Eds.), Museums and the Web 2009: Proceedings, Archives and Museum Informatics, (1), 23-36.

Stecker, R. (2006). Aesthetic experience and aesthetic value. *Philosophy Compass,* 1(1), 1-10

Sokolovsky, J. (2017, November 16). Art in the Instagram age: How social media is shaping art and how you experience it. https://www.seattletimep.com/entertainment/visual-arts/art-in-the-instagram-age-how-social-media-is-shaping-art-and-how-you-experience-it/

Suess, A. (2018). Instagram and Art Gallery Visitors: Aesthetic experience, space, sharing and implications for educators. *Australian Art Education*, 39(1), 107- 122.

Suess, A. (2020). Instagram and the art gallery: Aesthetic experience, space, and sharing. (PhD Thesis). Griffith University, (Australia).

Timuçin, A. (2013). *Estetik*. Bulut Yayınları.

Weilenmann, A., Hillman, T., & Jungselius, B. (2013). Instagram at the museum: Communicating the museum experience through social photo sharing. In Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems, Paris: ACM Presp.

Williams, H. (2016, July 14). Art for Instagram-is social media ruining art? https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/features/art-for-instagram-is-social-media-ruining-art-a7136406.htm

Yazar Bilgileri
Author details

*(Sorumlu Yazar Corresponding Author) Dr. Öğr. Üyesi, Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal Üniversitesi İletişim Fakültesi ayse.aldemir@ibu.edu.tr, Orcid: 0000-0003-3045-6917