



Biomorphism in The Works of Joan Miro in The Context of Surrealism
Sürrealizm Bağlamında Joan Miro Eserlerinde Biyomorfizm

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Abstract: Joan Miro, known for her surrealist paintings, produced her works, in which a child scribbled unconscious, shapes and lines randomly and without aesthetic concern. Much influenced by the subconscious and dreams, the artist has been seen as the first representative of automatism in the field of art. In Miro's works, the effects of the artist's past life can be traced. Some of the forms he used in his works are a mirror of the subconscious reflection of nature in his daily life. The artist reflected the subconscious world in his works, completely eliminating his own logic and external perceptions. The biomorphism seen in Miro's works influenced many different art disciplines and artists, as well as surrealist artists. This research is a study of the biomorphic forms created by Joan Miro in the art movement of surrealism through automatism and subconscious method through the works of the artist. The works by Joan Miro are considered how the artist treats biomorphic forms in the context of the current of Surrealism in relation to automatism and the subconscious. Qualitative research method was used in the research and in this context, literature on the subject was examined, visual sources were examined and readings were made through biomorphic forms in the works of the artist. The data obtained were examined within the art movement of surrealism.

Key Words: Automatism, Biomorphism, Surrealism, Subconscious

Öz: Sürrealist resimleri ile bilinen Joan Miro, adeta bir çocuğun bilinçsiz bir şekilde karalamış olduğu, şekilleri ve çizgileri rastgele, bir estetik kaygı gütmenden üretmiştir. Bilinçaltı ve rüyalardan çok fazla etkilenen sanatçı, sanat alanında otomatizmin ilk temsilcisi olarak görülmüştür. Miro'nun eserlerinde geçmiş yaşantısı sanatçıyı etkilemiştir. Eserlerinde kullanmış olduğu bazı formlar kendi günlük hayatında doğanın bilinçaltındaki yansımasının bir aynasıdır. Yansıtmak istediği, bilinçaltı dünyasını kendi mantığını, dış algıları tamamen ortadan kaldırmıştır. Biyomorfizm, birçok farklı sanat disiplinlerini ve sanatçıları etkilediği gibi Sürrealist

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sanatçılarıda çok fazla etkilemiştir. Bu araştırma, Joan Miro'nun, Sürrealizm sanat akımı içerisinde, Otomatizm ve Bilinçaltı yöntem ile yarattığı biyomorfik şekillerin sanatçının eserleri üzerinden incelediği bir çalışmadır. Joan Miro'ya ait olan eserler, sanatçının Sürrealizm akımı bağlamında biyomorfik formları otomatizm ve bilinçaltı ilişkisi içinde nasıl ele aldığı değerlendirilmektedir. Araştırmada nitel araştırma yöntemi kullanılmış olup, bu kapsamda konu ile ilgili literatür tarama, görsel kaynakların incelenmesi ve sanatçının eserlerinde ki biyomorfik formlar üzerinden okumalar yapılmıştır. Elde edilen veriler Sürrealizm sanat akımı içerisinde irdelenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Otomatizm, Biyomorfizm, Sürrealizm, Bilinçaltı

Introduction

People have not remained indifferent to what is going on around them from past to present, they have observed all living things, and their thoughts on nature have changed over time and have also directly affected art.

The ruins brought by the First World War, on the other hand, caused the artists to be affected politically and especially socially. Urbanization, war environment and the negative effects of industry led to the emergence of Dadaism in the first half of the 20th century. Andre Breton, a Dadaist, objected to Dadaism going as far as artistic subversion. Andre Breton, the pioneer of Surrealism, introduced the movement and published its manifesto in the journal "La Révolution Surréaliste", which he published in 1924. Surrealist poets and painters, influenced by the destructions brought by the First World War, started to turn to the imaginary images of the unconscious. Breton's automatism and Freud's effort to reach the unconscious were developed by the surrealists and they made their works in this direction. Surrealism artists produced works on organic forms without breaking their relationship with nature.

20th century Surrealist artist Joan Miro also produced biomorphic forms using the subconscious and automatism. It allowed Miro to produce works by revealing the subconscious in his childlike paintings. The illness that the artist experienced as a child and as a result of his father's settlement on the farm enabled Miro to be intertwined with nature and to observe nature.

In this study, in the context of Surrealism, the reflections of biomorphic forms taken from nature in Joan Miro's paintings, which are associated with automatism and the subconscious, are examined.

1. Automatism and Subconscious in The Context of Surrealism

Surrealism is an art movement that emerged in France at the beginning of the 20th century. It was not limited to the art of painting, but was influential in a wide range of fields including philosophy, literature, cinema and sculpture. It showed its influence in the literary field, especially in poetry. The ruins created by the First World War, its effect on people, and that artists were in the search of accordingly allowed the emergence of the Surrealist movement. When we look at the history of Surrealism, it is seen that the foundations of Surrealism were laid in Europe, most generally after the First World War. The trend, which also showed its influence after the Second World War, also attracted attention with its attitude towards the war (Çağna, 2016:7).

It is seen that especially the Dada movement developed after the war. Surrealism is also based on the Dada movement. The target of the Dadaists was against art, the political environment, traditional views and behaviors. When Tristan Tzara came to Paris in 1919, the newly established journal "Literature" became an environment where writers such as Andre Breton, Louis Aragon, Gide and Valery got to know each other. "Literature" aimed to be the center of Dadaism in Paris.

Now the Dada movement has declared that art is dead and that the movement is politics. Dadaism paved the way for the formation of Surrealism. It progressed through Dadaism and gained different aspects over time. Surrealists turned to human interiority by completely eliminating visual truth (Passeron, 1982: 10).

Surrealists produced works by using traditional art materials, canvas and paint, instead of ready-made objects used by Dadaists. The Surrealists set a benchmark for themselves. Most of the things in the mental process that went through the mind of the artist at that time became a work of art. On the other hand, Surrealists determined their own limits and sought solutions from the inner world of man. According to the Surrealists, the mind and creative thoughts that have been imprisoned for a long time in the human need to be authenticated. Surrealists produced works by using traditional art materials, canvas and paint, instead of ready-made objects used by Dadasists. The Surrealists set a benchmark for themselves. Most of the things in the mental process that went through the mind of the artist at that time became a work of art. On the other hand, Surrealists determined their own limits and sought solutions from the inner world of man. According to the Surrealists, the mind and creative thoughts that have been imprisoned for a long time in the human need to be authenticated. The subconscious, which is one of the basic characteristics of human beings, and the thoughts and emotions that are not revealed are like a treasure (Akbulut, 2016: 79).

Later on, their expression in the plastic arts, as well as journal literature studies, became stronger and diversified. Surrealism saw art as a guiding tool in the analysis of man by examining himself and returning to his inner world. Surrealism has produced works based on the idea that the imagination is out of the control of the mind and traditions by asserting the subconscious and automatism. For centuries, the artist has always sought the true source of art in nature. Forgotten human symbols took their place in art again with Expressionism. However, the examination of the subconscious aspect was provided with the Surrealism movement. It refers to the concept of "automatism" developed by Breton. The concept of automatism is to bring out the real perception underlying the consciousness without being independent of any aesthetic judgments and moral limitations (Passeron, 1982: 32).

Automatism is the emergence of pure and true ideas of consciousness. Within the surrealism movement, particularly, artists such as Salvador Dali, Max Ernst, Man Ray, Joan Miro and Yves Tanguy created works with the technique of automatism, where creativity is based on the subconscious. Surrealist artists rejected the control of brushstrokes in production and practice. They have benefited from Automatism by defending the conscious and subconscious. The concept of automatism means acquiring new forms by using their imagination and creativity, which occurred when the artist released the shapes that he created from himself. One of the first artists to use Automatism within the Surrealism movement is Andre Masson. Psychologist Sigmund Freud, who had important studies on the subconscious and influenced the Surrealism art movement, was influential in the art movement with the theories he put forward on surrealist artists on consciousness, subconscious, dreams and creativity (Thomson, 2015: 60).

Surrealist artists gave importance to completely unconscious randomness (Dönmez, 2014: 47). "Freud showed that the child and savage inside us come to the fore at the moment when the conscious thought that dominates our mind when we are awake weakens" (Gombrich, 2002: 592). The artist has discovered the riches of this world by descending into the subconscious.

Artists using automatism make random movements on the drawing surface. They enable the random shapes and subconscious images to be revealed. Forms and stains that are formed with the emergence of automatism and the subconscious are in organic (biomorphic) form.

The Surrealism movement produced works that emerged with the expression of the subconscious, which Freud discussed in his psychoanalysis theory. Pure thought of everything that passes through the human brain, dreams seen in a waking state, has been the subject of Automatism.

Automatism is a method that is not controlled by any external influence and does not adhere to certain rules (Yeniay, 2013: 42). According to Surrealist artists, they produced works by delving into their revolutionary spirit, dreams and subconscious. According to the surrealist philosophy, they got rid of the world view based on lived reason and logic and aimed to transform it into a world where logic did not dominate. According to Freud each of the works influenced by the subconscious created free art. Surrealism is the method of revealing the true image of thought, whether by word, writing, drawing or any other means. Using psychoanalytic methods, the artists left the audience face to face with their works. However, they believed that they could reach their own self and the real work of art by descending into the subconscious of the human being and extracting the mysterious power and images (Akarsu, 2010: 90). Joan Miro, a surrealist artist, is known among artists who produce organic forms using the subconscious and automatism technique.

1.1. Joan Miro and Biomorphism

20th century Surrealist painter Joan Miro was born in Barcelona in 1893 to a family of artisans dealing with carpentry and jewellery. He lived on a farm in Montroig, which his father bought to recover from an illness he had caught at a young age. The fact that Joan Miro comes from a family of artisans influenced the artist in drawing and design at an early age. It is known that his love for nature emerged during this time.

He enrolled in the art school of Francesco Gali in 1912, and gained information about many movements of the West from this education process. Between 1912 and 1920 Miro painted nudes and real-life scenes at an academic level. In the following years, the artist was influenced by the French Fauvism and accordingly used vibrant colors. However, he was also influenced by the cubists and used geometric forms in his works (Sakıp Sabancı Müzesi, 2014: 25).

The 1920s are the artist's periods in Paris. During this period, he met Andre Breton, the founder of Surrealism. Breton enabled Miro to look at his art life with a different window. Surrealist artists and Breton called Miro "pure psychic automatism". In his early works, the artist focused on dreams and hallucinations as the subject of his works. Joan Miro's Surrealist influence resembles Yves Tanguy's abstract biomorphic forms. Similar to the underwater and underwater organisms of Tanguy, Miro has insectivorous forms found in nature. Sometimes, microscopic creatures, horse, bird, cat and even human forms can be seen in Miro's works.

Symbols and signs are the forms Miro often uses in his work. Jon Miro associated his works with the surrealism movement and produced biomorphic works using the subconscious. It is seen that Miro's early paintings carry the influences of various modern movements (Fauvism, Cubism, Dadaism).

Miro produced works without sticking to a single movement throughout his artistic life; in fact, this was a pioneer in the formation of his own style. However, Miro is particularly associated with the Surrealism movement. Throughout his art life, he adhered to the surrealists' idea of freeing only the creative images of the subconscious without the control of logic and reason. Miro's style was called "Biomorphic abstraction" because his works used organic rather than geometric forms. Joan Miro produced his works on subconscious biomorphic forms. The artist remained under the influence of dreams, without aesthetic concerns. He never lost his spiritual and childlike enthusiasm. The use of biomorphic forms in his works transformed the objects into a form and a form of expression, not as they appear, but outside the visible. The forms taken from nature through observation were reflected in his works by the artist with a biomorphic approach (Johnson, 1941: 40). Biomorphism emerged in the 20th century and was influenced by other art movements. It

developed in response to some of these movements and in parallel with the ideas of others. Looking at the term biomorphism, it is seen that it is based on the ideas of Surrealism and Art Nouveau and Abstract art movements. Biomorphism deals with the irregular, abstract and organic forms that influence Surrealism. In the Surrealism movement, the use of biomorphic forms has connections with the root word "-morph". He is known as "Morpheus", the son of Hypnos, the god of sleep in Greek mythology, and is the god of dreams. Surrealism was heavily influenced by the subconscious and dreams. Biomorphism has abstract, organic and irregular forms and takes its forms from nature. In fact, it is not the description of the object, but the meaning in the essence of the object and what it makes people feel. They aimed to produce works by separating logic and art from each other. They acted from dreams, instinctive behaviors, without being bound by reason and logic. They aimed to create biomorphic forms, especially in the unconscious world, with uncertain shapes and non-geometric (organic abstraction) (Göğebakan, Kılıç, 2020: 24). While trying to understand biomorphic forms, the questions of "why, how?" were tried to be answered instead of the question of "what?". According to the definition of Erenler, the biomorphic form is the forms formed with curvilinear contours reminiscent of plant or animal forms rather than geometrical forms (Erenler, 251: 251). The term biomorphism in art was first used by the art historian Alfred H. Barr in 1936 and when he used "Biomorphic Sculpture" for the Abstract Art exhibition.

The biomorphic style was introduced by the British critic Laurence Alloway. He analyzed and developed the term "biomorph", which he borrowed from Barr, in terms of origin science. According to Alloway, the definition of biomorphic is defined as "Bio" a structure that shows the interactions between life or living phenomena, "Morphology" is defined as the features found in the form and structure of an organism or a living thing (Mert, 2017: 8). Biomorphic forms are seen in wavy, curved and generally rounded forms, which are actually the natural life forms of invisible organisms. These irregular shapes are also depicted in the form of bacteria, stones, leaves, plants, and sometimes even humans.

"The artists started to incorporate the elements of surrealism, which is generally dominated by the feeling of boredom, into their works. Forms became increasingly obscure, symbolic and often biomorphic. Shapes and patterns reflected traces of organic life. The purpose of doing this was to be able to dissolve and disintegrate" (Grzymkowski, 2015:179).

Biomorphism was associated with automatism by Andre Breton, and was developed by surrealists as an automatism-creating technique using Freud's "subconscious" effort to reach. In the first manifesto, emphasis was placed on methods for revealing the subconscious. The artist established a close relationship with automatism with his childlike paintings. By making references to the subconscious, he had common aspects with surrealist artists. Although the artist seemed to be involved in the Surrealist and Dada movement, he never accepted the idea of being involved in a movement. Freud considers that creativity is subconscious and in this direction the games played by the artist during his childhood and the traumas he experienced.

Joan Miro produced works with a pure, childlike consciousness. He made works with the subconscious mind intact. The symbols Miro uses in his works have no meaning. Embryos are reminiscent of the shapes humans have painted on cave walls. The artist arbitrarily reflected the lines, colors and stains on the canvas into his works without paying attention to space and depth. Miro's paintings were inspired by children's drawings and doodles, and he made them with a childlike precision. Miro is the best example of Breton's "transferring the subconscious into the picture in its most pristine form". It aimed to reveal subconsciously suppressed emotions. Most of the forms he

used in his works are round and organic shapes. The bright colors he chose in his paintings also added a child-like meaning.



Picture 1. Joan Miro, Plowed Field, 1923-24, oil painting on canvas, 66 x 92.7 cm

There are insect-like forms in Miro's works. Not content with these, he frequently used forms similar to microscopic creatures and also depicted figures such as horses and birds. The fabled effects he created with abstract forms, deformed animals, and female figures in his compositions are very close to the surrealists. With this aspect, the artist has produced works on organic forms without limiting his art (Uysal, 2019: 35). It is a work done by Miro in 1923 (Picture 1.). While living in Montroig, he portrayed a field by looking at it from his own window of imagination, and most of the forms were separated from their own reality and used unrelated forms together. When we look at the painting, there is a deformed horse in the middle of the painting; there are dogs, snails and many other animals standing right in front of it. There are many forms that are not perceived by the eye and most of them are imaginary shapes that are not defined and this has been associated with biomorphism. Creatures formed by subconscious and imagination in the composition contain organic structures side by side as human, plant and animal. The color in the work consists mainly of mustard yellow and brown tones. The composition is divided into two parts as space and atmosphere. Biomorphic, curvilinear and round forms and geometric forms are depicted parallel to each other. The fact that the cone on the left side of the picture, which looks like an egg on the tree, has ears and eyes, and body organs, associated Miro's work with biomorphism. The giant ears and eyes attached to a cone also indicate that every living thing has a soul.

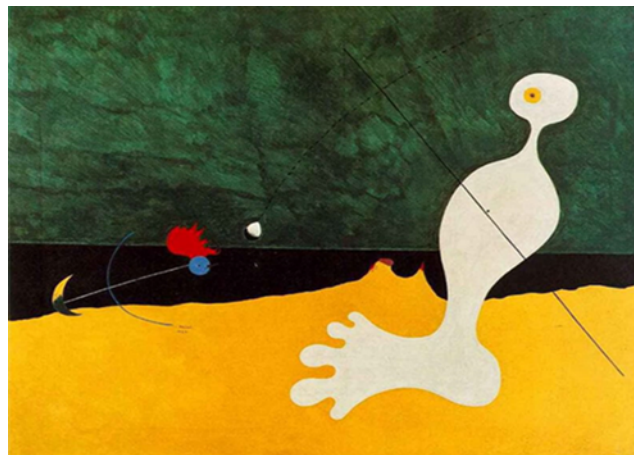
Miro said, "You know how much I love animals, little bugs. I was fascinated by insects! I remember Breton's wife Simone gifted me a book on insects one day. It was Fabre's book. I loved this book very much" proves this (Miro, 2016: 52-53).



Picture 2. Joan Miro, Harlequin's Carnival, 1925, oil painting on canvas, 66 x 93 cm

Harlequin's Carnival (Picture 2.), made by Miro in 1925, is divided into two parts as ground and background. Imaginary biomorphic forms are used in double plan. In the picture, there is a window in the upper right, perhaps night time. There are fish and different biomorphic forms on a table just below. The cat in front of the table has been hybridized, completely removed from its natural structure. Many surreal forms and living beings are used together. In Miro's work, the images in the artist's subconscious of the images known to everyone are revealed. In the work, organic and inorganic forms are used together. The worm-shaped structure divided the picture into two. It is understood from the sentence "I think this is a lizard, I put a hat on his head" that this structure, which looks like musical notes, starfish, circles of certain sizes, a ladder, a butterfly coming out of the membrane, and a creature, is actually a lizard (Miro, 2016: 53).

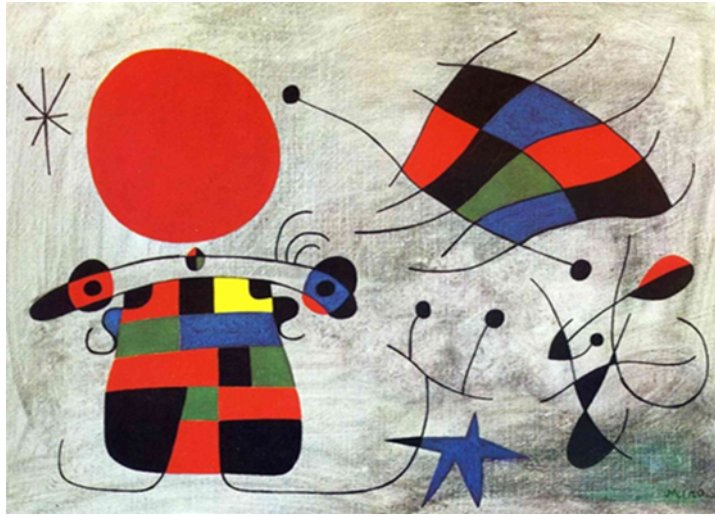
During his time in Paris, Miro created mostly organic and abstract works in his art. Seeing the works of Kandisky and Paul Klee in Paris is one of the reasons that caused the artist to change (Mert, 2017: 30).



Picture 3. Joan Miro, Person Throwing Stones at a Bird, 1926, oil painting on canvas, 74 x 92 cm

The white spot on the right of the work (Picture 3.) is depicted as a biomorphic form and there is a schematic bird figure right in front of it. The white spot represents the human figure. It is mathematically depicted by the effect of rotation created by a force on an object as if indicated by dots on it.

This shape corresponds to the movement of the stone thrown at the bird. There is no aesthetic concern in Miro's work. The artist has painted the first images that come to people's minds with the automatism method. Organic and inorganic forms were used. Small and large forms are used in the composition.



Picture 4. Joan Miro, The Smile of Glorious Wings, 1953, oil painting on canvas, 35 x46 cm

Miro's work "The Smile of the Flamboyant Wings", (Picture 4.) which he made in 1953, is a work that completely reveals subconscious images with the method of automatism. The background is used in light gray tones and the space perspective is not used. A human figure in the left part of the painting is a form that lies in the artist's subconscious. As with other Surrealist artists, Miro has no concern for ground, all rules and laws, including gravity, have lost their validity.

In the work, it was obtained only with a red circle form without giving details on the face. The work consists of red, black, green and blue colors. The lines are depicted with biomorphic forms. The lines are simple and agile.

In the work, patterns were created with black lines as a peinture. Only because there is no black painting around the red circular circle, it is the focus of the eye. The feet and hands of the figure in the work are also depicted in organic forms. Vivid colors are more dominant in the work.



Picture 5. Joan Miro, Peinture (Escargot, Femme, Fleur, Etoile), 1934, Oil painting on Canvas, 195 x 172 cm

In the work that Joan Miro made in 1934, (Picture 5.) it starts with yellow tones and consists of colors that go from brown on the left and go from green to dark blue on the right. The painting features a white hand that hangs in a downward motion, which is the focal point. In the left part of the painting, there is a creature made of organic forms that are not completed in a U shape. The table contains the words he gave to the picture (Peinture, escargot, femme, fleur, etoile). The painting is mostly figure-based and there are creatures that cannot be perceived by the eye. It is a good example of the Surrealism movement, using living organisms and the biomorphic forms in them.

The sad state of the artist was included in his work. He used dark colors by deforming the forms. There is a split feeling from the middle of the picture and the left side is used in warmer tones. It is used in calligraphic elements in the work. In the work, space is not used; almost organic forms have challenged gravity. In the composition, the writing gave movement to the painting and associated it with other forms.

Conclusion

These works, which were made in the mood brought by the social collapse and the remnants of the war after the First World War, are the biomorphic style that surrealist artists use in an imaginary and imaginary way with the acceptance of Breton's manifesto. Biomorph and automatism were the first to use randomness. In automatism, artists who set out with the subconscious have gradually moved away from biomorphic forms and turned into even more amorphic forms.

The illness that Joan Miro experienced when he was a child, had an effect on his work in the environment he lived in, not using logic and intelligence, but completely inspired by his subconscious and dreams. In fact, there is an abstract effect when looking at Miro's works for the first time. But shapes, colors and lines appear as images in a surreal effect, where the mind remains in the background. The artist did not include aesthetic concerns in his works. There are frequently repetitive images in the forms. He used simple and organic forms in his works. While making his works, Miro

produced works by examining the forms in nature. Biomorphism has influenced Art Nouveau and Abstract movement and many plastic arts since surrealism.

In conclusion; Joan Miro, a surrealist, produced works in which the mind was disabled by using the subconscious and automatism method. While producing his works, he used biomorphic, round and amorphous forms that he created intuitively and imaginatively.

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