

YEDITEPE UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

**EXAGGERATION IN ART AS A TOOL OF INTERPRETATION
AND ITS REFLECTION IN PLASTIC ARTS**

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EXAGGERATION IN ART AS A TOOL OF INTERPRETATION AND ITS
REFLECTION IN PLASTIC ARTS

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Prof. Dr. Gülveli Kaya

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ABSTRACT

Exaggeration in Art as a Tool of Interpretation and Its Reflection in Plastic Arts.

The depiction of peculiar half-human, half-animal creatures on cave walls by early humans signifies diverse interpretations of reality. The emergence of this illusion in drawings by our early ancestors unfamiliar with painting has always piqued curiosity. Motivations behind the use of exaggeration in the creation process remain intriguing. In order to transform reality into a more meaningful form and highlight value, the application of exaggeration, transcending the ordinary flow of life, is evident in daily life and art as an expressive and interpretive tool, spanning from ancient cave walls to today.

When artists employ exaggeration to interpret their realities, the resulting fusion of visible and invisible elements reflects in the narration as an expression of the artist's liberated creation. The originality of these narrative modes fosters a diverse understanding of reality.

This study analyzes the concept of exaggeration, its theoretical implications, and selected artworks across various disciplines and periods within the context of exaggeration. Considering the interactions among art disciplines, this evaluation extends to the plastic arts, examining the current state of the concept of exaggeration.

The rationale for selecting this thesis topic is to provide a new perspective on exaggeration in art and explore how artists use it as a tool of expression and interpretation. As an unexplored subject, it aims to address a significant gap in Turkish literature related to art.

Keywords: Art, exaggeration, interpretation, plastic arts.

ÖZET

Bir Anlamlandırma Aracı Olarak Sanatta Abartı ve Plastik Sanatlardaki Karşılığı

İlk insanların mağara duvarlarına çizdikleri yarı insan, yarı hayvan tuhaf yaratıklar gerçekliğin farklı yorumlarıdır. Bu illüzyonun, hayatlarında hiç resim görmemiş atalarımızın çizimlerinde nasıl ortaya çıktığı, yaratı sürecinde abartı kullanımında onları nelerin yönlendirdiği ve motive ettiği hep merak konusu olmuştur. Gerçeği daha anlamlı bir şeye dönüştürmek, değerli olanı ön plana çıkarmak için gerektiğinde yaşamın olağan akışına aykırı olanın yani abartının kullanımı, mağara duvarlarından bugünlere kadar bir ifade ve anlamlandırma aracı olarak hem günlük hayatta hem de sanatta karşımıza çıkmaktadır.

Sanatçı, abartıyı kendi gerçekliğini anlamlandırma aracı olarak kullanırken, görünen ve görünmeyen bir arada oluşturduğu algı, duygu ve hayal gücü, sanatçının özgür yaratımının bir ifadesi olarak anlatım biçimine yansımaktadır. Anlatım biçimlerindeki özgünlük, gerçekliğin farklı boyutta anlaşılmasına neden olmaktadır.

Araştırmada, abartı kavramı kuramsal açımlarıyla birlikte incelenmiş, sanat tarihinin farklı dönemlerinden seçilen, farklı disiplinlerdeki eser örnekleri abartı bağlamında analiz edilmiştir. Abartı, sanat disiplinleri arasındaki karşılıklı etkileşimler de göz önüne alınarak, plastik sanatlar özelinde değerlendirilmiş ve günümüzde abartı kavramının dönüştüğü durum irdelenmiştir.

Bu tez konusunun seçiliş nedeni, sanatta abartıya yeni bir bakış açısı getirmek, sanatçının abartıyı bir ifade ve bir anlamlandırma aracı olarak nasıl kullandığını incelemektir. Daha önce araştırılmamış bir konu olması nedeniyle Türk Literatüründe önemli bir boşluğun doldurulması hedeflenmiştir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Abartı, anlamlandırma, plastik sanatlar, sanat.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY	ii
ABSTRACT.....	iii
ÖZET	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vi
LIST OF FIGURES	viii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	xi
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
2. CONCEPT OF EXAGGERATION	6
2.1 The Meaning, Origin, and Etymological Equivalent of the Word Exaggeration....	6
2.2 Concepts Associated with Exaggeration.....	16
2.2.1..... The Relationship between Exaggeration and the Concepts of Reality, Perception, Illusion and Imagination	16
2.2.2..... The Relationship between Exaggeration and Public Entertainment, and the Carnival Spirit	28
2.2.3... The Relationship between Exaggeration and the Concepts of Supernatural Beings, Excessiveness, Fear, The Uncanny, and Grotesque	33
2.2.4..... Deformation, Representation of The Ugly, Sanctification of Imperfection (The Relationship between Exaggeration and the Concepts of Distortion, Formlessness, Grotesque, Carnavalesque and Abjection)	41
2.2.5..... The Relationship between Exaggeration and the Social Phenomenon of Kitsch	52
2.2.6.. The Relationship between Exaggeration and the Concepts of Transcendence, Ideal, Sublime, Beautiful and Ugly	58
2.2.7..... The Relationship between Exaggeration and the Concepts of Humor, Caricature, and Coarse Comedy	72
2.2.8..... The Relationship between Exaggeration and Symbolic Expression (Allegory, Metaphor)	77
2.2.9..... Folk Narratives: The Relationship Between Myths, Tales, Epics, Stories, and Legends with Exaggeration	87
3. EXAGGERATION AS A LANGUAGE OF INTERPRETATION.....	96
3.1 Concept of Meaning and Interpretation	96
3.2 The Concept of Communication, Visual Communication, and Symbols	104
4. EXAGGERATION IN ART AS A TOOL OF INTERPRETATION AND ITS	

REFLECTION IN PLASTIC ARTS	111
4.1 The Emergence of Creativity and the Role of Exaggeration	111
4.1.1. Cave Paintings and Instances of Exaggeration.....	112
4.1.2. The Mother Archetype and the Approach of Exaggeration.....	123
4.1.3. The Ritual-Spiritual Realm and Exaggeration.....	130
4.1.4. Common Origin in the Expressions of Art & Magic and the Role of Exaggeration.....	132
4.1.5 The Role of Exaggeration in Ornamentation	140
4.1.6 Instances of Exaggeration in the Symbols Göbeklitepe	142
4.2 Exploration of the Exaggeration Concept in Mystery, Authority, and Hierarchy as Periodic Themes.....	143
4.3 Exploration of Exaggeration in the Ideal of “Looking Good Means Being Good (Flawless And Magnificent).....	149
4.4 Exaggeration in Mythology.....	154
4.4.1 Dionysus: Deity of Contemporary Art	155
4.4.2 Pan and Symbolic Concepts	157
4.4.3 Priapus (Phallus Cult).....	160
4.5 The Realm of Fairytales, the Fear of Bourgeois Civilization and Exaggeration - From the Earthly Church to the Heavenly Church.....	161
4.6 Elements and Principles of Composition, Processes of Interpretation, and Exaggeration in Plastic Arts.....	167
4.7 A Perspective on Exaggeration from the Classical Art Ideal.....	178
4.8 Alienation as an Expressive Form and Traces of Exaggeration in Distortion	199
4.9 Populism, Postmodernism, and Exaggeration in Contemporary Art	222
CONCLUSION.....	257
METHODS AND ACTIVITIES USED IN THE RESEARCH	258
REFERENCES	259
VISUAL RESOURCES.....	314

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1 KADESH WAR AND KADESH PEACE TREATY, PHARAOH II. THE PICTURE SHOWING RAMSES IN KADESH, 13 TH CENTURY BC.	8
FIGURE 2 RENE MAGRITTE, BETRAYAL OF IMAGES, 1928-1929, O/C/B, 63.5x93.98CM.	21
FIGURE 3 ALBERTO GIACOMETTI, WALKING MAN, 1947. BRONZE.....	26
FIGURE 4 GUSTAVE DORE (1832-1883), PAINTING FOR GARGANTUA AND PANTAGRUEL, 1873, GARNIE (ECO, 2019).	29
FIGURE 5 FESTIVAL OF COLORS IN INDIA, HOLI FESTIVAL IN INDIA.....	31
FIGURE 6 PIETER BRÜGEL, THE FIGHT BETWEEN CARNIVAL AND LENT, 1559, DETAIL, OIL ON WOOD, 118x164CM, KUNSTHISTORISCHES MUSEUM, VIENNA.	32
FIGURE 7 GÖBEKLITEPE, PHOTO CREDIT: ŞEYHMUS ÇAKIRTAŞ,.....	40
FIGURE 8 GÖBEKLITEPE, OBELISK, ŞANLIURFA.	40
FIGURE 9 ORLAN, REFIGURATION/ SELF HYBRIDIZATION PRECOLUMBIAN No:38, 1998, KIBAKROM PRINT, 161.3x108CM.	45
FIGURE 10 GARGOYLE", NOTRE DAME CHURCH, PARIS.....	50
FIGURE 11 LAOCOON AND SONS, ANCIENT MARBLE STATUE, 242 CM X 163 CM, VATICAN.	60
FIGURE 12 WILLIAM TURNER, HANNIBAL AND HIS ARMY CROSSING THE ALPS, 1812.	64
FIGURE 13 RICHARD NIXON'S CARICATURE.....	75
FIGURE 14 EDWARD & NANCY KEINHOLZ, "THE CADDY COURD" 1986-87 CADILLAC BASED ARTWORK. DESCRIPTION: MOBILE TABLEAU: 1978 CADILLAC WITH 1966 DODGE VAN, PLASTER CASTS, PHOTOGRAPHS, WOOD, METAL, CLOTH, BOOKS.....	79
FIGURE 15 MONA HATOUM, "GRATER DIVIDE", 2002, SCULPTURE.....	81
FIGURE 16 CAVE PAINTING "LASCAUX", 17,000-15,000 BC, DORDOGNE, FRANCE.....	113
FIGURE 17 JEAN DUBUFFET, GROUP OF FACES, 1946, MOMA,.....	119
FIGURE 18 ERWIN WURM, DECLINING ABSTRACT SCULPTURE 2013.....	121
FIGURE 19 BRANCUSI, KISS SCULPTURE, (1916), LIMESTONE, (58.4x33.7x25.4CM), 94.35KG, ARTA, ROMANIA.	122
FIGURE 20 WILLENDORF VENUS, 28,000-25,000 BC.	123
FIGURE 21 FERNANDO BOTERO, BROADGATE VENUS, (1989), LONDON, PHOTOGRAPH BY ALAN KEAN, ...	126
FIGURE 22 BRASSAI "AMULETTA I", 1971, 16.2x9x4 CM.	127
FIGURE 23 LOUIS BOURGEOIS, MAMAN, 1999, 9x8x10M, MARBLE, STAINLESS STEEL AND BRONZE, GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM, BILBAO.	129
FIGURE 24 WILLENDORF VENUS (28.000-25.000 BC), 11.1CM., JEFF KOONS, BALLOON VENUS, 2008-2012, 259.1x121.9x127CM., 5 DIFFERENT COLORS, VIENNA MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY.	129
FIGURE 25 GOTTLIEB GEORGI, KRASNOYARSK SHAMAN ENGRAVING.	131
FIGURE 26 NATIVE AMERICAN WOODEN TOTEM POLES ON THE NORTHWEST COAST.	134
FIGURE 27 TROIS FRERES CAVE-FRANCE, 13,000 BC, DRAWING OF A SHAMAN OR 'MAGICIAN'.	136
FIGURE 28 DANCE OF SPELL, 4,000 BC, SOURCE: GRUBER 1941, s. 172.....	138
FIGURE 29 FRANCISCO JOSE DE GOYA, INCANTATION, 1797, MUSEO LAZARO GALDIANO.....	139
FIGURE 30 UGO RONDINONE, SEVEN MAGIC MOUNTAINS, 2016, NEVADA.	140
FIGURE 31 A PAINTED KWELE MASK AND A TUVA SHAMAN HEADADDRESS FOUND IN GABON, A CENTRAL AFRICAN COUNTRY.	141
FIGURE 32 GÖBEKLITEPE, 9.600-9.500 BC, ŞANLIURFA.	142
FIGURE 33 HOLY TRINITY - OSIRIS FAMILY, FATHER OSIRIS, SON HORUS AND MOTHER ISIS, 874-850 BC, GOLD, LAPIS LAZULI, 9 X 6.60 CM, LOUVRE MUSEUM, EGYPTIAN DEPARTMENT, PARIS.....	147
FIGURE 34 ANSELM KIEFER, ISIS AND OSIRIS, 1985-87, LEAD, ACRYLIC, OIL, CLAY, PORCELAIN, WIRE, CABLE, 340x690CM, MOMA, SF.	147
FIGURE 35 PYRAMID OF CHEOPS, 2580-2560 BC, 139 M, EGYPT.....	149
FIGURE 36 THE KRITIOS BOY", 480 BC, SCULPTURE, MARBLE FROM PAROS, 117 CM, ACROPOLIS MUSEUM, ATHENS, GREECE.....	152
FIGURE 37 THE RIACE BRONZE" BRONZE STATUES, 460-450 BC, 198 CM, "MUSEO NAZIONALE DELLA MAGNA GRECIA, REGGIO CALABRIA ITALY.	152
FIGURE 38 MICHELANGELO, DAVID, 1504, MARBLE, 5,17 M, GALLERIA DELL'ACCADEMIA, FLORENCE, ITALY..	153
FIGURE 39 VILLA DEI MISTERI" FRESCOS SERIES, ARCHAEOLOGICAL PARK OF POMPEII, ITALY.	154

FIGURE 40 PETER PAUL RUBENS, <i>DRUNKEN SILENUS</i> , (1617-18), OIL ON WOOD, 212x214,5CM, BAVARIAN STATE PAINTING COLLECTIONS.....	157
FIGURE 41 CARLOS SCHWABE, <i>THE FAUN, A FAUN PLAYING THE FLUTE</i> , 1923, 115x146 CM, GENEVA MUSEUM OF ART AND HISTORY.	159
FIGURE 42 EREN EYÜBOĞLU, “DANCE, 1949,” GOUACHE ON PAPER, 49x63 CM, EYÜBOĞLU FAMILY COLLECTION.....	159
FIGURE 43 PRIAPOS FIGURINE	161
FIGURE 44 CHIMERAS (GARGOYLES) OF THE CATHEDRAL OF NOTRE DAME DE PARIS.	162
FIGURE 45 SALVATOR ROSA, “SCENES OF WITCHCRAFT: EVENING”, 1640. CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ARTS	164
FIGURE 46 ORHAN ENEZ CARICATURE SOURCE:	169
FIGURE 47 HENRI MATISSE, <i>THE DANCE</i> , 1910, O/C/B, 260x391 CM, HERMITAGE MUSEUM, ST. PETERSBURG	172
FIGURE 48 MARCEL DUCHAMP, <i>NUDE DESCENDING A STAIRCASE, No:2</i> , 1912, O/C/B, 147x89.2CM.	173
FIGURE 49 PIERO DELLA FRANCESCA, <i>MADONNA OF MERCY</i> , CENTER PANEL OF TRIPTYCH, 1445-1455, OIL AND TEMPERA ON WOOD, 1.44M	174
FIGURE 50 AI WEIWEI, <i>SUNFLOWER SEEDS</i> , 2010, PORCELAIN, TATE MODERN, LONDON	175
FIGURE 51 SANDRO BOTTICELLI, <i>THE BIRTH OF VENUS</i> , 1486, TEMPERA ON CANVAS, 173x279 CM. UFFIZI GALLERY, FLORENCE	179
FIGURE 52 LEONARDO DAVINCI, <i>VITRUVIAN MAN</i> , 1490, GALLERIE DELL 'ACCADEMIA, VENICE, ITALY.	180
FIGURE 53 LEONARDO DA VINCI, <i>MONA LISA</i> , 1503, O/C/B, 77x53CM, LOUVRE MUSEUM, PARIS.	181
FIGURE 54 HIERONYMUS BOSCH, “TRIPTYCH OF THE GARDEN OF EARTHLY DELIGHTS” 1503-1504, DETAIL, 2.2 x 3.86 M. PRADO MUSEUM, MADRID, SPAIN	183
FIGURE 55 EL GRECO, <i>OPENING OF THE FIFTH SEAL</i> , 1608-1614, O/C/B, 2.25x1.99M. METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NY.....	187
FIGURE 56 CARAVAGGIO, <i>THE ENTOMBMENT OF CHRIST</i> , ENTOMBMENT, 1604, 300CMX203CM, PINACOTECA VATICANA, VATICAN CITY.....	190
FIGURE 57 FRANCISCO GOYA, <i>LOS CAPRICHOS</i> , No: 43, 1790, “THE SLEEP OF THE MIND GIVES BIRTH TO MONSTERS”, ACIDIFICATION AND AQUATINTA, 21.8x25.2 CM.....	193
FIGURE 58 FRANCISCO GOYA, <i>SATURN DEVOURING HIS CHILDREN</i> , WALL PAINTING ON CANVAS, 1819-1823, 143.5x81.4CM., PRADO MUSEUM, MADRID.....	194
FIGURE 59 VINCENT VAN GOGH, <i>THE STARY NIGHT</i> , 1889. FEATHER, 73.7x92.1CM, MOMA,.....	197
FIGURE 60 PICASSO, <i>LES DEMOISELLES D'AVIGNON</i> 1907, 243.9 x 233.7 CM MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, NEW YORK.....	204
FIGURE 61 HENRY MOORE, <i>RECUMBENT FIGURE</i> , GREEN, RECLINING FIGURE, 1938, STONE SCULPTURE, 889x1327x737MM TATE GALLERY LONDON, UK.....	205
FIGURE 62 HENRI MATISSE, <i>THE GREEN LINE- PORTRAIT OF MADAME MATISSE</i> , 1905, 40.5x32.5CM, O/C/B, NATIONAL GALLERY OF DENMARK, COPENHAGEN., DENMARK.	206
FIGURE 63 ANTONI GAUDI, <i>CASA MILA</i> , (1906-1912), BARCELONA, SPAIN.....	208
FIGURE 64 HANNAH HÖCH, “HANNAH AND HER SCISSORS, MODENSCHAU (FASHION SHOW), 1925-35 (DETAIL) BY HANNAH HÖCH. PHOTOGRAPH: BERLINISCHE GALERIE – LANDESMUSEUM FÜR MODERNE KUNST, FOTOGRAFIE UND ARCHITEKTUR, BERLIN”	211
FIGURE 65 MARCEL DUCHAMP, <i>FOUNTAIN</i> , 1917.....	212
FIGURE 66 MARCEL DUCHAMP, <i>LHOOQ</i> , 1919	213
FIGURE 67 PIET MONDRIAN, <i>COMPOSITION WITH RED, BLUE AND YELLOW</i> , 1930, O/C/B, 45x 45CM., KUNSTHAUS ZURICH.	214
FIGURE 68 SALVADOR DALI, <i>SPACE ELEPHANT</i> , 1961, GOLD CASTING, JEWELRY, 68 x 35.5 x 21 CM, DALI THEATER MUSEUM.....	216
FIGURE 69 HANS BELLMER, <i>LA POUPEE (THE DOLL)</i> , 1936, VINTAGE GELATIN SILVER PRINT AND GOUACHE MOUNTED ON CARD STOCK, IMAGE INCLUDING GOUACHE, 17.8 x 17.5 CM.....	217
FIGURE 70 RENE MAGRITTE, <i>PERSONAL VALUES</i> , 1952, O/C/B, 80X100CM.	218
FIGURE 71 JOAN MIRO, <i>PAIR OF LOVERS PLAYING WITH ALMOND BLOSSOMS</i> , 1975, 300 x 160 x 140CM, SYNTHETIC RESIN, THE JOAN MIRO FOUNDATION, BARCELONA, SPAIN.....	219
FIGURE 72 JACKSON POLLOCK, <i>No. 5</i> , 1948, OIL ON MDF, 2.4 M x 1.2 M. PRIVATE COLLECTION, NEW YORK.....	228
FIGURE 73 PHILIP GUSTON, <i>PAINTING, SMOKING, EATING</i> , 1973, O/C/B, STEDELIJK MUSEUM, SOURCE MFA.ORG.	230
FIGURE 74 FRANCIS BACON, <i>HEAD I</i> , 1948, O/C/B, 100.3CM x 74.9CM.	232
FIGURE 75 JOSEPH BEUYS, <i>PERFORMANCE TITLED “HOW TO EXPLAIN PICTURES TO A DEAD HARE (1965).”</i> .	233

FIGURE 76 MARINA ABRAMOVIC, PERFORMING “RHYTHM O”	234
FIGURE 77 JEFF KOONS, PUPPY, 1992, FLOWERING PLANTS, STEEL, WOOD AND SOIL, 11.5 METERS, GERMANY, SCHLOSS AROLSEN	238
FIGURE 78 ANDY WARHOL, MINT MARILYN (TURQUOISE MARILYN), 1962, ACRYLIC AND SILKSCREEN INK ON LINEN, 50.8 x 40.6 CM. PRIVATE COLLECTION PHOTO. TIM NIGHSWANDER.	239
FIGURE 79 ANDY WARHOL, MARILYN MONROE COMPLETE PORTFOLIO, 1967, REVOLVER GALERY.	240
FIGURE 80 ROY LICHTENSTEIN, “WHAAM!”, 1963, A/C/B, 1.7x4M, TATE MODERN, LONDON	241
FIGURE 81 YVES KLEIN, LE VIDE (THE VOID), 1958, GALERIE IRIS CLERT, PARIS	242
FIGURE 82 FERNANDEZ ARMAN, FULL-UP, 1960, GALERIE IRIS CLERT, PARIS.....	242
FIGURE 83 CHUCK CLOSE, SELF PORTRAIT, 1967-1968, A/C/B, 273.1X 212.1 CM.....	243
FIGURE 84 FERNANDO BOTERO, NUDE, 1966, BRONZE STATUE.....	246
FIGURE 85 FERNANDO BOTERO, MONA LISA, 1978, O/C/B, 183 x 166 CM	247
FIGURE 86 KATHARINA FRITSCH, RATTENKÖNIG (THE RAT KING), 1993, POLYESTER RESIN, 2.8M HEIGHT, 13M DIAMETER, NY, INSTALLED AT DIA CENTER FOR THE ARTS APRIL 1993.	248
FIGURE 87 CLAES OLDENBURG, CLOTHESPIN, 1976, CENTRE SQUARE PLAZA, 15TH AND MARKET STREETS	249
FIGURE 88 CLAES OLDENBURG, FLOOR BURGER, 1962, LATESK COATING ON FABRIC EXTERIOR, CARDBOARD AND FOAM FILLING INSIDE, 1.48x2.90x1.48M.	250
FIGURE 89 ANISH KAPOOR, “CLOUD GATE”, 2004, 10x20x13M, CHICAGO, USA.....	254
FIGURE 90 RON MUECK, “IN BED”, 2005, 161.9 x 649.9 x 395, QUEENSLAND ART GALLERY	255
FIGURE 91 RON MUECK, “BOY”, 1999, 5M, PHOTO BY TAMAKI SONO.....	256

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BC	Before Christ
AD	Anno Domini
O/C/B	Oil on Canvas Board
A/C/B	Acrylic on Canvas Board
Et al	and others
n.d.	no date



1. INTRODUCTION

In this study “Exaggeration in Art as a Tool of Interpretation and Its Reflection in Plastic Arts”, examples selected from different periods of art history have been examined, exploring the role of exaggeration and analyzing their theoretical implications. While conducting this analysis, the interactions between different art disciplines were also evaluated.

The various expressions and language of exaggeration, diverse examples from different historical periods, and the contemporary transformation of the concept of exaggeration have been collectively examined. Exaggeration has been approached through the artist’s perspective, questioning its utilization as a tool for interpreting the artist’s own reality. The definitions of the words “*abartı*, *mübalağa* (exaggeration)” from TDK (Turkish Language Association), Püsküllüoğlu, and the Oxford dictionary were employed as references in transcend the ordinary; consequently, artistic concepts aligning with these definitions, transcending the ordinary, were acknowledged as instances of exaggeration. (See Chapter 2, The Concept of Exaggeration, Meaning, Origin, and Etymological Equivalent of the Word Exaggeration).

Relevant local and international visual and written sources were surveyed, and research in various databases was scrutinized. The selected art examples were dissected within the framework of exaggeration.

The goal was to seek answers to the following questions: What instinct compelled our ancestors, who had never encountered painting in their lives, to draw exaggerated paintings on cave walls? What drove the need for exaggeration? Why do our brains exhibit heightened reactions to extremes? How do mental processing and the creative response unfold? How do artists utilize exaggeration as a tool for interpretation? Is exaggeration a product of societal compulsion, a necessity, or an expression of the artist’s own reality? The way emotion is defined by the artist and the depth of the meaning they attribute to the elements could be related to what? In certain periods of art history, exaggeration stands out prominently. What characteristics of these periods signify the use of exaggeration? Can a shared sentiment about exaggeration be identified across all art disciplines? Is it a manifestation of exaggeration or an expression of the artist’s distinctive style? Can every

instance of exaggeration in art be classified as exaggeration? Is the lack of an object or voidness also considered a form of exaggeration? While deformation is recognized as a form of exaggeration, is every instance of exaggeration a deformation? In this research aimed at tracing the trajectory of exaggeration from cave art to the present day and illuminating its most prevalent instances, the concept of exaggeration has been examined in connection with themes such as reality, the carnival spirit, supernatural symbolism, excessiveness, fear, horror, deformation, the sanctification of imperfection, transcendence, the ideal, the sublime, cartoon, comedy, kitsch, symbolic expression, and folk narratives.

In **Chapter Two**, the semantic nuances, origins, and conditions of formation of exaggeration are elucidated. Additionally, the existence of imaginative and fictional elements in exaggeration and what valuable reality is were also discussed.

Concepts Associated with Exaggeration (Section 2.2): Expanding upon theoretical perspectives, the chapter delves into the intricacies of the “*exaggeration concept*” under the following headings: “*Reality, Perception, Illusion, Imagination,*” “*Public Entertainment, the Carnival Spirit,*” “*Supernatural Beings, Excessiveness, Fear, Horror, the Uncanny, Grotesque,*” “*Deformation, Representation of the Ugly, Sanctification of Imperfection,*” “*The Social Phenomenon of Kitsch,*” “*Transcendence, Supreme, Ideal, Beauty & Ugly,*” “*Humor, Comedy, Coarse Comedy,*” “*Symbolic Expression,*” “*Folk Narratives, Myths, Tales, Epics, Stories, and Legends.*”

The concept of reality, a subject extensively debated with no consensus reached on its definition, is examined, and the different realities of each period, different aesthetic understandings, the relativity of values and perceptions are explained. Furthermore, emphasis is placed on the assertion that imagination constitutes the reality of art and exaggeration. Under the title “**Public Entertainment, the Carnival Spirit**,” Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of carnival is succinctly summarized in the context of Rabelais’ Gargantua. The ‘exaggerated joy and laughter’ experienced within the liberty of Bakhtin’s carnival is examined through the lens of Bakhtin’s Grotesque. The study underscores that the exaggerated spirit of the carnival, a phenomenon encompassing social, collective, socioeconomic, political, and folkloric dimensions, with its liberating, subversive nature that brings forth marginalized, oppositional, and suppressed emotions, has been transposed into art as a grotesque reality. This transformation is noted to have persisted throughout the history of art, finding its place in various forms from Roman caves onward. Under the

heading “**Supernatural Beings, Excessiveness, Fear, The Uncanny, and Grotesque,**” it is noted that Gothic architecture became conspicuous in European architecture, particularly from the 12th-13th century onwards through magnificent cathedrals, adorned with exaggerated pointed towers, symbolizing the aspiration to reach the heavens and God. The discussion extends to how Gothic aesthetics continued to exert influence in literature, painting, cinema, and theater by evoking themes of terror, horror, mystery, despair, evil, human frailty, and power dynamics. The Grotesque by Bakhtin, examined in Section “2.2.2,” under the title “*Public Entertainment, the Carnival Spirit,*” is revisited in this section, enriching the analysis through Kayser’s distinct approach, accompanied by additions emphasizing fear and uncanniness. The discussion extends to Göbeklitepe, acknowledged as a site instilling fear, with an emphasis on the notion that its alarming symbols could be regarded as instances of ancient exaggeration. Under the title **Deformation, Representation of the Ugly, Sanctification of Imperfection,** the concepts of grotesque, carnivalesque, abjection and informe (formless), which describe tendencies such as deformation and departure from idealized human bodies, and their relationship with exaggeration are examined.

The concept of grotesque was elucidated through the perspectives of Wolfgang Kayser, while the concept of carnivalesque was explained through Bakhtin’s approaches. Under the title “**The Social Phenomenon of Kitsch,**” discussions encompassed the aesthetics of kitsch, the influence of the industrial revolution and populism, and the economic and cultural factors that paved the way for kitsch culture. The relationship between kitsch and exaggeration was thoroughly examined. Susan Sontag’s *Camp* was highlighted for its close association with kitsch, and it was noted that movements like Pop Art, Art Pompier, and Art Nouveau opened the doors to the realm of kitsch objects with their emphasis on exaggeration and excess. Under the heading of “**Transcendence, Sublime, Ideal, Beauty, and Ugly,**” the relationships between these concepts and exaggeration were revisited. The issue of transcendence and the ideal in art was elucidated through the image of Laocoön. The concept of the sublime was expounded through the perspectives of Kant and Burke, and beauty was conveyed through the diverse approaches of Schiller, Schelling, Lessing, Hegel, Kant, Baumgarten, and Leibniz. Rosenkranz and Eco’s insights into ugliness were discussed, and Nietzsche’s thoughts on art were narrated through the examples of Apollo and Dionysus. Under the title “**Humor, Comedy, Caricature, Coarse Comedy,**” it

is emphasized that caricature and humor are comprised of exaggeration. The discussion highlights how they accentuate flaws, features, and the most distinctive differences, aiming to amuse and provoke thoughts, thereby persuading broad audiences. The question of why our brains exhibit heightened reactions to extremes is elucidated through Ramachandran's "Shift peak" theory. In the section titled "**Symbolic Expression (Allegory, Metaphor)**," the concepts of metaphor, allegory, oxymoron, and paradox are succinctly summarized, and their relationship with exaggeration is explored. Symbolic narratives, such as Fables and Parables, are explained and illustrated. Muhibbi's poetry, one of "*Divan*" poets, serves as an example, showcasing its exaggerated symbolic features. It is emphasized that the limbs depicted through exaggeration in literature are rooted in dreams created about the lover and serve to glorify the beloved. Under the heading "**Folk Narratives - Myths, Tales, Epics, Stories, Legends**," it is noted that the roots of folk narratives extend back to myths, depicting with extraordinary events, supernatural beings, and superior powers, are expressed in a fantastical narrative, attributing symbolic meanings and incorporating elements of exaggeration. Various examples are examined, including folk tales (Kerem and Aslı), Folk Music (Azdavay Hasan's folk song), Minstrelsy tradition (Karacaoğlu), Epics (Iliad and Odyssey, the Legend of Oghuz Kaan, Bayeux Tapestry), Orta oyunu (Low Comedy) (Kavuklu and Pişekar), Shadow play (Karagöz and Hacivat), Nasrettin Hodja, and Evliya Çelebi's Travelogue.

In **Chapter Three**, the discussion revolves around "*Exaggeration as an Expression of Interpretation*" under the premise that exaggeration is employed as a potent language of interpretation both in art and daily life. Considering that individuals are consistently engaged in communication, interaction, and information transfer with their surroundings as they strive to comprehend and reshape the world in a manner congruent with themselves, the focus was placed on "*The Concept of Communication, Visual Communication, and Symbols*."

In **Chapter Four**, the exploration delves into the reflection of exaggeration in the plastic arts as a tool of interpretation in art from the dawn of creativity to the present day. Selected works from different periods of art history, along with examples from diverse disciplines if available, are scrutinized. Section 4.1, titled "*The Emergence of Creativity and the Role of Exaggeration*," delves into topics such as "Cave Paintings and Instances of Exaggeration," "The Mother Archetype and the Approach of Exaggeration," "The Ritual-

Spiritual Realm and Exaggeration,” “Common Origin in the Expressions of Art & Magic and the Role of Exaggeration,” “The Role of Exaggeration in Ornamentation,” and “Instances of Exaggeration in Göbeklitepe Symbols.” The periods spanning from the inception of creativity in caves to the contemporary era are examined and exemplified under the following headings: Section 4.2, “*Exploration of the Exaggeration Concept in Mystery, Authority, and Hierarchy as Periodic Themes*”; Section 4.3, “*Exploration of Exaggeration in the Ideal of “Looking Good Means Being Good”*”; Section 4.4, “*Exaggeration in Mythology*”; Section 4.5, “*The Realm of Fairytales, the Fear of Bourgeois Civilization and Exaggeration*”; Section 4.6, “*Elements and Principles of Composition, Processes of Interpretation, and Exaggeration in Plastic Arts*”; Section 4.7, “*A Perspective on Exaggeration from the Classical Art Ideal*”; Section 4.8, “*Alienation as an Expressive Form and Traces of Exaggeration in Distortion*”; Section 4.9, “*Populism, Post Modernism, and Exaggeration in Contemporary Art.*”

2. CONCEPT OF EXAGGERATION

Under this section, the Meaning and Etymological Counterparts of the Word Exaggeration and the Concepts Associated with Exaggeration will be examined.

2.1 The Meaning, Origin, and Etymological Equivalent of the Word Exaggeration

The word “*abartı*,” a counterpart for the word “exaggeration” in Turkish, as defined by the Dictionary of Contemporary Turkish (1986) from the TDK, refers to “making something or an event seem bigger or more than it is, “*mübalaga*” (TDK, 1986). Essentially, the word “*abartı*” is rooted in the Arabic word “*mübalaga*,” itself derived from the root “*buluğ*”. However, there is no information available about when it entered the Turkish language (tdk, n.d.). Both words “*mübalaga*” and “*abartı*” are used in Turkish. When the nouns “*mübalaga*” and “*abartı*” are used as verbs, it is often “*mübalaga*” that appeals to the other party since it typically involves implied praise. The term “*mübalaga*”, when used as a word, signifies reaching the end point, putting all one’s effort into something, moving forward, and enlarging. In literary language, exaggeration is employed to enhance the impact of words, depicting or describing something in a way that is significantly different from reality (Safa, 2015, pp. 251-252). The word “*mübalaga*” pushes the meaning to its limits. It involves emphasizing specific features or situations to convey emotion, and its usage transcends the ordinary. There are two types of “*mübalaga*”: “*ifrat*” (an excess in overdoing) when it portrays something more than it is, and “*tefrit*” (excess by showing less) when it portrays less (Çetinkaya, 2011, p.39). “*Mübalaga*” is categorized as “*tebliğ*” (declaration)” if it conforms to reason and tradition; if it conforms to reason but not to tradition, and if a person’s characteristics are praised or denigrated excessively it is termed as “*iğrak*” (excessive praise or denigration); if there is extreme exaggeration that does not conform to either, it is referred to as “*gülv*” (excessive exaggeration) (Çetinkaya, 2011, p.39). Modifiers such as “very,” “more,” “vast,” and “highly” indicate the excessiveness of a feature in something and are associated with exaggeration. The English equivalent of “*abartı*” is “Exaggeration” (Safa, 2015). According to the Oxford Dictionary, “**exaggerate**” is defined as “to make something seem larger, better, worse, etc. than it really is” (Oxford

Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 1995, p.397), indicating a departure from the ordinary. In English, “**hyperbole**” is also synonymous with exaggeration. The Dictionary of Arts and Sciences defines exaggeration as follows: “In the art of rhetoric, it is a kind of hyperbole, such as strengthening or amplifying something by saying that it is better or worse than it really is. There are two kinds of exaggeration; one is exaggerating things, the other exaggerating words...” (Gregory, 1806, p. 664).

Püsküllüoğlu Turkish Dictionary outlines the indicators that define and signify exaggeration as follows: “Portraying something as larger or more than it is.” “The state of being excessive.” “Going to extremes, surpassing what is necessary in a task by not contenting oneself with the required measure.” Indicators of excessiveness include terms like “very,” “more,” “vast,” and “highly” (Püsküllüoğlu, 1995, pp.30, 149). Consequently, exaggeration entails transcending the ordinary.

When an exaggeration is employed, it is invariably intended to convey something, serving a purpose. While unconscious exaggeration may exist in primitivism, art is characterized by purposeful exaggeration. The concept of exaggeration exerts a significant influence on human psychology (Yılmaz, 2021). The instinctive desire to exaggerate is inherent in humans and can manifest in various psychological disorders.

Exaggeration involves portraying a real situation or a feature more or less than it actually is; hence, to evoke exaggeration, the particular feature must be either magnified or minimized. Thus, metaphor arises. The role of metaphor and exaggeration in the richness of literary language is undeniable. The assessment criteria for exaggeration also encompass considerations of its alignment with morality and tradition (tdk.n.d.). Each image crafted in the realm of imagination essentially constitutes a “reproduction and transformation of reality” to a certain degree. While memory primarily serves the preservation of experiences, imagination is fundamentally dedicated to transformation. Through imagination, specific features or scenarios are underscored, deliberately accentuated, and novel depictions are formed. The overarching objective is to captivate attention, ensure comprehensibility, leave a lasting impression, influence, persuade, enhance emotional intensity, and deliver a distinct message by presenting the depicted subject as distinctly different from reality. Typically, the attributes of both lovers and statesmen are subject to exaggeration. Examining Egyptian art, the portrayal of the pharaoh, a central figure, offers a striking example. While the real-life pharaoh assumes the dimensions of an average Egyptian, in the collective imagination of the

Egyptians, he looms as a colossal figure, vividly illustrated as such (Hockney & Gayford, 2017, p.24), (Figure 1).

Similarly, the 1942 “Buy War Bonds” poster features an allegorical figure, Uncle Sam, motivating Americans for war, seemingly commanding troops with grandeur against a backdrop of clouds. This figure, symbolizing concepts like democracy, freedom, and justice, is deliberately portrayed on a larger scale (Rathus, 2015, p. 101).



FIGURE 1 *Kadesh war and Kadesh peace treaty, Pharaoh II. The picture showing Ramses in Kadesh, 13th century BC.*

Exaggeration, as a counter-opinion and an antithesis to the existing thesis, amplifies the negative to elevate the positive (Kaya, 2022). Exaggeration is the discomfort felt as the ordinary order of the world is disrupted. Additionally, exaggeration inherently incorporates a proactive approach to an unknown future and serves as a mechanism for problem-solving, consistently tailored to fulfill its intended purpose.

Andrew Selby, the author and illustrator of the book “*Animation*,” discusses the use of exaggeration in cartoons and animation, stating: “The principle of exaggeration, whether applied to physical design and character movements or to the broader narrative functions of animation itself, provides opportunities to stretch and distort reality, achieving the seemingly impossible by stretching conditions and breaking rules” (Selby, 2013, p. 15). Selby characterizes the path to exaggeration as the exploration of the impossible, transcending routine practices and rules. Consequently, exaggeration can be described as a departure from the ordinary.

In his book “*Outliers*, 2008”, Malcolm Gladwell emphasizes the “10,000-hour rule” to achieve success with a specific talent, underscoring the need for extensive and prolonged effort (Gladwell, 2009). Similarly, in “*The History of Pictures*,” Hockney and Gayford note that renowned artists like Raffaello, Michelangelo, and Turner commenced intensive work from the ages of 13-14, highlighting a similar notion (Hockney & Gayford, 2017). During an appearance on Bloomberg TV’s program hosted by Aslı Şafak, author Mümin Sekman discusses his analysis of successful individuals and underscores the following: “Balance is the ideology of the middle class. Successful individuals exaggerate. To succeed is to exaggerate something. For instance, the Germans exaggerated systematic work,...” (Bloomberg TV, 20.09.2022). The emphasis lies in exaggerating whatever is necessary for success.

In conclusion, exaggeration is a natural part of human behavior and an instinctive response. In everyday life, we frequently use exaggerated statements. Numerous examples of exaggeration can be provided. For instance, to exaggerate an event or situation, expressions like “He is so skinny that he would fly if you blew on him,” “The child is burning up in flames,” “I have a million things to do,” “I was frightened to death,” etc., can be cited. Many examples can be listed successively. As an example of exaggeration through metaphor to strengthen expression, we can say, “The mountain of a man was transformed into a limp and helpless man.” An example of exaggeration using clichéd expressions and idioms could be, “I was so ashamed that I wanted the ground to swallow me up.” In order to praise any feature of a person, we can say, “Roses bow their necks before your beauty.” Therefore, exaggeration can be defined as the narration of the valuable reality, which is separated from others and highlighted, for the understanding of the current situation to strengthen the expression.

Orhan Tekin, in his research paper, defines exaggeration as follows: “Exaggeration is a form of intervention that involves multiplying the value of the existing object or situation, which includes additions or subtractions about the existing one, rather than making us believe in another reality. In this case, the valuable and existing reality is not distanced” (Tekin, 2017, p. 152). The valuable reality mentioned, expresses a valuable feature or situation for its creator, and exaggeration occurs when it is emphasized in the narrative (Tekin, 2017). In daily life, when we describe what is important and valuable to us, reality gains a new dimension as we act selectively and express it in an exaggerated way. Martin

Gayford mentions that the very tall Japanese women in the paintings of Japanese painter and ukiyo-e master Kitagawa Utamaro (1753-1806) appear to be at most 150 cm tall in 19th-century photographs (Hockney and Gayford, 2017, p.24). The artist portrayed the women in his imagination by exaggerating their height.

Values are shaped through the culture of the human community in which we grow up, forming the identity of that society. The creation of symbols for concepts attributed with values has persisted from ancient times to the present day. As Aristotle stated, humans are social beings and products of their environment. Every social habit, behavior, emotion, rule, custom, and tradition adopted by society contributes to this identity. These values are transmitted from generation to generation through symbols. Family and religion play crucial roles in instilling values in individuals. Societal morality, religion, and culture cannot be assessed in terms of reality or truth, and the field of historical science is unable to definitively conclude whether values are true or real (Peperzak, 2014, p.269).

Exaggeration finds examples in various aspects of life, including daily life, politics, religion, literary texts, advertisements, and all branches of art, making it an integral part of both our lives and artistic expression. Eroğlu defines exaggeration in art as follows: “In plastic arts, exaggeration is mostly associated with formal aspects. To achieve this, a logic of stylization is crafted, often used to highlight different aspects and characteristics of an artist. Caricaturing human and figurative forms are common approaches in order to highlight differences and the resulting features in an illustrative sense. Such formal interpretation tends to infuse the work with expression. Exaggeration is also employed to bring attention to an obvious ironic situation, and it can manifest through the portrayal of various volumes of colors and lines (Eroğlu, 2013, p. 9).

In his article in the “scop bulletin,” Baransel defined the title “Capricho” of Goya’s 80-piece engraving series as “ideas and judgments that do not conform to the usual and common rules” (Baransel, 2012). This definition almost serves as a definition of exaggeration with its extraordinary nature. Baudelaire, commenting on Goya’s engravings, stated, “No one has ever made the absurd possible with such audacity. All those gnarled beings, animalistic faces, demonic grins are thoroughly inherent to human. The resemblance and harmony between these beings are so strong that their existence cannot be denied even from the point of view of natural science. In summary, it is not possible to separate the real from the imaginary with a sharp line. Even the most meticulous researcher cannot determine

the ambiguous boundary of this art, which contains the real and the surreal at the same time” (Baudelaire 1868; Baransel, 2012). (See Section 4.5, The Realm of Fairytales, the Fear of Bourgeois Civilization and Exaggeration). While Baudelaire appreciates the bold use of exaggeration in Goya’s engravings, he mentions the confusion of reality and fantasy. Goya, due to his illness resulting in deafness, was able to look at the world from a different perspective, moving away from normality and changing art with his imaginative freedom and new aesthetic understanding.

While the given definitions for Goya’s engravings point to the extraordinary, it can be observed that the concept of *ordinary* is used as a criterion in legal writings for the evaluation of evidence. In Hukuki HABER (Legal News), Dr. Suat Çalışkan (2019) explained the concept of the ordinary course of life in legal terms as follows: “The concept of the ordinary course of life can be defined as the behaviors that people in general do continuously in social life, the behaviors that people normally exhibit in similar situations” (Çalışkan, 2019, Hukuki Haber). The opposite of this, the criterion of contradiction to the ordinary course of life, reminds us of exaggeration. In art, the exaggerated appearance created by the artist with the unlimited imagination is contrary to the ordinary flow of life. If there are creatures, heroes, or situations that are created with unlimited imagination, contain extraordinary elements, and cannot be encountered in real life, we say that there are imaginary elements, exaggeration, and fictional elements in that work. According to Tekin (2017): “The use of the word fiction when talking about exaggeration suggests a planned, programmed behavior or plot of events” (p.152). Therefore, exaggeration is a language of expression that is not based on facts but created by the artist’s imagination. While the artist consciously uses exaggeration as a tool for interpretation, they can benefit from compositional principles such as proportion, scale, contrast, dominance, harmony, rhythm, balance, movement, or concepts such as metaphor, allegory, humor, grotesque, carnivalesque, abjection, sublime, ugliness, excess, deformation (See Section 4.6, Elements and Principles of Composition, Processes of Interpretation, and Exaggeration in Plastic Arts).

When examining the definitions of art provided by artists and writers, we encounter the following statements: According to Pablo Picasso, “Art is a lie that allows us to understand reality” (Zayas, 1923; Picasso, 2001), and according to Turner, “Art is an endeavor that subverts man” (Yılmaz, 2018). French writer Andre Gide believes that “A work of art is an exaggeration of an idea” (Gide, 1919, p.5), while British writer Jeanette

Winterson claims that “Art cannot be tamed; Art rebels” (Winterson, 2018). All these definitions of art can point to the reality of art, that is, exaggeration.

Landscape painter David Dunlop describes exaggeration as “a form of focusing and simplification” (Dunlop, 2014), suggesting that exaggeration helps reduce the complexity of the subject, allowing attention to be concentrated on the exaggerated elements. Similarly, French painter, writer, and art critic Emile Bernard explains simplification as follows: “Since thought is a collection of objects compiled by the imagination, it is no longer necessary to paint by looking at something. Thought conceals the essence of the object, rejects the details, thus simplifying shapes and colors” (Read, 2020, p.23). As we often fail to notice many things around us, and habits that no longer capture our attention lose their ability to surprise us, we begin to seek out different things. The more familiar something is to us, the less we see it. For us to focus, that thing must be able to attract our attention. Marketing activities are built upon this reflex. Gombrich, when discussing the dullness of what we frequently encounter in art, speaks of entertaining peculiarities and the artist’s impulse to be different (Gombrich, 1972, pp. 2-11). While our appetite for the new and our desire for change are satisfied through constant stylistic changes, we often prefer making minor modifications to existing styles rather than embracing radical new ideas or inventions because they are less familiar.

Neuroscientist Ramachandran, with his “Peak Shift Theory”, attributes the use of exaggeration in art to attract attention to the fact that our attention reacts highly to exaggerations about the fine details of a particular feature (Spivey, 2005). Ramachandran, while talking about the existence of exaggeration in nature and that it creates a natural selection, said that when female peacocks prefer males with big tails, the genes for big tails proliferate in the population and eventually result in peacocks’ flamboyant but useless tails (Ramachandran and Rogers, 2010). This theory suggests that there may be other strong emotions at play besides Charles Darwin’s theory of natural selection of genes.

The Herring Gull Test mentioned by Spivey (2005) brought a different perspective to the concept of exaggeration (p.60). In the test conducted by Oxford University on gulls in the Herring region in 1950: “Newborn gull chicks recognize their feeding mothers by the red line on their beaks. In the test, the chicks were handed sticks the size of the mother’s beak, wrapped in red-colored bands, and when they saw the stick, they reacted exactly as they did to the mother gull. This time, they repeated the test with two red bands on the same

stick, and the chicks' reaction increased in direct proportion to the number of red lines, and they even showed no interest in the stick with a single red band" (Spivey, 2005, p.60). The test is a good example of the presence of exaggeration in nature and shows how our brains are programmed to exaggerate features that are important to us. Ramachandran, famous for his theories and experiments in behavioral neurology, interpreted the research as follows: "If seagulls had an art gallery, they would hang the stick with three red bands on it on the gallery wall, worship it and call it a masterpiece. ..." (Spivey, 2005, p. 60). In this interpretation, Ramachandran highlights the defining attributes that distinguish a work of art, simultaneously drawing attention to the inquiries our research endeavors to address: What innate impulse compelled our ancestors, devoid of any prior exposure to paintings, to create elaborate depictions on cave walls? What motivated them to exaggerate, portraying peculiarly shaped beings, as evident in figurines like the Venus of Willendorf?

David Dunlop has asserted that the trajectory of exaggeration, initiated with paintings on cave walls, has evolved, simplifying over the course of art history and culminating in minimalism. He indicates that the ultimate form of exaggeration involves abandoning the canvas and embracing conceptualism (Dunlop, 2014). Duchamp's introduction of the urinal as an art object stands as an exemplification of exaggeration. Duchamp rescued the object from its superficial existence, elevated it to the conceptual realm, and deemed it a work of art as a vessel for the meaning he imparted to it. Duchamp independently determined what constitutes a work of art, ascribed significance to the readymade, imbued the urinal with meaning, and thereby altered our perception of it (See Section 4.8, Alienation as an Expressive Form and Traces of Exaggeration in Distortion). Additionally, the selection of the urinal as the object is ironic and exaggerated in itself.

In his book 'Contemporary Art Philosophy,' Turani posits that "the absence of logic in a work of art ensures its infinitude, diversity, color, and richness" (Turani, 2014, pp.12-13). Meanwhile, the French author Gide (1869-1951), mentioned previously, in his book *'Prometheus Illbound 1919,'* remarks that "a work of art is an exaggeration of an idea." Both perspectives underscore the creative nature of art and the inherent presence of exaggeration. Platte emphasizes a deviation from the ordinary flow of life by asserting that "the creative is always the unexpected" (Platte, 1957). Through this lens, exaggeration contributes to both creativity and credibility.

Texts characterized by an exaggerated discourse are commonly referred to as fairy

tales, fantasy, epic, saga, legend, dream, and magical realism. Exaggeration, employed by artists to enhance the persuasiveness and efficacy of their works, manifests across all art disciplines throughout various epochs. Anything newly created through a rich imagination encapsulates the reality of its creator.

In his book *“How Art Made the World,”* art historian and archaeologist Spivey delves into how our ancestors, who had never encountered paintings in their lives, arrived at the concept of painting and discovered the ability to convey messages through symbols, and explores the reasons behind their inclination to exaggerate (Spivey, 2005, p. 31). Spivey interprets the human tendency to exaggerate through T.S Eliot’s assertion that “People cannot bear reality too much” (Spivey, 2005, p.81). Adnan Turani, in his work *“Contemporary Art Philosophy,”* adds to this discourse by stating, “Man becomes weary of the materialistic dryness and rigidity of reality. The intoxication of emotions presents itself as a rich and colorful universe” (Turani, 2014, p.74). Turani emphasizes that the use of exaggeration, as a means to distance oneself from reality, break free from the monotony of the mundane, and highlight the valuable elements, has roots in ancient cultures and serves the continuity of existence and life. In the realm of visual arts, Picasso in painting and Henry Moore in sculpture explored the surreal and the world of animist forms, discovering primitiveness (Read, 2020, p.58). They employed formal simplification as a technique of exaggeration. Notably, in primitive cultures, exaggeration was not a conscious choice; rather, it manifested itself as a symbiotic relationship with nature. Deformation, emerging consciously since the 19th century, acted as an intentional antithesis to existing artistic theses. Picasso’s conceptualization of exaggeration, wherein he abandoned nature and molded art according to his own vision, stands as a poignant example of this phenomenon.

Deformation is a form of exaggeration, but exaggeration is not only based on form, in other words, exaggeration in art does not mean deformation. Therefore, in this study, exaggeration will not be analyzed only in terms of deformation. When it comes to exaggeration in the abstract, for example, as in Malevich and Mondrian, the transition from aesthetic visuality to the intellectual dimension, then gradually goes to the blank canvas by getting rid of emotions. Voidness in art is also an exaggeration.

In contemporary times, exaggeration emerges as an effective method across all art disciplines. Exaggeration, which was mostly seen in animal and human figures in wall

paintings or small figurines in the early ages, is now prominent in various fields such as painting, sculpture, architecture, literature, theater, cinema, and music in the modern world.

This study approaches exaggeration from the perspective of the artist. Definitions of exaggeration from the TDK, Püsküllüoğlu Turkish Dictionary, and the Oxford Dictionary have been used as references. Artistic phenomena that align with these definitions are acknowledged as exaggeration. The use of exaggeration as a tool for the artist to interpret their own reality is scrutinized.

In this section, the lexical meaning and etymology of the word exaggeration have been explored. Utilizing selected definitions of exaggeration as reference, artistic phenomena aligning with these definitions are acknowledged as instances of exaggeration. Since exaggeration is approached from the artist's perspective, it is noted that exaggeration is not confined solely to form and deformation; rather, it involves a connection with imagination. The discourse encompasses discussions on why exaggeration is employed, the presence of imaginative and fictional elements within exaggeration, the concept of valuable reality, and the assertion that exaggeration is an instinctive response in humans. A distinctive viewpoint on the concept of exaggeration is presented through Spivey's mention of "*The Herring Gull Test*" in his book "*How Art Made the World.*" The application of neuroscientist Ramachandran's "Peak Shift" theory is discussed, highlighting how art employs exaggeration to draw attention by triggering heightened responses to nuanced exaggerations in specific features. Common threads in the thoughts and sentiments expressed in the statements of Dunlop "simplification and focusing", Gombrich "Aesthetic fatigue", T.S Eliot "people can't stand reality too much", Spivey "boredom of the present", and Ramachandran "high reaction of living beings to nuanced exaggeration" are explained as the shared notion that individuals gradually lose interest in the familiar elements in their surroundings, rendering them nearly invisible; consequently, tend to respond positively to subtle changes. These insights collectively support the idea that the artist's utilization of exaggeration as a tool for interpretation enhances the impact, persuasiveness, strength, and comprehensibility of their expressions.

2.2 Concepts Associated with Exaggeration

2.2.1 The Relationship between Exaggeration and the Concepts of Reality, Perception, Illusion and Imagination

The selectivity we exhibit in our daily lives, with the desire to highlight what is valuable to us, and the sharing we engage in by incorporating the feeling of “exaggeration,” give rise to diverse and novel forms of reality. Consequently, this section aims to scrutinize the concepts of reality, perception, illusion, and imagination, along with their relationship with exaggeration. Although we assert that the objects we see, hear, and touch are real, the nature of reality remains an enduring question without a unanimous resolution. Our individual perspectives shape how we perceive and prioritize aspects of the world based on our emotions and value judgments. Upon entering a room, a music enthusiast may first notice the guitar, whereas someone else might observe a book in the library. Reality, a malleable concept, is a construct of our minds. We tend to embrace and pursue the reality that holds greater value for us, acknowledging that everyone possesses their own reality, making it inherently diverse. The relative value of things is subjective to each individual.

Freud underscored that “nothing is as it seems, and the unconscious influences all actions and values” (Barrett, 2015, pp. 113-114). Artists, drawing inspiration from the visible reality of nature, embark on the creation of their unique realities. Every imaginative creation represents the reality of its creator and, consequently, the reality of art. The act of creation constitutes the artist’s fictional reality and emanates from their inherent subjectivity. In their book *“A History of Pictures,”* Hockney and Gayford contend that “a drawing of an animal on a cave wall is evidence that the person who drew it saw that animal; it is not evidence of the creature itself,” emphasizing that a painting is a personal perspective narrating a unique way of perceiving something (Hockney and Gayford, 2017).

In her article titled ‘Economic Perception and Reality,’ İdil Göksel shared insights from a speech by behavioral scientist Rory Sutherland, effectively illustrating the relativity of values. The example provided vividly narrates the efforts of King Frederik the Great of Prussia to promote the consumption of potatoes among Germans. Initially, in an attempt to stabilize bread prices and mitigate the risk of famine, he mandated the addition of potatoes to bread alongside wheat. However, faced with reluctance from the public, who were

unwilling to consume and cultivate potatoes that not even dogs ate at the time, King Frederik altered his strategy. He rebranded potatoes as the exclusive food of the nobility, proclaiming that only the upper class could partake in this delicacy. The kingdom's potato fields were prepared, and guards were stationed to safeguard them. Consequently, by reshaping the public's perception of potatoes, King Frederik successfully encouraged widespread cultivation and consumption. This example serves to highlight that perceptions and associated values are subject to variation among individuals, and it further demonstrates that the values and perceptions of the same individual can undergo transformation over time or through persuasive means (İşler, 2016, p. 201).

The captured essence in a photograph— is it reality? Are the visual narratives conveyed by the camera a form of fiction, or perhaps, are they traces left by the bygone past? John Berger and Jean Mohr discuss in their book *“Another Form of Telling”* that photography embodies both fiction and traces of the past (Berger and Mohr, 2007, p. 84). These photographs serve as signs or traces of moments we've left behind. Essentially, all photographs are extracted from a continuum, and when viewed in isolation, they induce a sense of uncertainty. The reality portrayed in a photograph is in a constant state of flux, influenced by factors such as the distance, angle, and lens employed. This condition perpetuates as a play of reality within the framework of perspective. The history of photographs that present counterfeit or staged images extends back to the inception of photography (Hockney and Gayford, 2017, p. 265). Despite the illusion that photography has stripped away all depictions of the real world from painting, in truth, we can assert that our belief in a photograph is commensurate with our belief in a painting.

The recording captured by surveillance cameras is confined to what the camera can perceive. Someone must determine the camera's point of view and position it in a way that provides an image of a specific area. Consequently, each image takes shape through a distinct perspective.

With the advent of the digital revolution, contemporary photographers have crafted imaginary scenes and fictions that may appear real, creating a narrative, an illusion, and an alternative reality. The camera lens, distinct from the naked eye, enables selective focusing, allowing it to capture the minute details of a fleeting moment that would typically remain unseen (Animal Locomotion-1887). In his final work, *“Camera Lucida,”* Roland Barthes (1915-1980) conveyed his reflections on photography, delving into the realm of

‘unencrypted messages.’ He underscored that photographs excerpt appearances but refrain from translation (Barthes, 1977, p.45). Even without translation, the message derived from a continuum can introduce ambiguity.

Our reflection in the mirror also deceives us; it does not unveil the truth. This is because our mirror image is an inverted version, a reflection. In conclusion, reality proves to be an exceedingly elusive concept, and perception encapsulates what we behold. Our perceptions are confined and susceptible to manipulation. Thoughts and ideas, expressed in a particular form through the use of signs, are inherently subjective. Given the myriad meanings attributed to symbols and signs, we often perceive things not as mere objects but as entities evoking specific ideas (See Section 3.2, The Concept of Communication, Visual Communication, and Symbols).

The phenomenon of illusion emerges as each individual perceives the same reality differently. Our perception is shaped by the window through which we observe events and the angle from which we view them (İşler, 2016, pp.187-188). Values are also relative and they represent the values we perceive. We can say that perceived value is the value that a person, product, or any service holds in our minds. When the perceived value is accepted, the price becomes less crucial when making a purchase. For example, when acquiring an Apple product, we pay for the story of Steve Jobs and do not scrutinize the price extensively (emkaragoz.n.d.). Therefore, the cost we incur, whether expensive or cheap, is also relative. As illustrated in “Chapter 2,” “*The Concept of Exaggeration*,” and “Figure 1” in the study, the pharaoh, a pivotal figure in Egyptian art, is, in reality, of regular Egyptian stature. However, due to the populace’s value perceptions, the representation exaggerates his size, depicting him as larger than life.

Through contradictions and oppositions, we can apprehend the existence of a thing, a phenomenon. The presence of something is intrinsically connected to the existence of its opposite. Light-shadow, white-black, light-darkness – these are examples of such dichotomies (İşler, 2016, pp.187-210). Silence constitutes an integral part of music; without silence, the essence of music would cease to exist. Both light and shadow are imperative to perceive volume. The juxtaposition of the bad accentuates the good, exemplifying that everything can be comprehended in conjunction with its opposite, necessitating the establishment of equilibrium between such contrasts. In Plato’s allegory of the cave in “Republic,” the world is allegorically presented as a cave (See Section 2.2.6, The

Relationship between Exaggeration and the Concepts of Transcendence, Ideal, Sublime, Beautiful and Ugly). This 2,400-year-old allegory remains one of the most eloquent sources addressing the dynamics of reality and illusion. İdil Göksel articulates in her article: “The critical question pertains to whether what we perceive outside the cave is more genuine than its shadows. Can we be certain about everything we presume to know? As individuals who unquestionably accept media-shared content, the scrutiny of our perceptions becomes imperative, questioning their veracity in relation to whom and what” (İşler, 2016, pp. 205-206). While Socrates, Plato’s mentor, underscored the arduous nature of attaining reality with the assertion “If I know anything, it is that I know nothing,” Descartes (1596-1650) scrutinized the veracity of many things perceived and believed. Is the world truly as it presents itself to us? To establish a robust foundation amidst the capricious nature of reality, Descartes advocated the “Cartesian skepticism” approach. According to this, unexamined knowledge could not be acknowledged as truth; doubtful thoughts necessitated interrogation, validation for accuracy, and subsequent acceptance, providing the sole pathway to truth. This skeptical outlook culminated in Descartes formulating a dictum deeply entwined with his philosophy: “Cogito, ergo sum” – “I think, therefore I am” (Descartes, 2018). This axiom encapsulates the primary tenet of Descartes’ metaphysical philosophy, emphasizing that thought is a precondition for existence.

According to Philip K. Dick, a provocateur of reality: “Reality is defined as that which persists even when belief in it ceases. Reality requires no belief; it simply exists. Attaining reality becomes possible when we liberate ourselves from perceptual illusions, where the role of expectations becomes evident” (İşler, 2016, p. 208). Nathaniel John Ware, in contrast, asserts through the concept of the “expectation gap” that people experience discontent when their expectations surpass the boundaries of reality (İşler, 2016, p. 208). Expectations represent our beliefs and aspirations for the future. Ware contends that realizing expectations, especially if they diverge significantly from life’s realities, can pose a formidable challenge. However, an individual’s aspirations for the future might paradoxically prove more realistic than their present reality. Throughout history, imagination has served as a sanctuary, providing individuals with an alternate reality to escape the harshness of life. In alignment with Nietzsche’s doctrine of the “will to power,” humanity harbors a desire to shape its own reality in response to the reality of the world. This desire forms the basis for exaggeration. In the pursuit of a reality where survival and empowerment

are possible, individuals fabricate an imaginative reality (Nietzsche, 1986, p. 493). Nietzsche posits: “There is no objective reality suitable for evaluating beliefs. In addition to demonstrating the impact of the absolute truths and values upon which we construct our lives, these must be reassessed in the context of the ever-changing world. When necessary, they should be replaced with new values, beliefs, and truths that contribute positively to life.” Given that the perception of reality varies according to the cultural frameworks of individuals and societies, as well as the historical epochs they inhabit, the reality thoughts of different individuals and societies differ from each other, and all of them are equally valid or true” (Soysal, 2008).

Reality assumes diverse connotations in the realms of science and philosophy. Scientific reality intertwines with entities amenable to experimentation, exhibiting measurability, embodying universal truths expressed through induction and legality, maintaining continuity, and remaining receptive to novel additions. Conversely, philosophical reality rests on subjectivity, encompassing elements of reason that transcend sensory experiences. This framework allows for the discussion of both concrete and abstract realities. Truth, in this context, is characterized by the alignment of knowledge with its object. Turani contends that reality is fluid, subject to change based on the perspectives of the contemporary era, adapting its truth accordingly. The consistent creation of art in alignment with the realities of each epoch affirms this assertion (Turani, 2014, p. 112). Wölfflin, in his work “Principles of Art History,” posits that European painting, linear in the 16th century, transitioned to a shadowy style in the 17th century (Wölfflin, 2015). This difference over time reflects distinct worldviews and preferences towards the world.

Rene Magritte (1898-1967) captivates us with his painting titled “*The Betrayal of Images*, 1928-1929” (Figure 2). Regarding the relationship between word and image, Foucault emphasizes, “Language and painting possess irreducible qualities to each other” (Gültekin, 2017, p.56). Magritte asserts, “The words in a painting are made from the same substance as the images. However, in a painting, we perceive images and words differently” (Köksal, 2013, p.128). The dilemma arises: should we believe in the image or the word? A parallel situation exists in the works of Paul Klee, who transformed writing into a visual content (Erdoğan, 2019, p.73). Magritte grants writing a freedom independent of form, aiming to disrupt the conventional link between language and image. The coexistence of contradictory propositions gives rise to semantic opposition, encapsulated within the concept

of Paradox. The discussion on Paradox is elaborated in *Section 2.2.8 under the title “The Relationship between Exaggeration and Symbolic Expression (Allegory, Metaphor)”*. Orhan Tekin, in his assessment of Magritte’s painting with respect to exaggeration, articulates: “Exaggeration, unlike Magritte’s attempt to manipulate the perception of truth and error, does not seek to pass judgment; instead, it aims to enhance the value of the object or situation through additions or omissions related to the existing reality” (Tekin, 2017, p.152). Indeed, the degree of truth in paradox fluctuates based on the vantage point (Duran, 2019). This aspect holds significance for imparting a novel outlook on life and serving as a cognitive exercise.



FIGURE 2 Rene Magritte, *Betrayal of Images*, 1928-1929, O/C/B, 63.5x93.98cm.

Truth is not the reality itself; rather, it is its reflection in our minds. In Sufism, truth represents the inner essence of religion, embodying the omnipotence of God and the quest to reach divinity. Through the act of creation, artists endeavor to unveil and attain truth. Marxism posits that “objective reality is mirrored in our consciousness, and truth is attained through examination, observation, and experimentation” (Fırıncıoğlu, 2016). Additionally, Marxism emphasizes the interdependence of human reality on environmental and societal realities (pp. 234-246).

Jean Baudrillard’s (1929-2007) **Simulation theory** renders that the media has made communication impossible, destroyed meaning, reduced the audience to a passive position and replaced reality (Baudrillard, 2008). According to Baudrillard, “simulation is not a copy. While a copy refers to something real, what simulation refers to lacks inherent reality” (Metin & Karakaya, 2017). Hyper-reality, on the other hand, signifies the reproduction of an object, event, or experience influenced by mass culture, displacing the original and blurring “the line between reality and fiction” (See Section 4.9, Populism, Post Modernism, and Exaggeration in Contemporary Art). Digital platforms, media, and reality shows collectively

shape the perception of hyper-reality. An illusion is crafted, seemingly possessing all the data of reality yet being unreal, counterfeit—a realm where reality and fantasy entwine, leaving neither authentic nor fabricated elements discernible. The 1998 science fiction film “The Truman Show” by Peter Weir creates artificial worlds encompassing all the peculiarities of life. This amalgamation of reality, fantasy, and dreams in service of popular culture aligns with Baudrillard’s theory of hyper-reality.

The concept of Post-Truth, intricately intertwined with technology and politics, signifies the loss of reality and the meaninglessness of truth. Although Post-Truth emerges as a phenomenon in recent years marked by information pollution, the relationship between truth and falsehood has always existed throughout history. Steve Tesich introduced the term Post Truth in his 1992 article “A Government of Lies” published in *The Nation* (Tesich, 1992). In this piece, Tesich contended that American society has consciously opted to inhabit a Post-Truth world, even at the cost of democracy. While Post-Truth endures through the channels of social media, it is recognized as a significant instrument in the context of populism (Mertek, 2020) (See Section 4.8, Populism). Political scientist Hannah Arendt, in her 1972 article titled “Lying in Politics,” underscored that “truthfulness and honesty cannot be considered virtues for a politician; lying is commonplace for a politician” (Arendt, 2018).

According to Israeli historian and author Yuval Noah Harari, truth inherently points to *Homo Sapiens*, as humans, being the sole mammals capable of cooperation, are adept at inventing fictional stories, disseminating these narratives, and persuading millions to believe in them. Harari posits that humanity’s belief in the truths it fabricates serves the purpose of achieving unity, acquiring power, and attaining authority (Harari, 2015). The devaluation and unquestioned acceptance of information raise the critical question: Can truth hold meaning in a society where falsehoods are narrated as if they were undeniable truths?

Franz Kafka (1883-1924) articulated, “It is difficult to tell the truth because, in fact, there is only one truth, but this truth is alive; therefore, its countenance constantly changes like that of a living creature” (Özkaya, 2020). As one of the trailblazers of 20th-century modern literature, Kafka, in his 1912 work ‘Transformation,’ navigates between the world of the transformed insect and the human world, oscillating between the surreal and the real (Arik, 2013, p.71). The essence of truth captured by our era resides precisely here. In the autonomous creation of artistic fantasy, the artist interprets events beyond the ordinary flow of life, articulating them in an exaggerated manner. The term “Kafkaesque,” inspired by

Franz Kafka, conveys uncanny and horrific connotations (unlimitedrag.n.d.). It encapsulates the sense of detachment and distancing from the perceived reality in Kafka's narratives. In her book "Art Objects, Essays on Ecstasy and Effrontery," Winterson contends that "art is compelled to reflect the reality of its audience. Genuine painting, owing to its obstinate independence—barring incidental circumstances, cannot achieve this. The reality of painting is imaginative, not mundane" (Winterson, 2018). She emphasizes the unbridled nature of art and underscores that its reality lies within the realm of the artist's imagination. The reality of art is synonymous with the reality of imagination. Artists employ the language of exaggeration, utilizing their imagination to interpret their reality. "The reality of imagination leaves nothing out; hence, it is the most comprehensive reality," remarks Winterson. When Cézanne paints a tree or an apple, he does not replicate them; instead, he captures their essence through the lens of his imagination. "The world is not flat, nor is reality, and only the imagination comprehends this, unveiling it through art" (Winterson, 2018, pp. 153-154).

In art, each era encapsulates a distinct reality and a unique aesthetic perspective. Throughout the existence of humanity's engagement with art, individuals have utilized art for various purposes, interpreting their art based on their own values and emotions. The categorizations of art serve as clear indicators of this evolution. Primitive art, originating with cave paintings, carries imprints of rituals, mystical occurrences, and the outlook of its creator. Ancient Greek art mirrored life, serving as an imitation of reality. Beauty and idealism were intertwined with the Greek religion, where even the gods were depicted with idealized human bodies, and representations of the unattractive were omitted. During the Middle Ages (5th-15th century), there was a departure from the ideal beauty of Ancient Greece, and art commenced portraying a world that existed beyond reality. According to the American physicist Capra, "This scholastic philosophy of the Middle Ages is tethered to two fundamental authorities: Aristotle and the Church" (Capra, 2009, p. 61). "This perspective, fused with Christian theology and ethics, persisted unchallenged throughout the Middle Ages, shaping the period's conceptual framework" (Ersoydan, 2012). Medieval Gothic art (12th-16th century) embodies exaggeration and excess. It is an era in which religion is exalted, emphasizing human vulnerability and mortality, and generating a unique language of exaggeration within the atmosphere of fear (*See Section 4.5, The Realm of Fairytales, the Fear of Bourgeois Civilization and Exaggeration*). In the 15th century, the Renaissance dismantled the scholastic understanding of the Middle Ages, ushering in a heightened

interest in realism and representation. While a philosophy of humanism rooted in reason and humanity prevailed in art, the divine aspect of portraiture in the Middle Ages transitioned to a humanized form during the Renaissance. Studies focusing on anatomy, perspective, and optics intensified, marking an era characterized by idealism shaped through mathematical formulas (See Section 4.7, *A Perspective on Exaggeration from the Classical Art Ideal*). With Mannerism (16-17th century), art advanced beyond Renaissance realism, giving rise to exaggerations in figures and composition, purposeful alterations in color and perspective, and the emergence of distorted elongated forms, deformation, and dynamic compositions, departing from idealism. In the Baroque period (16-18th century), art served the church and the state, embodying magnificence, power, flamboyance, dynamism, colorfulness, exaggeration, and theatricality. It depicted religious themes, legends, heroic narratives, mythology, wars, and daily life. Through historical paintings, states crafted their own collective memory. The increased purchasing power of the bourgeois class led to the emergence of new aesthetic preferences, prompting liberated artists to embark on creative production. Thus, the era of art for art's sake commenced. In the 18th century, the democratization of art was facilitated by academic education, the establishment of museums, and the proliferation of publications and books, marking the initial strides of Modernism. Towards the late 18th century, the Romantics waged war against Classicism, prioritizing emotion and imagination. "The Realism movement emerged in the latter half of the 19th century as a response to Romanticism, shaped by the ambition to depict and convey humanity and nature as they are" (Çetişli, 2007, p. 80). When queried about the meaning of reality, some artists claimed to strive for "objective" depictions of what they observed. However, the interpretation of realism embraced by certain painters is so obscure that it defies a precise definition. Courbet, in addressing realism, expressed, "I have also been branded a realist. Such labels are never accurate. If they were, artworks would be superfluous" (Can, 2021). Yet, in another essay, he asserted, "They label me as a socialist painter. I accept this title with satisfaction. I am not merely a socialist; I am also a democrat and a republican. In short, I am a partisan of the entire revolution and, above all, a Realist. ...Realist signifies sincerity, unadulteration, and an affinity for truth" (Kaplan, 2019). Courbet's dual discourses appear contradictory in the realm of realism. Realist art undergoes a virtual loss of realism post-1880s, as Jung and Freud delve into the dark infinity of the subconscious, creating an enigmatic, melancholic, and poignant atmosphere (Turani, 2014, pp.74-75).

The prominence of modernism in art reached its zenith at the end of the 19th century and the first quarter of the 20th century. Movements such as Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, Cubism, Constructivism, and Expressionism liberated artists from the fixation on imitation. They relinquished the representation of worldly images through the discourse of “art for art’s sake” and the formalistic approach, venturing into the portrayal of subjective expression styles defined by individual colors, forms, and lines, thus distancing themselves from realism (*See Section 4.8, Alienation as an Expressive Form and Traces of Exaggeration in Distortion*). The sculptures of the Swiss painter and sculptor **Alberto Giacometti** (1901-1966) serve as an illustration elucidating the interplay between the realms of reality and exaggeration. Giacometti questions art, humanity and reality with the body. Recognized by Jean Paul Sartre as the epitome of existentialist narration in art, Giacometti’s oeuvre encapsulates the imprints left by industrialization and wars on the artist (Şen, 2019). Exemplifying this confluence is the iconic bronze sculpture “*Walking Man, 1947*,” wherein the slender, towering figure appears to dissolve before the observer’s gaze, presenting a novel rendition of an isolated being in the cosmos—remote and solitary. While appearing solid, the sculpture accentuates the vulnerability and mortality of human. This manifestation reflects the artist’s perspective; Giacometti endeavors to represent the external world as it manifests to him, thereby expressing himself and creating his own reality. Giacometti’s sculptures are crafted with minimal elements, at times a mere line or subtle contacts. The elongated bodies, small heads, rough narrow faces, large feet integrated with the base, and the coarse outer surfaces of the statues reveal his interest in formal problems and his unique worldview. Giacometti’s interpretation of the new human being, employing ratio/proportion, space, simplification, and his own reality, is inherently exaggerated. In essence, the reality of exaggeration in Giacometti’s art is a fusion of the artist’s distinct reality and imagination. Hegel (1770-1831), discussing art and the artist, emphasized the importance of simplification in art—an observation that resonates with Giacometti’s works (Lenoir, 2004, p.69).

Moreover, Hegel is referenced within the thematic framework of “Transcendence, Sublime, Ideal, Beautiful, and Ugly” (Section 2.2.6), where his assertion, “Art is the “geist” that is inserted into matter and makes matter resemble itself,” is expounded upon (Sena, 1972, p.41). Drawing from Hegel’s proposition, it can be posited that Giacometti, through the sculpting of bronze in his renowned work “*Walking Man (1947)*” (Figure 3), created a

new perception of existence and the soul created its own reality on the material. (See Hegel under Section 2.2.6)



FIGURE 3 *Alberto Giacometti, Walking Man, 1947. Bronze.*

Mondrian, Malevich, and Kandinsky stressed that the real remains invisible to the naked eye, asserting that the true essence of the universe could only be approached through abstraction and that abstraction was the herald of truth. While this perspective held sway for the majority of the 20th century, it waned in influence with the advent of Populism and the postmodernism of the 1960s-1970s. Following World War II, artists disengaged from the external world, turning inward and forsaking representation. The Abstract Expressionism movement gained prominence (See Section 4.9, *Populism, Postmodernism, and Exaggeration in Contemporary Art*). In the 1960s, Conceptual art emerged, prioritizing thought over the object. Figures like Joseph Kosuth and Marcel Duchamp posed fundamental questions about the nature of art. The impetus for change stemmed not from the Aristotelian belief in the relationship between art and reality but rather from the postmodernist notion that nothing possesses a real essence. Postmodernist realism is no longer more realistic than abstraction; nothing possesses a genuine essence, and everything constitutes an imitation of an imitation. Art adopts a pluralistic, participatory, fragmented, political, and social stance, employing representation and drawing references from old masters, images, and icons. Rather than a singular image or representation, fragmented aesthetics and representation come to the forefront (Graf, 2021).

In examining the current landscape, we observe that topics such as virtual reality, digital photography, digital video art, the World Wide Web, Fragmented Aesthetics, Organic Art, Environmental Art, etc., are at the forefront of discussion (Graf, 2021). While we cannot predict the realities and technologies that will be discussed in the future, it is noteworthy that the technologies we possess today were once mere aspirations. It becomes apparent that, for science, technology, and art, imagination is a perpetual necessity alongside factual knowledge. The utilization of imagination ensures that exaggeration persists as an integral aspect of creativity and the artistic realm. Throughout the creative process, whether expressed through painting, sculpture, music, or literature, emotions such as transcendence, enthusiasm, excitement, sadness, joy, admiration, fear, horror, pain, shock, and rebellion, when filtered through the artist's lens and conveyed to the material, give rise to the possibility of exaggeration (Yilmaz, 2021).

This chapter delves into the extensively queried concept of reality, acknowledging the lack of unanimity in its definition. The examination encompasses the intricacies of reality, perception, illusion, and imagination, along with their interplay with exaggeration. The emphasis is placed on the distinct realities of each era, divergent aesthetic understandings, values, and the inherent relativity of perceptions. Mondrian, Malevich, and Kandinsky underscored the notion that the authentic cannot be perceptible through unaided vision, asserting that the genuine essence of the universe can solely be apprehended through abstraction. Concurrently, Conceptual art accentuates that the visible serves merely as a conduit, prioritizing cognition over the tangible object. Pioneers such as Joseph Kosuth and Marcel Duchamp embarked on inquiries delving into the nature of art, probing the intricate interplay between reality and exaggeration, a dynamic epitomized by Giacometti's sculptural masterpiece, "Walking Man, 1947." The narrative navigates from Descartes' interrogations about reality and the displacement of truth facilitated by communication tools (Simulation theory) to the emergence of the Post-Truth concept and the ensuing loss of reality. It explores the concept of hyperreality, highlighting the blurring of the line between reality and fiction. The discourse underscores that the illusion crafted by primitive societies, grounded in their unique reality, has given way to contemporary virtual realities through websites and social media channels. Although the realities that will shape tomorrow remain uncertain, the chapter underscores that the use of exaggeration as an interpretative tool, fueled by the artist's imagination, stands as an enduring truth in the realm of art.

2.2.2 The Relationship between Exaggeration and Public Entertainment, and the Carnival Spirit

In this section, we delve into the realm of public entertainments, carnivals, the carnival spirit, their connection to exaggeration, and their reflection in art. Public entertainments will be encapsulated within the framework of Mikhail Bakhtin's carnival concept and Rabelais' *Gargantua*. Carnivals, categorized among public entertainments, represent a suspension of imposed rules and a period during which people liberate themselves. The behavioral patterns specific to carnivals include exaggerated joy, obscenity, excess, sexuality, and the indulgence of all physiological needs in an atmosphere of freedom where conventions are overturned. When the grotesque reality crafted during carnivals is mirrored in art, it gives rise to an exaggerated language. Mikhail Bakhtin, a Russian philosopher and linguist of significant stature in 20th-century thought, placed carnival at the core of theoretical debates, associating it primarily with community and participation. In the preface to Bakhtin's work "The Dialogic Imagination," Irzik notes: "Through the carnival, folk culture, in opposition to official culture and a totalitarian order, brings laughter, parody, the rhythms of nature and collective life, the resistance and functions of the body, and grotesque realism into the realm of language and literature" (Bakhtin, 2020, p. 24). According to Bakhtin, during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, a form of relationship characterized by freedom and friendliness prevailed in the town square during carnival time, bridging people separated by barriers of property, profession, and age (Bakhtin, 2005, p. 36).

François Rabelais, a prominent figure in the French Renaissance, left an indelible mark on world literature with his five-volume fantastical and comic novels "Gargantua, 1534" and "Pantagruel, 1532" (Figure 4), narrating the adventures of two giants, (Rabelais, 2020). Rabelais transformed the folk culture of carnival from a seasonal event into a veritable cultural revolution. Influenced by the liberating climate of the Renaissance, respect was accorded to human values, and humanity was introduced to novel value systems. In the foreword to Rabelais' *Gargantua*, Birsal Uzma asserts: "Rabelais did not employ the giant theme solely for its comedic effect. Giants also symbolized the human ideal of the Renaissance: They embodied the physical manifestation of Renaissance man's infinite

intellectual appetite” (Rabelais, 2020, p. 17).



FIGURE 4 *Gustave Dore (1832-1883), painting for Gargantua and Pantagruel, 1873, Garnie (Eco, 2019).*

Gargantua commences with the birth scene of a prince, drawing inspiration from Aristotle’s assertion that “Laughter is bestowed only on human beings among all living creatures.” It intricately examines the fundamental physiological aspects that define human beings, with a particular emphasis on laughter (Ötgün, 2020, T24). However, a significant detail lies in the fact that this prince is a giant. As Rabelais nurtures Gargantua in his novel, endowed with an insatiable appetite and a thirst for knowledge, he concurrently critiques all the pivotal events of the era.

To mitigate the potential negativity that the exaggerated language, generated by the grotesque in the narrative of the novel, may instill in the reader, Rabelais, in the preface, urges the reader to endeavor to comprehend the essence of the work and discern the profound thoughts underlying the fantasies (Rabelais, 2020, p.23). The novel series portraying the lives of the voracious giant Gargantua and his son Pantagruel seamlessly intertwines reality with fantasy and irony. Gargantua and his son, though deemed shapeless and disproportionate by classical medieval standards, transcend the classical mythology’s depiction of fearsome giants (Bahtin, 2005, p. 100). Instead, they evolve into the heroes of the new age, distinguished by their immeasurable and colossal stature. The exaggerated grotesque reality, especially concerning bodily images, basic physiological needs such as eating, drinking, and defecation, characterizes both folk culture and the collective body of society (Bahtin, 2020). The grotesque, in its representation, transcends the body and the

world not as mere entities but as processes of existence. Rabelais's humorous language and wit underscore an endeavor to interpret the world with a critical, challenging perspective that is human-centric, countering any restrictions on freedom, constrained thought, and individuals solely engrossed in their self-interest. Ömer Türkeş, despite Gargantua being a work from 500 years ago, deems it a contemporary text and asserts that it serves as a bridge between the Middle Ages and the modern period (Türkeş, 2016). Gargantua, where satire and humor are adroitly wielded, has left an indelible impact on European intellectuals.

"The Tale Grandes Chroniques de France" narrates the heroics of a giant family created by the magician Merlin to assist English King Arthur in battle. It is suggested that Rabelais drew inspiration from this folk tale as his starting point" (Türkeş, 2011, 2016).

İhsan Oktay Anar's (1960-) postmodern narrative "Amat (2005)" bears a resemblance to Rabelais' Gargantua (1534) with its incorporation of folkloric comic elements and a narrative style characterized by carnivalesque exaggeration (Büyüktuncay, 2011).

In Cervantes' novel "Don Quixote," Sancho Panza, accompanying Don Quixote, serves as the grotesque reflection of Gargantua, characterized by his substantial belly, voracious appetite, copious defecation, and a cheerful yet lazy appearance (Ak, 2017). While bringing forth the joy and amusement of the people, he simultaneously assumes a mocking and shrewd demeanor.

Puppetry, Karagöz plays, jugglery, "*meddah*" (public storyteller), "*orta oyunu*" (low comedy), "*tuluat*" (Turkish improvisational theater), performance techniques, forms of narration, humor, and the archetypes they portray from Turkish society derive their essence from carnival entertainments. It is acknowledged that there exists a similarity between these forms and the Italian folk theater of the Renaissance period (folklor.gen.tr). Laughter serves as an expression of the primal, animalistic impulses of human nature and manifests during events like carnivals, spring festivals, births, weddings, feasts, etc. Bakhtin posited that the laughter of the carnival is inclusive of the entire populace, encompassing both a joyous, triumphant quality and a cynical, imitative aspect. The exaggerated joy, obscenity, and excess prevalent in the liberating atmosphere of the carnival constitute a grotesque reality. It is essential to note that we are not referring to an entirely innocent laughter; rather, it can be aptly termed grotesque laughter. Bakhtin interpreted the grotesque as "a universal fear and anxiety stemming from unlimited power, conquerable through laughter" (Güzel, 2016,

p. 16). According to Epicurus, laughter symbolizes victory and superiority, elucidated as “the triumph of reason over the fundamental pain of man, arising from the fear of god and death. Man attains happiness as a consequence of the war he wages against his fears through reason” (Salihoğlu, 2016). Further comprehensive insights into the grotesque are expounded upon in the study under the section titled “*Deformation, Representation of The Ugly, Sanctification of Imperfection*” (Section 2.2.4).



FIGURE 5 *Festival of Colors in India, Holi Festival in India.*

The Holi Festival, also known as the Indian festival, is a religious folk celebration (memphistours.n.d.) characterized by the exuberance of color, marking the observance of new beginnings and the arrival of spring (Figure 5). It is suggested that Anish Kapoor has produced works inspired by the pigments utilized in this festival (Graf, 2023).

Over time, the carnival has evolved beyond mere literary criticism, establishing itself as a significant concept in folkloric, cultural, and societal studies. The carnival left its imprint on various art movements, such as expressionism and surrealism, through its influence on grotesque reality. Its impact traversed from literature to diverse realms of art, introducing fantastical, humorous creatures, and entertainers. In the context of the relationship between painting and exaggeration, we can refer to the painting “*The Fight Between Carnival and Lent, 1559*” by Brueghel as an example. The painting delves into human behavior during both carnival and Lent, amalgamating contrasts within the same frame. Exaggerated, caricatured, and grotesque figures, rendered in a sarcastic style, allude to the inherent meaninglessness of hierarchical structures. (Figure 6) (Section 4.7).



FIGURE 6 Pieter Bruegel, *The Fight Between Carnival and Lent*, 1559, Detail, Oil on wood, 118x164cm, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

Disrespect towards the sacred, the noble, and authority is prevalent during the carnival. From this perspective, Reisoğlu asserts that Maurizio Cattelan's installation "La Nona Ora, 1999," which subjects the Pope to ridicule, can be considered to possess a carnivalesque dimension. Similarly, Nick Cave's work, "*Soundsuits*, 2013," resonates with carnival culture, drawing parallels with masks and costumes, evoking the spirit of carnivals (Reisoğlu, 2022, p.35).

In this section, we delve into folk entertainments, the carnival spirit, their connection with exaggeration, and their manifestation in art. The synthesis of folk festivals is explored within the framework of Mikhail Bakhtin's carnival concept and Rabelais's Gargantua. The 'exaggerated joy and laughter' experienced within the liberating atmosphere of the Bakhtinian carnival is scrutinized through the lens of Bakhtin's Grotesque. It is highlighted that the exaggerated essence of the carnival, a phenomenon intertwined with social, collective, socioeconomic, political, and folkloric dimensions, holds a liberating quality, turning societal norms upside down, unveiling marginalized, oppositional, and repressed emotions. This spirit permeates literature and all artistic realms, courtesy of grotesque realism. While Bakhtin's carnival may not be observed in its historical form today, it is

underscored that the carnivalesque spirit resurfaces in opposition to authority and official culture in various eras through the works of marginal artists. The relationship between carnival and exaggeration is exemplified through Bruegel's painting "*The Fight Between Carnival and Lent, 1559*," Maurizio Cattelan's installation "*La Nona Ora, 1999*," and Nick Cave's "*Soundsuits, 2013*."

2.2.3 The Relationship between Exaggeration and the Concepts of Supernatural Beings, Excessiveness, Fear, The Uncanny, and Grotesque

This section, under the heading of Concepts Associated with Exaggeration, will explore supernatural beings, excess, fear, the uncanny, and the Kayser grotesque, examining the relationship between the atmosphere of fear created and exaggeration. It all began with humanity's apprehension of natural phenomena such as thunder, earthquakes, floods, storms, supernatural entities, the unknown, and the unseen. In his work "*Four Hundred Years of Gothic Excess, Terror, Evil, and Ruin*," Hines traces the origins of the gothic, asserting that it emerged with the eruption of Mount Vesuvius, symbolizing people's vulnerability and fears in the face of powerful natural events (Hines, 2005). As humans historically depicted how they lived and hunted on cave walls, they also illustrated their fears. With the advent of belief in God, authoritative governance, and the specter of war, the concept of fear assumed a different guise, profoundly influencing people's lives and behaviors. The medieval Gothic period, deeply steeped in church influence, engendered an environment of oppression and fear, marked by the uncanny, hopelessness, evil, hell, excess, and death. People believed that neglecting rituals for their gods or chosen deities would incur their wrath and result in punishment. Consequently, medieval Europe experienced the pervasive impact of belief and fear within the realm of art.

Commencing from the 12th-13th century, Gothic architecture manifested prominently in European structures, featuring grand cathedrals and soaring spires that aimed to reach the sky, symbolizing the aspiration to connect with God (See Section 4.5, The Realm of Fairytales, the Fear of Bourgeois Civilization and Exaggeration). In his book '*Gothic*,' Hines highlights that 'the urge to reach the sky led to the domes of Chartres and Reims cathedrals increasing from 35 and 38 meters to 42 meters in Amiens and 48 meters in Beauvais' (Hines, 2005, p.13). Consequently, in a socio-political context dominated by the church, the

utilization of cathedrals as a means of artistic expression is not unexpected (arkeofili.n.d.). Gombrich characterizes Gothic architecture as ‘celestial churches,’ remarking on the endeavor to construct towering cathedrals to showcase the glory of God, resulting in an ethereal ambiance (Gombrich, 2016). İklim Demir, in turn, dubs Gothic as the ‘*Surrealist Movement of the Middle Ages*,’ attributing these definitions to the altered ambiance brought about by the meticulous craftsmanship and fine processing of stones used in church construction (arkeofili.n.d.). Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris stands as a splendid example of French Gothic architecture (See Section 4.5). The exaggeration prevalent in the Gothic era found significance through the use of light in cathedrals adorned with stained glass windows ascending towards the heavens, alongside frightening sculptures and religious motifs adorning the exteriors of structures (See Section 4.5).

The aforementioned terrifying sculptures, Gargoyle and Chimera, are peculiar examples of grotesque sculptures in Gothic architecture (Figure 44). Placed on the exteriors and summits of buildings and churches, these sculptures were intended to evoke the fear of hell among people. These grotesque and fearsome creatures appear as if they could break free from the stone holding them, ready to take flight at any moment.

In the realm of painting, Gothic found its expression in the works of English painter Salvator Rosa (1615-1673) (See Section 4.5) (Figure 45). Subsequently, in Spain, Goya’s (1746-1828) series of engravings titled “*Los Caprichos, 1729*” garnered considerable attention (Figure 57). Goya’s horrifying life in Spain, coupled with the burden of his deafness, materialized in his mind as an exaggerated reality.

The integration of Gothic into literature commenced with Horace Walpole’s novel “*The Castle of Otranto (1764)*” (See Section 4.5). The novel unfolds within the confines of a dark and melancholic castle. As Gothic entered literature through architecture, early Gothic literary works were predominantly structured around spatial elements (kayiprihtim.org). Subsequently, the fear associated with bourgeois civilization found expression in literature through works like “*Frankenstein*” (Mary Shelley, 1818) and “*Dracula*” (Bram Stoker, 1897) (Moretti, 2018, p.105). The nobles depicted in Goya’s “*Los Chinchillas (1797-1798)*” served as inspiration for Frankenstein’s monster in Hollywood (Hines, 2005, p.195). Frankenstein has been adapted for both the silver screen and television, and new monsters continue to emerge, adapting to contemporary eras. From the Frankenstein of 1818 to the present day, Hollywood’s science fiction and fantastical productions such as “*Gattaca*”

(1997) and “*The Matrix Trilogy*” (1999-2003) have permeated popular culture (Heartney, 2008, p.168). The saga of “*King Kong (1933, 1976, 2005)*,” where the monster is a giant gorilla, stands as one of the most iconic characters in cinema and has extended its presence to television. King Kong, with his size, strength, animalistic nature, profound inner depths, and humanoid facial expressions, more closely resembles romantic heroes than malevolent monsters, ultimately transforming into a circus spectacle within the consumer society. “The horror narrative unfolds through the tale of monsters frightening people” (Akça, 2011). King Kong engages in battles with dinosaurs and Godzilla on the cinematic stage, portraying a racial struggle through the evolutionary process, featuring apes before humanity and dinosaurs preceding apes.”

“Mehmet Berk Yaltırık who is recognized for his historical horror stories, short stories, and novels such as “*Anatolian Horror Stories*,” “*Istrancalı Abdülharis Paşa*,” and “*Yedikuleli Mansur*,” and claims to be influenced by Evliya Çelebi’s “Travelogues”, wrote in the preface of the book “Vampires, Gluttons, Yalmavuz in Turkish Culture,” which he co-authored with Seçkin Sarpkaya: “The history of mankind is also the history of monsters” (Sarpkaya & Yaltırık, 2018). They believed that horror literature touches upon the dark side of human nature, and entities such as monsters and spirits etc. appeal to the more shadowy aspects of humanity, expressing and sharing this perspective. In Turkey, indigenous fantasy cinema and horror literature gained momentum in the mid-2000s.

Gothic elements, such as dark and ominous caves, underground mazes, castles, cathedrals, monsters, monasteries, tombs, bats, cliffs, vampires, witches, gluttons, ghosts, goblins, fairies, etc., continue to evoke fear in contemporary times.

Similar to grotesque sculpture examples like Gargoyle and Chimera (Figure 44), grotesque is a frequently utilized element in gothic theater, cinema, painting, and horror literature. Mihail Bakhtin and Wolfgang Kayser presented different interpretations of the grotesque. The study extensively covers Bakhtin’s carnival in “Section 2.2.2” under the title of “The Relationship between Exaggeration and Public Entertainment, and Carnival Spirit.” In this section, Kayser’s grotesque, distinct from Bakhtin’s, will be discussed. After elucidating the carnival, Bakhtin, defining the grotesque, states: “Carnival, as a social institution, is transposed into literature as grotesque reality” (Bakhtin, 2020, p. 25), emphasizing the connection between carnival and grotesque. According to Bakhtin, grotesque embodies a state of change, transformation, and incomplete metamorphosis,

signifying continuity: “The grotesque image reflects a phenomenon in a state of transformation: An unfinished metamorphosis from birth to death, from growth to becoming. Its relation to time is one of the defining characteristics of the grotesque image. Another inevitable feature is ambiguity. For in this image, we see the two poles of transformation together: the old and the new, the dying and the fertilizing, the beginning and the end of the metamorphosis. The grotesque body is a state of being against all kinds of normality. It ranges from dwarfism to gigantism, to different arrangements of limbs. The changes made on the body in this way are both frightening and amusing” (Deniz, 2022, edebistan.com).”

The grotesque, stemming from the comic, underwent a semantic shift in the 20th century alongside the evolving world, and Wolfgang Kayser delineated the various aspects of the grotesque. Kayser’s conception of the grotesque began to be employed to describe tasteless and repugnant elements as an expression of the restlessness, fear, helplessness, and horror experienced by individuals when the natural order is disrupted, under the imposition of governing bodies and religious pressures. The 20th-century perception of the grotesque fundamentally asserted that everything uncanny and sudden induces fear and alienation in individuals. In his thesis, Ünlüaycıl articulated, “The grotesque is understood from the definitions of key theorists to encompass effects and tendencies such as creating a sense of the ‘uncanny,’ fascination with the magical, exaggeration and caricaturization, playfulness, the inseparability of various degrees of laughter and fear, and deviation from the normal/ugliness” (Ünlüaycıl, 2002). The uncanny, a psychoanalytic concept, is defined as the situation in which the unpredictable, disturbing element undergoes a transformation beyond the individual’s control and becomes representable. According to Külahlıoğlu, it signifies the dark, frightening, and disturbing aspects of the individual, object, and space (Külahlıoğlu, 2019). Freud, in his view, associates the uncanny with childhood experiences in the subconscious, stating, “The uncanny is not something new or foreign; rather, it is something familiar and old that is repressed and removed from the mind, something that emerges even though it should remain hidden” (Kara, 2021, p.1153). In essence, it is an experience of rendering the invisible visible. Freud posits, “The return of mostly repressed childhood complexes, such as castration anxiety and the desire to return to the womb, is uncanny” (Candan & Arıcan, 2021, p.164). The resurgence of suppressed elements causes distress in the individual.

In a discourse drawing from Freud's elucidations, Elroy asserted that the grotesque addresses the child within the individual and underscored: "The grotesque is not solely a phenomenon exclusive to the modern world; it emerges through the triggering of primitive mental activities" (Mc Elroy, 1989). Elroy suggested that certain creatures, like spiders and bats, evoke mixed feelings of fear and hatred in humans, attributing this to Freud's examinations of childhood animal phobias, sexual symbols, and the fear of the father.

Philip Thomson, author of the book 'The Grotesque, 1972', said that Grotesque could not be fully explained until Kayser's new concept. Thompson mentioned that because grotesque is the expression of the cold or alienated world, because the familiar world is suddenly viewed from a different perspective that makes it weird, the weirdness can be as scary or creepy as it is ridiculous. He mentioned that all these oddities also explain the relationship between grotesque and alienation (Ünlüaycıl, 2003, p.70). The first person to talk about the relationship between grotesque and alienation was John Ruskin. In describing his views on the grotesque in one of his works, Ruskin emphasizes that the basic element of the grotesque is the man who sees, that is, the person who is oppressed under the horror of the world surrounding him. The important thing here is the person who realizes that this world is a terrifying world. In line with this awareness, he says that it is not the world, nature or reality, but the man himself who creates contrasts such as sublime-mundane, innocence-sin, pathetic-ridiculous, and ordinary-extraordinary (Sazyek, 2013, p. 1246). In consonance with Kayser's perspective, which posits that "the grotesque is a play with the absurd" (Ünlüaycıl, 2002, p.70), unforeseen and sudden movements, extraordinary situations, and scenarios deviating from the normative course of life constitute fundamental elements of the grotesque, often intertwined with the concept of exaggeration. An illustrative quote from Ünlüaycıl (2003) underscores this dynamic, stating that "Masks, automatic movements, puppets that transform the human into a mechanical figure are grotesque motifs that generate this effect. The tension of the situation and the moment is reflected with these motifs."

The prevalence of grotesque depictions is particularly conspicuous in Gothic, horror, and coarse comedy literature. Noteworthy is Rabelais's utilization of the grotesque in his treatment of various anatomical components. Victor Hugo, in the preface of his theatrical work '*Cromwell (1827)*,' posits that the grotesque encapsulates an inherent reality markedly distinct from apparent reality. Transitioning into the 19th century, the nature of grotesque comedy underwent a shift from a predominant focus on laughter to a conceptualization

accentuating the existential predicament of the modern individual, confronted with the disconcerting potential of an alienated world (Ünlüaycıl, 2003, p.73). Within the preface of the theatrical work *Cromwell*, emphasis is directed towards the distressing and horrifying dimensions of the grotesque. Similar to John Ruskin, Victor Hugo draws attention to the symbiotic relationship between alienation and the grotesque. Wolfgang Kayser, through his exploration of the relationship between the grotesque and ‘alienation/ defamiliarization,’ significantly contributes to the nuanced understanding of the concept (Nurdan, 2020).

In the realm of the grotesque body, alongside deformity and disproportion, there exists a confluence of disparate forms, blending various species and bodies together.

Intermediate bodies, disrupting categorical boundaries—such as jesters, dwarfs, hunchbacks, and other grotesque figures—find a prominent presence in both Traditional and Contemporary Turkish Theater, notably within the works of Cahit Atay, Ferhan Şensoy, and Levent Kırca theaters. Addressing the role of the grotesque in theater, Ünlüaycıl articulates in his article: “Modern grotesque expression in theater frequently leverages the material possibilities of carnivalesque grotesque expression” (Ünlüaycıl, 2003, p. 82).

Grotesque emerges as a pivotal narrative language, particularly in the mid-20th century, within the realms of “black comedy (black humor)” and the “theater of the absurd” (See Section 4.8, Alienation as an Expressive Form and Traces of Exaggeration in Distortion). The crucible of World War II, exposing individuals to both the existential confrontation with death and the desolation of life, propelled them into a realm where pain and laughter coexisted in an enigmatic manner. The grotesque form, encapsulating dichotomies like fear and joy, beauty and ugliness, manifests itself on stage through the medium of absurdist theater, employing an exaggerated language of signification. Keser’s definition of absurdity delineates it as “thoughts that are ludicrously unbelievable and incompatible, arising from a logical error, devoid of value or order within the universe or human life” (Keser, 2009, p.22). In the theater lexicon, the ‘theater of the absurd’ is characterized as “a theatrical genre that intimates humanity’s incongruence with life and nature, their detachment from the natural order, presented through a novel essence and form” (Taner et al., 1966, p. 251). These definitions seamlessly associate “black comedy” and the “theater of the absurd” with the notion of exaggeration. The staging of Samuel Beckett’s “Waiting for Godot” in Paris in 1953 exemplifies the theater of the absurd, where characters perennially await the elusive Godot at a crossroads, adjacent to a solitary tree (Yılmaz, 2021). As values plummet into

meaninglessness, human responses to the nebulous future become absurd, peculiar, and inconsistent, unraveling contradictions and giving rise to tragic monologues (Tello & Ravassi, 2017, pp. 132-137). Hence, the exaggerated sharing of fear, as an instinctual response, not only serves as a precautionary measure for an uncertain future but also embeds itself within our memory as a narrative constructed for the times ahead (Tekin, 2017).

In his book, Andrew Collins delves into the intricate interplay of fear, the unknown future, and uncertainty, offering a vivid portrayal: “Let us endeavor to fathom the fear and uncertainty that must have pervaded the minds of the Epi-Paleolithic people dwelling in the proximity of Göbeklitepe. A colossal fire in the sky, succeeded by an extended era of darkness, incessant rainfall, and submersion of the earth, ushered in a world characterized by coldness, desolation, and thirst, bereft of herds of animals for sustenance” (Collins, 2014, p. 288). Collins underscores the pivotal role played by the fear of the unknown in shaping societies. In this vein, the mention of Göbeklitepe in Şanlıurfa is germane. Recognized as an ancient center of worship, Göbeklitepe has secured a place in the *UNESCO World Heritage List*. Boasting a history spanning 12 millennia, it stands as one of the world’s oldest temples, predating Stonehenge by 7000 years and the Egyptian Pyramids by 7500 years (Uçansoy, 2021).

Initiating excavations at Göbeklitepe in 1995, German archaeologist Klaus Schmidt, though tragically departing at an early age, succeeded in immortalizing his experiences in a book titled ‘*Göbeklitepe – Mysterious Sanctuary of Ancient Hunters/Builders of the Oldest Temple*’ Schmidt’s reflections encapsulate the monumental archaeological revelation from his unique perspective. In his book, Schmidt asserts, “Across the expansive region between the Tigris and the Euphrates, a symbol system was unearthed. While the meanings of these symbols elude us, they held paramount significance for ancient societies, serving as instruments of cultural memory storage” (gazeteduvar.com.tr, 16.01.2020). The excavations at Göbeklitepe remain ongoing.

Göbeklitepe emerges as a pivotal juncture during the transition from a hunter-gatherer lifestyle to settled habitation. Fundamental questions persist regarding the motivations and methodologies underlying the construction of Göbeklitepe as a temple.

The site exhibits hieroglyphic-like configurations, reliefs, peculiar creatures with numerous legs, insect-like entities with triangular heads, and grotesque, ominous symbols—

manifestations of ancient exaggeration (Figure 7). The T-shaped obelisks at Göbeklitepe, the largest weighing 16 tons, tower between 3 and 6 meters in height (Figure 8), symbolizing the genesis of the first phallus cults (Altaş, 2021) (See Section 4.4).



FIGURE 7 Göbeklitepe, Photo credit: Şeyhmus Çakırtaş,



FIGURE 8 Göbeklitepe, Obelisk, Şanlıurfa.

Discovered in 1997, Karahantepe stands as a newly unearthed archaeological site located in the Şanlıurfa region. The commencement of excavation activities dates back to September 2019. Some sources suggest its antiquity predates that of Göbeklitepe (ktb.gov.).

In this section, the focus is on the Gothic period of the 12th-13th century. It is elucidated that starting from the 19th century, notably in European architecture, grand cathedrals and their extravagantly pointed towers, aspiring to ascend towards the heavens and God, became conspicuous, imbuing the era with a sense of fear through the medium of exaggeration. Beyond architecture, the influence of this period persists in literature, theater, cinema, and painting, invoking fear through elements such as horror, mystery, eeriness, hopelessness, evil, human vulnerability, and power dynamics. The prevailing atmosphere of fear during

this period is expounded to have engendered its distinct language of exaggeration in the realm of art. The examination of Bakhtin's grotesque, previously explored in detail in Section "2.2.2" under the headings "The Relationship between Exaggeration and Entertainments, and Carnival Spirit, and the relationship between exaggeration," is revisited in this chapter. This time, Kayser's distinct approach is introduced, placing additional emphasis on fear and the uncanny. The inclusion of Göbeklitepe, a site evoking fear, is noted, highlighting its frightening symbols and obelisks as potential instances of ancient exaggeration. In painting, Gothic finds representation through the exaggerated grotesque figures of English painter Salvator Rosa and later Goya. Additionally, the Gargoyle and Chimera are recognized as examples of grotesque sculptures in Gothic architecture. It is also mentioned that the fear associated with bourgeois civilization are conveyed in literature through iconic novels such as "*Frankenstein*" and "*Dracula*," and the mid-20th century witnesses the emergence of "*black comedy (black humor)*" and "*absurd theater*" as narrative forms, identified as grotesque, exaggerated languages that seamlessly intertwine fear and joy, beauty and ugliness.

2.2.4 Deformation, Representation of The Ugly, Sanctification of Imperfection (The Relationship between Exaggeration and the Concepts of Distortion, Formlessness, Grotesque, Carnavalesque and Abjection)

Contemporary art challenges the traditional expectations of beauty in art by presenting flawed, ugly, strange, fragmented, and distorted bodies. This section, titled "*Deformation, Representation of the Ugly, and Sanctification of Imperfection*," will discuss the concepts of deformation, formlessness, grotesque, carnivalesque, and abjection and their relationships with exaggeration.

Creative practices throughout art history have been realized as different interpretations and recreations of reality. Many influential works in the history of art have started from imperfection. Avoiding the perfect, insistently choosing the flawed, is like pitting Dionysian transcendence against Apollonian rationality. (See Section 4.4.1, Dionysus, The Deity of Contemporary Art). While Francis Bacon (1909-1992) asserted, "There is no perfect beauty without some sort of oddity in its proportions," Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792), the English painter, expressed the opposite sentiment: "Nature, as imitated, should emphasize

the unrealized intentions of God, not the exact and ugly appearance of the natural phenomenon, but what we would wish it to be, or the unrealized intentions of God, defining the desires of man by the will of the Creator. This implies that art should imitate the ideal world, not the real world” (Hines, 1998, p.53). While achieving standards of perfection, such as the muscular body of Michelangelo’s David, was a primary objective for artists of that era, others like Francis Bacon employed deformation to reinterpret reality through the lens of their individuality, representing the frightening, flawed, ugly, and strange. Deformation, in this context, serves as an exaggeration that artists employ to interpret of their emotions and elicit a more profound impact. In Heartney’s work, the factors influencing the preference for ugliness over beauty and the distorted over the ideal are elucidated by the rise of abstraction, the ennui associated with the ideal and reality, the inability to openly critique values and hierarchies, the ascendancy of feminist criticism, skepticism toward the use of female beauty, and a counter-reaction against the societal demand for physical perfection in pop culture. (Heartney, 2008).

Concepts such as distortion, deformation, grotesque, carnivalesque, abjection, and informe, which delineate tendencies such as the desire for imperfection and the departure from ideal human bodies, represent unsettling and unrestrained inclinations that disregard boundaries, positions, and rules (Heartney, 2008, p.194). Each of these concepts can be associated with excess and exaggeration, and they will be individually scrutinized.

Distortion is characterized by the alteration of specific aspects of figures in a work of art without distorting them to the extent of unrecognizability. Particularly employed in fine arts and photography, distortion involves modifying data derived from nature without completely obliterating them, aiming to create a more potent effect, draw attention, underscore, and emphasize. Distortion arises from religious, social, or individual needs, signifying a purpose. From primitive art sculptures to Gothic art, Mannerism, Baroque art, Expressionism, Surrealism, Cubism, and contemporary art, distortion is prominently featured. In his 2009 art lecture notes titled *‘Deformation, Deformation, Abstract, Metamorphosis,’* Mehmet Sakızcı contends that what occurred in Gothic art, as cathedrals ascended towards the sky, was not deformation but a distortion, driven by a desire to approach God (Sakızcı, 2011). Distinguishing distortion from deformation, Sakızcı elucidates this differentiation with examples such as “when a ball loses its air, its shape is distorted, but when it gets old from playing, it is deformed. The shape of a paper can be

changed by cutting it, but it is deformed when we crumple it in our palms.” The TDK dictionary defines **deformation** as “Distortion, disgrace.” According to the Keser dictionary, “Deformation is to distort the form of the object or figure modeled in painting and sculpture to make it suitable for expression. Interpreting the form” (Keser, 2009, p.88). While deformation is often perceived negatively, it is, in fact, the creation of a new form, an alternative to an existing form, the distortion and remaking, and the recreation of imperfect nature by the artist.

In Mannerism, disruptions of symmetry and deformations of composition and anatomy are evident (Figure 58) Deformation, a pivotal concept in modern art, has been employed as a tool by artists such as Picasso, Matisse, H. Moore, and Dali to articulate the realities of emotions and dreams.

Another concept associated with exaggeration is the **formless (informe)**, defined as “the unformed state of matter or the unmediated state of nature” (Ural, 2020). However, when Georges Bataille and Andre Breton used the concept of the *formless*, it was not in the above-mentioned sense but rather “in the sense of blurring social categories, destroying borders, invalidating representations, and putting it against the concept of form” (Bataille, 1929; Breton, 2009; Ural, 2020). In 1996, American art critic Rosalind Krauss (1941) and Algerian critic Yves Alain Bois (1952) organized the exhibition “Informe” (Formless) at the Pompidou Center in Paris. This exhibition underscores the collapse of ideals of aesthetic harmony and unity (Heartney, 2008, p.194). American artist Mike Kelley (1954-2012) is among those who creatively use formlessness as a tool. They challenge traditional assumptions about beauty, not to glorify art, but rather to emphasize the breakdown of aesthetic harmony (Krauss & Bois, 1997). In his article “*Fluid Reality in New Media Art*,” Yücel defines Georges Bataille’s concept of the formless as “a meaningful metaphor that can describe both today’s world and today’s art” and explains his thoughts as follows: “Everything already had a form of its own—the worm, the spider, the spit, even the universe could be a liberating metaphor as a form with its variable formlessness. Bataille saw the formless as a new way of disrupting all categories. In the chaos and disorder of today’s world, our perception of reality, which has been deconstructed, lost its coordinates and turned into a fluid experience, is being transformed into a new media form by artists. Just like the concept of formless, we observe that new media art allows for variable, fluid, and unfixable forms regarding time/space/form/content contexts” (Yücel 2014). As Yücel states,

traditional boundaries in art are evolving with technology and can no longer be confined only by rigid categories such as form and content.

“**Grotesque**,” another concept associated with exaggeration, has been examined in conjunction with Bakhtin’s perspective under the heading “Public Entertainment, the Carnival Spirit” (Section 2.2.2) and with Kayser’s distinct approach under the title “*Supernatural Beings, Excessiveness, Fear, the Uncanny, and Grotesque*” (Section 2.2.3). In this section, the grotesque approaches of Hegel, Schlegel, Victor Hugo, and Baudelaire will be scrutinized. In his thesis, Doğan specified that Hegel characterized the grotesque with features such as the fusion of different natural universes, immeasurable and exaggerated dimensions, and the proliferation of various limbs and organs of the human body. Moreover, he asserted that Hegel entirely disregarded the role of comedy in the grotesque (Doğan, 2018, p.11). Friedrich Schlegel, on the other hand, defined the grotesque as a contradictory contrast between form and content, an unstable mixture of heterogeneous elements, and the power of both the absurd and the paradoxical (Doğan, 2018, p.10). Victor Hugo’s definition of the grotesque is conveyed as follows: “it is ubiquitous; it creates the deformed and horrible as well as the comic and ridiculous.” According to Doğan, Hugo argued that ideal beauty adheres to a single standard, whereas the grotesque allows for limitless variations and combinations. Baudelaire’s definition of the grotesque, as relayed by Doğan, is stated thus: “the grotesque is the most primitive form; however, it does not express the superiority of one human being over others but rather the artist’s superiority over nature” (Doğan, 2018, pp. 10-11). In essence, the use of the grotesque also serves as an indicator of the artist’s individuality. Among the terms employed to characterize the experience associated with the grotesque since the 19th-20th century, “arabesque, burlesque, uncanny, dystopia” can be enumerated. Nevertheless, the grotesque has gradually shifted from its initial meanings to describing something dreadful, uncanny, and exaggerated.

The uncanny and mysterious aspects of the grotesque are veering into the uncanny and enigmatic territory (See Section 2.2.3). According to Freud, our homes and even our own bodies are concealed and uncanny spaces. From this vantage point, contemporary artists such as Mona Hatoum and Orlan aspire to overcome this sense of mystery and uncanniness through performances wherein they endeavor to explore the interiors of their bodies. Orlan, a performance artist, underwent a series of nine surgeries altering her facial features in a predetermined pattern in the project titled “*Reincarnation of Saint Orlan*.” In accordance

with the observations made by Heartney in her book, Orlan aimed for the audience to bear witness to the transformation of her own body into a sculptural medium (Heartney, 2008, p. 189). This performance may be characterized as exaggerated due to its excessive nature, transcending the ordinary. Within the “Refiguration/Self Hybridization Precolumbian No: 38, 1998” series, Orlan endeavors to emulate pre-Columbian African statues through digital alterations, giving rise to a peculiar and primitive semblance characterized by distorted lines, effectively proposing the conception of a novel human species (Figure 9).



FIGURE 9 Orlan, *Refiguration/ Self Hybridization Precolumbian No:38, 1998*, Kibakrom print, 161.3x 108cm.

One of the terms connected with the grotesque is dystopia. While “utopia” defines the anticipation of an ideal society in the future, “dystopia” serves as a cautionary signal against the adverse future awaiting contemporary society. In his study, Doğan expounds on the definitions of utopia and dystopia, stating: “While utopia transports us to a future, condemning the present, dystopia leaves us in the midst of a dark and oppressive reality, presenting us with a terrifying future unless we discern and address its symptoms here and now” (Doğan, 2018, p.47).

Another concept that warrants discussion is the **Carnavalesque**. This concept is elucidated under the heading “*Public Entertainment, the Carnival Spirit*” (Section 2.2.2). Carnivals represent a period of inversion wherein values are upended, and decorous behavior is temporarily set aside in the name of the ‘carnival spirit,’ signifying an exaggerated portrayal of the body. The infusion of this spirit into a work designates it as carnivalesque

(Danow, 1995, p. 3). Given that the body, liberated from its stereotypes within the unrestrictive ambiance of the carnival, transgresses cultural norms, carnivalesque becomes a potent language of signification for an artist seeking to subvert conventions. The carnivalesque body is a mortal entity with functionalities. The carnivalesque image engages with open mouths, ample bellies, bodies assuming provocative postures that elicit desire, and the substances emanating from these bodies (Connelly, 2014, p.84). Doğan noted that, among contemporary concepts, carnivalesque is most closely associated with **abjection** (Doğan, 2018).

The intricate interplay of emotions that disgusting, repulsive, and grotesque elements evoke in the viewer is eloquently depicted in Plato's narrative concerning Leontius: "Leontius' internal struggle upon the instantaneous desire to witness the corpses of executed criminals outside the walls of Athens illustrates the conflicting emotions of repulsion and desire stirred by the grotesque and repulsive. Although Leontius grappled with this desire for a time, he ultimately yielded to it. As he ran toward the location of the deceased, his eyes wide open, he addressed his own eyes, which he believed were possessed by the devil, declaring, 'Behold, you damned wretches, take your share of this beautiful scene'" (Smith, 2006; Doğan, 2018). The emotions experienced by Leontius, encompassing shame and profound internal conflict, can be characterized as grotesque. "Despite the equal intensity of desire for both, the inclination to gaze upon beauty should not be resisted, whereas the inclination to gaze upon ugliness is expected to be resisted" (Summers, 2003, p. 27; Doğan, 2018). Aristotle also asserted in *Poetics* that we derive pleasure from observing painful things. Leontius confronted reality. Aristotle, however, delves into imitated forms—shapes crafted through human talent. When confronted with depictions of corpses, we can derive pleasure from an image that would typically displease us, thanks to the artful mastery of imitation (Summers, 2003, p. 28; Doğan, 2018). Consequently, art possesses the capacity to present something inherently ugly and repulsive as aesthetically pleasing.

Metamorphosis, a term that can be confused with deformation, finds its roots in biology. For instance, the transformation of a caterpillar into a cocoon and subsequently into a butterfly involves a differentiation process mediated by hormones. The phenomenon of metamorphosis is also observable in the development of frogs. While metamorphosis denotes a transformation and change within a species through hormonal processes, it distinctly differs from distortion and deformation. In the realm of art, the utilization of

metamorphosis can be exemplified by the poems of the Roman poet Ovidius, completed in the 8th century AD, consisting of 15 books that narrate the metamorphosis of mythological heroes. These 15 books hold a significant place among European mythology literature. Franz Kafka's "*Metamorphosis*" serves as another instance, narrating Gregor Samsa's metamorphosis into an insect. This work stands as a poignant exploration of life's tribulations, the individual's entrapment, and inner turmoil. Kafka, in his works, delves into themes such as alienation, existentialism, anxiety, absurdity, guilt, surrealism, and metamorphosis, vividly portraying the evolving and transforming dynamics of individuals in the face of authority. Belgian artist Jan Fabre (1958) similarly employs metamorphosis and insects as central concepts and structures in his works, pushing artistic boundaries and endeavoring to forge his own realm of infinity (İsmailoğlu & Korkmaz, 2018). In a speech on 'The Relationship between Social Change and Creative Drama,' academic writer Coşkun San addresses the question of whether social metamorphosis is possible. He remarks that symbols of metamorphosis, such as those seen in Kafka's story or Ionescu's "Rhinoceros," involving the transformation into cockroaches and rhinoceroses, are fantastical elements scientifically implausible. They serve to illustrate how individuals become estranged from their surroundings. San concludes that social metamorphosis, from a scientific standpoint, is not feasible, deeming the discourse exaggerated and more of a cautionary nature (San, 2009).

Anamorphosis, reminiscent of metamorphosis but distinctly dissimilar, constitutes an optical illusion technique in painting. It is employed for deformed and challenging-to-discern paintings, visible only from specific perspectives or through special mirrors or prisms. Anamorphosis is a method of distortion. According to Keser's dictionary, Anamorphosis is defined as follows: "Derived from the Greek term 'anamorphosis,' meaning transformation or reshaped, an image that appears elongated and distorted, as if reflected in a curved mirror or due to other optical trickery, or as if seen from an extremely tilted point of view" (Keser, 2009, p. 36). Piero della Francesca (1412-1492), an Italian painter and mathematician of the Early Renaissance, pioneered this optical illusion practice. Since the Renaissance, this illusion technique has been employed in art practices to convey coded political messages and evoke curiosity and interest (Istvan Orosz, Felice Varini, Hans Holbein-The Ambassadors 1533) (Çağlar, 2018). Humans, vulnerable in the face of nature, utilize their imagination to create mythological stories attributing sacredness to explain their creation and existence and cope with their fear of nature (See Section 2.2.9 and Section 4.4). These mythological stories, rich in exaggeration, captivate attention and add an impressive

value while dealing with extraordinary events, supernatural beings, supreme powers, symbolic meanings, and a fantastic narrative. The effectiveness and widespread appeal of mythology can be attributed to the human predisposition towards exaggeration, finding interest and power in the exaggerated, and the human desire to transcend themselves and their limits (Yılmaz, 2021). In light of this information, considering Ovidius' mythological poems, the use of metamorphosis symbols in art can be associated with exaggeration, akin to mythological stories, as a means to push boundaries, defy reason, and challenge tradition.

Deconstruction, also known as **disassembling**, **dismantling**, or **dismounting**, is a discourse of postmodernism that represents a shared idea across various disciplines. The concept of deconstruction, developed by French philosopher and critic Jacques Derrida (1930-2004) based on Heidegger's philosophy, aims to undermine the contradictions within structures built on binary oppositions. In Keser's art dictionary, deconstruction is defined as follows: "It is not about disassembling or dismantling a system; instead, it is about demonstrating that the system has already self-dissolved. It is not a method, criticism, analysis, application, or theory. It is not about establishing a new truth but rather about compellingly reexamining existing modes of thinking on already present structures to reveal different alternatives. With this approach, deconstructionism opposes the 'unity of truth' concept in structuralism and emphasizes the importance of the 'relativity of truth'" (Keser, 2009, pp.357-358). In 1988, the MoMA hosted an architectural exhibition focused on deconstruction. The works of architects such as Zaha Hadid, Peter Eisenman, and Frank Gehry were presented. Artists like Francis Bacon (1909-1992), Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968), Jasper Johns (1930), and Valerio Adami (1935) concentrated on the processes of constructing works of art. "By inverting the relationships between the signifier, signified, and the sign, the artists produced works aimed at revealing the dilemmas in social life" (Keser, 2009, p. 358). According to these artists, art is the transcendence of concepts.

Examining some words and phrases used in Turkish related to these concepts, words such as *ucube* (monstrosity), *hilkat garibesi* (freak of nature), *gudubet* (hideous), *kaknem* (cantankerous), etc., are considered, as they are associated with meanings of defectiveness, ugliness, or weirdness and can be related to exaggeration. The Arabic-origin word "**ucube**" is commonly used in Turkish daily life and, according to TDK, means "very strange, surprisingly ugly." It refers to something that does not resemble other living beings of its kind, having an unknown origin, being bizarre, incomprehensible, and formless. The Arabic-

origin word “**hilkat**” means “the characteristics created and unique to a person, temperament,” and “**Hilkat garibesi**” is an idiom used both literally and figuratively. According to TDK, a “**hilkat garibesi**” is a person who has abnormal strangeness in their body from birth and is described as strange, odd, or weird. Figuratively, it can refer to people exhibiting strange behaviors. The word “**gudubet**,” is also of Arabic origin. “**Gazup**” means a person whose face is too ugly to look at. The word “**gudubet**” is used only for women, and according to TDK, “Gazup” is a woman whose face and disposition are both too ugly to be tolerated. It has two different meanings: “ugly camel” and “a woman whose appearance and behavior are both repulsive.” “**Kaknem**” and “**kokoroz**” are words with meanings similar to “gudubet.” According to TDK, “kaknem” means “ugly, grumpy, dry, skinny,” while “kokoroz” has different meanings such as “corn, long thing with a pointed end, and an ugly person.” In slang, “kokoroz” also means to challenge or intimidate.

When delving into the topic of **ugliness** and the **representation of the ugly**, it is perhaps crucial to acknowledge initially that each culture possesses a distinct understanding of beauty and ugliness. While the masks crafted by indigenous populations may appear dreadful and shapeless to Westerners, they may harbor positive values for the cultures that create them. Section 2.2.6, titled “*The relationship between Exaggeration and the Concepts of Transcendence, Ideal, Sublime, Beautiful and Ugly*,” incorporates the perspectives of Rosenkranz and Eco on ugliness. Until the Middle Ages, various aesthetic theories perceived ugliness as the antithesis of beauty, a discord that disrupts the proportional rules of beauty, a deficiency. Nevertheless, Eco, in his work “*On Ugliness*,” after underscoring that beauty consistently garners admiration, while the ugly elicits responses of disgust, repulsion, fear, and horror, extolled art by asserting, “Art possesses the ability to articulate the ugly as beautiful; it can depict something ugly or displeasing in nature as beautiful” (Eco, 2019). Furthermore, in the same work, he introduced the concept of “Hisperic Aesthetics” as the aesthetics of immeasurability, a topic explored in Section 2.2.6. In this discourse, Eco highlighted a paradigm shift in aesthetics between the 7th and 10th centuries, elucidating a European style wherein rules such as proportion, measure, and symmetry cease to function, yielding to a dominion of irregularity and immoderation. The emphasis on change and the association of the concept of “hysterical aesthetics” with non-conformity to traditional laws can be linked to exaggeration.

Concerning ugliness, Greenberg asserted, “Every great original work of art initially appears ugly,” attributing this to the initial response of encountering an experience unprecedented and unfamiliar. Skopbülten, in its article dated 11/11/2021 titled “*The New and the Ugly*,” drew attention to a distinct perspective derived from Greenberg’s ideas, stating, “The continued perception of Pollock’s paintings as ugly by many individuals, despite their transformation into icons of modern art, signifies a lasting innovation” (Skopbülten, 2021, November 11).

Ugliness has the capacity to disconcert the viewer, disrupt their tranquility, and perturb them by redirecting attention to social issues. Within the realm of ugliness, an element of exaggeration may be present; for instance, an excessively large, exaggerated nose or a deformed body may be deemed ugly, eliciting emotions such as disgust, fear, and horror (Yilmaz, 2021).



FIGURE 10 *Gargoyle”, Notre Dame Church, Paris*

The terms “grotesque,” “carnavalesque,” “abjection,” and “formless” share common ground in exaggerated boundary states, mutations, hybridization, and the non-rational. Art, deemed to violate inviolable boundaries, forms the cornerstone of the Surrealist movement, which blurs the lines between the imaginary world, dreams, and mundane reality (Heartney, 2008, p.194). All these characteristics find their tangible expressions in deformed bodies. Dutch painters Hieronymus Bosch (1450-1516) (Figure 54) and Pieter Bruegel (1525-1569) (Figure 6) Spanish painter Francisco Goya (1746-1828) (Figure 58), Mannerist artists such

as Spanish El Greco (1541-1614) (Figure 55) and Italian Jacobo Tintoretto (1518-1594) employed deformed bodies. In the modern era, noteworthy figures include German-American artist George Grosz (1893-1959) and German artist Hans Bellmer (1902-1975) (Figure 69). Post-World War II, representations of distorted and deformed bodies proliferated. The terrifying women depicted by Dutch abstract expressionist painter Willem de Kooning (1904-1997) the sculptures of Swiss-born sculptor and painter Alberto Giacometti (1901-1966) (Figure 3), the paintings of British expressionist painter Francis Bacon (1909-1992) (Figure 74), American painter Philip Guston's (1913-1980) grotesque paintings (Figure 73), and French sculptor Louise Bourgeois's (1911-2010) pile of hollowed-out organs serve as examples.

In this section, concepts like distortion, grotesque, carnivalesque, abjection, and informe (formless), which depict trends such as deformation and deviation from idealized human bodies, and their relationships with exaggeration, are examined. The concept of grotesque has been extensively explored with Bahtin's approach under the title "Public Entertainment, the Carnival Spirit" (Section 2.2.2) and Kayser's distinct approach under the title "Supernatural Beings, Excessiveness, Fear, The Uncanny, and Grotesque" (Section 2.2.3). Additionally, this section reviews the grotesque approaches of Hegel, Schlegel, Victor Hugo, Freud, and Baudelaire. It is asserted that concepts such as deformation, grotesque, carnivalesque, abjection, and informe (formless) denote non-rational, boundary-defying situations, mutations, hybridization, and exaggerated scenarios. Words and phrases associated with these concepts, such as "*ucube*" (monstrosity), "*hilkat garibesi*" (freak of nature), "*gudubet*" (hideous), "*gazup*," "*kaknem*" (cantankerous), and "*kokoroz*," are examined, and the postmodern discourse, deconstruction, and disintegration are succinctly summarized under this heading. For an artist seeking to dismantle conventions, all these concepts collectively form a potent, exaggerated language of signification. Through these concepts, art transgresses presumed inviolable boundaries, with the artist distorting, exaggerating, and transcending conventional limits to interpret their own realities. The rise of abstraction, the ennui associated with the ideal and reality, the inability to openly critique values and hierarchies, the ascent of feminist criticism, and the resistance against society's growing demand for physical perfection are highlighted as contributing factors to the surge in tendencies like deformation, the representation of the ugly, and the pursuit of imperfection in art. It has been noted that contemporary artists like Mona Hatoum and Orlan endeavor to

transcend the enigmatic and uncanny through their exaggerated performances, wherein they seek to explore the inner workings of their bodies. The correlation between the pursuit of imperfection, deformation, and exaggeration is sought to be elucidated through Orlan's performance.

2.2.5 The Relationship between Exaggeration and the Social Phenomenon of Kitsch

In this section, we will scrutinize Kitsch culture, which emerged as an emblem of popular culture in the 20th century, and critically examine its association with exaggeration. Furthermore, Section 4.9, titled “Populism, Post Modernism, and Exaggeration in Contemporary Art,” will provide an in-depth exploration of populism and popular culture.

Upon delving into the dictionary meanings and etymology of the term “kiç,” we find that the English-Turkish dictionary defines it as “A contrived work of art, inexpensive literature, embellished items, literary compositions, etc., presented as works of art but deemed absurd, ludicrous, or devoid of value” (Longman, 1993). The German-Turkish dictionary characterizes “kiç” as “A so-called work of art attempting to evoke emotions through primitive means, a purported work of art lacking artistic value, something worthless, an expression of tastelessness” (TDK, 1993). Renowned German sculptor and art professor Ludwig Giesz (1887-1966), in his seminal work “Kitsch,” traced the origin of the term to the English word “sketch,” employing it to encompass all superfluous items acquired under the guise of art in the latter half of the 19th century (Eco, 1992, p. 272). Conversely, author Thomas Kulka associates “kiç” with the French word “chic,” signifying elegance and style, “şık” in Turkish (Kulka, 2012, p. 33). The multiplicity of interpretations for the term “kiç” has rendered its definition inherently challenging. Acknowledging this difficulty, Baudrillard asserted that this phenomenon constitutes a cultural category necessitating sociological analysis (Baudrillard, 2016). While culture is commonly underscored for its unifying attributes, it also possesses a distinctive quality of differentiation. When examining diverse cultures, we observe the disdain that individuals belonging to the “upper class” or “high culture” harbor toward the preferences of the “lower class” or “low culture.” They articulate disparaging remarks about the perceived lack of taste in nouveau riche individuals who, in their view, transgress the boundaries set by prevailing aesthetic sensibilities. However, echoing Umberto Eco, aficionados of kitsch believe they partake in a highly

refined experience, warranting respect for this discernment (Eco, 2019, pp. 394-397). At the core of kitsch aesthetics lies a human characterized by hope, yearning, anticipation, and emotional intensity. In contrast to Eco, Clement Greenberg, in his 1939 manifesto “Avant-Garde and Kitsch,” emphasized the imperative for artists and critics to steadfastly preserve the demarcation between high culture and low culture (Greenberg 1939; Heartney, 2008, p.16). Greenberg posited that Kitsch is a product of the Industrial Revolution, a byproduct that facilitated urbanization and widespread literacy in Western Europe and America. Before the Industrial Revolution, literacy stood out as the paramount criterion distinguishing high culture from folk culture (Greenberg, 1939, p. 6). However, with the increasing accessibility of resources and the proliferation of literacy, it became apparent that literacy alone could no longer bridge the cultural chasm. Even if the peasants and bourgeoisie settling in cities as the working class acquired literacy, they lacked the material means and time to immerse themselves in city culture as the affluent did. Consequently, they embarked on a quest to utilize their limited time and resources, laying the groundwork for the culture of kitsch that catered to their understanding and entertainment needs. Thus, kitsch emerged, appealing to those ignorant of cultural values but craving amusement, embodying “a symbol of all the counterfeit aspects of life” (Greenberg, 1939, p. 6; Berk, 2017). Consequently, kitsch possesses a class-based lineage. Kavrakoğlu contended that taste is not an individual trait but a societal aesthetic norm system, asserting that any development disrupting this norm system gives rise to bad taste and kitsch (Kavrakoğlu, 2013). The act of transcending the norm system defines exaggeration through transcending the ordinary, embracing excess (Püsküllülüoğlu, 1995, p.30, 149). Eco underscored kitsch and bad taste as social phenomena, emphasizing the role of economic factors in this paradigm (Eco, 2019, p.394). Adnan Turani, in his work “Philosophy of Contemporary Art,” posited that the source of kitsch lies in the deficiency of the cultural level required for the new age (Turani, 2014, p.57). Consequently, economic and cultural factors are identified as the origins of kitsch. Periods characterized by populism, particularly, mark zeniths of exaggeration and kitsch products.

The British philosopher Roger Scruton (1944-2020) alluded to a distinctive aesthetic understanding, stating, “*Defining Kitsch is not easy, but you recognize it when you see it*” (Scruton, 2015). There is unanimity regarding the emergence of Kitsch in the art market of Munich during the 1860s and 1870s, describing easily marketable, inexpensive, and highly

sought-after paintings and sketches (Scruton, 2015). Kavrakoglu defines kitsch as “corrupted taste, cheapening, depersonalization, bad taste, counter art, counter aesthetics—a term employed in art history to designate images or objects lacking aesthetic value or being disliked” (Kavrakoglu, 2013).

Critics concur that kitsch is a concept employed to disparage and marginalize cheap and imitative objects. Nerdrum shares a similar perspective, asserting, “Kitsch is a pejorative concept. Traditionally, the term kitsch is used to describe ornate, vulgar objects or cheap, mass-produced paintings with simple and meaningless motifs” (Nerdrum, 2015, p. 14). Despite the derogatory and disdainful nature of the kitsch concept, at its aesthetic core lies the emotionally intense human being. Consequently, kitsch encompasses sentiments such as hope, longing, emotion, conscience, and expectation. Individuals experiencing an emotional intensity of yearning for a happy life, expecting a just world, seeking justice, and rebelling against the state of the world have attempted to interpret their emotions with an exaggerated, sentimental state of mind, reading bumper stickers, listening to songs by Müslüm Gürses and Orhan Gencebay, and embracing an exaggerated, kitschy mood.

Identifying a crucial distinction between popular taste and the mass culture that emerged alongside industrialization, McDonald highlighted that “developing technology played a role in the business world’s manipulation of the masses, allowing for the production of unqualified goods that would satisfy the market” (McDonald, 1953, p. 13). Similarly, literary critic Matei Calinescu, akin to McDonald, asserted that the prevalent bad taste in modern times is predominantly an ideologically guided illusion rooted in mass culture. Theodor W. Adorno (1903-1969) remarked on the concept of mass culture, stating that “to prevent mass culture from being perceived as a culture emerging from the masses, as the present form of folk art, they altered the term to ‘culture industry’” (Adorno and Horkheimer 2002, p. 95). Adorno argued that the culture industry is not organic; it is not spontaneously derived but rather the planned production of products that cater to the consumption tendencies of the masses. Consequently, the culture industry endeavors to establish a uniform order, pursues interests, and seeks to strengthen authority (Adorno, 2012, pp. 109-118). *Section 4.9* of the study delves into a detailed discussion of mass culture, culture industry, popular culture, populist art, and populism under the heading “*Populism, Post Modernism, and Exaggeration in Contemporary Art.*”

The notion of “false consciousness,” as alluded to by McDonald, is embodied in

Adorno's texts as a "*parody of catharsis*" (Calinescu, 2010, p. 265). Catharsis, defined as "purification, cleansing, emotional discharge," takes on a distinct meaning in Adorno's concept of the 'parody of catharsis,' signifying a ludicrous and pseudo-purification, an artificial satiation. Ergüven interprets this concept, characterized as an artificial purification devoid of consciousness, as a "*pseudo-catharsis*," elucidating it as copies reproduced through technological means, pseudo-satisfactory products that are not artworks but rather ready-made effects (Ergüven, 1992, p. 28).

Thomas Kulka stands out as one of the authors underscoring the modern nature of kitsch. He argues that the absence of the term until the second half of the 19th century serves as a critical indicator of kitsch being a modern phenomenon (Kulka, 2014, p. 26). Does this absence imply that bad taste is also a product of modernity? Italian art critic and philosopher Gillo Dorfles (1910-2018) contends that kitsch did not exist in ancient times (Kulka, 2014, p. 29). Despite Kulka's perspective that kitsch is closely linked to the industrial revolution, his book also incorporates statements from writers who argue otherwise. Hungarian Arthur Koestler (1905-1983) is one such author, asserting that Petronius, a Roman writer from Emperor Nero's era, referenced kitsch when describing the bad taste of tradesmen in "The Satyricon" chapter titled "Trimalchio's Dinner Party" (Kulka, 2014, p. 25). Herman Broch, in defining kitsch as the replacement of ethical quality with aesthetic quality, emphasized its presence in the last periods of the Roman Empire, asserting that periods characterized by the fragmentation of values are times when kitsch flourishes, underscoring kitsch as an ancient phenomenon (Eco, 2019, pp.403-406). On the contrary, Calinescu posits that, despite the seeming likeness between bad taste and kitsch, kitsch is a phenomenon of the 19th century, whereas bad taste can be traced back only as far as the Baroque period. Therefore, he asserts that bad taste is intrinsically tied to the invention of machines and the commencement of production and reproduction activities. According to Calinescu, who views kitsch as a quintessential product of modernity from a technological standpoint, the proliferation of tasteless, cheap, and imitative products becomes commonplace when kitsch becomes technologically viable and economically lucrative in a modern society (Calinescu, 2010, p. 265).

Modern art dismantled societal class distinctions, ushering in an inclusive understanding accessible to all. Renowned Pop Art figure Andy Warhol (1928-1987), through references to consumer society, particularly exemplified by his iconic Campbell

soup cans, opened the gates to the realm of kitsch objects. Warhol's kitsch products, characterized by provocative, vibrant neon colors and elements of excess, are emblematic of exaggeration (See Section 4.9). Likewise, American painter and sculptor Jeff Koons (1956), recognized for reproducing ordinary objects on a grand scale, secured his place in the exaggerated, captivating world of kitsch. His colossal works signify a celebration of excess (See Section 4.9). Given that the foundation of popular culture invariably centers on consumption, there is an inclination towards excess, perpetually gravitating towards the grand, vast realms, and expansive dreams. Consequently, simple, everyday objects consistently appear in oversized proportions, mirroring the trend in art.

Umberto Eco incorporates "*L'art Pompier*" (fireman art), defined as the art of the late 19th century, into the realm of kitsch. *L'art Pompier*, a style outlined by the French Academy between 1850-1900, encompasses academic art paintings featuring nude depictions of gods and goddesses, provocative concubines, exaggerated historical scenes, and especially allegorical compositions (Eco, 2019, p.400).

American author and critic Susan Sontag, in her 1964 essay "*Notes on Camp*," elucidates the close association between Camp—a term she defines—and kitsch. She suggests that Camp could also be termed "*sensible kitsch*." In essence, Camp denotes the sophisticated experience of an individual who recognizes the inherent kitsch in what they observe, expressing a knowledgeable, aristocratic taste—a contemporary dandyism. Sontag characterizes Camp as "*being a modern dandy in mass culture*," asserting that unlike the aristocratic dandy figure of the 19th and 20th centuries, the modern dandy of the 21st century, embodying "Camp," advocates for a taste devoid of class distinctions. While Camp manifests itself as a sensibility (vogue.n.d.), a form of expression through irony, playfulness, and exaggeration rather than being solely content-driven, Sontag defines Camp as an affection for the artificial and the exaggerated. Even when Camp objects claim a certain marginality and refinement, they must carry an element of vulgarity, an unnatural excess, and exaggeration. Films labeled by movie critics as '*the ten best bad movies*' or tastes defined by phrases such as '*beautiful because it is horrible*' (Divine in "Pink Flamingos") can be classified as Camp. Despite the acknowledgment that most Camp examples are kitsch, Camp is not always equated with bad art. Sontag's Camp list includes esteemed artists such as Gaudi and some works by Mozart. Antoni Gaudi's ambition to single-handedly build the unfinished "*Sagrada Familia, 1882 - estimated date 2028*" church in Barcelona failed due

to the immoderation of his ambition (See Section 4.7). Hence, discussion on excess and exaggeration is warranted. Susan Sontag's exploration reveals that the taste for Camp extends from Mannerists to the Baroque period, gothic novels, and even encompasses a passion for Chinese art (Sontag, 1966). Camp, by its nature, should embody an excess that challenges the norm, with Art Nouveau standing out as a prime example. Art Nouveau pieces frequently incorporate decorative embellishments and plant patterns (Figure 71). One of the most prominent motifs in the realm of Camp sensitivity is gender ambiguity (Eco, 2019, p.410). Sontag illustrates this by referencing the languid gazes and slender, curvaceous bodies depicted in pre-Raphaelite poetry and paintings, as well as the Art Nouveau works that showcase thin, gender-neutral figures. Greta Garbo's flawless beauty is also presented as an instance where gender ambiguity within Camp is evident. Sontag articulates, *'The beauty of the most masculine man lies in his feminine side, while the most beautiful aspect of the most feminine woman lies in her masculine side'* (Conleyclark. n.d.). Despite Sontag's clarification that Camp does not inherently involve a homosexual preference, implying that not all homosexuals subscribe to a Camp taste, it is noteworthy that homosexuals often play a pioneering and prominent role as spectators of Camp (Sontag, 1966).

In this section, an examination is conducted on the culture of kitsch, which has manifested as an indicative facet of popular culture. The emphasis is placed on periods marked by populism, particularly noting that these periods coincide with the zenith of kitsch products and exaggeration. It is asserted that the core of kitsch aesthetics revolves around individuals characterized by hope, longing, expectation, and intense emotions. Furthermore, the discussion delves into the influence of the industrial revolution, economic and cultural factors, and the class-oriented nature of kitsch culture. The discourse extends to encompass concepts such as mass culture and the culture industry, underscoring the uniform order sought by the culture industry in pursuit of its vested interests. The exploration encompasses Adorno's concept of the "parody of catharsis" for kitsch, highlighting kitsch as a modern concept. Additionally, the proximity of Susan Sontag's Camp to kitsch is articulated, emphasizing that a substantial portion of camp examples, with their elements of marginality and unnatural extremism, align with the kitsch aesthetic. The foundational premise of popular culture, rooted in consumption, is addressed. The exposition contends that due to the inclination towards grand dreams, expansive worlds, and the monumental, simple, everyday objects consistently assume larger-than-life proportions. Pop Art, Art Pompier, and

Art Nouveau are explicated as pivotal in unlocking the realms of kitsch objects through their emphasis on exaggeration and excess. The connection between kitsch and exaggeration is further elucidated by referencing the works of Andy Warhol and Jeff Koons in the context of popular culture.

2.2.6 The Relationship between Exaggeration and the Concepts of Transcendence, Ideal, Sublime, Beautiful and Ugly

In this section, we delve into the philosophical examination of transcendence, ideal, sublime, beauty, and ugliness, questioning their relationship with exaggeration.

Transcendence, in its essence, highlights the concept of excess. In philosophy and religion, transcendence is a mode of thought used to articulate the impact of divine power existing beyond the known, lived world on the world itself. It can also be described as the ability to perceive the world from an external standpoint. Works that evoke transcendence often involve the artist surpassing themselves and imparting this transcendent experience to the audience (transcendental). Consequently, there is an exaggeration of the human-subject, a phenomenon typically realized within the liberated ambiance of the modern era: “Within the traditional understanding of transcendence, the quest involves man submitting to the sublime beyond himself, merging with it, and seeking unity. In this pursuit, where man isolates himself from both self and the world, the modern era, characterized by the centralization of the subject and individual agency, becomes the reconciling process with one’s own existence” (Hayat, 1999). While the modern era foregrounds concepts such as emancipation, reason, individualism, secularism, and equality, creating an expansive realm of freedom and exploration for humanity, it is this very freedom that intensifies exaggeration in the annals of art history. However, this freedom also begets self-aggrandizement and introspection. In the pursuit of sublimity within transcendence, the focus shifts from the body to the more fitting concepts of mind, spirit, and soul (Balanuye, 2008, p.50). Deleuze’s philosophical path, termed “*transcendental empiricism*,” leads to the reconceptualization of the body in philosophy, paving the way for an ongoing journey of becoming, attachment, detachment, and reconnection (Balanuye, 2008, p.58).

Psychoanalyst and philosopher Erich Fromm (1900-1980) posited that the need for transcendence originates from humanity’s desire to be a creative entity. As explored in

Section 4.1, “*The Emergence of Creativity and the Role of Exaggeration*,” creativity emerges from the struggle for survival. Fromm identified art, love, faith, and thought as domains that can guide individuals toward transcending themselves (Fromm, 2018). French philosopher Levinas remarked on the artist’s yearning for transcendence and the aspiration to be creative: “..... *The work of art is a desire for life, but the lifeless existence bestowed upon the sculpture by the artist is a derisive life, not subject to its master, a caricature of life*” (Zeynepdirek, 2012). The artist’s desire for creativity is characterized as a defiance of mortal fate and an attempt to live beyond death.

Art and transcendence, integral to religious rituals, trace back to ancient nature religions. Rituals in polytheistic Pagan religions, encompassing worship, chanting, and magic, embody the essence of religion. These ritualistic imprints are discernible across all forms of art. Section 4.1.3, “*The Ritual-Spirit Realm and Exaggeration*,” delves into these matters comprehensively. Scientifically explaining the impact of mystical experiences on the creativity of cave dwellers (Spivey, 2005, pp.34-43). In the Greek world, for over 2500 years, the subjects of tragedies that repeated twice a year during seasonal transitions, legends, epics (*Iliad & Odyssey*), or in Turkish folk literature, the *Travelogue of Evliya Celebi*, can be given as examples of artistic and literary transcendence (See Section 2.2.9, *Folk Narratives: The Relationship Between Myth, Tale, Epic, Story, and Legend with Exaggeration*).

The German historian and pioneer of modern archaeology, Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768), presented a distinctive perspective on Ancient Greek art in his essay of 1755. He asserted that Greek art does not imitate nature but embodies an ideal of beauty. According to Winckelmann, the singular path to originality involves emulating Greek works (See Section 4.3, *Exploration of Exaggeration in the Ideal of “Looking Good Means Being Good”*). He clarified that emulation is not a conventional imitation; rather, it is an adaptation of the greatness found in Ancient Greek works, a translation of what made them extraordinary, into the contemporary art of his time. He aptly described this process as “Simplicity and serene greatness.” The “Laokoon sculpture group” (Figure 11), discovered in 1506 on Rome’s renowned Esquiline hill and exhibited at the Vatican Museum, depicts the Trojan priest Laokoon and his two sons under attack by snakes. This sculpture ensemble stands as a noteworthy example of Hellenistic craftsmanship (See Section 4.3). It is a dynamic, emotive, and dramatic sculpture with figures that gracefully intertwine. The

narrative of Laokoon, presented as an epic, frequently found expression in both tragedy and Hellenistic poetry. The anguish depicted on the father's face in the sculpture precisely captures the serene greatness referred to by Winckelmann. In the midst of a stormy sea, the depths remain vast and tranquil. This interpretation suggests a conscious suppression of pain, a deliberate endurance of suffering, as he defies the gods with his intellect. The artwork, crafted with the spirit of transcending the known, lived, and experienced world, embodies the artist's self-transcendence (Albayrak, 2022). While transcendental thought is often regarded as the capacity to observe the world from an external standpoint, it accentuates the concept of excess. The transcendence of the subject, manifesting as an exaggeration of the human-subject's potentials, involves surpassing boundaries and signifies the presence of exaggeration.



FIGURE 11 *Laocoon and sons, ancient marble statue, 242 cm x 163 cm, Vatican.*

In the sculpture of Laocoon and his sons (Figure 11), two **ideals** can be identified. Firstly, the work is considered ideal due to its exemplary structure, and secondly, Greek beauty is seen as an ideal form of beauty. Michelangelo's David statue also serves as a representation of the ideal, showcasing perfect proportions and scale based on the Greek mathematical system (See Section 4.3, *Exploration of Exaggeration in the Ideal of "Looking Good Means Being Good"*) (see Section 4.7, *A Perspective on Exaggeration from the Classical Art Ideal*). The depicted ideal proportions and graceful bodies are products of an understanding from that era that prioritized and revered humanity, considering them as superior beings. However, these idealized figures, too beautiful to be real, where everyone

appears youthful and seems molded from a single form through mathematical formulas, deviate from reflecting the entirety of society. In this sense, they represent an extraordinary situation and can be considered exaggerated. In the realm of philosophy, TDK defines the idealism as an “appropriate, accepted element or thought,” and as a “concept that gathers in itself all the superior qualities related to the result that thought can design.” Idealism, according to TDK, is “the general name for teachings that take thought as the basis of knowledge and accept that human thought establishes existence.”

Since **idealism** commenced with the subject, the philosophical orientations of German philosophers Kant, Fichte, and Schelling have become a philosophy based on the “Self.” Idealism, particularly shaped by German philosophers and often labeled as German Idealism, began with Kant in the 18th century. Kant’s transcendental idealist view posited that humans enter the world with specific mental patterns, determining knowledge of existence or the physical world. The human mind and its cognitive faculties, juxtaposed with the world outside the mind, constitute the two sides of knowledge. Kant also viewed the ideal as the representation of an idea in a concrete singular form (e.g., the ideal of Peace, the ideal of Freedom). Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, as the starting point of their philosophical inquiries, based on world intelligible by reason which was introduced by Kant, and the concept of freedom expressed in the moral law he produces (Cevizci 2014, p. 801). According to Kant, a person is free if they comply with the laws of reason.

The concept of the **sublime** was initially examined by a writer named Pseudo Longinus in the 1st century AD. Longinus asserted that the sublime is what propels an individual into ecstasy and can solely be attained through art (Koşar, 2021, p. 152). However, the sublime acquired its true significance in the 18th century, owing to the contributions of Edmund Burke (1729-1797) and Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), coinciding with the development of a perspective centered around humanity and the repositioning of transcendence during the Enlightenment (Koşar, 2021). According to Burke and Kant, the sublime is an abstract concept evoking dominant emotions such as power, might, and fear. The demarcations between **the sublime and the beautiful** were redefined, with God being situated as the sublime and humans as the beautiful. In this reconfiguration, the sublime and the beautiful do not hold opposing meanings (Koşar, 2021). Aesthetic appreciation is articulated through the notions of beauty and sublimity.

In his essay “*Observations on the Feelings of the Beautiful and the Sublime*,”

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) characterized the works of William Turner as **sublime**. The crossing of the Alps by Hannibal in 218 BC represents a significant military achievement, and the painting “*Hannibal and His Army Crossing the Alps 1812*” captures this historical event by accentuating the power of nature through a snowstorm (oggito.com, 2019). Paintings from the 17th century depicting stormy skies, tumultuous seas, and snowstorms led to the division of the realm of aesthetic appreciation into beauty and sublimity, as these phenomena could not be explained solely through beauty. The sublime’s predominant feature is its association with boundless elements and an aspiration for the greater. It consistently exerts influence over larger and more formidable objects (Eco, 2016, pp. 278-292). Shaping the foundations of English aesthetics in the 18th century and beyond, this concept significantly influenced Turner, akin to numerous romantic artists, particularly in his later works, pushing him towards the boundaries of abstract painting. Turner’s sublime aesthetics extracted landscape painting from the classical paradigm of nature representation, positioning it as a tool to reflect his inner world and worldview (Erdoğan, 2017). Whether in the form of waves, clouds, or snowstorms, Turner’s paintings often portray natural occurrences that evoke fear in individuals (Figure 12). According to Kant, “We can only describe objects with magnitudes and limitations that surpass us as sublime” (Yılmaz, 2021). Initially categorized by Kant as Noble Sublime, Majestic Sublime, and Frightening Sublime, the concept of the sublime was later bifurcated into Mathematical Sublime (eliciting a sensation of absolute magnitude) and Dynamic Sublime (instilling fear and surpassing our comprehension) in his 1790 work “Critique of the Power of Judgment” (Albayrak, 2022). Kant exemplified the mathematical sublime with the starry sky, suggesting that gazing upon it compels us to contemplate more than what is visible, leading to an assumption of infinity and a disconcerting, negative pleasure stemming from the desire to attain the unattainable. As an illustration of the dynamic sublime, he presented the image of a storm. In the dynamic sublime, it is not the infinite expanse that unsettles us but the infinite power, arousing a sense of discomfort within us (Kant, 2016, pp. 75-83). In line with these explanations, the sublime is perceived as a sense of inadequacy and vulnerability in the face of magnitudes or nature beyond the grasp of the human mind (Yılmaz, 2021). The concept of the sublime can allude to the realm of transcendent experience, and hence, to exaggeration, particularly exaggeration rooted in the magnification of scale can evoke the concept of the sublime.

The English philosopher **Edmund Burke** (1729-1797) lived during the time of the French Revolution and adopted a stance against it. Prior to Burke, a clear distinction between the concepts of the beautiful and the sublime had not been firmly established; instead, these terms were often used interchangeably rather than as distinct ideas. However, with Burke, these concepts began to diverge, and a clearer demarcation was established. Burke defined the sublime and the work of art in the following manner: “A genuine artist must be generous in the deception presented to the viewer, and the most sublime designs should be easily attainable. Designs that are expansive only in their dimensions consistently signify an ordinary and limited imagination. There cannot be a great work of art without deceit; such a quality is reserved solely for nature. A discerning eye will find the middle ground between excessive length and height and short, intermittent quantity...” (Burke, 2008, p. 80). According to Burke, the sublime primarily reveals itself through negative emotions like fear and astonishment, and secondarily through positive emotions such as admiration, awe, and respect. Fear, according to Burke, is the most potent among these emotions because, by generating the apprehension of death, it approximates real pain. Consequently, anything evoking fear, danger, and thus anxiety is deemed sublime. Burke reinforces this notion with examples such as ghosts and demons in horror narratives. Like Burke, Kant, building upon the principle of the inaccessibility of nature, asserts that the sublime not only entails a feeling of enjoyment but also a sense of fear based on the characteristics of nature. The concept of the sublime is primarily shaped through transcendence, representing a notion that surpasses human dimensions and elicits emotions such as uneasiness, fear, greatness, and grandeur. In addition to the realm of imagination, works of art commonly employ the technique of manipulating real dimensions, presenting even the simplest elements on a grander scale, thus evoking a sense of sublimity. The most evident rationale for this lies in the general tendency of humans to experience a feeling of infinity towards objects surpassing their own scale. Indeed, any structure exceeding the dimensions of the human scale induces a profound sense of sublimity.

Malevich’s “*Black Square, 1915*” emerged as a response to the First World War, while mid-century monochrome art (such as Mark Rothko’s paintings) reacted to the Second World War. Yugoslav sociologist and philosopher Slavoj Žižek (1949-) interpreted Malevich’s “*Black Square*” as the pinnacle of modernist sublimation (See Section 4.8). According to Žižek, the abstraction of the *Black Square* stands in stark contrast to the

extreme realism found in Courbet's "*The Origin of the World 1866*," where he depicts the vagina of his model. Courbet, in Žižek's view, represents the glorification of reality, while Malevich represents the glorification of emptiness, and Modernism navigates between these two extremes (Artun, 2018). If small objects are beautiful, then large, monumental things are sublime. If clarity characterizes beauty, darkness, gloominess, and mystery define the sublime, and so forth (bisavtv). Malevich initiated an artistic tabula rasa, excluding everything with a void. Consequently, Malevich glorified emptiness, and Courbet, in turn, exaggerated by glorifying extreme realism.

In his book '*Notes on Aesthetics and Art*,' Moissej Kagan elucidates the sublime in art as follows: "...the sublime has a particularly powerful ecstatic effect on individuals. It astonishes us with its unusualness, its splendor, its incomparability with our own capacities and possibilities, and elicits in us a sense of respect mixed with admiration and fear. It is not surprising that the sublime's ability to shake the human spirit is highly esteemed in art. Art has harnessed this sublime ability in various forms" (Kagan, 2008). This explanation closely aligns with Burke's definition of the sublime. The sublime initially induces a sense of dignity mixed with astonishment, followed by admiration.



FIGURE 12 William Turner, *Hannibal and his Army Crossing the Alps*, 1812.

Erdoğan defines the concept of the **sublime** as follows: "It is an effort to explain the splendor and spiritual dimension of nature through rational or non-scientific means." The sublime is generally defined as "something that exceeds human measurements in the fields of art, ethics, theology, and philosophy and is superior in its greatness" (Erdoğan, 2017, p. 2431). The Turani dictionary explains the sublime as "the aesthetic category that allows us to identify objects and events in which the human ideal is expressed with a unique power and in which this power far exceeds its everyday manifestations in reality" (Turani, 1993, p.

148).

Exaggeration can occur when the reality that the artist sees or experiences meets transcendent emotions in the creative process. There are many definitions of exaggeration associated with words such as excessive, large, small, etc., but the effect of exaggeration cannot be measured only by size. Exaggeration can also be felt in situations that exceed human perception and power in the face of nature, and this is reflected in art. The concept of the **sublime** in aesthetics can be associated with exaggeration. In works of art, the sublime affects the viewer with its greatness and limitlessness. Greatness or dominance in a work of art can be realized when human beings feel inadequate in the face of the power of nature. In this case, the fact that the scale of a work of art is large compared to human beings can create the effect of sublimity on the viewer, as well as make him feel the sublime with its content (Yılmaz, 2021). “*Burj Khalifa, 2007*” in Dubai is still the tallest building in the world with a height of 828 meters. A building of this height is a majestic structure with its height overflowing above the clouds. Someone looking down from that height will sense the sublime. The concept of the sublime has been considered by artists and philosophers as one of the subjects of aesthetics since the period when it began to influence the creative processes of artists.

Beauty and **ugliness** are relative concepts and vary greatly according to periods of history and cultures. Eco said that finding something beautiful or ugly stems from political and social criteria rather than aesthetic criteria (Eco, 2019). We can see that ugliness has been defined as the opposite of beauty in every era.

Beauty will be analyzed through the different philosophical approaches of Schiller, Schelling, Lessing, Hegel, Kant, Baumgarten, Leibniz, Plato, and Plato, and ugliness through the approaches of Rosenkranz and Eco, and their relationships with exaggeration will be questioned.

Schiller (Johann-Christopher Friedrich) (1759-1805), a German poet, dramatist, philosopher, and historian, is considered one of the founders of contemporary German literature along with Goethe and was influenced by Kant’s concepts of aesthetics and ethics (Osborne, 1996, p.107). Schiller defined **beauty** as freedom that becomes visible; according to him, beauty is life and alive. By talking about erasing matter through form, Schiller means a new design of reality (Sena, 1972, p. 38). This new design of reality is not sought in this

world but in another universe that has been reappeared. This free discourse and new reality design evoke exaggeration.

Aristotle (384-322 BC) asserted that the essence of art is imitation and expounded on the **beauty of a work of art** as follows: “The artist holds a kind of mirror to nature with his work; the beauty of the artwork is proportional to what the artist completes, filling in what nature has left incomplete” (Sena, 1972, p. 23). Imitation, liberated from being a mere projection of nature, has evolved into nature’s complement. Aristotle discussed that the loftiest forms of beauty encompass order, symmetry, and determination.

The German philosopher and scientist Leibniz (Gottfried Wilhelm) (1646-1716) posited that **beauty** is a transcendent essence. This essence, unlike Plato’s world of ideas, is not a realm of existence but an objective essence attainable through knowledge. He grounded his philosophy in the principles of logic.

German philosopher **Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten** (1714-1762) is acknowledged as the founder of modern philosophical aesthetics. From Baumgarten’s perspective, aesthetics is not only art but also science (Wessell, 1972, p. Keskin, 2018). Baumgarten regarded the **concept of beauty** as “a quality of objects that cannot be explained by an unchanging set of rules and appeals to the senses. While Leibniz sought beauty in the essence of the object, Baumgarten sought it in the entirety and external characteristics of the object. Plotinus (205-270 AD), the founder of Neoplatonism, attained beauty in the soul of the subject gazing at the object, and Baumgarten delineated the boundaries of aesthetics as a branch of knowledge reduced to emotion. According to him, the beauty of an object is comprised of the harmony displayed by the parts composing the object” (Sena, 1972, p. 28).

In **Immanuel Kant**’s aesthetics (1724-1804), the **beautiful** is distinguished from the pleasant, the good, the direct, and the useful. The beauty of art, distinct from the beauty of nature, lacks a functional purpose. In this context, Kant bifurcated judgment into judgment of taste and judgment concerning the quality of purpose. As specified in the judgment of taste, only taste exists; however, in the judgment of purpose, ideas of utility and fitness for purpose form the basis of the judgment of beauty. Kant outlined the characteristics of aesthetic judgment as follows: “What is beautiful provides us with disinterested pleasure that does not benefit us, and although the judgment of taste is subjective, it transcends mere sensations. Beauty, the subject of this judgment, cannot be confused with the pleasant”

(Yetkin, 2007, p. 67). According to Kant, “beauty, truth, goodness, the qualities, and quantities of objects and substances acquire a value, a meaning, and a form according to the structure of our soul. Thus, beauty does not exist outside of us; we ourselves confer this quality upon works of art” (Sena, 1972, p. 31). According to Kant, “art can represent the ugly as well as the beautiful because artistic beauty is not something beautiful; it is the beautiful design of something” (Sena, 1972, p. 31).

Gotthold-Ephraim Lessing rejected views that locate the source of beauty in imitation. Lessing introduced two distinct perspectives to the concept of beauty: **sensual beauty and natural beauty**. While he regarded the purpose of painting as the expression of sensual beauty, he contended that works of art not reflecting the human body are not genuine art. In his examinations of Greek sculpture art, he expressed that the essence of painting for them was the pursuit of beautiful bodies and appearances, asserting that only those who succeeded in this could capture beauty (Sena, 1972, p. 34).

Hegel (1770-1831) stands as one of the foundational philosophers of German idealism. According to Hegel, art embodies “the *geist* that permeates matter and molds matter in its own image” (Sena, 1972, p. 41). Hegel contends that in the sculpture “*The Walking Man, 1947*” (Figure 3) by Swiss-born sculptor Alberto Giacometti (1901-1966), a novel perception of existence emerges through the sculpting of bronze. Hegel suggests that the *geist*, in shaping the material, brings forth its own reality, realizing its own vision (See Section 4.8, Alienation, Distortion). To interpret his sense of confinement, Giacometti exaggerates by manipulating the proportion and form of his sculpture, simplifying it excessively. Hegel argues that the **beauty of art** surpasses that of nature. He posits that as the *geist* transforms into matter, matter carries traces of the *geist*, and the visible manifestation of the *geist* is an expression of beauty. Hegel perceives every entity as participating in a continual process of formation, with nothing reaching an absolute conclusion. Hegel terms this system of perpetual transformation ‘dialectical idealism’. He regards matter as a manifestation of thought (spirit) and envisions its movement from the realm of ideas towards the concrete, perceptible world—existence. According to Hegel, “The beauty of art is grounded in sense and imagination” (Tunalı, 2005, p. 151). “However, in Hegel’s aesthetic views, the concepts of imagination and spirituality are not akin to the sense adopted and pursued by surrealists in art. For him, art represents an essence, and this representation signifies the spiritual realization of the arbitrariness and contingencies of life

and the world” (Tunalı, 2005, p. 151). Thus, the involvement of imagination and senses is not a deception or an outward expression but a spiritual reality, where the soul materializes in the senses. Work of arts, according to Hegel, amalgamate the spirit and essence of things into a tangible design. The distinction Hegel draws between the essence of man and his spiritual existence (*geist*) gives rise to alienation. Yet, alienation dissolves when the spiritual existence reunites with the essence of man (Tunalı, 1976). In light of this system of perpetual transformation, Hegel articulates that “throughout his life, man undergoes a cycle of estrangement and self-return, considering alienation as a positive juncture in the journey of discovering his essence” (Kızıltan, 1986, p. 11; Uluç, 2020, p. 33) (See Section 4.8, Alienation as an Expressive Form and Traces of Exaggeration in Distortion). Through alienation, the artist employs distortion to exaggerate his own reality, aiming to comprehend it. The grotesque figure serves as an expression of the alienated world.

The German Idealist philosopher **Schelling (Friedrich-Wilhelm Joseph)** (1775-1854) amalgamated his statements on the significance of art with Kant’s critical philosophy (Osborne, 1996, p. 106). In Schelling’s philosophy, art is not an imitation of nature; rather, it is a process where the artist, defined as an artistic genius, enlivens nature like a divine spirit, not imitating it. **Beauty**, according to Schelling, is the finite sensation of the infinite. He expressed that true art is not a momentary impression but the design of infinite life. According to Schelling, when universal reality, that is, truth and action, effectively converge, beauty emerges (Sena, 1972, p. 43).

The German thinker and psychologist **Johann Friedrich Herbart** (1776-1841) posited that “beauty is nothing but relationships, the relationships of sounds, lines, and colors being examples” (Sena, 1972, p. 44). Herbart’s definition of **beauty** aligns with the abstract works of Kandinsky and Klee (See Section 4.8). Both artists distilled their impressions into colors and lines, and in the resulting artworks, a sensory image emerged as a sound. Silent music has transformed into a visual conception of music.

The work “**Aesthetics of Ugliness**,” penned by the German philosopher **Johann Karl Friedrich Rosenkranz** in 1853, is acknowledged as the inaugural treatise on the concept of ugliness (Rosenkranz, 2018; Yiğit, 2019, p. 593). Rosenkranz underscored the similarity between ugliness and evil, asserting that there exists a traditional perspective suggesting that ugliness is the antithesis of beauty, as understood in terms of harmony, proportion, or wholeness. Eco noted that Rosenkranz’s meticulous analysis in his book encompasses

ugliness in nature, spiritual ugliness, ugliness in art, formlessness, asymmetry, disharmony, deformation, and repulsiveness, surpassing a simplistic definition that considers ugliness merely as the opposite of beauty in terms of harmony, proportion, or integrity (Eco, 2019, p. 16). In his book “*On Ugliness*,” a sequel to “*On Beauty*,” Umberto Eco provides a detailed account of the rich and surprising history of ugliness. Eco underscores that, unlike the unbiased appreciation often associated with synonyms of beauty, almost all synonyms of ugliness evoke a reaction of disgust, even violent repulsion, horror, or fear. In the same context, Eco introduces the concept of Hisperic Aesthetics, describing it as the aesthetics of immoderation: “...between the 7th and 10th centuries, in a region stretching from Spain to the British Isles, including part of Gaul, we witness a complete transformation of taste. Hisperic aesthetics is the style of a Europe in its darkest centuries, marked by the decline of agriculture, the abandonment of cities, and the collapse of the great aqueducts and Roman roads. In such an atmosphere of general barbarism, monks, poets, and miniaturists perceive the world as a dark forest inhabited by monsters, resembling a labyrinth of dark paths. The Hisperic style no longer adheres to traditional laws of proportion. People start to appreciate the new music of incomprehensible words derived through irregular means, focusing on the immeasurable and immense” (Eco, 2019, p.111). This exposition suggests that concepts such as *ugliness* and Hisperic aesthetics, which defy traditional laws of proportion, can be associated with exaggeration.

Beauty and **ugliness** are relative concepts, and Eco posits that perceiving something as beautiful or ugly is rooted in political and social criteria rather than aesthetic standards (Eco, 2019, p.10). In exploring the concept of ugliness, it becomes evident that ugliness has been consistently defined as the antithesis of beauty throughout different eras. Henderson, in his book, includes Eco’s statement: “Beauty is, from some perspectives, tedious. While the notion of beauty evolves through ages, beautiful objects must always adhere to certain rules... Ugliness is unpredictable, with endless possibilities. Beauty can be measured, while ugliness is infinite like God” (Henderson, 2018, p.12). According to Evecen and Koç’s publications, Victor Hugo’s assertion that “The beautiful has but one type, the ugly has a thousand” aligns with Eco’s perspective (Ronchi, 2020 as cited in Evecen and Koç, 2021, p.3). Within the aesthetics of ugliness, the analysis has been directed towards uncovering the resemblance between ugliness and moral evil. The definition of beauty, once considered synonymous with perfection, has evolved in contemporary aesthetics, allowing the imperfect

to be acknowledged as beautiful. Surveying the synonyms of ugliness reveals descriptors such as incompatible, disproportionate, formless, shameful, horrifying, incomplete, excessive, vulgar, coarse, bad, unpleasant, contrarian, horrible, grotesque (Eco, 2019, 10). Based on these delineations, it can be asserted that ugliness inherently incorporates an element of exaggeration. Features such as an exceptionally large head, nose, or a body with deformities or omissions can evoke emotions like disgust, anxiety, terror, and fear (Yılmaz, 2021).

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), in his essay “*The Birth of Tragedy*” (1872), expounded on his thoughts on art through the allegorical characters of **Apollo and Dionysus**, the two sons of Zeus in Greek mythology with disparate characteristics. While Apollo symbolizes order, form, and self-restraint, Dionysus (See Section 4.4.1, *Dionysus, The Deity of Contemporary Art*) represents bursts of passion and life forces. Nietzsche positioned the rationality of Apollo against the transcendence of Dionysus. Nietzsche interpreted Greek mythology as the triumph of Apollo over Dionysus and considered art as the dynamic conflict between these two forces (Osborne, 1996, p. 127). According to Nietzsche, painting, sculpture, and epics were categorized as Apollonian arts, while music and lyric poetry were characterized as Dionysian arts. In line with this classification, Nietzsche underscored the supremacy of painting and sculpture over poetry and music, emphasizing the preeminence of plastic arts in the creation and shaping of a new world. However, Dionysus, with his outbursts of passion, excess, enthusiasm, rebellion, and irregularity (See Section 4.4.1), can be associated with the element of exaggeration.

In conclusion, the terms “*transcendence*,” “*ideal*,” “*sublime*,” and “*ugliness*” within aesthetics can be aptly linked to exaggeration in art. Within works of art, the sublime captivates the viewer through its magnitude and boundlessness. Sublimity, greatness, or dominance in an artwork emerges from the human sense of inadequacy in the face of the power of nature. Consequently, when the scale of a piece of art surpasses that of humanity, it can evoke a sense of sublimity in the viewer and convey sublimity through its content. Transcendence involves the exaggeration of the human subject, portraying a state of self-transcendence for the artist who prepares a work by venturing beyond the known and experienced world to encounter a transcendent realm. As discussed in Section 4.1.3 “*The Ritual-Spirit Realm and Exaggeration*”, artistic forms of self-expression among indigenous peoples, related to rituals and Shamanism, establish connections with different worlds and

transitions to the otherworld through rituals. Scientifically, the effects of mystical experiences in the creativity of cave people have been elucidated (Spivey, 2005, pp.34-43). The “Representation of the Ugly” is explored in Section 2.2.4, where ugliness emerges with characteristics such as disproportionality, shapelessness, incompleteness, excessiveness, vulgarity, coarseness, badness, unpleasantness, anomaly, horror, and grotesqueness. Considering all these definitions, it can be asserted that ugliness inherently incorporates an element of exaggeration. Therefore, by employing proportion, distortion, grotesque figures, artists can employ ugliness to exaggerate, facilitating the expression of their emotions. In the realm of artistic idealism, the depiction of ideal dimensions and elegant bodies is a product of an era that values humanity and regards them as superior beings. These idealized figures, unrealistically beautiful, uniformly youthful, and shaped by mathematical formulas, fall short of reflecting the entirety of society; rather, they depict an extraordinary situation and are consequently exaggerated.

In this section, an attempt has been made to elucidate the notions of transcendence and the ideal in art through the Laocoon image. The sublime concept has been expounded from the perspectives of Kant, Burke, and Kagan. Reference has been made to William Turner’s painting “Hannibal and his Army Crossing the Alps, 1812,” exploring the sublime aesthetics and its correlation with exaggeration. Zizek’s interpretation of Malevich’s “Black Square, 1915” as the epitome of sublimation has been highlighted. Additionally, it has been posited that an individual gazing downward from the lofty height of Dubai’s “Burj Khalifa, 2007,” surpassing the clouds, would apprehend the sublime, thereby associating the sublime concept in aesthetics with exaggeration. The multifaceted understanding of beauty has been conveyed through the distinct perspectives of Shiller, Schelling, Lessing, Hegel, Kant, Baumgarten, and Leibniz. Changes in the contemporary conception of beauty have been addressed, emphasizing that even imperfections can be deemed beautiful in today’s aesthetic understanding. Discussions on ugliness have involved the approaches of Rosenkranz and Eco, along with the concept of Hisperic aesthetics. Nietzsche’s reflections on art, conveyed through the examples of Apollo and Dionysus, underscore the association of Dionysus with exaggeration, encapsulating his exuberance, enthusiasm, rebelliousness, and irregularity. In conclusion, the section underscores the potential correlation of the concepts of “*ideal*,” “*sublime*,” “*transcendence*,” and “*ugliness*” in aesthetics with exaggeration in the realm of art.

2.2.7 The Relationship between Exaggeration and the Concepts of Humor, Caricature, and Coarse Comedy

In this section, we will delve into concepts such as humor, caricature, and the coarse genre of comedy that could be associated with exaggeration, examining their relationships with exaggeration.

Humor is a narrative style capable of offering a different perspective on lived reality, prompting smiles during questioning, encouraging thought while eliciting smiles, and skillfully redirecting attention (Alay, 2019). The sense of humor involves the ability to assess the comical and absurd facets of life. In English and French, the terms “humour” and “sense of humour” are employed to express the concept and understanding of humor (Şenyapılı, 1995, p. 24). The term “*mizah*” has entered the Turkish language from Arabic, and its Turkish counterpart is “*güldürü*” (comic/farce). According to the Ottoman-Turkish Encyclopedic Dictionary, the root of the word “*mizah*” is indicated as “*müzah*.” Various definitions associated with “*mizah*” (humor) are also provided in the dictionary: “humor: Joke, jest, entertainment,” “*Mizahi*” (humorous): humorousness, entertaining,” “*Mizah-nüvis*” (humorist): one who writes humorous, entertaining articles” (Devellioğlu, 1986, p. 782). Additionally, the dictionary provides information about the term “*latife*,” meaning a joke in connection with humor, and some derived words: “*Latife*: 1. A strange and beautiful word that evokes laughter. 2. Story, joke. *Latife-gu*: Jovial, joker. *Latife-perdaz*: Jovial, joker” (Devellioğlu, 1986, p. 649).

Despite attempts by thinkers such as Aristotle, Plato, Kant, Descartes, Darwin, Freud, and various researchers to explain humor from their perspectives, it remains challenging to define and measure, with no conclusive consensus reached. While humor is generally seen as a pleasurable experience that begins with a comical impulse and concludes with smiles and laughter (Susa, 2002, p.45), it is also characterized as subtle satire aiming to entertain, amuse, and tease without causing offense (Yardımcı, 2010). **Aziz Nesin** summarized humor as anything capable of inducing healthy laughter in individuals, regardless of the extent. According to him, a wide array of elements, such as comic novels, stories, satire, lampoon, mockery, jokes, humorous pantomime, caricature, shadow and puppet plays, ridicule, grotesque, humorous anecdotes, wit, allegory, slang, mockery, and ridicule, all fall within the realm of humor (Usta, 2009, p. 34). **Humor**, or comic, is effectively employed across all

art forms.

Turkish cartoonists and their memorable characters, including **Oğuz Aral** (Dumb Avni), **Cemal Nadir** (Amca Bey), and **Latif Demirci** (Muhlis Bey, Arap Kadri), hold a distinct place in the realm of humor. As Aziz Nesin posits, humor emerges as a concept that exhibits variations across societies, classes, nations, and even individual perspectives (Nesin, 2001). Given that individuals define humor based on their unique understanding, the existence of numerous diverse definitions is only natural. Humor is occasionally employed when articulating the shortcomings of others, highlighting the significance of mutual tolerance. Whether it be the jests made by a worker about their employer or the parodies, satires, and caricatures in which comedians take aim at politicians, these forms of expression often find refuge in the humor sensibilities of the opposing party. Renowned poet **Neyzen Tevfik** (1879-1953), in addition to his mastery of the ney, distinguishes himself as a poet and a skilled practitioner of rational and realistic satire. Through his satirical works, he offered responses to the repressive governance of the Ottoman era and critics of the revolutionary ideals in the Republic years (turkedebiyatı.org.n.d.).

Western perspectives trace the history of humor back to the 4th and 5th centuries BC in Ancient Greece, during the years of mythological heroes Oedipus and Theseus. Humor, particularly as a means of expressing societal joys and emotions, gains prominence in collective entertainments (Heath, 1998, p. 3). For instance, the “Purilli rites” celebrating the arrival of spring among the Hittites and the Dionysian festivities in Ancient Greece (See Section 4.4.1, Dionysus, The Deity of Contemporary Art) are entertainment events incorporating humor (Arkeonews.n.d.). Entertainments were organized to celebrate the triumph of good over evil, with humor taking the place of the frustration and fear left by evil forces on people once the negative situation was resolved. Humor, by imitating evil, served as a source of entertainment (Öngören, 1998, p. 17).

In the realm of **grotesque theater, which represents coarse comedy** and finds widespread application in literature, the elucidation of the grotesque is notably elucidated by two scholars. Kayser characterizes the grotesque with a decidedly negative connotation, interpreting it through a lens of fear (See Section 2.2.3). Conversely, Bakhtin, in an ironic twist, adopts a perspective centered around humor (See Section 1.2.2) (Nurdan, 2020). Both grotesque approaches have undergone meticulous scrutiny in this study. While Bahtin’s

rendition of the grotesque finds expression in plays that affirm life, exuding a more jubilant ambiance, occasionally accompanied by musical elements, Kayser's iteration surfaces in productions that are fraught with violence, critique authority, and are laden with existential threats and fear (Ünlüaycıl, 2003). "In subsequent eras, the grotesque became linked with caricature, its horrifying and repulsive features subdued, and instead, it assumed the role of accentuating the peculiar and ludicrous" (Ünlüaycıl, 2003, p. 69). Consequently, grotesque is concomitantly associated with concepts such as comedy, humor (satire, parody, irony), and caricature.

"**Parody, irony, and absurdity** stand out as paramount comedic stylistic techniques in postmodern texts. Within ironic narrative, the disparity between the expressed and intended facts in the text engenders a humorous discourse. Conversely, parody entails the reassembly and mockery of previously articulated discourse or text, imbuing it with a ludicrous context. In essence, **parody** comprises a satirical imitation arising from the transformative, ridiculous, and critical alteration of something grave in both style and content" (Firat, 2019).

The domain of "**absurd comedy**" emerges as a facet of humor in cinema and theater. Absurd comedy, tackling events and scenarios that flout logic as mundane occurrences, amalgamates surreal situations and dichotomies. It assumes an entirely exaggerated and absurd countenance through the accentuation of absurdities and logical fallacies with elements of mirth (Firat, 2019). The film "*The Dictator 2012*" by the American comedian and actor Lary Charles (1956) serves as a compelling illustration of absurd comedy. The word "absurd", of French origin, means "unreasonable, illogical, or inappropriate". Keser's lexicon posits that the term 'absurd' is employed in two distinct senses: firstly, "ludicrously unbelievable, incompatible, incongruous due to a logical error," and secondly, "referring to thoughts devoid of value or order in the universe or human life" (Keser, 2009, p.22). It underscores the absurdity, incongruity, and meaninglessness in the face of a phenomenon, situation, or event. The term 'absurd' is deployed for situations deemed irrational to take seriously, characterized as extremely absurd and irrational. Any event contravening reality and reason is deemed absurd, hence exaggerated. The Arabic-rooted term '**abes**' shares analogous meanings with '**absurd**.' The TDK dictionary elucidates that '**abes**' signifies "contrary to reality, common sense, reason, unnecessary, unwarranted, empty, absurd." Consequently, '**abes**' and '**absurd**' are utilized interchangeably to serve the same purpose

(etimolojiturkce 2012-2020 ; hürriyet.com.tr).

A **caricature**, generally employed to elicit laughter, provoke thought, convey a message, and satirize, is a form of line drawing that embraces exaggeration. Caricature, rooted in exaggeration, amplifies imperfections with the aim of evoking smiles and contemplation, thereby potentially persuading broad audiences. Given its emphasis on the peculiar and ludicrous, caricature is inherently linked with the grotesque. It has perennially functioned as a tool feared and resisted by authorities, representing a manifestation of reaction against those in power.



FIGURE 13 *Richard Nixon's caricature*

Renowned Indian-American neuroscientist V.S. Ramachandran (1951-) articulates the essence of caricature by stating, “If someone presents you with a caricature of Richard Nixon featuring exaggerated eyebrows, a prominent nose, and drooping cheeks, you would promptly recognize the former president, even if the depiction is not true to life. The cartoonist strengthens and amplifies these distinctive features of Nixon’s face to create a sketch. Why might our brains respond so intensely to extremes (Figure 13). You are experiencing what scientists refer to as a ‘shift peak.’ To comprehend the concept, envision wanting to teach a mouse to differentiate a rectangle from a square. This task is quite manageable. All that is required is rewarding the creature with cheese each time it opts for the rectangle, and it will swiftly learn to consistently choose the rectangle. Subsequently, after the mouse has developed this preference, suppose you present it with a longer, thinner rectangle. Inevitably, you’ll observe that the mouse favors the exaggerated one over the original. What the mouse has learned to recognize is not a specific rectangle but the very concept of a rectangle: the more rectangular, the better. The astute rodent gazes at the longer, thinner rectangle and exclaims, ‘Wow, what a rectangle!’ Scientifically, the mouse’s ‘peak response,’ its most robust reaction, occurs as it diverges from the original. According to

conventional evolutionary theory, animals inheriting genes that yield advantageous traits, as in the case of giraffes, progressively elongate their necks over successive generations to reach tall acacia trees more effortlessly. Giraffes must identify and mate with members of their own species. They possess a recognition system that inherently favors mates exhibiting more ‘giraffe-like’ characteristics. Consequently, longer necks are not chosen for any functional reason but simply because, in the screening for desirable traits, the visual system prioritizes those that are exaggerated. They stand out, much like Nixon’s prominent eyebrows. Over successive generations, the long neck transforms into an increasingly reliable species marker for giraffes, facilitating mate recognition even from a considerable distance. Female peacocks preferring males with large tails lead to the proliferation of genes for large tails in the population, culminating in the magnificent yet impractical tails of modern peacocks. The aesthetic evolution theory we propose centers around mating behavior but differs from sexual selection in that it elucidates extreme traits and behaviors in all members of a species, not solely males. Given that humans are visual beings, we naturally place a strong emphasis on appearance” (*Ramachandran and Rogers, 2010*). Through this exposition, Ramachandran elucidates the presence of exaggeration in nature with illustrative examples. In these instances, the exaggerated consistently takes precedence over the original—essentially, the farther from the original, the greater the demand and interest. This phenomenon is precisely mirrored in caricature. It can be asserted that the concept of the Shift Peak provides an answer to the question we sought when initiating this research: “why do our brains respond more intensively to extreme ends?”

In this section, the discourse delves into humor, the coarse genre of comedy, and caricature, emphasizing that caricature is constituted by exaggeration. It accentuates flaws, features, and the most prominent differences while aiming to elicit smiles and contemplation, effectively persuading broad audiences. The terms “Sense of humour” and “Latife” have been elucidated, and the linkage between caricature and the grotesque has been established due to its emphasis on the peculiar and ridiculous. Our inquiry into why our brains exhibit more intense responses to extremes finds resolution through Ramachandran’s “*Shift peak*” theory, highlighting the inclination in natural instances to prefer the exaggerated over the original. The prevalence of the grotesque, as the coarse manifestation of comedy, has been underscored in both theater and literature.

2.2.8 The Relationship between Exaggeration and Symbolic Expression (Allegory, Metaphor)

Symbolic, fictional expression is a method of communication and expression that exists in almost all societies, encompassing religion and art, and has been integral to human life since its primitive days. Symbols, evolving from drawings on cave walls to their present forms, facilitate the adaptation of individuals to the social world, playing a significant role in defining profound and valuable realities as tools for meaning-making (Çebi, 2008). Therefore, symbolic expression is explored in this section, and its relationship with exaggeration is examined. Additionally, in Section 3.2, titled “*The Concept of Communication, Visual Communication, and Symbols*,” symbols are analyzed as visual communication tools.

Symbols have undergone an evolution, ranging from various animal symbols to hybrid human-animal symbols, and national symbols, becoming an integral part of art while acquiring a mystical discourse. The emergence of mystical meaning was influenced by church pressure, fostering mutual understanding among people through symbols (Dönmez, 2018). The peculiar symbols in paintings attributed to the Roman artist Famulus, featuring half-human, half-animal compositions, are characterized by fantastical exaggeration (Ballı, 2016). These peculiar symbols and grotesque figures exhibit a sense of exaggeration. In Section 2.2.3 of the study, the discussion centers around the vast symbol system between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, establishing itself as a cultural repository of memory (Schmidt, 2007). Modern individuals today continue to engage with symbols from the cultural memory store of the past. Jung’s concept of archetypes is fundamentally rooted in these conceptual and malleable symbols that humanity has generated throughout history (Jung, 2020). As articulated in Necip Tosun’s book “*The Theory of Eastern Narrative*,” symbolic narratives are often cryptic, veiled, and occasionally encrypted. Terms such as allegory, metaphor, simile, metaphor, and metonymy represent symbolic approaches, embodying a feeling or thought in an alternative symbol beyond its inherent reality for more effective communication. Particularly in Eastern literature, the use of symbolic approaches in storytelling is widespread (Tosun, 2015). “Although occasionally leading to incomplete understandings, expressing emotions and thoughts indirectly through symbolic values, rather than directly, renders the narrative more intriguing and stimulates the reader’s creative

thinking” (Demirel, 2012). Symbols serve not only to convey ideas but also to express lyrical feelings and thoughts. Therefore, the language employed in all mythological stories is symbolic, transcending time and geography. The frequently used expression “Mother Earth” in mythological stories symbolically conveys notions of fertility, abundance, protection, and prosperity. “Symbolic expression is employed not only to explain, illuminate, and teach ideas, realities, and concepts, or to create literary and fantastical works, but also to convey a political message strikingly without facing any repercussions” (Aktaş, 2011, p.334). Symbolic expression thrives on its closed, cryptic, and indirect nature. Human beings engage in symbolic thinking, utilizing supernatural symbols to establish connections with the external world through abstraction, conceptualization, and personification. Moreover, as mentioned in Section 2.2.3, based on Jung, it can be asserted that our fears are transmitted to our genes through symbols. Symbols of fear, religious symbols, and symbols of supernatural beings are transmitted across generations, facilitated by the collective unconscious through images termed archetypes by Jung (Jung, 2019).

According to the TDK, a symbol is a concrete object, sign, emblem, epitome, or token that denotes something not expressible by the senses (TDK Turkish Dictionary, 1986, p.1278). Symbols signify something beyond themselves (Uluç, 2009, p.50). In symbolic expression, the signifier encompasses at least two meanings. One pertains to the intrinsic meaning of the form, while the other relates to the symbolic representation of what the form signifies. For instance, a circle, an astrological symbol, also embodies a geometric form. In this regard, symbolic expressions are inherently multivalent and, consequently, rest on a slippery terrain. The objective is to animate a thought, behavior, or action with symbols and analogies external to their inherent reality, facilitating a more accessible and impactful conveyance. Symbolic language is notably employed in **Mevlana’s** (1207-1273) Masnavi Texts narrated with symbols are termed allegorical, as per the Turkish Language Institution, while metaphor is expounded as a figurative expression. In Turkish literature, the structure corresponding to allegory is referred to as “*istiare*” (figure of speech). *Istiare* is constructed by utilizing only one of the two fundamental elements of the simile (either the signifier or the signified).

The concepts of **simile**, **metaphor**, **symbol**, and **allegory (figure of speech, metaphorical simile)** can be intermingled. Their shared characteristic lies in conveying one thing while implying another, potentially inducing some confusion. Whether it be a symbol,

allegory, metaphor, or metaphorical simile, each is underpinned by metaphor, similitude (teşbih), and indirect expression. They relate to metaphor and simile in one aspect or another, with their similarities outweighing their distinctions.

Allegory exhibits more pronounced exaggeration than metaphor and comprises interconnected symbols. Symbols, in isolation, lack signification. Allegorical expression arises through the relationships established among symbols when they amalgamate into a cohesive whole (Yılmaz, 2021). A widely accepted definition of allegory is expressed as “intending one thing while articulating something else” (Açıl, 2014, pp. 145-167). An illustrative instance of allegory is **Edward & Nancy Keinholz’s** “*The Caddy Courd 1986-87*” (Figure 14). The artwork incorporates unsettling images, where exaggerated figures with human torsos and animal heads, seated around a table and providing explanations, symbolize authority while indicating exaggeration (Rüzgar, 2006, pp. 200-203). Turning to the concept of metaphor, it is Aristotle who is credited with its initial exploration. According to Aristotle, “metaphor is the utilization of one word in place of another word or meaning” (Altıntaş & Kılıç, 2016, pp. 185-201). The term “metaphor” has its roots in the Greek “metaphora,” signifying “transfer” (Fischer, 2011).



FIGURE 14 Edward & Nancy Keinholz, “*The Caddy Courd*” 1986-87 Cadillac based artwork. Description: mobile tableau: 1978 Cadillac with 1966 Dodge van, plaster casts, photographs, wood, metal, cloth, books

Morey defines metaphor similarly, stating that it is “the transfer of meaning from one symbol to another symbol” (Morey, 2011). In her article “*Metaphor and Ex-libris*,” Banu Uyan Dur discusses how metaphor shapes the conceptual structure of an artwork (Dur, 2017, p. 123). Külekçi, describing metaphor as “mecaz” in Turkish, asserts that it is “the use of a

word in another sense with interest or analogy” (Külekçi, 2011, p.21). In addition to “metaphor,” terms such as “*benzetme*” (simile), “*eğretileme*” (metaphorical simile), “*istiare*” (figure of speech) are also used as responses to the word metaphor (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011, p.205). The line “*Traveling down a long narrow road*” by **Aşık Veysel** (1894-1973), a prominent figure in Turkish folk music and poetry, serves as a metaphor for life.

Bornstein distinguishes metaphors in visual arts from mimesis, asserting that metaphors, much like assemblage and collage, bring together various independent elements to create new and highly expressive harmonies (Bornstein, 1979). In **Picasso**’s works, he incorporated discarded objects such as baskets, pipes, vases, and bicycle parts alongside conventional sculpture materials. When asked about his use of these ready-made objects, Picasso explained, “My sculptures are plastic metaphors. This is the same principle as in painting” (Aldrich, 1968). Picasso was intrigued by the metaphor in aesthetic perception, and the objects in his compositions were distinctly visible with their own independent identities. In **Christian Boltanski**’s work “*Personnes 2010*,” ready-made objects are employed to convey a message. A hook hanging from the ceiling releases clothes from a pile at a certain height, producing sounds reminiscent of a heartbeat for those witnessing the work (Gilmartin, 2010). Utilizing clothes from various age groups, the artwork serves as a metaphorical expression, recalling both the individuals who wore these clothes and the mass atrocities in Nazi gas chambers (Cumming, 2010). The clusters of clothes symbolize metaphorically charged representations of tragic events and can be associated with exaggeration.

Contemporary artists, seeking exaggerated expressions in art, attribute metaphorical meanings to ready-made objects while also playing with their dimensions. An illustrative example is Mona Hatoum’s “*Grater Divide, 2002*” (Figure 15). “*Grater Divide*” is a grater created on a scale much larger than its usual dimensions. By solely altering the object’s size, the artist associates a kitchen utensil with different concepts. The transformed grater, now a screen, becomes a metaphor for the isolated world of women from the social sphere (Başarır, 2012). The grater stands out with its exaggerated dimensions and metaphorical significance.



FIGURE 15 Mona Hatoum, “Grater Divide”, 2002, Sculpture

The literary device of oxymoron is another among figurative expressions such as simile, metaphor, symbol, allegory, and irony. Oxymoron, like metaphor and allegory, serves to enhance expression in rhetoric (Demir, 2011). By combining two contradictory words, conflicting adjectives, or attaching contradictory attributes to an object, **oxymoron** is a writing style that creates a contradictory, ironic, humorous, and satirical atmosphere. It is employed to bring attention to, emphasize, and strengthen the meaning of a distinctive feature of the object, as well as to criticize, satirize, or evoke curiosity about the object in question. Examples include ‘foolish wise,’ ‘frighteningly beautiful,’ ‘old bachelor,’ ‘virtual reality,’ ‘dark light,’ ‘silent scream,’ etc. (Cevap-bul,2020, July31.). Oxymoron is frequently encountered in literary works and film titles, used to emphasize different meanings, encourage a deeper and varied perspective on subjects, or critique and satirize concepts. Examples include titles like ‘The Living Corpse,’ ‘An Ordinary Miracle,’ ‘The Rich Beggar,’ etc. (optolov.ru.n.d.) (arhub.ruoptolov.ru/en). An illustrative oxymoron from George Orwell’s renowned novel “1984” is the statement, “*War is peace. Freedom is slavery. Ignorance is power.*” Through dystopian fiction, Orwell conveys his criticism of the authoritarian state model and oppressive regime as a combination of incongruous elements. Another example of oxymoron used to caution society against the pitfalls of modernity and prevailing negative future is the Latin proverb, “If you want peace, prepare for war.” The heading “Media and ethics” also constitutes an oxymoron employed to reinforce the significance of ethical inquiry (Demir, 2011). Oxymoron, akin to metaphor and allegory, is crucial in fostering awareness, expanding thought into new realms, and inviting contemplation. It can be associated with exaggeration in this context. An example of oxymoron is found in Greek mythology with Zeus, the king of the gods, being wise and old

yet perpetually young and robust (Kaya, 2022).

Paradox, on the other hand, constitutes a semantic contradiction, the coexistence of two conflicting propositions. An example from George Orwell's *'Animal Farm'* further illustrates this concept: "All animals are equal, but some are more equal than others." While the government asserts equality for all, it underscores unequal treatment. This concept within paradox is articulated in a manner contradicting the general belief in equality. According to Aristotle's logic of metaphor, paradoxes are propositions that transcend and challenge the limits of logic (Düzyurt, 2022). The examination of the truth and falsity of a paradox is imperative due to its inherent contradiction. Consequently, the "logical contradiction, which cannot be determined as either true or false, showcases unsolvable situations in its undecidable state. Recognizing this unsolvability enables the recognition of the starting point of thought." Durhan posits that the fundamental practice of paradox is not so much about solving the problem but seeking the path to a solution, developing different perspectives, and embracing a philosophical goal of being on the road rather than at its end (Durhan, 2019). Hence, paradox serves as a mental exercise and is crucial in providing a distinct outlook on life. In the case of oxymoron, the depicted phenomenon is an integral whole, and a new meaning emerges from the juxtaposition of two opposites. Looking at the relationship between oxymoron and exaggeration, a parallel can be drawn in terms of both being fictional, capable of showcasing new and unconventional facets of reality, serving to draw attention, underline and emphasize points, and encompassing satire and metaphor. Socrates' aphorism, "The only thing I know is that I know nothing," exemplifies a beautiful paradox. Artists like Rene Magritte and Maurits Cornelis Escher frequently employ paradox in their works (Atalay & Tüzün, 2017). As discussed in Section 2.2.1 under the title "The Relationship between Exaggeration and the Concepts of Reality, Perception, Illusion and Imagination," Magritte's painting "The Betrayal of Images, 1928-1929" (Figure 2) perplexes observers. Should belief be placed in the image or the word, and which one represents the truth? The notion that words are, in fact, more real than what is visually perceived is considered an approach presaging conceptual art (Köksal, 2013). As mentioned in Section 2.1, titled "Meaning, Origin, and Etymological Equivalent of the Word Exaggeration," Orhan Tekin asserts, "Exaggeration does not attempt to pass judgment by manipulating the perception of truth and error, as attempted by Rene Magritte" (Tekin, 2017, p.152), indicating that he does not associate paradox with exaggeration. The truth value of paradox, indeed, varies

depending on the perspective from which it is examined.

The poet (minstrel) Emrah (1775-1854) from Erzurum, in his poem “Fidan (Sapling),” utilizes metaphor to liken his beloved to a sapling. In the following quatrain extracted from this work, the beloved is the element of comparison, and the sapling is the one being likened (edebiyatogretmeni website). The poet employs metaphor by utilizing only one of the two elements of the simile, specifically the one being compared to.

*In the morn, I visited a sapling,
I inquired, “Are you weary?” It replied, “No, not in the least.”
Its fair hands adorned with henna in every joint,
I pondered, “Is it a celebration?” It responded, “No, not at all” (Erzurumlu Emrah).*

Sociologist Jean-Pierre Durand (1948-) elucidates the structure of symbols, emphasizing that “a symbol makes reference to at least one thing but cannot be reduced to a single entity,” thus underscoring that a symbol eludes reduction to an external reality or a singular object (Durand, 1998, p.9). Educator and philosopher Susanne Langer (1895-1985) posits that signs proclaim while symbols remind (Arat, 1977, pp.41-43). Symbols typically bear the weight of historical and cultural narratives. While some symbols convey universal meanings, many others are intricately woven into the cultural dynamics of ancient societies, encapsulating the local, national, and sacred. Mythological and allegorical symbols encompass diverse themes such as humanity, deities, heroes, the universe, nature, and supernatural forces, serving as the wellspring for ancient cultural narratives. *The mythic tale of the flood, experienced by Gilgamesh and the prophet Noah*, permeates the mythologies of numerous cultures worldwide. Despite lacking direct communication, diverse cultures across different geographies and epochs share analogous narratives (medium.com). In summation, a symbol can be characterized as an action, object, or sign created by individuals that facilitates the portrayal of a reality beyond the scope of our sensory perception, transcending the visible and known meaning.

Fables, characterized by protagonists often drawn from the animal kingdom and culminating in moral lessons, amusement, and contemplation, are succinct, symbolic narratives (Coşkun, 2006, p. 52). Conversely, **Parables** utilize human characters to explicate a concept, employing simple yet fictional stories, often referred to as “mesel” in religious literature. Infused with exaggerated language and metaphors, renowned fables include ‘**The**

Fox and the Crow, **'The Cicada and the Ant,'** and **"Town Musicians of Bremen"** (Coşkun, 2006, p. 52). Parables, however, narrate events congruent with daily life. Noteworthy examples of Allegory, as presented by Hasan Emir Aktaş in his research article titled *'Symbolic Narrative Style in Works with a Theme,'* include **'Kelile ve Dimne'** by Beydeba, **'Harname'** by Şeyhi, and **'Animal Farm'** by George Orwell—all of which qualify as fables due to their distinctly animal protagonists. Semerci Hikayesi and "Heart of a Dog" are narratives that incorporate both Fable and Parable elements. In his play *'Liberte,'* poet and playwright Abdülhak Hamid Tarhan focuses on Abdülhamid II, utilizing allegory to scrutinize Abdülhamid's persona, governance, and the ideals under contention. While bearing semblance to fables by deviating from real-life facts, *"Liberte"* distinguishes itself by not featuring animal characters (Aktaş, 2020).

"When referring to **political allegorical works**, we allude to works wherein political figures are represented. George Orwell's allegorical work **'Animal Farm'** encapsulates the establishment of the Soviet Union as a communist regime and the political actors during the Stalin era. The animals, governed by pigs, symbolize the characters in the representation" (Orwell, 2015). The animals revolt against human oppression, assuming control of the farm. Through this allegory, Orwell critiques politics and underscores the political subjugation, exploitation, and conspiracies experienced by humans. The political satire novel "Animal Farm," with its fable-like structure, was adapted into a film in 2001 under the title "Animal Farm."

Şeyhi, a prominent poet of Divan literature, employs allegory in his 15th-century work *'Harname,'* wherein he caricatures the severe attacks he endured. Through the allegory of an ox emulating the life of oxen, which entered crop fields, was beaten by the field owner, and had its ears and tail severed, Şeyhi explores the hardships faced (Şeyhi, 2017). In his allegorical narrative, Şeyhi skillfully exhibits the wit of a cartoonist and employs realistic, exaggerated depictions (Aktaş, 2020).

Russian author Mikhail Bulgakov's (1891-1940) work *"Heart of a Dog,"* published in 1925, represents a narrative (Bulgakov, 2015). This novel by Bulgakov, which satirizes the communist aspiration to forge a new Soviet individual, faced prohibition during the 1930s.

Universalized narrative accounts (such as *Town Musicians of Bremen, Hansel and Gretel, The Cicada, The Little Match Girl, Nasreddin Hodja, Polyanna, Thumbelina, Little*

Red Riding Hood, etc.) predominantly serve to symbolize universal values such as solidarity, truthfulness, friendship, labor, love, freedom, and morality. They encapsulate these values through a structured narrative or the portrayal of specific characters. Meanwhile, the symbolic constructs of these enduring tales occasionally assume a humorous demeanor. The most extensively employed symbols encompass universal motifs like apples, pomegranates, grapes, owls, lions, tigers, snakes, eagles, the sun, moon, stars, and planets—some of which maintain a shared significance and persist into contemporary contexts. Animal, plant, and astrological symbols, commonly referred to as such, bear profound mythological implications rooted in the earliest sacred texts, myths, epics, and narratives throughout history. For instance, the apple, denoted as the forbidden fruit in creation myths, stands as a symbol laden with intense meaning. Its symbolic relevance, tracing back to the narrative of Adam and Eve in sacred texts, is contemporarily contextualized within similar thematic boundaries, signifying notions of prohibition and intimacy. The owl, emblematic of knowledge and science in Western civilizations, and associated with death and ill fortune in Eastern civilizations, constitutes one of the symbols whose interpretation is contingent upon the cultural context in which it is employed (Alp, 2009, p.65).

Each story, by referencing a designated time period, location, and historical progression, symbolically encapsulates a distinct history, geography, and culture. Furthermore, every story imparts its socio-cultural, socio-political, aesthetic, and historical contextualization. Thus, stories function as both historical and cultural artifacts. Gustav Klimt's paintings, characterized by ornamental, decorative, and geometric features intertwined with female, botanical, and zoological motifs, exemplify the Symbolist art movement. Homer's epic poems, the **Iliad and the Odyssey**, authored in the 6th century B.C., served the dual purpose of entertaining and educating the populace. Recited during the grand Panathenaia celebrations in Athens and by wandering minstrels in private or local events, these epics provided cultural and educational value. "**The Battle of Frogs and Mice**," a clever adaptation of the Iliad, constitutes an animal tale (fabl) narrating humorous animal conflicts (Homer, 2010). According to Boratav (1982), epics rely on narrative techniques and exhibit surreal features through irrational elements or amusing exaggerations, as exemplified in mosquito and flea epics or tales of destitution.

In Divan poetry (classical Turkish poetry, 13-19th century), a rich amalgamation of Arabic, Persian, and Turkish symbols is discernible. To fathom the essence of these verses,

one must delve beyond the literal meanings of words. The mere mention of a rose implies the beloved, while a nightingale alludes to the lover. Rather than extolling the beauty of the whole, these poems emphasize the allure of individual facets, idealizing real-life experiences and exalting human characteristics (Turkedebiyati.org). Within Symbolist Divan poetry, particularly in the domain of love literature, a prominent feature is the extensive use of exaggeration and elevation. The limbs of the beloved are delineated with hyperbole, adorned with epithets such as shah and sultan. The intention behind such exaggeration is to ennoble the beloved through personalization and identity construction (Karaköse, 2010). This embellishment is achieved through either magnifying or diminishing specific anatomical features. The conveyed messages are rooted in the poet's boundless imaginings about the beloved, intertwined with the artist's cultural background, worldview, personality, psychology, and philosophy.

The poet unites the beloved with the idealized state through love, using imagery. Exaggeration is applied differently to facial features and body parts, with the height of facial elements expanded, while the mouth and waist are subject to contraction. The roundness of the face is likened to the sun, moon, and earth, eyelashes are described as arrow-like, and hair symbolizes the struggles of life and the passage of time. While the mouth is assumed nonexistent (dot lip), it is endowed with the meaning of being a repository for concealed secrets. According to Karaköse (2010), the waist, assumed virtually nonexistent, symbolically serves as a hidden passage from the material realm to the realm of non-existence, intricately depicted through the subtleties of the poet's imagination.

Among the contracted/ attenuated elements, the mouth and waist are hyperbolically diminished to the point of nonexistence. This absence, itself an exaggeration, is eloquently exemplified in the following poem by Muhibbi (Suleiman the Magnificent) (1494-1566):

*“Nokta dirdüm ağzına olsa dehanundan eser
Bilüne mu dir idüm mu incelükde anca yok” Muhibbi*

“If there was a sign of her mouth, I would call it a ‘dot. ‘I would call a hair to her waist, but no hair can be as delicate as hers” (Karaköse, 2010). The poet, employing the analogy of “dot” for the mouth and “hair” for the waist, exaggerates and elevates the beloved by suggesting that the mouth is smaller than a dot, and the waist is finer than a hair.

This section underscores the symbolic nature of human thought, wherein individuals

employ supernatural symbols and establish connections with the external world through processes of abstraction, conceptualization, and personification. The concepts of metaphor, allegory, oxymoron, paradox are summarized and exemplified and their relationship with exaggeration is questioned. Edward & Nancy Keinholz's installation "The Caddy Court, 1986-1987" was shared as an example of allegory, while Mona Hatoum's sculpture "Grater Divide, 2002" was shared as an example of metaphor and its relationship with exaggeration was examined. Christian Boltanski's "Personnes, 2010" was also shared as an example of metaphor. It was emphasized that symbolic expressions are implicit, indirect, closed and often cryptic, that symbol, allegory and metaphor all have metaphor, simile and indirect expression in their background, and that the similarities between them are more than their differences and that they can be associated with exaggeration. Oxymoron and paradox were defined, symbolic stories Fables and Parables were explained and exemplified. The poem of Muhibbi, one of the Divan poets, was given as an example of exaggeration with its symbolic features. It was emphasized that the limbs that literature visualizes with exaggeration are based on the dreams created about the beloved and glorify the beloved.

2.2.9 Folk Narratives: The Relationship Between Myths, Tales, Epics, Stories, and Legends with Exaggeration

The roots of **folk narratives** extend back to myths. These narratives, adopting a fantastical style by attributing symbolic meanings to extraordinary events, supernatural beings, and superior powers, prominently incorporate the element of exaggeration. Consequently, among the concepts linked with exaggeration, "*Folk Narratives: Myths, Tales, Epics, Stories, and Legends*" will be scrutinized under this heading, and their associations with exaggeration will be inquired.

Human beings have narrated their thoughts, perceptions, and beliefs about the creation and demise of the universe, the world, humans, and other beings through myths, with these interpretations evolving into belief patterns over time. While some myths transform into legends, certain mythological legends and motifs play a pivotal role in the genesis of epics. Mythology comprises stories fashioned by human imagination, attributing sacredness to cope with vulnerability and fear of nature, ultimately elucidating existence (See Section 4.4). Stambovsky (1996) asserts, "Although myths are consistent in themselves, their inclusion of

exaggerated and superhuman elements has significantly impacted societal life, forming the vibrant and appealing facet of religious existence.” Mythological narratives abound in exaggeration. Mythological heroes carry exaggerated attributes, contributing an engaging and impressive dimension to their character. The effectiveness and prevalence of mythology can be attributed to humanity’s inclination towards exaggeration, finding allure in the powerful and impactful, and the innate human desire for self-transcendence (Yılmaz, 2021). Hasan Baltacı, in his article “*The Reflection of Turkish Mythology in Works of Plastic Art,*” reminds us that the term *Mythos*, as used by Aristotle in the sense of an event or story, should not be forgotten in its modern context, where the extraordinary/unrealistic is referred to as ordinary/real (Baltacı, 2020). Mircea Eliade, a historian, and philosopher of religion, in his book “*The Characteristics of Myths,*” notes that “myths were considered the transfigured form of religious belief in the 17th and 18th centuries; for over half a century, Western scholars have not regarded them as ‘fables,’ fabrication,’ or ‘fictions’ but as they were in archaic societies. Therefore, myth is not considered a fabrication or a fable but rather a true story, considered sacred and valuable” (Eliade, 2001, p. 11). Consequently, varying approaches and definitions of mythology have been posited by researchers and thinkers, underscoring the complexity of providing a universally accepted definition (Seyidoğlu, 2009, p.16). The relationship between nature and mythology mirrors that between nature and art. As humanity establishes aesthetic connections between nature and art, mythology assumes a vital role in these connections. It serves as an inspirational source across artistic domains and an extensive reservoir of resources for objects. “Classical Greek mythology has been the source of visual arts, music, and literature since the Renaissance” (Batur and Başdoğan 2022). Supernatural beings, exaggerated mythological creatures, symbols, legends, epics, paintings, and movies reside within this realm. In Section 4.4, titled “*Exaggeration in Mythology,*” Dionysus, Pan, and Priapos are discussed due to their symbolic significance in art and their role as exemplars of representation. “The relationship between mythology and art spans two dimensions: direct and indirect. The necessity for mythological knowledge to analyze works of art exemplifies the direct connection between mythology and art. The indirect relationship, on the other hand, hinges on evaluating what mythological elements express as figures, materials, and images” (Tökel, 1998, p.33). Artists leverage mythology to imbue their work with depth of meaning, a more enigmatic language and style, and to achieve intensity of meaning with conciseness. To correctly interpret the

figure on a vase, understanding the values and common beliefs of the society to which the vase belongs—essentially, the mythological background of the figure—is imperative.

The French sociologist E. Durkheim (1858-1917) posits that myths are an integral component of religion (Durkheim, 2011). Serving the function of fostering unity and collective spirit, myths are brought to life within societies through rituals and ceremonies (See Section 4.1.3). Rhythmic movements performed in harmony contribute to the reinforcement of a sense of unity among group members. An illustrative instance is the Maori belief, as discussed in Section 4.1.4, where they engage in a group ritual known as the “potato dance,” imitating the growth of crops, with the conviction that it will compel the crops to flourish. Simultaneously, rituals symbolically express the diversity within a community. While contributing to the integration of the community they represent, they also serve as an identity marker distinguishing them from other communities (Cohen, 1999). Despite the non-human nature of characters within myths, they exemplify human attitudes and behaviors. “Myths provide answers within the context of their era to the questions of why and how that people ask to interpret the world and themselves” (Kaynak, 2012). According to Erhat’s dictionary, mythology is defined as follows: “Derived from the Greek word ‘myth,’ meaning tale, story, legend, and the word ‘logos,’ meaning word, mythology is a narrative in which people attempt to explain their creation, gods, and nature by employing their imagination, thereby creating narratives that literarily influence the listener” (Erhat, 1978, p. 5). In Turani’s dictionary, mythology is defined as follows: “It is the name given to all the legends created and believed by a nation. Although generally known mythological stories originated in Greece and Rome, the ancient Egyptians, Mesopotamians, Hittites, and ancient Turks also had mythologies. The people of the first ages, who could not solve the creation of the world scientifically, solved everything in their minds with a fairy tale. Thus, the birth of the gods was always based on fairy tales and fairy tales became the source of mythology” (Turani, 2018, pp. 97-98).

The tradition of storytelling began with **folk tales**, and both classical and modern stories emerged from the development of folk tales. Stories are narratives of real or near-real events that have left a social mark and are passed down orally from generation to generation. The word “*öykü*” (story) is derived from the Arabic word for imitation, “*öykülenme*.” Stories are among the oldest literary genres with similarities to the epic genre in which extraordinary events are the subject. In folk tales, the subject consists of the events that take place around

the hero of the story. There are two elements in the folk tale: one is the oppressed and the other is the oppressor. The folk tale continues as adventures between these two elements. The setting in folk tales is the world. Examples of folk tales that have survived to the present day include: **The Book of Dede Korkut**, **Layla and Majnun**, **Kerem and Aslı**, **Tahir and Zühre**, **Köroğlu**, and others. They are quite long narratives, usually dealing with subjects such as love and heroism, told largely by minstrels and meddahs, in a mixture of verse and prose. Heroic tales mostly deal with the society or prominent people in the society and draw attention with exaggerations and extraordinary things. While the leader struggles with problems that a normal person cannot overcome, exaggerated heroic stories are told in order to realize loyalty to him and to create a perception of heroism (Eğitim Platformu, 2018). The aim is to glorify society and individuals, attract attention, arouse curiosity, create a leader, and gather around a leader.

Most **folk songs**, which have an important place in folk music, have a lived story and attract attention in terms of their emotional load and humorous elements. **Folk ballads (Türkü)** are important in that they reflect the humorous attitude of the people towards various events and phenomena as well as pain, sorrow, joy, and happiness (Çetinkaya, 2006, p. 34). In some folk songs, seemingly meaningless elements are used exaggeratedly not only for criticism but also for entertainment purposes. **Azdavay'lı Hasan's** folk song "They say a water buffalo made a nest on a willow branch, and the fly snatched its young, saw that..... A water buffalo with its large size making a nest on a willow branch and its young being snatched by a fly is not something that can be experienced normally. There are two alternatives in terms of interpretation here: either humor and satire were intended to be added to the folk song, or the fact that the fly genus known as buffalo fly in some regions actually makes a nest in a willow tree living in wetlands, and that its offspring is caught by another fly was intended to be emphasized" (Çetinkaya, 2006, p. 34). Another interpretation is that the buffalo, in order to cool off in the summer heat, covers its little hairy skin with mud and lies in the shade of the willows that reach into the water in the wetland. A fly catching the calf is a fly biting the calf. With the question "Saw that?" the inconceivable events are emphasized in a sarcastic way (musikidergisi.n.d.). Therefore, it is a good example of satire.

In one of his poems, **Kerem the Minstrel**, the protagonist of the folk tale "Kerem and Aslı" that has endured since the 17th century, humorously articulates his struggle with a "fly" as follows:

*“I gradually succumbed to a fly,
I came to understand the business of this fly up close,
I seized it with a sword, beheaded it,
I spread its carcass over seven mountains,
The fly buzzed and flew into the air,
I strained its fat into three hundred and sixty pans,
We placed its meat in one thousand one hundred and seventy pans,
We presented its brisket as a gift to Kayseri” (Özcan, 2002, p. 107).*

Okan Alay, in his analysis, contends that Kerem, in his poetry, approaches the subject in a surreal manner, employing a contradictory narrative style. He centralizes his battle with the fly, listing it with sarcastic language and exaggerated details—beheading the fly with a sword, spreading its carcass on seven mountains, straining its fat, placing its meat in pans, and presenting its brisket to Kayseri. Alay suggests that this approach draws readers into the enchanting world of fables and nursery rhymes, effectively highlighting the senselessness of human struggle through exaggerated and absurd language (Alay, 2019). In the final stanza, the words “Kerem the woeful told this lie / And who saw that peer of the fly “ convey the message that the story is fabricated, thereby implying that life itself is akin to stories—a lie.

The “**Minstrelsy tradition**,” representing Anatolia’s cultural memory and richness, is a master-apprentice tradition shaped over centuries, encompassing versatile arts such as poetry, music, and storytelling. This tradition’s notable aspect lies in its ability to resonate with broad audiences by reflecting the living conditions, perspectives on life, and ethical-aesthetic values of its era. **Karacaoğlu, Köroğlu, Dadaloğlu, Aşık Mahzuni Şerif, and Aşık Veysel** are renowned figures within this tradition. Artists proficient in adhering to this tradition, engaging in witty yet humorous banter, narrating stories, and performing them with instrumental accompaniment are referred to as “aşık (minstrel),” and this mode of expression is termed “aşıklık (minstrelsy).” A minstrel’s skill is evaluated based on the competence displayed in encounters with other minstrels. There are even narratives suggesting that an unsuccessful minstrel may abandon his instrument, face its destruction or confiscation, or cease minstrelsy, unable to perform before an audience (Taşlıova, 2017). Aşık, while praising beauties, articulates pain in a dramatic language accompanied by the saz. The poems and stories of minstrels narrate the yearning for the beloved, heroic tales, and societal issues

of their time. The values, morality, and aesthetics of Anatolian people find expression in the works of minstrels (aregem.ktb.gov.tr).

Karacaoğlan, a prominent folk poet of 17th-century folk literature, delves into themes of nature and love. Providing epic portrayals of human love in Anatolia, Karacaoğlan extols Turkmen girls rather than celestial beings, seeking beauty on Earth rather than in the heavens. Karacaoğlan's depiction of love is profoundly human, distinct from the miniature beauties prevalent in Divan literature (Özden, 2000). His lyrical poems effectively capture the literary, philosophical, and social milieu of his era. Mountains are recurrently featured subjects in his poetry (turkoloji.cu.n.d.).

“If I were to sigh, it would melt the mountain,
The tears from my eyes propel the mill” (Anthology, 2015).

“Karac’oğlan, exuberating, surging,
The wave of love surpasses his neck....” (Mutlucemiz).

To elucidate the strength of his love, Karacaoğlan metaphorically asserts that his sighs can melt mountains, and the copious tears from his eyes have the force to turn a mill. By exaggerating situations that cannot occur in reality, he emphasizes the potency of his love.

A noteworthy illustration of **extraordinary narratives** in folk tradition can be found in **Evliya Çelebi's** “Travelogue”. Composed by Evliya Çelebi in the 17th century as a 10-volume work, the Travelogue captivates readers with its embellished language and extraordinary storytelling. Austrian historian Joseph von Hammer Purgstall (1774-1856) introduced Evliya Çelebi's Travelogue to the world in 1814 through his article titled “The Interesting Discovery of a Turkish Travelogue” (Purgstall, 2011). This introduction garnered the attention of numerous Turkish and foreign researchers in the 19th century (Diniz, 2017). The narratives of witches, gluttons, sorcerers, vampires, humor usage, and the element of extraordinariness within the travelogue signify a penchant for exaggeration.

Professor Robert Dankoff, specializing in Turkish and Islamic studies at the University of Chicago, asserted in his book “An Ottoman Mentality” that Evliya Çelebi's exaggerated approaches serve the purpose of entertaining, capturing interest, and enriching the narrative (Dankoff, 2010; Bitik, 2011). Jean-Louis Bacque-Grammont, in his article titled “Magic in

Evliya Çelebi's Travelogue," accentuated the compatibility of Evliya Çelebi's narratives about vampires with Dracula literature (Bacque-Grammont, 2009). "Similar information can also be found in a fatwa by Shaykh al-islam Ebussud Efendi" (Düzdağ, 1972; Bitik, 2011).

In her article "*Witch, Vampire, Wizard Narratives and Their Functions in Evliya Celebi's Travelogue*," Başak Öztürk Bitik delved into the contextual placement of extraordinary creatures in the Travelogue. It was observed that extraordinary and exaggerated stories coincided with periods of travel devoid of war, conquest, and rebellion, replacing colorful narratives with monotonous depictions (villages, towns, baths, mosques, etc.). These narratives were believed to be utilized to infuse color into the storytelling and sustain interest (Bitik, 2011). In conclusion, it can be affirmed, in line with the consensus among the aforementioned researchers, that Evliya Çelebi resorted to extraordinariness and exaggeration to eliminate tedious monotony and attract attention.

While **epics** are typically shaped by events leaving profound imprints on social life, such as heroism, **legends** differ in their origin, being products of imagination and revered as sacred. Epics concern the entirety of society, possessing a national character, whereas legends are more individual (edebiyatfatihi.n.d.). In Turkish folk poetry, **epics**, humorous epics, epic parodies, animal epics, dreams, transcendence, imagination, contrasts, exaggeration, and extraordinary narrative styles exhibit a surreal quality. The concept of the epic, in folk poetry, comprises quatrains recited in 7, 8, and often 11 syllables, addressing issues that have left an indelible mark on societal life. In texts crafted with an epic expression, such as epics, individuals, places, times, and events bear extraordinary qualities. Homer's Iliad and Odyssey form the cornerstone of Greek culture. Particularly, the heroes encountered in epics represent the ideal types of societies with their extraordinary qualities, distinct from ordinary individuals (Legend of Alp Er Tunga, Legend of Oguz Kaan, Legend of Battalgazi, etc.). Eyüboğlu and İpşiroğlu, in their work "*The Sense of Truth in European Painting*," refer to the **Bayeux tapestry**, surviving from the 11th century, as **the epic of the war** between the English and the Normans. Each scene is depicted through images, accompanied by necessary explanations inserted between the pictures. The Bayeux tapestry, resembling a cinematic production, spans a length of 70 meters and a width of 50 cm. Under the direction of an artist who divides the story into scenes and connects them, the tapestry brings together the efforts of numerous workers. The imagery on the tapestry is inseparable from the art of storytelling. Rather than depicting what he saw, the painter narrated an event

that became legendary in his mind. The embroidery, featuring schematic, abstract figures, shadow puppet figures, is composed of lines and colors, constituting a splendid example of medieval embroidery and woven painting. The narrative and the embroidery converge in a surreal realm devoid of shadows, encompassing earth and sky, angel and man (Eyüboğlu and İpşiroğlu, 2013, p.36). Individuals, places, times, and events bear extraordinary qualities. Yalın and Sipahioğlu classify such products as “woven paintings” (Yalın and Sipahioğlu, 2021). In Section 4.5, titled “*The Realm of Fairytales, the Fear of Bourgeois Civilization and Exaggeration*,” the Bayeux tapestry is referred to as an example of medieval woven painting.

Orta oyunu, (a theatrical genre similar to that of ‘low comedy’ once popular in Turkey) a manifestation of traditional Turkish culture, is an improvisational performance enacted within an enclosed space surrounded by spectators. It diverges from a scripted text and incorporates elements of music, dance, and song. The term “*Orta oyunu*” first appears in historical records in 1834. In ancient sources, it has been referred to by various names such as “*kol oyunu*” (branch play), “*meydan oyunu*” (square play), “*taklit oyunu*” (mock play) and “*zuhuri*”(imitator). While “*orta oyunu*” can be performed in closed venues like inns or coffeehouses, its more common setting is in open spaces. The circular or oval area designated for the performance is termed as “*palanga*.” At the core of the play are two pivotal characters, **Kavuklu and Pişekâr**. Kavuklu corresponds to Karagöz in the Karagöz play, while Pişekâr is the counterpart of Hacivat. Similar to the Karagöz play, humor in “*orta oyunu*” relies on an exaggerated language, leading to misunderstandings, witticisms, and comical movements. The play entails the imitation of professional and regional characteristics and dialogues of individuals from various professions, regions, and nations. In the “*orta oyunu*”, a man assuming the guise of a woman is referred to as “**Zenne**.” Kavuklu Hamdi and Pişekâr Küçük İsmail Efendi are esteemed as prominent masters of the “*orta oyunu*” (Turkedebiyatı.n.d.).

The shadow play, an art form in folk theater known as **Karagöz and Hacivat**, shares substantial similarities in characters and sequences with the “*orta oyunu*”. It is an improvisational shadow play involving mutual dialogue and imitation but presented on a screen, representing a hybrid genre. Combining narrative and theatrical elements, the shadow play assumed its current form in the 17th century, providing both entertainment and intellectual stimulation while contributing to the development of social awareness. The

performer of the Karagöz is referred to as a “hayalbaz” (fantasizer) While featuring stories, rhymes, and folk songs, the shadow play invariably imparts a moral lesson at its conclusion, ensuring its educational as well as entertaining purpose. The play is distinguished by its exaggerated language and storyline. During Ramadan festivities, individuals partaking in the “*iftar*” meal would directly attend Karagöz performances. Whether these experiences were factual or legendary remains uncertain, yet they endure as a living tradition.

Nasreddin Hodja (1208-1284), acknowledged as a folk hero, holds a significant place in Turkish tradition as a philosopher, humorist, and sage. Due to the people’s profound admiration for him, information about Nasreddin Hodja’s life has become entwined with rumors, occasionally acquiring extraordinary attributes. Among these rumors are encounters with Seljuk sultans, close relations with Mevlana, conversations with Timur, who lived at least seventy years later, and even simultaneous appearances in multiple locations. His renown extends beyond Turkish history, reaching the Near and Middle East, Central Asia, and even Italy (tariholaylar.com). Frequently caricatured riding upside down on a donkey, Nasreddin Hodja skillfully surprised and amused everyone with his quick wit. Approaching social problems in daily life with a humorous style and exaggerated language, Nasreddin Hodja’s jokes depict the Anatolian people’s mindset, thoughts, and perspectives. Rooted in guiding individuals towards goodness and truth, his jokes reveal flaws and mistakes through humor. Nasreddin Hodja, occupying a vital role in oral culture, continues to be passed down through generations with his amusing short jokes and thought-provoking stories. These jokes, laden with exaggerated language, humorously illuminate logic mistakes, offering valuable lessons in reasoning.

In this section, it is emphasized that the roots of folk narratives extend to myths, addressing extraordinary events, supernatural beings, and superior powers through a symbolic and fantastical narrative that incorporates elements of exaggeration. The efficacy and ubiquity of mythology are attributed to the inherent human inclination towards exaggeration, with the exaggerated possessing qualities that are inherently attractive, potent, and impactful. Examining examples such as folk tales (Kerem and Aslı), folk music (Azdavay’lı Hasan), the tradition of minstrelsy (Karacaoğlu), epics (Iliad and Odyssey, Legend of Oghuz Kaan, Bayeux Tapestry), “*orta oyunu*” (Kavuklu and Pişekar), shadow play (Karagöz and Hacivat), Nasreddin Hodja, and Evliya Çelebi’s Travelogues, it is evident that folk narratives are intricately linked with exaggeration due to their extraordinary nature.

3. EXAGGERATION AS A LANGUAGE OF INTERPRETATION

Exaggeration serves as both a language of interpretation and a means of communication. Consequently, under the heading “Exaggeration as a Language of Interpretation,” the exploration will delve into the “The Concept of Meaning and Interpretation” and scrutinize the “The Concept of Communication, Visual Communication, and Symbols.”

3.1 Concept of Meaning and Interpretation

Since ancient times, one of humanity’s pivotal activities has been attributing meaning to the events transpiring in their surroundings. Within this section, an examination of the Concept of Meaning and Interpretation will take place, querying how exaggeration functions as a potent language of meaning in both daily life and art.

A contemporary perspective posits that the world constitutes a holistic entity comprised not of mere objects but of meanings. Each element acquires value through the meaning ascribed to it (Akdeniz, 1995). Human capabilities encompassing intuition, cognition, and experience, coupled with the societal and historical conditions of the era, values, cultural accumulations, symbols born from social consensus, the artist’s imaginative faculties, and indicators open to sensory perception, both auditory and visual, along with linguistic and non-linguistic indicators, play crucial roles in the processes of understanding and interpretation. Understanding, since the advent of humanity, marks the inaugural step towards mastery over nature. As humans strive to comprehend the world, reconstruct it according to their inclinations, and assert dominance, they engage in continual communication, interaction, and information transfer with their surroundings. In these transmissions, establishing a mental relationship between thoughts and experiences is paramount to attributing meaning to a word, resulting in the emergence of meanings through auditory and imaginative elements (Barut, 2018). Vertical information transfer involves the transmission of knowledge from one generation to the next, while horizontal transfer pertains to the dissemination of information between individuals within the same temporal framework. The amalgamation of these transfers culminates in what we term cultural accumulation. Culture necessitates communication, and language forms the bedrock of

communication. A word serves as a sign replacing what one intends to express. In its most expansive definition, **meaning** is delineated as “the concept conveyed by words that manifest in language as indicators, possessing determinants based on human knowledge of the world, within a specific context and on a given subject” (Aksan, 1994, p.48). The TDK Current Turkish Dictionary defines ‘Meaning’ as “What is understood from a word, an utterance, a behavior, or a phenomenon, and what a proposition, a plan, a thought, or a work seeks to express.” The Keser Art Dictionary posits, “Meaning is the set of concepts indicated by a sign, and meaning is the most essential aspect of a message” (Keser, 2009, p.39).

According to Ferdinand De Saussure (1857-1913), revered as the father of 20th-century linguistics, **language** is “a string of indicators that emerges as a result of societal needs. Signs consist of words, sounds, etc., created by attributing meaning with linguistic signs” (Saussure, 2014). The meanings indicated by words are entwined with societal structures. Humanity, as a social being, communicates through language, wherein symbolic perception assumes a significant dimension.

The term “**interpret**” is expounded as “to explain the meaning, to give meaning, to impart meaning.” To be able to interpret, “facts, signs, expressions, or behaviors must exist.” Two crucial approaches to interpretation include the “Cognitive Psychology Model” by American psychologist Karl E. Weick (Weick, 1988) and the interpretation model proposed by Meryl Reis Louis (Louis, 1980). Weick’s theory defines interpretation as the process of interpreting and understanding events that can occur at conscious and subconscious levels. For Weick, the linkage between rules and values from the past, information from the contemporary environment, current experiences, and signs is pivotal to interpreting. Signs and symbols assume a triggering role in the process of meaning attribution. While rules, values, and signs may lack individual meaning, meaning is ascribed when a connection can be established between them. Louis’ interpretation approach characterizes the process as perception, diagnosis, and rendition, asserting that perception is achieved by conceptualizing signs, facilitating the transition from perception to cognition, and situating them within a meaningful framework. Signs are conceptualized as changes, oppositions, and surprises. The primary contribution of Louis’ model lies in the fact that surprises act as triggers in the interpretation process (Louis, 1980). When individuals encounter surprises incongruent with their expectations, they attribute diverse meanings to these surprises and consequently exhibit corresponding behaviors. When viewed as transcending the ordinary, surprises can

be associated with exaggeration. Smerek defines meaning as “the answer to the question of what these events mean” (Smerek, 2009). According to Sally Maitlis and Marlys Christianson, interpretation is the process of rendering clues and signs in the environment and creating intersubjective meaning through action cycles (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014). According to Margaret Gross, sensemaking is a situational difference that emerges as a result of the impressions reflected in our minds from our environment (Gross, 2010). While **perceptions** are formed by interpreting signs and stimuli, our perceptions are notably limited and susceptible to manipulation. Collingwood, Professor of Metaphysical Philosophy at Oxford, remarks on our limited perception: “You cannot understand what a person really means by only considering his written or verbal expressions; you need to understand which question his expressions correspond to. This question is the question that has formed in his own mind and which he assumes is in your mind as well” (Collingwood, 1978, p. 31). Hence, revealing hidden meanings due to individual differences in our perceptions is far from straightforward.

Diderot’s Encyclopedia elucidates perception, defining human knowledge as “Memory, Logic, and Imagination” (Doorly, 2019, pp. 57, 58). Individuals **exhibit selective perception** of stimuli that pertain to them, causing these stimuli to become more prominent. Consequently, the significance lies not so much in the location, situation, and form of our surroundings but rather in how we perceive them. **The Gestalt concept**, introduced in the 1900s, delved into the examination of how the human eye perceives visual experiences. While the components of a visual image are individually analyzable and assessable, the entirety of the visual image differs and encompasses more than the sum of its parts. Tevfik Fikret Uçar provides an eloquent example in his book: “Each note represents a sound, and when played individually, we can perceive the individual sounds. When these sounds are combined with a melody and harmony, the result expresses a meaning greater and more beautiful than the sum of its parts” (Uçar, 2022, p. 139). Another illustration is: “Recognizing a person we have encountered before when we see them again is possible. However, if asked to describe that person, success may be elusive, as these individual data have not been processed in the brain” (San, 1981). The individual comprehends the whole not by fragmenting it into parts but as an integral entity.

The act of **imagination** concurrently constructs a vibrant parallel world and serves as a boundless realm for escape, embodying image creation. Einstein’s statement, “Imagination

is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encompasses the world. The true sign of intelligence is not knowledge but imagination” (Viereck, 1929, Oct.26 Saturday Evening Post), sheds light on how contemporaries like Einstein and Darwin, who combined imagination with scientific methodology, shaped our era. A distinct demarcation between the world of imagination and the reality we perceive does not exist. Imagination is invoked whenever we contemplate past events or plan for the future. Imagination is a form of visualization ability (Coşkun, 2020). In the process of interpreting the world, imagination proves to be our most valuable ally. Exaggeration is intimately tied to imagination. Freud went so far as to associate art with imagination. If the artist, through unlimited imagination, conjures strange creatures and situations imbued with extraordinary elements that are improbable in real life, we can identify the presence of exaggeration.

“One of the endeavors of individuals striving to understand/interpret themselves and the world manifest in the form of art. Nevertheless, the concept of art is an exceedingly contentious one, nearly impossible to define in terms of its form, transmission, and meaning” (Yılmaz, 2019). In the interpretation of an artwork, society, the artist, the artwork itself, and the audience collectively influence its meaning. “When considering the historical and social attributes of art, coupled with the individuality inherent in its creation, it becomes apparent that we confront numerous layers of meaning.” In his article, ‘Artwork and The Problematic of Meaning Attributed to It,’ Isa Eliri contends that the confusion between subject matter and meaning permeates the interpretation of paintings. He states, “If the subject matter were meaning, works by different artists in different periods would need to evoke the same effect or sensation. As subjects change over historical periods, the meanings assigned to these subjects may also undergo transformation” (Eliri, 2013). Every painting encapsulates meaning. In the revolutionary work ‘*Black Square, 1915*’ by Malevich, a luminary of the Russian avant-garde, an artistic clean slate is unfolded that excludes everything with a void (See Section 2.2.6, *The Relationship between Exaggeration and the Concepts of Transcendence, Ideal, Sublime, Beautiful and Ugly*). As discussed in Section 2.1 under the title “*The Concept of Exaggeration*,” David Dunlop encapsulates Malevich’s black square by stating, “Exaggeration is a form of focusing and simplification” (Dunlop, 2014). The exaggerated scenario crafted by the artist, through the elimination of complexity and the strategic use of space, facilitates a focus on, contemplation of, and realization of the subject as a tool of interpretation. In his painting ‘*Black Square*,’ Malevich exaggerated emptiness

by glorifying it, expressing the desire to underscore the absence of meaning and value in everything and to inaugurate an artistic clean slate. Exaggeration offers individuals the opportunity for interpretation, and the power of interpretation paves the way for individuality (Kaya, 2022).

In the realm of art, emotion, meaning, and signification, Tolstoy asserts, “If the artist can transpose the emotions experienced during the creation of a work onto canvas, marble, or literature in a way that allows others to undergo them, that is art” (Tolstoy, 2017, p. 50). Tolstoy further defines art, stating, “While art may certainly possess meanings or messages, its essence lies not in its content but in its emotion—the sensory power and style enabling the production of content.” Gilles Deleuze and Gombrich, on the other hand, characterize perception as the “detection of distinctions, relations, arrangements, and meanings” (Gombrich, 1992; Colebrook, 2000). In the analysis of the process of interpreting an artwork, Umberto Eco places emphasis on the “concept of openness and polysemy,” redirecting the focus from the artist to the reader/viewer in the process of art interpretation (Eco, 2019). Eco highlights the fascination of a work offering multiple meanings, while Dante, the Italian poet and scholar, interprets his masterpiece, *The Divine Comedy*, from the early 14th century, presenting a singular interpretation and meaning. Dante narrates his posthumous journey through Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven, intertwining it with his role as the protagonist of the story (Dante, 2019).

The examined subject of this research, “Exaggeration in Art as a Tool of Interpretation and Its Reflection in Plastic Arts,” offers a perspective from the artist’s viewpoint. The artist employs exaggeration to interpret their own reality, fears, emotions, and values. The resulting perception, emotion, and imagination, blending the visible and invisible, manifest as expressions of the artist’s liberated creation. Particularly in emotionally challenging situations, our mental processes exhibit excesses, leading to a heightened likelihood of making inappropriate inferences. In such cases, the methods or evaluations employed by our minds often prove inadequate (Türkçapar, 2009). Reactions in these situations are typically instinctive, reflex responses, often dissociated from logic, and can be associated with exaggeration. Emotions extend beyond mere neurological reflexes; they are intertwined with what captures one’s attention, one’s imaginative realm, and even one’s dreams and metaphors. Lisa Cohen categorizes anger, fear, joy, surprise, disgust, and sadness as “*core emotions*,” emphasizing their transcultural and universal nature (Cohen, 2017, p. 155).

Defining emotions is challenging due to their subjective nature. Türkçapar questions the possibility of measuring emotions: “If we lack the ability to measure emotion, how can we determine the degree of exaggeration in its portrayal? As Peter F. Drucker stated, ‘You cannot manage what you do not measure’” (Türkçapar, 2009). Throughout history, various methods have been employed to measure emotions. Türkçapar, through the “Automatic Thoughts Examination Form,” prompts individuals to scrutinize their emotions, assigning scores to their intensity or severity. In the service sector, organizations aim to gauge customer emotions, thereby enhancing customer satisfaction and reducing customer acquisition costs. However, from the artist’s perspective, measuring their emotion is impossible, making it challenging to assess the extent of exaggeration in their emotional reflection and response. Nevertheless, historical codes, social experiences, genetic social images (archetypes), the collective unconscious, and sensitivities developed over millennia play a role in shaping reflex reactions, just as emotions and thoughts do (Çeper, 2021). Anger in response to injustice is a reflex, an outward expression of human essence, carrying a moral judgment. Thus, the artist, as a reflex, can amplify their feelings, inner reality, sensations, intuition, rebellion, and enthusiasm. The uniqueness in forms of expression results in reality to be understood in different dimensions. Exaggeration has been a method employed in the creation of artworks since ancient times, establishing an artistic language across various domains such as novels, poetry, theater, painting, sculpture, music, architecture, and cinema.

The artist’s mode of understanding their emotions, the methods used for expression, the depth, and purpose attributed to personalized elements are interconnected with the artist’s culture, psychology, and philosophy. “The images that the artist draws to comprehend their intense emotions reflect their message to society, cultural background, worldview, and personality.” Andre Gide states, “A work of art is an exaggeration of an idea” (Gide, 1919), Picasso asserts, “Art is a lie that allows us to understand reality,” and J. M. W. Turner describes art as “an occupation that subverts man.” These statements provoke questions about truth, art, and their narratives, associating art with exaggeration.

In this research, the “*Concepts Associated with Exaggeration*” (Section 2.2): “*Reality, Perception, Illusion and Imagination,*” “*Public Entertainment, the Carnival Spirit,*” “*Supernatural Beings, Excessiveness, , Horror, the Uncanny, Grotesque,*” “*Deformation, Representation of the Ugly, Sanctification of Imperfection,*” “*The Social Phenomenon of Kitsch,*” “*Transcendence, Ideal, Sublime, Beauty and Ugly,*” “*Humor, Comic, Caricature,*

Coarse Comedy,” “*Symbolic Expression,*” “*Folk Narratives, Myths, Fairy Tales, Epics, Stories, and Legends,*” along with their theoretical expansions, attempts to interpret the “concept of exaggeration.” It explores questions about the instinct guiding our ancestors, who had never seen a picture, to draw exaggerated pictures, delving into the motivations and influences shaping them. Human beings inherently seek to interpret everything they create. According to the hermeneutic theory of understanding and interpretation, everything today gains value through the meaning ascribed to it (Akdeniz, 1995). When the artist communicates their feelings, the goal is not to replicate the world precisely; rather, it is to interpret the perceived world through the emotions, intuitions, and dreams evoked within themselves.

Imagination holds significant sway among Romantics who define the artwork as “an expression of the artist’s personal excitement and emotions” (Ötgün, 2008). The unrestrained expression of imagination and the manifestation of individual attitudes through emotions, as desired, are only achievable when the individual is liberated. The paramount tenet of modern art lies in the artist’s attainment of freedom, steadfastly defending their cognizance against authority, impediments, and proscriptions (Hauser, 1984, p. 141). Baudelaire, a pivotal figure in shaping the groundwork for modernism, contends that the artist “transforms something repugnant into beauty through the power of artistic expression; this stands as one of the remarkable privileges of art - or the artist” (Bozkurt, 1992, p. 8). Aesthetics constitutes an autonomous realm, and the artwork epitomizes the artist’s reality with its distinctive qualities. Notions highlighting exaggeration underscore the artist’s imagination and liberty. With Romanticism, a precursor to Modernism, the artist commenced freely expressing emotions. The artist’s psychology and personality are now conspicuously embedded in the work. In the early 20th century, avant-garde artists ushered in individuality, placing the artist at the forefront (Ötgün, 2008). The artist is free to transcend the ordinary to interpret their feelings and to emphasize what is important to them, they use their individuality and exaggerates when necessary.

Exaggeration, as an attitude, is a catalyst for unleashing artistic creativity (Kaya, 2022). Freud, when delineating creativity, delves into artistic creativity and the artist’s creative process. Initially conceptualized as inspiration, the prevailing notion posits that this inspiration is bestowed upon the artist by a higher power. Psychoanalytic criticism posits that creation emanates from within the artist. Freud attempts to elucidate the origin of this

intrinsic feeling through the “*Oedipus complex*.” “Individuals have expectations from life; however, owing to the necessity of conforming to society, they may suppress desires that go unrealized. The individual satisfies these desires through fantasizing in the realm of imagination. Freud associates art with daydreaming, asserting that the artist harbors unfulfilled desires, which are conveyed to others through their work, garnering admiration. In this manner, the artist satisfies themselves and inadvertently reveals their inner self. According to Freud, the artwork serves as a documentary record” (Ötgün, 2008). Freud posits that dreams, serving as a means to fulfill unmet sexual desires and other wishes, disguise implicit experiences from the subconscious as they come to consciousness. Conversely, the artist, through the artwork, unburdens their subconscious, laying bare their inner self. The artwork assumes the form of a shadow cast by the artist’s subconscious (Moran, 2007, pp. 151-153). Similar to the psychoanalytic criticism method, psychological criticism, in its quest for a correct understanding of the artwork, centers on the artist, scrutinizing the forms, types, and images recurrent in the artist’s oeuvre to unveil their personal approach. In this view, “the true meaning of the work is what the author thinks, designs, and wishes to express” (Moran, 2007, p. 132). Moran staunchly supports the principle that the artist’s psychology, personality, and background forge a tight nexus with the produced work. E. H. Gombrich contributes to this criticism with the ‘*experimental psychological analysis*’ method, exploring how the emotional values of formal order, proportion, balance, lines, and colors in the artwork are refracted through the artist’s personality (Gombrich, 2016). Critic Charles Mauron (1899-1966), employing the psychoanalytic criticism method (Psychoanalytic Criticism), proposes that to comprehend an artist comprehensively, their works should be analyzed in four stages: “1-Layering an author’s texts ‘one on top of the other’ to identify points of overlap, revealing networks of metaphors, ingrained mythical figures, recurring dramatic situations related to ‘fantasy production.’ In other words, bringing to light the networks of associations and image clusters; 2-Identifying the author’s ‘personal myth’ by investigating how these deeper networks and clusters, discerned through reading different texts, are interconnected within the holism of the work, and how they undergo change and transformation; 3-Interpreting the ‘personal myth’ identified through the texts in terms of psychoanalysis as the emergence of the author’s unconscious fantasy; 4-Cross-referencing the results obtained with the author’s life story” (Rıfat, 2008, p.59). Infinite, boundless imagination, diverse desires, thoughts, and fantasies allude to the exaggeration process.

In conclusion, to interpret a work of art, one must consider numerous critical criteria such as creativity, thought, concept, and the context of the concept, along with the subjective, spiritual experience of the work (Ötgün, 2008). Understanding and interpreting a work of art demand a concerted effort, mirroring the artist's creative process. The artist employs exaggeration as a tool to interpret of their reality, emotions, reactions, and objections, striving to convey them persuasively and capture attention.

This section underscores that one of the most pivotal activities of human beings is to derive meaning from their surroundings, to comprehend and interpret them. To achieve this, there must be facts, signs, expressions, or behaviors – clues and stimuli. The manner in which the artist comprehends their emotions, the method they employ to express them, the depth of meaning attributed to personalized elements, and the purpose are all intertwined with the artist's culture, psychology, and philosophy. It is emphasized that the artist resorts to exaggeration as a language of interpretation to underscore their feelings, thoughts, and realities convincingly.

3.2 The Concept of Communication, Visual Communication, and Symbols

Human beings engage in constant communication, interaction, and the exchange of information with their surroundings as they endeavor to comprehend, contextualize, reconstruct, and assert dominance over the world in a manner aligned with their own perspectives. The utilization of exaggeration as a language of interpretation serves the purpose of effectively conveying an emotion or thought to the recipient, essentially facilitating communication. Consequently, under the heading “*Exaggeration as a Language of Interpretation*,” we will delve into the examination of “*The Concept of Communication, Visual Communication, and Symbols*,” and scrutinize their connections with exaggeration.

According to *TDK's Glossary of Social Science Terms*, communication is defined as “the social interaction process that enables the exchange of thoughts and emotions between individuals, social groups, and societies through various means such as words, gestures, writing, images, etc.” (Ozankaya, 1975. Communication stands as a crucial element of both individual and societal existence, serving as the process through which information is transmitted from a sender to a receiver, manifesting itself **visually or aurally** through our sensory perceptions. In the realm of plastic arts, conveying an idea, emotion, or concept is

achieved through the utilization of a unique visual language. The drawings on cave walls stand as the initial manifestations of visual communication. Symbols, as products of societal consensus, along with the artist's imagination and signs accessible to our senses, play a significant role in the processes of understanding, interpretation, and communication. Exaggeration, employed as a language of expression in art, possesses its own distinctive language and functions as a means of communication.

Throughout the artist's journey of interpreting and producing their work, communication transpires initially with oneself (internal communication), followed by **communication** with the artwork. In artistic communication, the **message** embodies the artwork itself. "Communication, characterized by the reciprocal flow of emotion and thought, the impact of the transmitted message on the intended target, the success of the individual or phenomenon in influencing others, is entirely made possible through the comprehensive utilization of indicators and the language of expression." Exaggeration, as a pivotal language of expression, enhances the impact and credibility of the message. The use of exaggerated language, ingrained in human nature, finds application in both daily and artistic communications to effectively convey emotions and messages. Exaggeration is primarily conceived through the effective utilization of the power of internal communication (psychological communication) and is then conveyed to the artwork through the artist's unique language.

Language serves as a system of vocal signs employed by individuals for self-expression. The integration of **writing** into communication stands as one of the monumental achievements in human history, symbolizing the recording of words and the commencement of communication with the future. The proverb "Words fly away, writings remain" underscores the enduring nature of writing. Literature, characterized as a phonetic art, employs language as its material. Folk narratives (See Section 2.2.9) employ a fantastic language to narrate extraordinary events, supernatural beings, and symbolic meanings, with the use of exaggeration making communication all the more captivating, potent, and effective. The depiction of heroes with exaggerated language adds a persuasive and impactful dimension to communication. In contemporary art, writing serves as a plastic language, transforming into a visual image. Particularly, the Dadaists (Tristan Tzara, *Typographic Poems*, 1916) (Rene Magritte, *The Betrayal of Images*, 1928-1929) (Figure 2) and the poem painting "*Cheval, 1915*" by Guillaume Apollinaire, a surrealist artist, exemplify the use of writing as a plastic language. It can be argued that these practices

subsequently catalyzed the formation of conceptual art (Marcel Duchamp, *Fountain*, 1917) (Eş, 2022). Goya's "*Los Caprichos*, 43, 1790" (Figure 57) and Jacques Louis David's "*The Death of Marat*, 1793" serve as instances where the written image is utilized as a religious, political, or documentary element in plastic arts.

Uçar asserts that "visual communication, though more limited than written communication, possesses more universal dimensions in terms of communication" (Uçar, 2012 pp.18-19). According to Rudolf Arnheim, a German-born art and film theorist renowned for his contributions to the psychology of perception, "the most effective organ of human cognition is the sense of sight" (Arnheim, 2007). Our perception of events around us begins with the eyes; we observe, recognize, and attempt to interpret objects visually. When examining the use of **symbols, signs, and diagrams** as visual communication tools, we discern that humanity's efforts to create communication tools commenced on cave walls. Each culture possesses its unique symbols, signs, communication rules, and norms. The Lascaux wall paintings, surviving from 15,000 BC to the present day, stand as the earliest examples of visual communication (Uçar, 2022). The wall paintings in the Lascaux cave (Figure 16) provide evidence that our ancestors could perceive and depict what they observed in their surroundings. Similarly, Hockney emphasizes that "a painting of an animal on a cave wall is evidence that the painter saw the animal, not the creature itself" (Hockney and Gayford, 2017), highlighting that the individual perspective and personal perception of the painter are reflected (*See Section 4.1.1, Cave Paintings*). These paintings, characterized by simplification and stylization, free from unnecessary details, have been utilized as examples of indirect communication and expression in various societies, employing symbols, silhouettes in a linear language, and occasionally, tonal variations and stains (Figure 16). In cave paintings, deformations in human figures, schematic and stylized drawings fail to mirror an accurate reality. It can be asserted that the exaggeration created in wall paintings through deformation serves the purpose of magic, expression, or making a statement – in essence, communication (Baysal, 2021, p.16). In fact, we continue to employ a similar pictorial approach used in pre-writing periods for communication even today. Uçar elucidates this form of communication as "asking for directions to the airport in a society whose language we do not know by drawing a picture of an airplane" (Uçar, 2022, p.23). This form of communication, utilizing symbols, is extensively employed in our daily lives as well as in numerous fields, especially in religion and art (*See Section 2.2.8*). In art, conceptual messages can be created by leveraging the metaphorical and allegorical structures

of symbols. The section “*Symbolic Expression - Allegory, Metaphor*” (See Section 2.2.8) examines symbols, highlighting that contemporary artists utilize metaphor and allegory for an exaggerated expression in art. The metaphorical example provided here is Mona Hatoum’s sculpture “*Grater Divide, 2002*” (Figure 15), a grater created on a scale significantly larger than its standard dimensions. The exaggeration lies in its dimensions. “By altering only the size of the object, the artist has associated a kitchen utensil with different concepts, transforming the grater into a screen, a metaphor for the isolated world of women from social life” (Başarır, 2012). Uçar reinforces the same idea in her book: “Symbols are visual and auditory phenomena that convey more than they depict” (Uçar, 2022, p.42). Another example mentioned under Section 2.2.8 as an allegory is Edward & Nancy Keinholz’s “*The Caddy Court 1986-87,*” conveying a message and representing authority through its unsettling allegorical structures (Figure 14).

Signs, when used in conjunction with symbols, constitute a visual language in communication; however, they do not carry identical meanings. Rather, they signify a particular situation or rule, as observed in traffic signs, chemical notations, mathematical symbols, etc. These signs possess international utility and convey precise meanings. Instances of sign employment can be discerned in children’s illustrations, primitive tribal depictions, Picasso’s sketches, Miro’s paintings, and Klee’s cosmic compositions (San, 1981). Consequently, signs serve as tools for signification in our daily communication and in art, allowing the artist to construct an exaggerated language in accordance with the intended message. The utilization of signs is prevalent in plastic arts, music, performance arts, advertisements, and graphic designs.

Naturally, **notes**, serving as a type of sign, function as “*markers for writing sounds*” (Sun, 2018) Notes serve as the unique alphabet of the language of music, embodying a universal signification dimension and presenting abstract symbols for the uninitiated. In the realm of music, notes can be exaggeratedly employed as instruments for interpretation. Addressing Baroque period music in his article “*Ornaments in Western Music Writing,*” Sadık Özçelik contends that ornamented notes, emerging during the Baroque era, play a role in embellishing music, contributing nuances smaller than regular notes, and functioning as elements that enhance expression without impeding the natural flow of music, thereby alluding to the concept of exaggeration (Özçelik, 2002). The Romantic period in music, characterized by the stretching of instrumental and vocal limits, represents a phase of exaggeration, where balance and proportion give way to exuberance and extravagance (See

Section 4.7). Gustav Mahler, a prominent Austrian composer of the 20th century, attracted attention with innovative approaches in his career commencing towards the end of the Romantic period. During a performance of his work known as the “The Symphony No. 6” or “Tragic Symphony, 1903-1904,” Mahler employed a giant hammer to strike twice, extending beyond the instruments. This unconventional act sought to interpret the blows of destiny through hammer strikes while simultaneously underscoring that notes need not be adhered to as sacred texts. Consequently, Mahler’s performance may be associated with exaggeration. In one of his writings, Selçuk Aylar posits that this generated noise serves the purpose of strengthening narration, emphasizing certain aspects, and conveying a message (See Section 4.7) (Aylar, 2015, pp. 93-94).

Color, being one of the most direct forms of non-verbal communication, stands as a crucial design element, bearing symbolic significance. In the realms of art and design, color emerges as an element that resonates most strongly with emotions, capable of independently conveying messages (Gezer, 2019). Consequently, when an artist employs color as a means of interpretation, it can give rise to an exaggerated language in alignment with their emotions and intended message. Claude Monet’s “*Impression, Sunrise 1872*” (See Section 4.7) serves as an exemplification of this concept. Moreover, the abstract, expressionist, color field paintings of Mark Rothko, Barnett Newman, and Clyfford Still exemplify communication solely through color (See Section 4.9). Uçar provides an example regarding color in his book: “In Turkish, the word ‘flag’ evokes a shade of red” (Uçar, 2022, p. 106). This particular shade of red symbolizes liberation, independence, and the Republic of Turkey, transcending mere color to convey a profound message. In Henri Matisse’s “*The Dinner Table 1908*,” the tablecloth merges with the wall, transforming the entire surface into an energetic pattern of colors. Matisse employed intense, pure, and exaggerated colors as instruments of expression.

Numbers also hold symbolic values, with number symbolism manifesting in religious texts, myths, epics, and art. For instance, in medieval Turkish Islamic architecture, the use of the number eight is associated with the paradise stamp (Aslan, 2021). Paul Klee’s “*Pavilion of Numbers, 1918*” serves as an illustration of the use of numbers as symbols in painting. Paul Klee imparts meaning to the concealed reality behind the visible through the use of symbols (Erdoğan, 2019). Numbers are also intertwined with notions of good fortune and magic.

Another form of communication, namely non-verbal communication, finds expression through **body language**. This language is utilized across all performing arts (cinema, theater, etc.) and performance arts, constituting an essential component of the world of spectacle. Jackson Pollock's unconventional approach to painting, transforming into a ritual with exaggerated body language, represents a significant development in the realm of performance art (Martínez and Demiral, 2014) (See Section 4.9) (Figure 72).

In essence, language, symbols, signs, and body language fulfill crucial roles in our comprehension and interpretation of the environment, in the organization of social relations, and in art. As Uçar contends, “symbols and signs are like the key to life,” facilitating relationships and communication. Uçar underscores the role of symbols in communication: “Symbols are like a door. Those possessing the requisite knowledge, intuition, and sensitivity open this door and access the essence. Otherwise, that door remains forever closed” (Uçar, 2022, p.13, 40-41). This emphasizes the necessity of being knowledgeable about symbols to navigate a world surrounded by them; otherwise, life becomes challenging. Consequently, communication with symbols offers advantages over written communication, boasting universal meaning, easy recall, and swift interpretation. Artists seeking a striking, emphasized, exaggerated, and convincing expression can utilize symbols to attribute allegorical or metaphorical meanings to objects.

According to Marshall McLuhan, a Canadian communication theorist (1911-1980), communication technologies wield a guiding influence on how individuals perceive and interpret of the world. McLuhan emphasizes the significance of the medium through which a message is transmitted, rather than the content of the message itself (McLuhan and Fiore, 2005). The concept of the “*Global Village*” associated with McLuhan reflects the belief that the world will become a small community, particularly with the widespread adoption of electronic communication. People in different parts of the world can simultaneously witness the same news and events (McLuhan and Powers, 2015). As technology advances and mass communication accelerates. However, the paradoxical reality of our contemporary world is, despite the acceleration of communication in every field, individuals, armed with smartphones, become beings incapable of verbal communication when physically together.

This section, titled “*Exaggeration as a Language of Interpretation*,” delves into “*The Concept of Communication, Visual Communication, and Symbols*,” examining their relationship with exaggeration. It asserts that, in the pursuit of understanding the world, interpreting it, reconstructing it in alignment with oneself, and asserting dominion over it,

humans engage in constant communication, interaction, and information transfer with their environment. Furthermore, it emphasizes the importance of exaggerated language in the effective communication of emotions or thoughts to the other party—effective communication being the transmission of an emotion or thought to the other party in a compelling, convincing manner. The section posits that exaggeration, inherent in human nature and widely employed in daily communication and the language of art, is primarily forged through the effective utilization of the power of internal communication (psychological communication). In the process of external communication, exaggeration reaches the world of others and is transferred to the work, especially in the unique language of the artist.



4. EXAGGERATION IN ART AS A TOOL OF INTERPRETATION AND ITS REFLECTION IN PLASTIC ARTS

In this study, entitled “*Exaggeration in Art as a Tool of Interpretation and Its Reflection in Plastic Arts*,” the first section systematically addresses the meaning, origin, and etymological counterparts of exaggeration and its related concepts. In the second section, under the heading “Exaggeration as a Language of Interpretation,” emphasis is placed on the concepts of meaning, signification, communication, visual communication, and symbols. The fourth section delves into the use of exaggeration in art as a means of signification, evaluating examples of mutual interaction among various art disciplines. Furthermore, selected instances from different social and artistic periods are scrutinized within the realm of plastic arts, elucidating the transformation of the concept of exaggeration in the contemporary context.

4.1 The Emergence of Creativity and the Role of Exaggeration

Under the main title of “*The Emergence of Creativity and the Role of Exaggeration*,” this section commences with an exploration of **Cave Paintings**, the earliest evidence of creativity and exaggeration. Subtopics such as the: *The Mother Archetype and the Approach to Exaggeration*, *The Ritual-Spiritual Realm and Exaggeration*, *Common Origin in the Expressions of Art & Magic and the Role of Exaggeration*, *the Role of Exaggeration in Ornamentation*, and *Exaggeration Examples in Göbeklitepe Symbols* are thoroughly examined. The subsequent analysis delves into the implications of exaggeration examples on plastic arts.

Humans harbor a natural curiosity about their surroundings and the world, engaging in observation and endeavors to interpret of their interactions. The creative process, spurred by the endeavor to establish connections with life and survive, manifests in various forms. In the realm of artistic expression, every individual possesses and can cultivate the innate urge to create. In this process, artists infuse their aesthetic reactions to external stimuli with their inner worlds and emotions. The act of exaggeration, transcend the ordinary to effectively interpret and express emotions and reactions, is an instinctive inclination inherently tied to human nature and intimately connected to the creative process. Therefore,

the investigation into the origins of creativity and exaggeration appropriately commences with cave paintings, acknowledged as the initial evidence of this artistic inclination. Despite the anonymity of the first artists of Paleolithic times, their significance in shaping the artistic landscape is well-acknowledged (Eroğlu, 2014, p.30).

Sözen and Tanyeli define artistic creation succinctly as “...nothing more than the act of reproducing reality” (Sözen and Tanyeli, 1994, p.208). Artists, in interpreting reality through their emotions, embark on a creative journey, crafting an aesthetic realm through diverse materials and methods. This process, inherently linked to exaggeration, serves as a method for artists to enhance their creations. The resultant exaggerated aesthetic world serves as an outward expression of the synthesis between the artist’s inner realm and external influences. The creative individual, capable of interpreting and making sense of the visible world in a unique manner, transcends conventional patterns and, when required, employs exaggeration, prioritizing originality. As Turani aptly states, the work of such an artist lacks a predetermined logic, remains open to interpretation, encapsulated by the notion that “*the creative is always unexpected*” (Turani, 2014, p.11-13). Exaggeration, therefore, emerges as a pivotal attitude that propels creativity within the realm of art (Kaya, 2022).

4.1.1. Cave Paintings and Instances of Exaggeration

Given that cave paintings are acknowledged as pivotal reference points substantiating the inception of art, this section will scrutinize cave paintings as the primary instances of exaggeration.

The epoch during which cave paintings emerged corresponds to the Paleolithic age, a primitive communal era inhabited by hunter-gatherer societies. Preceding the polytheistic pagan culture, individuals held animistic beliefs (Baysal, 2021, p.26). In this era’s paintings and sculptures, forms exhibit clarity while content remains enigmatic. The identity of the artist cannot be discerned (Eroğlu, 2014). Yılmaz (2021, s.194) elucidates, “Archaeological remains related to primitive art have been revealed in three different forms: Art on cave walls, open-air rock art, and portable art. The common thread among these three forms is the density of animal depictions. Infrequent depictions of human beings reveal deformities, schematic renderings, and stylization.” Consequently, human figures fail to mirror a reality congruent with nature; instead, they serve as reminders of nature. The intended purpose is

not the transmission of emotions and thoughts but rather making a declarative statement (Baysal, 2021, p.16).



FIGURE 16 Cave painting “Lascaux”, 17,000-15,000 BC, Dordogne, France.

The most ancient paintings that have survived to the present day are depictions of hunting animals on the walls of caves in Southern France (Lascaux) (Figure 16) and Spain (Altamira). According to Gombrich, these represent the initial instances of a naturalistic, nature-centric understanding of art, and they have been acknowledged as crucial reference points for the inception of the art of painting” (Gombrich, 2016, p. 21). The charcoal and ochre paintings of horses, bison, and handprints found in Spain’s Altamira Cave rank among the world’s best-preserved cave paintings (Arthibo, 2021, September13). In addition to paintings, engravings, reliefs, and statuettes, there are also axes, cutters, and scrapers shaped by chiseling stones among the artifacts from the Paleolithic Age.

The individuals responsible for the wall paintings in the Lascaux cave (17,000-15,000 BC), situated in the Dordogne region of southwestern France, are *Homo sapiens*, identified as the first modern humans (Yakar, 2022) (Figure 16). In the hall depicting large bulls with images of bulls, bison, horses, and deer, one of the bulls is 5.2 meters long, making it the largest animal painting ever discovered in a cave (Arthibo, 2021, September13). The technique used in creating these drawings remains a subject of curiosity. Similar to other cave paintings, this cave also features various creatures, including a pregnant horse with horns, a panther-skinned creature, a deer with a tail, a humped bison, and peculiar horned beings. All these depictions of creatures can be considered as the initial traces of creativity,

imagination, and exaggeration.

Primitive art encompasses societal, mystical, functional, ceremonial, and religious aspects. “It is societal in nature as it originates from processes facilitating the construction of essential daily items and tools for hunting, conveys the mystical thoughts of a distinctive nature, and is employed in the service of rituals such as magic” (Yalım, 2021). The initial artworks crafted by humans exhibit a symbolic and abstract nature. Deformation, stylization, and schematism play pivotal roles in abstraction (Read, 1981, p. 55). The artworks are characterized by linearity, and Wölfflin highlighted that “we can speak of a linear vision, not a conscious use of line” (Wölfflin, 2015). The utilization of exaggeration by primitives, akin to the use of lines, is not a deliberate choice. The abstract, symbolic understanding of art has endured through the ages. Subsequently, shadows merged with linear essence. The shadow, originating from the most primitive structure of humans, perhaps stands out as the most potent among archetypes (Hall Nordby, 2006, p. 45). During the cave period, people believed the shadow to be a part of themselves, their souls, and endeavored to immortalize it by drawing numerous living and inanimate entities on cave walls in contour lines (Ergüven, 2000, p. 148). This artistic approach has allowed these drawings to endure until the present day. The notion that the shadow served as the genesis of the art of painting and played a pivotal role in its evolution is widely accepted (Stoichita, 2006, p. 11). Hockney contends that painting commenced with the shadow and underscores that the silhouette of the hand in Spain’s El Castillo cave (32,000 BC) is a type of template, visible only in its outline, much like a shadow. These depictions were created by blowing pigment around the hand and bear a resemblance to shadows (Hockney and Gayford, 2017 p. 64). According to the Roman writer Pliny (1st century AD), the tradition of portraiture began with the shadow. In one of his anecdotes related to shadow painting, Pliny recounted the clay portrait modeling by Butades, a Corinthian potter. This modeling involved creating a portrait by outlining the shadow cast by a face on a wall with lamp light (*wall panel depicting the story of Butades and his daughter, 1845-1848*). Martin Gayford supported Pliny, drawing attention to the use of shadows by stating that “silhouettes were a cheap and popular form of portraiture in 18th and 19th-century Europe” (Hockney and Gayford, 2017, p. 67). While shadows often transcend real dimensions and become giant, creating a sense of fear and deception (Eraslan, 2020), Hockney also points out that shadows produce illusions as much as they convey information (Hockney and Gayford, 2017 p. 56). Jung referred to the primitive and dark side

within every human being as the shadow. When artists employ exaggerated language, it is often this shadow side that they draw upon the most. This shadow side, perceived as negative and beyond the control of the conscious mind, possesses both a collective and personal dimension. The collective dimension encompasses societal taboos, primitive or immoral aspects that are frowned upon and not approved. On the other hand, the personal dimension may be linked to psychic potentials that individuals are unaware of or choose to ignore (milliyet/barısözkırıs.n.d.). The use of silhouettes and shadows, as seen in cave paintings, has become integral to storytelling in photography and cinema, evoking impact, curiosity, and fear. David Hockney emphasizes the interplay between painting and cinema on the subject of shadows, asserting that “Caravaggio invented Hollywood lighting” and he asserts this belief. Furthermore, he emphasizes that “we cannot see Caravaggio’s dramatic lighting in nature” (Hockney and Gayford, 2016). In Caravaggio’s paintings such as “*Judith Beheading Holofernes, 1599*” and “*The Entombment of Christ, 1604*”, his use of shadow, dramatic lighting, and atmosphere alludes to exaggeration (Figure 56, see Section 4.7). It is suggested that Caravaggio expressed not only the visible reality but also his anger, homosexuality, criminal tendencies, in other words, his own reality, through shadows (Erdoğan, 2015, p. 59; Giderer, 2017, p. 80). In the film “*The Maltese Falcon, 1941*”, mentioned by Hockney, Humphrey Bogart’s shadow cast by the cigarette and statue in his hand is more effective and threatening than the shadow itself (Hockney and Gayford, 2017 pp. 60-67). Modern artists who employ shadows include Giorgio de Chirico (*Mystery and Melancholy of a Street, 1914*), Andy Warhol (Exhibition of Shadows, 1979), David Hockney (Steps with shadow, 1978), and Kare Walker (Exhibition Design, 2002, 2013). In this study, under the title “*The Relationship between Exaggeration and the Concepts of Reality, Perception, Illusion and Imagination*” (Section 2.2.1), Plato’s allegory of the cave is emphasized, where prisoners perceived shadows as reality. In Warhol’s “Shadows” exhibition, the origin of the shadows remains unknown. The paintings are designed like a giant filmstrip, resembling a monumental, monochrome painting, with numerous repetitions. The recurring shadowy images and the potency of multiplicity have consistently been utilized by Warhol. However, the shadow has lost its object, its source, its seriousness, its frightening nature, and has transformed into an empty concept (Giderer, 2017, p. 88).

The guidance and motivation of our ancestors, who had never encountered paintings in their lives during the process of creation, have perennially been a subject of inquiry. In

his work “The Story of Art,” Gombrich asserts, “We do not comprehend how language emerged, much like our ignorance surrounding the genesis of art” (Gombrich, 2016). Nevertheless, Spivey, an art historian and archaeologist, extensively explores these enigmatic issues in his publication, delving into the origins of our ancestors’ inclination toward painting and the wellsprings of their creativity (Spivey, 2005, p. 31).

While French archaeologist Henri Breuil (1877-1961) contended that cave wall paintings depicted aspects of daily life and hunting, this assertion fell short of fully addressing Spivey’s inquiries (Spivey, 2005, p.27). Excavated bones were found to belong to animals distinct from those portrayed on the walls. Additionally, if the purpose of the paintings was to facilitate hunting, they should have been situated in conspicuous locations, yet they were often in places challenging for humans to access (Spivey, 2005, pp. 34-40). The elucidation sought by Spivey materialized through the wall paintings of the SAN tribe in Drakensberg, South Africa. These paintings captivated the interest of South African archaeologist David Lewis Williams (1934), the author of *The Mind in the Cave*, who dedicated years to scrutinizing the artworks. His research findings are succinctly encapsulated: “Though the paintings may seem like glimpses of everyday life, closer inspection reveals a man holding the tail of an antelope. This could signify an expression of courage or a hunting ritual. However, the figure in the painting possesses the head of an antelope and hooves in place of feet. The rationale behind these exaggerated depictions, shrouded in mystery, remains unknown. The extant SAN tribe, in their shamanistic ceremonies, traversed into the spirit realm and subsequently returned to the earthly domain. This journey served to preemptively safeguard the future, sustain life, and seek remedies for ailments. While it could be posited that the murals reflected these lived spiritual experiences and imaginative constructs, further investigation was imperative” (Spivey, 2005). This subject is expounded upon extensively in *Section 4.1.2, titled “The Ritual-Spirit Realm and Exaggeration,”* including a reference to its scientific substantiation.

Mentioned within the ambit of “*The Concept of Exaggeration*” (*Section 2.1*) in this study are the discourses elucidated by the British poet T.S. Eliot, specifically, “the incapacity of individuals to endure reality excessively” and “the wearisomeness inherent in the extant” (Spivey, 2005, p. 81). Alongside these, Gombrich’s concept of “aesthetic fatigue” (Gombrich, 2016), Ramachandran’s assertion regarding the “heightened responsiveness of living beings to nuanced exaggeration” (Spivey, 2005), and Adnan Turani’s commentary on

humanity's disillusionment with the "materialistic dryness and rigidity" of reality. Turani posits that "Man is tired of the materialistic dryness and rigidity of reality. The intoxication of emotions appears to him as a rich and colorful universe" (Turani, 2014, p. 74). The unifying sentiment across all these expressions is that individuals, with the passage of time, lose interest in the perpetual elements within their surroundings, gradually becoming indifferent to them. Consequently, they exhibit positive responses to subtle alterations. The intentional distortion of ideal beauty, as a strategy to alleviate the ennui of the present, to diverge from reality, accentuate intrinsic value, and employ exaggeration for the perpetuation of existence, is grounded in the shared biological instinct of humanity. Can our appetite for novelty not be satiated through minor stylistic shifts in marketing initiatives? Numerous instances in the fashion industry, such as the oscillation in skirt lengths, the repositioning of products on supermarket shelves, and the differentiation in product packaging, serve as illustrations. Therefore, these discourses and examples substantiate artists' proclivities for exaggerated imagery and, in some manner, establish a connection to our ancient forebears. Nevertheless, it is crucial to acknowledge that in ancient cultures, exaggeration was not a deliberate act but rather manifested as a competition with nature. Deformation, on the other hand, emerged consciously from the 19th century onward as a deliberate antithesis to an existing thesis. Picasso's penchant for exaggeration, forsaking nature and molding art in his own fashion, stands as a paramount exemplification of this phenomenon.

The cave wall paintings, juxtaposing the human body with that of animals, the body of one animal with another in a hybrid, exaggerated, bizarre, and ridiculous manner, can be termed as the earliest examples of grotesque due to their amalgamation of two opposites (Tekin, 2017). The blurring of boundaries between human and animal bodies in the paintings is interpreted as neither fully animal nor fully human, but as an animalistic human, attributing the characteristics of animal species to humans (Clottes, 2014; Yılmaz, 2021). The term "grotesque," employed not only in painting but also in literature and other arts, is delineated under various headings such as "Deformation, Representation of the Ugly, Sanctification of Imperfection" (Section 2.2.4), "Humor, Comic, Caricature, Coarse Comedy" (Section 2.2.7), and "Public Entertainment, the Carnival Spirit" (Section 2.2.2). In Rabelais' *Gargantua* (1534), grotesque is examined in relation to the body. French writer and philosopher Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995) introduced the concept of "animal becoming" to

eliminate the boundary between animal and human, identifying the flesh as the zone of indistinguishability between animal and human. Deleuze summarized the concept as follows: “The body, the flesh, the melancholy of being trapped in a decaying body.... The grotesque body, the body of the ugly, the expressive body—the body that consumes food, defecates, empties, deforms, reproduces...” In Lütfiye Bozdağ’s article “Flesh as a zone of indistinguishability between animal and human,” the grotesque body is described as “a resistance against power with an organic intermediate form, a form of resistance against Apollo with Dionysian aesthetics, a form of rebellion, a desire to continue its existence” (Bozdağ, 2019, March 26) (Sanatatak.com.n.d.). Grotesque figures are expressive and exaggerated.

In the 20th century, particularly evident in the works of artists such as Francis Bacon, Kiki Smith, Werner Herzog, Jenny Saville, and Matthew Barney, the intersections and ambiguities between animals and humans transport us back to Paleolithic cave paintings. The transgression of boundaries between human and animal can be associated with extremity, exceeding measure, venturing beyond the confines of the conventional body, embracing unusualness, and embracing exaggeration.

The artworks of primitive communities in Egypt, Oceania, Mesopotamia, China, Japan, Africa, Australia, and America, discovered in the 19th century and subsequently transported to Western art centers where museums were established, have significantly influenced artists like Gauguin, Picasso, Kirchner, Brancusi, Klee, Dubuffet, Henri Matisse, and Andre Derain. These artists drew inspiration from primitive, rough-formed, simple, monumental, and mythically exaggerated shapes. The interest in primitivism originated from artists’ desires to escape the pressures of industrialization, rigid urban regulations, and the need for a novel, unadulterated perspective on the world (Okan, 2018). The fortuitous alignment of this period with the inception of psychological studies, marked notably by Freud and later Jung, delving into the subconscious realm, presented spiritual life as a new frontier for artists. The impact of psychological studies and Freud’s theory of the subconscious (Freud, 2021) on art cannot be overstated.

Certain artists, rejecting formal academic education, operated with unrestrained individuality and without any imposed control mechanisms. Dubuffet’s mural works serve as notable examples showcasing primitive tendencies. The artist’s portraits in ‘*Group of Faces, 1946*’ (Figure 17) strikingly resemble children’s paintings, emphasizing a formal

resemblance between children's and primitive art (İşler, 2004). In essence, simplicity is the sought-after characteristic by the artist, forming the foundational narrative trait in both children's and primitive art. In his examination of the relationship between children's painting and primitive art, Ahmet İşler highlighted that the features of primitive art overlapping with children's painting - such as 'originality,' 'intensity of emotion,' 'directness,' 'saving on meaning,' 'symbolic expression,' and 'vitality' - underpin the innovative artists' logic of perceiving and expressing the world. Consequently, an interactive relationship exists between children's painting, primitive art, and the artistic pursuits of the early 20th century (İşler, 2004). In Freud's book *Totem and Taboo*, his assertion that "in the developmental process of the individual, traces from the evolutionary process of the human species can be discerned, and traumatic events in history resonate individually in people's lives" (Freud, 2021) provides an explanation for the call to return to primitiveness. The artist's departure from luminosity and optical representation towards a psychological form cultivated within their own imagination has gained prominence. This era (19th-20th century), emerging as a proclivity to evade civilization and where artists withdrew into introspection, ushered in substantial changes to the art of painting (Turani, 2014). From cave paintings to the contemporary, the awakened creative unease in the artist consistently delivers the unforeseen. The artist imparts the unexpected by utilizing exaggeration as a tool for interpretation, accentuating the values they have apprehended and consider significant.



FIGURE 17 Jean Dubuffet, *Group of Faces*, 1946, MoMA,

The hunting activities of humans and their creation of animal paintings on walls indicate their observation and attempts to familiarize themselves with the animals in their surroundings. Indeed, in the book *"A History of Pictures,"* Hockney states, "A depiction of an animal on a cave wall is evidence that the artist saw that animal, not the creature itself" (Hockney and Gayford, 2017), emphasizing that painting and creativity are personal perspectives, with each artwork reflecting the artist's viewpoint. In cave art, the portrayed

animals are depicted as if they have been abstracted from their natural environment. In other words, the artist has distanced the animals from their natural state, reanimated them in a symbolically human world, and, in a way, seems to symbolically domesticate wildlife (Yilmaz, 2021).

Additionally, according to David Hockney, “all images, whether scratched on a wall, painted on canvas with a brush, made with a camera or digital program, whether in a cave or on a computer screen, are essentially paintings” (Hockney and Gayford, 2017). Winterson, stating that “All paintings are cave paintings; they are paintings made on the flat, dark walls inside us...” (Winterson, 2018, p.31), highlights that humanity’s most sublime feature becomes visible through painting. The artist, by transforming the three-dimensional world into a two-dimensional image on flat surfaces such as cave walls, canvas, paper, cinema screen, television, or smartphones, interprets his own reality from caves to the present day.

In primitive societies, symbols are a crucial part of life and communication, understandable by everyone. Thus, it can be asserted that art began with symbols. In contemporary art, since most symbols do not emerge from simultaneous experiences and artists can have individual symbols, establishing a commonality, as in primitive societies, is not easily attainable (Strauss, 1995, p. 159).

Regarding the abstract art of primitives, Worringer suggests that “While primitive societies turn to abstract art due to their ignorance of the universe, civilized societies turn to abstract art for other reasons, as they have enough knowledge about the universe with the development of science and civilization” (Tunalı, 1983, p. 142). He implies that abstraction in primitives is an instinctive creation, done unconsciously without the intervention of the mind. Today, with the development of human intelligence and the accumulation of knowledge, we can discuss conscious abstraction. The primitive understanding of form is grounded in simplicity and minimalism, more of an imaginative nature than a visual one. Emphasizing and exaggerating, unnecessary details are extracted from the composition (Okan, 2018). As discussed under the title “The Concept of Exaggeration” (Chapter 2) in the study, David Dunlop indicates that the journey of exaggeration in art, starting with cave wall paintings, has, throughout art history, simplified to minimalism. He notes that the ultimate exaggeration is to abandon the canvas and embrace conceptualism (Dunlop, 2014). Zheng, in reference to Erwin Wurm’s works, contends, “Erwin Wurm does more than make us

laugh, saying, ‘See? This is what the world can look like!’; he facilitates our acceptance of different ideas and finding new, stranger ways to experience the world” (Zheng, 2013). Thus, Zheng emphasizes how different approaches can be explored to comprehend the world. Through this different approach, Wurm signifies exaggeration by merely evoking the human being (Figure 18). Primitive art, which does not directly show but suggests, is captured in Brancusi’s sculptures (Figure 19) with simple forms. Picasso, employing mythological and ceremonial images and masks, recognized that African sculptures were not decorative images but were shaped by the perceived world and the creative mind (Okan, 2018).



FIGURE 18 Erwin Wurm, *Declining Abstract Sculpture 2013*

Picasso, who conveyed primitiveness through his artworks, is renowned for his robust imaginative expression behind geometric shapes. In his painting “*Les Femmes d’Alger*, 1907,” he incorporated African masks, disrupted facial representation norms, and juxtaposed two opposites, primitiveness, and civilization. In a composition dominated by angular and rigid forms, he captured vibration and allure through the contrast of angular-round or hard-soft, using a limited number of rounded forms in a balanced manner (Şentürk, 1999).

Brancusi’s sculpture “*The Kiss*” (Figure 19) drew inspiration from Auguste Rodin’s 1882 work. However, the departure point of the artist’s abstract sculptural style from Rodin’s emotional realism lies in its excessively simplified, primitive geometric form (the historyofart.org). The intertwined figures of a man and a woman appear as a straightforward

stone block. This extreme simplification in simplification indicates an element of exaggeration.



FIGURE 19 *Brancusi, Kiss Sculpture, (1916), Limestone, (58.4x33.7x25.4cm), 94.35kg, Arta, Romania.*

In this section, cave paintings, serving as evidence for the emergence of the art of painting, are scrutinized within the framework of exaggeration. It has been observed that the delineation between human and animal bodies becomes indistinct, with human figures failing to depict a reality harmonious with nature but rather serving as mere reminders of nature. The motivation and guidance behind our ancestors, who had never encountered paintings in their lifetimes, in the utilization of creation and exaggeration have been pondered. The discussion encompasses spiritual experiences intertwined with shamanistic ceremonies, the ennui of the existing, our curiosity for the new, the instinctive exaggeration as a means of sharing the unseen and valuable reality, and the role of the shadow as a wellspring for the art of painting. It is noted that until the 19th century, exaggerations in paintings occurred unconsciously, later transitioning into a phase characterized by conscious exaggeration. Furthermore, the discourse delves into the contemporary interest in the primitive within the realm of painting. Examples of works by Jean Dubuffet, Erwin Wurm, Picasso, and Brancusi are intricately examined in the context of exaggeration. Ultimately, the artist, who transmutes the three-dimensional world into a two-dimensional image on flat surfaces like cave walls, canvas, paper, cinema screens, televisions, or smartphones, is highlighted for employing exaggeration to comprehend their own reality—from the era of caves to the present day—aiming to amplify the value of the valuable, exhibit persuasiveness, and share the unseen alongside the visible.

4.1.2. The Mother Archetype and the Approach of Exaggeration



FIGURE 20 Willendorf Venus, 28,000-25,000 BC.

The “*mother archetype*,” a fundamental archetype according to Jung, plays a crucial role in understanding creation, existence, and the meaning of the universe. As a sacred model, the “*mother archetype*,” which has been a wellspring of art for millennia, holds significant importance. Within the context of social collective subconsciousness, the universality of motherhood is evident, evaluated similarly across the world (Dursun & Torun, 2020). In both positive and negative aspects, the Mother, or the mother goddess, encompasses a range of qualities: emotional, fertile, representative of abundance and fertility, a symbol of rebirth, a source of creativity, sustaining life, providing support, protection, nurturing, and, simultaneously, embodying seductiveness, witchcraft, and other dark aspects. Mythological records and archaeological findings provide visual evidence of the mother archetype. The image of the mother goddess, an artistic symbol in the Neolithic Age, underwent abstraction with the advancement of agricultural culture. While initially a symbol of agriculture and fertility, it transitioned to the depiction of detailed facial and bodily features towards the ancient period. The concept evolved from a divine figure to an understanding that depicts humanity. Consequently, the image of the mother has experienced numerous transformations since its emergence as an artistic source, yet it has persisted (Yılmaz, 2010, pp.47-59). Considering the Mother Archetype’s historical role as a wellspring of art and the early traces of exaggeration found in cave paintings and small portable female figurines, it is deemed appropriate to examine the subject under the title of “*The Mother Archetype and the Approach of Exaggeration.*”

The nomadic lifestyle of hunter-gatherer societies, constantly shifting to more fertile hunting grounds, found adaptation through the amalgamation of symbolic thought and the unifying power of art (Yılmaz, 2021). The advent of paintings, figurines, and similar artifacts during this period marked significant changes for humanity. These objects, such as

“figurines” (Figure 20) featuring exaggerated chest, abdomen, vulva, buttocks, and a progressively narrowing structure toward the arms and legs, carry diverse functional, social, cultural, and faith-related meanings. These statuettes, characterized by their lack of facial details, are not mere imitations but interpretations of nature. Crafted from materials like bone, stone, marble, metal, ivory, or earthenware, these general characteristics are more pronounced in early examples. The “Venus of Willendorf,” measuring 11.1 cm in height and dating back to 28,000-25,000 BC, stands out as one of the most renowned statuettes of prehistoric plump women. The exaggerated features symbolize fertility and abundance, while the absence of a facial depiction associates Venus with the universal concept of motherhood. Consequently, the cognitive processes in creativity are shaped by the instinct to reproduce and ensure the continuity of life through the creation of new life. Fertility, as a valuable aspect, is emphasized and exaggerated. One of the initial questions investigated in the research was “How does the mind function in the creative response,” and it can be affirmed that an answer to this question is found here. Tekin echoes similar emphases in his work (Tekin, 2017).

When the question “Why do our brains react more intensely to extremes?” is posed, “*The Herring Gull Test*,” quoted from Spivey’s book “*How Art Made the World*,” provides an answer as detailed in Chapter 2 under the title “*The Concept of Exaggeration*” (Spivey, 2005, p.60). This test, explaining the presence of exaggeration in nature through the behavior of herring gulls, illustrates how our brains are programmed to exaggerate features that hold significance for us. It also elucidates the reason behind the use of exaggeration in the figurines of ancient people. Considering the importance of fertility in the ancient period, the similar appearance of Venus statuettes in different times and places can be attributed to the same instinct.

Pervin Erbil, in her book “*The Historical Defeat of Woman from Cybele to Pandora*,” offers the following insights regarding women who assumed the roles of mother, ancestor, and goddess: “It should not be wrong to think that these women with exaggerated sexual organs were used in religious and magical ceremonies as symbols of fertility. She is not only a symbol of fertility but also the mother of the child and, therefore, the ancestor of the community, as the only certain and definite being in the confusion created by the unpredictable paternal position due to multiple sexual relationships or who has not yet discovered the function of the man in reproductive activity. Her role as a mother and

ancestor, with its symbol of fertility, leads her to assume a different function: Goddesshood” (Erbil, 2008). “The goddess is a deity and a symbol of spiritual tradition. Her life-giving organs are exaggerated. However, this exaggeration and nudity are not seductive elements. They have a sacred quality” (Erbil, 2008). In the Paleolithic period, since the female, who mediated the birth of the individual forming the society and who was a gatherer, was perceived with an identity that guaranteed the continuation of life, care was taken to protect and reproduce her (Aslan, 2010). In the Neolithic period, humans began to cultivate the land and domesticate animals, thus taking nature under their sovereignty. In this period, when the productivity of the soil was identified with the reproduction of women, women were considered sacred, and, as Pervin Erbil mentions, this led to the birth of the belief in mother earth, mother goddess. The image of the mother goddess was considered sacred in belief systems and has been carried on to this day.

In the Hittite era, depictions of the ‘Sun Goddess of Arinna’ (1400-1300 BC), nursing Horus and Isis in her embrace, would later serve as inspiration for depictions of Mary and Jesus. The narratives designed around the mother-child imagery derive their essence from the collective memory’s profound ‘mother goddess’ archetype. Among the figures most sculpted by humanity in prehistoric times is the female body. The oldest known sculptures, the Hohle Fels in Germany (40,000-35,000 BC), and the Venuses of Willendorf in Austria (28,000-25,000 BC), emphasize fertility, featuring seated, reclining, and standing figurines in Anatolia, particularly during the Neolithic period when sedentary life emerged at Hacilar (8500-5500 BC) and Çatalhöyük (6500 BC). These sculptures similarly express fertility through prominent features such as large breasts, a full abdomen, and genitalia emphasized with triangular contours (Okan, 2018). In contrast to Paleolithic figurines, Neolithic female figurines exhibit a divergence into both standing and sitting figures.

Throughout art history, the significance of Venus has endured from ancient times to the present. Dating back 25,000 years, the handheld figurines like the ‘*Venus of Willendorf*’ emphasized fertility, abundance, and the continuity of life. As we transition to Ancient Greece, where Venus figures were frequently depicted, one of the most renowned works of Greek sculpture, ‘*Venus de Milo*’ (130-100 BC), comes to light. Moving into the Hellenistic period, we encounter the ‘*Venus Callipyge*’ (3rd century BC), also known as the ‘*Venus with Beautiful Hips*’ statue. The woman ceases to be merely an object of fertility and begins the transformation into an object of beauty and lust. In the 20th century, French singer Georges

Brassens composed a song inspired by Venus Callipyge, reigniting the sculpture's fame (Bursali, 2017). Photographer Joel-Peter Witkin (1939), known for his provocative work "*The Birth of Venus, 1988*," an exaggerated reinterpretation of Botticelli's "*The Birth of Venus*" (1486), portrayed Venus as a hermaphroditic figure, offering a critical perspective on stereotypical beauty. Witkin sought to dismantle societal taboos and prejudices by addressing overlooked issues (Göktan, 2008, p.235-244). Another artist challenging conventional beauty ideals was Colombian painter and sculptor **Fernando Botero** (1932-), who, as a rebellion against ideal beauty, placed his 5-ton 'Broadgate Venus' (1989) in a London square (Figure 21). With its ample and exaggerated body, Broadgate is akin to a contemporary, larger rendition of Willendorf's Venus (Ari, 2019). Botero's distinctive style, characterized by exaggerated volumes, a liberated color palette, simplified forms, and grotesque figures, often featuring corpulent or even inflated figures reminiscent of balloons, has become synonymous with the term *Boterismo* (senveben.b.t). His use of exaggeration serves to capture attention, offer critique, and infuse a humorous element.



FIGURE 21 *Fernando Botero, Broadgate Venus, (1989), London, Photograph by Alan Kean,*

The work "*Amuletta 1, 1971*" (Figure 22) by the Hungarian-French photographer and sculptor **Brassai** (1899-1984) serves as an interpretation of fertility idols. The stone figure of a woman, simplified and sculpted, is abstracted into a mass devoid of legs, arms, and feet, with a particular emphasis on the buttocks, which is deliberately exaggerated.

Australian sculptor **Ron Mueck** (1958-), in his wax sculpture "*Pregnant Woman*" (2002), standing at 2.5 meters, magnifies the pregnant woman, transforming her into a contemporary rendition of the mother goddess derived from collective memory. It can be asserted that the emphasis lies on the exaggeration of the precious nature of fertility. In the

sculpture “*Mother and Child*” dated 2001, measuring 30 cm, he diminishes the size of the woman giving birth while exaggeratedly highlighting the anxiety and loneliness experienced by the woman post-childbirth. Mueck employs the pregnant woman in both unusually large and small scales. There is no disproportion in the works, but a deliberate use of an exaggerated scale.

Anish Kapoor (1954-), a British artist of Indian origin, delves into the theme of maternal fertility in his installations “*Mother as Mountain, 1985*” and “*Mother as Void, 1989*.” In “*Mother as Mountain*,” a red conical form bears vulva-shaped hollows and voids, representing a mountain created by the artist with inspiration from nature. The mountain symbolizes protection, unity, and inclusivity. The mountain is representative of the body, and the cave symbolizes the vagina, the fallopian tube. The woman gives birth, and the earth nurtures humanity, thus the simultaneous utilization of both imparts strength and sanctity to both the mother and the earth. Kapoor frequently opts for substantial dimensions in his installations and explains this choice as follows: “Every idea has a scale. This work would not be the same if it were a third of its size. Pyramids cannot be imagined in another dimension. Size is a tool, a sculptural tool” (oggito.com, 2021). The use of large sizes stimulates the viewer’s consciousness, eliciting surprise and curiosity. While boundaries are challenged through extensive dimensions and imposing structures, the capture of infinity and sublimity is possible, and this association can be made with the concept of exaggeration (See Section 4.9).



FIGURE 22 Brassai “*Amuletta 1*”, 1971, 16.2x9x4 cm.

The sculpture “*Maman, 1999*” (French for “mother”) by the French sculptor **Louis Bourgeois** (1911-2010), who metaphorically associated his mother with a spider, stands as a tribute to his mother (Figure 23). In the artist’s conceptualization, the maternal image, embodying the nest-weaving, protective demeanor, and feminine energy, is manifested as a colossal spider. Simultaneously, it serves as an emblem of male patriarchy’s dominance over women. “Louise Bourgeois’ initial forms depict the metamorphosis of goddess symbols. These forms are symbolic manifestations that establish a connection with the prehistoric era.” The artist asserts, “A sexual element has always been present in my works” (Gadon, 1989, p. 223). *Maman*, among the world’s largest sculptures, monumentalizes the spider through the deliberate use of an exaggerated scale. Confronting an object or being of everyday proportions on such a grand scale induces a psychological shock, readily associated with the concept of exaggeration.

Jeff Koons’ “*Balloon Venus*” breathes contemporary life into the modern version of the Venus of Willendorf. Since September 2015, Balloon Venus has found a home in the Natural History Museum Vienna, coexisting with the Venus of Willendorf (Figure 24). Through this piece, Koons mocks conventional norms through a simplistic narrative, rejecting the assignment of profound meanings to artworks, a characteristic reminiscent of the pop art movement. His emphasis on swift consumption and decorative qualities is evident (Studioartstalker.n.d.). Koons’ works can be assessed through the lens of the Kitsch aesthetic. Kitsch works, occasionally executed with a mocking approach against the system by disregarding established rules, frequently lack profound meanings and overtly emphasize exaggeration.



FIGURE 23 *Louis Bourgeois, Maman, 1999, 9x8x10m, marble, stainless steel and bronze, Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao.*



FIGURE 24 *Willendorf Venus (28.000-25.000 BC), 11.1cm., Jeff Koons, Balloon Venus, 2008-2012, 259.1x121.9x127cm., 5 different colors, Vienna Museum of Natural History.*

In this section, the concept of exaggeration is critically examined through the lens of the “mother archetype,” a profound source of inspiration for art spanning thousands of years. The discussion centers around the Venus of Willendorf (28,000-25,000 BC) statuettes, where the omission of facial features, arms, and feet contrasts with the deliberate exaggeration of the breasts, abdomen, buttocks, and vulva—symbolic manifestations of fertility and productivity. The presence of similar imagery in female figurines across diverse temporal and spatial contexts is attributed to a shared instinct, aligning with the outcomes of

the “*Herring Gull Test*,” which elucidates the manifestation of exaggeration in nature through the behavior of seagulls. Delving into the annals of art history with Venus of Willendorf as a starting point, the narrative underscores the enduring significance of Venus, portraying her not merely as a fertility symbol but also accentuating her emergence with connotations of beauty and sensuality. The discourse extends to the contemporary era, highlighting the upheaval of entrenched beauty norms and scrutinizing modern iterations of the mother goddess, as exemplified by artists such as Botero, Brassai, Ron Mueck, Anish Kapoor, Louis Bourgeois, and Jeff Koons within the context of exaggeration.

4.1.3. The Ritual-Spiritual Realm and Exaggeration

The artistic forms employed by indigenous peoples to articulate their self-expression are intricately linked to ancestral reverence, rituals, and religious functions. Therefore, under this thematic umbrella, it is considered pertinent to delve into the discussion of the *Ritual-Spiritual Realm*, probing its association with exaggeration.

In the context of Paleolithic era paintings, the discourse revolves around the interpretations associating these artworks with shamans and their protective spirits. James David Lewis-Williams scrutinized the relationship between these creations and Shamanism, underscoring the presence of a complex cosmological perception expressed through two or more distinct worlds (Lewis-Williams, 2019). Rituals encompass ceremonious and obligatory religious ceremonies within which public participation is paramount. This regular observance extends to holidays, religious weddings, baptisms, vows, and various other religious events. Additionally, Marcel Mauss acknowledged the existence of non-religious rites in his work “*Sociology and Anthropology*.” As per Frazer, “All the rites of Australians, most of their religious initiation ceremonies, are magical in nature” (Mauss, 2013, p. 73). In his exploration, French thinker and anthropologist Levy-Bruhl expounds upon “the existence of another world, distinct from the world inhabited by the natives, belonging to an invisible and timeless period” (Levy-Bruhl, 2020). Disruptions in the rhythm between worlds signal a belief in the need for restructuring. Lewis-Williams posits that the act of entering caves, traversing their depths, entering a trance, and establishing a connection with the other world reflects the essence of Shamanism. He interprets cave passages as domains belonging to the other world and underscores that traversing these realms can symbolically signify the

transition to the other world (Lewis-Williams, 2019, p. 196-198). During the ritual of transitioning to the other world, collective mystical experiences unfold. Group members feel a profound connection and integration with the invisible beings to whom they owe their existence, experiencing a state of ecstasy (Levy-Bruhl, 2020, p.30). The symbolic ritual itself constitutes an exaggerated experience. “Shamans invoke their assisting spirits through sound and music, engaging in dialogues with them through songs. In Shamanism, where music holds paramount importance, the drum emerges as one of the crucial ritual objects” (Bozdemir & Özçelik, 2019) (Figure 28). According to Turcologist Vasili Radloff, the drum symbolizes the animal accompanying the shaman on the journey to the spirit world. In Yakut legends, the drum is known as the ‘shaman’s horse’ (Radloff, 2008). In Section 4.1.1, drawing from Nigel Spivey’s “*How Art Made the World*,” the dissertation delves into the tribe’s spiritual journey to the spirit world and its return through shamanistic ceremonies. This journey is positioned as a proactive measure for the future, ensuring the continuity of life, and seeking remedies for ailments. Striking parallels emerge between the exaggerated, peculiar paintings found in the Drakensberg in Africa and those in Europe. Some geometric drawings depict shapes that do not exist in nature. Spivey scientifically elucidated these similarities through experiments conducted at the *Institute of Psychiatry-London clinic*. “Subjects underwent a trance experience, witnessing imaginary images, allowing them to encounter similar images during wakefulness. The noteworthy resemblance between the subjects’ experiences in the experiment and the geometric shapes on cave walls is apparent” (Spivey, 2005, pp. 34-43; Tekin, 2017). Consequently, the dissertation scientifically explicates the impact of Shamanism-specific rituals, ceremonies, and trance states on the creativity of cave dwellers. Hence, it can be asserted that cave inhabitants “depicted their spiritual experiences and the images from their dream world on the rock walls” (Tekin, 2017, p. 147). The peculiar, grotesque figures, products of the dream world, and unattainable in nature, assume an exaggerated form.



FIGURE 25 Gottlieb Georgi, Krasnoyarsk shaman engraving.

In this segment, the discussion revolves around the premise that the creative expressions and ingenuity of primitive humans are intricately intertwined with their spiritual experiences, rituals, religious functions, and Shamanism. The narrative emphasizes that the collective mystical experiences occurring during the rituals of transitioning to the other world, symbolically enacted for purposes such as ensuring the continuity of life, seeking remedies for diseases, and proactively addressing future concerns, manifest in mural depictions as peculiar, unnatural, and exaggerated shapes. This phenomenon is scientifically substantiated through the observation of similar images during the trance experience conducted at the “Institute of Psychiatry-London” clinic, as documented in Spivey’s work. Consequently, it is posited that cave paintings encapsulate spiritual experiences unique to Shamanism and imagery derived from the realm of imagination. Regarding the context of exaggeration, the narrative underscores that the ritual itself is inherently exaggerated. Moreover, it highlights that those drawings portraying fantastical, grotesque figures—figures not encountered in everyday life—serve as indicators of this exaggeration.

4.1.4. Common Origin in the Expressions of Art & Magic and the Role of Exaggeration

Since ancient times, the concepts of art and magic have occasionally intertwined, particularly evident in primitive beliefs such as paganism and animism (İba, 2021). Consequently, under this heading, *The Common Origin in the Expressions of Art and Magic* will be explored, and its relationship with exaggeration will be scrutinized.

Baysal asserts that one of the most compelling responses to the debate on the origin of art is the idea that “hunting scenes depicted on cave walls were created for magical purposes” (Baysal, 2021, p.27). A belief system encouraging the act of magic through painting is outlined, suggesting that primitive humans sought assistance from the supernatural powers they believed in through their artistic creations. According to Gombrich, “For primitives, there is no difference in usefulness between a hut and an image. Huts protect them from rain, wind, sun, and spirits; images protect them against other forces that are as real as natural forces. In other words, pictures and statues were used for magical purposes” (Gombrich, 1972, p. 20). Gombrich posits that primitives believed they could gain power against prey only by painting their images or assuming the guise of animals, emphasizing the blurred

distinction between image and reality for primitive societies (Gombrich, 1972).

Magic, with its elements of mystery, mystical formations, rituals, and unverifiable effectiveness, has consistently sparked curiosity. The ongoing debate about how to define it and its place vis-à-vis science and religion continues to captivate contemporary discourse. Figures such as the natural scientist and writer Gaius Pliny distinguish magic from religion (Morgül, 2022). Marcel Mauss aligns with this perspective, stating that “magic is non-religious and is intended to be so” (Mauss, 2013, p.76). In magic, the attempt to interpret of and influence the world through supernatural means without direct prayers to a deity is a common thread. If we wish to illustrate a case of primitive magic, consider the “potato dance” performed by the Maori people in New Zealand. In an effort to shield the freshly planted potatoes from potential damage caused by east winds, women laboring in the fields engaged in a dance, replicating the wind’s gusts, the rainfall, and the growth and blossoming of the crops with their movements. Simultaneously, they sang folk songs, expressing their desire for the crops to thrive in harmony with their actions. The dancers held the belief that by imitating the growth of crops, they could influence and stimulate their actual growth. This practice serves as the cornerstone of primitive magic, revealing itself as nothing more than a straightforward act of emulation (Thomson, 1998). In the emulation dance, individuals manifest the desired outcome through imaginative contemplation, aligning with the manner in which one envisions the realization of their goals. Jack Ensign Addington, a researcher in subconscious studies, introduces the principle of “*Act as if it were, let it be*” in his work “*100% Mind Power*” (Addington, 1996). The ritual of emulation dance intricately adheres to this foundational principle. Additionally, the convergence of dance, music, and art within the realm of magic not only serves the objectives of enchantment but also intricately contributes to the structuring and fortification of societal constructs (Danko, 2017, p.9). Marcel Mauss underscores the sociological dimensions of magic, asserting, “because we have seen that there is a collective concept behind all the signs associated with magic” (Mauss, 2013, p.189). Hence, these rituals may also offer insights into the societal significance of art.

While magic permeates Animism, Totemism, and Shamanism, Paganism rituals echo similarities with their counterparts. Pagan rituals, designed to showcase human alignment with nature and a profound reverence for all forces and spirits within, mirror the principles found in Animism. According to Edward Burnett Tylor, “The oldest among the religions of

humanity, essentially a type of religious theory, is Animism, and practices such as idol worship, sorcery, divination, and fortune-telling in primitive communities have all originated from Animism” (Sarihan, 2015, p. 17). Animism, rooted in the attribution of spiritual entities to natural elements, constitutes a foundational religious theory. On the other hand, Totem belief hinges on the notion that cohabitating individuals, when belonging to the same clan, are deemed kin and share a common ancestor (Kekevi and Dualı, 2020). These ancestral figures, not exclusively human, are identified as totems within the clan (Tr.weblogographic.). With their compelling allure, totems emerge as pivotal exemplars of ornamentation in indigenous art.



FIGURE 26 *Native American wooden totem poles on the northwest coast.*

The totem poles of British Columbia and Alaska on the northwest coast of North America are renowned. The patterns on these totem poles often depict symbols resembling the clan’s ancestors. These poles narrate legends or the traditions of the clan. In reality, these poles are not objects of worship; their sacredness stems solely from the historical significance of the carved figures” (Bulut, 2010, Yerliruh Blogspot.com) (Figure 26).

In ancient times, it was believed that art and magic were intertwined, with sorcerers and artists closely connected. The sorcerer-artist, by establishing a connection with supernatural forces, could influence spirits and other entities (Sipahi, 2006). Bacon expressed, ‘I see myself as a medium who creates images rather than a painter’ (Eroğlu, 2014). Beuys, following his crash as a fighter jet pilot in Crimea, utilized felt and oil in each performance, seemingly interpreting them as a symbolic resurrection (Artun, 2015). The mystical concept crafted by Beuys is notably exaggerated. Cave paintings, as argued by Henry Breuil, provide the earliest evidence showcasing the connection between art, magic,

and creativity. Paintings of animals on cave walls, resembling a form of hunting spell, aimed to ensure success in hunting animals: ‘In the Niaux Cave, where research was conducted, images of animals stabbed with arrows, wounded, and caught in traps lend support to this perspective. Additionally, the presence of depictions of people adorned in animal skins supports the interpretation of hunting magic’ (Djindjian, 2009, p. 5). Lucien Levy-Bruhl, in his book, elucidates how the everyday experiences of primitive societies could suddenly adopt a mystical quality: “When a man walking in the steppe sees a tiger in the distance, he may try to hunt it, but if it does not behave like its counterparts and exhibits strange behavior, it is no longer a real tiger, but a supernatural tiger, a kind of tiger called *kanaima*, that is, a sorcerer who has taken the form of a tiger, and it is impossible to kill it. In this case, the native must hide or flee” (Levy-Bruhl, 2020, p.27). Natives believe in the existence of an infinite number of supernatural beings in their surroundings, as encounters with such beings are frequent in myths and tales. Hence, they are in constant anticipation that an ordinary situation can transform into a mystical one at any moment, signifying an atmosphere of uncanniness.

In primitive societies, certain individuals, often with mental disorders, were privileged to experience mystical occurrences more frequently than others. These individuals establish superior relationships with the forces of the unseen world compared to ordinary people (Levy-Bruhl, 2020, pp.39-41). The activities of sorcerers are a form of fiction, primarily relying on individual interpretations. In this context, the power of the sorcerer lies in guiding the community in spiritual matters, essentially contributing to the formation of *collective consciousness* (Binyazar, 2011). Magic has evolved over time, taking the form of either white or black magic based on the nurtured intention. It has transformed into symbols in magical imagery, leading to the emergence of talismans and amulets as safeguards against negative energy. The themes of magic, symbolized and unified into a shared language, persisted in popularity until the Middle Ages. Marcel Mauss stated, “The epidemic of sorcerers in the Middle Ages is one of the greatest proofs of overstimulation and excitement in society’ (Mauss, 2013, p.207). Although the Inquisition burned many sorcerers, it simultaneously gave rise to new ones. With the advent of monotheistic religions, magic gradually vanished from social practices and collective memory. Ancestral beliefs were relegated to the realms of the collective unconscious. However, the widespread use of magic

for individual benefit continues to this day. Freud and Jung's concepts of consciousness have served as references for the art world in this regard.

In the *Trois Freres* Cave in France, a drawing of a presumed sorcerer or shaman was discovered (Figure 27), with similar drawings later found at Lascaux. It is believed that these two drawings depict shamans in a trance. These grotesque figures, embodying both human and animal characteristics, are deliberately exaggerated. The earliest written evidence of magic dates back to the time of the Sumerians, the civilization credited with the invention of writing (2600 BC). Spells for love have been found on archaeological materials and predominantly on papyri (7th century AD) (gazeteduvar.com.n.d.)



FIGURE 27 *Trois Freres Cave-France, 13,000 BC, drawing of a shaman or 'magician'.*

Plato, in his depiction in the *Republic*, asserts: “Beggar prophets approach the doors of the wealthy, convincing them of their divine power. Through sacrifices, amulets, celebrations, and feasts, they persuade individuals to atone for their sins or those of their ancestors. For a modest fee, they promise to inflict harm upon enemies, claiming to wield the will of the heavens in their favor through magical arts and incantations” (Plato, 2015; Arkeopolis website). Plato, in this discourse, underscores that magicians deceive people and cautions against placing trust in them. Nevertheless, contemporary individuals still seek recourse in magic. “To assuage their curiosity about the future, fulfill their desires, or break free from the perceived influence of demons and malevolent magic, people turn to individuals such as sorcerers, witch doctors, charm casters, and fortune tellers. The primary motivation for engaging in magic has been noted as the desire to seek meaningful explanations for events. Scholars like John Dewey, emphasizing ‘the search for certainty,’

Viktor Emil Frankl, focusing on ‘the search for meaning,’ and Abraham Maslow, addressing ‘the desire to know and understand,’ have all touched upon this desire” (Kuşat, 2004, p.112). “The Westcar Papyrus, housed in the Berlin Egyptian Museum, narrates the story of ‘*Tales of Wonder or King Cheops and the Magicians*.’ This tale centers around the mythical sorcerer Dedi, renowned for reattaching the severed head of an animal” (Kartopu & Ünal, 2019). It is imperative to highlight the significance of dance in all Egyptian activities, emphasizing its magical prowess. Hüseyin Yavuz, in his book ‘*First There Was Dance*,’ labels dance as the “magical art of transitioning to the World of Gods,” explaining it as, “In its most primitive form, dance is the way people express their powerlessness in the face of nature, moving without moving, leaving everything to the flow of nature, spontaneously engaging in regular, sequential, rhythmic movements” (Yavuz, 2015). While dance’s aesthetics and rhythm elevate it to an art form, it simultaneously serves as a universal rite of passage for individuals entering the unknown world. As Hüseyin Yavuz aptly stated, “dance, as a ritual transformed into art, has always existed and will continue to exist” (Yavuz, 2015). “The fusion of music, word art, and body language has become an inseparable whole. Beginning with primitive tribes, the magical ritual dances performed by people under the influence of their inner worlds and beliefs have persisted throughout civilization periods” (Lexová, 2012, p. 42).

“Among the surviving depictions, a noteworthy magical hunting dance from around 4,000 BC stands out. In this drawing (Figure 28), a man, adorned as a fox and wielding a flute-like instrument, is situated amidst representative figures of a giraffe, ox, and ram” (Hüseynova, 2019).



FIGURE 28 *Dance of Spell*, 4,000 BC, Source: Gruber 1941, s. 172

In Goya's masterpiece "*Incantation 1797*," **owls, flying** monsters, and grotesque figures with unsettling faces are employed to explore the theme of magic, creating a vivid and exaggerated portrayal (Figure 29)

Renowned for his mixed media art, Ugo Rondinone (1964-) presents "*Seven Magic Mountains*, 2016," an outdoor installation (Figure 30). In this artwork, colorful primitive totems, constructed from vibrant rocks in the Nevada desert, provide a contemporary perspective on past values (See Section 2.2.3 and Section 4.1.6, Göbeklitepe obelisks). Rondinone critically examines the relationship between his art and primitive art, showcasing innovation in materials despite the primitive forms (thisiscolossal.n.d.).



FIGURE 29 *Francisco Jose de Goya, Incantation, 1797, Museo Lazaro Galdiano*

Communities persist today in their belief in totems. Turning to literature from other artistic realms, J.K. Rowling's novel "*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*" faced bans from 12 publishers due to its magical elements. However, Bloomsbury Publishing defied the restrictions in 1997, propelling Rowling into billionaire status (Rowling, 2016). The novel was prohibited in the USA on the grounds of conflicting with Christian values. In 2001, director Chris Columbus adapted it into a film. The immense popularity of "*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*" can be attributed, in part, to its rich mythological influences. Characters, animals, creatures, objects, and events draw inspiration from diverse mythological sources. Gods, goddesses, the cosmos, nature's existence, legends, magical animals, and monsters all constitute elements of mythology, serving as wellsprings of inspiration for humanity. The Harry Potter narrative transcends the boundaries of novels and movies, spawning a thriving industry. Harry Potter museums, cafes, merchandise, and toys continue to captivate a broad audience (Yavaş, 2022).

The persistence of certain beliefs within the frameworks of magic, the evil eye, fortune-telling, mediums, and astrology in today's society underscores the latent or overt role of magic in the social system. Notably, magical objects and images find applications in contemporary art. It is crucial to emphasize that this usage aims not to perform magic but rather to interpret the artist's world.



FIGURE 30 *Ugo Rondinone, Seven Magic Mountains, 2016, Nevada.*

While magic rituals were once construed as social obligations in primitive societies, they have evolved into expressions of individual utilitarianism today. As Erel (1997) observes, “Contemporary individuals, alienated from the societies they inhabit, may find themselves in greater need of magic than ever” (p. 72). Andre Breton supported this notion, stating that “over time, art has assumed the function of magic” (Aydın, 2007, p. 31).

This section delves into the historical entanglement of magic and art, where both have often intersected, attempting to comprehend and influence the world through supernatural avenues. It underscores that magic, executed through supernatural means, serves various purposes—realizing thoughts, desires, or emotions, finding solutions to existing problems, and planning for the future. In essence, magic involves transcending the ordinary flow of life and challenging boundaries through supernatural means, imbuing it with a sense of exaggeration.

4.1.5 The Role of Exaggeration in Ornamentation

The act of adorning bodies with paint and embellishing specific body parts with jewelry, whether for spellcasting, protection from malevolence and the evil eye, expression of belief, ritualistic purposes, or the desire to attract attention and admiration, manifests in diverse forms across cultures. Initially, these adornments served not merely an aesthetic purpose but carried a mystical significance, acting as a safeguard against malevolent forces. Body painting, believed to ward off evil spirits and insects, finds expression in the masks and jewelry employed during ceremonies, showcasing the remarkable artistry of indigenous

peoples (Figure 31). At times, the jewelry utilized exhibits a level of extravagance that extends to distorting organ shapes and even piercing ears and nasal septums. In primitive societies, the act of adorning, alongside body and face painting, encapsulates a magical essence (Yağmur, 2007). Even weapons and household items become canvases for artistic embellishments, integrating elements such as jewelry and ceremonial objects. Totems stand out as significant examples of ornamentation in indigenous art (See Section 4.1.4.) (Figure 30). Laden with symbols reminiscent of the clan's ancestors, totems narrate the traditions and legends intrinsic to the clan.



FIGURE 31 *A painted Kwele mask and a Tuva Shaman headdress found in Gabon, a Central African country.*

The embellishment of weapons, sacred artifacts, and handcrafted items by primitive individuals through patterns, engravings, embroidery, and similar techniques inherently serves symbolic functions. The representation or symbol of the plant, animal, or object they anticipate assistance from, or that already aids them, signifies their own essence, fostering a sense of integration (Levy Bruhl, 2020, p.224). Shamanic attire, adorned during shamanic rites, introduces an unusual and magical dimension to the surroundings, amplifying the ritual's grandiosity and theatricality. "The headgear worn holds an indispensable role for the shaman during rituals and stands as one of the most sacred materials. The inclusion of eagle feathers in the headdress is believed to facilitate the shaman's ability to fly" (Yardımcı, 2017, p.518) (Figure 31).

4.1.6 Instances of Exaggeration in the Symbols Göbeklitepe

In Section 2.2.3, titled “The Relationship between Exaggeration and the Concepts of Supernatural Beings, Extremism, Fear, The Uncanny, and Grotesque,” Göbeklitepe has been examined (Figure 32). German archaeologist Klaus Schmidt commenced the excavation of Göbeklitepe, dating back 12,000 years to the present, in 1995. Unfortunately, he passed away prematurely, but he managed to convey his findings at Göbeklitepe to us through a book.



FIGURE 32 *Göbeklitepe, 9.600-9.500 BC, Şanlıurfa.*

In his work “*Göbeklitepe, the Mysterious Sanctuary of Stone Age Hunters/Builders of the Oldest Temple*” (Schmidt, 2007), Schmidt stated: “In a vast area between the Tigris and the Euphrates, a significant ‘symbol system’ was discovered, underscoring its importance as a repository of ‘cultural memory’ (Schmidt, 2007). Among the abstract symbols, the T-shaped obelisks, each measuring 3-6 m in height and weighing 15-16 tons, are believed to represent ancient mythological narratives (Schmidt, 2007; Potts, 2012, p. 158; Laneri, 2015, p. 86; Sagona, 2006, p. 38).

Göbeklitepe boasts arrangements resembling hieroglyphics, reliefs, and grotesque symbols depicting hybrid creatures and frightening combinations of human and animal figures. These elements have endured through the ages as examples of ancient creativity and exaggeration (Schmidt, 2007). The obelisks, with their impressive weight, grand dimensions, monumentality, and numerical density, are surprising and can be associated with exaggeration, considering the era of their construction. In his study titled “*The Transformation of the Phallus Image in Art*,” Altaş likens the obelisks to phalluses, stating: “Göbeklitepe obelisks can be seen as the first phallus cults. The obelisks in question represent a vertical masculine stance against the feminine cults of nature. In later periods,

both Ancient Greek and Ancient Roman societies attached particular importance to phallus cults” (Altaş, 2021) (See Exaggeration in Mythology, Section 4.4) (Figure 8). This site, predating the Egyptian Pyramids by 7,500 years and Stonehenge by 7,000 years (Yıldırım, 2016), where we can trace ancient traces of exaggeration, prompts inquiries into the motivations behind its construction (Collins, 2014). Meanwhile, in 1997, another site named Karahantepe was discovered in Şanlıurfa, with excavations commencing in September 2019. Some sources suggest that it predates Göbeklitepe (See Section 2.2.3) (ktb.gov.tr.).

4.2 Exploration of the Exaggeration Concept in Mystery, Authority, and Hierarchy as Periodic Themes

In the Neolithic period (10,000-6,000 BC), which followed the Paleolithic period, people moved from hunter-gathering to settled life. Spivey: “The people who settled around the Nile River were characterized by a sense of authority, consistency in their social life, conservatism, order and hierarchy, which determined the way they created works of art” (Spivey, 2015). The discovery of agriculture brought about the settled order, the first villages were established, and farming and trade began. With agriculture and animal husbandry, the relationship between man and nature became different and shaped art. People, who experienced serious problems such as floods, droughts or animals perishing due to diseases, famine and hunger, began to look at nature with suspicion and fear. Therefore, since people could not trust nature in this period, art developed in an abstractionist and symbolist direction. In his book “*Abstraction and Identification*”, Wilhelm Worringer explains all artistic creations with two basic concepts: “the instinct of identification for naturalistic art and the instinct of abstraction for anti-naturalistic abstractionist art” (Worringer, 2017). Worringer thought that art could only be explained from a psychological perspective. “In identification, man turns to objects outside his own existence, and in their existence, he experiences his own emotions and spiritual activity, his freedom. However, for this to happen, there must first arise an interest of trust and sympathy between man and nature and natural objects. Such an interest of trust and sympathy leads man to nature and objects. Man attributes his own emotions and spiritual activity to these objects he encounters. Aesthetic pleasure becomes a product born in such a process. Aesthetic pleasure originates from the experience of recognizing and connecting one’s own emotions with an object that becomes a receptacle for those emotions.” (Tunalı, 1983, p.140). According to Worringer, people’s

love of nature and identification with nature brings naturalistic art to society. In the Neolithic period, the relationship between society and nature turned into a struggle for survival due to agriculture-based life. The love of nature was replaced by fear and distrust, and nature was no longer an object of pleasure but a source of life. Therefore, distrust of nature led to abstractionist art, which was explained by Worringer's instinct for abstraction (Worringer, 2017). Tunalı, on the other hand, explained that fearful, insecure people find peace with abstract art as follows: "...only abstract art forms provide people with peace and happiness as absolute values" (Tunalı, 1983, p.141).

Therefore, in Neolithic civilizations such as Sumer, Babylon, Assyria and Akkad, art was symbolic, schematic and abstractive due to their cultural structures and living conditions. Tansug describes Mesopotamian painting as follows: "Paintings and reliefs in Mesopotamia do not adhere to a strict schematism. Although the figures conform to the common scheme in which the head is in profile, the torso from the front and the legs from the profile, they evoke a sense of free movement and rhythm" (Tansuğ, 1995, p.36). Artists have to follow the rules and present everything in accordance with expectations. Therefore, they have no other way but to follow a rule with great consistency (Gombrich 1972, p.34-35). Baysal explains this in his book "*Deformation in Painting*" as follows: "The abstraction and deformation in question here were carried out against the will of the painter, and the historical conditions he was in conditioned him" (Baysal, 2021, p.29). Exaggeration emerged as a characteristic of the period, as an attitude spread throughout the period. People met with exaggeration within those stereotyped standards.

The Sumerians, dating back to 5,500-4,000 BC, stand as the pioneering civilization to discover writing. Sumerian script, known as cuneiform (3,300-3,200 BC), was inscribed on soft clay tablets through the imprint of metal pieces, later solidified by baking. This method facilitated the documentation of significant records, such as the dominion of the state, governmental power, wars and treaties, and the exaltation of heroes. The epics, legends, laments recounting disasters, hymns praising kings and gods, animal tales, and literary Sumerian documents recorded the Sumerians' imaginative prowess, worldview, social life, religious beliefs, and sacred beings endowed with supernatural powers (Yücel, 2016). Sumerians also engaged in the creation and utilization of seals (Ancient History, 2018). Hieroglyphics, emerging subsequently, are recognized as the Egyptian script. In eras where literacy was absent, people learned essential concepts through stylized images conveyed by

the masters of that time, akin to the stylization observed in Egyptian hieroglyphs. Schematic painting became a conduit for expression and learning (Baysal, 2021, p. 29).

Mesopotamia holds a pivotal place in human history, earning it the designation of the ‘cradle of civilizations.’ In Sections 2.2.3 and 4.1.6 of this study, Göbeklitepe in Şanlıurfa, situated within Mesopotamian borders, and the exaggerated symbols found there were expounded upon. Schmidt, in his work “*Göbeklitepe: the Mysterious Sanctuary of Stone Age Hunters*,” underscores the vast symbol system in the enigmatic region between the Euphrates and Tigris, emphasizing its role as a cultural memory repository (Schmidt, 2007). The T-shaped standing stones discovered in Göbeklitepe, each weighing 15-16 tons and towering at 3-6 meters, adorned with relief animal symbols—six-legged, insect-like creatures, fat antennae, triangular-headed animals, snakes, foxes, and grotesque abstract symbols—can be associated with the theme of exaggeration (Figure 7). Meanwhile, excavation efforts commenced at Karahan Tepe, unearthed in 1997 in the same region of Şanlıurfa, believed to predate Göbeklitepe.

Ancient Egypt, dating back to 3100 BC, stands as the prominent civilization of the era alongside Mesopotamian cultures. Egypt, surpassing its neighbors in cultural advancement, is renowned for its splendid and colossal structures. Papyri, pyramids, and temples dedicated to gods and pharaohs serve as pivotal symbols embodying Egyptian culture (Hüseynova, 2019). The belief in the afterlife significantly influenced the sculptural art of mummification, tombs, and monuments in Egypt. The conviction of posthumous resurrection led to a strong emphasis on creating sculptures resembling the deceased, crafted from durable materials. Realism in sculptures and reliefs originated from this belief (Child, 1998, p. 119). Spivey asserts that the coherence, order, and hierarchy in the social lives of Egyptians along the Nile River influenced their art. Egyptian art exhibits an anti-naturalist approach, resembling a dictionary definition of figures due to their schematic nature rooted in cultural structures (Yalım, 2021, pp. 268-276). According to Spivey, “Forms of artistic production caused by cultural structures have continued almost unchanged for three thousand years” (2015).

The appearance, stance, and skin colors of each Egyptian god were meticulously predetermined (Gombrich, 1972, p.38; Yücel, 2016). Consequently, deviations from these predetermined details were not anticipated. The application of rules resulted in a harmonious and balanced composition in artworks. Throughout Egyptian history, prayers and spells consistently addressed the god Osiris, a symbol of death and rebirth in Egyptian mythology.

Osiris, responsible for fertility and plant growth with his green skin, is depicted in white attire symbolizing mummification and the anticipation of rebirth (Öztürk, 2016). The sacred trinity representing the Osiris family (874-850 BC) is considered the nucleus of divine unity. Father Osiris, adorned with a shroud and a crown symbolized by an ostrich feather, crouches on a pillar. His son Horus, the falcon-headed savior, wears a double royal crown, while Isis, the mother and wife, dons a horn on her head and a universal solar disk (Figure 33).

Dance holds significance in palace events in Egypt and is believed to possess magical power, as emphasized in Section 4.1.4, “*Common Origin in the Expressions of Art & Magic and the Role of Exaggeration.*” Additionally, the interaction between art disciplines is exemplified by Stanley Kubrick’s 1996 film “*A Clockwork Orange.*” Kubrick incorporates the eye of Horus, an ancient Egyptian symbol, within a pyramid. This symbol also represents the Illuminati sect, of which Kubrick was a member, potentially aiming to attract mass attention to the cult through subconscious messaging (Özfen, 2018). Another instance is Alex Proyas’ 2016 action film “*Gods of Egypt,*” with a script rooted in Egyptian mythology and gods. Nickolaj Coster-Waldau stars as Horus, the God/King of Egypt. The narrative surrounding Osiris encompasses tragedy, hope, and the promise of eternal life. Greek and Egyptian stories, myths, and symbols have frequently been adapted for American cinema.

In the painting “*Osiris and Isis*” (1985-1987) by Anselm Kiefer (Figure 34), a prominent figure in modern art’s New Expressionism movement, a contemporary perspective is applied to past values. The painting, based on the mythology of the creation of ‘Osiris and Isis,’ portrays the story of death and resurrection. Kiefer opts for dark colors emphasizing death, loneliness, and the uncanny, utilizing unconventional materials such as copper wire and porcelain, alongside paint, to depict a pyramid. The diverse materials on the canvas, with their hardness, repulsiveness, and multi-layered composition, provide volume to the painting, ensuring the integration of mixed materials with content. The grandeur, size of the pyramid, and the conveyed emotions of violence, fear, death, alienation, and the uncanny are palpable through the colors and materials employed. Depictions of death, piles of fresh soil, dark red soil colors, rusty hues, and the decay and destruction of rust induce tension in the viewer, making the artwork memorable (Gündüz& Enginoğlu, 2018; Kolay, 2021). The painting “*Osiris and Isis*” also draws attention with its substantial size,

associating the sense of ostentation and sublimity with exaggeration due to its mystical and uncanny ambiance.

Kiefer frequently incorporates piles of rubble in empty spaces, portraying ruined architecture or a destroyed landscape to convey the destruction and darkness associated with war.



FIGURE 33 *Holy Trinity - Osiris family, Father Osiris, Son Horus and Mother Isis, 874-850 BC, gold, Lapis Lazuli, 9 x 6.60 cm, Louvre Museum, Egyptian Department, Paris*



FIGURE 34 *Anselm Kiefer, Isis and Osiris, 1985-87, Lead, Acrylic, Oil, Clay, Porcelain, Wire, Cable, 340x690cm, MoMA, SF.*

The figures central to Egypt's political and social order are depicted on a grander scale than those of lesser social and political significance. The magnitude of these figures correlates with their societal importance, portraying captives and slaves in subservient, even diminished, arrangements (Kadı, 2019). This hierarchical scale, as defined by Lois Fichner Rathus, the author of 'Foundations of Art and Design,' is "the use of size to show the relative importance of objects or people in a composition" (Rathus, 2008, p. 252). *Section 4.6 of the study, "Elements and Principles of Composition, Processes of Interpretation, and Exaggeration in Plastic Arts,"* discusses the concept of hierarchical scale. Furthermore, under the heading "Meaning, Origin, and Etymological Equivalent of the Word Exaggeration" in Section 2.1 of the study, it is highlighted that the pharaoh, the most significant figure in Egyptian art, was portrayed as larger than life due to societal perceptions, despite being of normal height in reality (Hockney and Gayford, 2017) (Figure 1). However, this exaggeration must be contextualized within the conditions and expectations of the era.

The Egyptian pyramids, constructed as pharaoh tombs around 2500 BC, can be considered exaggerated structures when considering the challenges of their construction, their exaggerated dimensions, and the use of large and cumbersome materials (Yılmaz, 2021). Even in the 21st century, the mystery of their construction remains unsolved. These structures transcend their time.

The Pyramid of Cheops (Figure 35), the largest among the pyramids and one of the Seven Wonders of the World, utilized limestones floated along the river during seasonal floods for construction. Today, excluding galleries and the burial chamber, it stands intact. Comprising two million three hundred thousand stones, each weighing an average of two and a half tons, it spans an area of thirteen acres and stands at a height of one hundred and thirty-seven meters (Tansey, 1986, pp. 78-79). The concept of exaggeration in architecture can be assessed through the lens of large-scale structures, construction techniques, the exaggerated use of colors and forms, as well as the construction method and duration (Yılmaz, 2021). Burke underscored the impact of monumental works on the imagination, stating, "For the sublimity of the works, the grandeur of the dimensions seems necessary; for the imagination cannot reach the concept of infinity from a few small parts" (Burke, 2008, p. 79). He proposed that grand structures pushing boundaries could capture infinity and sublimity.



FIGURE 35 *Pyramid of Cheops, 2580-2560 BC, 139 m, Egypt*

In summary, when examining the civilizations of Mesopotamia and Egypt in the Neolithic period, it becomes evident that art was governed by strict rules and laws, adopting a schematic, symbolic, and abstract nature. Consequently, artists were not expected to be wholly original. Therefore, discussing the use of exaggeration as a tool to interpretation proves challenging. The paintings employ a hierarchical scale, portraying the most significant figures in Egypt's political and social order on a larger scale than figures of lesser social and political importance. The magnitude of the figures corresponds to their societal significance, while captives and slaves are represented in kneeling or diminutive formations. Even if this scaling is associated with exaggeration, it emerges as a pervasive necessity throughout the era.

4.3 Exploration of Exaggeration in the Ideal of “Looking Good Means Being Good (Flawless And Magnificent)”

The ideal of *Kalokagathia* (good-beautiful), deeply rooted in Greek philosophy, revolves around the concepts of good and beautiful. It emphasizes the holistic excellence of individuals, encompassing physical, mental, and moral dimensions, highlighting the harmony of ethical and aesthetic qualities (Yıldiran, 2011, p.7). Socrates asserted that there is no distinction between the good and the beautiful, stating that they are elements achieving their goals correctly within the same pursuit (Tunalı, 2008, p.24). This ontological connection between the beautiful and the good permeated Greek philosophy, extending from Plato (refer to Section 2.2.6, The Relationship between Exaggeration and the Concepts of Transcendence, Ideal, Sublime, Beautiful and Ugly). In his discourse, Tekin mentioned the expression of the Greek culture's understanding, “Looking good means you are good” (Tekin, 2017, p.149). This section delves into how Greek culture transitioned from the ideal

of “Looking good means you are good” to exaggeration.

Ancient Greek culture initially felt the influence of Egyptian civilization, characterized by consistency, order, grandeur, and distinct lines. Nevertheless, it later distanced itself from this influence, scrutinizing the human body in intricate detail and endeavoring to convey reality authentically in their sculptures (Tekin, 2017). Unfortunately, examples that thoroughly define Greek art have not survived to the present day. However, evidence suggests that, for the first time in art history within the Greek world, the human body broke free from molds, gaining independence and portraying a force capable of dynamic movement. The gap between gods and humans vanished in the Greek world. As they believed that gods were in perfect human form, they crafted magnificent sculptures with flawless proportions, reflecting the ideal concept of beauty. Idealization, as described in Keser Art Dictionary, refers to the depiction of images in accordance with the premises of the ideal form, signifying a form of aesthetic deformation to produce idealized forms (Keser, 2009). The artist’s ability to connect past, present, and future, create images, and shape them in alignment with societal values contributes to the pursuit of perfection. The act of creation can be seen as the artist’s quest for perfection. Given that it is impractical for all bodies to reflect ideal beauty with the same freshness, youth, and exact measurements, idealization points beyond the ordinary, and according to Keser’s dictionary, it can be considered a form of aesthetic deformation (Baysal, 2021, p.24). Deformation, in turn, signifies exaggeration.

Greek artists, the first civilization to capture realism, continued their path by exaggerating it as they found reality boring and deviated from the ideal understanding of beauty. The boredom with reality rekindled the inclination for exaggeration inherited from mankind’s ancestors. To enhance aesthetic perception in the brain, they exaggerated the perfect forms created in accordance with specific rules. In the end, the Greeks, capturing realism in their art, continued by exaggerating it (Spivey, 2005).

“The Kritios Boy, 480 BC” (Figure 36) stands as a crucial example showcasing the Greeks’ journey to perfection and a significant expression of the Greek culture’s understanding of “Looking good means you are good” (Tekin, 2017, p.149). The Greeks’ departure from this ideal understanding of beauty can be observed through the relationship between mathematics and beauty established by Polykleitos. Polykleitos argued that beauty is a mathematical calculation, with tension, symmetry, and balance being the elements constituting the concept of beauty (Spivey, 2005, p.75). Polykleitos’ aesthetic philosophy

aligns with the thoughts of Pythagoras, who posited that everything is a number and can be measured through mathematics. Aristotle, associating beauty in art with mathematical arrangements, emphasized the highest forms of beauty to be order, symmetry, and determination, elements demonstrated by mathematical sciences (Aristotle 1996, p. 539). Plato, influenced by Pythagoreanism in his later years, explained the structure and functioning of the universe through numbers, asserting that the beauty of a form is a mathematical beauty derived from the proportion of numbers. According to Aristotle, beauty involves a proportion that can be mathematically determined. The use of ratio and proportion has been a consistent method for determining beauty from Ancient Greece to the present day (Vitruvian Man, see Figure 52, Golden Ratio, see Figure 53) (Timuçin, 2003, p.23). Plotinos, attributing beauty to proportion and symmetry, stated that beauty in visible things consists of symmetry and proportion, as in everything else (Richter 1951, p. 5). Although figures made before Polykleitos successfully expressed the reality, they were quite immobile. With Polykleitos, movement infused sculptures. The inclination to exaggerate returned, driven by the question of why reality should be imitated when those who wanted to see a real human body could simply look around them. The inclusion of movement and exaggeration in sculptures can be seen in the work titled *'The Riace Bronze'* (Figure 37) (Spivey, 2005, pp. 61-81). The sculpture features anatomical details, such as hip, abdominal, and chest muscles, and a deep back channel, even beyond what an athlete would possess. Consequently, *'The Riace Bronze'* sculpture marks the initiation of exaggeration.

For instance, the colossal "David" sculpture, reminiscent of Polykleitos' renowned masterpiece "Doryphoros, Athlete Carrying a Spear, 440 BC," stands at an impressive height of 5 meters. Regarded as a pinnacle of Renaissance sculpture and an emblem of Florence, this statue impeccably exemplifies both scale and proportion while embodying the ideal. (Figure 38) Symbolizing the ideal, the statue exemplifies both scale and proportion, representing the relationship between the human spirit, personal courage, and a young athletic body (Toman 1995, p. 220).



FIGURE 36 *The Kritios Boy*", 480 BC, Sculpture, Marble from Paros, 117 cm, Acropolis Museum, Athens, Greece.



FIGURE 37 *The Riace Bronze*" Bronze statues, 460-450 BC, 198 cm, "Museo Nazionale della Magna Grecia, Reggio Calabria Italy.



FIGURE 38 *Michelangelo, David, 1504, marble, 5,17 m, Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence, Italy.*

During the Hellenistic era, Greek culture embraced a more open-minded artistic philosophy, wherein the art of sculpture witnessed a conspicuous manifestation of creative transcendence through inspiration drawn from mythological themes. Sculptures, conveying expressions of pain, fear, joy, and a sense of movement as if poised to leap from their pedestals, underscored this artistic evolution (Baysal, 2021, p.61). As articulated by Gombrich, “Hellenistic art aimed to captivate individuals with its striking essence and indeed succeeded in doing so” (Gombrich, 2016, p.108). The sculptural ensemble “*Laocoon and His Sons*” serves as a notable exemplar (Figure 11). Section 2.2.6, titled “*The Relationship between Exaggeration and the Concepts of Transcendence, Ideal, Sublime, Beautiful and Ugly,*” elucidates the concept of transcendence in art through the prism of the Laocoon image. In addressing the use of mythological narratives in art, Lessing posited: “Both poetry and plastic arts bring non-existent objects before us and make them present, yet both remain illusions” (Lessing, 1887). Mythological narratives, with their epic quality challenging our perception of reality, inherently encapsulate the element of exaggeration (Yılmaz, 2021) (See Section 4.4, Exaggeration in Mythology).

The ‘Villa dei Misteri’ frescoes (Figure 39), surviving from Roman painting, depict figures deliberately exaggerated and rendered larger than usual to impart a heightened sense of sublimity (Farthing, 2012, p.64).

Akademi' website, Sarıkaya associates myths with 'being creative' and links 'creator' to godhood, asserting that "Art is essentially grounded in the creation of mythology at some point" (Sarıkaya, 2022.). The ubiquity and potency of mythology can be attributed to humanity's inclination towards exaggeration, where the allure of the extravagant, powerful, and impactful intertwines with the desire to transcend one's own limitations.

4.4.1 Dionysus: Deity of Contemporary Art

The significance of Dionysus lies in its symbolic implications within the realm of art. Due to being an exemplar of representation in art, it has been deemed fitting to scrutinize Dionysus among mythological characters.

Greek mythology stands as the most influential source of inspiration in European art and literature. The gods Apollo and Dionysus have been recurrently depicted in various artistic manifestations. Expounding upon the victory of Apollo over Dionysus and the ensuing dynamic conflict between the two, *Section 2.2.6 titled "The Relationship between Exaggeration and the Concepts of Transcendence, Ideal, Sublime, Beautiful and Ugly"* references Nietzsche's articulation of Greek mythology. Nietzsche, in shaping the foundations of philosophy based on the attributes of "Apollo" and "Dionysus," and identified music and lyric poetry as Dionysian arts. In his work *"The Birth of Tragedy: Out of the Spirit of Music,"* Nietzsche describes the ceremonies dedicated to Dionysus: "These festivals are vibrant to the utmost, disregarding gender distinctions, conducted in a specific location, in a state of isolation. Generational fluctuations surpass the rules of tradition adhered to by each family, and a milieu is created as if the most ferocious wild elements of nature have unleashed themselves, where, in the most peculiar manner, excessive love intertwines with predation" (Nietzsche, 2009). This expression by Nietzsche resonates with Mikhail Bakhtin's carnivals (Bahtin, 2005), as expounded in the detailed discussion under the title *"Public Entertainment, the Carnival Spirit"* (*Section 2.2.2*). The liberating, topsy-turvy, and extravagant spirit of carnival can be considered Dionysian. While the Saturn Festival in Rome was once governed according to the desires of the god Dionysus, it transformed into a carnival with the establishment of Christianity as the official religion in Rome. In contrast to Apollo, the embodiment of reason, Dionysus represents madness, exaggeration, change, exuberance, enthusiasm, innovation, ecstasy, and creativity (Acar, 2011, p. 237-252). He

encompasses everything that constitutes expressionist and nonconformist art. Dionysus, a Greek god, has been portrayed in stories, reliefs, sculptures, and frescoes. Although Dionysus is often referred to as the God of wine, he symbolizes not only the intoxicating effects of wine but also the sociability that accompanies it (Özcan, 2019).

Over time, Dionysus festivals evolved into classical Greek theater. In contemporary art, feminist art, happenings, performance art, and body art can be linked to Dionysus festivals and theater. With the advent of the concept of performance in art during the 20th century, art transformed into theater, dance, and music.

Notably, the Baroque period prominently featured Dionysus festival scenes. Dionysus paintings initiated by Caravaggio and continued by Velasquez and Rubens depict Dionysus shedding his divine glory and adopting human characteristics (Figure 40). The Renaissance and Baroque periods portrayed Silenus, Dionysus's companion, as a figure in Dionysus festivals, characterized by a flat nose, corpulence, ugliness, old age, and a perpetual state of drunkenness, leading to constant falls from his donkey. Silenus, encapsulating all the negative aspects of wine and ecstasy in Dionysian religion contrary to Dionysus's divinity, gained significance in Renaissance and Baroque painting, and he emerged as a pivotal figure in Dionysus festivals in the arts (Güzel, 2006) (Figure 40).

When contemplating the traces of mythology in art, classical art production typically comes to mind. However, an examination of contemporary art and its exaggerated language suggests that today's art creates a mythical world. The disruptive, innovative, rebellious, contradictory, revolutionary, unregulated, and overflowing nature of contemporary art can be regarded as a Dionysian uprising. In his article titled "Mythology and Contemporary Art," Bazyar underscores the irregularity in contemporary art by asserting, "If the God of Fine Arts is Apollo, the God of Contemporary Art is Dionysus" (Bazyar, 2016). Dionysus's anarchist and avant-garde attitude holds paramount importance in the development of art, ushering in innovation, enthusiasm, exuberance, rebelliousness, excitement, irregularity, the pushing of limits, and exaggeration.



FIGURE 40 Peter Paul Rubens, *Drunken Silenus*, (1617-18), oil on wood, 212x214,5cm, Bavarian State Painting Collections.

4.4.2 Pan and Symbolic Concepts

Pan, one of the deities of Greek mythology, assumes the role of the protective deity for forests, shepherds, satyrs, and herds of animals. Given its frequent utilization to symbolically represent concepts across various artistic domains, Pan has been selected as an exemplary figure. The symbol of Pan is intricately linked to notions of wildness, fear, vitality, sexuality, and fertility. Depictions often portray Pan running through rustic landscapes, engrossed in musical endeavors, and abruptly startling onlookers.

Particularly prominent in 17th-century art, Pan finds detailed representation in the works of French writer and historian Pierre Grimal. In his work, “*A Concise Dictionary of Classical Mythology*,” Grimal delineates Pan as the god of shepherds and herds, possessing a visage that is part human, part animal, with a distinctively wrinkled face and a prominent chin. Noteworthy are the two horns adorning Pan’s forehead, a hairy body, and lower extremities akin to a male goat, complete with split hooves. Pan exhibits swiftness in his movements, effortlessly scaling rocky terrains. His adeptness at concealing himself within thickets, either to observe fairies or to rest, renders disturbing him at noon a perilous endeavor (Grimal, 2023). In an effort to interpret his fears, man used his imagination, employing exaggeration to transform extraordinary narratives into allegorical stories, myths, and fragmented beliefs. “The image of Pan is indicative of an archaic era when gods were predominantly envisaged in animal form rather than in human guise. Singular among the

gods, Pan experiences death, a consequence of the cultural shift towards personifying deities in human form” (Olgunlu, 2020, p.215). Pan’s vivacity and exuberance are symbolized by his half-man, half-goat form, a grotesque image aligning with the concept of exaggeration. The term “grotesque” originated from figures on cave walls juxtaposing the human body with those of plants and animals or merging disparate animal bodies in a fantastical manner (Ünlüaycıl, 2003, p. 69). Cömert expounds on the association between Pan and panic, asserting, “Pan is markedly disconcerting for both humans and other living beings owing to his appearance. His sudden manifestations and unsettling sounds terrify those traversing desolate terrains. The term ‘panic’ itself stems from the fear instilled by Pan” (Cömert, 2019, p. 66).

In a research article, Batur and Başdoğan underscore Pan’s significance as an artistic symbol, noting, “While Pan may not stand among the twelve revered gods of Olympus, and grand temples may not bear his name, his embodiment in nature and vibrant representation of nature’s variability as a symbol have served as enduring wellsprings of inspiration. This inspiration extends beyond the realm of painting, influencing other visual arts, music, literature, and poetry for millennia. Pan, in this context, emerges as a symbol encapsulating the inseparable connection between humanity and nature, reflected in the realm of art” (Batur and Başdoğan, 2022).

Painter Eren Eyüboğlu integrates Pan and Karagöz into Matisse’s dancing figures in the painting “Dance, 1949” (Figure 42). The presence of Pan in the composition heightens the sensuality of the dance, complemented by the rhythmic resonance of the pan flute (Erhat, 2008, p.235). Consequently, Eren Eyüboğlu seamlessly melds the origins of fauvism with elements drawn from mythology and traditional culture (Atan, 2021, p. 123-124).



FIGURE 41 Carlos Schwabe, *The Faun, A faun playing the flute*, 1923, 115x146 cm, Geneva Museum of Art and History.



FIGURE 42 Eren Eyüboğlu, *“Dance, 1949,”* Gouache on paper, 49x63 cm, Eyüboğlu Family Collection.

The painting “The Faun” by the symbolist painter Carlos Schwabe, painted in 1923, is also a self-portrait of the painter (Figure 41). The counterpart of Faun, the god of the countryside in Roman mythology, in Greek mythology is Pan, and he is depicted playing his flute in the open countryside (Batur and Başdoğan,2022). The Faun, in half-man, half-goat form, is a grotesque figure and can be associated with exaggeration.

Fernando Arrabal, one of the playwrights of the absurd theater, called some of his plays Panic Theater and adapted the word “panic” from the name Pan, the god of shepherds. He frequently used grotesque figures in his plays, Pan being one of them (Yanikkaya, 2003, p. 173-178).

4.4.3 Priapus (Phallus Cult)

In the Modern and Postmodern periods, the examination of Priapus under the mythology heading is deemed appropriate due to the utilization of the phallus image as a sign in art and its association with exaggeration.

Throughout history, diverse cultures have symbolized fertility with the mother goddess (See Section 4.1.2 The Mother Archetype and the Approach of Exaggeration), while desire has found representation in the phallus image. In Greek and Roman Mythology, Priapus, the son of Dionysus and Aphrodite, is recognized as the god of sexuality, masculinity, and reproduction. Priapus was positioned within vineyards, serving as a scarecrow to safeguard the crops. It was believed that he warded off thieves by violating them (Altaş in 2021). Priapus, depicted as a small and unattractive man, is characterized by his genital organ, which is proportionally elongated. Owing to its exaggerated proportions, the genitalia is described as deformed, ugly, obscene, uncanny, and comical (Eco, 2019, p.131). The statue of Priapus is housed in the Izmir Ephesus Museum.

Some perspectives regard the standing stones of Göbeklitepe (See Section 4.2.3 and Section 4.1.6) as the earliest manifestations of phallus cults. Altaş asserts, “These standing stones exhibit a vertical masculine posture in opposition to the feminine cults of nature” (Altaş, 2021). According to Zizek, “Göbeklitepe protrudes as a phallic element” (Zizek, 2005, p. 125). While Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome placed significance on phallus cults, the influence of Christianity in the West led to the diminishing display of the phallus, which was gradually replaced by iconography. Iconographic depictions obscured the phallus, resulting in the complete loss of its cult value. However, during the modern and postmodern periods, the phallus image underwent a transformation into a sign. Particularly noteworthy are the works of Constantin Brancusi (1876-1957), a pioneer of modernism in sculpture, such as “*Woman Looking into a Mirror, 1909*” and “*Princess X, 1915-1916*”. Additionally, the performance artist Barbara T. Smith’s (1931-) piece “*Field Piece, 1970*”, and the work “*Phallus Bottle, 1965*” by Japanese artist and writer Yayoi Kusama (1929-), renowned for her contributions to various art disciplines, serve as examples of phallus images created by artists. Kusama, in her piece, sought to overcome the fear of the phallus by integrating the object of desire onto all surfaces. As Altaş notes, “Every limb in the artwork is like a living and constantly moving organism” (Altaş, 2021, p.1-11).



FIGURE 43 *Priapos Figurine*

4.5 The Realm of Fairytales, the Fear of Bourgeois Civilization and Exaggeration - From the Earthly Church to the Heavenly Church

In the 12th and 13th centuries, a period that emerged in France and persisted across all of Europe until the 15th and 16th centuries, during the Gothic era influenced by the church, the sociological and psychological fears of individuals who found their era unsettling unfolded. The horror arising from societal division gave birth to a fantastical world populated by devils, ghosts, witches, monsters, marking the manifestation of bourgeois civilization's fears encapsulated through figures like Frankenstein and Dracula. Gombrich's interpretation of Gothic architecture as heavenly churches accentuates the divine's sublimity while underscoring human helplessness and insignificance in its presence. The association between these occurrences and exaggeration will be scrutinized within the context of plastic arts.

This epoch witnessed the upheaval of plague, significant political transformations, and the culmination of Crusades in defeat for the Christian world. The retreat of Europe against the Islamic realm, acting as a catalyst for social decay, ushered in the emergence of an alternative way of life. The monster and the vampire, representing the two dreadful facets of society—extremes of the pitiable wretch and the merciless property owner—serve as complements to each other. Moretti, in the “*The Dialectics of Fear*” section of his work “*Signs Taken for Wonders*,” defines the Gothic period by asserting, “*Horror literature unequivocally arises from the terror of a divided society and the desire to remedy it*”

(Moretti, 2018, p.105). The ambiance of fear engendered an enchanting world in art by embracing heightened imaginative endeavors. Rooted in transcending the ordinary within the overall atmosphere of the Gothic era, exaggeration becomes the cornerstone, involving the glorification of the divine, the portrayal of human wretchedness, i.e., mortality, and the exploration of fears associated with hell and monsters. Exaggeration finds its primary expression through architectural structures, the strategic use of light in churches adorned with soaring stained-glass windows directed towards God, and the incorporation of terrifying figures and religious motifs into the external facades of buildings.



FIGURE 44 *Chimeras (gargoyles) of the Cathedral of Notre Dame De Paris.*

The TDV encyclopedia summarizes the genesis of Gothic art: “Feudalism gave way to monarchies with cities taking the forefront. In this context, Gothic art was conceived by clergy members with the aim of reinstating authority over a populace that was losing faith and breaking free from the church’s influence” (TDV Encyclopedia of Islam). Medieval Europe, much like in various other domains, experienced a profound impact of faith in the realm of art. The gothic aesthetics, assuming the form of a style across different disciplines—from architecture to painting, literature, theater, and cinema—is characterized by its nourishment from supernatural elements and fear. Detailed exploration of “Gothic” is undertaken in Section 2.2.3 under the heading “*Supernatural Beings, Excessiveness, Fear, The Uncanny, and Grotesque.*” While Gothic originated from a spiritual world and a thought framework rooted in faith, it embodies a revolutionary spirit, particularly in terms of artistic and architectural dimensions (Demir, 2019, July 27). Gombrich’s assertion that Gothic style extends beyond technical innovation and his reference to Gothic architecture as heavenly churches resonates profoundly (Gombrich, 1972, p. 137). In Gothic architecture, the

relentless pursuit of constructing towering cathedrals and the impulse to connect with God through these structures are prominently highlighted.

In Romanesque architecture, structures exhibit a massive, fortress-like appearance with robust supporting pillars, round arches, thick walls, a limited number of windows, and towers, creating a sense of protection against malevolent attacks. In contrast, Gothic architecture replaces round arches with pointed ones, enabling an increase in height. Instead of thick, hefty walls, Gothic structures feature slender column bodies and expansive stained-glass windows, presenting a luminous, ethereal structure suspended in the air as if woven with a net. Gombrich accentuates the disparity between Gothic and Romanesque architecture, asserting that “a devout person could feel closer to understanding the mystery of the world here.” Gothic architecture, initially prominent in France, indicating refined taste and aesthetics, continued its influence across numerous European countries until the Renaissance Period. Nourished by supernatural elements, Gothic aesthetics permeated the collective consciousness with its monumental churches, cathedrals, and castles, emphasizing the concepts of the sublime, infinity, and greatness, highlighting the magnificence of God and the insignificance of humanity in the face of such grandeur (Mull, 2008, p. 18). Prominent features of Gothic architecture include large stained-glass windows, rose windows, and intersecting arches forming vaults (İlhan, 2021).

Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, a stellar example of French Gothic architecture, stands as one of the earliest Gothic cathedrals, undergoing construction throughout the Gothic period (1163-1250). Emphasizing the grandeur of God with its colossal dimensions, expansive stained-glass windows, and rose windows, it presents an exaggerated appearance through its embellishments, lofty ceilings, and an illusion of weightlessness. Gombrich underscores the impact of these structures on individuals with the observation, “...when we enter these large interior spaces, we feel that these dimensions make everything seem small” (Gombrich, 1972 p. 140). The psychological influence of Gothic buildings on viewers can be interpreted in the context of architecture’s relationship with exaggeration, as stated by Gombrich.

Examining the sculpture works of the Gothic period, we encounter **Gargoyle** and **Chimera**—peculiar, terrifying sculptures in grotesque Gothic architecture. These statuesque monsters were strategically placed on the exterior of buildings, cathedrals, in the mouths of water streams, and on roofs to serve as reminders of the fear of hell (See Section 2.2.3).

Grotesque, eerie creatures gaze at travelers from the walls of buildings (Figure 44). Thus, the period is interpreted through the lens of exaggerated fear.

The essence of Medieval Gothic finds expression in the paintings of English artist **Salvator Rosa** (1615-1673) (Section 2.2.3). His masterpiece “Scene of Witchcraft, 1640” (Figure 45) stands as a quintessential example of Gothic art (Hines, 2005, p. 32). The malevolent figures within the painting show no interest in the surrounding people. Hines elucidates this by stating, “This style is Salvator Rosa’s way of reminding that fears and fantasies are inside people and that they have the potential to carry a secret tawdriness” (p.33). The painting encapsulates both excess, uncanniness, and uncertainty. Therefore, excess and uncanniness can be associated with exaggeration. Özlem Şan, reflecting on this work, remarks: “Witches, old wives, gargoyles, creatures, dead people, counterfeiters, knights, corpses, skeletons... Figures working passionately in pursuit of their evil intentions and their theatrical stances as if they were on the stage or in street theater.” Salvator Rosa embraces all the characteristics of Gothic art with this painting and asserts: “This scene is dark, uncanny, ominous” (Şan, 2015, May 20).



FIGURE 45 Salvator Rosa, “*Scenes of Witchcraft: Evening*”, 1640. Cleveland Museum of Arts

Later, certain artistic experiments by Goya (1746-1828), particularly his series of engravings (*Los Caprichos*, 1799), garnered significant attention. In these engravings, the artist not only employed an exaggerated style in portraying the embodiment of demons, monsters, and devils but also depicted dreams in a realistic manner (Soyşekerci, 2018). The harrowing life of Goya’s Spain, coupled with the burden of his deafness, manifested in his

mind as an exaggeration (Section 2, The Concept of Exaggeration). As Goya underscores by stating “Imagination abandoned by reason creates impossible monsters, but it is also the mother of arts and creates miracles”, when the gates of dreams were opened, the feeling of uncanniness and fear was multiplied and this created devils, ghouls, witches and monsters. (Soyşekerci, 2019)

Examples of Gothic influences from disciplines beyond plastic arts are discussed in detail under the heading “Section 2.2.3, *The Relationship between Exaggeration and the Concepts of Supernatural Beings, Extremism, Fear, The Uncanny, and Grotesque.*” The literary expression of Gothic began with **Sir Horace Walpole**’s work “*The Castle of Otranto* (1764).” Mary Shelley’s “**Frankenstein**” and Bram Stoker’s “**Dracula**” vividly conveyed the fear of bourgeois civilization. The legend of “**King Kong** (1933, 1976, 2005)” also made its mark in cinema as one of the most iconic characters. Umberto Eco, by stating, “Through Dracula, the creature created by Dr. Frankenstein, Mr. Hyde, King Kong, we finally come to present day to find ourselves surrounded by zombies and aliens, we find new monsters in our midst. However, we not only fear them but also do not perceive them as messengers of God” (Eco, 2019, p. 127), emphasized the historical influence of religion on art. Simultaneously, he reminded that in every society, divisiveness is poised to give rise to new monsters. Instances such as black comedy and absurd theater, along with Goya’s “*Los Chinchillas* (1797-1798)” serving as inspiration for Hollywood’s portrayal of Frankenstein’s monster, are also elaborated upon under Section 2.2.3. “*Evliya Çelebi’s Travelogue*,” a reservoir of vampire tales contributing to extraordinary narratives, is comprehensively detailed under the title “Folk Narratives” in Section 2.2.9 of the study. In his article titled “*Magic in Evliya Çelebi’s Travelogue*,” Jean-Louis Bacque-Grammont highlights the compatibility of Evliya Çelebi’s vampire narratives with Dracula literature (Bacque-Grammont, 2009) (See Section 2.2.9).

It might be fitting to mention the **Bayeux Tapestry** (11th century) as an exemplary woven painting from the Middle Ages. It serves as an epic of the Anglo-Norman war, resembling a cinematic narrative with its 70m length and 50cm width in a strip format. As expounded in the study under the title of Section 2.2.9, “Folk Narratives,” the schematic figures on the tapestry amalgamate storytelling, painting, embroidery, earth, and sky in a shadowless surreal realm (Eyüboğlu and İpşiroğlu, 2013, p.36). Elements of person, place, time, and event exude extraordinary qualities. Yalın and Sipahioğlu aptly term such products

as “woven paintings” (Yalın and Sipahioğlu, 2021). Miniatures from manuscripts prepared in the 10th and 11th centuries in Medieval Europe (Saint-Sever Manuscript of the Book of Revelation, etc.) and miniatures in Islamic art created on book pages to elucidate the text represent a style of painting devoid of perspective, shadow, and light (Eco, 2019, 78). Contemporary textile art in the form of woven paintings also incorporates photorealistic approaches (Monique Lehman’s portrait textile paintings).

The Middle Ages, with its influence of religion and a backdrop of fear, encapsulates a period full of contradictions. It is understood from numerous stories of the era that obscenity, the amorphous and disturbing, the ridiculous, the ugliness, the grotesque were glorified and tolerated (evidenced by the use of feces instead of incense in the Festival of Madmen, grotesque representations of the human body in the Donkey Festival, and obscenity, blasphemy, etc.). Eco delves into these contradictions, asserting in his book, “The religious and moral ceremonies attended by the public were accompanied by a large area reserved for sin, and there were places where prostitution was tolerated” (Eco, 2019, p.137) (See Section 2.2, Public Entertainment, the Carnival Spirit). He further explains, “The ridiculous and obscene represent a kind of compensatory rebellion, by making us laugh at what is depressive and oppressive, like a safety valve for tensions...” (p.135). The spirit of the period found its form through the glorification of the amorphous, the disturbing, and the grotesque.

In this section, it is emphasized that the exaggeration in the general atmosphere of fear of the Gothic period was rooted in the exaltation of the divine and the belittling of the human being, that is, the mortal, and that the period was interpreted through the exaggeration of fear. The architectural field was particularly prevalent in interpreting the general atmosphere of fear during the period, using light in stained glass churches rising towards the sky, incorporating terrifying statues on the exteriors of buildings, and employing religious motifs. The period’s general atmosphere of fear gave rise to its unique language of exaggeration.

4.6 Elements and Principles of Composition, Processes of Interpretation, and Exaggeration in Plastic Arts

Up to this point in the research, topics have primarily been addressed on a chronological chart and within the general definition of art, elucidating exaggeration in art through illustrative examples as a pervasive approach. However, as we delve into subsequent chapters, the focus will shift predominantly towards the realm of plastic arts. Specifically, the examination of composition elements and principles in plastic arts, their relationships with interpretation processes, and the reflection of exaggeration in the context of plastic arts will be explored under this heading.

Artists, in their quest to interpret emotions and thoughts, craft their works by selectively employing **composition elements and principles** that align with their preferences. The creative process shaped by these choices is inherently intertwined with exaggeration.

In the realm of plastic arts, composition denotes the amalgamation of conceptual and visual elements in a certain order, the arrangement of the elements in the visual field, and the resultant work that emerges from this process. Ocavir and colleagues have defined the elements of art, encompassing line, shape, value, texture, and color, while categorizing organizational principles as harmony, rhythm, variation, balance, proportion, dominance, movement, and economy (Ocavir et al., 2015, pp. 48-85). Similarly, Özsoy and Ayaydın have delineated visual design elements as point, line, texture, color, tone, value, shape, form, and space, scrutinizing design principles under headings such as rhythm, movement, balance, emphasis, contrast, harmony, proportion, and diversity (Özsoy & Ayaydın, 2016).

In conclusion, when crafting a composition, the artist leverages principles such as **harmony, variation, balance, dominance, movement, and proportion** to achieve visual coherence and to reach their own reality.

Among these principles, achieving **harmony** poses one of the most challenging tasks. This is due to the inherent risk of inadvertently fostering monotony. According to the Keser art dictionary, **harmony** is defined as “the accord arising from different color relationships or the state in which the elements constituting a work of art refrain from conflicting with one another” (Keser, 2009, 46). The Eczacıbaşı Art Encyclopedia describes harmony as

“conformity, accord and harmony between the parts of a whole. It is the integrative order achieved by establishing adaptations and transitions, reducing disparities among elements of different personalities and qualities. It emphasizes the principle that qualities should complement rather than mirror each other (İpek, 2008a, p. 1566, vol. 1). However, it’s essential to note that harmony might not be a pursuit every artist aspires to achieve. Yılmaz remarks, “Harmony may not be an effect that an artist specifically endeavors to attain in their artistic expression. Alternatively, artists, in their endeavor to interpret emotions, undergo an enthusiastic and passionate creative process. This process, inherently linked with exaggeration, allows artists to employ exaggeration as a method to sustain interest and underscore themes of personal value” (Yılmaz, 2021, p. 10).

While an equitable use of visual elements may render a composition lifeless, emotionless, and monotonous, this issue can be mitigated by strategically employing **variations** such as **movement, rhythm, color, and contrast** (Ocvirk et al., 2015 pp. 65-88). Spivey corroborates these assertions with the results of the “*Herring Gull Test*,” conducted on seagulls and discussed in “*How Art Made the World*.” As previously mentioned under the title of “*The Concept of Exaggeration*” (Section 2.1), the “*Herring Gull Test*” draws attention to the presence of exaggeration in nature, illustrating how our brains are inherently programmed to exaggerate features that hold significance for us. It effectively demonstrates how attention, when diffused by the equal use of visual elements, can be heightened through the strategic use of change and exaggeration (Spivey, 2005, p. 60). The presence of different, **opposing characteristics** among visual elements, namely **contrast**, can imbue an artwork with artistic value and an exaggerated language. In their book “*Visual Design Elements and Principles*,” Özsoy and Ayaydın, following the explanation that “artists can create contrast in a composition using differences in color, shape, quantity, direction, spacing, texture, line, and style”, underscored the relationship between contrast and exaggeration. They stated, “Exaggeration can be achieved through contrast: In certain visual designs, exaggeration needs to take center stage. Exaggeration is often created through contrast. For example, in arts like caricature, contrast-dependent exaggeration is frequently employed” (Özsoy and Ayaydın, 2016, pp. 206-211). As elucidated under the section “*Humor, Comic, Caricature, Coarse Comedy*” (Section 2.2.7), caricature, with its subtle sarcasm and grotesque style, not only evokes a smile but also engages thoughtful contemplation, drawing attention in the desired direction. For example, in the cartoon depicted in “Figure 46,” Orhan Enez employs

contrast between light and dark (black-white) on a sunny day, using a flashlight. Creating a religious profile with elements such as a beard, shalwar, and robe, he exaggerates these features using the contrast principle, intending to make philosophical sense of the ideas of light and dark (Akın, 2020, p. 87). Contrast, whether achieved through color, texture, form, or meaning, introduces a dynamic interplay that enriches the artistic narrative. Dichotomies such as good-evil, long-short, angular-round, hard-soft, thick-thin, matte-shiny, black-white, light-dark, big-small, narrow-wide, and more, serve as potent tools in this pursuit.

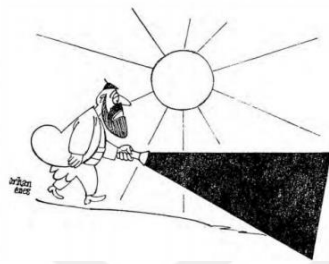


FIGURE 46 Orhan Enez Caricature Source:

Caravaggio's painting, "*The Crucifixion of St. Peter*, 1601," located in the Basilica of Santa Maria del Popolo, a dynamic and dramatically exaggerated scene is crafted through the application of visual design principles such as contrast, light-dark color play, and directional lines (Umut, 2020, November 06).

Şakir Gökçebağ (1965-) showcased his installation titled "Pop Art 2" in the exhibition "*Think Tank*, 2015." Within this exhibit, he constructed an exaggerated language by leveraging the contrasts in texture, color, meaning, and size among diverse materials like coal and popcorn (galerist.com.tr, Think Tank, 2015). Similarly, Anish Kapoor utilized contrast, a key visual design principle, in his monumental work "*Cloud Gate*, 2004." He harnessed the unity of opposing concepts—concave-convex, feminine-masculine, presence-absence—infusing metaphorical significance into the piece. Kapoor also engaged the audience by transforming the artwork into an exaggerated presentation (See Section 4.9) (Figure 89). Notably, "*Cloud Gate*," with its organically spreading giant oval form, establishes a contrast amid the vertical and angular structures in its placement, accentuating exaggeration through its unconventional shape (See Section 4.9).

The attainment of **balance** in a work of art is characterized by the even distribution of visual weight, often resulting in a pleasurable aesthetic experience. According to Uçar:

“Balance in visual design should not be perceived as equality. The balance that resembles reflection from a mirror is boring, shallow, and static” (Uçar, 2022). Consequently, symmetrical balance tends to be more monotonous compared to asymmetrical balance, which may struggle to captivate the audience’s attention for an extended period (Ocvirk et al., 2015, pp. 81-82). Asymmetrical balance, as suggested by Genç and Sipahioğlu in their book “Creative Process in Art,” allows artists to intentionally disrupt balance to achieve psychological tension. They argue that balance is not solely dependent on symmetry, providing artists with the freedom to pursue unequal balances when desired (Genç and Sipahioğlu, 1990, p. 70). Asymmetrical compositions, stimulating viewers’ perceptions and evoking curiosity, provide artists with a means to employ an exaggerated language (Dağlı, 2022, p. 79). According to Antmen, Vladimir Tatlin’s “*Tatlin Tower 1919*” or “*Third International Monument project*” is a design that employs asymmetrical balance, a key visual design principle, with its monumental, giant, spiral structure despite the tower never materializing. The blending of painting, sculpture and architecture, the utopian, exaggerated design, reflecting the dynamism of the future space age, is striking even in contemporary times (Antmen, 2016). Picasso’s work titled “*Guernica, 1937*” also employed asymmetric balance, another visual design principle. “The unequal arrangement of the figures in the composition can express movement and rebellion, which is the subject of the painting, as the opposite of stasis in the viewer” (Dağlı, 2022, pp. 80-81).

Ocvirk and colleagues, in their book “*Art Fundamentals*,” elaborate on the dominance principle, stating that artists can emphasize specific elements using various techniques. They suggest that focal points guide the viewer’s eye across the artwork, establishing a hierarchical order. The greater the contrast, the more **dominant** the emphasized area becomes, with potential methods including placement, direction, character, scale, and proportion. Dominance can also be achieved by increasing the contrast within color, value, and texture (Ocvirk et al., 2015, pp. 81-82). Özsoy and Ayaydın’s explanation of dominance and emphasis is as follows: “Hierarchical scaling is also related to the dominance principle. In order for dominance to achieve its purpose, the emphasized element must be emphasized element to be clearly visible within the composition. **Emphasis** controls priority areas, determines focus, organizes the design, establishes a hierarchy among visual elements, and directs the viewer’s attention, aiming to make the initial glance more lasting (Özsoy and Ayaydın, 2016, p. 200-202). Uçar suggests that “emphasis can be created using size, visual

vibration, color, and texture” (Uçar, 2022, p. 271). As an illustrative example of emphasis, Brassai’s work “*Amuletta I, 1971*” portrays a female figure with an exaggerated emphasis on the hips, interpreting it as a fertility idol devoid of head, arms, and legs (Figure 22) (See Section 4.1.2, *The Mother Archetype and the Approach of Exaggeration*).

The crux of **motion** is energy. Within the realm of visual design, **motion** serves to infuse vivacity and dynamism, easing the process of focal engagement, averting monotony, guiding emotional responses, and augmenting persuasiveness. Abstract motion materializes through the interrelations among visual elements such as spots, light, shadow, and assorted components. Conversely, concrete motion encapsulates observable movements inherent in actual life. Motion pre-establishes the points where the viewer’s eye will pause to rest and proceed, as well as the path. (Özsoy & Ayaydın, 2016, pp. 170-173). The flow between these elements is facilitated through of harmony and variations (Yılmaz, 2021). The artist’s boundless imagination, channeled through the creation of motion, offers a pathway to an exaggerated aesthetic. For instance, in Tintoretto’s masterpiece “*The Last Supper, 1593-1594*” the application of light-shadow contrast both integral composition principles in the realm of plastic arts, contributed to the creation of a dramatic and dynamic composition (See Section 4.7). Moving on to Van Gogh’s opus “*Starry Night, 1889*” (Figure 59), the artist employed short, rotating, and bold brush strokes and vibrant color palette to generate a circular, vortex-like movement within cosmic elements.

Rhythm stands as another crucial design principle. Through the repetition and continuity of visual elements, it enables the eye to navigate seamlessly between components, facilitating transitions from one fragment to another. The iteration of a regular and gradual rhythm, has the potential to engender movement and exaggeration. Described as a musical order, rhythm takes form through the harmonious interplay of elements such as continuity, repetition, movement, emphasis, contrast, nuances, changes, and similarities within a composition. Consequently, the work can emancipate itself from the confines of monotony (Özsoy & Ayaydın, 2016, p. 158-165). As life’s perpetual motion contributes to the sense of rhythm, L. Weber explicates this phenomenon as follows: “Rhythm is one of the concepts most familiar to us. The succession of night and day, the transition between hot and cold seasons, the resurgence and manifestation of the plant kingdom, and the arrival of rest after work or sleep after wakefulness. (Keser, 2009, p. 282).

In Henri Matisse’s painting “*The Dance, 1910*” (Figure 47), the eye moves between

the figures with the repetition of figures, the rhythmic rise and fall of the arms and legs, and the rhythm of the colors. Similarly, in the paintings “*Sketch for Cabaret, 1890*” by Georges Seurat and “*Nude Descending a Staircase, No: 2, 1912*” by Duchamp (Figure 48), repetition serves as the fundamental element in creating rhythm, infusing movement and dynamism into these works of art.



FIGURE 47 Henri Matisse, *The Dance*, 1910, O/C/B, 260x391 cm, Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg

Ratio and **proportion** are perceived within the relationship of elements comprising the entirety of a work of art, both in relation to each other and within their own context. Due to its evaluative nature through comparison, ratio is inherently relative. “**Ratio** refers to the relationship of size, quantity, and degree between two similar ones, and **proportion** refers to the comparative relationship of one part with the other or the whole” (Keser, 2009, p.240). Artists, through manipulation of ratio and proportion, can achieve an exaggerated visual appearance. Ocuvirk et al.’s observation underscores this: “When the proportions of the parts appear to be logically related to the whole, the proportions create harmony and balance. Disproportionately enlarged or reduced parts produce variation that can help express an idea” (Ocuvirk et al., 2015, p. 76). In El Greco’s painting “*Opening of the Fifth Seal, 1608-1614*” (Figure 55), the deliberate disproportion in the figures draws attention, as heads are depicted as small while bodies extend as if reaching towards the heavens. Hence, El Greco employs an exaggerated language to convey the anxiety and fear of the moment through deformed bodies.



FIGURE 48 Marcel Duchamp, *Nude Descending a Staircase, No:2*, 1912, O/C/B, 147x89.2cm.

While proportion delineates the relationship between units within a work, **scale** is assessed concerning the overall work, defined as the ratio of the drawing size to the actual size of a specific component. Despite the negative connotation associated with **disproportion**, its usage in artwork can yield a remarkably striking effect, deviating from the ordinary and instigating curiosity. **Proportion** and **scale**, as fundamental design elements, aid viewers in comprehending a work. Artists frequently employ disproportion in size or alternative scaling to underscore the significance of the represented elements. *Section 4.3*, under the heading “*Exploration of Exaggeration in the Ideal of “Looking Good Means Being Good,”*” showcases Michelangelo’s sculpture “*David, 1504*” (Figure 38), serving as an exemplary instance of both scale and proportion in art. Additionally, the use of exaggerated scale in Louis Bourgeois’s work “*Maman, 1999*” (Figure 23), presented under the title of *Section 4.1.2*, “*The Mother Archetype and the Approach of Exaggeration,*” transforms the spider into a monumental figure rather than an ordinary one. Yılmaz remarks on this: “Encountering an object that can fit in the palm of our hand in daily life on such a scale creates a psychological shock effect and sometimes causes an overwhelming effect in the world of objects” (Yılmaz, 2021). Ron Mueck’s sculpture “*In Bed, 2005*” provides a compelling example of exaggerated scale, as encountering a giant identical to reality but much larger has a psychological impact on individuals (Figure 90). At times, designers or

artists strategically employ proportion, allowing a small-sized form to evoke a monumental effect. Guggenheim Museum Building in New York, despite its modest size amidst skyscrapers, commands a monumental presence.

Hierarchical scale, as defined by Keser, involves “Describing the size of the figures according to their degree of importance, rather than how they appear objectively in the space” (Keser, 2009, p. 159). Illustrated in Figure 1 under the title of Chapter 2, “*The Concept of Exaggeration*,” the most significant figure in Egyptian art, the pharaoh, is portrayed as large in the minds of Egyptians despite being the size of an average Egyptian in reality (Hockney and Gayford, 2017, p. 24). Piero della Francesca’s (1412-1492) work titled “*Madonna of Mercy 1445-1455*” (Figure 49) showcases the artist’s use of hierarchical scale, exaggerating the size of the Madonna figure to elevate her to a revered position. The depiction of the Virgin Mary opening her arms and providing shelter for smaller figures at her feet with her cloak emphasizes her forgiving power and maternal sentiment (Ocvirk, 2015, p. 82).



FIGURE 49 Piero della Francesca, *Madonna of Mercy*, center panel of triptych, 1445-1455, Oil and tempera on wood, 1.44m

Multiplication, defined by TDK as “to increase the amount, number, size, enhance, ascend,” can be employed in art through the repetition and augmentation of an element, thereby achieving exaggeration. Ocvirk and colleagues emphasize that repetition does not necessitate exact multiplication; it merely requires similarity or close resemblance (Ocvirk et al., 2015). Multiplication introduces interest to an image by repeating similarities, such as

the resemblance of family members, adding a layer of relatedness with small differences (Ai Weiwei, Bubble, 2008). Yılmaz notes, “While the entire work may be an exaggerated repetition of units, it is also possible to achieve exaggeration by repeating only one element” (Yılmaz, 2021). The installation “*Sunflower seeds, 2010*” by Chinese contemporary artist Ai Weiwei (1957), utilizing porcelain sunflower seeds (Figure 50), provides a splendid example of exaggeration through multiplication (Avcı and Uslu, 2018). Acting as unifiers and gatherers in Chinese culture, the sunflower seeds are assembled in millions, forming a cohesive whole and complementing each other. The installation was exhibited concurrently with the Istanbul Biennial at the Sabancı Museum in September 2017 (Türk, 2017, August 02). Şakir Gökçebağ (1965-) similarly alters the meaning of ordinary objects encountered in daily life by multiplying them, establishing a connection with conceptual art, For example: “*Harlem I, 2010, wall installation*”. (Uzunoğlu, 2019).



FIGURE 50 Ai Weiwei, *Sunflower seeds, 2010, porcelain, Tate Modern, London*

As a work of art evolves, the artist may recognize superfluous complexity, revert to the essential, discard intricate details, and reconstruct the part by integrating it with the entirety. The application of the **economy** principle facilitates the reclamation of the work’s unity. Noteworthy practitioners in the effective utilization of economic abstraction include Picasso and Matisse. In Picasso’s engraving, “*The Bull, 1945,*” he delineated the stages of abstraction, reducing the bull to its fundamental lines in the 11th stage. The objective of abstraction is to unveil profound meanings (Ocvirk et al, 2015, p.17). Within contemporary art, figures such as Barnett Newman, Ad Reinhardt, and Morris Louis exemplify the understanding of economy through their color field paintings (p.85). David Dunlop expressed that “exaggeration is a form of focus and simplification” (Dunlop, 2014). In this context, the term “economy” in art resonates with the concept of exaggeration (See Chapter 2, The Concept of Exaggeration).

For the effective transmission of ideas and emotions, artists and designers must rely on **creative concepts** and solutions. At times, even a subtle alteration or the use of varying dimensions, whether small or large, proves sufficient to evoke the desired impact (Uçar, 2022). Analogous to our tendency to overlook many elements in our surroundings, habits that no longer captivate our attention prompt us to seek novel stimuli. The more familiar something becomes, the less perceptible it is to us. The prerequisite for our focus is the capacity of a given element to captivate our interest. Marketing activities are intricately woven into this reflex. Gombrich characterizes this phenomenon as “Aesthetic Fatigue.” While our appetite for *novelty* is satiated through constant stylistic shifts, a predilection for minor modifications to existing styles, rather than embracing radical new ideas or inventions, often prevails due to their unfamiliarity. These nuanced adjustments, as highlighted by David Dunlop, are instrumental in facilitating focus on that specific detail (Dunlop, 2014) (See Section 2.1 The Meaning, Origin, and Etymological Equivalent of the Word Exaggeration,).

Schank postulates that “if there are **deviations** or **contradictions** that disrupt the natural flow of a specific event, or if something intentionally integral to a specific event is deliberately omitted, it is considered interesting” (Schank, 1979). Why do we tend to focus more on interesting thoughts? What gives rise to the phenomenon of interestingness? In seeking answers to such questions, it was determined that “individuals perceive unexpected situations that deviate from their expectations as more interesting.” (Doğan, 2015). This discourse seamlessly aligns with the realm of exaggeration. In his book “Sociology of Art,” Danko expounds on **expectations**, remarking, “People anticipate a melody that commences to culminate in a specific tone, or an action that concludes in a certain manner. The composer has the ability to shape and manipulate the audience’s expectations regarding the trajectory of the melody. Deliberately delaying the fulfillment of these expectations thereby engenders tension” (Danko, 2017). Gustav Mahler’s (1860-1911) “6th Symphony,” often denoted as the “Tragic Symphony,” serves as a pertinent illustration corroborating Danko’s discourse (See Section 3.2, The Concept of Communication, Visual Communication and Symbols). By introducing unexpected elements such as hammer blows symbolizing the blows of fate at the symphony’s denouement, Mahler effectively creates tension. (mahlerfoundation.org/mahler/compositions/symphony-no-6/). Deviation from expectations and contradiction finds resonance with exaggeration.

The magnitude and dominance of exaggeration cannot be measured solely through

compositional principles and size. Exaggeration can be perceptible in situations that exceed one's power in the face of nature. Consequently, exaggeration also invokes the **concept of the sublime** within aesthetics. Employing sublime aesthetics, the artist can cultivate an exaggerated appearance through transcendence, incorporating majestic and mysterious structures and images within the composition. This approach aims to elicit emotions such as amazement, excitement, astonishment, shudder, or admiration, surpassing human measurements and the cognitive capacity of the brain (Yılmaz, 2021). Exemplifying this is Anselm Kiefer's portfolio of large-scale, monumental paintings such as "*Isis and Osiris, 1985-87*" (Figure 34) (Section 4.2, *Exploration of the Exaggeration Concept in Mystery, Authority, and Hierarchy as Periodic Themes*). Delving into the concept of the sublime in Section 2.2.6, titled "*The Relationship between Exaggeration and the Concepts of Supernatural Beings, Extremism, Fear, The Uncanny, and Grotesque*," further elucidates this exploration. The sublime within artworks captivates the viewer through its dimensions and boundlessness. Large-scale works, juxtaposed with human proportions, elicit a sublime effect, with certain works further amplifying this sense through their thematic content. William Turner's painting "*Hannibal and his Army Crossing the Alps, 1812*," successfully instills a sense of sublimity (Figure 12) (Section 2.2.6). The sublime is recognized as a fundamental topic within aesthetics. The experience of sublimity, triggered when nature transcends the physical and spiritual capacities of humanity, interconnects with vulnerability. This phenomenon is observed to evoke emotions such as enthusiasm, fear, excitement, infinity, power, and terror in artworks (Yılmaz, 2021, p.27). Erdoğan's definition characterizes the sublime as "an endeavor to elucidate the magnificence and spiritual dimension of nature through non-rational or scientific means" (Erdoğan, 2017).

Across all branches of art, the artist can wield an exaggerated language to interpret what is valuable and important to them, by using metaphor, allegory, grotesque, symbol, satire and deformation language as a method, in addition to composition principles (Yılmaz, 2021). In interpreting their works, artists manipulate ratio, proportion, and scale while incorporating mythological elements, aesthetic sublimity, texture, color, and can achieve an exaggerated look by pushing the limits with their use. **Pushing the limits** in art can be achieved through method, creativity, technique, light and shadow, color, form, and texture, and the variety of materials used. Exaggeration is a stance that can pave the way for artistic creation in every period by pushing the limits (Kaya, 2022). While Sözen and Tanyeli's

definition asserts that “...artistic creation is nothing but the act of reproducing reality” (Sözen and Tanyeli, 1994, p.208), this reproduction may indicate a process intricately connected with exaggeration.

While in antiquity, the act of producing art was a result of pure thought, and exaggeration occurred unconsciously, in contemporary times, however, exaggeration can be considered a product of conscious thought. As artists articulate their emotions and employ exaggeration as a tool to interpret, reality takes on a new dimension.

In this section, the examination encompasses the utilization of composition elements and principles in plastic arts, the interpreting processes and instances of exaggeration are examined together. The artist, in the act of creating their work, selects composition elements and principles aligned with their preferences to give coherence to their feelings and thoughts. It is emphasized that the resultant creation process, influenced by these preferences, is inherently linked to exaggeration. Balance, dominance, rhythm, movement, color, contrast, emphasis, scale, ratio and proportion, hierarchical scale, multiplication, use of economy and connections with exaggeration were examined.

4.7 A Perspective on Exaggeration from the Classical Art Ideal

Admiration for classical art and the resurgence of the concept of ancient art have profoundly shaped the Renaissance period (Conti, 1982, p. 5). Originating in Florence, Italy, in the 15th-16th centuries and exerting its influence across Europe, the Renaissance signifies the revival of interest in ancient art (Farthing, 2014, p.150). Renaissance artists endeavored to revive the spirit of classical art, drawing inspiration from the analyses found in Greek sculptures. Nature underwent scrutiny, humanity evolved into a thinking and discerning individual, and an art that valued people began to influence the Renaissance. In contrast to the divine portraiture of the Middle Ages, the Renaissance humanized depictions and understanding the human body became a paramount goal. Anatomical intricacies of the body were scrutinized within defined parameters and subjected to mathematical formulations, thereby projecting sublimity and grandeur through idealized imagery. While artworks of the period continued to be rooted in religious narratives, stories, and mythologies from the Bible, the incorporation of nature initiated a shift towards more naturalistic portrayals (Boydaş, 2022). Alongside aristocratic and ecclesiastical patronage of the arts, the Medici family

emerged as a crucial catalyst for humanist thought in society, science, and the arts (Graf, 2023, p.25).

The mythological and allegorical painting “*The Birth of Venus* 1486” by Italian artist **Botticelli** (1445-1510) stands as one of the most renowned painting in art history, reflecting ideal beauty through its idealized body proportions (Eco, 2006, p. 200) (Figure 51). The artwork portrays the birth of the Roman goddess of love and beauty, Venus, standing gracefully nude within a seashell at the center of the composition. Marked by balanced light usage and soft color intensity, the composition achieves balance and harmony. The absence of contrasting light and color enhances the overall sublimity of the painting. All figures are flawless and exude youth and beauty. Graf, in his discourse, accentuated that Botticelli’s masterpiece “*The Birth of Venus*” symbolizes the rebirth of the classical antiquity art concept, hence marking the genesis of the history of perfect beauty (Graf, 2023, p.25).



FIGURE 51 Sandro Botticelli, *The Birth of Venus*, 1486, Tempera on canvas, 173x279 cm. Uffizi Gallery, Florence

Michelangelo’s sculpture “*David*, 1501-1504” equally embodies the ideal (See Section 4.3, Exploration of Exaggeration in the Ideal of “Looking Good Means Being Good”). This masterpiece serves as a stellar exemplar of both scale and proportion in art, grounded in the Greek mathematical system (Yilmaz, 2021) (Figure 52).

In his painting “*Mona Lisa*, 1503,” Leonardo Da Vinci utilized the golden ratio, expressing human analysis through a mathematical constant numerical value (Figure 53). Artists immersed themselves in mathematical calculations as the aesthetically pleasing proportions of the human face could be elucidated through formulas.

These elegantly proportioned bodies and youthful individuals, seemingly molded to perfection, represent a product of the era's ethos that held humanity in high regard as a superior being. The actual prevalence of individuals conforming to these standards remains questionable. The ideal measurements, shaped by mathematical formulas, defined the rules and style of the period, with artists adhering to these principles considered successful. The exaggeration of the era lies in the attempt to ground everything ideal in a mathematics divorced from the natural essence of nature. Not all individuals perpetually embody youth, maintain an 18-year-old appearance, exude beauty, and adhere to ideal proportions, as depicted in artworks. Thus, considering idealism in a utopian dimension may be associated with exaggeration. While this represented the prevailing trend of the period, our contemporary perspective allows us to characterize this understanding as a form of exaggeration.

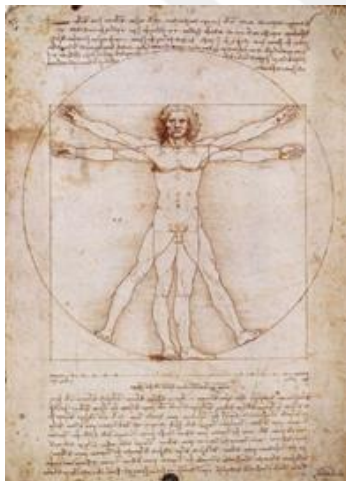


FIGURE 52 *Leonardo DaVinci, Vitruvian Man, 1490, Gallerie dell' Accademia, Venice, Italy.*

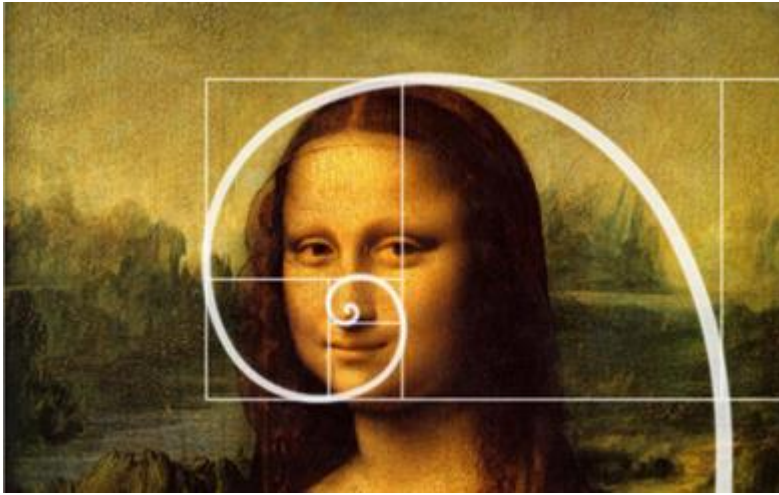


FIGURE 53 *Leonardo Da Vinci, Mona Lisa, 1503, O/C/B, 77x53cm, Louvre Museum, Paris.*

The Renaissance originated in Florence, serving as the epicenter of the European Renaissance for the majority of the 15th century. In addition to Florence, Italy, Venice emerged as a crucial center for the Renaissance due to its strategic location and robust connections with the East. Owing to the cultural decadence of the middle class and the French army's occupation of Florence, the artistic hub shifted from Florence to Rome, marking the advent of the High Renaissance period (Farthing, 2014, p.153). Beyond Italy, the Renaissance spread to Northern European countries, where it became known as the Northern Renaissance. The geographical distinction between the North and the South also influenced their respective artistic styles (Eroğlu, 2018, p.12). In contrast to their Italian counterparts, Northern European painters, prioritized naturalistic depictions of the human form over mathematical formulas and idealism (Hieronymus Bosch and Pieter Bruegel). They relied more on intuition, employing grotesque and humor, and thus resorted to exaggeration (Hieronymus Bosch, Pieter Bruegel). The Northern Renaissance distinguished itself through attention to detail, refined artistic craftsmanship, and a lesser preoccupation with the classical world. The illuminated ambiance of the South and the cold, closed atmosphere of the North also left an imprint on the psychological makeup of the artists (Eroğlu, 2018, p.93).

While Eroğlu characterizes **Hieronymus Bosch** (1450-1516) as an early surrealist, he asserts that Bosch's paintings exhibit a remarkable level of progressiveness that would not be out of place in contemporary art exhibitions today (Eroğlu, 2018). According to Tolstoy, "Extraordinary, out of the ordinary, progressiveness, that is, the human tendency to

transcend, is an exaggeration” (Tolstoy, 2017 (See Chapter 2, Meaning, Origin, and Etymological Equivalent of the Word Exaggeration)).

Bosch’s painting “*Garden of Earthly Delights Triptych 1503-1504*” portrays fantastical narratives such as lust, sin, heaven, hell, evil, unidentified locations, a world of symbolism akin to fairy tales, strange, cartoonish facial expressions and gestures, grotesque, dark, extraordinary elements, and crowded figures. Through these, Bosch issues a warning to humanity against sinfulness and conveys a moralistic message (Eroğlu, 2018, p.103-105) (Figure 54). The waning credibility of the Roman Catholic Church and the resultant mistrust among the populace led to religious fanaticism. In depicting heaven and hell, Bosch envisaged the dystopian future of hell juxtaposed with utopian images of heaven (See Section 2.2.4, *Deformation, Representation of The Ugly, Sanctification of Imperfection*). Therefore, in the aforementioned painting, Bosch utilized the contrast between heaven and hell, used surreal elements, and created an exaggerated language with allegorical and symbolic expressions in order to warn humanity and show the truth.

Pieter Bruegel (1528-1569), a prominent painter of non-religious subjects during the Renaissance, became the second artist after Jan van Eyck to depict his homeland and capture the essence of his era (Turani, 1992, p.388). Employing Mannerism’s diagonality, movement, and layering, Bruegel crafted an exaggerated language in his paintings (*The Peasant Wedding, 1567-68*). Without relying on light and shadow, he outlined figures with contour lines. His depictions of rough-faced villagers engaged in activities like dancing, drinking, and lovemaking were presented without attempts at idealization, occasionally infused with humor (Turani, 1992, p.388). In his painting “*The Fight Between Carnival and Lent, 1559*” (See Section 2.2.2). (Figure 6), Bruegel juxtaposes contrasting, opposing, and incompatible human behaviors (sacred-worldly, supreme-low, wise-fool, order-disorder) within the same frame, challenging conventional thought patterns. Through carnivalesque, exaggerated bodies, and mockery, he critiques the meaninglessness of hierarchy (Reisoğlu, 2022, p.32). While Bosch conveyed his inner world through his works, Bruegel sought to bear witness to the external world (Eroğlu, 2018, p.113). Coarse, grotesque, and cartoonish drawings are areas where exaggeration is unmistakably evident (Yılmaz, 2021).

Therefore, in contrast to the Italian Renaissance, where painters often adhered to mathematical formulas and idealistic representations, artists of the Northern Renaissance, notably Bosch and Bruegel, prioritized naturalistic depictions of the human form. In this

context, they diverged from strict mathematical precision and embraced a more instinctual approach, utilizing exaggeration techniques through the incorporation of grotesque elements and humor.



FIGURE 54 Hieronymus Bosch, “*Triptych of the Garden of Earthly Delights*” 1503-1504, Detail, 2.2 x 3.86 m. Prado Museum, Madrid, Spain

Mannerism, which emerged as a stylistic movement in Florence and Rome between the High Renaissance and Baroque periods (1520-1580) in Italy, has been characterized as a transitional bridge from the rule-bound aesthetics of the Renaissance to the Baroque era. The equilibrium established by the humanist approach of the Renaissance period, placing humanity at the center of the belief system, was disrupted by the “*Protestant Reformation*” initiated by Martin Luther in 1517. In the 16th century, the reform movement within the church necessitated renewal, leading to a questioning of the belief system, the emergence of distrust, and ultimately, bloody wars waged in the name of religion (Gökkaya and Güler, 2020). Moreover, Copernicus’ revelation that the sun, not the earth, occupied the center of the universe further intensified scrutiny of the church, which asserted centrality in all matters (Krausse, 2005). Consequently, those who lost faith during the Reformation movement recognized the impossibility of expressing the evolving world through rational, balance-based artistic principles. By the mid-16th century, they found themselves in a void, convinced that the attained level of artistic achievement was insurmountable. Suicide incidents surged, and Shakespeare’s Hamlet character became a symbolic figure of this era (Turani, 1992, p. 393). These collective developments paved the way for the emergence of the Mannerist style (Krausse, 2005). The Renaissance’s emphasis on ratio, proportion, size, balance, harmony,

and central composition gave way to elements of deformation, such as bulging forms, elongated limbs, diminished heads, and expressions of melancholy on faces. Mannerist artists also embraced diagonal compositions, dynamic movements, exaggerated mystical lighting, color, and “S”-shaped mobile figures, contributing to an aura of spatial ambiguity. From a thematic perspective, Mannerism departed from the idealized effects of Renaissance painting by addressing religious subjects without considering nature, witnessing the disappearance of spatial considerations, and incorporating deliberate deformations (Sürsal, 2011, pp. 20-21). Hauser elucidated Mannerism with the term “paradox,” signifying the coexistence of insurmountable contradictions (Hauser, 1984). The artists of this period were drawn to human imperfections, the grotesque, and deformations, as if the imperfect held a unique allure. Consequently, Mannerism became a stylistic manifestation shaped by the specific conditions of the era and an exaggerated attitude that permeated the entire period. Mannerist painters resorted to exaggeration and reshaping to draw attention to focal points and render meaningful messages.

Michelangelo proclaimed the arrival of Mannerism with his colossal ceiling frescoes, sculptural bodies, monumental composition, and a change in style in the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican. Elie Faure interprets this stylistic shift in his book “*History of Renaissance Art*,” stating, “Michelangelo felt the weight of slavery in his heart to the extent that it caused him infinite pain. He held people in such high regard that he could not accept their inferiority. Consequently, he consistently distanced himself from people, presenting the sought-after balance to them with a Michelangelo-like stubbornness, exaggerating it with bitterness and disdain” (Faure, 1979, p. 128). With this explanation, Faure highlights Michelangelo’s use of exaggeration as a reaction and expression. Adnan Turani, in his book “*World Art History*,” remarks, “Michelangelo created extraordinary, colossal figures as a response to the great injustices and cruelties of his time. He aimed to confront society, strengthened by these exaggerated figures, to convey the anger within his inner world” (Turani, 1992, p. 374).

Jacopo Tintoretto (1518-1594) demonstrated both Mannerist and Baroque characteristics in his works, characterized by strong light-shadow contrast. In the painting “*The Last Supper, 1592-1594*,” the diagonal, dynamic, and dramatic composition, the stacking of figures instead of an ideal order, the separation of the divine and the earthly in the composition plan, the use of light sources within the darkness to delineate, and the mystical effect created by illuminating the angels and the movement of Jesus (Şentürk, 2012)

significantly differ from Leonardo's "*The Last Supper*." This aesthetic approach, reminiscent of capturing a snapshot of reality, and the sense of incompleteness in the painting (Graf, 2023) distinguish Tintoretto's work.

Adnan Turani states in his book "*World Art History*": "Tintoretto revisited the religious sentiment lost in the Middle Ages with the painting knowledge acquired during the Renaissance, achieving a new form of artistic expression, whether in color or design. Thus, a novel visual concept of the afterlife emerged, incorporating earthly space and figures into painting" (Turani, 1992, p. 395).

Cretan **El Greco** (1574-1614), a student of Titian in Venice, an observer of Michelangelo's works in Rome, and a resident of Toledo during Spain's fervent period of dogmatism and inquisition, manifested influences of Byzantine and Middle Age styles in his works, departing from Renaissance idealism. The Byzantine tradition was based on deforming the body for symbolic purposes, and it can be said that El Greco employed this tradition as reference in his work. Noteworthy for his religious identity, El Greco portrayed his own soul, employing a new formal language and deviating from established ideal proportions. Some of his works are even regarded as extreme examples within the Mannerist movement. While El Greco's works exhibit a certain brutality, they intensified towards the end of his life. Barres contends, "El Greco's art emerges as a prematured example of Modernism, shaped by the outlook based on the foundations of Catholicism and its unique expressive dimension" (Barres, 1997, p. 106), highlighting Greco's role as a trailblazer with a radical and early modern stance. "*View of Toledo*" stands as one of his crucial works, reflecting his mystical, dark soul onto the landscape and showcasing how he conveyed his spiritual state through art. Thus, Turani has pointed out, "El Greco is considered an expressionist who used exaggerated figures to convey his own mood, emphasizing the melancholic, pre-disaster atmosphere over Toledo" (Turani, 1992, p. 397). Consequently, El Greco's early contributions to the emergence of expressionism are acknowledged (Graf, 2023). As articulated by art historian Karl Maria Swoboda (1889-1977), El Greco was influenced by Venetian color usage, employing bright, pure colors, and sharp color contrasts reminiscent of Tiziano's old style (Eroğlu, 2018, p. 121). According to Greg Reimann, he drew inspiration for the blue-yellow harmony from Veronese (Reimann, 1966, p.13). El Greco's large mural, "*The Burial of Count Orgaz, 1586*," features two distinct parts: the earthly and the divine. In the lower portraits, a seriousness of faith based on nature study is

evident, while in the upper scene, a distinctly mannerist approach is noticeable. Hence, it is an art simultaneously surreal and grounded in the observation of nature. Turani emphasizes in his book that such paradoxes are recurrent across various periods in art history (Turani, 1992, p. 397). Another noteworthy El Greco painting is “*Opening of the Fifth Seal, 1608-1614*,” (Figure 55) rumored to have inspired Pablo Picasso’s “*Les Femmes d’Alger*”. Created for a side altar in the Church of St. John the Baptist, this depiction of the apocalypse features naked men and women with elongated forms reminiscent of Gothic cathedrals reaching towards the sky. Allegorical, contorted, deformed figures, small heads and figures that seem to float in the air, portraying the anxiety and fear of the moment. El Greco’s fundamental artistic sentiment is to “guide people towards God in the face of their sufferings, as they can find solace only in Him” (Başar, 2006). El Greco conveyed the mystical expression in his paintings through light flickers, pale and cold colors, creating a rich and exaggerated atmospheric effect (Gökkaya and Güler, 2020). The deviation from Renaissance ideals and the disruption of nature-reading standards in El Greco’s works can also be interpreted through his emotional connection with religion.

Regarding Mannerist sculpture, Michelangelo is often the foremost figure that comes to mind. However, in the 16th century, **Giambologna** (1529-1608) also stands out in the realm of Mannerist sculpture. Giambologna’s sculpture “*The Abduction of the Sabines (1579-1583)*” is particularly renowned. The spiral body movements, the expression of unity, and the diagonal trajectory of the raised arm of the woman at the top illustrate the sculptural spirit of the period. Özkan Eroğlu elucidates this spirit in his book “*Renaissance and Baroque*” as follows: “By placing the flag-bearing arm of the central figure in Delacroix’s 19th-century painting ‘Liberty Leading the People’ next to this raised arm, we cannot overlook the sculptors’ actions here, which unmistakably aim to exalt a romantic perception embraced by Baroque art” (Eroğlu, 2018, p. 91). In his book “*Renaissance and Baroque*,” Eroğlu expresses his proximity of Mannerism to Baroque, stating, “Since Mannerism is the transitional period between the Renaissance and Baroque, it is inherent for it to carry the features of both; however, it predominantly leans towards Baroque” (p. 90).



FIGURE 55 *El Greco, Opening of the Fifth Seal, 1608-1614, O/C/B, 2.25x1.99m. Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY.*

When examining exaggeration in literature from other art disciplines during this period, the works of **François Rabelais**, such as “*Pantagruel-1532*” and “*Gargantua-1534*,” stand out as significant novels of the Renaissance era. These works have left an indelible mark on world literature. The exaggeration in the humorous narratives of these novels, detailed under the title “Public Entertainment, the Carnival Spirit” (Section 2.2.2) in the research, can be explained by the liberating climate of the Renaissance and the value attributed to humanity, portraying bodily images, basic physiological needs, and rituals with grotesque and exaggerated imagery (Rabelais, 2020). Turning to contemporary literature, İhsan Oktay Anar’s postmodern narrative, “*Amat (2005)*,” converges with Rabelais’s novels in the realm of grotesque narrative (Büyüktuncay, 2011) (See Section 2.2.2). **Cervantes’s** work, “*Don Quixote*,” also serves as a grotesque reflection of Gargantua (See Section 2.2.2).

In traditional Turkish culture, art forms such as Kukla, Karagöz, and Hacivat (shadow play), Kavuklu and Pişekar (orta oyunu), “*tuluat*” theater, and similar expressions derive their modes of expression from humor and festivities (See Section 2.2.9). The comedic elements in these narratives hinge upon exaggerated language, wit, and misunderstandings. There is an acknowledgment of the resemblance between these traditional forms of Turkish expression and the Italian folk theater of the Renaissance period (folklor.gen.tr.n.d.).

As an example of the reinterpretation of tradition through technology, we can cite the contemporary artwork “*Mona Leo, 1987*” by Lillian Schwartz, created in digital environments. Lillian reinterpreted Leonardo Da Vinci’s portrait by digitally matching it with the Mona Lisa painting, presenting the audience with a reimagined perspective on the mystery of the Mona Lisa painting (Şengül, 2013).

The classical equilibrium and serene horizontal and vertical lines of the Renaissance yield to the dynamic, luminous, dramatic, splendid, emotionally charged lines of the Baroque style following Mannerism. **The Baroque era** (16-18th century), characterized by the construction of exaggerated edifices with elaborate dimensions and ornamentation, originated in Rome, Italy, and disseminated throughout Europe. In Baroque art, exaggeration emerges as a tool for interpretation through movement and light. The artist seeks to capture beauty in motion.

Gombrich highlights Baroque period architecture as a pivotal epoch in the history of architecture (Gombrich, 1972, p. 342). As detailed in the section titled “Concepts Associated with Exaggeration” (Section 2.2.1), art during the Baroque period serves the church and the royalty, and is characterized by grand, dramatic, dynamic, exaggerated, colorful, and theatric. The decline in the aristocracy’s demand power, coupled with the growing demand of the bourgeoisie, brought forth new aesthetic tastes, allowing artists greater freedom. Keser describes the Baroque period: “Baroque art aimed to narrate emotional situations in a manner that would appeal to the senses with a dramatic approach. Rich ornamentation, excessive light and shadow, liveliness, mobility, tension, extreme emotions, and the heightened importance given to color usage are distinctive features of Baroque art” (Keser, 2009, p. 57). All these features are indicative of exaggeration in the composition elements and principles of plastic arts, elaborated in Section 4.6. The primary aim of Baroque art is to present the visible in a naturalistic manner; hence, the history of portraying ugliness commences with Baroque art (Graf, 2023). Given that Baroque art is associated with palace and church art, it lost its viability with the overthrow of the monarchy, similar to Classicism (Turani, 2014, p. 32). “In the Baroque period, body depictions in the works of Caravaggio and similar artists are realistic and full of enthusiasm under the influence of spirituality. This is related to the appreciation of ‘spirituality in the individual’ in religious paintings at that time” (Arasse, 2008, pp. 336-337). The main subjects in Baroque period paintings are religious symbols and mythological gods, akin to the Renaissance.

Gombrich remarks on the Baroque style becoming fashionable: “When art begins to take a new path, it has to follow that path to the end. As diversity and striking effects begin to be considered important, every artist will have to satisfy the feeling of strangeness with increasingly complex decorations and create ever more surprising inventions with the concern of being original. In the first half of the 17th century, new and surprising ideas for buildings and decorations continued to proliferate in Italy” (Gombrich, 1972, p. 342). In conclusion, the Baroque period is associated with exaggeration; however, as Gombrich suggests, it represents a new trajectory. It raises questions about how much the artist reflects their own reality, as an individual is inherently shaped by their family, society, traditions, culture, and the circumstances of their time.

One of the most striking examples of Baroque architecture is the “**Melk Abbey**” (1702-1736) situated on the Danube in Austria. The monastery, with its peculiar dome and towers, appears surreal. Gombrich commented on the **Palace of Versailles** (1655-1682), considering it Baroque not for its decorative details but due to its infinite size. According to Gombrich, the *Palace of Versailles*, with its vast size that cannot be captured as a whole in any photograph, evokes a sense of sublimity. Gombrich’s observation that “when we enter large interior spaces, we feel that these dimensions dwarf everything” (Gombrich, 1972, p.352) elucidates how human psychology is impacted within these structures. The psychological impact of grand structures on the viewer can be understood in the context of the relationship between architecture and exaggeration.

Caravaggio (1571-1610), one of the pioneers of Baroque painting, is termed a “*light director*” by Eroğlu (2018, p.126). In the section titled “The Emergence of Creativity and the Role of Exaggeration” (Section 4.1), when discussing silhouette and shadow, David Hockney’s statement about Caravaggio is included: “Caravaggio discovered Hollywood lighting” (Hockney and Gayford, 2017 p.172). Caravaggio’s use of the impressive contrast of light and darkness to give volume to his bodies creates a moving, dramatic, striking, and theatrical effect, resulting in rich compositions (The Entombment of Christ, etc.) (Figure 56). Caravaggio crafted scenes using real models, and thereby created images. The scenes he created, with the dramatic lighting and dramatic atmosphere he employed, are exaggerated (Kaya, 2023). His approach to using light and shadow helped him depict faithfully, whether beautiful or ugly. Caravaggio’s harsh light does not impart grace to the body; instead, it is oriented towards expression rather than beauty (Gombrich, 1972, p. 306).

In this context, Graf suggests that the aesthetics of ugliness commenced with Caravaggio (Graf, 2023). Eroğlu, in his book *“Renaissance and Baroque,”* notes that Caravaggio intensely focused on this dramatic lighting (tenebrism) to illuminate the dark facets of his own soul and his very brief, violence-laden life (Eroğlu, 2018, p.126). Caravaggio’s dramatic lighting and the theatrical atmosphere he created render his work exaggerated. The video for the song “Losing My Religion” by REM, which employs dramatic lighting, bears the influence of Caravaggio (Graf, 2023).



FIGURE 56 Caravaggio, *The Entombment of Christ*, *Entombment*, 1604, 300cmx203cm, Pinacoteca Vaticana, Vatican City

The Rococo style, another that we can correlate with exaggeration, developed towards the conclusion of the Baroque period. It eloquently mirrored the refined taste of the aristocratic and noble class through its vibrant colors and graceful embellishments. Originating in Paris at the commencement of the 18th century, Rococo, the inaugural architectural movement centered on interior design, disseminated across the entirety of Europe, encompassing Germany, Austria, Russia, and Northern Italy. The “Amalienburg Palace” in Munich, finalized by the French architect François de Cuvillies in 1739, stands as an exemplary manifestation of Rococo aesthetics. Rococo concluded its existence with the

French Revolution. Decorative elements such as folds, curves, seashells, and floral motifs are distinctive features of the Rococo style. It manifested its influence primarily in architecture, particularly in churches and palaces (Bailey et al., 2015, p. 260). Goya, through his series “*Tapestry Cartoons, 1778-1780*,” became the representative of Rococo in Spain.

Romanticism, Impressionism, and Post-Impressionism, recognized as pivotal in the transition from classical to modern art and deemed as the roots of modern art, will be examined in the context of their relationship with exaggeration in the realm of plastic arts.

Following the French Revolution of 1789, the dissolution of feudalism and aristocracy led to a decline in the oppressive influence of governmental and religious institutions on individuals. The advent of a democratic parliamentary social order empowered individuals to assert their autonomy, fostering an awareness of their integral connection with nature. Consequently, this transformative shift in perspective resulted in a profound alteration of their worldview and understanding of life (Adivar, 2012). In reaction to classicism, the Romanticism movement emerged in the late 18th century, prioritizing emotion, enthusiasm, and imagination, thereby providing individuals with the freedom to express themselves. The romantically inclined artist, driven by a liberated mindset, primarily focused on color as a means of expressing emotion and enthusiasm, breaking formalism with powerful brushstrokes and the optical effects of colors (Turani, 2014, p.50). Against this backdrop, at the 1846 Paris World Fair, Romanticism and the painter Delacroix was to be praised by Baudelaire (Turani, 2014, p. 31).

When scrutinizing the paintings of the German artist Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840) through a visual lens, it becomes evident that he envisions humanity as an integral part of nature—portraying humans as beings of nature. Furthermore, his works depict individuals isolated in nature, diminishing and rendering them helpless in the face of sublime nature. Through the application of compositional principles such as light-shadow contrasts, Friedrich accentuated the relationship between foreground and background. Utilizing singular figures, he communicated the isolation of humans in nature, thus accentuating the power of nature and evoking a sense of the sublime. The sublime sentiment associated with nature finds resonance with exaggeration, as its magnitude and dominance transcend mere dimensions, manifesting in instances where human comprehension and authority are overshadowed by the forces of nature. This exploration will extend to the association of the Romanticism movement representative, painter **Goya**, with concepts linked to

exaggeration—such as the uncanny, deformation, fear, and the grotesque—as well as **William Turner**’s relationship with the concept of the sublime.

19th-century Spanish painting’s indisputably one of the greatest masters and a prominent representative of the Romantic movement, **Francisco Goya** (1746-1828), is acknowledged as the pioneer of modern painting due to his daring technique, utilization of imagination, and radical approaches (Öztürk, 2011; Graf, 2023). Advocating artistic freedom by proclaiming “There are no rules in painting,” Goya, having served as a court painter, thus illuminated the periods he lived in through his neo-classical and realistic practices. Following a severe illness in 1793, Goya became deaf and descended into depression. It becomes evident in his subsequent works that melancholy and pessimism are progressively escalating. The series of 80 engravings titled *Los Caprichos*, created between 1797 and 1798 and discovered by Baudelaire in 1828 (See Chapter 2, The Concept of Exaggeration), prompted Baudelaire to describe Goya and his engravings in the following manner: “No one has ever made the absurd possible with such audacity. All those crooked beings, animal-like faces, and evil grins are uniquely human to the bone. The similarities and harmony between these beings are so strong that their existence cannot be denied even from the point of view of natural science. In essence, drawing a distinct line between the real and the imaginary is unattainable. As Baudelaire (1868) aptly puts it, “Even the most meticulous researcher cannot determine the ambiguous border of this art, which includes the natural and the supernatural at the same time.” Baudelaire discusses the exaggerated, deformed, and grotesque nature of entities in Goya’s engravings, emphasizing the amalgamation of the real and the unreal. In classical period paintings, where the invisible world was traditionally defined through the visible world—depicting figures like Jesus and Mary as ordinary people—Goya deviated by choosing to portray the visible and invisible worlds together. The term “Capricho,” attributed to Goya’s engravings, translates to “ideas and judgments that do not comply with ordinary and common rules” in Italian and Spanish (Baransel, 2012). Concepts such as contradiction, unusualness, irregularity, fantasy, and peculiar images in these engravings allude to exaggeration. These works serve as reflections of daily life scenes, historical events, imaginary images of sorceresses and mysterious figures, and especially Goya’s own obsessive dreams (Gombrich, 1972, p.384). Examining Goya’s engraving titled “The sleep of the mind gives birth to monsters, *Los Caprichos*, No: 43, 1790” (Figure 57), we observe an artist falling asleep at his desk late at night. When his creative work is

interrupted by sleep, his mind surrenders to the imagination of the unconscious. The creatures emerging from the darkness, circling around him, symbolize the nightmare and hatred in the artist's mind. As Goya eloquently states: "The sleep of the mind gives birth to monsters. Imagination abandoned by the mind creates impossible, useless thoughts. 'Imagination, used together with reason, is the mother of art and the source of all beauty'" (Öztürk, 2011). This unity of reason and creative imagination is also the wellspring of exaggeration. Goya's words substantiate Kaya's assertion that "exaggeration is an attitude that paves the way for artistic creation" (Kaya, 2022).



FIGURE 57 Francisco Goya, *Los Caprichos*, No: 43, 1790, "The sleep of the mind gives birth to monsters", Acidification and Aquatinta, 21.8x25.2 cm.

During the horrors of war and social chaos in Spain, Goya created 14 oil paintings with intense visual effects on the wall plaster of his country house in Quinto del Sordo (1819-1823). In 1873, these paintings were transferred onto canvas and found their place in the Prado Museum under the title "*Black Paintings*." These works, akin to El Greco's paintings, signify a potent inception for expressionism (Marcus, 2023). Among this series of 14 paintings, "*Saturn Devouring His Children (1819-1823)*" (Figure 58) alludes to a horrifying, chilling tale from Greek mythology while critiquing the cruelty and mercilessness of Goya's era. Deliberately selecting a disturbing and frightful narrative as his subject, Goya aimed to comprehend humanity's brutality, heartlessness, and savagery. Through bold lines, angular, distorted, and twisted grotesque forms, a dramatic play of light and shadow, deep colors, thick layers of paint, a densely textured surface, and rough brush strokes, he crafted an uncanny, unsettling atmosphere. The use of a monochrome background further intensified

this uncanny ambiance, thereby constructing an exaggerated language in the artwork. Graf, in his book on the subject, even remarked, “...it is also evidence of the exaggerated power used over people” (Marcus, 2023, p.26). Goya sought to fathom the exaggerated cruelty and misuse of power prevalent in his time, and this intention manifested in the expressive and exaggerated depictions within his grotesque figures.



FIGURE 58 *Francisco Goya, Saturn Devouring His Children, Wall painting on canvas, 1819-1823, 143.5x81.4cm., Prado Museum, Madrid.*

William Turner (1775-1851) is discussed in Section 2.2.6, titled “*The Relationship between Exaggeration and the Concepts of Transcendence, Ideal, Sublime, Beautiful and Ugly.*” Immanuel Kant, in his essay “*Observations on the Feelings of the Beautiful and the Sublime,*” characterizes William Turner’s works as sublime. Turner portrays Hannibal’s crossing of the Alps in 218 BC, a significant military triumph, by accentuating the power of nature and the snowstorm (Figure 12). Through his expressionist, blurred brushstrokes, the contrast of light and dark areas, and an innovative use of warm and cold colors, Turner conveys the sublime feeling of nature, creating a novel way of perception and an exaggerated individual expression language. The affinity between the discussed Turner aesthetics and abstraction could only be established in the mid-1960s (Robinson, 2016). While the grand scale of an artwork in comparison to humans and its boundlessness can evoke a sublime effect on the viewer, there are also works of art that achieve sublimity solely through their

content (Yılmaz, 2021).

The Romantic period, extending beyond plastic arts into music, witnessed an exaggeration of the limits of instruments and sound. In the 19th century, composers prioritized dramatic vocalization with harmony and instrument diversity, replacing balance and proportion with exaggeration and enthusiasm in romantic music (İlyasoğlu, 2003). Richard Wagner's (1813-1883) operas are cited as exemplars of the most extravagant operas (The Flying Dutchman, 1840). Wagner, a significant aesthetic theorist and cultural reformer in performing arts (Nietzsche, 2009, p.101), incorporated mythical and metaphorical layers of meaning into his operas, expanding the boundaries of operatic phenomena. In Wagner's works, the use of unchanging repetitions emphasizes a perpetual sameness, creating an endless melody (Ülger, 2014, p.203). **Gustav Mahler** (1860-1911), a prominent composer bridging Late Romanticism and Modernism, introduced a giant hammer in the last part of a performance of his *Sixth Symphony*, surpassing the instruments' traditional boundaries and generating much discussion and criticism. Selçuk Aylar expresses that the motive behind lying behind this giant hammer is more about the desire to emphasize and confirm, suggesting that the path to exaggeration arises from a sense of inadequacy or dissatisfaction with expression (Aylar, 2015, pp. 93-94). Mahler used the hammer to enhance his narrative, creating an exaggerated language (See Section 3.2, The Concept of Communication, Visual Communication, and Symbols).

With the advent of photography, artists ventured into nature, capturing the instantaneous feelings and effects created by nature in the human soul, transferring them to paintings through their preferred color palette. In this context, exaggeration is linked to the artist's choice of color palette, influencing the transmission of the effect to the other side. Impressionists applied paints separately to the canvas without mixing them, capturing the dynamic, ever-changing scenes they observed outdoors without missing reflections and lights (Gombrich, 1972, p. 429). While classical analyses were based on light and shadow, the introduction of color led to the expression of cold through warmth. Impressionists, influenced by scientific research on light, attempted to depict light on natural objects using paints representing sun colors, painting light's color in a pure, unnatural way. As Turani contends, "the color system replaced the object form, removing the natural form from the painting" (Turani, 2014, p.50). Post-Impressionists attempted to reintroduce form into painting, but the dominant use of color side by side could not prevent the disintegration of

form.

Claude Monet (1840-1926), a French painter, employed light and color in a symphony of colors in his paintings. He conveyed his impressions through the unity of colors on a two-dimensional plane. In the 19th century, it becomes evident that color dominated painting and constituted a significant element in shaping it. Therefore, exaggeration can be achieved in painting through the dominance of color as the primary element and the use of contrast, incompatible, or unrealistic colors (Yilmaz, 2021).

Vincent van Gogh's (1853-1890) work "*The Starry Night*" (1889), (Figure 59), as one of the Post-Impressionist artists reacting against the Impressionist movement and seeking to reintroduce form into painting, will be examined in the context of exaggeration. Prior to that, the discussion will focus on Paul Cezanne, recognized as the father of modern art, serving as a bridge between Impressionism and Cubism.

French post-Impressionist painter **Paul Cezanne** (1839-1906) holds a pivotal position in the development of modern art. Cezanne aimed to capture the forms and colors he perceived in nature in his own impressions, striving to interpret the invisible aspects of nature through geometry. He used warm-cold color contrasts, space contrasts, and pure color contrasts to reveal the foreground-background effect, and claimed that there was an inherent mathematics, a structure to nature. He aspired to craft appearances that were magnificent, robust, resolute, and serene. As Turani notes in his book "*Philosophy of Contemporary Art*," "Cezanne placed black among the colors to avoid disrupting the structural formations of objects, fortifying the image by grounding it in geometric forms" (Turani, 2014, p.52). Gauguin added thick contours around the object, but due to the use of plain colors and pure color contrasts, three-dimensionality was not achievable. In Turani's words, the paintings became "a color composition that remains on the surface." Consequently, Turani contended that labeling the 19th century as the era of color would be apt, as color asserted its dominance in painting, capable of conveying emotions independently (p.53). Gombrich, in his assessment of Cezanne's work "View of Sainte-Victoire Mountain," emphasized the solidity of the images transformed into geometric forms, noting that they are "immersed in light, yet still robust and corporeal" (Gombrich, 1972, p.429).

Van Gogh provided a beautiful explanation for his use of exaggerated colors in a letter: "I amplify the blonde hue of the hair, incorporating the orange, chrome, and lemon tones. I

paint not the back of the head or the ordinary wall of the room but infinity. I apply the most intense and rich blue that the palette can offer. The blond and radiant head emerges mysteriously on the blue-charged surface, akin to a star in the sky. My dear friend, the audience may perceive nothing but caricature in this exaggeration. But do we truly concern ourselves with that?” Through deliberate color exaggeration and the animated traces left by his brushstrokes, Van Gogh conveyed a plethora of emotions—enthusiasm, ecstasy, love, admiration, energy, passion for art, the storm within him, and perhaps even fear. Gombrich underscored the idea that emotions are imbued with meaning through colors, stating, “Our emotions paint our way of seeing and our memories with their own colors” (Gombrich, 1972, p.447). Van Gogh’s utilization of pure colors and swift brushstrokes positions him as an early and pioneering expressionist, akin to figures such as El Greco and Goya (Graf, 2023).



FIGURE 59 Vincent Van Gogh, *The Starry Night*, 1889. feather, 73.7x92.1cm, MoMA,

“*The Starry Night*, 1889” painting has become one of the most renowned artworks of all time due to the rotating composition of the sky, the melancholic blue color palette, and its amalgamation with Van Gogh’s tragic life. Instead of a fleeting glimpse of reality, Van Gogh, intrigued by lines reminiscent of exaggerated and distorted woodblock prints, turned towards the more exhilarating realm of his own imagination, distancing himself from nature. The short, robust, rotating, repetitive rhythms of the brushstrokes, along with the circular and vortex-like movement of helical cosmic elements, collectively impart the impression of perpetual motion within the painting. His imagination, characterized by striking cold-warm contrasting colors, the revelation of paint chemistry through thick application, and

pronounced brush marks, serves as a profound expression of the artist's emotional state. Gombrich goes as far as interpreting these brushstrokes as a manifestation of the artist's transcendence (Gombrich, 1972, p.437). The celestial expanse represents the surreal dimension of the artwork, with the cypress tree acting as a conduit between the earth and the sky. Color supersedes tangible forms, objects undergo simplification, shadows dissipate, and the painting is executed with light, subtle layers reminiscent of Japanese prints (p. 438). Van Gogh, in his quest for pure, natural light, employs a two-dimensional plane to convey forms and emotions, achieved through the amalgamation of exaggerated, striking colors. It could be argued that the artist's intrinsic nature is discerned through the lens of nature itself, as he endeavors to evoke an effect by distorting it in his departure from nature.

An example of interdisciplinary interaction emerges when considering the impact of the painting "*Starry Night*" on Scottish-American guitarist Don McLean, who drew inspiration from it on a different continent, 70 years later. McLean composed a song titled "Vincent upon viewing the artwork," and it found its place in the album "American Pie" (Alev, 2022, March 26). McLean's lyrics poignantly reflect Van Gogh's life story and the soul-wrenching pains he endured. Furthermore, "*Starry Night*" serves as the concluding musical piece for the animated film "*Loving Vincent* (2017)," a cinematic portrayal of Van Gogh's life accompanied by visual art.

This section delves into the examination of the classical period in plastic arts within the context of exaggeration, exploring its relationships and interactions with other art disciplines. The discourse touches upon the attempt to decipher the anatomical intricacies of the body through predefined rules, emphasizing that the exaggeration of the period sought to align everything ideal with a mathematics divergent from the naturalness of nature. Consequently, it becomes evident that exaggeration in classical art predominantly arises as both a necessity and an instrument of the era. In the Northern Renaissance, in contrast to the Italian Renaissance, Bosch and Bruegel prioritized naturalistic, grotesque depictions shaped by their individual intuitions over mathematical formulas and idealism. Their creative language, infused with humor, resulted in an exaggerated portrayal. Mannerism, acting as a transitional bridge from Renaissance aesthetics to Baroque, is introduced, highlighting the shift in the understanding of ratio, proportion, size, balance, harmony, and composition during the Renaissance. The elongated limbs, deformation, and exaggerated use of mystical light and color mark the departure from the idealized effect of painting, giving way to an era

characterized by exaggeration. With the advent of the Baroque period, exaggeration manifests itself through movement and light, epitomized by the curved and exaggerated decorative elements of Rococo. Romanticism, Impressionism, and Post-Impressionism, pivotal in the transition from classical to modern art and laying the roots for the latter, are incorporated into this discussion. This bridge period witnesses artists assuming the role of rule-makers, resorting to exaggeration as a tool of interpreting their individual realities through distinct artistic attitudes.

4.8 Alienation as an Expressive Form and Traces of Exaggeration in Distortion

Alienation, bearing sociological, psychological, political, and philosophical significance, is an issue inherent to industrial societies. It involves individuals distancing themselves from a specific process and order, their own identity and values, their productions, and their labor (Işık, 2022). The term ‘alienation’, derived from the Latin verb ‘alieno,’ meaning ‘to alienate, estrange, transform,’ and the adjective ‘alienus,’ denoting ‘other’ or ‘stranger,’ has become ‘alienation’ in Western languages (Osmanoğlu, 2016). TDK defines alienation as “a distinct way of perceiving the products of human and societal activities, and the elements independent of these activities and dominating them, in different ways under certain historical conditions.” According to Marshall, as a conceptualization, alienation generally describes individuals distancing themselves from each other or a specific environment or process (Marshall, 1999, p. 198). Alienation, a phenomenon experienced in every era and society, manifests as an individual losing interest in their social environment, turning inward, and becoming detached from oneself and the world. In the study, *Section 2.2.3* discusses how under the title “*Supernatural Beings, Excessiveness, Fear, Uncanny, Grotesque,*” it is mentioned that distortion and grotesque are expressions of the alienated world.

Particularly after the industrialization of the 19th century, factors such as migration to industrial cities due to the lucrative nature of factory labor compared to agricultural production, peasants transitioning to workers, etc., confined individuals’ lives to a narrow social and natural environment. While societal life in crowded cities is highly dynamic, those bound by rigid working hours, living in stacked apartment buildings, experience life as monotonous, isolated, and restricted. A unique collective mass consciousness has emerged

in this society, consisting of individuals isolated from their surroundings and laden with spiritual knowledge. The society is constantly influenced by the outside world through the media, resulting in a form of mass robotism. Turani even noted the utilization of this mass robotism by leaders during the world wars of the 20th century. Consequently, the industry shaped a city, individual, and society that aligns with its needs (Turani, 2014, pp. 60-69). People migrating from villages to cities find themselves caught between village and urban cultures, leading to alienation from society, their surroundings, and the established order. As anxiety levels rise, individuals experience distortions in their perception of reality. Charles Dickens vividly depicted the 20th-century city in his novel “*Hard Times, 1854*”: “...it was a city of factories and high chimneys, these chimneys were constantly rising like snakes, winding suddenly and never untying. There was a black canal, a foul-smelling purple river, factory buildings with a lot of noise coming from the windows all day long, steam pistons that rose and fell constantly like a mad elephant shaking its head...” (Dickens, 1997). Although alienation is approached with some semantic differences in literature, it has universally been accepted as a feeling of isolation. Akdoğan underscores this isolation in his thesis, stating, “The importance of the concept of alienation is reflected in the writings of figures such as Karl Marx, Franz Kafka, James Joyce, portraying an individual isolated from society, family, religion, cultural, and social values, turning into either an oppressed worker, an insect, or a youth alienated from society in order to become an artist” (Akdoğan, 2013).

The philosopher who first introduced the concept of alienation was Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778). Section 2.2.6 discusses Hegel and alienation under the title “*The Relationship between Exaggeration and the Concepts of Excessiveness, Sublime, Ideal, Beauty and Ugly*.” GWF Hegel (1770-1831) assigned a philosophical meaning to the concept of alienation, making it the fundamental issue in his philosophy. Following Hegel, philosophers from the Marxist and post-Marxist traditions have approached alienation from different dimensions. Osmanoğlu explains these varied approaches, stating, “While Hegel views the movement of the geist in history as a form of alienation and liberation from alienation, Ludwig Andreas Feuerbach (1804-1872), conversely, argues that God is an expression of human alienation. For Feuerbach, Hegel’s geist is nothing more than man alienated from himself. Addressing the problem on a historical and social level, evaluating alienation within the framework of private property, business, production, and labor processes, Marx provides a critique of capitalism through the concept of alienation”

(Osmanoğlu, 2016). According to Marx, alienation is most intensely experienced in the capitalist and bourgeois order. A human being becomes akin to a machine part, losing connection with what they produce, severing ties with the whole, and forfeiting the freedom to act independently (Marx, 2007b). Marx contends that humans can only feel free in their animal functions such as eating, drinking, reproduction, and shelter (Osipov, 1977, p. 32). The constant repetition of the same task transforms the human into a mechanized entity, devoid of personality and freedom. German philosopher and existentialist Heidegger (1889-1976) describes this state with the German pronoun “*das M*,” referring to a world where “*one among many*,” everyone is the other, and no one can be oneself (Pappenheim, 2002, pp. 21-22). Regarding the reflection of this situation in art, Turani asserts that Post Impressionists and Nabis (Edouard Vuillard, Pierre Bonnard, Maurice Denis, etc.) portrayed introverted expression in art in the last quarter of the 19th century (Turani, 2014, p.82). Turani notes that the artists of this period, who turned inward, were fatalistic. In their art, colors remain harmonious, and forms have yet to disintegrate (p. 85).

In the 20th century, the advent of electrical energy significantly accelerated production, unprecedentedly hastening the flow of life and giving rise to a more intense work tempo. However, alongside the economic inadequacy of workers to afford the products they themselves produced, the era, marked by successive wars, brought about crises and psychological explosions unparalleled in history (Turani, 2014, pp. 81-82). These psychological reactions against living in silence emerged as a scream in the early 20th century, ushering in a period during which we would witness consecutive Modern Avant-garde movements, despite the wars and societal troubles experienced. As articulated by Fischer: “individuals must continuously overcome alienation to create societal conditions that empower them as masters rather than slaves of their production” (Fischer, 1995). As Turani asserts, “Art will no longer be an expression of introversion but a depiction of the explosion of suppressed emotions within individuals (p.83). Thus, from the modern era onwards, artists redirected their focus to their internal realities rather than the external (Rothko, 2020, p. 130). “Interest in Freud’s concepts of the unconscious and conscious, and the desire to actively employ them in artistic endeavors, played a role in these shifts” (Freud, 2014).

In architecture, Art Nouveau intertwines with stone structures, ornate balcony iron railings, fluid elements, and exaggerated relief decorations (Figure 70). Meanwhile, artists

such as Edvard Munch and Kirchner depict exaggerated coarseness of forms and vibrant color schemes in their paintings. The exaggeration of color and form by Fauves (Figure 62), Malevich's exaggeration of emptiness and objectlessness with his white square, Mondrian's abstract exaggeration at the end of his journey starting with a reference to nature (Figure 67). Surrealists' emphasis on fantasy brought forth by dreams and the subconscious (Figure 68), and Dada's view of exaggeration as an artistic approach (Figure 64) can all be explained as acts of rebellion. All these instances of rebellion can be associated with exaggeration as a tool of interpretation through our definition of transcending the ordinary.

In the realm of plastic arts, particularly in the painting domain, artists interpret their emotions by employing composition elements and principles that align with their preferences. Through manipulation of harmony, rhythm, movement, contrast, emphasis, balance, ratio and scale, and by utilizing exaggerated colors, distortion, and symbolic devices such as metaphor and allegory, or by creating a sense of sublimity, artists can express emotions powerfully. These aspects are discussed in the section titled "*Elements and Principles of Composition, Processes of Interpretation, and Exaggeration in Plastic Arts*" (Section 4.6) within the study. Color, as one of the most crucial elements in painting, allows for the conveyance of form and emotions through the combination of colors on a two-dimensional plane. During the Impressionist period, Claude Monet (1840-1926) extensively used light and color to convey pictorial effects and his unique expressions, replacing patterns with color, as discussed in Section 4.7. Examining the paintings of artists like Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), Ernst Ludwig Kirchner (1880-1938), Georges Rouault (1871-1958), and Kathe Kollwitz (1867-1945), we observe a departure from natural forms and colors, opting for primitive and geometric shaping with dramatic and exaggerated styles.

In the realm of sculpture in Plastic Arts, artists achieve exaggeration by magnifying size, manipulating ratio and proportion, engaging in illusion, metaphor, and reproduction. For instance, British sculptor Henry Moore (1898-1986) bestowed imaginary and formal new meanings upon the human figure as a metaphor through his large-sized, abstract, primitive, and organically shaped sculptures made of stone and bronze (Atalay, 2014). The growing interest in the **primitivism** effect seen in Henry Moore sculptures today stems from artists' desire to distance themselves from societal pressures, rules, and imposing ideas, aiming to escape details, simplify, and look at the world with a new pure perspective. "With this perspective, artists turned to analyzing the productions of people who organized their

existence around religious, magical, and spiritual beliefs centuries ago, thereby contributing to the shaping of contemporary art” (Özkul, 2020, p. 23-24). “In essence, the primitive attitude is the Western artists’ reinterpretation of the art of primitive societies under the conditions of the 20th century” (Turani, 2014). Artists, in order to interpret their emotions, rebellion, and wild cries, have exaggerated by turning to purity, a childlike perspective, and abstraction (Turani, 2014, p.99). Spanish philosopher Jose Ortega Y Gasset (1883-1955) has drawn attention to parallels between the 20th-century individual and the primitive human in terms of psychological structure, expressive interpretation, and similarities in thought (Gasset, 2022). Artists such as Henry Moore (Figure 61), Paul Klee, Picasso Kirchner, Jean Dubuffet (Figure 17), Brancusi (Figure 19), Brassai (Figure 22), Erwin Wurm (Figure 18), Anish Kapoor, Bourgeois have shown an interest in primitivism (Okan, 2018). Primitivism and expressive interpretation always involve an exaggerated aspect.

Picasso (1881-1973) abandoned nature, transcending reality beyond the visible world and generating solutions within the reality of painting itself. The desire to go beyond the existing and develop a new language, coupled with the use of exaggeration as a tool of interpretation, emerges as an artistic attitude in Picasso. In the painting “*Les Demoiselles d’Avignon, 1907*” (Figure 60), Picasso clashed primitiveness and civilization, disrupted the painting tradition preserved since the Renaissance, fragmented and distorted figures and space (Minor, 2016). It stands as a prime example of alienation, distortion, and exaggeration. Therefore, Picasso’s relationship with exaggeration lies in his abandonment of nature, shaping art according to himself, and his individuality.



FIGURE 60 Picasso, *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. K. G.)* 1907, 243.9 x 233.7 cm Museum of Modern Art, New York

Henry Moore (1898-1986), in his abstract stone sculpture titled “*Reclining Figure, 1938*” (Figure 61), as per Gombrich’s expression, only suggests the presence of a woman. Gombrich states the following about Moore: “He doesn’t want a woman made of stone; he wants to create a stone that evokes a woman” (Gombrich, 1972, p. 467). Indeed, in line with Gombrich’s emphasis, Moore has attempted to capture the ‘essence’ by minimizing detailing during the creative process. He introduced horizontal forms in contrast to the spaces placed inside the sculptures and the conventional understanding of vertically rising sculptures, thereby putting an end to the established notion of closed and vertically rising masses (Gombrich, 1972). Through the utilization of contrasts like negative-positive form and voidness-fullness, he generated art from emptiness, specifically negative space, enhancing the potential for varied meanings. In his own words, Moore has “allowed his sculptures to breathe” through these voids. The primal art curiosity evident in Moore’s work finds its roots in Egyptian, Etruscan, and Mexican arts, contributing to his stylistic choices in bringing forth the creations of the subconscious. This curiosity manifests in simplicity, massiveness,

bulkiness, and dimensional size. By magnifying the scale, distorting the form, and employing negative-positive form and voidness-fullness contrasts, Moore crafted abstract yet organically shaped, exaggerated sculptures that transcend the conventional understanding of sculpture.



FIGURE 61 Henry Moore, *Recumbent Figure, Green, Reclining Figure*, 1938, Stone sculpture, 889x1327x737mm Tate Gallery London, UK.

Fauvists employed color and light in an unprecedented manner, using raw, intense, and limitless hues, thereby exaggerating color (Yılmaz, 2021). Henri Matisse (1869-1954), a prominent artist of the era, portrayed his wife in the painting “*Madame Matisse, 1905*” (Figure 62). The aim was not to create a portrait that showcased the beauty of his wife but rather to play with color, as evident from the intense and raw colors used in his paint palette. Consequently, Matisse exaggerated by manipulating color in this piece. Color, for Matisse, consistently served as a tool of expression. Avant-garde artists like Henri Matisse share common traits, including individuality, a reluctance to align with any particular movement, and a yearning to forge a new realm beyond the tangible world they observe. Their association with exaggeration is manifested through the attitudes they exhibit—a desire to transcend the ordinary, articulate something novel, and cultivate a distinct language. In Section 3.2, under the heading “*The Concept of Communication, Visual Communication, and Symbols,*” Matisse’s painting “*Dinner Table, 1908*” is scrutinized in the context of employing color as a design element in communication. Moreover, in Section 4.6, under the title “*Elements and Principles of Composition, Processes of Interpretation, and Exaggeration in Plastic Arts,*” his work “*The Dance, 1910*” is examined concerning its

connection with rhythm and movement, integral components of compositional principles in plastic arts.

Edvard Munch's (1863-1944) self-portrait, titled "*The Scream 1895*," captures an exaggerated expression of human emotion through undulating, distinct, and swift brushstrokes. The piece features pure, robust, and contrasting colors, with color preferences that seemingly clash in the palette. The distortion, twisting, and vibration of forms contribute to a vivid depiction of impact. Remarkably, this painting served as inspiration for the mask in the popular thriller series "*Scream*" (sanatabasla.n.d.).

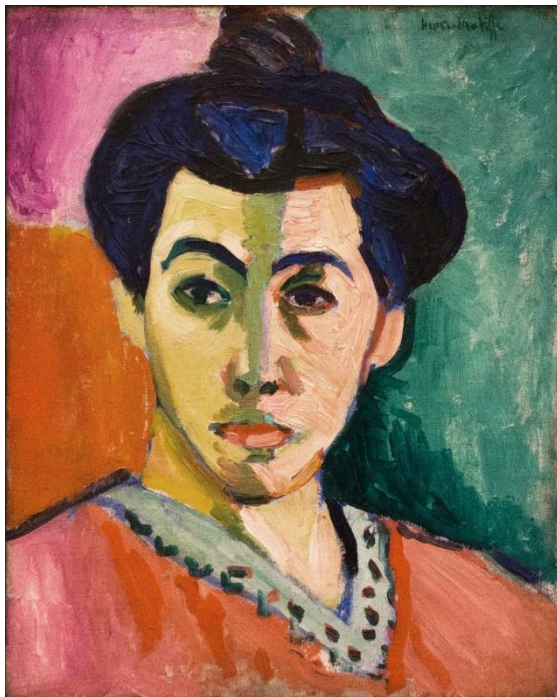


FIGURE 62 Henri Matisse, *The Green Line-Portrait of Madame Matisse*, 1905, 40.5x32.5cm, O/C/B, National Gallery of Denmark, Copenhagen., Denmark.

In the realm of architecture, experimental endeavors have given rise to the **Art Nouveau** movement—a synthesis characterized by the amalgamation of stone, iron, glass, and refined decorative embellishments which involves the convergence of diverse materials, the utilization of textural contrasts, and the harmonious coexistence of antiquity and modernity, art and craftsmanship. Providing a resonant homage to nature and a quest for beauty, Art Nouveau unfolds as a movement rich in synthesis (Figure 71). Emerging as the pioneering avant-garde movement towards the late 19th century and the early 20th century, Art Nouveau has left an indelible impact on Europe and America. Graf underscores the

potential of Art Nouveau as a noteworthy reference for contemporary art due to its nature as a synthesis movement (Graf, 2023). Drawing inspiration from the British Arts & Crafts movement and Japanese art, Art Nouveau, despite evoking associations with Baroque and Rococo styles, presents itself as more understated through its equilibrium of fullness and voidness (Graf, 2023). The architecture of the 20th century finds its genesis in these groundbreaking initiatives. While numerous examples of Art Nouveau architecture abound in Europe, notably in Brussels, Prague, Vienna, and Barcelona, Istanbul boasts the “*The Botter Building*” at number 235 on Istiklal Street in Beyoğlu as a splendid Art Nouveau specimen. Commissioned by Botter, a Dutch immigrant to Istanbul, this building stands out as one of the first in Turkey to incorporate steel construction in its edifice, featuring attention-grabbing iron balcony railings and reliefs (Graf, 2023). Consequently, Art Nouveau stands as an exaggerated and synthetic movement, characterized by its juxtaposition of old and new, textural contrasts, and the extravagant, sinuous forms of its structures.

Antoni Gaudi (1852-1926), the Spanish architect synonymous with the Art Nouveau movement, proclaimed, “There are no straight lines in nature; there is flexibility and harmony.” This philosophy is evident in his works, which consistently incorporate round, helical, and softened lines, alongside an abundance of decorative ornaments and exaggerated folds, transforming structures into fantastical narratives (Figure 63). Gaudi habitually associated human unhappiness with angularity and sharpness, thus producing architectural works devoid of corners, featuring rounded and curved elements (ipekgezer.com). The persistent repetition of forms, unwavering continuity, and allegiance to Gaudi’s ideology imbue his creations with a sense of exaggeration.

In the aftermath of Art Nouveau, modern architects like Frank Lloyd Wright (1869-1959) would eschew ornamental motifs, striving instead for buildings that prioritize comfort and utility. This departure marked the abandonment of longstanding habits associated with extravagant architecture since the era of Brunelleschi. The advent of new Bauhaus theories aimed to liberate cities and homes from superfluous details, ushering in an era of extreme simplification. The erstwhile appreciation for beauty would be supplanted by a focus on functionality and, when necessary, the ugly (Gombrich, 1972, pp. 443-445). The concept of exaggeration in architecture can be assessed from various perspectives, including the use of large dimensions, specialized construction techniques, exaggerated application of colors and

shapes, construction methods and durations, materials for decoration and ornamentation, the prevailing possibilities of the period, pushing boundaries, and transcending temporal constraints (Yılmaz, 2021). A scrutiny of Art Nouveau embellishments and the oversimplification of architecture that immediately followed, reveals that both can be associated with exaggeration.



FIGURE 63 Antoni Gaudí, *Casa Milà*, (1906-1912), Barcelona, Spain.

With the accelerated pace of industrial production facilitated by electricity, the ease of replicating what is valuable has led to a devaluation. The psychological responses arising from the alienation of individuals, the diminishing time for personal existence, and the realization of the relativity of created values have collectively given rise to the consideration of disassembling the object. This notion initially impacted Cubist artists and later found resonance among the Dadaists as the tumult of war unfolded. The Cubists commenced their exploration from the point where Cezanne attempted to interpret nature through geometry. Departing from the use of vibrant colors, they employed a palette of black, grey, and brown, deconstructing form with geometric shapes. The sentiment of disintegration manifests as an exaggeration that lends meaning to reactions against accumulated norms and unrealized life. Symbolic of the genesis of Cubism, **Picasso's** painting "*Les Femmes d'Alger*, 1907" (Figure 60) encapsulates this spirit. The liberating potential of Cubist forms significantly influenced artist **Paul Klee** (1879-1940), who engaged with geometric shapes, letters, and numbers. Klee's artistic realm thrived on dichotomies such as good-evil, life-death, top-bottom, front-back, angular-round, triangle-circle, and straight-wavy. While manipulating forms, Klee reveled in the diversity of serendipitous images captured through his imaginative

freedom. Contrasts, a fundamental design principle, serve artists in attributing meaning to their works and can introduce an exaggerated expressive language (See Section 4.6).

Russian painter and art theorist Kazimir Malevich (1879-1935), the progenitor of the Suprematist movement, embraced abstract geometry under the influence of cubism, aspiring to liberate art from its reliance on tangible objects. His piece “*Black Square, 1915*” articulated a response to the First World War. A connection can be drawn between Malevich’s black square and nihilism. According to Malevich, one must first liberate oneself from obsessions and embrace “nothingness” (Malevich, 2022). Greek philosopher Gorgias (483 BC - 375 BC) serves as the intellectual progenitor of nihilist thought. Influenced by the nihilistic system of thought, figures such as Nietzsche (1844-1900), Feuerbach (1804-1872), Jean Paul Sartre (1905-1980), and Albert Camus (1913-1960) emerged. Nihilism, originating in Russia in the mid-19th century, burgeoned as a philosophical approach, advocating for the absence of meaning and value and symbolizing a rebellion against the established social order. Malevich elucidates not the technique of painting but how one should contemplate it—a conceptual approach. Sociologist and critic Slavoj Žižek (1949) construed Malevich’s *Black Square* as the “pinnacle of modernist sublimation.” According to Žižek, the abstraction of the “Black Square” starkly contrasts with the hyper-realism of Courbet’s painting “*The Origin of the World*.” Courbet, often hailed as the first modernist painter, minutely depicts his model’s vagina (Žižek, 2000). “Courbet represents the glorification of reality, whereas Malevich represents the glorification of emptiness. Modernism oscillates between these two extremes” (Artun, 2018, March09) (See Section 2.2.6). With this work, Malevich protested war by exalting and exaggerating voidness and nothingness, underscoring the notion that everything is void of meaning and value.

While Cubism and Futurism, went beyond the placid surface of traditional art, the most revolutionary movement remains Dadaism. Dadaists reflected on the emotions stirred by the war, its impact on the urban landscape and society, projecting their oppositional discourses into their works. They engaged in a parody of art and culture, exhibiting an anti-establishment, anti-political, and anti-war stance (Kayalıoğlu and Şahin, 2016). Stemming from Friedrich Nietzsche’s (1844-1900) “*Nihilist and Denialist Theory*,” Dada permeated literature, painting, theater, music, and even graphic design, laying the foundation for contemporary art (Graf, 2023). In his 2018 article “*Destruction Aesthetics*,” Ali Artun asserted, “20th-century art is fundamentally terrorist and has been terrorized... It was

obliterated with two world wars, genocide, techno-nuclear power, etc. You cannot comprehend Dada or surrealism without considering the First World War” (Artun,2018, March09) Dada and Surrealism mark periods characterized by the intensive utilization of exaggeration. Novels such as Ernest Hemingway’s “*For Whom the Bell Tolls, 1940*,” recounting the Spanish Civil War, and Graham Greene’s “*The Quiet American, 1955*,” detailing the Vietnam War, elucidate that war alienated individuals and society in the 20th century. “The remnants of the war period depict individuals isolated from everything, having lost faith in God and national duties, questioning the purpose of their existence and the rationale behind their struggles. Advising them on what to do or discussing death becomes illogical, as death might be the only solution.” Characters in these novels discovered their life purpose in love, thus escaping alienation. Choosing opposite concepts, war and love, they questioned established norms. Alienation, manifesting itself in forms such as isolation from society, communication deficits, estrangement from one’s essence, and the questioning of life’s purpose, introduced contrasts, colliding colors, and inversion into art. In Antmen’s work, Dada is described as, “Dada is the expression of colliding colors, the unity of opposites, grotesque things, inconsistencies; in short, life itself” (Antmen, 2016, p. 122-124). **Tristan Tzara** (1896-1963), a founder of the Dada movement, defined Dada in his 1918 Dada Manifesto as, “Dada is a protest, a destructive action. It is the destruction of logic.” Commencing with Picasso and Braque, Dada brought about the widespread use of collage and assemblage, incorporating newspaper clippings, wallpapers, discarded materials, fabrics, etc. (Gençaydın, 1988: p. 107). Collages, blending unrelated concepts, different elements, and materials, have established an exaggerated visual language through natural texture contrasts, surpassing the traditional static surface of painting for the first time.

Dadaist painter, graphic designer, and collage artist, German **Hannah Höch** (1889-1978), as depicted in her artwork “*Hannah Höch and her Scissors, Fashion Show* by Hanna Höch, 1925-35,” published in The Guardian newspaper (Figure 64) (Cumming, 2014, Jan13), recontextualizes them through cutting, assembling, and pasting collages, probing the role of women in the modern world and the fragmentation of both the world and women. Höch, with the potency of photomontage, as evident in Figure 64, alienated the image, creating a ludicrous effect. Particularly in alienation, Höch emphasized the effectiveness of the cutting and pasting technique, distorting reality as desired through the use of photography. Höch’s use of photography becomes a form of rebellion, where he

conspicuously distorts proportions, rendering figures grotesque with large heads and small bodies. Thus, the understanding of the fragmentation of women is conceptualized through grotesque and disproportionate figures. Skopbulten eloquently describes Höch's art and the Germany of her time: "Höch's photomontages, resembling a surface of a shattered mirror, reflect the transformations in Weimar Germany, a nation just emerging from war; overthrowing the empire, embarking on revolutions, undergoing Taylorist transformations in industry, taking strides in women's rights, and making leaps in photography, cinema, and mass communication" (Skopbulten, 2017, December09). Dada artists prioritized randomness and improvisation. The oppositional and rebellious spirit of the Dada movement resulted in artworks that are extraordinary, absurd, strange, and exaggerated. Yılmaz directly correlates the Dada movement with exaggeration, stating, "In the Dada movement, the concept of exaggeration is perceived as an artistic approach" (Yılmaz, 2021).



FIGURE 64 Hannah Höch, "Hannah and her Scissors, Modenschau (Fashion Show), 1925-35 (detail) by Hannah Höch. Photograph: Berlinische Galerie – Landesmuseum für Moderne Kunst, Fotografie und Architektur, Berlin".

The Dada movement originated in Zurich and continued in Berlin, New York, and France. **Marcel Duchamp** (1887-1968) played a role in the New York branch of the movement. Renowned for selecting the ready-made object—a urinal—as his medium of artistic expression, Marcel Duchamp marginalized aesthetics, bringing thought and concept to the forefront. In doing so, he scrutinized the essence of art and successfully garnered widespread recognition, shaping both the conceptual evolution of 20th-century art and the

foundations of contemporary art (Kuzu, 2019). According to Kuzu (2019), “For modern art enthusiasts, a urinal, a can, or a Harley Davidson motorcycle can be a work of art as valuable as the Mona Lisa.” Duchamp’s provocative act involved presenting the urinal titled “*Fountain, 1917*,” signed “R Mutt” (Figure 65) as an art object. By doing this, he challenged conventional stereotypes defining artworks, elevating the object from its surface and placing it within the realm of conceptual dimensions. Duchamp’s approach stood in radical contrast to the prevalent art practices of his time. Thus, in line with our definition of transcending the ordinary, in order to interpret his reaction against the molds of art definitions and to question what art is, pushed the expressive language of art beyond the confines of conventional narrative, exaggerating by employing functional contrasts. Duchamp emphasized that the designation of something as a work of art or not lies within the artist’s discretion. Moreover, the artist’s selection of materials carries a sense of irony and exaggeration (Cengiz, 2022, p. 161). A work of art need not necessarily result from a deliberate action by the artist; a ready-made object can assume the status of a work of art by serving as a vessel for the artist’s attributed meaning (Kaya, 2022).



FIGURE 65 Marcel Duchamp, *Fountain*, 1917.

Duchamp satirized Leonardo’s renowned work “Mona Lisa, 1503” by adding a beard and mustache to a postcard featuring the painting. Through this act, he mocked the art preferences of the bourgeoisie, questioned the essence of art, and introduced a sense of disruption to its historical context (LHOOQ, 1919) (İlhan, 2020, p. 55). Graf categorizes this artwork as a synthetic ready-made object, considering it an early exemplification of

Postmodernism (Graf, 2023). “Duchamp, by adding facial hair to the Mona Lisa, employed gender contrasts, detached it from its temporal, spatial, and realistic context, introduced a sense of disruption to its historical context, and thereby exaggerated (Figure 66).

Under the influence of Cubist studies, some painters engaged in various experiments by considering the painting as an architectural construction. Among these artists was the Dutch painter **Piet Mondrian** (1872-1944), a proponent of the De Stijl movement. Mondrian commenced his artistic journey with naturalistic landscapes. Initiating the process of abstraction with the piece “*Gray Tree, 1911*,” he escalated this approach in “*Trees, 1912*.” The culmination of his stylization is evident in the work “*Composition with Red, Blue and Yellow, 1930*” (Figure 67), where his distinctive style takes form. In this piece, primary colors are divided by block lines, evolving into a two-dimensional grid structure. Mondrian aimed to construct his artworks using fundamental elements such as lines, geometric shapes, and pure colors (Gombrich, 1972, p. 464). According to Graf, Mondrian, through the application of three primary colors alongside black and white, sought to encompass all the colors of the world in his paintings. This conceptual approach allowed him to create a pure, retinal aesthetic. By incorporating geometric shapes (grid), he aimed to decipher the organic, chaotic, and layered structure of the world, intending to mirror the world in this manner (Graf, 2023).



FIGURE 66 Marcel Duchamp, *LHOOQ*, 1919

King & McGaw grounded Mondrian's artistic philosophy on the equilibrium between the opposing forces of nature, asserting that these are represented through horizontal and vertical directional contrasts (King & McGaw, 1982). Gombrich underscored that spirituality was important for Mondrian, like Kandinski and Klee, and that he was in search of an art in which he could reflect the objectivity of the laws of nature. (Gombrich, 1972, p. 464). Examining Mondrian's artistic process mentioned above, we can affirm that he reached geometric abstraction and minimalism, originating from the reference to nature, thereby transcending the artistic practices of his era radically. Therefore, employing our definition of transcending the ordinary, we can discuss exaggeration in Mondrian's art (Kaya, 2022). In order to unveil the deeper meaning beneath abstraction, artists liberate themselves from unnecessary complexity by incorporating the principles of economics in presentation. In Mondrian's paintings, we can identify an exaggeration evolving from an understanding of economy (See Section 4.6). There is a parallelism between the Suprematism and De Stijl movements regarding their approach to art, utilizing purely geometric data and creating an abstract language.



FIGURE 67 Piet Mondrian, *Composition with Red, Blue and Yellow*, 1930, O/C/B, 45x 45cm., Kunsthau Zurich.

Turani asserts, “In today’s world, where machines have permeated every professional domain, human freedom has led to an increase in incompetence, insatiable appetites, indifference, egoism, sadism, emotional numbness, and materialistic inclinations, prompting individuals to embark on living within a novel understanding of time.” Particularly for the

individual of the 20th century, amidst the multitude and complexity of events, the surge in the capability to swiftly traverse from one place to another without observing one's surroundings, coupled with the advancements in communication, results in individuals being subjected to the influences of events worldwide, leading to a loss of the concepts of time and space. The human brain functions as a montage area where disparate, intricate events converge, and Turani contends that "montage is the essence of contemporary life." Similarly, Surrealism comprises compositions that juxtapose unrelated elements (Turani, 2014, pp. 94-95).

Surrealism, influenced by Freudian psychology, is an artistic expression style that accentuates fantasy, manifesting as an exaggerated portrayal brought forth by the soul, dreams, and the subconscious. It has progressed in alignment with the perspectives championed by Dada. The Spanish artist **Salvador Dali** (1904-1989) has contributed to various art disciplines, spanning painting, cinema, sculpture, and jewelry. Gombrich remarks, "Dali's paintings imitate the enchanting chaos of his dreams" (Gombrich, 1972, p. 473). Salvador Dali, amalgamating Freud's theory of the subconscious, the classical art aesthetics of historical masters, and his personal dream and life experiences, establishes himself as an artist charting his distinctive course (Graf, 2023). "It is presumed that Salvador Dali's gold-cast artwork titled '*The Space Elephant, 1961*' (Figure 68) serves as an example of jewelry art. Therefore, the potential for it to be a pendant or brooch exists" (Zorlu, 2021). Zorlu contends, "This artwork, appearing as though taken from a different design and added to this composition, can be described as an eclectic amalgamation." The work showcases the elephant's feet and legs in an unconventional expression. The disproportionately thin and long legs for a hefty elephant create an exaggerated appearance. The feet resemble those of a bird, while the legs, being long, exceedingly thin, and highly articulated, give the impression of spider or stork legs. Consequently, discussions about asymmetric balance, disproportionality, and contrast between the body and legs come to the forefront. The narrative in this piece revolves around things that are not plausible in reality but are conveyed through references observed in reality. For instance, in the artwork '*Space Elephant*,' there is a narrative involving an elephant, yet this elephant is not real but a reimagined version. Dali accentuates the elephant's presence in space by rendering the background black, guiding the observer into the obscurity of space (Zorlu, 2021). When utilizing the impressions and images of reality within the human brain, there is an irrational exaggeration

of reality. Dali, employing the basic design principles of ratio-proportion fabrication, asymmetrical balance, and contrasts, seeks to exaggerate the state of surreality, making it credible and asserting that this is his reality, his artistic understanding (Kaya, 2022). In surrealism, exaggeration serves as a tool and manifests itself as a form.



FIGURE 68 Salvador Dali, *Space Elephant*, 1961, Gold Casting, jewelry, 68 x 35.5 x 21 cm, Dali Theater Museum.

German Surrealist artist **Hans Bellmer** (1902-1975) is a versatile artist engaged in various branches of art, including photography, sculpture, graphics, and painting. Through his “*Doll project*,” he utilized deformed doll bodies, expressing his desires with the absence of limbs on the female body. Eroticism stands out as a prominent element of surrealism, and Bellmer, drawing from his sexual fantasies, positioned sexuality as a central concern in his art. Reacting to his father’s oppressive demeanor, Bellmer directed his response toward Nazi Germany, championing imperfection and fragmentation in opposition to the Nazis’ idealization of a healthy, flawless, and integral body. In Section 2.2.4, under the heading “Deformation, Representation of The Ugly, Sanctification of Imperfection,” the discussion delves into concepts such as deviating from ideal human bodies, distortion, the grotesque, the carnivalesque, abjection, and their relationships with exaggeration. Bellmer’s designs featuring headless, degenerate, unsettling, unconventional, fragmented, and incomplete bodies fall within this category and can be associated with exaggeration. Bellmer meticulously photographed life-sized doll sculptures, repeatedly reconfiguring and capturing them, thereby reproducing and accentuating new perspectives (Küskü, 2019, p. 69). Bellmer’s internal reactions and protest stance are notably exaggerated.



FIGURE 69 Hans Bellmer, *La Poupée (The Doll)*, 1936, Vintage gelatin silver print and gouache mounted on card stock, Image including gouache, 17.8 x 17.5 cm.

Following the First World War in Germany, artists **George Grosz** (1893-1959), Otto Dix (1891-1969), and **Max Beckmann** (1884-1950) criticized societal decay, bureaucrats, the military, prostitutes, and industrialists with satirical expressions. German-American **George Grosz**, utilized exaggeration as he criticized the bourgeois society while deforming his caricatured drawings, such as “*Dangerous Road, 1918*,” in order to interpret his reaction to the war, between the two World Wars in Germany. Deformation manifested in his paintings as a reaction against oppressive regimes and the fixation on perfection in Nazi Germany and the Soviet regime (Heartney, 2008, pp. 194-195).

Another surrealist artist, René Magritte (1898-1967), in his painting “*The Betrayal of Images, 1928-1929*” (Figure 2), disrupted the conventional link between language and image. He employed contradictory propositions simultaneously, creating semantic contrasts and exaggerating by presenting enigmatic puzzles that are challenging to decipher. As discussed under the headings “*The Relationship between Exaggeration and the Concepts of Perception, Illusion and Imagination*” (Section 2.2.8), Magritte’s chosen paradoxical narrative has influenced contemporary art (Passeron, 1982, p. 33). In the painting “*Personal Values, 1952*” by René Magritte (Figure 70), the utilization of size contrasts and depicting some elements as significantly larger than others make them stand out and create surprise.



FIGURE 70 *Rene Magritte, Personal Values, 1952, O/C/B, 80X100cm.*

If we assume the glass, shaving brush, and comb depicted in large sizes are of normal dimensions, we perceive the space, bed, rug, and closet as small this time (Şentürk, 1999, pp.70-71). The contrast in dimensions and manipulation of object placements prompts us to question reality. Surrealist artists conveyed their compositions through inexplicable, extraordinary situations, unidentified elements, and conceptual contrasts. Lauer, in his book *“Design Basics,”* remarked, “The handling of an object outside its normal size, that is, unusually, exaggeratedly small or large, increases interest and attracts attention” (Lauer, 1990, p.83). In *“Personal Values,”* Magritte attracts attention by using size contrasts and creates an exaggerated language with a paradoxical expression that is difficult to unravel.

Spanish surrealist artist **Joan Miró** (1893-1983) attracts attention with the arranged extreme irregularity of his paintings, asymmetrical balance, form and color contrasts, mixed rhythm, the fluid, loose, organic forms of his dreams, objects resembling maggots, circles, moons, stars, women, birds, stairs, and its symbols and motifs. His works have abstract, primitive, and child-like connotations, colorful lyricism, and occasionally exceed the border of caricature (Passeron, 1982, pp. 209-213). After 1960, Miró also ventured into sculptures. In his sculpture *“Pair of Lovers Playing with Almond Blossoms, 1975,”* the amalgamation of surreal fantasies and abstraction used in his paintings catches our eye. A composition, color sense, and minimalism that synthesize child and primitive art are evident. The asymmetrical structure in the sculpture and the contrast in forms (round and angular) attract

attention, and the visual effect created by the contrasts draws the viewer in, strengthening the visual expression. While the work resembles primitive works of art, it creates an exaggerated language with its asymmetrical structure and contrasts. This work, located in Paris, also exhibits an exaggerated stance, creating a contrasting presence with the glass buildings around it, thanks to its organic form (Figure 71).



FIGURE 71 Joan Miro, *Pair of Lovers Playing with Almond Blossoms*, 1975, 300 x 160 x 140cm, Synthetic Resin, The Joan Miro Foundation, Barcelona, Spain.

When examining other art disciplines within the context of exaggeration, manifestations of alienation and rebellion come to the fore. One of the trailblazers of modern German literature, Franz Kafka (1883-1924), presented exquisite examples of alienation in literature. His extensive narrative “*The Metamorphosis*, 1912-1913” delves into themes of loneliness, exclusion, and alienation. Utilizing a vivid and exaggerated language, Kafka seeks to comprehend the individual’s changing and transforming chemistry in the face of authority.

Absurd theater, reflecting the spirit of the 20th century onto the stage, gave rise to a grotesque, irregular, and incompatible form of theater. The term “Absurd” has been examined under the heading of “The Concept of Exaggeration” (Section 2.1). In both absurd and grotesque theater, the application of makeup and masks stands out as the most spectacular elements of the performance (See Section 2.2.3, Supernatural Beings, Excessiveness, Fear, the Uncanny, Grotesque-Alienated World). Defined in the theater dictionary as a genre that conveys people’s incompatibility with life and nature and their detachment from nature, absurd theater utilizes an essence and form that defies reason in the

Aristotelian sense (Taner et al. 1966, p.251). It can be associated with the inexplicable absurdity, often devoid of meaning or logical connections. Yılmaz outlines ways to achieve exaggeration in theater, such as the actors exaggerating their performances, the playwright amplifying the script, or the director showcasing the work with grandiosity. This, in turn, contributes to the creation of an exaggerated language in theater (Yılmaz, 2021). According to Ataman, Luigi Chiarelli's play 'The Mask and The Face, 1913' marks the inception of grotesque drama (Ataman, 2021, Jan30). The Turkish theater scene also showcases grotesque, black comedy, and absurd theater styles, exemplified by playwrights such as Güngör Dilmen (1930-2012) with his work "*Live Monkey Restaurant*." Additionally, theaters by Cahit Atay, Ferhan Şensoy, and Levent Kırca serve as notable examples (See Section 2.2.3).

During this era, cinema explored new avenues of expression, particularly through small-scale, experimental, surrealist, and abstract films. An exemplary surrealist experiment is the sixteen-minute, black-and-white silent film "*An Andalusian Dog, 1929*," collaboratively created by Dali and director Luis Buñuel. Described by Ocvirk and colleagues as sequences of random images depicting a nightmare, the film employs exaggerated production techniques to provoke, shock, and evoke fear, reflecting the spirit of Surrealism (Ocvirk et al., 2015, p. 270). In 1918, Swedish painter Viking Eggeling (1880-1925), part of the Dada movement, directed the abstract film "*Symphonie Diagonal 1924*," a significant stride in experimental cinema (Skopbulten, 2017, August 21). Similarly, Dada artist and filmmaker Hans Richter (1888-1976) utilized basic geometric forms such as squares, rectangles, triangles, and circles in rhythmic repetitions and black-and-white contrasting colors in the abstract film '*Rhythmus 21*' (Yılmaz, S, 2011). This film was presented in Dada exhibitions.

In an article, Ayşenur Depe mentioned that cinema directors often regard Magritte as their favorite painter: "Magritte's mind-bending paintings exist in parallel worlds, portraying impossible situations and unidentified characters, akin to dreams. Magritte aims to reflect our reality and its mysteries by playing with the audience and deconstructing the familiar world. Hence, we often encounter his works in films that flirt with the edge of reality" (Depe, 2021, January 19). The similarity between Magritte's painting "*The Empire of Light, 1953-1954*," featuring a street lamp and house scene, and the scene under a lamppost in William Friedkin's film "*The Exorcist, 1973*" is striking. Magritte achieves a juxtaposition of light

and darkness, night and day within the same artwork. Another instance is the resemblance” between the staircase in Rene Magritte’s “*Architecture in the Moonlight, 1956*,” and the staircase leading to reality in Peter Weir’s film “*The Truman Show, 1998*” (sanatlaart, 2021, Jan19). Examples of interaction between art disciplines can be myriad. Particularly after the second half of the 20th century, the interaction among all disciplines underwent a significant transformation. Kani Ülger, in his study titled “*Examination of the Interaction Between Art Disciplines*,” proposes that the expansion of interdisciplinary interaction in art, encompassing multiple interactions and even extending to scientific fields, will shape 21st-century art (Ülger, 2023). Indeed, the works of Refik Anadol exemplify how art is reshaping itself as a fusion of computer technology, graphics, and engineering, adapting to technological advancements.

In this section, the reality of alienation in the 20th century and its distinctive reflection in plastic arts have been explored. Examples of exaggeration from other art disciplines, including cinema, theater, and literature, have been elucidated. The shift of artists towards their inner truths rather than external realities in the 20th century, influenced by Freud’s concepts of the conscious, has been emphasized. The shared characteristic among avant-garde artists is their individuality and the absence of allegiance to any specific artistic movement. Consequently, their relationship with exaggeration is intricately linked to the artistic attitudes they portray. It has been noted that artists increasingly make their truths and personal styles more visible in their works, resulting in diverse plastic elements and interpretations. When scrutinizing the modern era from the perspective of exaggeration and questioning the use of exaggeration as a tool for artists to comprehend their own truths, it becomes evident that this period provides numerous examples that align with the criteria of this study. Artists employ exaggeration to interpret their emotions and rebellions, showcasing examples through techniques such as distortion, coarsening, evaluating disparate forms together, manipulating ratio and proportions and scale, using pure colors, juxtaposing contrasts, portraying grotesque figures, deformation, and embracing objectlessness.

4.9 Populism, Postmodernism, and Exaggeration in Contemporary Art

The epochs characterized by populism stand as the zenith of exaggeration in art (Kaya, 2022). Consequently, this investigation addresses Popular Culture, Populist Art, Populism, Postmodernism, and contemporary art within this thematic framework. Populism, evolving from politics to literature, music to media, dietary habits to clothing, has become a ubiquitous and extensively debated concept. Associating closely with terms such as popular culture and popularity, politicians frequently levy accusations of “populism” against one another. Nevertheless, it is evident that populism lacks a precise definition. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, populism is delineated as “political ideas and activities aimed at gaining the support of ordinary people by meeting their desires” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2020). Individuals labeled as “*populists*” are those who act with the purpose of meeting the expectations of the majority and securing their support, prioritizing these desires above all else. Populists assimilate the preferences of the majority, adopting a demeanor akin to one of them to garner the support of the masses. In accordance with TDK: “The term ‘populist’ is derived from the Latin word ‘Populus,’ meaning people, while ‘populist’ denotes pertaining to the people. Populism is defined as the tendency and attitude to exalt everything related to the public”. TDK’s definition of “popular culture” states that it is “the entirety of cultural elements valid for a specific period, swiftly produced and consumed” (TDK, 2015). Keser Art Dictionary defines “*popular*” as “a person or thing that has gained sympathy and success among large masses of people.” The concept of *popular culture* emerged in the 1960s in the United States, primarily denoting “widespread clothing, frequently heard music, etc.” Keser’s interpretation of Popular Culture characterizes it as “the subculture known as kitsch. Following the rise in the economic income of lower and middle classes after the onset of the industrial revolution, various fields such as architecture, sculpture, academic painting, theater, opera, and literature catered to the artistic needs of the aristocracy. Simultaneously, artists produced new variants, including film, novels, television, and advertising, to meet the needs of the bourgeoisie. However, modernist works found little favor beyond a small elite. According to Fiske, popular culture is produced at the intersection of cultural resources provided by capitalism and everyday life. Consequently, popular taste emphasizes functionality over quality, and popular culture is a transient culture” (Keser, 2009, pp.258-259). Cultural values arising from the phenomenon of modernization, driven by consumerism, are termed mass culture or a subtype of popular culture. In his work

“Understanding Popular Culture,” John Fiske expounds on the differentiation between mass culture, referring to cultural products produced by capitalism’s culture industry, and popular culture, which denotes the public’s use of these products to create personal meanings (Fiske, 2012). Additionally, the prevailing notion that popular culture, produced and popularized for commercial purposes within mass culture, also belongs to the public is noteworthy. Indeed, the contemporary usage of the term “popular culture” implies a concept loved, chosen, and consumed by large masses. The masses that elevate a concept to popularity attribute specific meanings to it, and when these meanings are consumed, the function of popular culture concludes. In essence, popular culture is a swiftly utilized and consumed culture. Following Fiske’s perspectives, Hülür and Ölçer define the term “*culture industry*” as “a concept emphasizing the mass production and consumption, commodification, commoditization, and uniformity of culture and art in capitalist societies. Simultaneously, it signifies the deceit of the masses and the resultant structure of domination and oppression” (Hülür & Ölçer, 2019). According to Adorno, the “culture industry” (See Section 2.2.5, *The Relationship between Exaggeration and the Social Phenomenon of Kitsch*) differs from organic culture as it is not organically shaped; rather, it involves the planned production of products identified to be inclined towards by the masses (Adorno, 2012, pp. 109-118). Tekin, conversely, asserts that the art of this era metamorphosed into an investment tool, with needs directed in alignment with the interests of the period (Tekin, 2017, p.154). Consequently, the culture industry aspires to disseminate ideology.

There have been so many different definitions of popular culture that one of them says: “Popular culture is not the culture of the people; popular culture is a culture based on capitalist forms of production, marketing, distribution, and consumption of goods established around a broad division of labor” (Erdoğan, 2004, p.4). Fiske provided some examples to explain “popular culture”. One of these examples is jeans. While jeans were a garment worn by miners and workers in the early 20th century, they became widespread among young people, became a symbol of comfort, and became a product preferred by almost all segments of society. It is necessary to mention the “subculture theory” here. This theory argues that fashion spreads from minority subgroups to the masses. We can see a similar situation in jeans, and we can say that they are identified with the theory of subcultural influence. Similarly, in our country, arabesque music, which emanated from rural culture, became popular for a while. Going back to the example of jeans, John Fiske, who

conducted research on their use, observed that in a class of 28 students, 26 wore jeans and the other 2 had jeans but did not wear them that day, and asked why they preferred jeans. The first answer is the “integrative effect”. In other words, popular culture has an integrative effect. Another reason given was the “genderlessness” and “liberating power” of jeans as they do not discriminate between men and women. The effect of advertisements is important in the formation of genderless and liberating perceptions. Thanks to advertisements, messages reach large masses at the same time. Individuals convey both their personal and social views through their clothes. For example, while the ruling group in Russia called jeans “the decadence of the West”, young people saw them as liberation. Since jeans evoke America, they were scratched, torn, and painted to differentiate them, and these innovations also fed capitalism. “While the unbranded trousers express the provincial, the genderless, the branded ones begin to represent the upper class, the city, the feminine and the contemporary” (Fiske, 2012). In his book, John Fiske refers to capitalism and states that “we live through the commodities of capitalism, and the longer we live, the stronger it becomes”. Karl Marx’s views on this subject and the concept of alienation are discussed in detail in “*Section 4.8, Alienation as an Expressive Form and Traces of Exaggeration in Distortion*”. The way we use commodities, for example, ripping jeans and turning them into fashion, is a sign of opposition to capitalism, while at the same time feeding capitalism. Another good example given by Fiske in defining popular culture is football: “If a person wears a suit to watch a match with his friends, popular culture is not realized here. However, if he participates with a team jersey and team spirit, we can define this situation as popular culture”. In this way, the person fulfills the need to belong to a group. Sociologist Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) mentions that social solidarities are important phenomena that keep individuals together (Durkheim, 2015). Regarding “*popular texts*”, the discourses within the entertainment texts (songs, jokes, riddles, proverbs, parodies, etc.) of a particular culture, Fiske mentions “polysemy and open-endedness. People discover their own characteristics in these texts and become part of that culture” (Fiske, 2012).

Populism in the realm of politics is increasingly intertwined with the far right and fascism, manifesting itself as “associated with the weakening, neutralization, and even elimination of the democratic structure” (Donduran and Gedik, 2021). Presently, populism carries unfavorable connotations as the foremost threat to democracy, depicting the numerical majority as the embodiment of the people’s will and relegating minorities to

exclusion (gazeteduvar.b.t). In essence, the term populism is often misappropriated by political analysts, who dilute its core meaning and divert from its original context. Echoing this sentiment, Paul A. Taggart (1965) posits that “*populism serves as an indicator that something is amiss within democracy*” (Taggart, 2000). Meanwhile, Ernesto Laclau (1935-2014), an Argentine political theorist recognized as a post-Marxist, expounds on populism as a policy of dichotomizing the public: one side comprising the elite minority governing society, and the other representing the oppressed and marginalized public, despite being the authentic wielders of power (Encyclopedia of Populism, Tübitak).

In an examination, Akın Atauz explores the tandem concepts of “*populism and postmodernism,*” seeking to contextualize populism within the broader framework of postmodernity. He asserts, “populism is predominantly a political term, whereas postmodernism encompasses a more general sociological, philosophical, and ideological scope. The ‘postmodern ideology of populism,’ however, transcends being merely a phase of the capitalist system aspiring for global dominance” (Atauz, 2022, October 15.). Correspondingly, Celal Fedai, in a similar vein, introduces Postmodern Populism as a novel phase of populism in one of his articles. He contends that the cultural influences shaping countries are entirely under the hegemony imposed by the postmodern populist ideology, a construct devised by the USA in the early 1990s to perpetuate its interests following the dissolution of the USSR. Fedai argues that this ideology, labeled as globalization, endeavors to debase the cultures of nations through pop culture, potentially reducing them to countries on the map devoid of their essence—a phenomenon he describes as a cultural war (Fedai, 2016).

On November 11, 2017, during his address at the *Artist-2017 Utopia Exhibition*, Julian Stallabras, a British art historian and curator invited by the International Critics Association Turkey, tackled the query “What is populist art?” In response, he defined it as “art that is straightforward, predominantly figurative and expressive (or pseudo-expressive), readily aligning with commercial mass culture. It is art created by recognizable personas: envision it in connection with populist leaders (much like populist politics), and, much like populist politics, it enjoys considerable popularity; it is crafted for ‘the people,’ not for the custodians of the art world, as its creators proclaim” (e-skop, 2017, September 18). In the promotional catalog of the inaugural Andy Warhol retrospective in Philadelphia in 1965, curator Samuel Adams Green eloquently articulated, “Warhol’s pictorial language is composed of clichés.

Until our era, a culture characterized by distinctly impersonal, machine-made products untouched by human hands has not existed... Rather than challenging our popular habits and heroes, Warhol affirms them. Acknowledging inevitabilities makes them more manageable than resisting them. We prefer the exalted myth over the reality of our current experience, to the extent that the myth becomes pervasive and eventually loses the qualities that initially captivated us” (Lucie-Smith, 2004, pp. 256-265). Similarly drawing on popular culture images, Jeff Koons endorsed popular habits, expressing that he “employed every means to communicate with the audience and aimed to create art that everyone could comprehend and enjoy” (Antmen, 2016, p. 288).

The culture of kitsch and its products, emerging in the 20th century as indicators of popular culture, are intricately linked with the concept of exaggeration. Kitch items garnered popularity and evolved into objects of mainstream culture through advertisements that shared the realm of art with society. The comprehensive exploration of the kitsch theme is detailed under the heading “The Social Phenomenon of Kitsch” (Section 2.2.5). In his 1939 article, Greenberg asserted that “modern art serves as a form of resistance against consumer culture” and played a pivotal role in popularizing the term kitsch (Kahraman, 2015, p. 67) (See Section 2.2.5). The Bauhaus School, by bringing together art experts such as Klee and Kandinsky, established its presence in daily life through innovative designs that fused art and design, simultaneously resisting and responding to the forces of industrialization. However, the evolving needs of society continued to shape the trajectory of art. While the Supremacists waged war against technology, Futurist artists championed technology, highlighting the potential for technological products to be regarded as works of art. This paved the way for subsequent movements such as Dadaism and even Pop Art.

Amidst World War II, there was a notable influx of artists to America, resulting in the relocation of the art center from Paris to New York. Post-war, the American economy experienced unprecedented prosperity, contrasting with Europe’s reconstruction efforts. America embraced European artists, providing them with a liberating environment. New art schools and galleries proliferated, and MoMA, importing contemporary works from Europe, commenced the promotion of modern artworks. Consequently, New York ascended to become the new epicenter for artists (Köksal, 2019, p. 2). Clement Greenberg (1909-1994), a seminal art critic of the 20th century and a staunch advocate of abstract expressionism, championed the cause of abstract expressionist and color field painters associated with the

“*New York School*,” including Jackson Pollock (1912-1956), Willem de Kooning (1904-1997), Mark Rothko (1903-1970), Clyfford Still (1904-1980), Barnett Newman (1905-1970), Franz Kline (1910-1962), and Robert Motherwell (1915-1991). Greenberg posited that the essence of painting lies in its superficiality (Tizgöl, 2008, p. 81). Collaborating with figures such as public relations expert Samuel Kootz, critic Harold Rosenberg, writer Thomas Hess, and artists like Hans Hoffman and Robert Motherwell, Greenberg supported the aforementioned artists through his writings. Peggy Guggenheim, the founder of the Century gallery, provided a platform for these artists to showcase their works, facilitating their interaction with large and diverse audiences (Köksal, 2019, pp. 5-23). The artists of the New York School secured their position in the art scene by leveraging the support of collectors, museums, galleries, and mass media. Michel Tapié, a French critic, interpreted movements like Tachism (Art Informel) and Cobra as a form of lyrical abstractionism, representing “the European counterpart to the American Abstract Expressionism movement.” Some artists associated with Art Informel include Jean Fautrier (1898-1964), Georges Mathieu (1921-), Pierre Soulages (1919-), Hans Hartung (1904-1989), and Wols (1913-1951)” (Antmen, 2016, p. 151). Another significant figurative artist in this context is Jean Dubuffet (1901-1985), often closely linked to “Art Brut” or primitive art (Ragon, 2009, p. 46) (Figure 17).

Abstract Expressionists resorted to distortion, deformation, gestural attitudes, and an exaggerated use of color and thick paint to render their expressions convincing and powerful. This exaggeration served the purpose of sharing their feelings and imbuing their art with a sense of meaning. Despite their detachment from societal concerns in the external world, all artists shared a common sentiment—an impassioned resistance against the constraints of a materialistic society (Lynton, 2015, p. 229). Critic Harold Rosenberg, an American, asserted that “American artists transformed the painting surface into a kind of stage; instead of presenting a specific object, they made a particular struggle and action visible, creating distinct images as a result of their engagement with the canvas” (Gül, 2020). In the intense artistic struggle and action on the canvas of abstract expressionist painter **Jackson Pollock**, the exaggerated use of his body became a distinctive feature. Pollock, through bodily movements reminiscent of mystical and ritualistic dance figures, left indelible imprints on the canvas. The moments of movement, splashing, and dripping, along with the bursts of pure color and expression, were captured on the canvas. Pollock’s works, characterized by

a focus on process rather than results, embodied a dual nature—spontaneous and improvisational, yet also thought out and planned. His art seamlessly integrated Western expressionism, abstract aesthetics, mysticism, Native American sand painting, and Jung’s archetype concept (collective unconscious), blending improvisation with elements of jazz and modern lyrical dance. By establishing a profound connection between the conscious and the unconscious, the eye and the soul, Pollock transcended the conventional norms of art through his composition, use of paint, and distinctive style (Graf, 2021, p. 28). Consequently, Pollock crafted an exaggerated language within his art, characterized by his unique and individualistic approach. The paintings of Pollock, Barnett Newman, and Mark Rothko further exemplify exaggeration through their dimensions, exceeding the traditional scale of easel painting (Hockney and Gayford, 2017, p. 294) (Figure 72).



FIGURE 72 Jackson Pollock, *No. 5*, 1948, oil on MDF, 2.4 m x 1.2 m. Private Collection, New York.

Greenberg, despite his war against mass taste, found that even the abstract expressionists he strongly supported fell under the allure of popular culture. For instance, Willem De Kooning drew inspiration from Marilyn Monroe’s images in his “*Women*” series of paintings, as noted by Heartney in the book “*Art and Today*.” Jackson Pollock also embraced popular culture by titling an article in *Line* magazine “*Jackson Pollock-is he the Greatest Living Painter in the United States USA?*” and permitting the use of his own professional fashion photographs in the background (Heartney, 2008, p. 16). Consequently,

Popular Culture, celebrity culture, and Pop Art, originating simultaneously in America and England and finding its source in popular images and objects specific to mass media, are spreading rapidly despite all obstacles (Tunç, 2003).

In the realm of Abstract Expressionism's "*Color field*" painting, **Mark Rothko** (1903-1970) is described by Dülger as one who "lives in the shadow of emptiness" (Dülger, 2018, April 26). Rothko's large-scale color field paintings, featuring simple two- or three-color rectangles superimposed on a background of a single color, differentiate themselves through elements of emptiness, transparency, and vibration. To evoke different moods, Rothko employed a broad range of colors and tones. Within the canvas boundaries, emotions are conveyed through the combination and vibration of colors on a two-dimensional plane. Rothko's focus was solely on mechanical and pictorial features such as color, light, line, space, proportion, and scale (Hodge, 2013, pp. 80-81). The eastern influence, color, composition, and serenity in his paintings evoke reminiscences of Matisse. Nevertheless, this serene image contradicts his negative mood (Köksal, 2019, p. 20). Color, as one of the most fundamental elements employed by the artist to comprehend his works, is described by Kandinski as "a power that directly affects the soul and is a polyphonic piano" (Kandinsky, 2001, p. 79). Rothko achieves exaggeration in his paintings through space, misty and velvety layers of color, color vibrations, and very large-scale canvases.

In contrast to the dominance of Abstract Expressionism led by America, Tachism (Informal Art) emerged in Europe. Three pivotal artists in Informal Art are Wols, Jean Fautrier, and Jean Dubuffet. German painter and photographer **Wolfgang Schulze** (1913-1951), also known as **Wols**, is regarded as the pioneer of "Tachists" or "Informal" art and lyrical abstraction. Wols's "*The Blue Phantom 1951*" appears like a bad dream, fantastic, grotesque, frightening yet fascinating, surrealist, and can be associated with exaggeration with its dense texture of paint and the slits and pits etched into the ground. The hurt, tortured state of his canvases reflects Wols' own reality (Zeki, 2011, p. 38).

Alfred Barr, the director of MoMA, wrote the following about Dubuffet in his 1954 book "Masters of Modern Art": "The most original painter to emerge from Paris after the war is probably not an abstract painter. Jean Dubuffet (1901-1985), a painter of extraordinary intelligence and maturity, combines a childlike style with daring innovations and a grotesque sense of humor" (Ragon, 2009, p. 51; Zeki, 2011, p. 39) (See Section 4.1.1, Cave Paintings) (Figure 17). Dubuffet's relationship with exaggeration is associated with his grotesque sense

of humor, his primitive, childish style, in other words, his individual artistic style.

The 1950s and 1960s marked the emergence and prevalence of abstract expressionist tendencies and, in response to this, the foundation of a new art with figurative interpretation, referred to as Neo-Figuration, was laid. Simultaneously, approaches that paved the way for Conceptual Art came into being” (Zeki, 2011). The American painter **Philip Guston** (1913-1980), initially an abstract expressionist influenced by the NY school, transitioned to New Expressionism in the 1960s. In his painting “*Painting, Smoking, Eating, 1973*” (Figure 73), he portrays a smoker lying on his bed, indulging in eating and smoking. The caricature-like painting draws attention with the absence of nose and mouth, emphasizing deformation. The grotesque and peculiar figure appears passive, immobile, and helpless, while the room takes on a claustrophobic appearance resembling a heap, and the plate containing food evokes the image of an ashtray. Guston’s paintings feature recurring visual metaphors like piles of shoes, light bulbs, and cigarettes, constituting his visual vocabulary and serving as indicators of the traumas and disappointments he underwent. Hannah Bacon suggests that Guston, hailing from a Jewish immigrant family fleeing religious persecution and living in exile, used the stacked shoes as a reference to photographs depicting the aftermath of the Holocaust (Rew, 2013). The artist’s response to society’s quest for physical perfection and the exaggerated fascination with beauty, along with the traumas endured, find expression in his paintings. In an effort to comprehend his emotions, traumas, and reactions, Guston associated the objects chosen as repetitive visual metaphors with diverse concepts, employing the grotesque and deformation. He employed a limited palette of colors, such as red, pink, and yellow. Guston’s relationship with exaggeration is intertwined with his individual and entirely unique artistic stance.



FIGURE 73 Philip Guston, *Painting, Smoking, Eating, 1973*, O/C/B, Stedelijk Museum, Source mfa.org.

After the 1960s, **Francis Bacon** (1909-1992) emerged as a prominent artist in the era when the figure began to reemerge. According to Ragon, “Bacon alone epitomizes the New Figuration” (Ragon, 2009, p. 149). In Section 2.2.4, titled “*Deformation, Representation of the Ugly, Sanctification of Imperfection*,” the dissertation discusses Francis Bacon and highlights his reinterpretation of reality through the use of deformation. The British painter Bacon, in his works, distorts figures, portraying them as if confined to a space or caught in a storm, thereby accentuating the corruption, evil, and darkness inherent in humanity. As expressed by Bacon himself, “the truth in Bacon’s paintings is articulated as somewhat hopeless,” conveying a narrative of a damaged life and, consequently, a compromised truth (Zeki, 2011, p. 52). Bacon drew inspiration from photography and film, particularly admiring figures like Muybridge (*The Horse in Motion*, 1878) and Sergei Eisenstein, with a significant impact from the scream in “*Battleship Potemkin*, 1925” (p. 55). In his painting “*Head I*, 1948” (Figure 74), Bacon, through the portrayal of a monster-human amalgamation, likens the inadequately evolved human to an animal enslaved by its instincts. Utilizing deformation, Bacon disrupts the status quo and renders the invisible visible. By distorting the inner world of humanity through the human body, expressed through concepts like the grotesque and abjection, he transcends the ordinary and underscores the element of exaggeration (See Section 2.2.4, *Deformation, Representation of the Ugly, Sanctification of Imperfection*).



FIGURE 74 Francis Bacon, *Head I*, 1948, O/C/B, 100.3cm x 74.9cm.

German performance artist Joseph Beuys (1921-1986) stands out for his works influenced by shamanism, using felt and oil, which contribute to the interpretation of his resurrection and infuse a spiritual *aura* (See Section 4.1.4, *Common Origin in Expressions of Art and Magic and the Role of Exaggeration*). Beuys's primary performance, in fact, was the crash of his plane in Crimea during the war. During his period as a prisoner of war, he delved into Shamanic culture, resulting in spiritual influences and the development of a new language in his art. Through the miraculous act of healing, Beuys transitioned from a fighter pilot to an artist, with oil and felt not only healing his body but also rejuvenating his soul. However, the truth behind Beuys's mythologized miracle has raised certain questions (Artun, 2015, November 06). Beuys created works rooted in shamanism and spirituality, provoking diverse interpretations with the symbols he employed. In his performance titled "*How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare (1965)*," Beuys conveys the message that a deceased rabbit could grasp the essence of art or the mystery of existence better than many humans. The very nature of this attitude and behavior is unconventional. The exaggerated protest in elucidating art to a lifeless rabbit reflects an unconventional approach (Moffit, 2005, pp. 154-155; Merdaner, 2016, pp. 87-88) (Figure 75). Beuys, in his works for the Fluxus art movement, selects materials, objects, and animals that contain allusions to supernatural events, performing as if partaking in a modern shamanic ritual. Consequently,

Joseph Beuys produced numerous spiritually grounded, conceptual works that unveil the inherent properties of natural materials (Aksoy et al., 2020). Aligning with Beuys's philosophy, he contemplates suitable images and concepts, selects materials fittingly, imparts symbolic meanings through his distinctive critical discourses and interpretations, and integrates random elements into his work to craft pieces of varying dimensions that contribute to his artistic identity.



FIGURE 75 *Joseph Beuys, Performance titled “How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare (1965).”*

Marina Abramovic (1946-), a prominent figure in the realm of performance art, stands out as a significant representative of body art. Her 1974 performance, “Rhythm 0,” unfolds as a live spectacle that both astounds and horrifies the audience, resembling a social experiment. In this performance, Abramovic stood motionless for six hours, declaring, “you can do whatever you want to me with whatever you want,” in the presence of 72 objects on a table, including razor blades, loaded guns, and scissors. While commencing at a highly intense level, the performance took unexpected turns, leaving Abramovic bloodied by its conclusion. In this performance, which illustrates how individuals, fueled by mutual encouragement, can descend into savagery concerning evil, Abramovic’s focus appears to be on testing her own endurance in the face of brutal physical situations while striving for self-control (Heartney, 2008, p.218). Considering our definition of exaggeration, which entails surpassing required measures in a work, going to extremes, and transcending the ordinary, this performance can be characterized as undeniably exaggerated (Figure 76).



FIGURE 76 Marina Abramovic, *Performing “Rhythm 0”*.

Şükran Moral (1962-), a prominent figure in Turkish contemporary art, engages in performance, video, and installation art. Acknowledging influence from Marina Abramovic, Moral stands as a feminist artist, confronting the male-dominated society, unjust systems, sacred norms, sexism, and discrimination against immigrants. In 1994, she executed the performance “Marriage with Three People” in Italy, replicating it in Mardin in 1997. The performance, designed to cultivate awareness about male dominance and child marriages in society, diverges from the norm through the use of markers of excess, thereby signaling a deliberate incorporation of exaggeration.

With the bolstering of the economy and the surge in consumption, art objects have transcended the confines of galleries and museums, permeating daily life environments. This phenomenon has prompted a critical reevaluation of art, resulting in a diversification of art materials and the incorporation of ready-made objects. Simultaneously, the exportation of American popular culture products, including movies, music (*jazz, rock, country music*), iconic figures like Mickey Mouse, and art objects, has contributed to the emergence of a kitsch culture on a global scale (Kahraman, 2015, p. 67). In his 1939 manifesto “*Avant-Garde and Kitsch*”, Greenberg opposed kitsch for being inauthentic, fabricated and formulaic. Kitsch products were first offered for sale in America, England and all over Europe, and these products, valued as objects of art, made the consumer feel different (See Section 2.2.5, *The Relationship between Exaggeration and the Social Phenomenon of Kitsch*). The post-1960s era, often characterized as the electronic age, witnessed the proliferation of robotic dominance in production. This era experienced an exponential surge in production, and the formidable influence of enriched capitalist power extended its reach across various domains, encompassing both social life and the realm of art. Turani observes that affluent industrial proprietors, initially targeting solely urban intellectuals and the affluent, began infiltrating regions with limited purchasing power, extending their influence from cities to even the remotest villages, all in a bid to stimulate consumption. This evolving new target audience, comprising ordinary citizens on the streets and individuals rooted in rural culture, has been strategically positioned at the focal point of life by industrial magnates. Those wielding the financial power of industry, in the international biennials and exhibitions they orchestrated, marginalized the creative artist, thereby affording the showcase of commonplace, ephemeral, and disposable products. Simultaneously, they sought to obliterate the concept of art for art’s sake (Turani, 2014, p.160). Post-1980,

concomitant with the economic upswing in Europe, the velocity of consumption surged further. Accelerated by advertisements, fast-food consumption ingrained rapid eating habits, while the realms of fashion witnessed swift transformations in clothing and furniture. The proliferation of reproduction contributed to the upswing in kitsch culture. The expeditious replication of original works, coupled with the commodification of art, resulted in the depreciation of the art object. Moreover, interventions by the advertising industry have begun to erode the conveyed message. The attributes associated with art or artists have undergone a transformation into diverse forms within the advertising sector. Consequently, artists find themselves commodified, cast in the shadows of kitsch culture. For instance, Pfizer Pharmaceutical Company employed Van Gogh's portrait, featuring a severed ear, as the promotional face for the schizophrenia drug "Zeldox". Simultaneously, the Citroen brand bestowed names like "*Citroen C3 Picasso*" upon its newly launched cars in 2010, owing to their cubist design. Thus, Citroen effectively transposed the artistic lineage of Picasso, a figure revered as a genius who devoted his life to art, onto their vehicles (Kahraman, 2015, p. 72).

Post-Second World War, the anarchic facet of Dada reemerged, setting the stage for the inception of Pop Art in London during the early 1950s. Artists such as Eduardo Paolozzi (1924-2005), Richard Hamilton (1922-2011), Nigel Henderson (1917-1985), Lawrence Alloway (1926-1990), and Reyner Banham (1922-1988) coalesced under the banner of the '*Independent Group*,' embarking on an exploration of art's societal position (Lucie-Smith, 2004, pp. 256-265).

The collage "*Just What is It That Makes Today's Homes So Different, so Appealing, 1956*" by the British painter and collage artist **Richard Hamilton** (1922-2011) serves to exalt everything related to the public by containing almost all elements of popular culture, such as a poster girl, a bodybuilder, a lollipop with "POP" inscribed, and examples of consumer goods.

In delineating the evolution of British Pop Art, Zeki (2011, p. 59) underscores that the movement's initial phase, spanning from 1953 to 1956, displayed a more figurative and technology-integrated character. In contrast, its second phase exhibited more abstract qualities, accompanied by the embrace of the language and discourse of mass media. Painter **David Hockney** (1937-), a pivotal figure in the British Pop Art movement, made notable contributions through works like "Bigger Splash" (1967), featuring swimming pools, palm

trees, and glass-covered minimalist houses—a portrayal reminiscent of the dreamlike realm (Lucie-Smith, 2004, pp. 256-265). Hockney's representation of a splash, typically an ephemeral occurrence, is rendered on canvas in a frozen state, undergoing transformation per Hockney's artistic interpretation. The utilization of warm and cold tones creates an aesthetic tension. The 2.5x2.5m square colossal canvas made the viewers standing in front of it feel as if they were a part of the painting and influenced them (tate.org.uk). The deliberate application of large size and contrasting colors aligns with fundamental design principles, aiding viewers in comprehending the artwork and signifying a deliberate use of exaggeration.

Jasper Johns (1930-) created paintings of the American flag, transforming the object into a work of art. "The realization that the answer to the question 'Is this a flag or a painting?' was no longer important paved the way for Pop Art" (Zeki, 2011). American artist **Robert Rauschenberg** (1925-2008) merged photo collage and paint dripping techniques. He affixed various objects onto his paintings, thereby bringing together the internal and ordinary on the same surface. Although too individualistic to be considered part of a movement, he played a bridging role between abstract expressionism and pop art. Rauschenberg's connection with exaggeration is intertwined with his individuality and artistic approach.

In 1992, the American sculptor and painter Jeff Koons (1955) participated in a temporary exhibition in Bad Arolsen, Germany, showcasing his 11.5-meter-tall garden shaped like a dog, "Puppy," adorned with seventy thousand seasonal flowers (Figure 77). His presentation of kitsch with a Disney-like, exaggerated theme of innocence not only enhanced his advertising fame but also made it intriguing (Heartney, 2008, p. 17) (See Section 2.2.5, *The Relationship between Exaggeration and the Social Phenomenon of Kitsch*). Koons' aesthetic of provocation, coupled with his extravagant use of scale, transformed the ordinary dog into a monumental piece. The juxtaposition of the cute White Terrier, an animal one can hold in their arms in real life, in such a massive scale, astonishes and prompts contemplation among viewers. Popular culture places emphasis on exaggerated quantities, volumes, and sizes. Given that the core of popular culture revolves around consumption, the tendency to indulge in excess, gravitating towards the grandiose, immense worlds, and substantial dreams, simple objects consistently emerge on a large scale. Koons has also produced mirror-faced, glossy, colossal balloon sculptures, porcelain animals (Dog,

Rabbit, etc.), and reproductions of mundane objects (See Section 4.1.2, *The Mother Archetype and the Approach of Exaggeration*) (Figure 24) “Puppy” signifies exaggeration through its innocent theme and colossal size. Scale stands out as one of the fundamental design elements aiding the interpretation of an artwork (See Section 4.6, *Elements and Principles of Composition, Processes of Interpretation, and Exaggeration in Plastic Arts*).



FIGURE 77 Jeff Koons, *Puppy*, 1992, Flowering plants, steel, wood and soil, 11.5 meters, Germany, Schloss Arolsen

American painter, filmmaker, and publisher **Andy Warhol** (1928-1987) transformed famous personalities and products into icons of Pop art, leading a profound shift in the relationship between art and contemporary culture. Warhol obliterated the boundary between high art and low art in a society shaped by uncontrollable forces. According to Greenberg and his adherents, Warhol extracted art from its elevated pinnacles, thrusting it into a disconcerting spectacle of decline marked by mass appreciation, commercial co-optation, and celebrity worship. On the contrary, proponents of the new art contend that Warhol, as an artist, comprehended the forces molding post-war American society and mirrored them through his actions. In her book, Heartney underscored Warhol’s enduring influence by asserting, “there is no question who won the fight between the avant-garde and the kitsch” (Heartney, 2008, p.16). In the Marilyn series, Warhol employed the icon of Hollywood cinema. “*Mint Marilyn*” (Turquoise Marilyn, 1962) (Figure 78) vividly illustrates the transformation of a realistic image into an iconic one. The photograph was severed below the neck, repositioned on a distinct surface, and adorned with exaggerated, provocative, and

vibrant neon colors. The juxtaposition of black shadows against the cold blue background with warm colors on the face creates a color contrast, ultimately yielding a radiant appearance. Exaggeration is achieved through the utilization of color contrast, a principle of composition (Özsoy & Ayaydin, 2016, p. 211) (See Section 4.6). Warhol aimed to underscore the aesthetic manipulations he applied to the photograph in order to create a modern iconic image. The red lipstick on the lips and the golden yellow hues in the hair deliberately protrude beyond the lines, intentionally exaggerated for effect. The same intentional exaggeration is applied to the use of ink. Graf (2023, p.124) suggested that the halo formed around the figure, as the golden yellow color of the hair spills into the background, evokes the religious icons of the Middle Ages and positions Marilyn as the contemporary Virgin Mary. In selecting and crafting his subjects, Warhol employed the perspective of a media-savvy provocateur, aligning with the media trends of the era. He generated a striking series of images conducive to infinite reproduction (Figure 78) (Figure 79) (Heartney, 2008, p. 16). Reproduction, as one of the compositional principles, serves as a tool for achieving exaggeration (Yılmaz, 2021) (See Section 4.6, *Elements and Principles of Composition, Processes of Interpretation, and Exaggeration in Plastic Arts*). Periods characterized by populism are marked by the zenith of exaggeration through kitsch products, which emerge as indicators of popular culture (See Section 2.2.5, *The Relationship between Exaggeration and the Social Phenomenon of Kitsch*).



FIGURE 78 Andy Warhol, *Mint Marilyn (Turquoise Marilyn)*, 1962, Acrylic and silkscreen ink on linen, 50.8 x 40. 6cm. Private collection photo. Tim Nighswander.



FIGURE 79 Andy Warhol, *Marilyn Monroe Complete Portfolio*, 1967, *Revolver Galery*.

American painter **Roy Lichtenstein** (1923-1997) drew inspiration from graphic design, illustration, and comics. He presented comic book figures in a pictorial form, using an ironic and bold style by adding bright colors, text, and speech bubbles in the appearance of advertising prints (Figure 80). Lichtenstein's work "*Whaam!*, 1963" was created on a very large scale (1.7x 4m) with bright colors to emphasize the folly of war. An exaggerated language is created with design principles such as large scale, exaggerated use of bright colors and signs such as text and speech bubbles that help the viewer to interpret the work (See Section 3.2 and Section 4.6).

Post-1960 artists embraced the New Realism movement, adding thought to the work of art and accepting contemporary world art such as pop art. This movement also incorporated various features of conceptual art (Antmen, 2016, p.177). New Realism, often using waste and found objects, is rooted in the belief that the course of the modern era cannot be changed. French painter **Yves Klein** (1928-1962) and American artist **Fernandez Arman** (1928-2005), who sought a different dimension in art, were pioneers of the New Realism movement. Their works served as a reference for many artistic movements shaped by conceptual contemporary thought after Marcel Duchamp (Boyras & Cantürk, 2013).



FIGURE 80 Roy Lichtenstein, “Whaam!”, 1963, A/C/B, 1.7x4m, Tate Modern, London

Similar to Duchamp’s use of ready-made objects, New Realist artists explored ready-made objects commonly encountered in daily life, as well as plastic products, taking advantage of the richness of color and form that these products offer. Klein and Arman also pioneered the development of Conceptual Art by addressing the concept of dematerialization (Germaner, 1997). “In Yves Klein’s ‘Emptiness’ exhibition at the Iris Clert Gallery in Paris in April 1958, the gallery walls were painted white, and the exhibition hall was completely emptied (Figure 81). By showcasing an empty and white gallery space, Klein essentially regarded the gallery as art itself” (Süzen, 2010). “In order to capture reality, Klein almost obliterated objects taken from the outside world. The sense of aesthetic satisfaction was neutralized, aiming to stimulate pure thought and the ability to comprehend” (Fimiani, 2010, p. 290). He separated art from matter and utilized the boundlessness of emptiness. The empty space created as art itself serves as an example of exaggeration. “Fernandez Arman’s ‘Fullness’ exhibition, opened in the same gallery in October 1960, though different in method, essentially serves the same purpose. This time, Arman filled the same space to the brim with trinkets, turning the gallery into a pile and rendering it unusable” (Figure 82) (Germaner, 1997, p. 21). The industrial advancements and the boundless production of materials ushered in by the era of technology have served as a pivotal foundation for Arman’s creations. Simultaneously, he uniquely demonstrates that objects left behind by others can be utilized as works of art. Arman provides an objective response to Klein’s exhibition. Both exhibitions elicit momentary and fleeting shocks in the human mind, prompting a scrutiny of the concepts of matter and antimatter. Despite being starkly contrasting, they complement each other, reflecting the ideological, societal, and perhaps,

the pessimistic ambiance of their era in their works. Their aim was to emphasize that the essence of art lies in its meaning (Boyraz & Cantürk, 2013). In her research article, Ebru Dede states, “Refusing to produce can be regarded as an attitude against the commercialization of art or indifference towards the commercialized art market” (Dede, 2020, p. 394). Both studies employ the contrasting concepts of emptiness and fullness as two distinct examples of approaching art to comprehend reactions against the commercialization of art. Remarkably, they not only complement each other but also signify exaggeration in the realm of artistic expression.

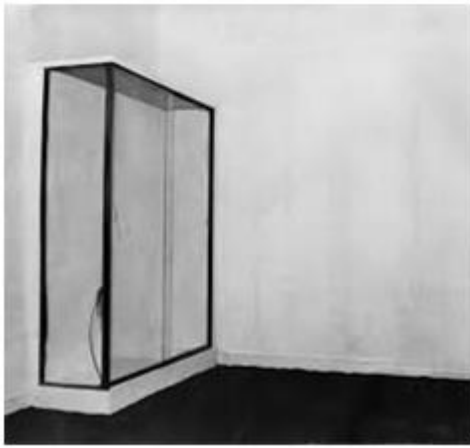


FIGURE 81 Yves Klein, *Le Vide (The Void)*, 1958, Galerie Iris Clert, Paris



FIGURE 82 Fernandez Arman, *Full-Up*, 1960, Galerie Iris Clert, Paris.

The American hyperrealist painter **Chuck Close** (1940-2021) is renowned for his monumental portraits (Figure 83). Hyperrealism, the most expansive movement reviving the representation of the human figure after Pop art, stands as evidence of the competition between machines and human perception. It gained substantial traction in the 1970s, particularly attracting emerging artists with a penchant for pop tendencies, given the pervasive nature of photography in every social setting where individuals have access to cameras or phones for capturing images (*See Section 2.2.1 Reality, Perception, Illusion, and Imagination*). Close, captures the subject matter he desires through photography and transports it to his workspace, with the intention of portraying photographic reality rather than the immediate reality. During the process of transferring the photographic image onto the canvas, he examines it by delineating squares (grids) on both the photograph and the canvas. Subsequently, he translates every detail onto the canvas. Reality has consistently played a pivotal role in art, and Hyperrealism serves as a photorealistic exaggeration of reality, depicting an “exaggerated reality” (hisour.com). Moreover, there is an intentional exaggeration in the dimensions of the paintings.



FIGURE 83 *Chuck Close, Self Portrait, 1967-1968, A/C/B, 273.1X 212.1 cm.*

When examining cinema from art disciplines other than Plastic Arts during this period, the Italian film director **Federico Fellini** (1920-1993) emerges. Although influenced by directors who bore the destructive impacts of the wartime, he chose to create films within the framework of the New Realism movement. However, Fellini never fully succumbed to the influence of any particular movement; instead, he embraced reality without reservation (Liktor, 2019, October 31). Fellini’s films are characterized by their exaggeration—deformed human bodies, unconventional treatment of subjects, incorporation of grotesque elements, and vibrant, carnival-like colors. In Fellini’s film “*Amarcord*,” the lives,

memories, and dreams unfolding in a small town are vividly narrated through exaggerated caricaturization. The film depicts the daily manifestation of fascism, offering a metaphorical perspective on religion, education, politics, and sexuality. The characters' exaggerated and unconventional actions serve as a critique of the education system (Agocuk, 2014, pp. 8-12).

Federico Fellini's "*La Dolce Vita*" (1960) stands as an exemplary cult film. Cult films, characterized by their textual peculiarities, are peculiar, deviant, challenging, active, unusual, and exaggerated. Distinguished from other productions of its time and enduring from its release period to the present day, cult films are devoted and passionate, yet possess relatively smaller fan bases, gaining prominence during the 1960s and 1970s. Mehmet Sarı underscores the significance of the audience's role in cult films, noting, "films are not inherently cult; it is the audiences that fervently adopt them." Cult film enthusiasts are crowds that resist prevailing cultural norms, thus, unlike popular culture cinema, they forge and sustain their distinct cultural milieu (Sarı, 2020, p. 247). The inclination of cult films towards bodily pleasures and the liberation of the imagination often evokes the carnival and the grotesque. In his study delving into the concepts of 'Carnival and Cult Film,' Mehmet Sarı posits that "the opposition of cult films to mainstream cinema and the carnivalesque suspension of official culture share similarities" (p. 230-250). Under the heading of concepts associated with exaggeration, the carnival theme is explored in "*Section 2.2.2, Public Entertainment, the Carnival Spirit.*" In the realm of the grotesque body, bodily pleasures such as eating, drinking, defecation, and sexual intercourse take on significant importance. These behaviors are recurrent themes in cult films.

According to Sarı (2020), works created for cinema by underground artists and directors like **Andy Warhol**, **John Waters**, and **Kenneth Anger** are also acknowledged as cult classics. For instance, Andy Warhol's silent black and white film, "Sleep, 1963," is a six-hour exploration of a sleeping man, capturing only the sounds of breathing and subtle movements. This film stands as an early exemplar of real-time cinema (Heartney, 2008, p. 144). Directed by American filmmaker **John Waters** (1946), "Pink Flamingos 1972" is notorious as one of the most extreme and peculiar cult films, characterized by its excesses and perversions. The film ventures into black humor, brazenly violating moral norms on subjects like sexuality and family. The main character, Divine, is portrayed as a grotesque figure, marked by unconventional behavior, weight, and overall appearance (Sarı, 2020, p. 246). **David Lynch** (1946), another iconic American director synonymous with cult works,

has left an indelible mark on the history of cinema. Lynch's legendary TV series, "*Twin Peaks*, 1990," originally fueled by popular culture, eventually made its transition to the silver screen. With its unusual, bizarre, and lengthy descriptions, dialog-free scenes, supernatural creatures, surreal style, sentences that defy interpretation, unsettling music, and multi-layered structure, the dark, mystical, uncanny, and tense atmosphere in the series, which transports the cinematic artistic visual texture to television, has been further expanded with *Twin Peaks VR*, a virtual reality game. The series illuminates the depths of the subconscious, depicting emotions such as claustrophobia, nightmares, shivers, fear, and anxiety, akin to the themes in David Lynch's films. Therefore, cult films are those that carve out their autonomous spaces, challenge dominant values, break the molds of understanding, bring together passionate audiences, and offer them a temporary carnivalesque freedom. These films carry elements of excess and are intrinsically associated with exaggeration.

The performance titled "4 minutes, 33 seconds" by the American Postmodern composer **John Milton Cage** (1912-1992), showcasing an exaggerated experimental act of silence within the realm of music, serves as a compelling example of the concept of emptiness. Prior to commencing his performance, John Cage expressed, "I have nothing to say, and I am saying this," compelling the audience to experience 4 minutes and 33 seconds of solely ambient sounds. In this intriguing performance, encompassing sounds such as breathing, creaking chairs, and coughing, Cage initiated a discourse on the technical feasibility of silence. Rather than focusing on the music being executed, he directed the audience's attention to ambient sounds, incorporating involuntary sounds and making the audience an integral part of this unconventional composition (Özkul, 2019). "While it is technically possible to create silence in the field of music, one cannot speak of complete silence with the presence of the audience" (Cage, 1973, pp. 22-23). Consequently, by acknowledging silence as an integral component of music, the audience embarks on a journey to reconnect with its essence through its inner voice, potentially fostering a heightened sense of awareness (Dede, 2020, p. 394). Through this performance, John Cage employs exaggeration to articulate that silence is indeed an intrinsic element of music, aiming to instill awareness in the audience.

In the sculpture branch of Plastic Arts, the use of color, manipulation of size through enlargement or reduction, control of proportion and scale, and the play with illusion and reproduction are avenues through which exaggeration can be explored (*See Section 4.6,*

Elements and Principles of Composition, Processes of Interpretation, and Exaggeration in Plastic Arts). Colombian expressionist sculptor and painter Fernando Botero (1932) provides examples of exaggeration in sculpture by placing fat figures at the core of his stylistic approach. Botero elucidated his choice of using corpulent figures in his art, stating, “Fat is beautiful because fat people possess the ability to instantly evoke a smile on others’ faces; they are sympathetic. Hence, I utilize fat figures in my paintings”. (See Section 4.1.2, *The Mother Archetype and the Approach of Exaggeration*) (Figure 85). Botero employed materials such as marble, mud, and bronze in his sculptures. Upon scrutinizing Figure 84 and Figure 85, one can observe the impact of exaggeration as a technique both on the canvas surface and in the three-dimensional realm of sculpture. His works not only encompass an overall exaggeration of the figure but also reveal instances where he employs exaggeration by either diminishing or amplifying certain elements that constitute the figure (such as small hands or feet) to accentuate them. Prioritizing volume, Botero gained recognition for his satirical creations that addressed the shortcomings of both individuals and society (Atıl, 2014, p. 18). Botero’s distinctive style became synonymous with his exaggerated depictions of fat women.



FIGURE 84 *Fernando Botero, Nude, 1966, Bronze statue.*



FIGURE 85 *Fernando Botero, Mona Lisa, 1978, O/C/B, 183 x 166 cm*

As an illustration of achieving exaggeration through allegory, **Edward & Nancy Keinholz**'s artwork titled "*The Caddy Court 1986-1987*" is presented under the heading "*Symbolic Expression*" (Section 2.2.8). In this work, exaggerated figures featuring human torsos and animal heads are employed, with the figures seated at a table, providing explanations that symbolize authority (Rüzgar, 2006, pp. 200-203) (Figure 14).

Under the same heading of "*Symbolic Expression*" (Section 2.2.8), the artwork "*Greater Divide, 2002*" by Mona Hatoum (1952), a Palestinian British sculptor, media, and installation artist, is introduced. In this piece, Hatoum assigns metaphorical meanings to ready-made objects, manipulating their dimensions for exaggerated expression in art (Figure 15). "The grater, transformed into a screen, serves as a metaphor for the woman's isolated world from the social sphere" (Başarır, 2012).

The German sculptor **Katharina Fritsch** (1956) employed exaggeration through a change in scale to craft enlarged renditions of individuals, animals, or religious icons. By replicating them, the artist intensified their peculiarity, imbuing them with the overall impression associated with trinkets mass-produced from molds. Her sculptural composition "*Rattenkönig (The Rat King, 1993)*" consists of nearly three-meter-tall giant black rats, each facing outward (Figure 86). As viewers, one might feel transported into the malevolent realm of a fairy tale, simultaneously perceiving oneself as a dwarf in their presence. While Fritsch's

series “*Group of Figures*” drew inspiration from cheap figurines in temples and religious shops, featuring oversized, vibrant yellow and green polyester resin figurines as symbols of worship, in the work “*Rattenkönig*,” these symbols metamorphose into monstrous rats (Heartney, 2008, p.62). Fritsch employed the techniques of scaling up and reproduction to elucidate the relationship between art and mass-produced trinkets, amplifying peculiarities through exaggeration.



FIGURE 86 Katharina Fritsch, *Rattenkönig* (*The Rat King*), 1993, Polyester resin, 2.8m height, 13m diameter, NY, installed at Dia Center for the Arts April 1993.

The American sculptor **Claes Oldenburg** (1929-2022) is the creator of colossal pop monuments that have become symbols. In an interview, he articulated the initial reactions to his sculptures as follows: “It goes like this every time: First, the newspapers sensationalize it, people express outrage. Then things settle down. Eventually, people become accustomed to it and even start to love it. Finally, we find that it has become a symbol of the place” (Erkmen, 2022, September08). Oldenburg chose objects embraced by American society as his subjects, crafting sculptures of items such as hamburgers, cakes, ice cream, lipstick, toothpaste, cigarette butts, and french fries. While incorporating these objects of consumption, he made satirical allusions to these iconic images with a touch of humor. By enlarging his sculptures to exaggerated sizes, he transformed them into monumental forms, producing ordinary objects with industrial, inexpensive materials. He presented them to the audience from a distinct perspective, prompting a reconsideration of human-object relationships. Exaggeration in popular culture revolves around concepts like quantity, volume, and size since popular culture is inherently tied to consumption. The act of excessive consumption, the perpetual attraction to the grand, expansive worlds, and vast dreams all

contribute to making seemingly simple objects appear substantial. In his work “*Clothespin*,” Oldenburg used the everyday object of a clothespin on an unusually large scale (Figure 87). The monumental size of the piece allows it to harmonize with the skyscrapers in the area where it is placed. The sculpture “*Clothespin*” invokes Constantin Brancusi’s “*The Kiss*” (See Section 4.1.1, Figure 19) and is perceived as two forms entwined. Therefore, it can be argued that it opens up possibilities for different associations (Hiçyılmaz and Uz, 2017, p. 366). In the artwork, there is no disproportion, but an exaggerated scale is employed. The use of this exaggerated scale has elevated an everyday object, taking it beyond the ordinary and transforming it into a monumental form. Encountering an object that would normally fit in the palm of one’s hand on such a scale creates a psychological shock effect in daily life (Yılmaz, 2021).



FIGURE 87 Claes Oldenburg, *Clothespin*, 1976, Centre Square Plaza, 15th and Market Streets

“Oldenburg altered the standardized structure of traditional sculpture, characterized by qualities such as rigidity and permanence, and introduced the concept of ‘soft sculpture’ to contemporary sculptural practices” (Hiçyılmaz and Uz, 2017) (Figure 88). Through his soft sculptures, Oldenburg revolutionized the conventional use of rigid and enduring materials in sculpture. In doing so, he presented a novel paradigm of form, material, and

contextual content beyond the confines of traditional sculpture. Familiar objects were emancipated from their habitual appearances. One such work, “Floor Burger,” resembling a sewn, stuffed, and painted soft cushion, prompts contemplation beyond the realm of an ordinary hamburger. The exaggerated proportions of the hamburger signify the profound influence of fast-food culture in the viewer’s life. Transforming an ordinary food item into an iconic symbol, it is showcased as an art object within the gallery. Due to its dimensions and distorted form, the viewer perceives it not as the familiar hamburger, opening avenues for diverse interpretations. The deformed structure, crafted with soft material enveloping a rigid cardboard core, succumbs to the force of gravity. It may also be likened to a human mouth, a resemblance confirmed in the artist’s sketches and notes (Hiçyılmaz and Uz, 2017). The production of objects in expansive dimensions and diverse materials, surpassing their conventional representations, signifies a deliberate use of exaggeration to convey their capacity for nuanced expressions beyond our conventional understanding.



FIGURE 88 Claes Oldenburg, *Floor Burger*, 1962, *Latesk coating on fabric exterior, cardboard and foam filling inside*, 1.48x2.90x1.48m.

The sculpture “*Amuletta I*, 1971” by the Hungarian-French photographer and sculptor **Brassai** (Gyula Halasz) is presented under the title “The Mother Archetype and the Approach of Exaggeration” (Section 4.1.2) (Figure 22). It serves as an idol of fertility, devoid of intricate details, abstracted as a complete form without a head, arms, and legs, with a particular emphasis on the exaggerated buttocks. This intentional exaggeration of the buttocks aims to highlight and symbolize fertility and the ongoing cycle of life.

As a result of profound changes in the social structure in America, Minimalism emerged as an alternative to the abstract expressionist movement. This movement, emphasizing simplicity and objectivity, is considered either the final effective move of Modernist art or, according to some perspectives, a manifestation of Postmodern understanding (Zeki, 2011). Minimalism, which gained prominence in the 1960s, introduced another facet of mass culture to the art scene during the most dynamic period of Pop Art in America. This distinct facet involves the industrial materials utilized by Minimalists, including fluorescents, bricks, chipboard, aluminum, steel, fiberglass, and other construction-industry materials (Antmen, 2016, 181-182). Prominent figures among Minimalist artists include American painter Frank Stella (1936-), American sculptor Donald Judd (1928-1994), and American artist Sol LeWitt (1928-2007). Frank Stella's (1936-) "*Shaped Canvases*," neither painting nor sculpture, marked a significant milestone in reaching a specific object (p.183). The minimalist approach involves distancing oneself from potential sources of confusion and adhering to what is genuinely necessary. David Dunlop asserts that "exaggeration is a form of focusing and simplification," underscoring how exaggeration diminishes the complexity of the subject, directing attention toward the exaggerated elements. He further adds: "The journey of exaggeration that began with cave wall paintings has simplified throughout the history of art to minimalism, and even the ultimate exaggeration has been conceptualism, giving up the canvas" (See Section 2.1) (Dunlop, 2014). Thus, Dunlop discusses the connection between simplification, primitism, minimalism, conceptualism, and exaggeration.

The impersonal, ordinary productions of the industry have been labeled as "the end of art" by certain American and British writers (Tizgöl, 2008; Turani, 2014, p. 160). The increased interplay between contemporary art and daily life has brought forth various expressions such as pop art, minimal art, installation, conceptual art, land art, and body art. Postmodernist artists have grounded their aesthetic criteria on populism, imitation, and eclectic collecting. Postmodern art is ostentatious yet lacks substantial content (Turani, 2014, pp. 198-199). According to Lyotard, the postmodern condition is "a process encompassing changes in both material conditions and ruptures in intellectual fields, as well as alterations in the status of knowledge. It is characterized by profound disbelief, insecurity, and suspicion. It accentuates the diversity of cultural and social values, the essence of the social bond, pluralism, deregulation, and conflict" (Lyotard, 2013, pp. 7-19). Postmodern reality

signifies a new understanding of reality wherein micro theories supplant macro theories, and singularity gives way to pluralism. Turani, in his book, discusses how the postmodernist approach, asserting that nothing possesses a true essence in the interplay between art and reality, renders the artist in a state of non-existence due to the turn towards external reality in art (Turani, 2014, p.179). Consequently, the artist of the Postmodern era has averted his focus from personal expression and inner reality, presenting objects before us as mundane entities. In this realm, nothing harbors a genuine essence; everything exists as an imitation of an imitation. Art assumes a pluralistic, eclectic, participatory, fragmented, political, and social character. The artist embraces quoting and reproducing without reservation. By drawing references from old masters, images, and icons, the artist employs representation, ushering in fragmented aesthetics and representation instead of a singular image or representation (Graf, 2021). Postmodern narrative techniques frequently involve irony, parody, pastiche, and collage. For instance, **Cindy Sherman** (1954-), an American artist and film director, adopts a pastiche approach in her photographs. Sherman transforms herself into peculiar characters and an icon of the cinematic world through various stage outfits, makeup, and costumes. While referencing film aesthetics, she presents her audience not with her reality but with a cinematic one. She shapes characters such as femme fatale, mistress, model, career woman, housewife, etc., in her own person (Heartney, 2008, p.124). While questioning the image of women shaped by popular culture, Sherman prompts us to contemplate how identity is established on a slippery ground and the existence of unlimited and pluralistic identity concepts (Antmen, 2016, p.276). In her series titled “*Untitled Film Stills 1977-1980*,” Sherman addresses dynamic identity with 69 black-and-white photographic frames. In #21 from this series, Sherman embodies a modern, urban woman. Since the viewer’s angle of view is below the eye level of the urban woman, she appears exaggerated and surreal (Marcus, 2023, p.155). In photography, exaggerated images can be obtained with the distance, angle, and lens used (*See Section 2.2, The Relationship between Exaggeration and the Concepts of Reality, Perception, Illusion and Imagination*).

New Expressionist tendencies and New figuration: “Beginning in the 1980s, especially in Germany, Italy, and the United States, a new generation of artists returned to canvas painting, embracing an individual, mythological, and narrative iconography through the use of colorist techniques, thick layers of paint, and free brushstrokes” (Akdeniz, 1990, p. 52). During this period, artists like **Georg Baselitz** (1938-) and **Anselm Kiefer** (1945-) in

Germany drew inspiration from their shared national history and cultural background (Antmen, 2016). The works from this era, characterized by an aesthetic that defies rules and boundaries, distinctly signify the element of exaggeration. German painter Anselm Kiefer, in his large-scale, expansive, and monumental paintings, employs themes and materials evoking destruction and pain, resulting in a multi-layered, dark, dramatic, and uncanny impact. Through this approach, the artist confronts the scars of German history and the Nazi past, often facing extensive criticism for his steadfast resistance against the oblivion of horror (Antmen, 2016; Graf, 2023, p.158). (See Section 4.2, *Exploration of the Exaggeration Concept in Mystery, Authority, and Hierarchy as Periodic Themes*). An example of exaggeration in art can be found in Anselm Kiefer's monumental and unsettling painting, "Isis and Osiris, 1985-1987." This artwork accentuates the cold void of death and the dissolution of space through its diverse use of materials (such as paint, copper wire, cable, clay, porcelain, etc.), the expansive size of the canvas, and the multifaceted structure and texture. The grandiosity, sublime sensation, and the creation of a mystical and uncanny atmosphere contribute to its association with exaggeration (Figure 34).

The relationship between exaggeration and the work "Maman" by the French female surrealist sculptor **Louise Bourgeois** (1911-2010), who monumentalized the metamorphosis of goddess symbols using an exaggerated giant scale, is examined in Section 4.1.2 under the heading "The Mother Archetype and the Approach of Exaggeration" (Figure 23).

British-Indian sculptor Anish Kapoor (1954-) specializes in installation art and conceptual art. In many of his works, the conceptual framework is abstract, polysemantic, and monumental in scale. Examples of his large monumental works, crafted with advanced technology, include "Marsyas, 2002" and "Cloud Gate, 2004" (Figure 89).

Anish Kapoor seamlessly integrates the modern period with the beliefs and art of the primitive era, bridging the East and the West. His work "Cloud Gate" brings together clouds and people, making them integral to the sculpture. This integration emphasizes that existence is not solitary and that everyone complements each other (Figure 89). The organic, transversely spreading, oval form of this sculpture creates a striking contrast within the space it inhabits, characterized by the vertical and angular geometric structures. Confronting us with this unconventional form found in nature, Kapoor's work not only intensifies the impact of the piece and its surrounding space but also signifies an element of exaggeration. The surface of the sculpture exhibits a dynamic structure that continually evolves in response to

the play of light, the movement of surrounding objects, and the presence of people. Throughout the day, this sculpture provides a visual spectacle, illuminated by diverse natural and artificial light sources. Rooted in Indian culture, the work carries the philosophical essence of the symbol embodying Yoni and Lingam together. The concave lower section, defined by rounded contours, symbolizes the feminine, while the convex portions represent the masculine duality. “In the context of Indian culture, the primal duality is the coexistence of female and male characters within the same entity, denoted as Yoni and Lingam. Cloud Gate encapsulates both the vagina and testicle, serving as carriers for the creative forces. It encompasses not just one or the other but both simultaneously. True to Kapoor’s distinctive approach, this sculpture establishes a third realm—an expansive, boundary-defying space that exists beyond distinctions of within, between, inside, or outside” (Baume, 2008; Sağlam, 2017, p. 2891). Weighing 110 tons and crafted from stainless steel, this monumental piece has become an emblem of Chicago, capturing the fascination of tourists with its colossal dimensions and material, explicitly signifying exaggeration. Kapoor, imbuing his colossal sculpture with metaphorical significance, imparts polysemy, transforming it into an immersive presentation that transcends boundaries, involving the viewer in its narrative.



FIGURE 89 Anish Kapoor, “Cloud Gate”, 2004, 10x20x13m, Chicago, USA.

Another hyperrealist Australian sculptor, **Ron Mueck** (1958-), reproduces sculptures that push the limits of reality by representing all aspects of the human body in life-size, larger, or smaller scales. Mueck employs casting techniques with silicone, wax, and fiberglass in his works. The gestures depicted in his sculptures, which realistically portray human life from birth to death, combined with exaggerated scales, effortlessly convey the figure's mood to the audience. In his 2.5-meter wax sculpture, "*Pregnant Woman*, 2002," Mueck magnifies the pregnant woman, transforming her into a contemporary version of the mother goddess derived from collective memory (See Section 4.1.2, The Mother Archetype and the Approach of Exaggeration).

Ron Mueck's works, "*In Bed*, 2005," and "*Boy*, 1999," captivate viewers with their exaggerated dimensions and realism (Figure 90) (Figure 91). The psychological impact of encountering a giant, identical to reality but significantly larger, is profound. The use of exaggerated scale is a fundamental design element that the artist employs to interpret his work (See Section 4.6, Elements and Principles of Composition, Processes of Interpretation, and Exaggeration in Plastic Arts). The artist frequently employs different scaling to underscore the significance of the representation, transcend the ordinary, attract attention, and monumentalize it.



FIGURE 90 Ron Mueck, "*In Bed*", 2005, 161.9 x 649.9 x 395, Queensland Art Gallery



FIGURE 91 Ron Mueck, “Boy”, 1999, 5m, Photo by Tamaki Sono.

In this section, examples of plastic arts selected from popular culture, populism, postmodernism, and contemporary art have been examined in the context of exaggeration. Similarly, examples of cinema and music chosen from other art disciplines of the same period have also been assessed in terms of exaggeration. It has been observed that exaggeration serves as a significant expressive language within popular culture. Rooted in the consumption that underlies popular culture, the encouragement to consume excessively perpetuates a constant yearning for grandiosity, vast worlds, and ambitious dreams. Consequently, seemingly ordinary objects consistently manifest in a larger-than-life and voluminous manner. In an era where consumption is actively promoted, the selection and direction of needs have shifted towards aligning with the interests of the time, transforming art into an investment and a source of profit. The artist’s creation of an exaggerated world of reality has given way to a realm dominated by gains, capital, and interests, mirroring the ordinary realities of life. Ultimately, it has been discerned that exaggeration serves as a pervasive instrument of the current era.

CONCLUSION

In this study titled “*Exaggeration in Art as a Tool of Interpretation and Its Reflection in Plastic Arts*,” exaggeration is explored from the artist’s perspective. The utilization of exaggeration as a tool for interpreting one’s own reality is scrutinized. Artistic phenomena that align with selected definitions of exaggeration, deemed extraordinary, are specifically evaluated within the realm of plastic arts, complemented by supportive examples from other art disciplines.

Across changing eras, geographies, mediums, tools, and disciplines, artists consistently employ exaggeration. In classical epochs, exaggeration permeated the era, emerging as a requisite and presenting itself as a standardized element. The exaggeration of the Renaissance aimed to systematize everything ideal within a mathematical framework, divorced from the natural essence of nature. However, in the 20th century, with the advent of Modernism, the dynamics of human interaction and communication with nature underwent transformation. Increased inquiry and awareness led individuals, including artists, to distance themselves from nature and construct their unique realms. Within this context, art emerged as one such realm. Avant-garde artists, seeking individual expression and the ability to transcend the status quo, adopted exaggeration as a personal instrument—alternatively labeled as creativity or subjectivity. This approach aimed to articulate something novel, contribute to nature, or enhance the understanding of the credibility, impact, or meaning of their artistic endeavors. Rather than conforming to established rules, artists themselves became the architects of these rules, and exaggeration became intricately linked with the artist’s distinctive artistic inclinations.

As a result, exaggeration is an instinctive reaction that is human nature. That's why more attention is paid to extreme. This research delves into the utilization of exaggeration, a human response, as a tool for interpretation in art.

Considering that art itself is a living phenomenon and a language of expression, it becomes evident that exaggerated expression, being a human response, persists within the continuum of art as a tool of interpretation.

METHODS AND ACTIVITIES USED IN THE RESEARCH

Various local and international visual and written sources related to the subject were scrutinized, and research studies in databases were examined. The selected art examples were analyzed within the framework of exaggeration.



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