


only to appreciate these well-honed instruments, but to give them a much more central place in scholarly engagement. As her many vignettes make absolutely evident, not only are there many questions that remain about how they function and flex over time, but far from being stuffy, obscurantist tongues, these mistress languages are full of surprises that shed abundant new light on the literary, intellectual, and cultural history of the Middle Ages in general.

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Metrics of Modernity: Art and Development in Postwar Turkey. Sarah-Neel Smith (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2022). Pp. 216. \$50.00 cloth. ISBN: 9780520383418

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Since its conception in 1937, Istanbul Museum of Painting and Sculpture has reflected the political, art historical, and economic structures of its time. Following years of preservation hazards, decades-long closures, and management crises, the museum has recently opened to the public once again. With its politicized and recently gentrified physical location in the historically commercial neighborhood of Karaköy, numerous restoration and conservation issues around its vast and poorly maintained collection, and the gaps its absence leaves in the art history of Turkey, the museum embodies many issues at the heart of Sarah-Neel Smith's *Metrics of Modernity: Art and Development in Postwar Turkey*, which serves as the subject of the book's epilogue. The museum's current and "semiperipheral" status is positioned as a question of Turkey's artistic futurity, as the author traces the convoluted patterns of Turkey's art scene in the mid-twentieth century over the course of four chapters. The convergence of economic, artistic, and political spheres, namely, the country's fragile economic market, its transition into a multiparty democracy, and artistic experimentation with tradition, means that Smith is also largely telling a story of obsolescence. Indeed, Smith chooses to thematize places that have ceased to exist today or have taken on new, often diminished, forms. The intersections of state control, ownership, and private enterprise are at the center of contemporary political discourse, and their centrality to *Metrics of Modernity* adds a significant contribution to modern and contemporary Turkish art history. Importantly, Smith demonstrates how mid-twentieth-century Turkey's contested political and economic past translates to its art institutional models, a connection that has often remained overlooked in contemporary scholarship.

Smith primarily focuses on the socioeconomic modernization and artistic modernisms of Turkey in the 1950s. This decade in Turkey's political and economic history marks the country's integration into an American-instigated capitalist free market, shifting from state-driven economic policies to private enterprise and the rise of individual consumption, which are what Smith deems the "metrics" of modernity. Drawing on a wide array of sources, from close readings of artworks and art criticism to theories of public policy and economics, Smith analyzes the modes of artistic production and consumption in Turkey. The main protagonists of the book, Adalet Cimcöz, Bülent Ecevit, Aliye Berger, and Füreya Koral, appear almost in every chapter, articulating an interwoven narrative on the confined institutional networks and shared missions ascribed to the artists of postwar Turkey. Artists



were treated as active agents of development, responsible for not only representing but fostering economic advancement. They “pursued interlinked questions of art and development in line with the priorities of the midcentury era, driven by a new and pressing question: How were they to continue developing the Turkish cultural sphere as their country repositioned itself in the international political landscape of the postwar period?” (p. 22).

The newly burgeoning private art institutions and events in the mid-twentieth century find a parallel, even connected, counterpart in Turkey’s economic experimentation. The founding of one of the earliest private art galleries of Istanbul, Gallery Maya, by artist and socialite Adalet Cimcöz, is the subject of Chapter 1. Maya challenged the state-sanctioned models of supporting the arts, which controlled exhibition models, content, and venues, and was the dominant mode of the early Republican period. Cimcöz’s pedagogical mission in educating the public about how to consume art and opening up space for artists to exhibit and sell their works outside of state-run facilities highlights new formations in the art world that were made possible by the newly formed economic agenda of privatization. Smith conceptualizes the status of Maya as “semiperipheral” to address its unique institutional framework: a space suspended between the centers of power and economic development, and the ones that are completely excluded from these networks. The artistic and curatorial practices that emerged from this liminal space act as a ground to describe power relations that dominated the art scene at the time.

Chapter 2 traces how artists would be instrumentalized in the process of economic and social growth. The protagonist of the chapter, Bülent Ecevit, was an influential figure during the 1950s as an art critic, cultural elite, gallery owner and, later, a prominent political leader. Ecevit founded Helikon Association Gallery (1953) in Ankara to realize his cultural democratization projects, namely, Turkey’s ongoing negotiations to enter NATO (p. 87). Within global art communities of the mid-twentieth century, abstract art, through a US-backed political agenda, became a symbol of individualism, capitalism, and free expression. Ecevit’s US-based political aspirations reveal themselves in promoting the genre as a unified symbol for cultural advancement in all democracies (p. 90).

Abstraction as a sign of development became most evident in a painting competition organized by Yapi Kredi Bankası, a privately owned bank, in Istanbul. The premise of the “Developing Turkey” competition (1954), at the center of Smith’s third chapter, questioned how to represent a national landscape transformed by industrialization, labor, and production. Not only did the competition become one of the most scandalous and well-known events in Turkish art history, but Smith outlines how it was mired in discourses surrounding abstraction and figuration, democracy and statism, and nationalism and internationalism. Aliye Berger’s abstract painting won the competition against more figurative works by artists who were formative in the art scene and art education during the early years of the Republic, unsettling the authority of the Istanbul State Academy of Fine Arts. Smith diligently investigates the extensive archive of public debate on “Developing Turkey,” with public discourse overwhelmingly deeming Berger’s abstract work incapable of representing national development and labor. Through this heated debate on Berger’s win, Smith discusses the dramatic shifts in Turkey’s mid-twentieth-century art scene, and its contrast to academic traditions and artists of the early Republic.


Although Smith’s analysis revolves around theories of economic modernization, her application of close visual and material reading to the artworks is what truly shines in the text. This is perhaps best utilized in Chapter 4, where Smith discusses artist Füreyâ Koral’s international practice. Smith places Füreyâ’s discourses around art, craft, Turkish national development, and economic integration during the postwar years (p. 130). Further, the material qualities of Füreyâ’s work, with her expressionist ceramic panels and tile works, allow Smith to discuss the phenomenon of artist-craftsman, while locating her strategic role in navigating the tenuous relationship between the US and Turkey.

Despite the archival challenges and epistemological inconsistencies in the historiography of Turkish modernism, Smith builds a coherently woven and clear narrative around the

divergent moments of development in mid-twentieth-century Turkey's art scene. *Metrics of Modernity* will be influential for Turkish modern and contemporary art scholarship, as Smith offers a continuous history of art from the late Ottoman and early Republican to the modern and contemporary period rather than one that is based on ruptures. Smith's use of economic models as guides to reveal local institutional histories and their connection to international politics is particularly useful as the field finds itself increasingly called to globalize its narratives. Further, rendering artists as active agents in navigating this relationship, especially in instances of diminished or destroyed archives, serves as an exemplar for writing non-Western art histories, which can often be superseded by the complex power structures in which they are imbricated. Smith concludes by extending her discussion temporally to 2004, when the politically charged Istanbul Modern Museum opened under state, private, and corporate sponsorship. Istanbul Modern, especially in the absence of an official state museum, set out to expand Istanbul's political and economic significance on a global scale. *Metrics of Modernity* shows that the project of fostering economic modernity and political relevance through artists and art institutions in Turkey will continue to shape the art historical accounts of Turkish modernism until the present.

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The National Frame: Art and State Violence in Turkey and Germany. Banu Karaca (New York: Fordham University Press, 2021). Pp. 288. \$138.00 cloth, \$39.00 paper. ISBN: 9780823290215

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The scratch ticket distributed by Kamusal Sanat Laboratuvarı (KSL: Public Art Laboratory) during the opening ceremony of the Eleventh Istanbul Biennial (2011), called the *Untitled Letter (Biennial)*, had been and remained an intervention that, for me as a visual artist working in Istanbul, embodied the tensions inherent in the production, distribution, discussion, institutionalization, and often consequent instrumentalization of contemporary art in Turkey that I have referred to on numerous occasions over the last decade. Only through Banu Karaca's incisive contextualization of this work in Chapter 4 ("The Art of Forgetting") of *The National Frame: Art and State Violence in Turkey and Germany* was I able to comprehend the larger scaffolding for this work. The *Untitled Letter* is addressed by Vehbi Koç, founder of Koç Corporation, the sponsor of not only the Istanbul Biennial but also prominent art institutions including Arter and Mehşer, to the junta leader Kenan Evren in 1980, a few weeks after the violent military coup d'état. Koç's sympathy for Evren's cause seeps into the letter, which ends with the line "I am at your service." Previously, I had interpreted this artistic gesture as a poignant, critical appropriation of a historical document that has previously not been widely distributed, problematizing how art is funded. Through Karaca's transformative scholarship, I now see it as a symptom of a crisis of culture and cultural policy, often fraught with the entanglements of structures that support, promote, construct, and sustain frameworks of art.

Karaca situates her book around two main questions, from which she explores a myriad of cultural practices, historical contexts, and social textures. Firstly, if the imperial forms of Turkey and Germany are considered to be parallel, how are the results of these formations so different from each other? And the second is, how do these environments shape the