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* Araştırma Makalesi / *Research Article*

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URBAN IDENTITY LOSS AND ARTISTIC RESPONSE: A WORKSHOP EXPERIENCE WITH RUŞEN KELEŞ*

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Abstract: The elective course titled "Plastic Meaning, Concept, and Material Relationship," based on Ruşen Keleş's research on urban identity and identity loss, was offered during the spring semester of 2023-2024 at the Faculty of Fine Arts and Design, Trabzon University, Department of Painting. Ten students enrolled in the course, where detailed discussions and extensive exchanges of ideas with students were conducted on the factors contributing to identity loss in Turkish cities. The course that includes Ruşen Keleş's works, the course delved deeply into the concept of urban identity, sparking profound debates on its content. Subsequent sections of the course analyzed contemporary artists' works on urban identity and identity loss, providing examples and presenting analyses of how art addresses these issues. Following the theoretical foundation, each student developed their conceptual work and presented it with supporting texts. The artworks produced by the students aimed to raise deep awareness on urban identity and identity loss, emerging as unique artistic expressions. The course aimed not only to equip students with knowledge on urban identity and identity loss but also to enhance their ability to approach these topics from an artistic perspective. Ultimately, the course aimed to demonstrate how art can effectively communicate complex issues like urban identity and identity loss and to uncover students' creative potentials in addressing these themes.

KENTLERİN KİMLİK KAYBI VE SANATSAL TEPKİ: RUŞEN KELEŞ İLE BİR ATÖLYE DENEYİMİ

Tabanında Ruşen Keleş'in kent kimliği ve kimlik kaybı üzerine araştırmalarının yer aldığı "Plastik Anlam, Kavram ve Malzeme İlişkisi" adlı seçmeli ders, 2023-2024 bahar yarıyılında Trabzon Üniversitesi Güzel Sanatlar ve Tasarım Fakültesi Resim Bölümü'nde on öğrenci tarafından takip edilmiştir. Ders boyunca, Türkiye'deki kentlerin kimlik kaybına neden olan unsurlar detaylı bir şekilde ele alınmış ve öğrencilerle geniş çaplı bir fikir alışverişi gerçekleştirilmiştir. İçeriğinde Ruşen Keleş'in çalışmalarının olduğu ders, kent kimliği kavramının derinlemesine incelenmesiyle başlamış ve bu kavramın içeriği üzerine derin tartışmalar yapılmıştır. İlerleyen bölümlerde, çağdaş sanatçıların kent kimliği ve kimlik kaybı konularındaki eserleri örneklerle incelenmiş ve sanatın bu konuları nasıl ele aldığı üzerine analizler sunulmuştur. Teorik altyapıyı takiben, her öğrenci kendi kavramsal çalışmasını hazırlamış ve bu çalışmaları destekleyen me-

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tinlerle sunmuştur. Öğrencilerin bu süreçte ortaya koyduğu eserler, kent kimliği ve kimlik kaybı konularında derin bir farkındalık yaratma amacı gütmüş ve özgün sanat eserleri olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu ders, öğrencilerin kent kimliği ve kimlik kaybı konularında bilgi sahibi olmalarını sağlarken, aynı zamanda bu konuları

sanatsal bir perspektiften ele alabilme yeteneklerini de geliştirmeyi hedeflemiştir. Sonuç olarak, dersin amacı, sanatın gücünü kullanarak kent kimliği ve kimlik kaybı gibi karmaşık konuları nasıl anlatabileceğini göstermek ve öğrencilerin bu süreçteki yaratıcı potansiyellerini ortaya çıkarmaktır.

Introduction

Beyond being physical centers where human interactions are most intense, cities are also social products. The relationship between the city and sociability signifies a continuous mutual influence between society and the city, which is fundamentally interpreted by human relationships. Urban spaces, primarily understood through human interactions, gradually develop their own identity and culture over time. This moment corresponds to the beginning of a process where the city also starts to have significant effects on human and social relationships. The interaction that emerges between the city and society leads to urbanization and the development of a sense of urban identity and consciousness among individuals living in the city.¹

Just as each individual has a unique identity, cities also possess distinct identities that set them apart from other global cities. The most crucial factor distinguishing one city from another is its urban identity. Urban identity is shaped by the city's social, economic, physical, cultural, and historical processes.² The identity of a city is related to the values, goals, and ideals of its residents. When we talk about the identity of a city, we might be referring to its soul. The soul of a city gives meaning to the city itself and its inhabitants as a whole. If this soul is not felt within the city and is not perceived by its residents, it becomes impossible to discuss the city's identity. In such cases, we can only speak of the lack of identity rather than an actual identity.³ The concept of urban identity involves a multifaceted process that goes beyond mere natural development. While some believe that a city's identity emerges organically without external influence, it is equally valid to recognize that a preserved city, even an industrial one, maintains its distinct identity. The notion of a "faceless" urban profile suggests inadequate implementation or lack of adherence to preservation principles. In summary, urban identity is shaped through a dynamic interplay of history, preservation, and future scenarios.⁴

According to Keleş,⁵ urban identity is shaped by physical, cultural, socio-economic, historical, and formal factors and is continuously developed by the inhabitants of the city. Cities can undergo a rapid transformation process over time due to individual interventions.⁶ People create a new urban identity by developing a new culture within the society they live in. Urban identity is a socially constructed phenomenon, shaped by various factors. Demographic elements, such as population size, growth rate, density, age distribution, and gender ratios, play a significant role. Additionally, cultural aspects—such as religion, language, ethnicity, family structure, lifestyle, and culinary traditions—contribute to a city's identity. It's important to

¹ Aelbrecht and Quentin, 2019: 23-28.

² Topçu, 2011: 1050.

³ Bell and Avner, 2013: 33-38.

⁴ Proshansky, 1978: 148-150.

⁵ Prof. Dr. Ruşen Keleş was born on August 19, 1932, in Araklı district of Trabzon, completed his primary and secondary education in Trabzon, and then studied at the Faculty of Political Sciences. During his student years, Keleş took an active role in various student associations, took part in republican and peaceful student movements and pioneered the Green Crescent Association in Ankara. Prof. Keleş, who has hundreds of groundbreaking works in the fields of urbanization, urban law, urban science and local governments in Turkey, is a respected scientist with more than 1000 citations and an h-index of 9. Approaching 90 years of age, Prof. Keleş's scientific contributions are supported by thesis consultancy data in the National Thesis Center of the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) and he has become a positive role model for academics and researchers in these fields (Keskin, 2022).

⁶ Keleş, 2021: 42-48.

recognize that urban identity is not homogenous; rather, it reflects diversity and competes with other concepts.⁷ It is frequently noted that with the globalization process that began in the last quarter of the 20th century, cities have started to resemble each other. This situation introduces the problem of homogenization in cities, eroding their unique identities. The globalization process has led to changes in the physical planning, architectural texture, and consumption, entertainment, and living spaces of social groups in cities, just as it has impacted the economic structures of countries. In this process, the economic development strategies and cultural policies of countries are also becoming intertwined.⁸

Globalization has led to new developments in consumption spaces within cities. The increase in social, economic, political, and cultural activities in urban areas has given rise to new centers and transformed transportation and consumption patterns. The proliferation of shopping malls has not only facilitated shopping but also addressed various needs such as dining, entertainment, cultural events, and sports—all in one centralized location. These changes have significantly transformed the social and cultural life of cities.⁹ The similarity in consumption and lifestyle patterns in cities, along with the interventions of global capital, accelerates the transformation of urban identities. In shaping urban identity, human-made elements are as influential as natural structures. The built environment constitutes a significant part of urban identity. Cities distinguished by their social, cultural, and historical backgrounds become recognized for their unique identities.¹⁰ Religious beliefs play a significant role in the formation of urban identity. The influence of places of worship on the development and evolution of urban fabric is evident, as seen in Islamic cities where structures develop around mosques.¹¹ In this process, urbanization cannot truly occur, and urban consciousness cannot develop. This situation leads to broader issues related to civilization, human rights, and democracy. Preventing these issues relies on individuals adopting behavioral changes necessary for urban living. Urban consciousness necessitates cities that preserve historical and cultural identity elements while embracing contemporary amenities, ensuring fundamental rights and freedoms, and fostering democratic social life.

Urban identity is influenced by the historical texture, architecture, cultural characteristics, geography, local traditions and lifestyles of individuals living in the city. The diversity of these factors distinguishes each city from others and gives it a unique identity. City identity can be constantly redefined. Urban identity is produced by society through consensus.¹² The natural and historical structures of the city give it a unique identity. The city's natural and artificial environment, architecture, history, spatial elements, cultural values, geography, social structure, local traditions, topography, climate, geopolitical position, economic structure, invasions and wars, earthquakes, capital city factors affect the identity of the city.¹³ The fact that cities lose their original identities and fail to produce new, unique identities leads to the problem of "de-identification". This situation leads to a decrease in the meaning that urban dwellers attribute to the city and a weakening of their sense of belonging to the city. The main cause of de-identification is capitalism's transformation of cities into commodities.¹⁴ Cities that lose their identity physically, culturally, and economically can lead to fragmentation and regionalization. This situation causes cities to become places where only certain activities take place, diminishing their significance and meaning.¹⁵ Identity is a distinctive and defining characteristic unique to living beings. In the context of cities, the concept of urban identity is based on

⁷ Keleş, 2012: 11-12.

⁸ Keleş, 1980: 17-21

⁹ Keleş, 2010: 28-31.

¹⁰ Keleş, 1997: 435-445.

¹¹ Keleş, 2005: 9-18.

¹² Keleş, 1982: 48-57.

¹³ Keleş, 2011: 27-28

¹⁴ Keleş, 2014: 51-53

¹⁵ Bahçeci Başarmak and Akpınar, 2023: 1246-1268.

each city possessing a distinguishing quality. Urban identity refers to the unique, scientific, modern and cultural accumulation of the city; its social, economic and cultural functions and their reflection on the spatial organization of the city. Keleş emphasizes that urban identity is the historical, cultural and natural values reflected in urban settlements.¹⁶

The identities of cities acquire different characters through urban images and identities. This process is shaped by the characteristics observed in the city, the experiences of its inhabitants and what is attributed to the city. Urban identity includes the set of values and goals of the inhabitants and the idealizations attributed to the city. Identity reflects the potentials of the city and the realization of these potentials depends on the formation of urban consciousness.¹⁷ Urban identity is a distinctive reflection of a city's cultural accumulation, historical heritage, settlement pattern, social, economic and social understandings. The protection of urban identity is ensured by individuals who adopt urban culture and have urban consciousness. Keleş states that Scandinavian cities such as Oslo, Stockholm and Copenhagen offer successful examples in this regard, but there are not enough practices in Turkey to protect urban identity.¹⁸ Art can synthesize and effectively communicate complex scientific knowledge to audiences, provide new perspectives on problems, touch emotions and create a spirit of challenge. Art can mobilize through emotions, develop empathy, capture the multi-sensory nature of lived experiences and promote self-reflection and awareness of complex environmental changes. Therefore, it plays an important role to expand this field of art and have a major impact on public attitudes.¹⁹

Many contemporary artists express their personal concerns about environmental awareness through various creative art forms. These artists use different materials and techniques to draw attention to environmental problems and raise social awareness. Some artists contribute to raising environmental awareness by using waste materials that pollute the environment and disrupt aesthetics in their artistic productions to create installations, collages and assemblages. Especially artists who draw attention to the loss of identity and deterioration of the aesthetic values of cities draw the attention of the audience by emphasizing these issues in their works. These artists argue that the unique identities of cities should be preserved, and their aesthetic values should be regained, and they convey this message powerfully through their works. Such artistic approaches inspire viewers to gain a deeper understanding of the problems facing cities and to propose solutions.²⁰

The aim of this study is to draw attention to the loss of identity and deterioration of aesthetic values of cities. The main objectives of this study are to raise awareness of fourth year students of Trabzon University Faculty of Fine Arts and Design, Department of Painting about environmental problems and urban identity, and to give a message to the audience and the world through art. In this context, the study emphasizes the importance of protecting urban identity and aesthetic values and shows how these issues can be addressed through artistic approaches. The research tries to increase students' environmental awareness and develop consciousness about the need to preserve the unique identities of cities. It argues that art can play a significant role in maintaining the unique identities of cities and reclaiming their aesthetic values. This message is powerfully conveyed through the students' works. Such artistic approaches inspire viewers to understand more deeply the challenges faced by cities and to develop solutions, thereby increasing social awareness. The study aims to utilize the transformative power of art to foster consciousness about environmental issues and the preservation of urban identity and aesthetic values. To this end, students use various art practices to draw attention to environmental issues and express their artistic responses to the deterioration of urban identities. This approach aims to create

¹⁶ Keleş, 1999: 36-39

¹⁷ Sezik, 2016: 43-56.

¹⁸ Aydın, Savaşkan and Bayırbağ, 2022: 1106-1105.

¹⁹ Lesen, Rogan and Blum, 2016: 657-660.

²⁰ Marks, Chandler and Baldwin, 2017: 1307-1321.

awareness about the loss of identity and the degradation of values in cities by capturing the viewers' attention. In line with this primary objective, the following questions are explored:

Have the aesthetic values of your city deteriorated?

What is the power of art to draw attention to urban identity and environmental problems?

What steps can be taken to prevent the loss of your city's identity?

Which features of your city do you think should not be lost?

1. Methodology

In the spring semester of 2023-2024, the elective course titled "Plastic Meaning, Concept and Material Relationship" was held at Trabzon University Faculty of Fine Arts and Design, Department of Painting with the participation of 10 students. Within the scope of the course, the works of Ruşen Keleş, who is from Trabzon, on "city, city identity and the factors that cause the loss of identity of cities in Turkey" were discussed in detail and in this context, a wide range of ideas were exchanged with the students. In the first part of the course, Ruşen Keleş's research on urban identity and identity loss was analyzed, and the factors that cause the loss of identity faced by cities in Turkey were discussed comprehensively. At this stage, students gained a better understanding of what the concept of urban identity means and the factors that cause the loss of identity of cities. In the following sections of the course, examples of contemporary artists who deal with the loss of identity of cities are given and evaluations are made through the works and approaches of these artists. In-depth analyses are made on how art deals with the issues of urban identity and loss of identity and how it conveys messages to the audience. Following this theoretical background, each student prepared their own conceptual work and presented it with a supporting text. The students presented their own perspectives on the loss of urban identity and how they could express these perspectives through art. The conceptual works aimed to raise awareness on the issues of urban identity and identity loss and combined with the individual creative processes of the students to create original works of art. As a result, this course aimed to provide students with in-depth knowledge on urban identity and identity loss, while at the same time developing their ability to express this knowledge through art. The studies conducted within the scope of the course have shown how effective artistic approaches to urban identity and identity loss can be.

2. Examples from the Concept of the Merger of City and Art

Childe's ideas guided the way cities were formed. Childe noted that the social development and changes that took place in Egypt, Harappa and Mesopotamia around 5,000 years ago were revolutionary in the urban context.²¹ Although painting is considered an individual activity, it reflects the social structure. The art of painting, which emerged as a symbol of hunting practices in ancient times, became a symbol of spirituality and eternity in Ancient Egypt. During the Renaissance, themes such as life, love, war and marriage came to the fore. The intensive treatment of cities in works of art began in the Renaissance period, when the art of painting moved away from the influence of spiritual and mythological narratives and began to examine social issues. With the Industrial Revolution, the appearance and social structure of cities underwent a radical change. Industrialization, with the desire to benefit from the existing infrastructure of cities, led to the establishment of facilities close to city centers and the suffocation of these areas with noise and pollution.²²

In the modern period, artists have become free to move away from clichés and familiar methods and to deal with the subjects they desire. This freedom, seen in Duchamp's work, questioned the nature of art and the process of visualization of the art object. In contemporary art, the city is seen as one of the engines of global, social and economic revitalization rather than

²¹ Yeoh, 1993: 608

²² Bernie, 1988: 37-50.

an aesthetic dimension. Cities are reorganized within the scope of aestheticization of life and transformed through art. In this context, with the modernization process, cities have been shaped as required by capitalism, and the transformation of urban space has been shaped by capital movements.²³ Global capitalism has emphasized the importance of urban culture and contemporary art, and big cities have become showcases. As cities compete with each other to attract circulating capital, urban life enriched with contemporary art has become an important attraction. Museums, art exhibitions and biennials attract not only travelers, but also global capital, top management classes and qualified workforce. Therefore, urban spaces maintain their economic and cultural vitality by hosting contemporary art activities.²⁴ Cities, especially in the East, are seen as a reflection of human excellence and human existence in the world. Cities are designed as places where the quality of human life is encouraged and emphasized. Due to the importance and interest of the inhabitants of cities, the concept of "city" has been constantly emphasized and the representations and mental images of artists within it have found a place in various branches of art. In this context, artists who emphasize the loss of urban identity are sampled and their works are analyzed.²⁵

In his conceptual works, Najjar magnifies and reexamines the potential of the image through the constant redesign and superimposition of time and space. The artist merges future time with the present (Fig. 1). He prepares various thematic series with a conceptual perspective in his photography and video works. In one of these series, "Netropolis" (2003-2006), he uses images of many large cities to explore the transformation of megacities through concentrated information networks. From Najjar's perspective, "Netropolis" (2003-2006) offers a vision of what globalized cities will look like in the future. For these works, the artist was inspired by the 1926 film "Metropolis" directed by Fritz Lang. Inspired by the futuristic 21st century megacities created by Lang, Najjar has applied a digital future to urban living spaces and reconstructed them from today's perspective. By superimposing the complexity, crowding, ever-changing skyline and transformation of familiar megacities, the artist constructs the global face of the future. Najjar emphasizes that cities are constantly subject to change and that this cycle will continue unabated. In this transformation process, the face of cities will constantly change. However, an important issue in this process is that cities are becoming similar to each other, skyscrapers are becoming widespread, and these structures cause the loss of urban identities. Najjar's work addresses the need to preserve the unique identities of cities and the effects of globalization on these identities.²⁶



Fig. 1. Michael Najjar, "Netropolis-New York", lightjet-Print, 2004.²⁷

²³ Kuspit, 2004, 18-27.

²⁴ Geniş, 2007, 59-77.

²⁵ Batty and Longley, 1994: 7-57.

²⁶ Flusser, 2013: 11-12.

²⁷ <https://monovisions.com/michael-najjar-netropolis/>

Ferhat Özgür's works on the urban transformation projects in Ankara, together with his immediate surroundings and neighborhood residents, show that as globalization makes cities similar in form, it also makes the problems, injustices and difficulties experienced in these cities similar. The artist has constructed a diary consisting of a series of photographs and videos recording the speed of change in the city and the effects of urban transformation practices on the city and people. In addition, increasing cultural differences are also among the subjects the artist addresses. New building practices, which are claimed to include all the possibilities of modern urban life, turn into a practice that destroys urban identity by detaching people from their living spaces. Moving away from the logic and processes of civilization, cities become commodities to be marketed and evolve into rent areas where income from economic activities is symbolized (Fig. 2). The destruction of urban identity and the individual becoming the object of a fiction controlled by capital under the name of urban transformation projects constitute the basis of Ferhat Özgür's work. New development projects realized by removing old structures erase not only the physical structures but also the memory of that region. The artist emphasizes that cities have become full of skyscrapers that resemble each other, leading to the loss of urban identities. This similarity is among the negative effects of globalization and the loss of cities' unique characteristics.²⁸



Fig. 2. Ferhat Özgür, "Compassion", Photography, 2006.²⁹

In the Norazjan street of the Odlajan district in Tehran, Mirza Hamid's murals, executed in a dilapidated and abandoned area, present viewers with strange and surprising meanings. These red stylized paintings, rendered in a terracotta hue, appear to belong to the same era as the ancient, relaxed, free, and large motifs on the burnt and collapsed walls. This work integrates concepts of art, literature, the city, and philosophy. The artist (Fig. 3) forces the viewer to confront the past, emphasizing that these ruins possess a history and soul. The roots of real life in the neighborhood are hidden in the ruined and forgotten houses. The artist wishes for contemporary people to better perceive themselves and the world around them, reminding them of meanings forgotten over time (Shahmirzadi, 2003). Through his work exhibited among the ruins and wreckage, Mirza Hamid aims to connect viewers with the past, demonstrating that history exists in these places. As the old neighborhoods of the city are demolished and transformed into commercial areas and shopping centers, a new urban fabric emerges. The artist draws attention to the destruction of non-economically profitable living spaces, which are replaced with commercially lucrative ones. In this process, cities become filled with identical skyscrapers, leading to the loss of urban identities. The artist's works underscore

²⁸ Özgür, 2013: 17-19.

²⁹ <https://www.kolekta.com.tr/yapit/merhamet/>

that the transformation of cities solely for economic gain results in the loss of social memory and identity.³⁰



Fig. 3. Mirza Hamid, "Odlojan", Paint on the wall, 2019.³¹

The processes of globalization and neoliberalism have led to significant changes in the structure of many cities around the world since the 20th century. While some circles have gained economically from these processes, unfortunately the historical heritage of many regions has been negatively affected by this transformation. Istanbul, which has attracted attention for centuries with its complex and mysterious urban layout, rare crafts, cuisine and architectural traditions, has recently been undergoing rapid change. Migration from Anatolia and other parts of the world has caused the city to lose its distinctive identity, and long-established traditions and crafts are in danger of disappearing. Yılmaz's work titled "Dirty Box" (Fig. 4) vividly illustrates how Istanbul's recent urban transformations have led to the disappearance of the Ahi tradition. The artist has photographed artisans such as tinsmiths, blacksmiths, and carpenters who work with knowledge passed down from master to apprentice. These photographs are displayed in a simple wooden diorama that functions like a projector, projecting the city's map onto the wall. In this way, various lost or disappearing crafts of the city are presented to the viewer.³² This work highlights the issue of cities becoming filled with identical skyscrapers, leading to the loss of their unique identities. Istanbul's rapidly changing urban structure, driven by globalization and neoliberal policies, results in the obliteration of

³⁰ Fathalizadeh Alamdari, 2022: 66.

³¹ <https://bitamontazer.com/stories/میرزا-حمید/>

³² Örer, 2017: 369.

historical and cultural values for economic gain. This transformation threatens not only the physical fabric of the city but also its social memory and identity.³³



Fig. 4. Bilal Yılmaz, "Dirty Box", installation, 2017.³⁴

The works of artists who delve deeply into the impacts of globalization and neoliberal policies on cities are significant. Artists like Yılmaz and Mirza Hamid visually and symbolically express the urban transformation processes of cities and the effects of these processes on cultural and historical fabric in their works. Yılmaz's "Dirty Box," documenting the changes in Istanbul's urban life, and Mirza Hamid's murals in abandoned areas of Tehran, bridge the past and present of cities, reminding us of the cultural heritage and social memory that are on the verge of being forgotten. These artists' works criticize the changes in the identity and life fabric of cities while demonstrating how art can be used as a tool in these transformation processes and play a role in preserving social memory.

3. Analysis of Students Art Works

The definition of urban identity loss by Ruşen Keleş serves as a fundamental resource for guiding and evaluating students' artistic works. In this section, works referred to as "Student Artwork 1" " Student Artwork 2" and similar names have been developed by examining Keleş's text on urban identity loss. These works are analyzed in terms of the conceptual dimension of art and the use of materials. The applications carried out by the students, inspired by these works, allow them to understand the structure of art pieces and assess their aesthetic values. In this process, an in-depth analysis is conducted on how visual elements are used in students' works and their impact on composition. Based on Keleş's findings on urban identity and identity loss, students explore the cultural and historical fabric of cities through artistic perspectives, investigating the dimensions of these changes reflected in art. These projects help students develop not only their theoretical knowledge but also their practical art skills. They gain a better understanding of how urban identity loss can be expressed through art and the effects of these processes on social memory.

"Student Artwork 1", a work made from fabrics using blue around the edges and yellow in the center showcases a composition of overlapping buildings with faces interspersed among them (Fig. 5). This piece depicts buildings on clouds brought by modernization and the expressionless faces spilling out of these buildings, representing an unexpected increase in awareness during this process. The work emphasizes the transformation of the idealized modern reality into a

³³ Çebi and Kavukcu, 2024: 223.

³⁴ Örer, 2017: 368.

frightening mechanism. The fabrics used in the work symbolize the cultural losses that will be covered and disappear over time. The connection between Ruşen Keleş's concept of urban identity loss and this work focuses on the impact of modernization and globalization processes on the identity of cities. Keleş states that cities lose their historical and cultural identities within modernization processes, resulting in cities becoming homogeneous, identity-less structures.³⁵ The overlapping buildings and expressionless faces in the student's work symbolize the anonymizing effects of modernization and the loss of urban identity. In this context, the buildings and faces in the work metaphorically reflect the process of urban identity loss and the disappearance of cultural richness. The depiction with fabrics addresses the theme of cultural values being covered and lost over time, aligning with Keleş's findings on urban identity loss. The piece critiques the homogenizing effects imposed on cities by modernization and globalization processes, while simultaneously emphasizing the importance of preserving cultural and historical richness.



Fig. 5. Student Artwork 1, Mixed Media on Paper, 20x30 cm, 2024.³⁶

“Student Artwork 2”, buildings made of polymer clay are placed in a grass-covered pot (Fig. 6). The colorful house in the center represents old houses, while the surrounding tall rectangles symbolize modern concrete buildings. Modernization offers many advantages that affect architectural design and building structures, but it also brings numerous disadvantages. Compared to traditional architecture, modern buildings are constructed with more materials such

³⁵ Keleş, 1994: 277.

³⁶ Author's personal archive.

as glass, metal, and concrete, disrupting environmental balance. The intense use of these materials leads to the overconsumption of natural resources and issues of environmental sustainability. This project illustrates how the dreams we nurtured and grew in our childhood are engulfed and erased by weeds in the concrete jungle brought about by identity loss. The metaphorical structure of the work highlights the impact of modernization and urban transformation on the natural environment and historical fabric. The connection between Ruşen Keleş's concept of urban identity loss and this work lies in the exploration of the effects of modernization and globalization processes on the historical and cultural identities of cities. In the student's work, the colorful house in the center symbolizes the disappearing traditional structure, while the surrounding concrete buildings represent the homogenizing effects of modernization and identity loss. In this context, the use of polymer clay and grass in the project critically reflects the environmental and cultural impacts of modernization. The concrete buildings around the traditional house symbolize the negative effects of modern architecture on environmental and cultural sustainability, aligning with Keleş's observations on urban identity loss. The work emphasizes the identity loss of cities and the disappearance of cultural richness in the process of modernization while drawing attention to the importance of environmental and cultural sustainability.



Fig. 6. Student Artwork 2, Polymer Sculptures Placed in Flower Pots, 20x15x14 cm, 2024.³⁷

“Student Artwork 3”, detailed windows of a building are drawn using acrylic paint on MDF. While the majority of the windows are depicted in a repetitive manner, two windows are illustrated in the style used in old houses. This project addresses the changes that occur in life with the development of technology and how traditional values are being replaced by new ideas and innovations. The student emphasizes that we are being drawn into a monotonous lifestyle, with everything starting to resemble one another in set patterns. The work highlights the monotony brought by the new era (Fig. 7). In a period when the houses we lived in had different colors and features, the fact that today's houses have become similar or the same is brought to the forefront in this work. This monotony is not only evident in architecture but also in education, clothing, social life, and media. The student symbolically represents this change and monotony with identical windows, while the different and old-style windows expose the loss of traditional values. In the project, the repeated identical windows represent the homogenizing effects of modernization and the loss of identity, while the two different

³⁷ Author's personal archive.

windows draw attention to the disappearance of traditional structures and cultural heritage. In this context, the use of MDF and acrylic paint in the project reflects a critical perspective on the impact of modernization on architecture. The identical windows symbolize the monotony of modern architecture and its negative impacts on environmental sustainability, aligning with Keleş's observations on the loss of urban identity. The project emphasizes the identity loss of cities and the disappearance of cultural richness during the modernization process while highlighting the importance of environmental and cultural sustainability. Thus, the student project concretizes the consequences of urban identity loss and cultural homogenization, delivering a thought-provoking message to the audience.



Fig. 7. Student Artwork 3, Akrylik on MDF, 20x20 cm, 2024.³⁸

“Student Artwork 4”, a composition consisting of 22 photographs, text, and a jacket is presented. This work depicts a human figure dressed in contemporary clothing in an old, abandoned house. The abandoned house symbolizes the loss of old urban textures and the usurpation of cities by contemporary events. In this artwork (Fig. 8), the body is considered a temporary temple for the soul; our thoughts, emotions, memories of the past, and the essence of our being are housed in our souls. The traces we leave in life are connected to both our bodies and our souls. The work emphasizes the soul's search for belonging and suggests that this search does not mean a lack of a sense of belonging. The idea of accepting that the soul belongs to everything and nothing, and thus freeing past traces to experience a limitless sense of belonging with its own essence, is explored. The artist presents the conflict between the old and the new, combining the traces of the past with the identity-erasing effects of the modern world. In the student's work, the abandoned house and the human figure in contemporary clothing represent how modernization erases the identities of cities and the loss of cultural heritage. In this context, the placement of photographs, text, and the jacket in the piece critically reflects the identity loss brought by urban transformation and the loss of a sense of belonging. The transient nature of the body and soul parallels the constantly changing and identity-less structures of cities. The abandonment of old houses and the use of modern clothing illustrate how modernization destroys cultural and historical fabrics and how, in this process, people lose their sense of belonging.

³⁸ Author's personal archive.



Fig. 8. Student Artwork 4, Photography Installation, 20x20 cm, 2024.³⁹

“Student Artwork 5”, a composition consisting of three photographs featuring details of the Çifte Minareli Medrese in Erzurum is presented. The background of the photographs is left white, aiming to draw the viewer's attention entirely to the old texture. This work emphasizes the loss of urban identity under the influence of modernism, where unique characters are being replaced by monotonous and standardized spaces. Modernism has encouraged standardization and commercialization in cities. This process has led to the emergence of cities filled with the same stores, chain restaurants, and apartment blocks, resulting in the disappearance of local cultures' unique identities. Consequently, cities have become replicas of each other, significantly reducing originality and diversity. This situation reveals the deep and destructive impact of modernism on urban identity. The influence of modernism has increased the tendency to destroy historical structures in cities. Demolitions and reconstructions carried out without respect for local heritage have caused cities to lose their character and soul. The replacement of historical buildings with modern structures has severed the connection between cities and their past, weakening urban memory. In the student's work, focusing on the details of the Çifte Minareli mosque highlights the importance of preserving this historical building and, consequently, the city's unique identity. This piece (Fig. 9) critically reflects the identity loss experienced in cities due to modernism and the replacement of historical structures with monotonous modern buildings. The white background allows the viewer's attention to be fully drawn to the details of the historical building, taking a stand against the identity loss brought by modernism.



Fig. 9. Student Artwork 5, Photography Installation, 20x20 cm, 2024.⁴⁰

³⁹ Author's personal archive.

⁴⁰ Author's personal archive.

“Student Artwork 6”, a camellia in the garden of Trabzon University Faculty of Fine Arts and Design was wrapped in plastic bags and a rose in a glass was placed in the center. This work (Fig. 10) reflects the globalization of the world order and the strengthening of neo-liberal policies after the Cold War period, which led people to become more disconnected from each other. The increase in free trade, privatization and reduction of trade barriers within government policies, supported the development of transportation and communication technology, and increased the fear of living space in cities. This process has resulted in people becoming socio-economically polarized and more disconnected from each other.⁴¹ In many parts of the world, urbanization has led to the emergence of closed and restricted settlement forms in the name of identity loss. This spatial disconnect has led to residential settlements becoming more fragmented within cities, with shrinking physical boundaries and a growing distance from nature. In this context, the relationship of modern life with nature has gradually weakened and individuals have begun to watch nature in closed spaces such as glass balconies. This is a reflection of the social and spatial segregation that has emerged as a result of neo-liberal policies and globalization. The invention of glass balcony systems was realized by Werner Jörg in Switzerland at the end of the Cold War period. These systems, which he developed after his customers wanted to add closed space to their balconies, became more widespread with the pandemic in 2020.⁴² During the pandemic, home living spaces have become more prioritized for people and the tendency to move away from nature has increased. While for modern generations, whose ancestors were nomadic societies, being in touch with nature was a familiar and longed for way of life, today the closure of even balconies causes these generations to disconnect from nature. In this context, it can be said that modern man, as Davila states, has become disenchanted with the truth and has taken refuge behind glass, and has made a glass armor for his own heart. It can be questioned whether sunlight alone is enough for the flowers he grows inside. This work is directly related to Ruşen Keleş's concept of loss of urban identity, with an approach that criticizes the loss of urban identity and a lifestyle disconnected from nature. In the student's work, the wrapping of the camellia with bags and the rose placed in the center symbolize how the natural and cultural texture of cities is destroyed in line with the demands of modern life. This work conveys a strong message to the audience by emphasizing the loss of urban identity and the negative effects of modernization processes on nature.



Fig. 10. Student Artwork 6, İnstlation, 220x180x300 cm, 2024.⁴³

⁴¹ Bahçeci, 2017: 37.

⁴² Akyüz and Balkan, 2024: 14.

⁴³ Author's personal archive.

“Student Artwork 7”, photographs of concrete buildings set within the green landscapes between Trabzon and Rize are presented from a critical perspective. These images (Fig. 11) not only harm nature but also destroy the unique texture of these regions. The processes of modernization and urbanization lead to the rapid concretization of natural areas and the loss of urban identities. These concrete structures placed within natural landscapes cause the disappearance of traditional and natural textures, threatening the unique identity of the region. This situation arises as a result of globalization and neoliberal policies; free trade and privatization policies lead to the overuse of natural resources and the weakening of environmental sustainability. The photographs in the student’s project criticize the destruction of nature and the monotony brought by concrete structures, emphasizing the negative impacts of this transformation on urban identity. Consequently, the concrete buildings within the natural landscapes between Trabzon and Rize provide a concrete example of urban identity loss. This work reveals the destructive effects of modernization and globalization on local cultures and natural areas. Thus, it highlights the significance of Ruşen Keleş's emphasis on the loss of urban identity.



Fig. 11. Student Artwork 7, Photography, 35x50 cm, 2024.⁴⁴

“Student Artwork 8”, video art is utilized to draw attention to the loss of privacy in modern life. The video features two superimposed images, presented in time-lapse to symbolize the rapid passage of modern life and the gradual erosion of privacy. In the first image, the swift flow of modern life is emphasized, while in the second image, the presence of a stranger illustrates how our homes have become easily observable. The background sounds of birds highlight the natural sounds that are no longer heard in modern life, pointing to the lost sense of nature and privacy. This work (Fig. 12) depicts how our privacy slowly erodes with the process of modernization, showing that in urbanized living environments, every building, apartment, and room silently witnesses different lives. Modern structures remind us that we are strangers within the walls of the places we live, leading to the weakening of neighborly ties and increased alienation among people. The use of curtains and windows in the background of the piece emphasizes the warmth and privacy of domestic life, while the use of old materials raises the question of how "modern" modern life truly is. This work can be directly related to Ruşen Keleş's emphasis on the loss of urban identity, demonstrating how urban identity is obliterated by modernization and globalization processes. Keleş asserts that cities lose their unique identities, becoming monotonous and standardized. The images and sounds used in the student's

⁴⁴ Author’s personal archive.

project critique the loss of privacy and the monotony of modern life, powerfully illustrating how urban identity is lost.



Fig. 12. Student Artwork 8, Video Art, 2024.⁴⁵

“Student Artwork 9”, a three-story concrete building from contemporary life is depicted on canvas using acrylic paint. The artwork portrays a person who, longing for the old way of life, tries to satisfy this yearning by looking at old houses amidst the bleakness of the new modern life. It reflects a situation where feelings of happiness, joy, unity, and togetherness are lost in modern life, causing the individual to feel trapped in their own world. Although these two lifestyles strive to coexist collectively, the opportunities and ostentation offered by modern life distance people from these emotions and lead to a loss of identity. In the artwork, identity loss is associated with the disappearance of certain statuses in an individual's life, being seen as insignificant, and self-isolation. Modernized buildings cause people to lose their old lifestyles and the emotional bonds that came with those lifestyles. The conveniences and showiness of modern life drive people away from collective values and push them toward individual isolation. The student's work powerfully expresses how modern buildings and lifestyles weaken individuals' emotional and social bonds, leading to a loss of identity. This piece (Fig. 13) addresses how the monotony and isolation brought by modern life contribute to the loss of urban identity. Aligned with Ruşen Keleş's observations, this work reveals the negative impacts of modernization on individuals and how cities lose their unique identities. Preserving urban identity and reclaiming the emotional values of the old way of life are seen as crucial steps in coping with the challenges brought by modern life.

⁴⁵ Author's personal archive.

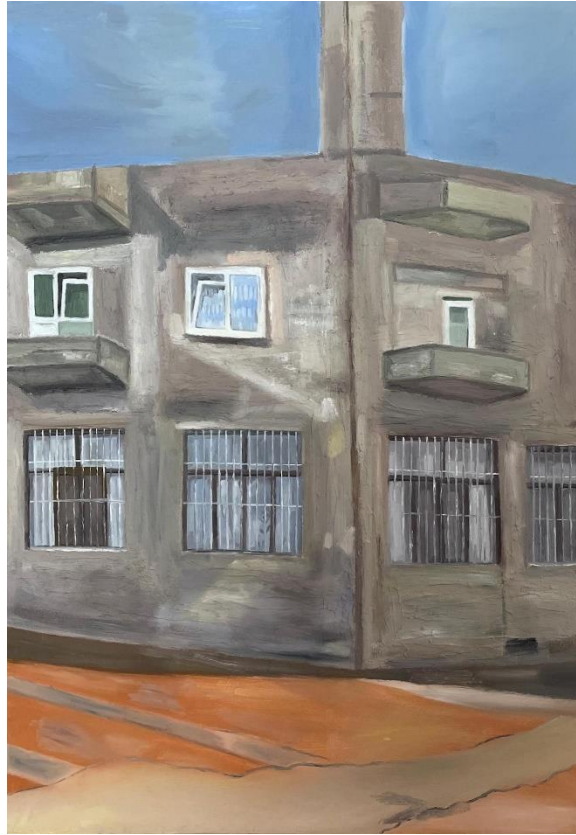


Fig. 13. Student Artwork 9, Acrylic on Canvas, 50x30 cm, 2024.⁴⁶

“Student Artwork 10”, a concrete block is wrapped with a red sash. This work emphasizes concrete as one of the fundamental elements causing the loss of urban identity. The concrete block, representing modern urbanization, is depicted as a material that destroys the unique identities and historical textures of cities. The red sash, a traditional element tied around the waists of virgin brides in Turkey, symbolizes the loss of identity brought about by modernization and the dependence on traditional values. This piece (Fig. 14) critically examines the loss of identity and the inability to break away from traditional values that accompany the modernization process. The representation of the concrete block as a symbol of modern urbanization highlights the factors leading to the erosion of urban identities, while the red sash illustrates how traditional values persist amidst the modernization process. The artwork underscores the necessity for systematic and planned modernization to prevent the erosion of urban identity. The student's work concretizes these observations by demonstrating how unplanned and unsystematic modernization can damage urban identity and how traditional values persist. This work advocates for the preservation of urban identity and emphasizes the need for more planned and systematic modernization processes. By doing so, both urban identity can be preserved, and traditional values can be maintained more healthily during the modernization process.

⁴⁶ Author's personal archive.



Fig. 14. Student Artwork 10, Beton Blok, 85x30x30 cm, 2024.⁴⁷

The students' works adopt a critical approach to the issues of modernization and loss of urban identity. The works emphasize the destructive effects of modern urbanization on traditional textures and identities. The works of the students overlap with the findings of Ruşen Keleş on the loss of urban identity. The unplanned and unsystematic progress of modernization processes causes cities to lose their identities and become monotonous. These studies emphasize the importance of preserving urban identity by addressing both the problems of modern life and the commitment to traditional values. In this context, the students' works reveal the necessity of sustainability and preservation of urban identity by looking at the processes of urbanization and modernization from a critical perspective.

Conclusion

The student works examined in this article reveal creative and critical approaches that deeply explore the themes of urban identity loss. Inspired by Ruşen Keleş's definitions and analyses of urban identity and its loss, the students have utilized this theoretical foundation in their practical projects, effectively illustrating the destructive effects of modernization on the unique identities of cities. The student works critique the monotony and uniformity brought about by modern urbanization from the perspective of the loss of traditional values and unique identities. Each piece, ranging from fabric-based works to polymer clay buildings, reflects the impact of urbanization on people and culture through various artistic expressions. The works using photography and video art vividly depict the effects of modern life on privacy and the loss of historical textures in urban spaces. The fabric collage with expressionless faces critiques the dehumanizing and identity-erasing effects of modernization, aligning with Keleş's observations on urban identity loss. The oil paintings depict the process of urbanization and the dramatic impact of modern architecture on traditional textures and identity loss. The sculpture made of polymer clay and grass metaphorically represents the environmental and cultural effects of modernization with a colorful old house surrounded by tall modern buildings. The work involving a gazebo wrapped in plastic bags reflects the changes in personal privacy and social relations using the frequently seen glass balconies in modern cities. Glass balconies symbolize both isolation from the outside world and transparency and surveillance.

⁴⁷ Author's personal archive.

Works utilizing photographic prints highlight the threats modern developments pose to historical sites and emphasize the importance of preserving cultural heritage, paralleling Keleş's views on urban identity loss. Notably, the piece with a red sash tied around a concrete block illustrates how structural changes brought by modernization intertwine with traditional values and the resulting identity loss. This work emphasizes the damage to urban identity caused by unplanned and unsystematic modernization processes. Similarly, the photographic work focusing on the Çifte Minareli Medrese in Erzurum demonstrates how historical structures are threatened by the impacts of modernization. In this context, the students' artistic approaches raise awareness about the sustainability of modern urbanization and traditional values, encouraging contemplation on these issues. By examining Ruşen Keleş's work on urban identity loss, the students have enhanced their knowledge and awareness, adding depth to their artistic creations.

Consequently, these artistic works emphasize the importance of preserving urban identity and managing modernization processes in a more systematic and sensitive manner. These pieces serve as significant tools for maintaining the identity of cities and managing modernization more consciously. The knowledge and experiences gained by the students in this process will help shape them into more sensitive and aware urban planners and artists in the future. In conclusion, the student works underscore the need for more systematic and sensitive management of modernization processes to create more livable and unique cities in the future. The importance of such artistic and academic endeavors is paramount in achieving this goal.

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