

REFLECTION OF SELF-PERCEPTION INTO THE ART EXPRESSIONS

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Abstract

Self-perception can be defined as the personal resolution and evaluation of individual's own thoughts like how they are perceived by their social surroundings, what they are and how they should be. This study aims to represent the expression of the students' self-perceptions through art expressions and is essential in regards to transform their self-realizations and self-evaluations into an art form. Students mind, talent, character, perception and intuition took place in this study where is executed through out the 2014-2015-spring term with 3rd grades at Anadolu University Education Faculty Fine Art Education Department. Duration of the study was three weeks period between 09.03.2015/28.03.2015 and the method is evaluated with art based research method as part of qualitative research. Art based research is an approach to evaluate, interpret and analyze the educational state and students' art projects. Student information forms, open ended questions and student products are used for data collection. The data gathered by the study was analyzed with descriptive analyze method.

Key words: Self-perception, art based research, art education.

Introduction

After 1960's with the transformation of art, concept of thought came forward and caused the needs of querying the object in art piece. Previously, during modernism period while expression language was formed with the shape, color changes and abstractions, in this period beyond form, intellectual expressions stand out. Especially when we look at the art after 1960's, we may say that the meaning and the content of everything have been changed. From that point, art has been transformed from the state of being an object that been produced, to an expression of the thought itself.

Changes have been observed in the meaning of art, related with technological, social and political structures and the specialties of the era and other occurrences in other fields also affected the art. In modern ages while art was described based on object and esthetical values, in postmodern period it had become the description where the ideational indicators took place. The movements of opposing object in art which makes influence starting from 1945' and became obvious after 1960's, still express their existence. With the help of increase in newly developed gadgets with technology and also with the help of digital environment and the images surrounding us, art changed form and headed to different ways of expression with the possibilities created with this technology. Esthetical values that exist under the influence of consumption culture and popular culture that rose as a result of capitalism's expended impact area had been questioned and formed. According to Yilmaz (2011) through out the development of art in centuries, artist become more free first with the ready to use materials and then with the period where fixed and pre-defined boundaries and rules changed with inter disciplinary approaches that are effective. The definitions and images of art that reform and develop along the process are the reflection of new ideas and new point of views and are the visions of changing traditional perception.

During art production process with the change of art definition and forms of expression, individual has to become more sensitive and more aware with the problems of the society he/she is living in and his/her environment. For individual to put together an art product, it is essential for him/her to know him/her self before the environment. The individual that source its self, interiorize the art created by self and assign meaning to it. All the work related to a field, situation or subject that is not related to self's life and have no space in self's life will be missing. First of all, it is important that the artist or the individual have to believe in his/her own work and have to be inner connected. In this manner individual's, artist's or art student's understanding and knowing its own self, is in direct proportion with the nature of the art product. According to Bayat (2003), self perception is realizing individuals own self, knowing who is it and what is it and the properties it is carrying, talents, interests, responsibilities, goals, values and manners. The indicators are the thoughts of the individual about a subject, job, object or a behavior, like "I am enough" or "I am not enough", or "I like/love it"

or “I don’t like /love it”.

The Aim and the Significance of the Research

This study aims to make a student to understand the self and then to express their self-perceptions, which created by themselves until this age, through art expression tools. By revealing this aim as the core, the questions below are answered;

1. How students describe their self-perceptions?
2. How do students transform their self-perception to an art product?
3. How do students carry out the art product-forming period?

Method

Art based research method that is used in this research where students’ self-perceptions were resolved with art products created by them, is a method that combines the research with the definitions created by art or design processes in scientific researches (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Eisner (2002) mentions that in art based research, students’ personal understanding and point of views of various situations through their artistic expressions are tried to be put forth based on their personal observations (Erişti, 2012).

Participants

Study was performed with the 3rd grade students of Anadolu University Education Faculty Fine Arts Education Department on 2014-2015 spring term and data gathered from the 10 active participant students of a whole of 13 student class. While study data was collected, the names of the students were changed under the ethical rules.

Execution Period

Research took place in 4 hours time period in three weeks duration between 09.03.2015/28.03.2015.

Table.1 Study Execution Process

Study Execution Period	
12 March 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meeting and greeting students, - What is self-perception? - What is student’s perception of their self?

	<p>Students expressing themselves by writing and their own resolutions,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explaining art forms of expression, with examples, - Image, symbol, giving information about metaphor concept, - Side meaning, direct meaning.
19 March 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Questioning and resolving the objects picked by students, - Presenting the development process in the class and comment
26 March 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Description of student works and presentation, - Resolution of the works.

In the first class, descriptions about self-perception were given to the students. Under the light of given information, in the class students' own self-perception ideas were discussed. After it has been required from the students to put their out comes and definitions of themselves into writing. While some of the students could express themselves easily, other wanted to think about it. Then a presentation was performed to the students about contemporary art and current art expression tools. Image, symbol and metaphor concepts are mentioned and students were informed. Samples of side and direct meanings in art pieces were given. In line with the information transferred to the students, it has been required from the students to determine the best-suited objects and concepts represents their selves. It has been required from them to form an installation by using their own picked objects with the art form they choose and try to explain it metaphorically. At the same time their own portrait shoots were asked to be presented with the art created. So with that their own image and their own self-perception could be presented side by side.

Second week in the class, students' concepts that are related to their self-perception were debated. All the drafts, photo shoots and other steps related to the process generated through out the all week, projected on the wall and discussed with participation of whole students.

In third week students completed their projects and represented in the class. They explained their work together with the manifestations they wrote. More time was given to the students with the missing part in their work.

Collection of Data and Evaluation

Research data are gathered from the work that students created during the process of analyzing their self-perception, from the observations and from the semi-prepared meeting form applied to the

students. During data collecting process it has been asked from students to answer the questions in the semi-prepared meeting form;

- What is the best specialty/theme that represent you?
- Explain in this manner with, which objects you interfered.
- Explain the art creating process you did with this self-perception.

In addition to these, student manifestations were also used as data. During evaluating and analyzing the students' work, collected data analyzed with the expert opinions and data validity increased.

Findings

The collected data were presented in two sections;

“Data gathered from evaluating the students work” and “ Data related to the process of creating art product.”

Findings related with the students art works

The art works of students related to their self-perception were evaluated with expert opinions. Students' self definitions and art tools for expression are given in the table below.

Table.2 Table of Themes and Expression Tools of Student Choices

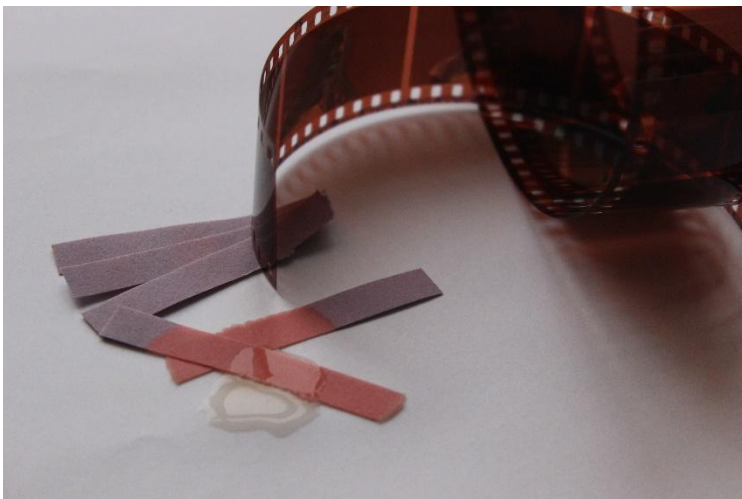
Students Name	Themes	Expression Tool
Ayşe	Disability to reflect the problems / Laugh / Being affected spiritually from the surroundings	Installation/ Photograph
Cansu	Consumption / Showing direction / Believe	Installation/ Photograph
Burcu	Effort to hold the tail straight, / Keeping secrets	Stop motion
Büşra	Stubbornness / Impatience	Photograph
Serpil	Ambition / Warmth	Installation
Çağan	Tide	Digital execution
Sena	Being silent / Afraid to hurt people	Installation/ Photograph
Mehmet	Protection / Protectionism	Digital execution
Gizem	Fragile / Vulnerable	Installation/ Photograph
Nihal	Complexity / Unclarity	Installation/ Photograph
Elif	Variability	Photograph

When the themes chosen by students analyzed, we see that while some of the student chose to handle only one item, other chose to express them selves with few. When we look at the art expression

tools they used, it has been seen that most of the students took a photograph of their work. It has been thought that the cause of this is that it is an easier and faster tool. Only Burcu among the students used stop motion video work. During the class Burcu mentioned that she loves video work and this is the best tool that expresses her best.

Ayşe: Ayşe chose the words “Disability to reflect the problems/ laugh / being affected spiritually with the surroundings”, in her work. She mentioned of these definitions express herself in a right way. Related to the topic, “ The general specification that defines me and everybody knows about me is to disability to reflect my problems and my sadness. So no matter what happens in me I always smile.” She used litmus paper and film band while she was expressing, this specifications of herself through art. The explanations regarding why she choose these objects are as follows,

“I chose the litmus paper and movie film as the defining object of myself in this project. To emphasize the subject about me being a fun person in my group of friends and in my social circle and how much I love to laugh I used litmus paper. A litmus paper is a paper that changes color when contacted with acid. I also live in my life something similar. However when with people I am a fun smiling person, as soon as I get home, I start to examine what had happened previously and create synergies and nothing was left at the end from my outside self. My sickness step up and I totally change color.”



Picture.1 Ayşe’s work of self-perception

Cansu: When Cansu defined herself, she reached the “consumption, showing direction and believe” concepts. The exact words she used was “consuming, showing the way and believing is the concepts defining my identity.” It has been seen that she transformed the concepts of herself in to an art product by using a hat, a watch and a book and she explained the relationship between the object’s and the concepts as;

“Event though we generally use the watch to mention time, sometimes we use as 2 o’clock, five o’clock as direction. Watch is my side meaning for showing direction. I used book for my consumption concept. Books are being used for information exchange and also to nestle but not always. And if they are empty and meaningless to me they consume my time, vice versa I consume them. Hat mostly is used for covering, protecting the head, but I turn my hat upside down and put on the table while I am listening to people. I listen to them but do not believe in every word they said. I weigh my self, I believe in what I see.”



Picture.2 Cansu’s work of self-perception

When Cansu’s work and its relation with the concepts she chose was evaluated it has been seen that she chose the symbolic response way. She has done that by direct meaning assigning to the objects.

Burcu: Burcu, tried to explain herself with “attempt to hold the tail straight” sentence. She mentioned that in general while acting with her conscious she also has a sentimental side. She said that two sides of her are interconnected but she does not want to show that side of her to the outside world and she keeps herself safe. In her work for the sake of reflecting those definitions she used a balloon with writing on, a photo frame and a string. She created a stop motion video with the installation she put together with the objects.



Picture. 3 Burcu’s work of self-perception

Büşra: Büşra who defined herself with the “ impatient and stubbornness concepts, found appropriate to use gramophone and record objects while she was creating the art pieces. She explained it as;

“When it is defining ourselves and concepts, the best concept for me to define myself is stubborn. Beside my stubbornness my impatience is also strong as my stubbornness. I want to fix, get it done at the exact moment. I persist. Mostly in the same situations, same occasions I become stubborn and I count where I am. Even hours pass when the same subject rise, the possibility me becoming stubborn is high. ”

Büşra linked the broken records action of playing the same place again and again, to her stubbornness. The scratch on the record represents the negative effect of stubbornness in life on her.



Picture.4 Büşra’s work of self-perception

Serpil: Serpil defined her self-perception with “ambition and warmth” words. She manifested as;

“Actually when I questioned my self, lots of concepts come forward. But the most obvious one is “ambition”. I am an ambitious person since I know myself. I am like a ball of yarn. Thrown forward, moving forward while consuming its self, a ball of yarn. Sometimes I pass through road full of dirt and stones. But if there is something I believe the rest become blurry. Even the obstacles. Sometimes this ambition exhausts me, I break piece by piece, and I lose the track of reality. I forget everything and everyone. I become attached to other lives through the roads I pass, or sometimes they get attached to me. I include them to my drag. Some continue with me some leave me at the beginning. I add things to my identity to my life from everyone during this drag. Sometimes thorns, sometimes beauty. I add them things too. Most of the time lots of heartbreaks. I do not even hesitate while I am leaving a part of mine, no looking back. But I am consumed. The far I go the more I am consumed, I break. A ball of yarn. I am warm, green is my color. When it comes, I conform the lives around me, I give warmth, and I heal.”

When Serpil’s work is analyzed it has been seen that it is a simple yet powerful work. She preferred to use less color, less object.



Picture.5 Serpil’s work of self-perception

Çağan: Çağan created the most different work among the students. Çağan differ by using a urinal while mentioning the best word defining him as “tide”. Not only by the object he picked, he succeeded in form the relationship between the concept and object.



Picture.6 Çağan’s work of self-perception

“The urinal that we use at the most needed time and after done with it we turn our back and leave it immediately, is the best metaphor for my life in this study. I used a handprint to back up the main theme in a straighter target. The things that the ones who add to us and leave traces to us in life should be the best part of this. Another item I used in direct meaning is sports shoes. Both me being a sportsman and me running to people who want to come close to me is a support to this metaphor.”

Sena:

“The best characteristic property that defines me is being a silent person and being a coward as also mentioned by the people around me. But the ones around me do not know actually I am afraid of hurting them. In this context I decided that the best objects are camouflage and cassette ”



Picture.7 Sena’s work of self-perception

Mehmet: The concept that Mehmet thinks his identity is in match with is “protective” He linked the bicycle with the protective concept. In his manifestation he explained as;

“The concept that I lined to my self-perception is protective. I always want to protect my loved ones and myself. Even though I wanted to protect, I always failed. As an example, fire is an essential need of human when lost in the nature. Fire protects, heats but if you stay too close it burns. Maybe I also do hurt when trying to protect. The object defines me is bicycle. People know me verifies that. I use my bike to keep myself healthy protect from getting sick; this is also linked to my concept indirectly.”



Picture.8 Mehmet’s work of self-perception

Gizem: Gizem said that the best concept defining her is “vulnerability”.

“My best definition for myself is being vulnerable. Related to this concept I used forty glasses. I used cotton, which defines my fragile and smooth faced. I used an eyeglass to represent me looking to life more carefully not to be hurt.” Gizem who chose a literal meaning definition path, completed her work by reflecting her own photo image onto the broken glass image with the help of a computer program.”



Picture.9 Gizem’s work of self-perception

Nihal: Nihal said that the best concept defining her is “complexity”. In her manifestation;

“If I need to define myself in one word it will be complexity. The object that I can use for this concept is a broken not showing television. All my blurry memories are imprisoned at the side of my brain as not clearing shots” are the word she used.



Picture.10 Nihal’s work of self-perception

Elif: Elif mentioned that the concept defining her self perception is “variability”. She explained the relationship between the concept and her self perception in her manifestation with these words;

“While I was defining myself I saw that the most obvious specialty of mine is variability. I realized that the boundaries I put are changing accordingly with the circumstances and environmental characteristics. I chose ice as the best mirroring object of this concept. With the environmental temperature ice starts to melt and takes its normal form, which is liquid phase under normal conditions. I change accordingly with my surroundings so this specialty of mine is similar with ice. When I find my own normal conditions my ice starts to melt. I am fond of honesty and clarity. The clarity of ice also represents my this side. Ice as in the solid phase different than its other phases, it has a shape and edges. Ice, this property shows my boundaries in my own sense.”



Picture.11 Elif's work of self-perception

Findings related to students self perception execution period

The steps taken by the students during the execution processes are;

1. Reading articles related to self-perception,
2. Researching, image, symbol, metaphor, side meaning,
3. Determining the theme and the concept related to them,
4. Making the connected object to their theme,
5. Arrangement of objects related to the theme and photo shoot,
6. Color, shape arrangements in digital,
7. Completion of work.

At first students did the reading given by the researcher and then they performed questioning to find the most suitable image that represent themselves. After that they chose the object related to the image, which will define the chosen image the best way. At this point students have been led to use the side meanings instead of the literal meanings. This had been the most difficult phase for the students. Related to the topic, Ayşe pointed out that at first only the literal meanings occurred in her mind. In that event Büşra mentioned, she had difficulties in linking the object and the theme and the reason is to form a side meaning relation. Also Cansu mentioned her having problems with the side meaning but it were because of her personality, she said that her way of thinking for everything is straight. After the determining the theme and the object, students completed the photo shoots, videos and editing. Some students expressed their joy during the process while others mentioned how they struggled about the theme during the process and the long time period that it took place.

Discussion & Conclusion

For undergraduates a design-based activity where they can actually work their creativity with the self-thoughts defining their capabilities is a compelling circumstance and situation. This research study provided the optimum states for students to work their mind, perception and intuition and they all used in the most creative ways. In the research, during the three-week course hour's time, students questioned their self-perceptions, their resolutions, and at the end created an art product. When looked at the context of the study, it is seen that it is in conceptual form. In nowadays art, it is important for the individual, art student or artist, first of all to know him/her self and then form a relation between him/her self and the society. In this study where exhibition took place around the self-perception concept, students had been forced to question themselves. After gathering the data through their questioning and answering process with their mind and also with their intuition, by targeting to improve their knowledge and cultural accumulation, students asked to use second, third meanings of the concepts and objects and also use metaphors. Most of the participants declared that they faced difficulties using the side meanings. The reason for this is to happen is the lack of reading and searching and the missing ability of binding the personality and thinking pattern of the students can be said.

Students being participated in more conceptual projects like this create different thinking and creating patterns and eventually this affects their works quality but also quality can be achieved by being more creative, extraordinary, special and authentic and having the ability to act (Hurwitz, 1983). In this regard, undergrads with adequate abilities would move forward, improve their beings and reform with art.

Resources

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