

## Gender and Its Representation in Contemporary Arts

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### Abstract

The concept of gender is an important issue that has been over-emphasized in recent years with an increasing rate of violence against human beings, is perhaps an important issue that needs to be addressed much more. The similarity of the terms, gender and sex, suggests that these two concepts are the same. The elimination of this mistake and the transformation of the position into a conscious awareness are carried out with the awareness of social responsibility with contributions in different disciplines. At this point, an evaluation can be made on art and the social function of art can be mentioned because the art is an important way of communicating collective messages through the artists by their works. In the 20th century, and especially since the second half of the century, the content of art is as important as the aesthetic appreciation and this point can be seen at the art practices which multidisciplinary approaches get to the forefront. In this paper, the way of expression of the concept of gender in contemporary art has been researched through the social function of art. The methods of this work depend on literature and artwork sample researches. And the concept of gender has been primarily addressed. This concept has been studied in terms of art works, disciplines, forms of expression, and works of artists who find meaning and overlap. And the results show that the concept of gender has found its place in contemporary arts.

**Keywords:** Gender, Contemporary Arts, Relation, Art, Artists

### Introduction

Society is a regular combination of self-constituting parts and human is the most important part of this circle. Depending on this point sex takes a big role because of the human biological structure. Modernity in the society provides to query the relationship between sex and society in the content of roles mean gender. So, gender which is the review area of social sciences and sciences such as psychology, sociology, anthropology and biology, is an actual subject of our century.

The semantic and phonetic similarities of the terms male-female and feminine-masculine are dissociated from these similarities in the biological dimension and the social dimension. The concept of gender which is formed within the framework of the difference of these dimensions and which is theoretically expressed first with Freud and psychoanalytic approach has many explanations. There are those who advocate that biologically based differences need to be expressed in terms of sex, sociocultural based differences should be expressed in gender, as well as in the case of differences between men and women (Dökmen, 2016:18). In general frame; the biological aspect of being a woman or a man corresponds to sex, whereas the understanding and expectation of society and culture related to the biological structure of the individual corresponds to the gender. Although scientific investigations have already dealt with this issue in the 1970s, the time it began to focus more on it was after the 90s.

Ann Oakley introduced the concept of gender into sociology with her book *Sex, Gender and Society*, published in 1972 (Pilcher and Whelehan, 2004: 56). At the same time stated that Oakley said "gender is a cultural issue. It marks the social classification of men and women as masculine and feminine" (Bhasin, 2003: 2).

Historically, sociological and psychological studies and researches on the subject have also revealed other sub-concepts and theories such as sex-typing, gender differences, gender discrimination, gender identity, gender roles/social role theory and gender stereotypes associated with the concept of gender. And also all these sub-concepts one by one have become the subject of other disciplines besides sociology additionally to general term of gender.

The multi-disciplined area of our time provides the connections between all disciplines. In this atmosphere different fields can get into relations with each other. Also an art is in the relation with other disciplines not only in forms but also with its conceptual contents because an art is the part of human, environment, society and life. So the term of gender also takes in place in art especially in the contemporary arts.

According to this point the meaning of gender in contemporary arts has been studied in this article. Firstly, the existence of the concept of gender in the art history has been examined. At the second heading of the study, the works in which the concept of gender has been expressed as the subject matter and the works of art in which gender inquiries have been investigated.

### **Gender in Art History**

This part can be examined under gender difference, gender discrimination and gender role which are the sub-titles of gender and depend on sex differences.

Gender differences mean feminine and masculine those social roles differences between men and women. Being man or woman is biological structure but femininity and masculinity are sociological statues. While the male-female difference is largely characterized as universal, the distinction between femininity and masculinity is culturally determined and highly variable. Biological differences are combined with culturally accepted gender differences, and the prevailing values in the socialization process shape the sexes at the point of femininity and masculinity (Bilton and others, 1983:148). And also this social structure is combined with the gender roles given to the person according to his/her sex. To put it simply; woman should care of her house and man should get money for his family. Girls should be stay at home with her mother and learn how to cook and boys should go outside with his father and learn how to get money. Occupations are separated by sex in social structure. Gender differences stem from the different roles that women and men learn to play or have to play in various organizational structures. And all these situations can be seen also in art history in the frame of woman's presence in the art environment.

The investigations on art history show that because of the prevailing values and also because of the cultural and social structure, the women artists mostly have been devalued in art history<sup>1</sup>. It is seen that most of the studies on this subject have been directed to the situation by interrogating the artistic activities of women who have not been evaluated in the past or have not been evaluated enough in the history, and by extracting the usual misconceptions and evaluations (Tufts 1974, Sutherland and Nochin 1976, Petersen, Karen and Vilson 1976, Bachmann and Piland, 1978, Sherman 1981).

If this issue is tried to be explained by the numbers, the following examples can be given and the situation of female artists is clearly understood. All of the artists mentioned in the book *The History of Art* (E.H.Gombrich, 1984), are male. In Francis Claudon's (1988) "Encyclopedia of Romantic Art", all of the 64 mentioned artists are male, too. In Jean Causso's (1987), "Encyclopedia of Symbolism", the female artist rate is 5%. In Maurice Serullaz's (1983) "Impressionism Art Encyclopedia", the rate of female artists mentioned only reaches 5%. In Lionel Richard's (1991) *The Encyclopedia of Expressionism Art* the percentage of female artists is 6%, in Reni Passerou's (1982) *Surrealism Art Encyclopedia* the percentage of female artists is %8. In Nobert Lynton's (1982) work called *The Story of Modern Art*, all of the artists who are considered to be pioneers, big stars, or stamps of revolution are all male. In the seventh volume of "The book of Art" published in 1985 which reserved for impressionists and post impressionists, only one female artist is mentioned: Marry Cassalt (1844-1926). Even more interesting, the 8th of the same publication is devoted to Modern Art and there is no single female artist (Ulusoy, 1999).

In fact there are so many women artist during the history of art. This is known by the book called "Le Vite Più Eccellenti dei Pittori, Scultori e Architettori" which was published in 1568 by Vassari. It is one of the rare studies that are prepared to deal with the artists of the period in terms of art history. In the first publication of this book in 1550 there were no women artists. But at the second edition of the book (1568), thirteen female artists were featured. Due to this book by Vassari, women artists who lived in the Renaissance period and were accepted for the first time by the society have become able to recognize (Sankir, 2010).

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<sup>1</sup> About this, you can watch the video by Professor Amanda Vickery who journeys from Renaissance Italy to the Dutch Republic and discovers a hidden world of female artistry: *The Story of Women and Art 1 -2-3*.  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SCKab-v\\_o3k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SCKab-v_o3k)

We learn the information from this book that Marietta Robusti, who has been named among the artists of his time, is a woman and despite all the negativity of social construction, continues his artistic work and even receives orders from the Spanish palace (Grosenick, 2005: 11).



The other female artist mentioned in that book is Artemisia Gentileschi who was artist Orazio's daughter and studied art at his father's atelier, had trouble history about her life. She was raped by Agostino Tassi, who was held to give perspective lessons by Orazio. This incident has been accused by the court with laxity, and even the size of the harassment has been further enlarged by performing vigilance control in the courtroom. It can be thought that Gentileschi punished the masculine world which she could not punish in real life, by her art as seen in picture 1. (Lapierre, 1998:121, Grosenick, 2005: 11).

Picture 1. Artemisia Gentileschi, Judith and Holofernes, 1620-21, oil on canvas, 162.5 x 199 cm, Uffizi Gallery, Florence

<https://ka-perseus-images.s3.amazonaws.com/c7c9e80c309a6e17daebdf461c4374ec3ee0aa20.jpg> (20.08.2017)

But until the 1970s, Vassari's effort did not create a chain reaction. In the 1970s, gender-based inquiries peaked and the reasons why women were not involved in the art world were searched. The most important of these researches is the article by Linda Nochlin, published in 1971, "Why is not there a great female artist?" But as seen the number and percent given above, there were no enough interest about women artists and the male-dominated hegemony was still going on even during that times.

At this point some questions can be asked: Where are women artist in any social position or situation? Are women not really active enough in the field of arts? Or maybe this can be explained the word 'Patriarch'. This concept refers to the hierarchy of social relations and the institutions in which men can repress women. The masculine value system dominates art and art history. As in art history, male viewpoint is dominant in science as a whole. So the existence of women, their experiences and the roles they play are either incoherent or misinterpreted (Sherman 1978, Kraus 1967, Kampen 1976, Scully 1969,). Plastic Arts has been seen as a 'proper activity' area suitable for men as it is in many professions. Therefore, for many years, women have been excluded from plastic arts (Ulusoy, 1999). This can be explained with gender role which is a group of sex-related anticipations that the community defines and expects the fulfillment from the individual (Dökmen, 2016:29).

The other point about gender and gender discrimination in art is about the representation of woman that sexual identities or roles attributed to them, in art works. During medieval period and new age generally two main prototypes of the theme were created over women: first the seductive and fallen woman and the second angel mother and spouse with naive, weak image iconographies. The history of 'Samson and Delilah' is an iconographies theme, which was about seductive woman and man who needs to protect himself from her, in painting art as it seen in Ruben's painting at picture 2.



Picture 2. Rubens, 'Samson and Delilah' about 1609-10, oil on canvas, 185 x 205 cm, The National Gallery.

<https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/peter-paul-rubens-samson-and-delilah> (21.8.2017)

When examining the history of painting art, especially in the 16th and 17th century at Northern art, 'Seducer-provocative' woman who carries a sexual proposition is commonly applied at paintings. But on the other hand, paintings during those times reflected a woman as passive, naive, and powerless person in social sense instead of provocative woman representation. As an example Judith Leyster's (1609-1660) who is not very well known female artist, painting which is representing sewing woman, can be given about this point (Picture 3). This theme by Leyster is not the only example of the period. But it had stand against the traditional Dutch artistic theme about prostitution. This art of work is important because it is as one of the first efforts to be regarded as a hoax (Hofrichter 1982: 173-182).



Picture 3. Judith Leyster, 'Woman Sewing by Candlelight', 1633, oil on canvas, 28 cm. <https://www.pubhist.com/w22161> (21.08.2017)

### **Representation of Gender in Contemporary Arts**

At the 19th century before the appearance of avant-garde, subjects and genres that determine the art such as historical, mythological, religious themes or portrait, still life and landscape, were dependence of traditions rooted in the taste of powerful individuals and power institutions. But at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, avant-garde movement countered this by using non-traditional ways in art or by removing subject matter totally. Towards the mid-20th century, it became impossible to classify art in terms of genre or subject. And this atmosphere opened the way for contemporary art.

Contemporary art generally includes the art works from 1970 until today. But it means not only the art works which were dated in past but also means the unusual art works in appearance, production and ideas. It began to deal with sociopolitical, economic, moral and cultural issues in instead of traditional themes. And most of contemporary artists care about the idea and philosophy on their works not cares how the art work looks. Of course the art has always been interested in social themes but with contemporary art this relevance has been more than ever before. These points also can be explained in other way with Kagan's explanations: "The ability of the art to undergo changes can make it possible for a great variety of different art forms to exist" (Kagan,2008:275). And also Kagan says that the art has functions such as illuminating and constructive function, educational function and cultural function (Kagan, 2008:441-451). So the themes of art are in connection with people and society directly or indirectly.

So art works from 1970s until today has been taken into consideration in the context of the title in this chapter. And the representation of gender in contemporary arts has been examined in different sub-lines according to the sub-titles of the term of gender.

Gender discrimination can be considered as the first gender issue and the representation of body in art can be examined under this point because of its relationship with being woman or man. Woman was one of the main subject matter of art in the past and it was mostly represented by nude figures. And the most popular discourse belongs to Berger about the term nude. In his book 'Ways of Seeing' in 1972 he said that being naked is to be yourself. But being nude is to be seen naked by others. And it must be seen as an object to be the nude of the naked body. Naked body reveals itself as it is, but nudity is displayed to be watched (Berger, 2008: 54). If we look at the art history we can see many artworks about nude, according to the Berger 'woman as an object'. So this point can be explained with the term gender discrimination over the woman body. Because in those art works we cannot see 'man as an object'. But in the frame of modern art we can see some differences about the representation of woman body in art. For example, 'Olympia' by Edouard Manet in 1863 which Manet

based the composition of this painting on The Venus of Urbino, by Titan (Picture 4), may be the first protest about nudity. This work is also nude artwork but at the underlines it carries different messages. As Berger said "if we compare Manet's Olympia with Titan's, we see the woman opposes her place where she was sited the traditionally, with a certain uprising" (Berger, 2008: 63). The position of her head shows that as seen at picture 5.



Picture 4 (left). Venus of Urbino, Titan, 1538 <http://www.uffizi.org/img/artworks/tiziano-venere-urbino.jpg> (30.08.2017)

Picture 5 (right). Olympia by Edouard Manet, 1863. <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/courses/rschwarz/hist255-s01/courtesans/olympia.jpg> (30.08.2017)

Also in the frame of modern art Tamara De Lempicka's art is important because of the representation of modern woman. Especially Tamara's iconic painting 'Self-Portrait in the Green Bugatti' in 1929 which represents woman who is equal to a man in a social context and who is strong and free. This painting also had come to the agenda during 1970s with feminism. And in 1989 with 'Guerrilla Girls' the big reaction about representation of woman in art over body started distinctly and it was quite a sound. That poster criticized the representation of woman in art with this slogan 'Do women have to be naked to get into the Met. Museum?' (Picture 6). This work criticized the gender discrimination in two ways: first is about the number of woman artist and the second is about the naked figures of woman. Since their inception in 1984 the Guerrilla Girls have been working to expose sexual and racial discrimination in the art world, particularly in New York, and in the wider cultural arena. The group's members protect their identities by wearing gorilla masks in public and by assuming pseudonyms taken from such deceased famous female figures as the writer Gertrude Stein (1874-1946) and the artist Frida Kahlo (1907-54). The Guerrilla Girls wanted to change some points around the art environment such as; biology is fate (which belongs to Freud), there is no great woman artist, emotional and intuitive is a man, at Palladium only men's work can be exhibited, when they were invited to the Palladium to organize an exhibition by feminist art critic Lucy Lippard (Wither, 1988: 286).



Picture 6. [http://www.tate.org.uk/art/images/work/PIP78/P78793\\_10.jpg](http://www.tate.org.uk/art/images/work/PIP78/P78793_10.jpg) (1.9.2017)

Another graphical expression about the gender roles is belongs to Barbara Kruger. Gender roles mean that is a group of gender-related anticipations that the community has defined and expects the individuals to fulfill (Dökmen, 2009:29). In her work named 'We don't need another hero' (1986) a girl admired and leaned to a small boy who had a weak. And this work queries the implicit gender roles of image in the context of structuring of cultural representations (Whitham and Pooke, 2013:210) because the society mostly gives gender roles to the children during their childhoods and these roles mostly gives the power to the boys.

Cindy Sherman also criticized the statue, roles and representation of woman through her artworks. At the end of the 1970s, Cindy Sherman exhibited series of small, 8 "x 10" cm photos named 'Untitled Film Stills' in New York, Artists Space. In that series, she was changing from one scene to another without being recognized by changing her makeup, hair style like a chameleon (Picture 7).

Cindy Sherman's *Untitled Film Stills* is a suite of 70 black-and-white photographs made over the course of three years in which the artist posed in the guises of various generic female film characters, among them, ingénue, working girl, vamp, and lonely housewife. Staged to resemble scenes from 1950s and 60s Hollywood, film noir, B movies, and European art-house films, the printed images mimic in format, scale, and quality the often-staged "stills" used to promote films. By photographing herself in such roles, Sherman inserts herself into a dialogue about stereotypical portrayals of women. And each photo frame looked as portrayed scenes of Hollywood melodramas. And the real woman hid herself behind the scenes and could not be caught. At this photos Sherman not only criticizes the forces that direct women to behave in a way that has received public approval but also tries to reverse the gaze of the man who watches the woman as an object (Freeland, 2001:136-138).



Picture 7. Cindy Sherman's iconic stills <http://d3ao8sz5crj5i0.cloudfront.net/01-cindy-sherman.jpg> (1.9.2017)

Sherman's philosophy in this artwork series also can be supported with Mulvey's explanation that in films is a structure which functions on an axis of passive/active with the man always on the active gazing side and the woman on the passive "to-be-looked-at-ness" side. This is done in two completing manners, with both the male figure within the duergis and the camera looking at the woman and directing the viewer's objectifying gaze. In plain words, the woman in films in meant to be looked at (Mulvey, 2003).

The body is one of the most important points about gender in art. And also the criticism about the representation of woman has quite changed in contemporary arts especially with the changing atmosphere of art with new art types such as performance art which depends on human body.

Violence against women was also represented by performance art in the frame of gender theme. For example Japanese and American artist Yoko Ono who was John Lennon's wife, debuted 'Cut Piece' in Kyoto, in 1964 (Picture 8) and has since reprised it in Tokyo, New York, London, and, most recently, Paris in 2003. The artist sat alone on a stage, dressed in her best suit, with a pair of scissors in front of her. The audience had been instructed that they could take turns approaching her and use the scissors to cut off a small piece of her clothing, which was theirs to keep. Some people approached hesitantly, cutting a small square of fabric from her sleeve or the hem of her skirt. Others came boldly, snipping away the front of her blouse or the straps of her bra. Ono remained motionless and expressionless throughout, until, at her discretion, the performance ended. In reflecting upon the experience recently, the artist said: "When I do the Cut Piece, I get into a trance, and so I don't feel too frightened.... We usually give something with a purpose... but I wanted to see what they would take...."<sup>1</sup>

Also Gina Pane (1939-1990) who is a French artist of Italian origins working in installation and performance. Gina Pane is best known as one of the few female body artists of the 1970s to use her body in her work in extreme ways, including self-inflicted injuries. In the tape *Psyche* in 1974 (in some texts it is referred to as *Psyché*), Pane is inspecting herself in a large mirror (a *psyché*), and is using make-up to draw an image of her face on that mirror. With a razor blade, she cuts herself just below her eyebrows. Then she goes and stands against a grid, holding a bunch of downy feathers in her hands. With the razor blade, she cuts across in the skin around her navel. Between these acts of self-mutilation, she plays with tennis balls, licks her breasts and caresses her body with the feathers. However, these moments never last long. Ritual torture always plays the lead in this ceremony of cleansing. In *Psyche*, the artist proves herself to be as vulnerable as the mythological King's daughter with her butterfly wings.

Another important female artist is Marina Abramović who performed her art *Rhythm 0* in 1974. The artist allowed the viewers for intervening with some tools to her during the performance. And also some of the tools were cutting tools. The work was remade for exhibition purposes in 2009 as part of the Abramović's retrospective exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art,

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<sup>1</sup> Yoko Ono quoted in MoMA Audio+ Guide, <https://www.moma.org/explore/multimedia/audios/406/7254>.

New York. In these performances, the violence that women apply to their bodies is the metaphor of social pressure and violence that women are exposed to (Antmen, 2014:177). And Suzi Gablik who is an art theorist, argues that the performers who uses violence and self-injurious during their performance with high-risk dimension have mirrored the general insensitivity of the social structure (Gablik, 1984:48).



Picture 8. Cut Piece, Yoko Ono, <http://www.artversed.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Yoko-Ono-Cut-Piece-1965.jpg> (1.9.2017)

In other representation of woman in the context of gender can be seen at Shirin Neshat's work called 'Rebellious Silence' which depends on photograph and video art (Picture 9). In the series "Women of Allah" (1993-1997) the contrast between the calligraphic text on women's bodies and the prohibition on speech is often suggested by titles. In "Speechless" the barrel of a gun peeps out from between a head-cloth and a woman's beautiful face laced with calligraphy, and in "Rebellious Silence" the cold steel of a weapon parts a woman's face and dark body into light and shade. The clothing and weapons suggest both women's defense of Allah in the revolution, and their defense of privacy and chastity in daily life. In these images there is a clear but ambiguous contrast between defense and attack, secrecy and exposure, eroticism and aggression. The range of imagery is kept within the cultural, religious and social codices of Islamic society, so Shirin Neshat is entitled to claim to have opened "a pictorial discourse between feminism and contemporary Islam", though "not as an expert" but as a images "passionate researcher" (Müller,2003).



Picture 9. Rebellious Silence, Shirin Neshat,

<https://kaperseusimages.s3.amazonaws.com/106da1496a448c8b8563ff5d9a26eb419eb1e3d0.jpg> (1. 7. 2017)

In the frame of gender another sub-line is stereotypes. A stereotype is "...a fixed, over generalized belief about a particular group or class of people" (Cardwell, 1996). Researchers have found that stereotypes exist of different races, cultures or ethnic groups and cannot change immediately or easily. And gender stereotypes also depend on social factors and cultural environment. The society has some rules about how man should be look or how woman must behave as woman. This point also has been voiced by the artist in contemporary art because contemporary art provides a favorable environment for gender inquiries. Of course the samples have given above also reflect stereotypes, too. But another side of gender which generally depends on sexual identity is mostly finding its place in contemporary art in the frame of stereotypes. With new approaches and new ideas of artist stereotypes have been started to collapse especially with queers. But Foucault's work has a strong influence on any postmodernist criticism and also in the activity of activist artists.

About queer Abrams says (1999: 255) "A central text is the first volume of Michel Foucault's History of Sexuality (1976), which claims that, while there had long been a social category of sodomy as a transgressive human act, the "homosexual," as a special type of human subject or identity, was a construction of the medical and legal discourse of the latter nineteenth century. In a further development of constructionist theory, Judith Butler, in Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (1990), described the categories of gender and of sexuality as performative, in the sense that the features which a cultural discourse institutes as masculine or feminine, heterosexual or homosexual, it also makes happen, by establishing an identity that the socialized individual assimilates and the patterns of behavior that he or she enacts".

Butler argues that we all put on a gender performance, whether traditional or not, anyway, and so it is not a question of whether to do a gender performance, but what form that performance will take. By choosing to be different about it, we might work to change gender norms and the binary understanding of masculinity and femininity. This idea of identity as free-floating, as not connected to an 'essence', but instead a performance, is one of the key ideas in queer theory (Gauntlett ,1998).

If we look at artworks in contemporary arts we can see many examples in these frames. And the collapse of stereotypes in art can be explained with Derrida's theory; Deconstructionism (or sometimes just Deconstruction) which is initiated by Jacques Derrida in the 1960s. It is a theory of literary criticism that questions traditional assumptions about certainty, identity, and truth; asserts that words can only refer to other words; and attempts to demonstrate how statements about any text subvert their own meanings. Also in Derrida's the postmodern theory of identity and subject that can no longer be mentioned a fixed feature, "It may be possible to discredit the masculine and feminine antagonisms of the gender in the postmodern era and thus to remove the hierarchies and the alienation from the scene" (Esayan, 2002).

For example the photographer Diane Arbus has photographed the daily life scenes of prostitutes, transvestites, mentally retarded subjects, and other alienated identities, usually left out of social life in America. This photograph (Picture 10) reflects Arbus's interest in gender and identity. This young man, photographed by Diane Arbus, looks at the objectives with a feminine expression with the curlers, the removed eyebrows and the painted fingernails, while the other side still preserves the appearance of masculine. This portrait can be explained with deconstruction of gender and identity because of unusual look for a man. This young man trapped between what societies expects from his body and what his body wants to present. By this scene society can be sent to rethink about different identities and also all known truths can be rethought.



Picture 10. A young man in curlers at home on West 20th Street, N.Y.C. , Diane Arbus, 1966 <http://ilovetalent.net/post/53507051465/this-friday-we-have-decided-to-look-into-the-work> (1.7.2017)

Olympia' by Edouard Manet in 1863 which Manet based the composition of this painting on The Venus of Urbino, by Titian, is reinterpreted by Yasumasa Morimura in 1988 (Picture 11) in the frame of contemporary art and also in the basis of Deconstructionism. Gender identity is important theme of Portrait (Futago). In western painting, female nude is a traditional genre. It was a master genre of the official French salons of the nineteenth century. When we look at the artwork we can notice the sexual identity of the object in the composition has changed. He presented the male body as a feminine indicator on a cover made of Japanese motifs. a male body which is with heeled slippers, hair, make-up and other accessories, is looking at the viewers with passive posture and inviting look. In this work, Morimura reverses codes known in both cultural and gender contexts. And his work leads to the reflection of the Japanese artists' role under the western influence and the gender identity. Despite their hair and muscular structure, the stretched naked body has accepted that it is feminine with a known Venus posing, and has embraced an inviting female posing as it was in Manet's Olympia. Manet deconstructed the classic Venus interpretation with Olympia in 1863 and Morimura after a hundred years passed, reinterpreted by adding the perception of homosexuality. This situation takes the viewer back to the Renaissance period and moves all the images and



indications of the body in the subconscious. "The placement of Morimura as a woman destabilizes the notion of fixed, binary gender roles of male and female that is prevalent in existing culture, and instead constructs a new, more elastic gender identity, where stereotypes of male and female are subverted" (Roca, 2006). Morimura's artwork also can be explained with Barthes's theory that is the most eloquent theorist of intertextuality and always attacked the notions of stable meaning and unquestionable truth. Barthes says that all works of art are created by consciousness and unconscious references with other artworks in Intertextuality theory (Whitham and Pooke, 2013:82). According to this approach Morimura's Futago has been created consciousness to other Venus' for drawing attention to the gender issue.

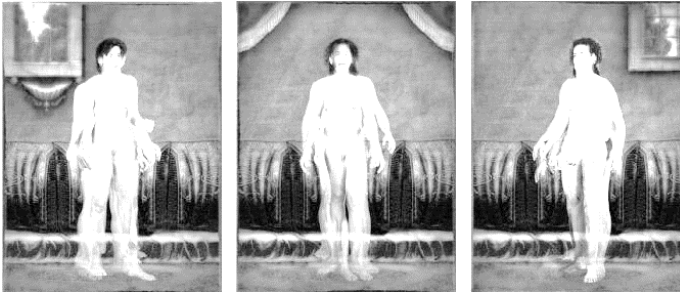


Picture 11. Portrait (Futago), Yasumasa Morimura, 1988. <http://ge1110-contemporary.blogspot.com.tr/2013/03/yasumasa-morimura-portrait-futago-1988.html> (2.9.2017)

Within each person, masculine and feminine features are found in different quantities. The masculine and feminine qualities within the bodies are transforming in the process according to Lacan and Deleuze. This transformation is reflected from outside the body as images and emotional behaviors. These reflections are mostly in the fight against heterosexual oppression, divided into two categories as gender categories, male and female. While sexual identity is simply divided into masculine and feminine according to the heterosexual cultural system, it comes in divisible in Lacan's subliminal theory. If the ban imposed within the social system creates division by Lacan's expression, the inner bisexuality that resists this division in the spiritual arena (Butler, 2012: 81-118). Deleuze who is a key figure in postmodern French philosophy, allows us to rethink the gender issue, similar to Lacan and Derrida's approach. According to Deleuze's theory, the body is a constant, constantly changing entity that is affected by society and affects society. Sometimes it can melt or glorify certain properties in itself (Işık, 1998: 117). According to Braidotti, who embraced the Deleuze philosophy, it should be the basis on which the individual wants to be rather than what is expected. These theories about how sexual identity can be transformed in a process can be visualized in the works of Teiji Furuhashi and Ahmet Elhan.

'Lovers' is a room-size installation by Furuhashi, a young artist from Kyoto. Full-scale images of five members of the Japanese performance collective Dumb Type (including the artist himself) fills four walls of a dark room. Motion detectors trigger some of the nude dancers' movements: strutting, running, embracing, separating, and posing with arms outstretched. Their bodies are at once wraiths, made insubstantial by technology, and corporeal, aching with feeling. Through his messages, Furuhashi is generally opposed to gender oppression and obligatory heterosexuality. Furuhashi died of complications from AIDS like Foucault's death from AIDS in 1984, shortly after "Lovers" debuted. He was thirty-five. This restoration is a landmark in the history of new-media art, and an epitaph for an artist who died far too young.

Ahmet Elhan brings different cultures and gender identities with nude bodies as a sculpture which is a universal symbol of antiquity heritage. Elhan puts bodies with different sexual identities on top of each other and intervenes, takes the transformation of the process individual into himself in his exhibition called 'Ink/composed' (Antmen, 2014: 70-71). Ahmet Elhan explores the boundaries of photography through experiments and studies the human body and plays with gender in his works of art. In his exhibition, Ink, Elhan carries the temporal wholeness, which he had previously created in the space axis, with the heterosexual hermaphrodite figurines. While the works at the exhibition are posing over the female and masculine body, they are investigating the new questions about movement and stability (Picture 12).

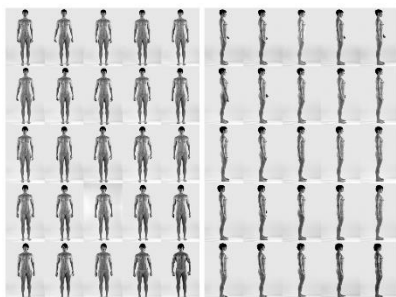


Picture 12. "Mürekkep I" Ahmet Elhan, 2013. <http://zilbermangallery.com/murekkep-e116-tr.htm> (2.9.2017)

There are also transgender artists who are changing the landscape of contemporary art. Transgender is a term that includes the many ways that people's gender identities can be different from the sex they were assigned at birth. There are a lot of different terms transgender people use to describe themselves. For example, sometimes the word transgender is shortened to just trans, trans, or trans male/trans female (Dökmen, 2016:25-26-27-28). Transgender people express their gender identities in many different ways. Some people use their dress, behavior, and mannerisms to live as the gender that feels right for them. Some people take hormones and may have surgery to change their body so it matches their gender identity. Some transgender people reject the traditional understanding of gender as divided between just "male" and "female," so they identify just as transgender, or genderqueer, genderfluid, or something else.

"Working in an array of artistic media including photography, video, sculpture, classical music and the spoken word, transgender artists are sharing their stories and experiences, their trauma and hope, their pasts and futures — on their own terms. Whether defining themselves as transgender, gender variant, transfeminine or gender failure, the following artists challenge our current understandings of identity while paving the way for a more aware and accepting future. With skill, bravery, humor and passion, the following artists interpret transgender life in radically different ways, revealing the infinitely multifaceted reality of the trans experience" (Frank, 2014).

One of them is Heather Cassils who is Canadian artist based in Los Angeles. While some view transgender identity as crossing from one gender to another, Cassils breaks down binaries to create a vision of continuous — and sometimes slippery — becoming. "Our bodies are sculptures formed by society's expectations...My body is my medium," says Heather Cassils, who uses art to explore gender in non-binary terms. Approaching transexuality as a continuum rather than a process of transition with an end point, he combines the artistic traditions of documentation and performance with his own bodybuilding practice. In the work 'Cuts: A Traditional Sculpture', Cassils revisits Eleanor Antin's landmark work of feminist art, 'Carving: A Traditional Sculpture'. Cassil's work upends Antin's quest for physical perfection by focusing on the quest to gain mass rather than lose it. Unlike the feminine act of weight loss in Antin's performance, Cassils's performance involves a transformation into a traditionally masculine muscular form (Picture 13).



Picture 13. 'Cuts: A Traditional Sculpture', Cassils, 2011-2013

<http://cassils.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/17heathercassils2011cutsatraditionalsculpturetimelapsefrontright-w-e1406233594208.jpg>

Yishay Garbasz is a Berlin-based artist and photographer whose diverse body of work displays a fortuitous congruity. Often, her subject matter is trauma and its intergenerational inheritance, through which bodily and embodied sites of conflict and memory loom large. In the case of her 2010 tour-de-force, 'Becoming', which chronicled changes in her body over the course of her gender affirmation surgery, she created a human-scale zoetrope to exhibit the work (Picture 14). Garbasz, who is transgender, previously explored issues of identity during her sexual reassignment surgery, documenting her body in the process. Garbasz says about her 2010 piece 'Becoming' "The piece looks at the viewers' reactions in a way. In the beginning most people look at the genitals—yes, no—but then they continue to look. The most interesting part about the piece is the hair. There are two versions of the work: the zoetrope, which when it was installed was the second biggest in the world, and the flip-book version. Even in the flip-book, the hair is really what interests' people. The genitals occupy so little of the body in terms of percentage, and the legs and arms don't change. I'm the same person that I always was. To put it more clearly: I'm the same woman I always was. I wanted to bring that to light because the before-after trope is boring and clichéd, contrary to what hundreds of CIS photographers would have you believe. I wanted to create something more real, and not about before and after" (Hugill, 2016).



Picture 14. Yishay Garbasz, *Becoming*, 2010, Installation of becoming at the Busan biennale // Copyright Yishay Garbasz, Courtesy Ronald Feldman Fine Art New York <http://www.berlinartlink.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/berlinartlink-yishaygarbasz-becoming-new1.1-590x393.jpg> (2.9.2017)

## Conclusion

In this paper, the way of expression of the concept of gender in contemporary art has been researched. The art is an important way of communicating collective messages through the artists and their work. In the 20th century, and especially since the second half of the century, the content of art is as important as the aesthetic appreciation and this point can be seen at the art practices which multidisciplinary approaches get to the forefront. This content was sometimes emphasized as Teiji Furuhashi's installation and performance work, 'Lovers' which opposition to gender repression, that controlled by computer and incorporating audiences into moving pictures and sounds. An indirect duel was expressed, as in the work of Ahmed Elhan, 'Ink', which can be explained by some identity theories the social content in the artwork has sometimes turned into a meaningful interpretation by iconographical analysis, as in Shirin Neshat's works on gender and power. This research has also showed that the postmodern age has become very important issue for vocalizing the term gender by society and artists. The concept of gender has been explained in several times during the modern and postmodern age and it made possible to talk about it or to represent it by art. The studies on gender issues by psychology, sociology and philosophy have allowed contemporary artists to move to this subject in their works of art. And also these investigations have given a change for transgender artist about feeling free to invoice their hopes and ideas on the stage of contemporary arts. In fact as Kagan's says that the art has a social function. The art must give different perspective to the society because making easier to perceive some different situations, thinks and ideas.

And as a result; when we look at 'The Venus' which are in pictures 4-5-11, it tells us that the concept of gender has found its place in contemporary arts with its changing looks.

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