

A NEW APPROACH IN SCULPTURE EDUCATION: THE CASE OF EXPERIMENTAL SCULPTURE STUDIO

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ABSTRACT

This study presents an overview of the phenomenon of Experimental Art through the example of the Experimental Sculpture Studio, as an alternative to the Wood, Stone, Metal and Jewelry workshops within the Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University Faculty of Fine Arts, Department of Sculpture. At the beginning of the 21st century, many universities gathered their education under the title of 'Visual Arts' instead of providing education for a single discipline. A transformation has become inevitable regarding sculpture education during this period when vertical and disciplinary education models around the world have been replaced by horizontal and interdisciplinary education. In this context, the idea that a new model is needed for art education constitutes the main axis of this study. In the study, firstly, the term 'experimental art' was clarified and then the importance of experimentality in the context of art education was emphasized by, starting from Kubler's idea of open and closed sequences. In the fourth part of the study, the education programme of Black Mountain College, one of the first institutions associated with Experimental Art, is examined, followed by an explanation of the working principles of Experimental Sculpture Studio, along with an evaluation of selected student works.

Keywords: *Experimental art, Sequence, Art of Sculpture, Sculpture education*

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HEYKEL SANATI EĞİTİMİNDE YENİ BİR YAKLAŞIM: DENEYSEL HEYKEL ATÖLYESİ ÖRNEĞİ

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ÖZET

Bu çalışma Deneysel Sanat olgusuna, Mimar Sinan Güzel Sanatlar Üniversitesi Güzel Sanatlar Fakültesi Heykel Bölümü bünyesinde, Ahşap, Taş, Metal ve Takı Atölyelerine alternatif olarak açılan Deneysel Heykel Atölyesi örneği üzerinden bir bakış sunmaktadır. 21. yüzyılın başlarında birçok üniversite belirli bir disipline yönelik eğitim vermek yerine programlarını Görsel Sanatlar başlığı altında toplamıştır. Dünya genelinde dikey eksenli, disiplinler eğitim modellerinin yerini yatay eksenli disiplinlerarası eğitime bıraktığı bu dönemde heykel sanatı eğitimi açısından bir dönüşüm kaçınılmaz hale gelmiştir. Bu bağlamda sanat eğitimi açısından yeni bir modele ihtiyaç olduğu düşüncesi bu çalışmanın ana eksenini oluşturmaktadır. Çalışmada öncelikle deneysel sanat ifadesi açıklığa kavuşturulmaya çalışılmış, daha sonra ise Kubler'in açık ve kapalı sekanslar düşüncesinden yola çıkılarak deneyselliğin sanat eğitimi bağlamında önemi vurgulanmaya çalışılmıştır. Çalışmanın dördüncü bölümünde Deneysel Sanat denilince ilk akla gelen kurumlardan biri olan Black Mountain College'in eğitim programı incelenmiş; ardından Deneysel Heykel Atölyesi'nin çalışma prensiplerine yer verilerek seçili öğrenci çalışmaları üzerinden bir değerlendirme yapılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Deneysel sanat, Sekans, Heykel sanatı, Heykel eğitimi

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1. INTRODUCTION

This study examines the Experimental Sculpture Studio, which has been operational for seven years. More specifically, it investigates whether the Experimental Sculpture Studio at Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University can offer a replicable and conceptually grounded model that emphasizes material engagement, critical inquiry, and student-led problem-solving as core components of contemporary sculpture education. Methodologically, the study is grounded in a qualitative case study approach, drawing on workshop observations and the analysis of both student texts and artworks created over the past two years. The aim is to uncover the intellectual foundations of the workshop, particularly through the students' work. While experimental sculpture studies are conducted in the sculpture departments of various universities in Türkiye, there is a need for a focused investigation into this subject. This lack stems from the absence of a comparable structural and operational framework for the workshop program, which has the potential to serve as a consistent model for sculpture education. The data and findings of this study should be considered as preliminary research that may pave the way for future large-scale investigations, enable comparative analysis with other experimental practices, and contribute to the formulation of a more advanced educational model. Moreover, if achievable, the primary aim of this study is to highlight the significance of experimentation in art, as it may stimulate essential discourse on the modernization and transformation of sculpture education in Türkiye.

2. THE ISSUE OF EXPERIMENTAL ART

In his article titled “What Do We Mean by Experimental Art?”, Derek Attridge approaches this question from multiple perspectives and argues that “if we can gain a sense of how the term is generally used, we may be in a position to advance to a more theoretically grounded account” (Attridge, 2018:1). He explains that the term “*Experimental*” may be understood purely on the basis of the scientific model. That is to say, art may be used to test various hypotheses, or artists and scientists may work together to produce results that aim to illuminate the nature of reality or instruct the general public” (Attridge, 2018:1). However, Attridge also notes that ‘this rather literal meaning’ of the term experimental is not what is usually meant by experimental art. Attridge (2018:2) clarifies the issue as follows:

...The term may gain some authority from its overtones of hard science, but does not usually imply an actual engagement with science and scientists. The etymology of “experiment” takes us back to the Latin verb *experiri*, to test or try, and its associated noun *experimentum*, a trial, test, or proof; and the word in English of course predates the development of scientific method. (The earliest recorded

examples of “experimental” mean “having experience of” or “based on experience” — and we may note that the French equivalent of “experiment” is *expérience*.) What does connect the modern scientific and artistic uses of the word is the sense of trial-and-error, of testing a hypothesis — but in the world of the arts, an experiment is not controlled in the same way as it is in scientific practice (a point I will come back to) nor is it a requirement that the experiment be repeatable by others.

From this perspective, it becomes unmistakably apparent how crucial the experimental quality of art is in art education as a methodological approach.

On the other hand, Attridge begins his article by stating that “the experimental quality of art [can] rather be understood as a matter of degree of innovation’, but then states that ‘when we consider historical processes, it becomes evident that the term *experimental* does not simply mean *degree of innovation*” and that “we need to complicate our approach to the idea of experimentation in art” (Attridge, 2018:9). In the subsequent sections of his article, he seeks to associate the concept of ‘experimental’ with the term ‘inventive’. According to him, all works worthy of being considered art are experimental in nature. Accomplished artists cultivate creative processes that push the boundaries of art, take risks and move towards the unknown. At this point, Attridge supports his argument by referencing J. M. Coetzee’s insights on the writing process, quoting him as follows:

It is naïve to think that writing is a simple two-stage process: first you decide what you want to say, then you say it. On the contrary, as all of us know, you write because you do not know what you want to say. Writing reveals to you what you wanted to say in the first place. [...] What it reveals (or asserts) may be quite different from what you thought (or half-thought) you wanted to say in the first place (Coetzee 1992, cited in Attridge).

Based on this quote, Attridge argues that the production of art follows a similar process, wherein the artist constructs their work through exploration and experimentation, rather than the pursuit of a predetermined objective from the outset. By examining the varied contextual applications of the concept of ‘experiment’, Attridge states that it is difficult to define this term in a completely consistent manner. According to him, a paradigmatic experimental work of art is one that exists outside the mainstream, is highly innovative in form, yet is not always regarded as entirely successful. Such a work reflects the artist’s trial-and-error process and is recognized by niche audiences rather than the general public. However, only the first criterion—being outside the mainstream—can be considered a determining factor. This is because, over time, many works of art that are characterized as experimental today may eventually become part of the mainstream.

Here, Attridge not only presents a unique perspective but also outlines a methodology that can be termed artistic research. He emphasizes the necessity of fostering contemporary experiments that engage with the unrealized potential excluded by culture, which Derrida refers to as invention. While this methodology shares commonalities with

scientific research methods, it diverges in that it necessitates an examination of the qualities of the artistic process itself, rather than focusing solely on the outcomes.

3. OPEN AND CLOSED SEQUENCES

Stefanie Stallschus, 'A Theory of Experimentation in Art? Reading Kubler's History of Art after Rheinberger's Experimental Systems', asserts that Rheinberger, in Kubler's analysis, identifies a parallel between the emergence of innovation in the fields of art and science. She notes that innovation in both spheres "is not the product of a brilliant plan, but rather the perception of one option in an existing framework, which is given through earlier artworks" (Stallschus, 2013:18). Stallschus (2013:18) provides the following insights:

In experimental research, new insights cannot be produced by orientation towards a goal, but only in the recognition of possibilities ensuing from pre-existing processes. Concrete questions and answers are clarified only by passing through a whole system of experiments and controls. Innovation is more the product of chance or a by-product of the process of repetition than it is an invention already intended beforehand (Rheinberger 1997, cited in Stallschus).

Similarly, Konrad Bitterli, in his essay 'Sculptural Bodies: Lying, Hanging, Unfurling... Situating Christoph Weber's Sculptural Works', states that contemporary art is more interested in expanding its content and materials rather than moving beyond the conventional artistic canon. According to Bitterli:

Artistic approaches no longer define themselves in terms of bold gestures or radical breaks with tradition, but instead build naturally and smoothly on the formal research of previous generations, linking it to other artistic experiences and creating works informed by unique sensibilities of their own (Bitterli, 2015: 26).

This perspective may lead us directly to Kubler's discussion of the concept of formal sequence, which offers an alternative framework to traditional approaches that categorize art history into distinct periods. In this context, Stallschus emphasizes that Kubler advocates for the consideration of works of art and objects within a framework of inter-related processes, rather than evaluating them solely within a specific style or period. By borrowing the term sequence from a mathematical context, Kubler facilitates an interpretation of art history based on relational dynamics among objects and events, rather than adhering to a linear progression model.

This approach seeks to depart from traditional models of biological development and normative discourses, such as the early and late stages in art history. Consequently, inventions and artistic innovations are not regarded as isolated events; rather, they are viewed as elements in continuous interaction within a comprehensive historical process. While Kubler acknowledges that radical innovations, which he calls prime objects, can

play a decisive role in historical processes, he primarily emphasizes the impact of these innovations within their sequence and their role in long-term transformations.

In this context, Kubler's understanding of formal sequences allows us to view art history as a dynamic and ever-changing structure, rather than as static periods. He argues that artistic production and inventions are not merely products of specific periods; instead, they should be considered part of broader historical shifts. By providing a critical approach to the traditional narratives used to explain innovation and change in art, this perspective serves as a new methodological tool for understanding the role of objects in historical continuity.

"A prerequisite for Kubler's thinking about the history of art in sequences lies in the problem-oriented conception of the artwork as the expression of artistic action. In this perspective every meaningful artwork appears as a hard-won solution to some problem" (Kubler 1962, cited in Stallschus). Consequently, for each work of art, one can identify previous or subsequent solutions as part of a problem-solution framework. These solutions create a chain of interrelated responses, which Kubler refers to as a sequence.

In *Shape of Time: Remarks on History of Things*, Kubler categorizes the concept of sequence into two types: open and closed. According to him (1962: 31):

When problems cease to command active attention as deserving of new solutions, the sequence of solutions is stable during the period of inaction. But any past problem is capable of reactivation under new conditions. Aboriginal Australian bark-painting¹ is an open sequence in the twentieth century, because its possibilities are still being expanded by living artists, but Greek vasepainting is an arrested sequence because the modern painter needed to renew his art at "primitive" sources rather than among the images of the Hellenic world. The transparent animals and humans of Australian painting, and the rhythmic figures of African tribal sculpture correspond more closely to contemporary theories of reality than to the opaque and unequivocal body forms of Greek art.

This concept holds significant importance in the training program of the Experimental Sculpture Studio. Modernist sculpture often features numerous open sequences. For instance, the question of whether a sculpture requires a pedestal continues to be a pertinent issue for many artists. The pedestal itself is also scrutinized as an ideological entity in contemporary sculpture. To illustrate this with a contemporary example, we can consider Ceylan Öztürk's *Dreaming Pedestal*, which received the Swiss Art Awards in 2022. Öztürk provides the following commentary about the work:

¹ Bark painting is an Australian cultural and aesthetic practice that has been around for at least 50,000 years. Throughout the Arnhem territory, figurative and totemic designs have been painted on bark shelters built for shelter during the wet season. To create a bark painting, a single panel of bark is cut from barked eucalyptus trees and the sheets are brought to the artist. The thin inner bark is then pressed with stones and fired.

An unerect pedestal is lying on the floor. It died or it's tired. Surely, it gave up to handle, to carry, to bring the work on an eye level. Can't handle a work or won't handle the work. A dream itself or it is dreaming, like how one cannot run, cannot grasp, nor cannot manage a task in a dream. Pedestal becomes the artwork itself, without the duty - can't handle or won't handle. It releases itself: not pretending a symmetry nor an erection to be a device, a mediator; but being itself with a significant and critical gesture. Is it itself now? Can it be a self today? It is not its owned form anymore; but it is, but a new one.

The dreaming pedestal melts down the white modernism, an only pedestal that not serving to the market, in the fair.

On the other hand, Arlene Shechet, in an interview with Sheena Wagstaff, articulates her skeptical perspective on the pedestal problem with the following statement:

Basically when I went to art school, everything, absolutely everything, had to be on the floor. There was no such thing as sculpture on a pedestal. That was just a complete no-no. I mean, Donald Judd could sort of get away with building things above the waist, but we were all scratching around on the floor. With Carl Andre, partly. I'm an artist because I like resistance. I mean, Louise Bourgeois actually had a lot to say about resistance, and I'm drawn to breaking the rules. And so if the rule is set out, that makes me completely fascinated by what's wrong with the pedestal. I mean, when I was a student, I was under the thumb of the culture of the professors who were telling us what the truth was. But as soon as I got out, I was drawn to the idea of actually making things that needed a pedestal. And then when I realized they needed a pedestal, I had to question, well, what is the pedestal actually doing? It's allowing or encouraging us to see a work at a certain height. It's not just the material. It's the height. It's how your eye, how your body meets the body of the sculpture. And I do think it becomes a body-to-body experience. And it's that body-to-body experience that sculpture of all kinds represents. It's a physical encounter, and the artist needs to decide how high, how low, how is it going to be encountered. If the artist doesn't take that on, somebody else will.

Öztürk's ideological interpretation of the pedestal, combined with Shechet's oppositional stance, underscores that the pedestal remains a site of ongoing critical dialogue in contemporary sculpture.

4. EXAMPLE OF BLACK MOUNTAIN COLLEGE

It can be argued that the experimental method in the field of art serves as a means of generating new solutions to specific artistic challenges, whether referred to as innovation or invention. The educational model of Black Mountain College plays a crucial role in the development of the experimental method. In her book *The experimenters: chance and design at Black Mountain College*, Eva Díaz argues that the 'language of experimentation continues to play an important role in contemporary artistic practice' and asserts that 'the ideas and terms advanced by Albers, Cage, and Fuller serve as important reference points. Yet the conflicts that arose among their competing ideas of the experiment have not been clarified' (Díaz, 2015: 1). Black Mountain College was established shortly after the closure of the Bauhaus in 1933, with the holistic objective of educating students as both human beings and citizens. The pedagogical approach of Black Mountain College

was influenced by the work of philosopher John Dewey, which emphasized art education. The founders of the college sought to eliminate hierarchical distinctions between students and faculty, as well as between faculty and administration. Despite its brief existence, Black Mountain College's innovative educational *experiment* was shaped by its minimalist structure, ideological orientation, and economic imperatives. In his book, Díaz (Díaz, 2015: 5) presents the following insights regarding the primary educators at Black Mountain College:

Focusing on the rival methodologies of experimental forms as elaborated and practiced by key teachers Albers, Cage, and Fuller is not to say they were the only Black Mountain faculty that appealed to experimentation, but study of their work will help excavate three of the most clearly articulated positions of the period. For Albers, an experiment “embrace[d] all means opposing disorder and accident.” It represented a careful procedure of testing socially and historically constructed perceptual understandings in art against deceptive optical stimuli. To Cage, experimentation exceeded patterns of reasoning so as to unleash greater indeterminacy. As he stated, “The word ‘experimental’ is apt, providing it is understood not as descriptive of an act to be later judged in terms of success or failure, but simply as an act the outcome of which is unknown.” To Fuller, experimentation was the nearly opposite procedure of aligning specific failures of a method with the regularities of his holistically conceived system of “total thinking,” a teleological process of discovering empirical truths.

5. CASE OF EXPERIMENTAL SCULPTURE STUDIO

The Experimental Sculpture Studio was established in 2018 within the Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University Department of Sculpture. It aims to create an educational model that integrates historical processes with diverse artistic perspectives. In this studio, guided by Kubler's problem-oriented approach, we strive to achieve a balance between theory and practice in art production. Throughout the history of sculpture, the challenges that artists face while developing their unique interpretations of art have significantly influenced the formation of their works. With this understanding, the following problem prompts are designed to encourage students to identify and construct their own inquiries or seek solutions to unresolved issues. A subject-driven approach encourages students to respond visually to externally imposed themes (e.g. themes that reflect social, cultural, political climate or a 3-dimensional expression of a color or interpretation of figure in a specific action etc.) rather than exploring problems of their own design, thus making art appear as a matter of design. For students to internalize specific challenges, it is crucial that the subject-matter is not imposed as an external constraint. Instead, a free and critical working environment should be fostered, allowing students to identify and explore their own problems.

This model, which is significantly influenced by John Cage's concept of action with an indeterminate outcome, is grounded in an educational approach that emphasizes the

process rather than the result and encourages direct interaction with the materials. It is important to note that the educational philosophy of the Experimental Sculpture Studio does not extend from Western educational models, nor is it, as Özer Kabaş suggests, an orientation that feeds only on *vertical influences*. On the other hand, the studio model is also not affected by what Özer Kabaş calls *horizontal influences* such as folk art (car painting, rug making) (Kabaş, 2023:71). Such conceptualizations or attitudes—asserting that art should conform to specific standards—can impose limitations on freedom within art education. More precisely, the education program does not prioritize the issue of horizontal or vertical influences in any manner. In this context, the primary objective of the studio’s educational approach is to generate original and innovative solutions by concentrating solely on the basic problems of sculpture, regardless of whether they are vertical or horizontal, Western or Eastern. Just as Pollock said that “the basic problems of contemporary painting (or sculpture, *emphasis mine*) are independent of any one country” (Pollock, 1944:14). Consequently, it is anticipated that the works produced within a specific timeframe and societal context are inevitably connected to the social, economic, and political conditions of that society; thus, art is regarded as a universal phenomenon.

The lack of specific materials in the workshop effectively directs students towards materials that directly relate to the problems they are addressing or encountering in their own lives, in addition to the limited traditional materials provided. In particular, students’ ability to work with various materials relevant to their daily lives offers significant freedom.

The program in this studio comprises three educational stages, each conducted through assignments that explore the history of sculpture.

1. Basic Knowledge: At the beginning of each assignment, students receive a general briefing on the theme, are provided with sources for further investigation, and are expected to conduct research to develop their personal approaches to the theme. During the briefing, the visual vocabulary of forms, techniques, and concepts is emphasized through examples of significant artists. The themes encompass theories and concepts related to the art of sculpture.
2. Studio Practice: Students develop their sketches based on the assigned theme and select appropriate materials for their projects. They are encouraged to creatively and experimentally utilize sculptural concepts, visual elements, and a variety of materials. If needed, the technical applications of these materials are explained throughout the process. These techniques also provide insight into the nature of the creative

process. Technical and conceptual foundations are discussed during midterm evaluations.

3. Criticism: At the conclusion of each assignment, students engage in group discussions about their work. Initially, each student presents their project through a written text. Following these presentations, they exchange opinions regarding the works shared. Participation is essential at this stage. Consequently, the criticism process involves both faculty members and students, who evaluate the sculptures based on technical², formal³, and conceptual⁴ criteria. At this juncture, a vertical hierarchical structure is dismantled by allowing all students, whether they are taking the course or not, to share critiques and to include these critiques in the evaluation of the work. Faculty and students are encouraged to utilize the criticism as a means to communicate artistic standards and to differentiate between craftsmanship, art, and nature. Each session concludes with a discussion of various approaches to the theme, aesthetic concepts, the strengths and weaknesses of the works, and constructive suggestions for improvement.

In their critiques, the lecturers are careful not to provide a precise definition of art or sculpture; instead, they highlight the realm of art and attempt to illustrate the characteristics that define what is considered artistic.

In 2018, when the studio was first established, it primarily focused on art movements; however, it later shifted its attention to pivotal moments in modern sculpture. Consequently, the themes introduced in recent years are designed to guide students in understanding the fundamental concepts of sculpture. In this context, it is important to emphasize that education is object-oriented rather than subject-oriented. This shift deeply influences students' learning processes by fostering analytical thinking, material sensitivity, and contextual awareness—qualities essential in contemporary art practices. This approach serves as a roadmap to address the core issues of sculpture, stemming from the separation of subject-matter and object-matter in modernist sculpture. Specifically, in modernist art, as the object and subject of art gradually diverged, the question of

² This refers to the materials used, the construction methods, and the craftsmanship.

³ This involves the form, composition, proportions, balance, and the relationship with space.

⁴ Conceptual critique considers the clarity of theme, depth of concept, dialogue with art history, innovation and risk, viewer engagement, and contextual relevance.

what to paint or sculpt emerged. The response to this question prompted artists focused on the subject to explore the fundamental problems of art, guiding figures such as Constantin Brancusi and Piet Mondrian in their modernist interpretations toward a quest for the essence of the subject. In contrast, artists like Carl Andre, Ad Reinhardt, and Donald Judd sought the essence of the object, striving for a form of pure art.

In this context, if we consider the notion that a work of art serves as a touchstone throughout its historical evolution, viewing artistic production as a form of ‘artistic research,’ it becomes evident that the art of sculpture presents distinct challenges (open sequences, to paraphrase Kubler) compared to other artistic disciplines. Only by addressing these challenges can we establish a connection between the past and the present, drawing from the history of sculpture and its underlying concepts. It is important to note that artistic research typically does not commence with clearly defined research questions, topics, or hypotheses whose relevance to the research context or art practice is predetermined. However, it is not feasible to evaluate the assignments given in this workshop within this framework, as the assignments function as conceptual triggers to engage with core sculptural concerns. They do not aim to achieve knowledge but rather to cultivate what can be described as the art world.

To clarify the issue, it is beneficial to examine the assignments provided and the corresponding student work. Within the scope of this study, only two of the problems identified by the lecturers, along with selected examples of student work produced in response to these issues, will be included. A consent form was obtained from the students who took part in this study that their names would be mentioned in the research.

6. SELECTED STUDENT WORKS ON THEMES

6.1. Pedestal problem in the art of sculpture

The pedestal emerges as one of the most significant issues in sculpture following Modernism. In her article ‘Sculpture in the Expanding Field,’ Rosalind Krauss notes that modernist sculpture, which embodies a negative condition of the monument, absorbs the pedestal into itself. According to Krauss, the pedestal serves as an auxiliary element that allows the sculpture to sit in a certain place and talk about the meaning or function of that place. The fact that the pedestal is absorbed into the sculpture itself and, in a way, removed from it, seems to be a key reason for the sculpture’s transition into a kind of siteless and homeless condition (Krauss, 1979:34). Richard Serra, in his interview with Hal Foster, similarly states that the most significant shift of the 20th century in sculpture was the removal of the pedestal (Serra, Foster, 2018:206). In this context, various examples of students’ approaches to the issue of the pedestal will provide valuable insights.

a) Sıla Nur Öztürk explains her work titled *Altarpiece*, crafted from wood ashes, as follows: ‘Altar means a high place where sacrifices have been made and offerings dedicated to God since ancient times, and it continues to hold significance in religions such as Christianity. In the sacrificial rites performed at the altar, a clean sacrifice, free of any black hair, is selected first. Before bringing the sacrifice to the altar, all attendees turn their backs to it. The victim is then brought to the altar table and cut into pieces. The blood is offered to God in a chalice, and the remains are burned for an extended period until only ashes remain. Once these processes are complete, the people turn towards the altar, and the celebration begins. I aimed to convey that a sculpture undergoes similar stages in the exhibition process. I used the metaphor of the altar for the pedestal, the sculpture as the sacrificial object, and the gallery as a ritualistic space. Both the altar and the pedestal symbolize power and serve as places of worship. I cut the wood, a living material capable of continuing its own process and one of the raw materials of the sculpture, into pieces and burned it until it transformed into ashes, displaying the remaining ashes on the pedestal to present the finished, final form of something that is alive and can continue its process. Thus, I sought to critique the pedestal as a symbol of power, which ironically protects and blesses everything placed upon it, while also offering a critical perspective on today’s empowered and monopolized colonialist gallery logic.’



Figure 1. Sıla Nur Öztürk, “Altarpiece”, 2024, wood ashes on pedestal, 30x110x25 cm

b) In his statement on his work *Nomad*, Mehmet Evren Erdoğan references Krauss’s study ‘Sculpture in the Expanding Field’, noting that she ‘seeks the initial traces of the expanding field, while addressing a diverse array of contemporary artistic practices that no longer conform to the traditional category of sculpture. According to Krauss, the category of sculpture can be defined by the logic of monument. Within this framework, sculpture occupies a specific physical location and communicates representationally about the function or meaning of that location. However, with the advent of modernism,

this logic begins to disintegrate. Firstly, Rodin creates monuments that will never be situated in their intended locations. Furthermore, modern sculpture no longer represents its location but rather itself. As a result of this shift, it becomes a nomadic entity, experiencing a loss in both meaning and physical context. In the logic of monumental sculpture, the pedestal—serving as the intermediary between the represented location and the sculpture—is inherently included in the sculpture and becomes portable. In *Nomad*, I affixed handles, which I acquired as ready-made objects, to the pedestal. This act of attaching handles metaphorically emphasizes the mobility and placelessness of the pedestal in terms of meaning and location.



Figure 2. Mehmet Evren Erdoğan, “*Nomad*”, 2023 Mdf, acrylic paint, luggage handle, 120x40x25 cm

c) Eylül Gizem Anık discusses her sculpture she named *Pedestal*: ‘In this sculpture, I aimed to illustrate the bondage of the pedestal. A significant commonality among sculptures prior to the advent of modern art is their reliance on a stable pedestal, which was regarded with greater seriousness during that era. In the pre-modern art period, a sculpture lacking a pedestal is often perceived as unfinished and incomplete, which effectively constrains the artist within the logic of the pedestal. Consequently, neither the pedestal can detach from the artwork nor can the artwork be liberated from the pedestal.

Wherever the sculpture is relocated, the pedestal invariably accompanies it, akin to a shadow. During this period, the pedestal lacks significance on its own; it serves merely

as a structural element that supports the sculpture. It is dependent on the sculpture, existing as a somewhat homeless entity. We can assert that the early stages of change regarding this issue began with Rodin. This can be regarded as the initial moments of breaking away from the traditional view of the pedestal, offering a new perspective. The separation of the pedestal from the sculpture, along with the form of the stone I utilize in my work, challenges the monotonous understanding of the pedestal prevalent in classical sculpture.

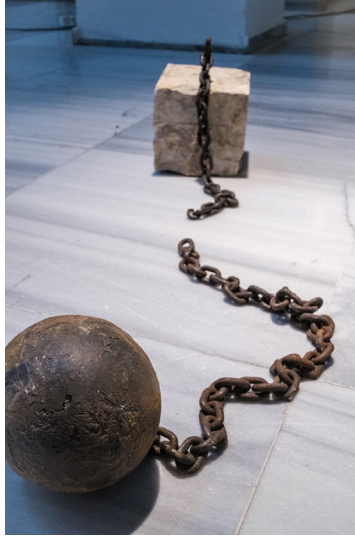


Figure 3. Eylül Gizem Anık, "Pedestal", 2024 Stone, Chain, Polyester cast ball, 20x40x120 cm

6.2. The Problem of Site-Specificity in the Context of Corner Space

The corner space in sculpture has garnered significant interest since the early years of modernism, with many artists frequently employing corners within gallery or museum interiors. The primary reason for this is that corner spaces offer a spatial configuration that is distinct from typical surfaces like floors or walls. Prior to modernism, sculptures were typically only found as decorative features on the exterior corners of buildings, while interior corners were rarely utilized. However, in the first quarter of the 20th century, we encounter Vladimir Tatlin's Corner Counter Reliefs, created for the Last Futurist Paintings Exhibition, which are often regarded as foundational works in the emergence of site-specific sculpture. With these reliefs positioned in the inner corner of the gallery space, Tatlin successfully introduced spatial considerations into the grammar of sculpture. Nevertheless, this innovation did not find its counterpart in the art of sculpture until the 1960s. Following Tatlin, Richard Serra, who expanded upon the issue of site-specificity

that is often associated with Minimalism, advanced the concept further. In his work *Strike*, placed in the corner of the gallery space, Serra both engages the viewer and re-defines the space. So much so that instead of merely occupying the space, the sculpture not only occupies the corner but also absorbs its spatial logic into its very structure. This phenomenon is also related to the issues of sitelessness and homelessness in modernist sculpture, which became evident when sculptures began to incorporate their pedestals. In this context, a condition referred to as ‘sitelessness’ or ‘homelessness’ in Krauss’s terminology, denoting an absolute loss of space of sculpture, the critique of public space sculptures—termed ‘Site-Dominant’ by Robert Irwin⁵—has prompted artists to adopt site-specificity as a strategic approach.

a) Mustafa Kaan Pınar states that his work ‘*Corner*’, which is created by orchestrating movements relative to an imagined convex corner within a space illuminated by light, ‘examines the concepts of self, habit, impulsivity and self-control’. Pınar further elaborated on his work: ‘starting point of the movements is the endeavor to bring the corner into existence through interaction with the assumed corner. Although the corner serves as a guide, it exists thanks to the movements, creating a mutual dependency between the corner phenomenon and the movements. These movements consist of repetitions that accompany the illusion of the ‘cube’ created by the installation.’

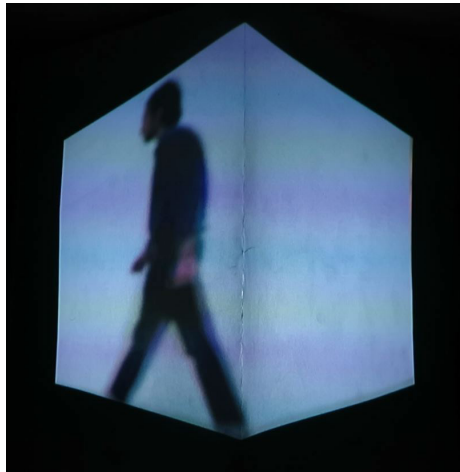


Figure 4. Mustafa Kaan Pınar, “*Corner*”, 2023, Video projection on tracing paper, 50x60x40cm

⁵ In *Being and Circumstance*, Robert Irwin outlines his shift toward “conditional art” through for evolving concepts -site dominant, site adjusted, site specific, and site conditional – with site specificity representing a critical point, where the artwork is conceived in direct response to a particular location, making it inseparable from its physical, spatial, and perceptual context.

b)Akif Taha Doğruyol states the following about his installation made of cardboard boxes and red rope: ‘Functionally, ‘Surveillance’ refers to the process of identifying individuals, translating them into data, and maintain control over them. However, this practice extends beyond mere observation; the monitored individual develops an artificial self-control mechanism to avoid committing the ‘sins’ defined by the authority.

Cameras are typically positioned at corners because these locations can cover a large area by offering the widest angle of view. Their placement at corners allows for comprehensive surveillance, effectively converting the monitored space into data. The specific locations of cameras reveal the intentions of the authorities who establish surveillance systems. The ability to strategically select the angle, the subjects of observation, and the duration of monitoring serves as a clear indicator of this power.

As long as the individual under surveillance cannot fully comprehend his role within this system, he remains oblivious to the mechanisms and motivations underpinning this system of control. The camera has evolved into an instrument of control that extends beyond mere observation’. While Doğruyol’s work critiques the surveillance system, it also possesses site-specific qualities regarding its placement.

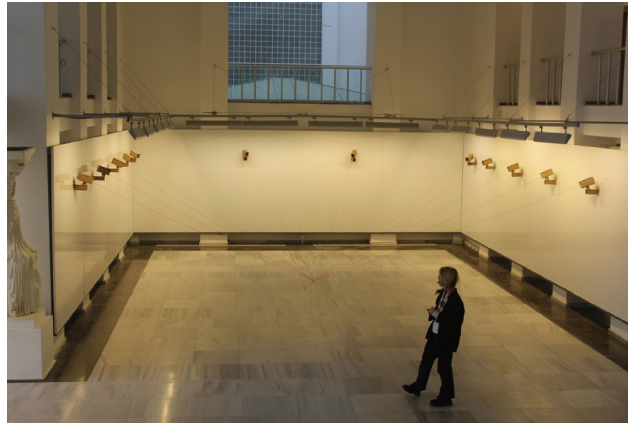


Figure 5. Akif Taha Doğruyol, “Surveillance”, 2023, Cardboard, paper tape, red rope, 7.7x 9 meter

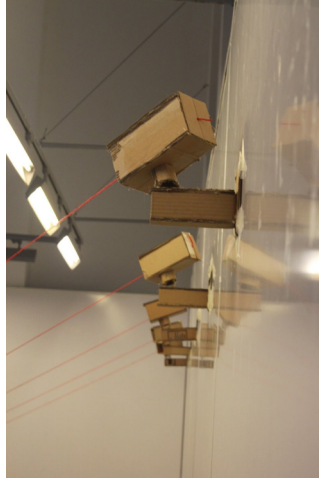


Figure 6. Akif Taha Doğruyol, "Surveillance", Detail

c)Arda Kendir discusses his work crafted from spruce wood: 'In order to restructure the material to fit the form of the corner, I molded the raw material to align with the shapes of the concave and convex corners. To obtain these pieces, I chose to manipulate the inner corner piece in a controlled manner while employing an uncontrolled shaping technique for the outer corner. In the pieces I created with the help of a rigid corner, the corners function as both the display spot and the vehicle for the creation of the artwork.'



Figure 7. Arda Kendir, "Spruce wood profile fixed to the corner I", 2025, Spruce wood, 9x25x25 cm



Figure 8. Arda Kendir, “Spruce wood profile fixed to the corner II”, 2025, Spruce wood, 9x25x25 cm

7. CONCLUSION

Although experimentation is typically understood within a scientific paradigm, multiple epistemological pathways exist for acquiring objective knowledge. In this context, when we view experimentation in art as an endeavor to develop innovative solutions to problems, the significance of discovery and experimentation becomes apparent. It is crucial to acknowledge that the value of artistic experience resides primarily in the process itself, rather than in the final product. The training program at the Experimental Sculpture Studio has also drawn from these insights. However, within the educational model that emphasizes three key processes, efforts were made to encourage students to explore themes centered around pivotal moments in the art of sculpture, aiming to generate original works through the identification of open sequences at historically significant inflection points.

Sıla Öztürk’s metaphorical alignment of the pedestal with the altar as a locus of power; Mehmet Evren Erdoğan’s framing of the pedestal as a mobile signifier in modernist sculpture; and Eylül Gizem Anık’s critique of sculptural dependency on the pedestal collectively enrich the discourse. Regarding the theme of corner space, Mustafa Kaan Pınar’s efforts to create a corner space through his performance, Akif Taha Doğruyol’s critique of a surveillance society, highlighting the fact that cameras are often placed in corners —and Arda Kendir’s works that utilize the corner as a tool, demonstrate that students can explore the given themes from diverse angles. Engagement with diverse materials and research practices is expected to facilitate the emergence of students’ original approaches in their future artistic development. Art production is intrinsically

linked to specific problems that artists have navigated throughout history. Given that sculptors have consistently grappled with fundamental concepts such as mass, weight, measure, scale, space, and friction, it is essential to focus on these concepts and examine their place in historical significance. In this context, experimental sculpture education diverges from conventional educational models. The findings suggest that embracing experimentation not only encourages independent artistic inquiry but also provides a flexible framework adaptable to the evolving challenges of contemporary sculpture education. Although the research questions are clearly defined, the results reflect a variety of exploratory practices that challenge conventional disciplinary confines. The analysis of student works on themes such as the pedestal and corner space demonstrate that the Experimental Sculpture Studio successfully fosters critical engagement, material exploration, and conceptual depth—indicating that an open-ended, problem-oriented model can effectively support the development of original artistic approaches. While the study’s focus on only two themes from the past two years highlights its limitations, the examples gathered suggest that the method holds promise.

7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Although only the works of the students mentioned above were included in this study, the contributions of all Experimental Sculpture Studio students to their artistic research and production cannot be overlooked. For this reason, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all experimental sculpture students, regardless of their participation in the study. Without their efforts, this work would not have been possible.

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