

Global Journal of Arts Education



Volume 9, Issue 2, (2019) 063-074

www.gjae.eu

Art for peace

Vafa Afshar, Department of Ceramics, Hacettepe University Institute of Fine Arts, Ankara, Turkey

Candan Terwiel*, Department of Ceramics, Hacettepe University Institute of Fine Arts, Ankara, Turkey

Suggested Citation:

Afshar, V. & Terwiel, C. (2019). Art for peace. *Global Journal of Arts Education*. 9(2), 063–074.
<https://doi.org/10.18844/gjae.v9i2.4417>

Received March 24, 2019; revised June 11, 2019; accepted August 28, 2019.

Selection and peer review under responsibility of Prof. Dr. Ayse Cakir Ilhan, Ankara University, Turkey.

©2019 United World CenterCentre of Research Innovation and Publication. All rights reserved..

Abstract

In this our modern times, many people, although not in every geography, had to live with wars and conflicts. Peace has always been the object of purchase, even if art cannot afford to prevent the war. Violence and war have become commonplace for everyone, especially for children. Exile, immigration, refugee, human trafficking issues, which have become a problem of the world as a result of war and violence, await solutions. Institutions, states and global organisations are trying to take big economic and social measures towards these problems; however the unresolved problems of the endless wars, the issues of war continue to be the main item of the agenda. For instance, the arts of Otto Dix, Kathe Kollwitz or our current days artists Tammam Azzam and Banksy. This study emphasises the belief that the art has a unifying, healing power, and therefore Art for Peace will continue to be made.

Keywords: Contemporary art, peace, war, art.

* **ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE:** Vafa Afshar, Department of Ceramics, Hacettepe University Institute of Fine Arts, Ankara, Turkey. *E-mail address:* afshar@hacettepe.edu.tr

1. Introduction

Art, which is an accumulation of human species, is also the accumulation of being human. The history of art is actually the history of humanly exaltation. No matter which field of art we look at, we see human beings in the centre. Art is an area where the passion for a better life is built. Therefore, the idea of peace never falls off the agenda as a phenomenon that contemporary art and artist must ponder.

Because of the two world wars in 20th Century and the intense wars and violent battles in the 21st Century, peace, which is what people need the most, also attracts the attention of art and the artist. It is unimaginable that any human being can be indifferent to a world where people are harmed by war, exile and violence. Artists have had an attitude against the evil since prehistory. Artists are the unofficial historians of the era they witness and they express the period by feeling it in the depths of their souls. They try to express the pain experienced by using the universal language of image.

The concepts of art and peace are the most important stages of human evolution. In this context, supporting peace is among the responsibilities of artist identity. This responsibility is against any kind of prejudice and conditioning. As well as embracing tolerance, sharing, respect for ideas, developing pleasure and emotions as a principle, art keeps harmful and bad habits away and includes making use of time well and positively. No artist has been indifferent to war and violence anyway. Art history is full of examples of this. Artists have constantly dealt with the issue of peace both through classical methods and tools and modern methods and tools. In this context, they have expressed peace through a variety of ways from theatre plays to popular songs, from modern dances to graphic designs (Anderson, 2002).

In almost every period of history, especially during the periods of intense wars, people, who need peace have expressed their longing for peace by producing peace themed art works, and especially in painting, in many different branches of art like sculpture, theatre, ballet, cinema, calligraphy and so on (Leeuwin, 2000).

Peace has always been the subject of art whose main purpose is to solve problems. As wartime periods are longer throughout the history, people need peace more, therefore artist have been including peace in their artworks as a theme (Savage, 2010).

Creative art is a dynamic that stands against the destructiveness of war, and moreover it opens the way for the good, the beautiful and the right. As Taylor (2012) states:

In this study, efforts to make peace in the 21st Century, which is full of wars and conflicts; in this context, the artists who lived in war periods and the examples of most effective peace themed art works have been analysed through the literature review method. It is important to present what artists experience and their emotions together with their works of art. It is also very important to make these works of art visible for today's people and to have them 'empathise' with the sense of the period in which they were created. The aim of this study is to develop these emotions and to show that is important for people to take care of peaceful environments in their lives.

2. Art works created for peace

Art, with its functionality, has been a tool that human beings use to organise their life, since the most primitive periods. Primitive man believed that he was protecting himself or gaining strength by drawing pictures of the animals he hunted on the walls of the caves. In ancient times, they wrote epics to explain the universe through mythology. In Medieval Ages, magnificent cathedrals were being built to spread scholastic way of thinking. The artists who realised Renaissance, broke all the dogmatic ideas with humanist and rational works. For example, artists like Voltaire and Rousseau, realised the French Revolution with their art works (Isler, 1999).

It was Jacques Callot who showed the terror of the Thirty Years War (1618–48) in Central Europe in 17th Century, in his series of Miseries of War (Paret, 1997).

Two hundred years later, Francisco Goya responded to the Napoleonic Wars in Spain (1808–1814) with a series of engravings illustrating the injuries and killings of Spanish villagers who were rising against the French army. One of the most important works of Goya is 'The 3rd of May' (1814), which reflects the destructive and devastating side of war (Figure 1). In his work 'The 3rd of Mat 1808', Goya reflected the brutality of war and stood up to it. In a letter he wrote, Goya explained the purpose of the painting as 'I have made it to immortalize the most extraordinary and heroic actions of our honorable rebellion against the tyrants of Europe, with my brush strokes'. Goya was influenced by Callot's works and Goya's works influenced many artists, including Picasso. The painting has revolutionised the history of art with its emotional power, the way it narrates the horror of war and its emphasis on the victims of war (Akalin, 2013).



Figure 1. Goya, The 3rd of May, 1814, oil on canvas, 266 × 345 cm

In addition, The 3rd of May 1808, also inspired Picasso's *Guernica* (Figure 2). Picasso's work *Guernica* depicts the fascist dictator General Franco's attack on the city of Guernica in 1937, the centre of the Basque region in Spain. *Guernica* is not only considered as the painting of Spanish Civil War, but also the most important anti-war painting of the 20th Century. Picasso gave the city's name to his painting to protest the destruction of the city by the bombs of German airplanes and killing of the innocent people who were brutally shot by machine guns. The artist wanted the pain to be felt with senses instead of depicting what exactly happened on that day, in his painting. Picasso used no colour other than black, white and grey in the painting (Berger, 2010).



Figure 2. Picasso, 1937, oil on canvas, 350 × 780 cm

Perhaps the first example that comes to mind when it comes to the theme of peace in art is Pablo Picasso's Peace Dove (Figure 3). Picasso made the Peace Dove in 1949 on the order of the Communist Party of which he was a member and since then, the White dove has been the symbol of peace. However, peace has always been the theme of art (Fallon, 2009).



Figure 3. Picasso, Peace Dove, 1949, lithography on paper, 56.7 × 76 cm

Not only Spanish artists but also artists living in other countries have been involved in the wars and conflicts of their countries. Some of them have even actively taken part in the process. One of those artists is the German artist Kathe Kollwitz. Kathe was born in 1867 in Königsberg (now Kaliningrad, Russia). Kollwitz was the fifth child of Karl and Katherine Schmidt. Discovering Kathe Kollwitz's talent at an early age, her father enabled her to learn from famous painting and graphic masters. Kathe, who started her art education in Berlin in 1884 and continued in Munich from 1888 to 1889, later worked as a teacher from 1898 to 1903 at Berlin Girls Painting School. Kathe Kollwitz was deeply influenced by the negative conditions of workers and the society and social injustice during the end of 19th Century and she dealt with the people and events she witnessed in real life and never abandoned the struggle

throughout her life. She expressed this crusader spirit in her art works with mature artist sensitivity. The destruction of World War I, and especially the passing of her son Peter in World War I affected her deeply, and thus she dealt with pacifism as a theme in her art works and she resisted throughout her life as a pacifist artist (Sargent, 2012). Kollwitz's war series which consists of seven woodcut prints, came out of the artist's experiences and observations in civilian life. Kollwitz's work called *Volunteers*, tells of her son Peter's death in October 1914 (Figure 4). Kollwitz reflected in her artwork the losses of both herself and her society in the sensitivity of both a woman and a mother (Zencirci, 2018).

Kathe Kollwitz is not the only German artist who make as a series of prints on war. German painter and print artist Otto Dix also made the print series called *Der Krieg* (War). The loss of Kollwitz's son in the war and what Dix experienced himself in the battle front led these two artists to express their deep pain and the brutality of war was the subject of their work.

Born in Thuringia in 1891, Otto Dix's father was a blacksmith. His modelling for his artist cousin led Otto Dix to decide to be an artist while he was still a child.



Figure 4. Kathe Kollwitz, *Volunteers*, woodcut print, 1922

With the support of his teacher Ernst Schunke, he became an assistant of painter and decorator and in 1909, he was awarded a scholarship to the Dresden School of Arts and Crafts. In August 1914, 22-year-old Dix, who continued his art education in Dresden, joined the German army and became one of the first witnesses of World War I. When the war was over, he expressed his bitter experiences to people with all its reality. Dix, who was affected by the Great War, took his experiences of war as the main theme of his work. Dix collected the theme of war in 50 print series in 5 portfolios, consisting of 10 prints under the title of *Der Krieg* (1924). In the prints in this portfolio, Dix deals with isolated events in the battlefield, civilian life and daily routine. *Die Skatspieler* is one of Dix's art works that depicts war (Figure 5). *Der Krieg* (War) series has been repeatedly criticised for Dix's stance against war. According to many experts, this series of prints reflects Dix as a pacifist. It is considered that, his aim in showing the brutality and repulsiveness of the war in such a realistic and almost repulsive way

is actually to warn people about the reality and effects of war, and thus to influence their thoughts on war (Zencirci, 2018).

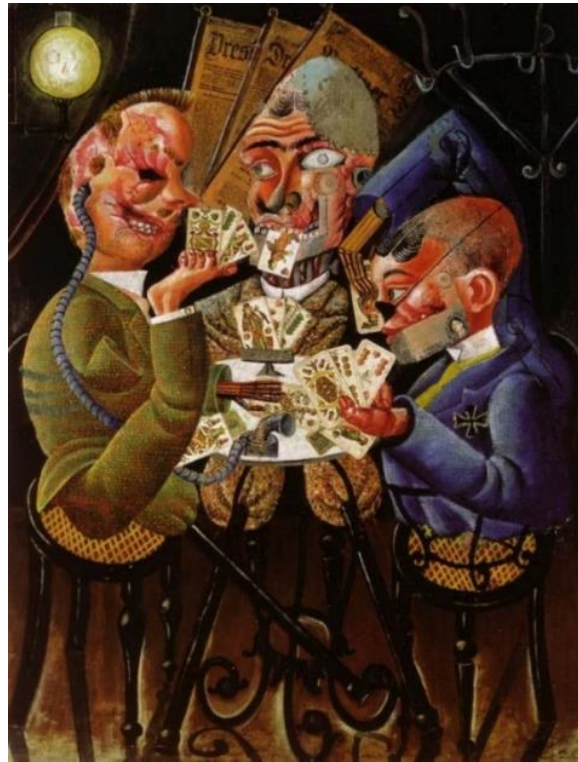


Figure 5. Otto Dix, Die Skatspieler, 1920

Another artist, who employs the concepts of peace and justice in her works, is the important Turkish ceramic artist Hamiye Colakoglu. Hamiye Colakoglu is one of the artists who made important contributions to the formation of Turkish ceramic art. The artist who was born in Trabzon in 1933 and who passed away on 31 December 2014, in Ankara, studied Art History and Italian Literature in Florence State Ceramic Art School on Technology High Temperature Firing and Perugia University in Italy between 1959 and 1963. Hamiye Çolakoğlu, who worked in Hacettepe University Fine Arts for long years, was able to leave a lasting impression on her period not only with the ceramic works she produced, but also with her active political stance, contributions to Anatolian culture and the organisations she led. The artist reflects the basic values of being human and the human values in her works, thus managed to reach the contemporary and the universal. When her works *Bombalar Cicek Acmali* (Bombs Must Bloom) (Figure 6), *Evrende Baris Senfonisi* (Peace Symphony in the Universe) and *Bosna Hersek Anısına* (In the memory of Bosnia and Herzegovina) are analysed, it is obvious that the main theme of her work is human, nature, science, peace and justice. From tradition to modernity, what makes her works contemporary and successful is undoubtedly not only her personal attitude and approach in her art, but also the human love, justice and peace that shine out in her art work (Terwiel & Karabey, 2015).



Figure 6. Hamiye Colakoglu, Bombalar Cicek Ac mali (Bombs Must Bloom), 1993

While peace has always been the main theme of the artist, as war and conflict took a wider place and became more violent all over the world, they started to be a theme of art more often and now more peace themed activities are being organised in the field of art. For example, on October 2015, 109 people lost their lives in a live bomb attack in Ankara and the theme of Hacettepe Macsabal Wood Firing Symposium was determined to be 'peace'. The Macsabal Wood Firing Symposium, organised by the Rectorate of Hacettepe University and The Faculty of Fine Arts was started in 2011. This symposium has been held internationally every year in Turkey, parallel to the opening of the new academic year of Hacettepe Univeristy. The theme 'Art for Peace', which was first employed in the 2015 symposium in Turkey, was also the theme of the symposium held in 2017. With this theme, in July in Wanju-Korea, in September sn Zibo-China and in October in Ankara-Turkey, Macsabal kilns were fired. In this symposium, which provides great opportunity for artists to come together and create together, a cultural interaction and communication takes place among artists from different languages and countries (Seramik Turkiye, 2018).

Canadian artist Louise Ladouceur is one of the artists who creates works of arts with a desire of peace and makes the problems of social justice and inequality visible through art works. Louise Ladouceur discussed the theme of peace in numerous graphic and painting exhibitions by expressing it through lines and colours (Figure 7). In addition to her painting and graphic work, Ladouceur has tried to define peace with her articles and writings and carried out her work as a peace ambassador in every field (Ladouceur, 2012).



3. Figure 7. Louise Ladouceur, Revolution Around the Rose, 2012

Claes Oldenburg is another important artist whose work raises awareness of the wickedness of war and war weapons. Born in Sweden, Claes Oldenburg is one of the leading representatives of the American Pop-Art movement. Oldenburg made large-scale sculptures of ordinary objects in his work.

One of his most important works in monumental dimensions is 'Lipstick', which was secretly placed on Yale University Campus in 1969 (Figure 8). This sculpture of Claes Oldenburg seems funny at first sight, but it is quite ironic and critical. Oldenburg secretly placed this 7.5 m high sculpture, which he made with his friends on the Beinecke Plaza in Yale University garden between the columns of the monument for World War I. Placing the sculpture in front of this monument, which has a classic appearance, is a devastating protest against both war itself and classical war monuments and war weapons. This sculpture which has a sarcastic appearance also created a space for anti-war demonstrations (Wilson, 2014).



Figure 8. Claes Oldenburg, Lipstick, 1969

Banksy is also one of the most important artists, who employs anti-war themes in his paintings. Banksy, whose true identity is unknown, has been known for 10 years for his striking murals in different countries, especially in England. Defining his work as 'Guerilla Art', the artist produces works that are anti-war, environmentalist, that advocate animal rights and that criticise consumerism. As well as England, Banksy is known for his political works in Palestine. The artist, made nine different art works on the wall that was built by Israeli government to the Palestine border, which was declared illegal by UN and defined as a wall of shame that turns Palestine into an open-air prison by the artist, under the name of holiday instantiations, which ironically reflects the bitter face of war (Figure 9) (Banksy, 2016).



Figure 9. Banksy, Wall of Shame, Bethlehem, Palestine

Another example of art for peace is the Syrian artist Tammam Azzam. Tammam Azzam who was born in Damascus, Syria in 1980, studies arts in Damascus University, Faculty of Fine Arts, concentrating on oil painting. Azzam, who had a successful career as a painter in Syria, started to produce digital media works after moving to Dubai due to the conflicts in the country. Tammam Azzam uses the masterpieces of the greatest European artists, such as da Vinci, Matisse, Goya and Picasso in the Syrian Museum series created for the Syria exhibition. In the Syrian Museum series, the artist uses Western masterpieces not only for their famousness and being instantly recognisable, but also to show that Syria does not have a world-class museum and that the regime is currently killing the cultural heritage. While Klimt's *Kiss* shows the love and relationship among people, she reveals her critique using the contrast of how this painting overlaps with war (Figure 10). The artist has digitally reinterpreted the famous *Kiss* by Gustav Klimt on a building destroyed by war. Tammam Azzam announced the destruction of war in Syria, the terror and tragedy it caused on Syrian people, by placing Klimt's famous romantic painting on the building that was destroyed by bombs. The artist Tammam Azzam describes his work as 'We describe the fine line of comedy and tragedy in Syria. We show how to make art in such circumstances. We speak of hope, of people's resistance against war and of love. I wanted to draw attention by using Gustav Klimt's *Kiss*. I suppose people here stopped doing art because every second in Syria smells like death. However, I am an artist, I am not a soldier, this is my way of fighting' (OneArt platform for contemporary art, 2013).

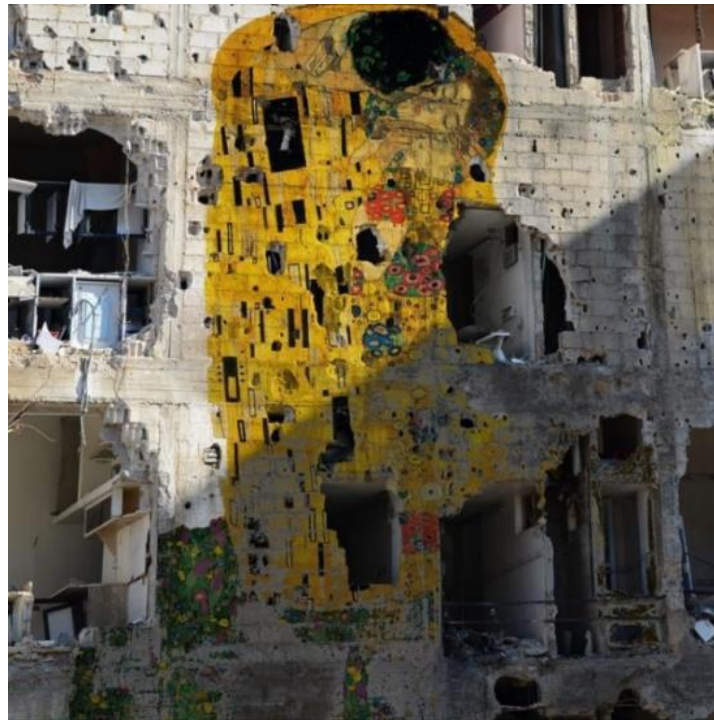


Figure 10. Tammam Azzam, Syria Museum series

Yara Al Najem is another artist who chose to migrate because of war and reflected his experiences to his work of arts. Yara Al Najem, a graphic artist born in Syria in 1990, is forced to leave his country in 2012. Not much is known about him, but his work is well known on social media and street art in his country. In his art work, *Travel Bag* (Figure 11), Yara Al Najem tried to show the homelessness of Syrians who were scattered all over the world (Syriauntold, 2014).



Figure 11. Yara Al Najem, Travel Bag

Among these artists, Syrian Hiba Aziouq can also be mentioned. Born in 1986, in Damascus, Hiba Aziouq graduated from the Damascus Academy of Fine Arts. The paintings of the artist, who had to leave her country because of war, are on the war in her country and the painful feelings they experienced. Hiba, who had to leave her country, first went to Erbil and then to Istanbul. Hiba, who never gave up the art of painting despite her bad days, continued her art wherever she went and opened her first solo exhibition in Erbil. In Ankara, Hiba opened an exhibition entitled “Unconditional Stories” with the art work she produced in the scope of Cer Modern Artist Residency Program (Figure 12). In this exhibition, Hiba tried to show that with each war, not only the bodies are harmed but she especially tried to show the wounded souls with her amorphous portraits and the dark feeling that was at the center of their unidentified bodies (Aizouq, 2019).



Figure 12, Hiba Aizouq, from the exhibition, Unconditional Stories

Another Syrian young artist who expresses the period's and the country's condition is, Wissam Al Jazairy, who was born in 1990, in Midan, Damascus. He started studying graphic design in 2008, in

New Bulgaria University and he graduated in 2011, at the beginning of the Syrian uprising. Wissam Al Jazayri had to hide for a while after escaping from his country and now lives in Antalya. Al Jazayri's paintings, depict people who suffer for their own people, who live under pressure, who are marginalised and who have to leave their country. "I dream of a free, independent and democratic Syria, I want the citizenship and justice to be the basis of government and I want peace to be the language spoken", he says. "I think my art has gained meaning after the révolution has started, and I paint to make the messages heard by the world through peaceful means". In the middle of the war, Wissam never forgot about hope and love, and his paintings reconstruct the Syrian homeland with bright colors. Therefore, he draws flowers against bullets, girls dancing against tanks (Figure 13), and love against death. In his paintings, the artist symbolises a brutal attempt to flourish in the darkest places (Syriauntold, 2013).

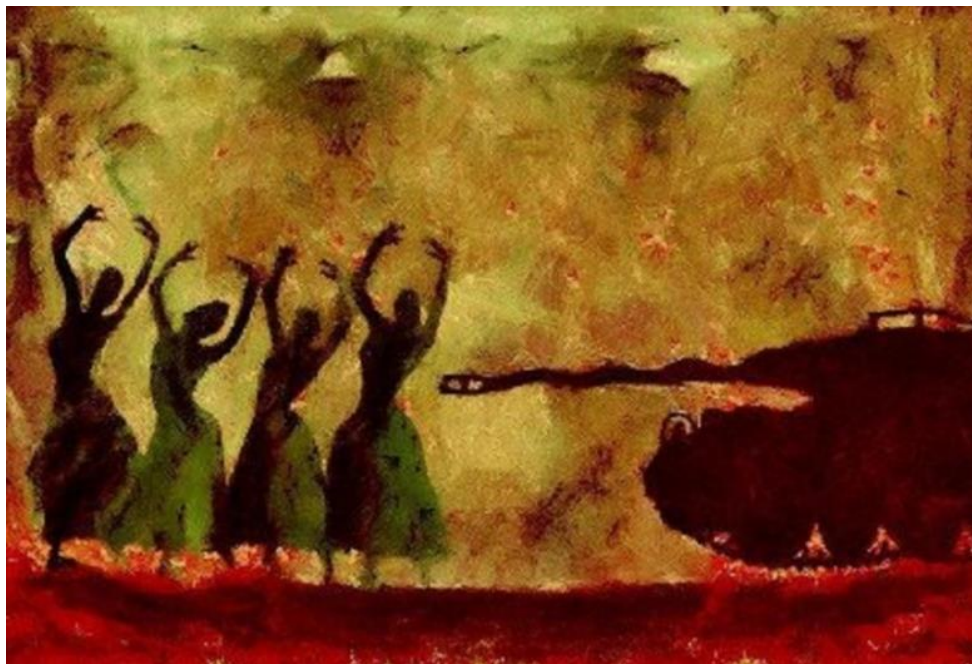


Figure 13. Wissam Al Jazayri, *Girls Dancing Against Tanks*

4. Conclusion

Generally speaking, the heritage and richness of art is full of numerous examples that clearly reveal the artist's attitude towards oppression and war. Artistic sensitivity sees and considers the protection of everything vital for the future in favour of peace against war. It is now understood that the defending peace is defending tomorrow and the future of human beings. Art represents one of the most special areas of human beings in which the passion for a better life is constructed. Therefore, the idea of peace has never fallen off the agenda as a phenomenon that contemporary art and the artist should ponder. There has always been a struggle, a political attitude at the core of art. The identity of the artist is seen in his/her works as the reflection of this attitude which is inherently present.

This attitude of artists in the society is really important. Although the artists are not the ones who directly give the start to this awakening, they are the visible part of it. Through art, we can contribute to social change by conveying our deep feelings and needs. To create a peace culture, we need to dream of it first. Art is one of the most important ways of realising this dream.

References

- Aizouq, H. (2019). *Resim Sergisi*. Ankara, Turkey: Cermodern/Hub Salonu.
- Akalin, T. (2013). Dunyada uc oonemli savasin etkisiyle olusan resimler. *Fine Arts*, 8(4), 352–367.
- Anderson, T. (2002). Mandala constructing peace through art. *Art Education*, 55(3), 33–39.
- Banksy. (2016). Retrieved from <http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Banksy>
- Berger, J. (2010). *Picasso'nun Basarisi ve Basarisizligi* (Y. S. v. M. G. Sokmen, Trans. 5th ed.). Istanbul, Turkey: Metis Yayinlari.
- Fallon, R. (2009). Birds, beasts, and bombs in Messiaen's Cold War mass. *The Journal of Musicology*, 26(2), 175–204.
- Isler, E. (1999). Voltaire ve rousseau etrafinda aydinlanma cagi fransiz yazini'na bir bakis. *Pamukkale Universitesi Egitim Fakuultesi Dergisi*, 5(5).
- Ladouceur, L. (2012). *Dramatic licence: translating theatre from one official language to the other in Canada*. Edmonton, Canada: University of Alberta.
- Leeuwin, E. W. (2000). 'The Arts of Peace': Thomas H. Mawson's Gardens at the Peace Palace, the Hague. *Garden History*, 28(2), 262–276.
- OneArt Platform for Contemporary Art. (2013). *Tammam Azzam: Syrian museum*. Retrieved from <http://www.oneart.org/biographies/artist/tammam-azzam>
- Paret, P. (1997). *Imagined battles: reflections of war in European art*. UNC Press Books.
- Sargent, L. C. (2012). *Visions of world war I: through the eyes of Kathe Kollwitz and Otto Dix*. (Master). Dayton, Ohio: Wright State University.
- Savage, K. (2010). The Obsolescence of sculpture. *American Art*, 24(1), 9–14.
- Seramik Turkiye. (2018). Hacettepe universitesi 7.uluslararası macsabal odun pişirimi sempozyumu ve macsabal sempozyumlari. Retrieved from <http://www.seramikturkiye.net/?p=4529>
- Syriauntold. (2013). Retrieved from <https://syriauntold.com/2013/09/19/wissam-al-jazairy/>
- Syriauntold. (2014). *Travel Bag by Yara al-Najm*. Retrieved from <https://syriauntold.com/2014/06/03/travel-bag-by-yara-al-najm>
- Taylor, A. J. (2012). Unstable motives: propaganda, politics, and the late work of Alexander Calder. *American Art*, 26(1), 24–47.
- Terwiel, C. D. & Karabey, B. O. (2015). Seramik Sanatccisi Hamiye Colakoglu ve Sanati Uzerine. *Turkiye'de ve dunyada kadin arastirmalari*, 83.
- Wilson, A. (2014). *Lipstick (ascending) on caterpillar tracks*. Retrieved from <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/works/oldenburg-lipstick-ascending-on-caterpillar-tracks-p13747>
- Zencirci, D. E. (2018). Otto dix ve “der krieg” gravür serisi. *Sanat Dergisi*, (22), 31–40.