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Evaluation of exhibition space design within the scope of art museums in North Cyprus

Kuzey Kıbrıs'taki Sanat Müzeleri Kapsamında Sergi Alanı Tasarımının Değerlendirilmesi

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Abstract

In the recent decades, educational institutions have played a role in fostering artistic production in Northern Cyprus since 1974. An illustration of this contribution is the Günsel Art Museum, established within the Near East University. This museum has not only served as a venue for art exhibitions but has also played a crucial role in promoting the creation and appreciation of art in the region. The research was conducted through a comprehensive case study, with a specific focus on the Günsel Art Museum. The results of the study reveal a positive influence of the museum on artistic production in North Cyprus. It has provided a platform for local artists to showcase their works and implemented educational programs that have introduced young individuals to the world of art. This article aims to explore the artworks and exhibition spaces in the NC post-1974, emphasizing the contributions of educational institutions established in NC during that period to artistic endeavors.

Key Words: Exhibition, Space, Design, Museum, Art.

Introduction

In the historical process, artistic content, socio-political factors, and changing technological developments have changed, and the adaptation of exhibition spaces to this has also changed in parallel with the historical process.

The word "exhibition" in the Turkish Language Institution dictionary is defined as "a collection of things arranged for the viewer to see and choose, and the place where these objects are displayed," "products and artworks arranged in a


Özet

Son on yılda, eğitim kurumları 1974'ten bu yana Kuzey Kıbrıs'ta sanatsal üretimin gelişmesinde bir rol oynamıştır. Bu katkının bir örneği, Yakın Doğu Üniversitesi bünyesinde kurulan Günsel Sanat Müzesi'dir. Bu müze, sadece sanat sergileri için bir mekân olarak hizmet vermekle kalmamış, aynı zamanda bölgede sanatın yaratılmasını ve takdir edilmesini teşvik etmede önemli bir rol oynamıştır. Araştırma, Günsel Sanat Müzesi'ne özel olarak odaklanarak kapsamlı bir durum çalışmasıyla yürütülmüştür. Araştırmanın sonuçları, müzenin Kuzey Kıbrıs'taki sanatsal üretim üzerinde olumlu bir etkisi olduğunu göstermektedir. Müze, yerel sanatçılara eserlerini sergileme olanağı sağlamış ve genç bireylere sanat dünyasını tanıtan eğitim programları uygulamıştır. Bu makale, 1974 sonrası Kuzey Kıbrıs'ta sanat eserleri ve sergi alanlarını keşfetmeyi amaçlamaktadır ve bu dönemde Kuzey Kıbrıs'ta kurulan eğitim kurumlarının sanatsal çabalarına vurgu yapmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sergi, Alan, Tasarım, Müze, Sanat.

suitable way for the public to see and get to know," and "a place where the specific agricultural, industrial, etc., products of a place, a country, or various countries are exhibited to promote them in an appropriate way" (NND, 2023).

In all three definitions, the need for "suitability" and "organization" that can prepare the ground for the viewers, or "spectator's," preference and mutual need for suitability and organization

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mentioned here is parallel to the creation of the right communication is emphasized. This atmosphere to understand/appreciate the content of artworks.

According to Çiğdem Demir, who asserts that this need for exhibition and its reasons stem from an instinctive impulse, defines exhibition as follows: "Exhibition is the act of showing, presenting, proposing, and revealing objects or works; Velarde answers these questions with 'having something to exhibit and a story to tell.' (Dernie 2006) states that exhibition is an activity inherent in human nature, pointing out that every individual's home is actually an exhibition area, and individuals exhibit objects to provide information about themselves, their lives, and their needs" (Demir, 2009).

In the historical process, artistic content, socio-political factors, and changing technological developments have changed, and the adaptation of exhibition spaces to this has also changed in parallel with the historical process. In this study the universal design principles will be used to evaluate the exhibition spaces.

Research Questions/ Hypothesis:

Within the objectives and goals of the study, the aim of the study is to examine developing and changing museum design history, modern approaches of space design principles, and analyse latest museum design example of Art Museum in North Nicosia through observation and to offer suggestions. Space design is not efficient itself to create full perception for viewers, but it should be considered in an

interdisciplinary approach. Hence, it is suggested to evaluate the design criterias as space design (including infographics), exhibition design and lighting design should be considered together. The following fundamental queries were addressed within the purview of this study:

1. What is the design principles that shapes contemporary museums?
2. How space design, exhibition design and lighting design should work together?
3. What are the latest applications/trends in North Cyprus on museology?

Literature Review

The historical process that began with the rise of religious spaces in Italy in the 15th century during the Renaissance, becoming important buildings that exhibit art, saw the first examples of exhibitions due to the interest of the new bourgeoisie, which emerged as a result of merchants setting out to explore new trade routes brought by the Renaissance, and their economic advancement over time. The collections acquired by noble families and their openness to the public, as well as the exhibitions organized during this process, can be counted as examples. In this sense, Palazzo Medici See Figure 1, built by the Medici family in Florence in the 1440s, can be considered the first modern museum in Europe. Following this, the exhibition space where Vasari organized the private collection of the Medici family at the Uffizi Palace's 2nd floor See Figure 2 can also be considered the first exhibition space in the historical process up to the present day (Çolak, 2011).



Figure 1. Palazzo Medici Exterior (Günel, 2016)



Figure 2. Palazzo Medici Interior (Tuscany, 2023).

In the 18th century, with the abandonment of monarchical regimes, royal palaces turned into exhibition spaces, and royal archives became exhibitions that filled these spaces or new spaces organized in this sense. The best examples of these are the Louvre Museum in France and the British Museum in England. The new way of life that started with the Industrial Revolution before the 20th century influenced art and, consequently, exhibition space designs. However, this approach before the 20th century was generally based on the principle of collecting, preserving, and exhibiting artworks in chronological order, and the priority of space design was not visible in these spaces. The “Salon de Refuse” exhibition See Figure 3, which showcases the artworks of rejected artists in a public exhibition with special permission, can be called alternative spaces that bring

artworks to the public independently, providing information about themselves, their lives, and their needs. (Demir, 2009) The understanding of modern art in the 20th century, unlike traditional art, requires a specific intellectual background, necessitating the correct alignment with the audience. Traditional art, being a product of shared common culture (religion, history, mythology, etc.), establishes easier communication with the audience, allowing it to be perceived by broader audiences. The first challenge faced by modern art in this context was the exhibition called the “Armory Show,” held in 1913 in America. This event marked the encounter of European art with the American audience, which did not yet possess the evolution and experience of European art, leading to the inevitable discomfort of American art observers with this new form of art.



Figure 3. Salon des Refusés (Refuses, 2023)

The situation that needs to be focused on from the planning stage to completion is to ensure proper communication with the audience and to create the desired atmosphere for the audience. There is no single formula for exhibition design types, and different solutions can be prepared in different situations (Kandemir, & Özlem, 2015). Therefore, considering the specific elements of exhibition spaces that will be selected for the works to be displayed before exhibitions and the exhibition types in these exhibition spaces are important for successful exhibition designs. Here, the need for exhibition design that accurately facilitates communication between the art work and the audience, ensuring the correct interpretation, becomes crucial for the audience of 20th-century art (Tokay, 2009). This need is directly proportional to the decrease in the audience capable of understanding the content provided by the artwork, which has led to a diminishing interest in art (Aybay, 2017).

The working on the planning and design of exhibition spaces, the following key points should be taken into account (Mace, 1997):

- Equitable Use
- Flexibility in Use
- Simple and Intuitive Use
- Perceptible Information
- Tolerance for Error
- Low Physical Effort
- Size and Space for Approach and Use.

Consequently, exhibition spaces and designs have undergone significant evolution throughout history, adapting to changes in artistic content, socio-political factors, and technological advancements. Successful exhibition design focuses on creating an environment that encourages communication between the artwork and the audience, enhances the visitor's understanding and appreciation of the works, and ensures the safety and preservation of the artworks (Goulding, 1999). Consideration of the specific elements of exhibition spaces and the planned types of exhibitions is essential for successful exhibition designs. In this study, space design/ exhibition design and lighting design of Günsel Art Museum will be evaluated according to universal design principles.

Methodology

This study consists of three stages. In the first stage of the method, a literature review was conducted regarding the historical development of the design of exhibition spaces and the concept of exhibition space. Within the scope of the

research, books, academic studies, projects, and articles on the subject were scanned. In this study seven aspects of universal design principles such as; 'equitable use', 'flexibility in use', 'simple and intuitive use', 'perceptible information', 'tolerance for error', 'low physical effort', and 'size and space for approach and use' was used to evaluate the exhibition spaces. Nicosia, the capital of the island of Cyprus, was chosen as the main scope of the study because it is a city where art is performed most intensely, where cultural and social density is high, and has art center/museum venues. Günsel Art Center in Nicosia and Dr. Küçük museum as first example of design planning in North Cyprus were examined. The analysis of these art centers was evaluated in the context of space design. In the second stage, space analysis was carried out in the context of space research based on the selected building mass to determine the current situation. During the analysis phase, the exhibition spaces on the plans of the selected art center/museum buildings were examined in the context of their current status determinations. In the last stage, observations were evaluated in the findings section of the study in order to determine the relationship between exhibition space designs and art designs.

Results and Discussion

Results

The history of Turkish Cypriot art, it is rooted in artists who completed their education abroad at the beginning of the 20th century. During the Ottoman period, there is no evidence of the existence of Turkish Cypriot artists through research. Towards the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, some Greek Cypriot artists attracted attention with their Impressionist-style works, including copies of Renaissance paintings during the British Colonial period. Turkish Cypriot artists emerged on the Cyprus art scene around the mid-20th century (İnatçı et al., 2005). However, the national aspirations of Greek Cypriots in the 1930s, who wanted to break free from British colonial rule, ignited events that would influence the social and cultural lives of both communities for more than half a century. The increasing pressure and policies imposed by Greek Cypriots on Turkish Cypriots after 1950 led to the foregrounding of the struggle for survival and existence in Turkish Cypriot art, philosophy, and intellectual development (Kaymak, & Faustmann, 2009). With the 1960 agreement, the two communities found their place in the modern world and became a rising value in the Eastern

Mediterranean. The presence of 25 museums and 24 cinemas and theaters in Varosha (Maras), which is currently uninhabited, is an example of cultural and artistic development. However, the tension between the two communities continued after the 1960 agreement and lasted until the 1974 peace operation, hindering the development of the Turkish Cypriot community in all areas. Examining Turkish Cypriot modern art, it can be said that artworks with aesthetic concerns have emerged in the last 30-35 years (İnatçı et al., 2005).

In addition, the universities established in the north of the island as a result of economic

policies after the declaration of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in 1983 paved the way for intellectual development. The support of academics working within the university has greatly contributed to the development of museology and exhibition design in Northern Cyprus. The graphics and exhibition arrangements designed by Dr. Gökhan Okur (see figure 4), an instructor at the Faculty of Fine Arts of Near East University, for the Dr. Fazıl Küçük Museum, serve as an important example of well-planned exhibition and informative design, highlighting the positive contribution of well-planned ergonomics criteria to visitors' experiences.

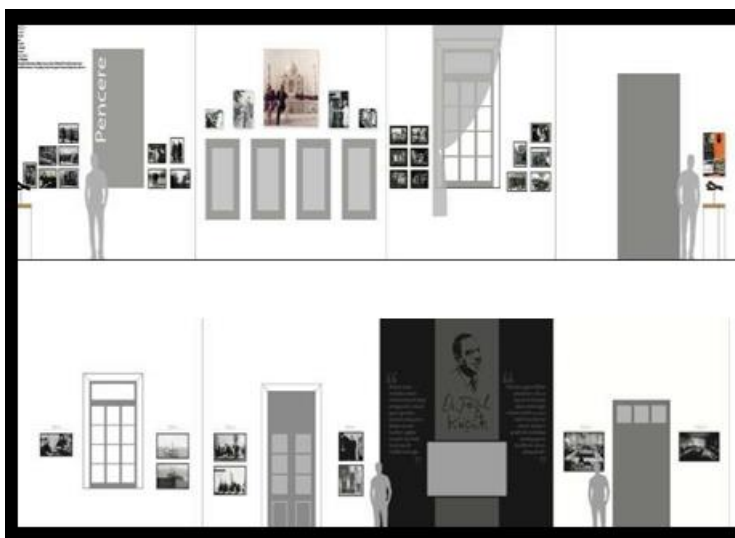
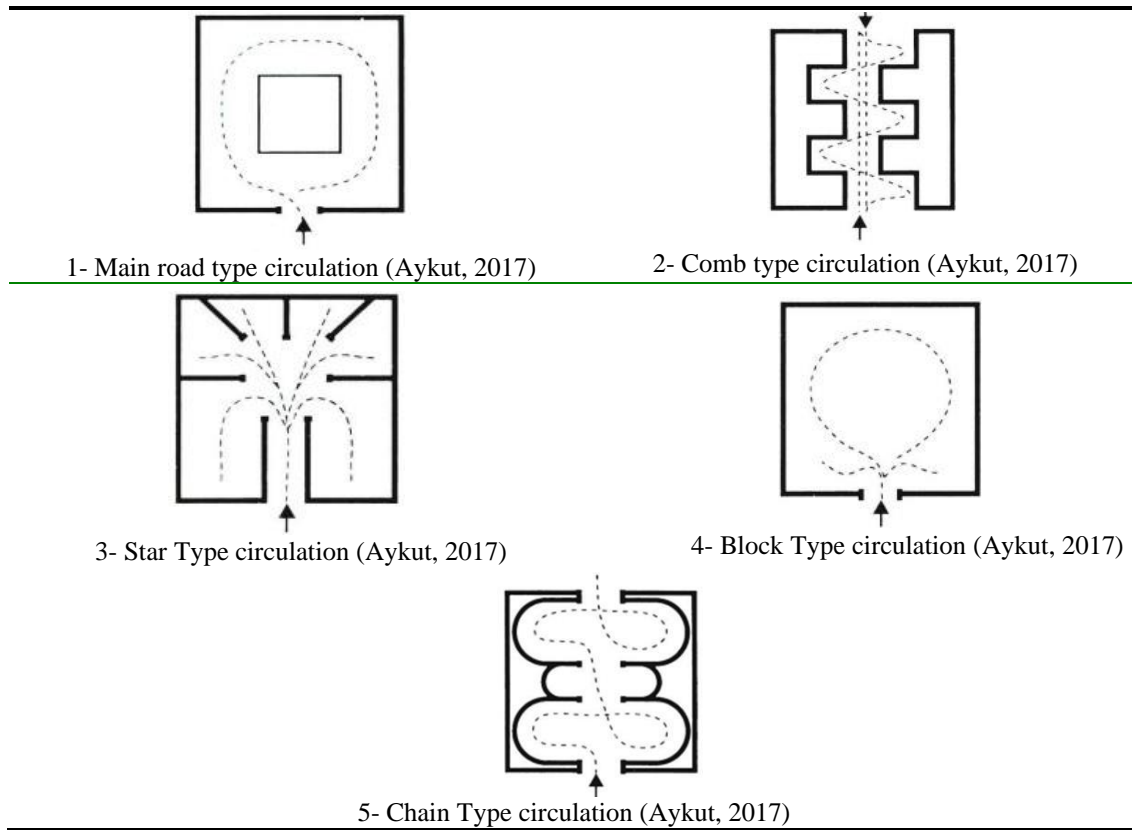


Figure 4. Dr. Fazıl Küçük Museum infographics (Okur, 2019)

At the same time, Near East University, one of the universities on the island, has made significant strides in museology, organizing exhibition openings for the collection of the Cyprus Modern Art Museum, which is still under construction. The upcoming Günsel Art Museum also serves as an example of Near East University's investment in the development of art on the island with a contemporary museological approach.

There are various formulas for touring museum areas and determining potential trends. This system varies depending on the layout and content of the exhibition area. In organizing the exhibition area, an access graph suitable for the layout is prepared, and visitors' possible trends are evaluated based on this graph. Züleyha Aykut suggests five possible graphic proposals for these circulation Patterns (Kaymakçı, S., & Sever, İ. A. 2022; Aykut, 2017). See Table 1.

Table 1.
Circulation types (Aykut, 2017)



After examining the circulation types graphics, it is understood that the most suitable type for the current layout of the Günsel Museum is the star-type circulation. The museum, designed on the ground floor, shows a distribution towards the

exhibition areas from the central point accessed by stairs. See Figure 5. To make this circulation type operate more efficiently, infographics and way finding signs can be added to the existing layout to facilitate the audience's navigation.

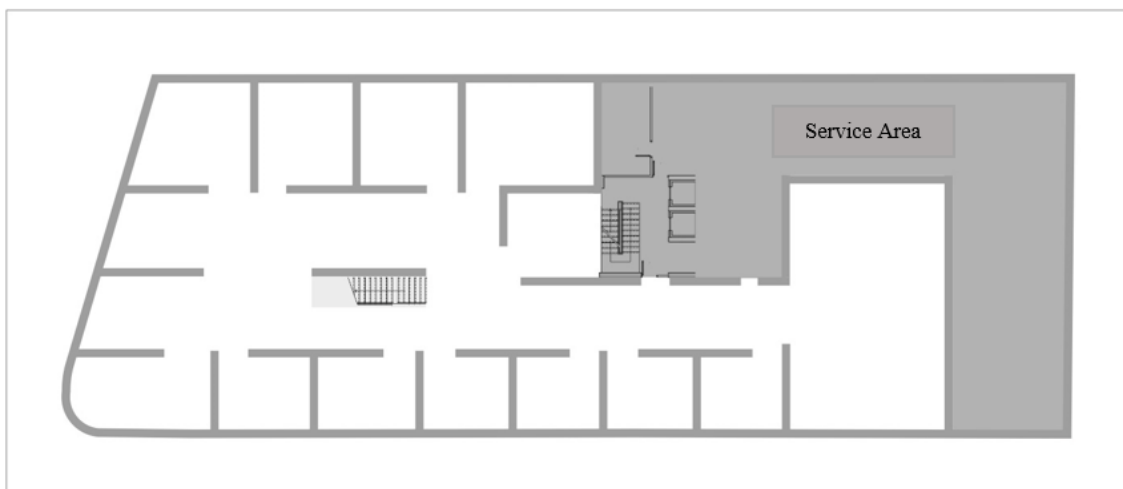


Figure 5. Günsel Art Museum, Ground Floor Plan, Scale 1/50 (Ergün, 2023)

Direction and information graphic applications in the museum, which has 15 exhibition areas, had designed by Prof. Erdoğan Ergün, the head of the Graphic Design Department of the Faculty of

Fine Arts and Design at Near East University, who is also the director of the Günsel Art Museum.

It is observed that the directional and informational graphics are designed according to universal design principles, allowing the viewer to have an easier and more perception-oriented visit in terms of the 7 points mentioned earlier. Exhibition spaces are not perceived as ordinary places, part of daily life, but rather as spaces that open the door to another world. This is because the artworks they contain or display are also like that. Richard Leppert describes images in his book "The Sight of Meaning in Art" as follows: "Images show us not the real world but a world from worlds. Images represent these things; representation, that is, re-presentation. Indeed, the things represented by images may not be in "reality"; they may only exist in the world of imagination, fantasy, desire, dream, or fantasy" (Leppert, 2002: 14). Inviting the viewer into this world and enabling the communication between the viewer and the image presented as part of this world will only be possible with the right creation of the atmosphere of this world. The

communication of art depends not only on the artwork and the viewer but also on a time/space need (temporal and spatial). In other words, displaying art requires a specific space and time.

The lighting units, which are crucial for all these conditions, are observed to be designed in accordance with contemporary museology at the Günsel Art Museum. The lighting units that are effective in perceiving the artworks offer a two-stage lighting design with main lighting illuminating the main lines during exhibition circulation and portable spotlights revealing the artworks more. See Figure 6. Thus, viewers can find their way between exhibition areas and gain a better understanding of the artworks, allowing people of all ages to perceive the artworks more effectively. Therefore, by establishing the right communication between the artwork and the viewer, the content of the artistic message becomes more understandable.



Figure 6. Lighting units in Günsel Art Museum (Günsel, 2023).

The analyses conducted reveal that the museum's lighting design, spatial layout, and exhibition methodology possess qualities in harmony with universal design principles explored in the literature review. Additionally, the strategic placement and design of info graphics and directional elements within the space will guide visitors in finding their way and exploring the artworks, enhancing the quality of their visit. Consequently, when appropriately implemented,

these elements will transform the space into a holistic environment functioning effectively in every aspect.

In this context, the large wall marked in purple (which welcomes visitor at the entrance) on the museum plan provides information about the general museum circulation. The numbering method to be used in the yellow areas will guide visitors in navigating the exhibition spaces.

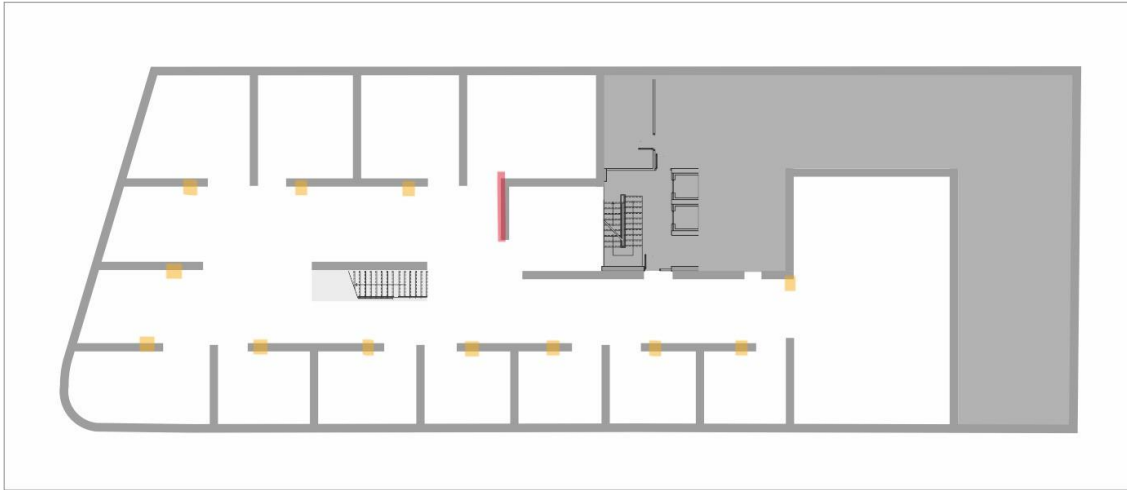


Figure 7. Günsel Art Museum suggested info graphics and number plates (Author, 2023)

■ Info graphic
 ■ Number Plates for exhibition rooms

Discussion

Regarding to the research questions mentioned in introduction, some points can be discussed as outcomes of the analysis. In the context of contemporary design principles, museum design is characterized by an interdisciplinary approach that incorporates education and research on a global scale. In this sense, various disciplines such as graphic design, interior architecture, architecture, art history, museology, and ergonomics collaborate in a cooperative effort to create modern museum spaces. The easy perceptibility of informational graphics, along with the support of illumination for exhibited works, museum spaces, and guidance, is a crucial indicator of the necessity for collaborative efforts in exhibition design and lighting design. By aligning itself with the trends that have been developing and implemented worldwide, North Cyprus has simultaneously made significant progress in the field of modern museology. The experience gained from these initial implementations foresees an improvement and advancement in the near future.

Conclusions

The educational institutions established after 1974 play a crucial role in the education of art students, directing and supporting the students in academic research, and thus contributing significantly to the discussion and adoption of art in society. Especially over the past decade, the symposiums and workshops organized by these institutions and artists, showcasing artworks produced and exhibited during these events, can be cited as examples of increasing awareness. In the context of this research, a temporary modern art museum established within the Near East

University in the last 15 years, a city museum, and ongoing construction of the largest modern art museum in North Cyprus, alongside the Günsel Art Museum, serve as examples of the contributions of these educational institutions. Simultaneously, ongoing art production is regularly visited by the community, academics and students affiliated with the institution through monthly exhibitions. Artworks created for significant days in the collective memory of society and special exhibitions also serve to refresh cultural memory. In this regard, the cultural expression of art meets with artists from different countries, enhancing diversity and contributing to the cultural richness of the Cypriot community.

As observed in the examples of the Dr. Fazıl Küçük Museum and the Günsel Art Museum, the steps taken in contemporary museology with the contribution of experts in the field are indicators that global practices are approached in museology in Northern Cyprus. The efforts made to participate in international competitions every year and the effort to be present in these competitions are inevitable results of all these initiatives, indicating that Northern Cyprus will participate in the race in terms of artistic activities in the future and can be a visible cultural showcase.

Art, in all its branches, is the most important influence reflecting the cultural language and history of a society. The more developed the visual memory in art in a society, the higher the culture and welfare level of the society will rise, and it will gain an equivalent position among modern civilizations.

In addition, academic-based cultural initiatives and initiatives, over time, become part of everyday cultural cycles, nourishing the society. Especially, activities carried out in places where the public frequently visits not only bring the culture of the North Cyprus to the international platform but also integrate into the visual culture of the people of North Cyprus, encouraging and educating future generations to undertake more comprehensive initiatives.

Recommendations

Based on the analysed data from this study, there is a need for info graphics to be added to the museum space and a numbering system to ensure proper circulation. It has been observed that in European practices, layers and colour systems are considered for museums. Integrating the most suitable system determined by graphic designers into this museum would be beneficial in making the museum more conducive to a comfortable visit. The determination of these recommendations through collaborative efforts of the appropriate disciplines is the subject of future studies and research.

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