

The Structural Codes of Metaphor in the Visual Arts

Görsel Sanatlarda Metaforun Yapısal Kodları

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ABSTRACT

At the core of this paper is a hermeneutic and transdisciplinary research on the concept of metaphor applied in the visual arts as an element of coding of meaningful relationships. The hypothesis of this paper anticipates that in the process of creating a work of art, metaphor has a multitude of structural functions through creative procedures in the construction of visual compositions and artistic narratives. Methodologically, the research intersects theories of metaphor as a method, of its hermeneutic function, of its openness, and of its denotative aspects. The theoretical aspects underline the essential properties of metaphor in the process of signification and contextual positioning in the realization of the poetic method, of its referentiality, of its category as a product of thought and as a formation of meanings, as a root metaphor, as an act of signifying and of interpretation, and as a symbol. Analytical cross-sections include the theories of Aristotle, Umberto Eco, Nelson Goodman, Liam Gillick, Edward Lucie-Smith, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Paul Ricoeur, Quintilian, Greimas and Courtés, Paul Henle, Ernesto Grassi, Ernst Gombrich, Aby Warburg, Charles Leslie Stevenson, Susanne Katherina Langer, Erwin Panofsky, Immanuel Kant, Wassily Kandinsky. The main research points are structured through the chapters: Methods of Visual Coding through Open Metaphor; Cross-referential Application of Metaphor in the Visual Arts; Metaphor in the Poetics of Visual Expression; Referential Metaphor: Towards the Concept of the "Open Work", Metaphor as an Engaged Message; Aspects of Interpretation of the Metaphorical Key and Discourses of Signification. The results show the realization of the poetic and creative function of metaphor through the context of discourse through the analysis and interpretation of Greek art (Minoan, Mycenaean, Classical, and Hellenistic) and of the hermeneutic reading of the works of Caspar David Friedrich, Gustave Moreau, Odilon Redon, Georg Grosz, Karl Hofer, Pablo Picasso, Wassily Kandinsky, Andy Warhol, John Baldessari, Liam Gillick, and others. The outcome of the research leads to new conclusions about the function of metaphor that enrich the history of art with new theoretical points.

Keywords: Metaphor, openness, message, referentiality, poetic function

ÖZ

Bu çalışmanın özünde, görsel sanatlarda anlamlı ilişkilerin kodlanmasında bir unsur olarak kullanılan metafor kavramı üzerine hermeneutik ve disiplinlerarası bir araştırma yer almaktadır. Bu çalışmanın hipotezi, bir sanat eserinin yaratım sürecinde metaforun, görsel kompozisyonların ve sanatsal anlatıların oluşturulmasında yaratıcı süreçler aracılığıyla çok sayıda yapısal fonksiyona sahip olacağını öngörmektedir. Metodolojik olarak, araştırma, metaforun bir yöntem olarak, hermeneutik işlevi, açıklığı ve göstergesel yönleri hakkındaki teorilerle kesişmektedir. Teorik yönler, metaforun anlamlandırma ve bağlamsal konumlandırma sürecindeki temel özelliklerini, şiirsel yöntemin gerçekleştirilmesindeki referanssallığını, düşüncenin bir ürünü ve anlamların oluşumu olarak kategorisini, kök metafor olarak, bir anlamlandırma ve yorumlama eylemi olarak ve bir sembol olarak önemini vurgulamaktadır. Analitik kesitler arasında Aristoteles, Umberto Eco, Nelson Goodman, Liam Gillick, Edward Lucie-Smith, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Paul Ricoeur, Quintilian, Greimas ve Courtés, Paul Henle, Ernesto Grassi, Ernst Gombrich, Aby Warburg, Charles Leslie Stevenson, Sergiusz Michalski, Susanne Katherina Langer, Erwin Panofsky, Immanuel Kant ve Wassily Kandinsky'nin teorileri yer almaktadır. Ana araştırma noktaları şu bölümler aracılığıyla yapılandırılmıştır: Açık Metafor Aracılığıyla Görsel Kodlama Yöntemleri; Görsel Sanatlarda Metaforun Çapraz Referanslı Uygulaması; Görsel İfade Şiirinde Metafor; Referanssal Metafor: "Açık Eser" Kavramına Doğru, Etkileşimli Bir Mesaj Olarak Metafor; Metaforik Anahtarın Yorumlanmasının Yönleri ve Anlamlandırma Söylemleri. Sonuçlar, Yunan sanatının (Minos, Miken, Klasik ve Helenistik) analizi ve yorumu ile Caspar David Friedrich, Gustave Moreau, Odilon Redon, Georg Grosz, Karl Hofer, Pablo Picasso, Wassily Kandinsky, Andy Warhol, John Baldessari, Liam Gillick ve diğerlerinin eserlerinin hermeneutik okuması yoluyla, söylem bağlamında metaforun şiirsel ve yaratıcı işlevinin gerçekleştirilmesini göstermektedir. Araştırmanın sonucu, sanat tarihini yeni teorik noktalarla zenginleştiren metaforun işlevi hakkında yeni sonuçlara yol açmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Metafor, açıklık, mesaj, gönderme, şiirsel işlev

Introduction

The application of metaphor in various visual contexts shows that it is important not only what the object of representation is, but also how, the way in which it is presented through artistic procedures relevant to the broader context of the time in which one lives and creates. With roots in the domain of linguistics, metaphor applied in the visual arts allows for a wide aspect of trans-disciplinary interpretation in discovering its functions in the construction of meaning. For the methodological approach in this paper, specific areas from the domain of history and theory of art, philosophy, hermeneutics, and semiology have been selected.

The methods of visual coding are analyzed through the concept of open metaphor (Eco, 1983) and conceptual distance (Johnson, 2012), which allows locating the creative aspect of situating in a certain visual discourse (Goodman, 1968). Cross-referential application of metaphor in the visual arts (Goodman, 1968) analyzes the symbolic and rhetorical function of the term (Gadamer, 2004).

The analysis of the function of metaphor in the poetics of visual expression is based on the hypotheses about its sign function (Ricoeur, 2004) related to imaginative expression (Langer, 1967). The referentiality of metaphor is analyzed through its potential in the structure of the work (Eco, 1989; Henle, 1958; Ricoeur, 2004; Stevenson, 1958) to form an “open work” (Цепароски, 1998). Considered as a means that constitutes an engaged message, metaphor is analyzed through its manifestations at the level of form and content (Eko, 1997). Aspects of the interpretation of the metaphorical key underline its complex structural function in relation to the social context (Feinstein, 1998). Key to the research directions is the hypothesis that metaphor fulfills its meaningful and poetic function at the level of discourse (Quintilian, 1876) conducted through the analysis of a multitude of artistic examples.

Methods

Methods of Visual Coding through Open Metaphor

Using a metaphorical language with a heuristic potential for merging word and image, Aby Warburg considers metaphor primarily a method, synonymous with comparative analysis, and its role is stylistic, methodological, and congenial. Its role as constitutive for thinking and interpretation is also recognized by Gadamer (Johnson, 2012). Key to Warburg's theses is the creation of “conceptual distance,” a heuristic concept through which the constitution of meaning is explored through the movement of themes (Johnson, 2012, p. 10). This argument is in line with the claims of Umberto Eco, who believes that the concept of “open metaphor” allows for semiotic trajectories and entry into labyrinths of meanings, or the so-called “encyclopedia entry.” In fact, what interests Eco is whether a part is understood as representative of the whole (1983).

According to the denotative theory of metaphor anticipated by Nelson Goodman, denotation is the core of representation. He considers the representation of an object of art to be a symbol of what it represents, referring to it and standing for it, emphasizing that pictorial representation is denotation (1968) (Ricoeur, 2004). Giving examples of the types of representation, Goodman categorizes three of them: substitutional (picture of a fictional man), equating (man-picture), denoting (man as a man) (1968, pp. 27–28). According to this theory, the act of representation itself is determinative of belonging or co-belonging to the type of images. This would mean that representation is not an “imitation” but a “classification” according to given “attributes” (1968, pp. 31–32).

For example, the still life is best explored in Dutch painting, but in the context of Cubism, it is deconstructed despite being named

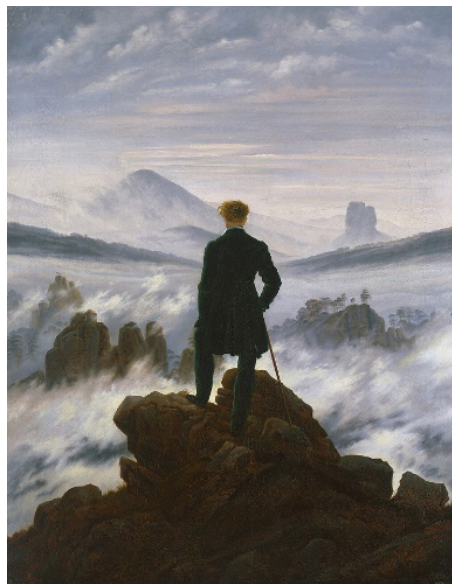
according to its authentic naming. Goodman's thesis that the subject in painting is not accepted from the ready-made world, but is modified according to the “manner” (1968, p. 32) of painting, is consistent with the concept that codes are built into the structure of painting, not added. The titling of a work plays an equally denotative role as its representation. The determination of the title is a creative act and is part of the discursive positioning of the object of art.

Cross-referential Application of Metaphor in the Visual Arts

An example of the application of Goodman's concept of “man-picture” is the work of Caspar David Friedrich, *Der Wanderer über dem Nebelmeer* (1817) (Image 1). Friedrich depicts an individual in the center of the canvas, a wanderer seen from behind, staring at an unknown, and unidentified mountain landscape. Here, the author mirrors the point of view of the internal focalizer with that of the viewer on this side, conveying or simulating a sense of loneliness and contemplativeness. The observation of a viewer in the painted field is a method of shifting the focalization, from that of the painter, to that of the viewer drawn into Friedrich's ambiguous narrative. The metaphor is built in the process of the double, triple, and multiple reading of the work. Who is the observer and what does he observe? Distance, seeing himself, emptiness, anticipation, return, departure, expectation, lack... This example shows the mirroring of the narratological codes expressed in the first person of the subject of identification, the internal character depicted in the work. What is suggested metaphorically is built in the process of overlapping the reader. It is not iconographically concluded.

Image 1.

Caspar David Friedrich (1774–1840), *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* (c. 1817), oil on canvas, 94.8 cm x 74.8 cm. © SHK / Hamburger Kunsthalle / bpk, Photo: Elke Walford



An example of the cross-disciplinarity of the metaphor is the oeuvre of Wassily Kandinsky, who, by painting music, “the sound of pictures” (Goodman, 1968, p. 45) breaks the barrier between creative disciplines (music and painting) in an attempt to isolate and expose pure emotion. In fact, Kandinsky describes music by giving both chromatic values and movement in the directions of those tones/values, creating the “color-music” relationship. Through his concepts of harmony and rhythm (lines and color), he translates

the most immediate art form music through a visual metaphor. For Kandinsky, form is the external expression of inner meaning. Using the metaphor of the piano, he claims, "The artist is the hand which, by touching the various keys (form), affects the human soul to respond to certain vibrations" (1946). One of the properties of "inner necessity" defined by Kandinsky is the equalization of the harmony of colors with the vibrations in the human soul. It follows that representation is relative any picture may represent any object, and the metaphorical transfer involved in expression is usually from or via an exterior realm (Goodman, 1968).

Referring to Kant's comparisons between symbolic (indirect) and schematic (direct) representation, Gadamer emphasizes the symbolic mode with its capacity for analogy and consistent metaphoricity as a significant effect on the function of language: "Our language is replete with such indirect exhibitions according to an analogy, where the expression does not contain the actual schema for the concept but contains merely a symbol for our reflection" (2004, p. 65), (Kant, 1987). But Gadamer distinguishes between logical reasoning in recognizing similarities and the rhetorical function of metaphor, often through the aspect of Aristotle's hypotheses, without excluding both: "Transference from one sphere to another not only has a logical function; it corresponds to the fundamental metaphoricity of language" (2004, p. 429).

Metaphor in the Poetics of Visual Expression

Metonymy and metaphor are features of the realm of meaning, according to Paul Ricoeur (2004), who differentiates between two kinds of associations based on naming similarity and meaning continuity or likeness. As a deviation, metaphor is a polysemic technique that falls under the synchronic domain. Metaphor is the bearer of the change in the meaning of the element according to the context of placement, and as such, it possesses diachronic features (2004). Contextual placement highlights the denotative direction of visual language and suggests discursiveness. In this sense, denotation is a sign-thing relation, and the poetics of expression corresponds to the realization of a relation (signification) between the signifier and the signified by the external sign (2004).

The contextual and discursive arrangement of materials inside the work, along with its inherent poetics derived from a well-defined concept, diminishes the polysemy of the sign. The inherent nature of the metaphor to evoke polysemy is muted by the discursiveness of visual poetics. Ricoeur asserts, "The metaphorical statement attains its meaning through an epiphora of the word" (2004, p. 153). The movement inherent to the metaphor is guided by the techniques of focalization, through the emphasis and framework of the expression (2004). Metonymy represents a form of denomination (substituting one word for another), but metaphor operates on two levels (predication and naming), performing its role due to co-belonging, which is determined by the isotopy of the context (Ricoeur, 2004). According to Algirdas Julien Greimas and Joseph Courtés, the idea of isotopy, also known as isotopie, is an operational term that signifies iterativity along the syntagmatic chain. Its primary purpose is to guarantee that the declarative discourse is consistent with itself (1982, p. 163). One cannot comprehend a metaphor without removing the meaning that is not consistent with the context (Ricoeur, 2004).

Susanne Katherina Langer examines what is expressed as an aspect of the sensuous or poetic form, the significance of art as the interiority of the work, an articulation from inside, and compares it to metaphor as connected to creative expression (1957, p. 134).

Langer goes on to say that language is an intellectual instrument for developing notions, as well as a common currency for exchanging them. The concept of a root metaphor gives rise to a powerful, abstracted notion of a dimension a set of experiences that can be compared. Metaphor is the awareness of a common form that is used to substitute one image with another (Langer, 1957).

Referential Metaphor: Towards the Concept of the "Open Work"

Multiple iconicity and its multitude of possible similarities (Henle, 1958, p. 194) are the source of the valence of metaphor and its potential to change and fulfill the role of a carrier of the process of signification. According to Charles L. Stevenson, a work of art that is a sign is also a sign of the properties it possesses (1958, p. 200). To recognize signification, it is necessary to decode the meaning in a specific referential framework. Ricoeur's hypotheses claim that "discourse is the arena of the work," a comprehensive entity that cannot be seen in isolation or as a set of elements. He connects the "structure of the work" with its "meaning," and the "world of the work with" its "reference" (2004). According to Goodman, there is a difference between symbols in the linguistic and representational sense (1968, p. 228). He connects the former with discursiveness, and the latter with presentationality. Unlike the divisibility of words in a sentence/language, a picture is an indivisible whole according to him. However, the fact that pictorial metaphors are also taken and contextualized parts in a new visual framework, establishes the visual-linguistic potential of metaphor in the visual arts. Ricoeur's hypotheses, in turn, underline that metaphor is inevitably grounded in symbolic theory, and that its function is purely referential (Ricoeur, 2004, p. 274). According to Eco, the essence of metaphor is revealed through its referentiality (1989). Contemporary art is interpreted as an epistemological metaphor because it offers us views of the world of today. He says "The open work assumes the task of giving us an image of discontinuity. It does not narrate it; it is it" (1989, p. 90). Just as Aristotle argues that metaphor is linked to the concept of movement, so Umberto Eco's concept of "work in motion" arises from the realm of the open work, with the potential to form various unpredictable structures (Цепароски, 1998, p. 113). Eco points out that this concept is open to a multitude of personal interventions, oriented interventions that belong to the world that the author wanted (Цепароски, 1998).

Results

Metaphor as an Engaged Message

According to Eco, there should be no equivalence between the information and the communicated concept, since the code is superior to what should be engaged in the message (1977, p. 18). Hence, it follows that coding, despite the potential for meaningful valence, nevertheless limits, that the status of entropy is possessed by both the source and the code (Eco, 1977, pp. 19–20). Thus, the function of the code is the union of signifiers with the signified, and the function of the message is to generate a plurality of meanings that rely on the intersecting levels of form and content (Eco, 1977, p. 25).

The photomontage/photocollage works of newspaper clippings by Helmut Herzfeld John Heartfield represent a kind of response of the artist to society, a depiction of the evil, corruption, greed, and manifestation of the power of the Nazi regime, the connection between war and money. He even anglicized his name as a

protest against German nationalism during the First World War. Many of his photomontages appeared in the left-wing newspaper *Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung* (AIZ) between 1930 and 1938. His works are a combination of words and slogans with an ironic tone and images with direct iconography, a whole that, read metaphorically, represents incompetence and abuse of power. According to Eco, the nature of metaphors causes a shift of linguistic explanation towards semiotic mechanisms that are not characteristic of spoken language (1983, p. 254). Example: Adolf, the Superman: Swallows Gold and Spouts Junk (1932) show the Führer from the waist up with a swastika in place of his heart, as if swallowing gold coins (x-ray image). The photomontage: Never again! – from the cover of AIZ (27. 11. 1932), is a direct response to Hitler's disregard for the Geneva Conventions for the Prevention of Abuses of Human Rights in Time of War. In the foreground is a pierced dove a symbol of freedom and in the background is the League of Nations building with the waving Swiss flag, altered in its symbolism i.e., replacing the cross with the swastika. Heartfield's reaction follows the dispersal of anti-fascist demonstrators by force. Heartfield's visual language, despite its explicitness and directness, is powerful, penetrating, and multilayered in its metaphorical reading. The swastika in his photomontages is a symbol (triple appropriation) put into the function of criticism of the Third Reich, although its origin dates back to the earliest prehistoric and later Eurasian religious applications in the name of well-being. Here the swastika is not the bearer of the original and polysemic meaning; it is not even a concept, but an iconic sign composed of crossed and crossed lines in a rightward direction, taken from the national flag of Nazi Germany, designed by Hitler himself, placed in a new context conceived by Heartfield. In fact, the origin of what is borrowed in the metaphor is foreign alien [ἀλλότριος/ἀλλοτρίου] [allotrios/allotriou] in the context in which its new, assigned meaning is actualized, as described by Ricoeur (Ricoeur, 1898, p. 76; Ricoeur, 1995, pp. 23-104; Ricoeur, 2004, p. 18). Referentiality in this context is based on the adoption of a certain iconic sign of foreign origin, metaphorized and placed in a new meaningful whole.

The artists of New Objectivity (*Neue Sachlichkeit*) (Michalski, 1994), Georg Grosz, Otto Dix, and others used metaphor to express a critical, politically engaged message through art (a post- or more anti-expressionist attitude towards art). In *Republican Automations* (1920), Georg Grosz expresses his political stance, portraying people, not as individuals, but as a "collectivist, almost mechanical concept," a kind of constructivist realism. Depicting figures in a narrow urban space (metaphysical features), with anatomy reduced to balls and cylinders, he emphasizes their soullessness through numbering. The title is a metaphor, as is the depiction in the work, alluding to the unreasonable and empty-headed followers of current policies. According to Ricoeur's hypotheses, metaphor is a transference that affects the possession of predicates by some specific thing, rather than the application of these predicates to something (2004, p. 276). Symbolism in the fine/plastic arts as a reflection of literature and poetry manifests itself as an extension of the idea of meaning through the readers' decodings (Brodskáia, 2012, p. 105). The art of Odilon Redon and Gustave Moreau is an essential example of the connection of the idea of art with external analogies (Brodskáia, 2012). The works of art of these authors show that "in Symbolism there is also the presence of strangeness and mystery and the sensation of the otherworldly and fear and the feeling of doom..." (Brodskáia, 2012, p. 105)

Image 2.

Gustave Moreau, *The Travelling Poet*, late 19th century, oil on canvas, Musée Gustave Moreau, Paris. Public domain image via Wikimedia Commons



The Travelling Poet (image 2), a work by one of the greatest French symbolists – Gustave Moreau – shows the essential thread between poetry and fine arts, opening a series of associative meanings: how far the imagination of the creative being travels and whether its journey ends in its head or is powered by the world around it and its surroundings.

Image 3.

Odilon Redon, *To Edgar Poe (The Eye, Like a Strange Balloon, Mounts toward Infinity)*, 1882, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Wallis Foundation Fund in memory of Hal B. Wallis, photo © Museum Associates/LACMA



Odilon Redon's symbolism has been described as "spontaneous and direct," (Brodskáia, 2012) and his vivid imagination was filled with associative visual iconography. His 1882 lithograph *To Edgar Poe (The Eye, Like a Strange Balloon, Mounts towards Infinity)* (image 3) shows an intriguing symbolic connection to the source

of inspiration and Poe's poetry, depicting the eye as a symbol of the spirit floating in a balloon in the sky. Here, a simple visual metaphor contains all the potential of the transformability of the symbol. Redon's art of Moreau is an example of how visual images could be transformed into words (Lucie-Smith, 1972, p. 72).

In *Eclipse of the Sun* (1926), George Grosz perhaps most explicitly alludes to political corruption and dominant economic interests during the War of Independence, depicting the president in military uniform and laurel wreath, accompanied by headless ministers and an upright industrialist. The symbolism of the sword and cross complement the legibility of his role during the First World War, in which many suffered. The donkey symbolizes the people who, exposed to strong propaganda, swallow the news and accept what is served to them as correct. The sun covered with an American dollar is the main metaphor and carrier of the narrative in the scene the participation of financial capital from America in Germany during the war. Hence, metaphor's power of reorganizing our perception of things develops from transposition of an entire 'realm' (Ricoeur, 2004, p. 278).

Ernst Thomas's *Attic* (1926) presents a cramped environment with distorted perspectives, including various views down, out, and in, as a metaphor for the various pressures that surround the individual on all sides (Michalski, 1994). As Michalski notes, "Attics, garrets, and skylights function as direct but also metaphorical references to the constricted nature of human life" (1994).

Karl Hofer's *The Dinner Party* (1924) seems to contradict its title, due to the serious tone of the faces of the portrayed characters, and especially of the imagined injured man who stands right next to the table, somehow excluded and not participating in the interaction at the table. A counterpoint to this seriousness, and even concern, is recognized in the face of the female figure on the opposite side.

The metaphorical title completes the author's narrative. The images of *Neue Sachlichkeit* never shape space in a real way; on the contrary, they are representations of the inner and outer dimensions of cognitive space, the one that reflects the relationship between man and his environment. This is why they often convey a sense of claustrophobia, of confined space. They are visual metaphors of the human condition (Michalski, 1994). The same is true of the recurring reference to the cactus as a metaphor for the human condition, as in *Cacti* and *Semaphore* (1932) by Georg Scholz (Michalski, 1994). This method corresponds to Gadamer's hypotheses about metaphoricity of language.

Semiotically, information theory encompasses the variability of the meaning of the message according to the circumstance, conditioned by the connotation itself as such; the context as a choice for interpreting the message; and the intentional ambiguity specific to the adoption of a certain code when placed in a new context (Eko, 1977, pp. 26–27). Hence, the formulation of the so-called aesthetic message that is configured through the setting of boundaries of information theory (Eko, 1977, p. 29). In visual contexts, it is the concept of framing a certain conceptual suggestion/idea at the level of a formative method.

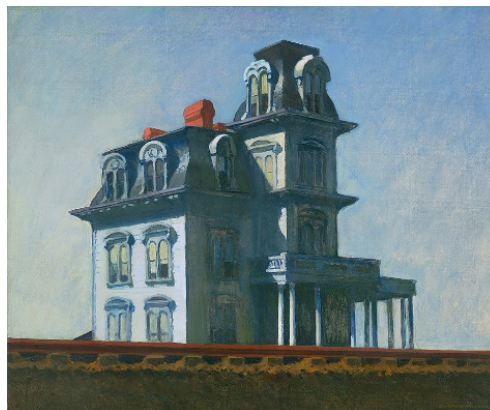
Aspects of Interpretation of the Metaphorical Key

According to Hermine Feinstein, the painting is a metaphor, a kind of book to be read, which opens historical paths and enables the formation of meanings through the so-called "metaphorical key" (1998). Metaphor is considered a product of thought, which reorganizes, condenses, and vivifies, penetrating deeply into clusters of meaning. Hence, Feinstein concludes that "art is metaphor." In the creation of a work of art, the metaphorical process is a concept of co-belonging and co-involvement, belonging to the art-

ists as much as it belongs to the viewers through the process of involvement and interpretation of the work/concept. The process also includes change.

Image 4.

Edward Hopper, *House by the Railroad* (1925), oil on canvas, 61 × 73.7 cm. Museum of Modern Art, New York City. Public domain image via Wikimedia Commons



Taking attributes that belong to one thing (creation) is transferred to another (interpretation). It also includes comparison, substitution, and interaction. In transference, attributes belonging to one kind become a filter that highlights, suppresses, or creates associations for another kind. What belongs to one kind becomes another kind (Feinstein, 1998). Feinstein distinguishes between personal metaphor (experiences and feelings turned inward) and societal metaphor (experiences and values turned outward) (1998). Analyzing the art of Edward Hopper, Feinstein points out that *House by the Railroad* (1925) contains a development of social from personal metaphor (Image 4). Visual artists are undoubtedly products of their society and reflect personal values in relation to social conditions (Feinstein, 1998). John Baldessari believes that metaphor allows a word to mean everything and nothing, an image to mean everything and nothing, which means he anticipates the thesis that analogy gives and takes away meaning (2007).

Interpreting metaphor as borrowing, Ricoeur believes that borrowed meaning is the opposite of the true meaning (the meaning that is its). Metaphor is spoken of metaphorically, and the definition returns to itself, and there is no non-metaphorical way to speak of metaphor (Eco, 1983; 2004). Speaking metaphorically about metaphor, Baldessari uses the phrase "inside or outside 'refrigerator doors'" in a comparative way to indicate the contextualization of art as crucial to metaphor (2007).

The representative of the Young British Artists group, Liam Gillick, also emphasizes that metaphor is sometimes used in a negative connotation, as a destructive political tool (2007). Through *Pinboard Prototype #1* (Milan House Project) (1993), Gillick, working with the media of chipboard, hessian, and works on paper, presents printed texts and architectural pencil drawings an unrealized interactive project (begun in 1992) that originally involved the construction of the artist's private house and then transformed into a project for a museum and a social center. The concept includes "users" who could change the display board, alluding to the artwork being intended for the public, for culture, and not for the personal and private satisfaction of those involved.

Through the methodology of relational aesthetics, the work in process, open to changes and suggestions, is highlighted, rather than its finished form. According to Nicolas Bourriaud, who coined the concept of relational aesthetics, the idea of including the oth-

er provides space for the development of human relationships in the process of conceptualizing and distributing the work (2002).

Discussion

Discourses of Signification

According to Quintilian, metaphor is realized only in the context of discourse. It is one of the tropes, the most common and the most beautiful, that which contains what is called translatio and the Greek metaphor [μεταφορά] (1876). He emphasizes that “metaphor has been invented for the purpose of exciting the mind, giving a character to things, and setting them before the eye” (1876).

Analyzing *The Friedsam Annunciation* (according to Panofsky, attributed to Petrus Cristus, with the reservation, however, that it is “almost a van Eyck”), Gombrich suggests that the light entering through the church window is a metaphor for the Immaculate Conception. According to Panofsky, “the window ‘that transformed the light of day into the Light’ was recognized as one of the most expressive symbols of the Christian revelation” (1935). Thus, Gombrich believes that if the painting did not depict the Annunciation, the window in itself would not signify anything, would not be a symbol for anything other than what it is. The symbol functions as a metaphor, which acquires a specific meaning only through its integration into a given context (Gombrich, 1972).

Interpreting the painting *The Oath of the Horatii* (1784) by Jacques Louis David, Feinstein believes that the female figures in the reclining position in the right half of the composition reflect the status of women in ancient Rome (Feinstein, 1998).

Image 5.

Andy Warhol, *Marilyn Diptych*, 1962, acrylic on canvas, Tate Modern, London. Image © The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / DACS, London. 2026. Image credit: Tate



Searching for metaphor in Warhol's work, Feinstein interprets the iconography implemented through the process of fading in *Marilyn Diptych* (1962) as a “fading view of woman as sex object” (Image 5). The repetition of the image as a method, followed from left to right until the fading, offers a less focused and less complete representation of the portrait. Similarly, in Robert Bechtle's painting, *'61 Pontiac* (1968–1969), the metaphor of the social family is located, disinterested, rigid, and somehow alienated in the sterile environment/ambience (in front of a printed foil on the wall). Brush marks are not visible. The division into three parts here and into two parts in Warhol's work is part of the process of metaphorization of the narrative. Van Gogh's painting *The Potato Eaters* (1885) metaphorically denotes class status and political-economic power, reflected through the survival of a family (Feinstein, 1998).

Picasso's *Guernica* (1937) addresses the conditions of the Spanish Civil War and the destruction of the city and the suffering of its inhabitants, depicting the agony and devastation caused by it. The shapes of the figures are distorted, angular, and rounded. Joan Brown's *The Bride* (1970) metaphorically illustrates personal identity, brought into question through the conclusion of marriage. Edward Keinholz's mixed-media work *The State Hospital* (1966) addresses issues of institutional power and corruption and the inhumane treatment of patients (Feinstein, 1998).

Analyzing one relevant example each from Greek art: Minoan, Mycenaean, Classical, and Hellenistic, Feinstein arrives at a coinage that marks common characteristics a metaphor for the stages of art's adolescence. The Minoan example, *The Toreador Fresco* (c. 1500 B.C.), Knossos, is representative of coloristic and rhythmic forms in movement, acceleration, and stylized realism; the Mycenaean example, *The Lion Gate* (c. 1300 B.C.), Mycenae, is indicative of rigidity and formality, a preoccupation with warfare, hunting, and massive fortifications; the Classical example, *Standing Youth (The Kritos Boy)* (c. 480 B.C.), is a symbol of rationality, order, balance, harmony, and the pursuit of the abstract ideal; the Hellenistic example, *Dying Gaul* (c. 230–220 B.C.), Pergamum, is known for its simulation of vigorous movement, anatomical detail, emotional tone, and attempts at unassailable realism. Their adolescent phases denote the concepts successively: playful and outgoing (Minoan); aggressive and mistrustful (Mycenaean); reflective and reasoned (Classical); energetic and self-absorbed (Hellenistic), each of them in accordance with the then essential characteristics of the societies in the four periods of Greek art (Feinstein, 1998). This determinant of the metaphor (as an adolescent phase) is characterized by openness, taking into account the specifics of visual expression.

William Kentridge's film collage *SelfPortrait as a CoffeePot* covers a time frame of four years spent in his studio, conceived through nine episodes of about thirty minutes each. By introducing pauses in the movement of the frames, live performance, and philosophical dialogue with mythology or mining in Johannesburg, Kentridge creates a striking visual structure through which the idea of the studio as a space of continuous creative imagination is approached. The domestic pot for preparing coffee (the jug) becomes a substitute for the artist, a kind of machine through which ideas pass as the coffee flows, similar to the interest in machine forms and the metaphor for the repetition of movement in Marcel Duchamp's *The Coffee Mill* (1911). Kentridge's art, his layered and conceptually developed ideas, contains historical elements, maps, texts, and images from everyday life in the construction of connotative directions and elements of readability.

Tracing movement from ancient sources (Poliziano/Angelo Ambrugini) to their visualization (Botticelli, *Birth of Venus*), Warburg alludes to the concept of forms in motion (1999). He states, “The action in Botticelli's painting proceeds just as in the poem, except that Venus, on her shell, covers her breast with her right (instead of her left) hand, holding her long hair to her with her left, and that she is greeted not by three Horae in white garments but by a single female figure in a colored, floral dress girl with a rose branch” (1999). Hence, Warburg notes that Poliziano turns to the poets of antiquity for explanations of the motifs of movement, which he then faithfully reproduces in his poems (1999). For Christopher D. Johnson, this means that Warburg “is trying here to uncover the dynamics of how this translation of images is or is not achieved and why,” arguing that the metaphorical expression that is en-

gaged in describing a “translation” in space or time can also be identified with its Latin root, *translatio*, as a metaphor (2012).

Christopher D. Johnson argues about establishing relationships, contours (Umfänge, according to Warburg), but not boundaries between things, about allowing for differences and distances, important for the analytical approach to interpretation, i.e., emphasizing the importance of metaphor over the symbol according to Warburg (2012). To clarify this dilemma, he refers here to Ernesto Grassi, emphasizing that metaphor is an original act of both signification and interpretation (1980).

For Gombrich, metaphor in the visual arts is crucial for generating a “cognitive effect” (Johnson, 1972; 2012). He distinguishes between literal and metaphorical meaning, indicating that categories created by language can be taken over either through translation or through borrowing. Metaphor is a temporary or tentative category, illuminating because it appears against the stability of language. It provides “a fresh insight into the structure of the world by piercing the veil of ordinary speech.” Making a distinction between seeing and understanding, Gombrich says that “even to ‘grasp’ an idea sounds less immediate than to ‘see’ it.” Here he refers to Cicero for whom “the power of the linguistic image is based on vision”. Cicero’s conception is that “Every metaphor, provided it is a good one, has a direct appeal to the senses, especially the sense of sight, which is the keenest...the metaphors drawn from the sense of sight are much more vivid, almost placing before the mind’s eye what we cannot discern and see” (Gombrich, 1972).

Hence, metaphor as a creative and poetic principle in the visual arts show that through the principles of structural coding, it possesses enormous potential for generating a wide range of meanings amenable to a multitude of hermeneutic interpretations.

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Image References

Image 1.

Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840), *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* (c. 1817), oil on canvas, 94.8 cm x 74.8 cm. Image rights: Permanent loan from the Hamburg Art Collections Foundation © SHK / Hamburger Kunsthalle / bpk, Photo: Elke Walford

Image 2.

Gustave Moreau, *The Travelling Poet*, late 19th century, oil on canvas, Musée Gustave Moreau, Paris. Public domain image via Wikimedia Commons.

Image 3.

Odilon Redon, *To Edgar Poe (The Eye, Like a Strange Balloon, Mounts toward Infinity)*, 1882, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Wallis Foundation Fund in memory of Hal B. Wallis, photo © Museum Associates/LACMA

Image 4.

Edward Hopper, *House by the Railroad* (1925), oil on canvas, 61 × 73.7 cm. Museum of Modern Art, New York City. Public domain image via Wikimedia Commons. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_House_by_the_Railroad_by_Edward_Hopper_1925.jpg

Image 5.

Andy Warhol, *Marilyn Diptych*, 1962, acrylic on canvas, Tate Modern, London. Image © The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / DACS, London. 2026. Image credit: Tate.

Yapılandırılmış Özet

Görsel Sanatlarda Metaforun Yapısal Kodları başlıklı makalede, görsel sanatlarda metaforun disiplinlerarası ve hermeneutik araştırması, anlamlandırma/kodlamada anlamlı ilişkilerin keşfine yol açmaktadır. Görsel bağlamlarda metaforun uygulanması, hem temsil edilen nesnenin hem de sunum yöntemlerinin daha geniş zamansal bağlam içindeki önemini vurgular. Dilbilime dayanan görsel metaforlar, anlam inşasındaki rollerini ortaya çıkaran disiplinlerarası yorumlara olanak tanır. Bu makale, tarih, sanat teorisi, felsefe, hermeneutik ve göstergebilimden yararlanan metodolojik bir yaklaşım benimsemektedir. Metaforun yapısal işlevleri, referans noktaları ve bağlamsal konumlandırması, görsel kompozisyonların ve anlatıların sanat eserinde açıklık ve çok anlamlı okuma oluşturma potansiyeline sahip olduğunu göstermektedir. Metaforun şiirsel işlevinin nasıl gerçekleştirildiği, çok sayıda sanatsal örnek üzerinden detaylandırılmıştır.

Bu metin, çeşitli kuramcılar aracılığıyla metaforun karmaşıklığını ve anlamdaki rolünü tartışmaktadır. Paul Henle, metaforun ikonikliğinin değerini etkilediğini belirtir. Paul Ricoeur, söylemin kapsamlı bir varlık olarak bir eserin yapısını, anlamını ve referansını birbirine bağladığını öne sürer. Nelson Goodman, dilsel ve temsili semboller arasında ayırım yaparak, görsel metaforların bağlamsal bir çerçeveye içindeki bütünlüğünü vurgular. Ricoeur, metaforun sembolik kuramda derin köklere sahip olduğunu ve referanssal bir işlev gördüğünü ileri sürer. Umberto Eco, çağdaş sanatı, anlatmadan süreksizliği yansıtan, Aristoteles'in hareket fıkırına bağlayan ve çeşitli yorumlara açıklığı öneren epistemolojik bir metafor olarak yorumlar. Paul Ricoeur, isim benzerlikleri ve anlamlar arasında ayırım yaparak metonimi ve metaforu inceler. Çok anlamlı bir araç olan metafor, eşzamanlı alanda işlev görür ve diyakronik yönleri de içererek bağlama bağlı anlam değişimini yansıtır. Bu, görsel dilin göstergesel doğasını vurgular ve söylemselliği öne sürerek, göstergeyi bir işaret-nesne ilişkisi olarak tanımlar ve göstereni ve gösterileni dışsal işaretler aracılığıyla birbirine bağlar. Bu metinde, bir eserdeki malzeme ve şiirselliğin düzenlenmesi, işaretin çok anlamlılığını azaltır. Ricoeur, metaforik ifadelerin kelimelerin epiforası aracılığıyla anlam kazandığını ve yorumlarının odaklanma tekniklerinden etkilendiğini savunur. Metonimi kelimelerin yerini alırken, metafor bağlam tarafından şekillendirilen yükleme ve adlandırma üzerinde işlev görür (izotopi). Greimas ve Courtés, izotopiyi bildirimsel söylemde tutarlılığı sağlamak olarak tanımlar ve bir metaforu anlamının bağlamıyla uyum gerektirdiğini vurgular. Metodolojik olarak, açık metafor kavramı, anlam oluşumu, kök metafor, anlamlandırma ve yorumlama eylemi, metafor hareketi kavramı ve sembolik işlev de dahil olmak üzere görsel kodlama incelenmektedir. Referanssal metafor, resimsel ve sembolik temsil yoluyla işlev görür. Referans metaforunun sunulması eylemi, taklit yöntemlerine dayanmaksızın, imgeler alanındadır. Analizler, odak noktasının örtüşmesinin anlatıların çok katmanlı bir şekilde okunmasına yol açabileceğini göstermektedir. Görsel dilde metaforik bir unsur bulunduğunda, metaforun sembol analojisiyle bağlantısı mümkündür. Metaforun çok anlamlılığı, bağlamsal konumlandırması ve gösterimsel yönleri, metaforun değişimin taşıyıcısı olduğu hipotezini desteklemektedir.

Metaforun kuramsal noktaları, Aristoteles, Umberto Eco, Nelson Goodman, Liam Gillick, Edward Lucie-Smith, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Paul Ricoeur, Quintilian, Greimas ve Courtés, Paul Henle, Ernesto Grassi, Ernst Gombrich, Aby Warburg, Charles Leslie Stevenson, Susanne Katherina Langer, Erwin Panofsky, Immanuel Kant ve Wassily Kandinsky'nin argüman ve hipotezlerine dayanmaktadır. Metaforun etkileşimli anlamı, Yunan sanatının (Minos, Miken, Klasik ve Helenistik) dönemine ait sanat eserlerinin yorumlanması ve analizi ile Caspar David Friedrich, Gustave Moreau, Odilon Redon, Georg Grosz, Karl Hofer, Pablo Picasso, Wassily Kandinsky, Andy Warhol, John Baldessari, Liam Gillick ve diğerlerinin eserlerinin hermeneutik okuması yoluyla incelenmektedir. John Hartfield'ın fotokolajları, görsel kodlamanın metaforikliği ve sembollerin bağlamsal kullanımı üzerine katmanlanmış derin sosyolojik çağrışımlar içerir. Bu örnek, sembol unsurunun gerektirdiği metaforun çok anlamlılığını göstermektedir. Georg Grosz'un sanatsal örneği, metaforun siyasi bir duruş ve eleştirel düşüncenin öngörüsü aracı olarak kullanımını kaydetmektedir. Burada işlev, algının yeniden düzenlenmesine indirgenmiştir. Sembolist sanatçılar Odilon Redon ve Gustave Moreau, metaforu görsel olarak betimleyici ve kodlanmış bir şekilde kullanarak, anlamsal yorumlamaya yol açarlar. Görsel temsilin metaforikliği, Karl Hofer'in sanatsal örnekleri üzerinden detaylandırılmıştır. Metaforun göstergebilimi, bağlamsal öncüller aracılığıyla, fıkır/kavramın çerçevelenme yöntemine dayalı estetik mesajın yapılandırılması yoluyla ele alınır. Düşüncenin bir ürünü olarak metafor, ortak katılımı ve ortak aidiyeti mümkün kılar ve bu da sanatın büyük ölçüde metaforun anlamlı işlevine dayandığı temel sonucuna götürür. John Baldessari'nin hipotezleri, Edward Hopper'ın çalışmalarının analizleriyle örtüşmekte ve anlatıda anlam atamada analojinin kilit rol oynadığını doğrulamaktadır. Terimin etimolojisi ve çeviri olarak kök anlamı dikkate alındığında, metaforun öngörücü gücü ve şeylere özellikler atfetme yeteneği vurgulanmaktadır. Andy Warhol'un çalışmaları gibi çağdaş sanat örnekleri, metaforun yalnızca yapının bir parçası olarak eserdeki unsurları değil, görsel alanın tüm anlatısını kapsadığını göstermektedir. Antik sanattan örnekler, bu cihazın sanat tarihinde uzun zamandır çağrışımsal kod çözme aracı olarak kullanımına bir örnektir. William Kentridge'in görsel analogileri, metaforun sanatsal kavramsallaştırmanın katmanlarına yönelik çağrışımsal bir rehber olarak temel işlevini vurgulamaktadır. Sembol ve metafor arasındaki karmaşık ilişkiler, yapısal kodlamanın çeşitliliğinde, doğrudan veya dolaylı yönlerinde, bilişsel mesafelerinde veya beklenmedik örtüşmelerinde dilsel ve görsel eşdeğerlerin incelenmesi yoluyla analiz edilmektedir.

Dil ve görsel temsil arasındaki bağlantı, metaforik anahtarın gücünün, anlamlandırma olanaklarının zenginliği aracılığıyla uygulama seçiminde yattığını göstermektedir. Metaforun kodlama ilkesinin dinamikleri, okuyucu ve yorumlayıcı hermeneutiğin karmaşık yapılarını oluşturarak, metaforun yaratıcı temsili kullanım için tükenmez bir potansiyele sahip olduğunu ve sanatsal anlamın kavramsal konumlandırılmasının çok kategorilliliği yoluyla anlamın etkileşimli ve hareketli bir şekilde taşınmasını sağladığını ortaya koymaktadır. Bu makalede sunulan çok sayıda teorik analiz ve görsel örnek aracılığıyla, görsel sanatlarda metaforun şiirsel işlevi vurgulanmış ve öne çıkarılmıştır.