

## **REVIEW REPORT**

This is the review of the doctoral thesis written by Dilay Koçoğulları under the supervision of Associate Professor Przemek Pintał, Ph.D. presented to the Doctoral School of The Eugeniusz Geppert Academy of Art and Design in Wrocław, Poland.

## **COMMENTS ON STRUCTURE**

### **The title**

Responses of the Body: Under Different Social Structures

The title is quite attractive and covers the framework in which the author has been working but still leaves a space of mystery and it reaches its full embodiment once the whole process is experienced by the reader/viewer. Although it may vaguely echo the Bio-Art practice, it still attracts attention.

### **Introduction**

The author starts with the justification of her extensive use of scientific methods in her artistic productions, such as working with living organisms, gene technology, etc. The observation about the artists' studios turning into scientific laboratories shed light on the practices of contemporary artists.

In the second paragraph, she clarifies that she has chosen women as the working environment whereby the living organisms become agents, and their effects (both physical and psychological) are the focus of the research to be discussed from the critical point of view, bringing social structure into the field of discussion.

In the third paragraph, she explains her main motive as the position of women in society, but in her case, she predetermines the society as "patriarchal." Having chosen quite an original and indirect but also very critical approach to the position of women in a patriarchal society, she has put herself into a perilous but also promising path for an artistic creation process. The parallelism she has established with men and the microbes is quite challenging and striking, but she could have waited to declare it in conclusion.

The questions she raises are essential but also down to the point. Significantly extending her questions to the effect of the microbes on a migrated body is quite an intelligent and creative way of approaching the recent dynamics of the world, such as migration.

In the last paragraph (Research Questions), she promises not an induction but a series of individual stories. This is quite valuable since many tend to deduce all those stories into a whole, devaluating each case's individuality.

## **Chapter I: Process of the Project with a Focus on Unexpected Changes in the Body**

Pages (10-13) dedicated to personal experiences may look awkward at the beginning but provides the reader a background of her approach as well as her artistic creativity turning this ordinary (in the sense of being an experience suffered by any individual) process into an artistic creation to communicate, which has the potential of leading the viewer to reflect her/his own experiences.

### **1.1. Theoretical Background**

Even one can feel the feminist approach from the first page, in this chapter, the author discusses the issue.

She puts forward the use of different materials (primarily biological material) in artistic practices and justifies her methodology (p. 16).

She discusses the concepts of feminism, cyberfeminism, bio-art, and post-human via Donna Haraway, Megan Smitley, Marietta Radomska, Rosi Braidotti, and Eduardo Kac (p. 15-18).

In the last paragraph of this chapter (p. 18) the author explains her methodology whereby she declares the fields she has worked on as "the behavior of organisms (biology); psychological effects (psychology); and different social structures (feminist studies)."

### **1.2. Inspirations**

The author mentions Heather Dewey-Hagborg, Anna Dumitriu, Johanna Rotko, Teresa Murak, Stephen Wilson, and Ken Rinaldo as artists given her inspiration. While explaining the artists and some of their works briefly, she also underlines the reason behind thus clarifying the point of inspiration.

### **1.3. Interviews**

The author shares two interviews she had made with two women who wrote in the Glass Book. It could have been interesting to read the interviews of the other participants as well.

### **1.4. Completed Project as a Biological Laboratory Experiment**

This is a collaborative project with another artist (Ali Kanal). As stated, it "focuses on a specific place and investigates the biodiversity of that region, and it aims to open new areas of exploration by following the traces of the biome." Although the approach is similar to her doctoral project from the technical point of view, the final statement on post-humanism brings (so-called) the superiority of the human species into the discussion.

## **Chapter II: Analysis of Doctoral Project Installations and Documentation of the selection of doctoral works**

In this chapter, the author describes and explains the exhibition she has prepared for the doctoral project, which consists of three parts.

The interrelation between the physicality and the concept(s) is well thought out and executed. As described by the author, the process is quite long that needs to be done with great care as (if) they were scientific experiments. They are visual outcomes of experiments whereby living organisms have become agents of the personal stories of participating individuals.

The contrast between the first two parts of the exhibition (the Glass Book and Photos Installation) and The Object Installation, in which the author used paraffin as a metaphorical element for preserving the memory, is quite attractive.

Since she exhibited her project in Izmir, I could see and experience her tri-partite installation. She has chosen a neat way of arranging the exhibition, providing the visitor with enough but limited information to let them create an individual connection leading to self-reflection. In The Glass Book, you do not read the texts. However, those typographical elements turning into a container of living organisms of the authors are valid for hundreds of pages of biographies.

The Photos Installation can be taken as the complement of the Glass Book where those women come to the point of contact with the viewer. At the same time, the germination process puts those women's physical existence into a reality but still behind the veils. Those recent bodily fluids working on (and with) the visual memories of the past become a strong advocate for the elusive nature of time. However, this elusiveness of the time was balanced with the third installation (The Object Installation) in which she used solid items resembling the memory.

### **Summary**

This chapter is the conclusion and the self-reflection of the author. The text explains her personal journey (the questions she raised, the methodology, and the execution). The text also promises further research and creation.

### **FINAL EVALUATION**

The concept of the doctoral project is well thought and executed. As it puts women in the center, the exhibition concept deals with feminism, patriarchal society and its influence on women, and immigration. The originality lying under the exhibition is how individual stories are presented by using bodily fluids as agents.

Although there are six women taken as the subject matter of the exhibition, they become the generic representative of their own experience, reflecting those who have gone through the same; thus, the message becomes inductive.

Her education in biology explains her deep interest in living organisms and her excellent command of the material she has been working on for her artistic creations. By selecting those organisms to work with, she makes the viewer aware of a microscopic cosmos with which the human species share life on earth. What attracts me the most in her works is that she touches on the most discussed topics of the social life of the human species by very cleverly involving the indirect(but also direct) agents affecting the life of the individuals.

Her portfolio indicates to an active production phase that she managed to handle within the global limitations of Covid-19 pandemic.

As conclusion, I am confident to say that Ms. Dilay Kooğulları has fulfilled the requirements of the Doctoral School of The Eugeniusz Geppert Academy of Art and Design in Wrocław, and she has achieved to form a remarkable doctoral project. Being experienced in the didactic field of art education as well, she has the potential to both be on the creative side and touch the lives of the younger generation of artists.

I turn to the Council of the Art Discipline of the Eugeniusz Geppert Academy of Art & Design in Wrocław to confer on Ms. Dilay Kooğulları the degree of Doctor in the field of art in the discipline of fine arts and art conservation



Assist. Prof. Mehmet Kahyaoglu  
Art Historian, Ph.D.  
Yaşar University, Izmir, Turkey