Sculpture Etymology



Sculpture etymology, namely the origin and meaning history of the word sculpture, is an extremely valuable field of study in terms of understanding the historical layers and cultural interactions of Turkish. The vocabulary of languages carries unique clues about the history, geographical locations, and cultural contacts of those societies. In this respect, the word sculpture is an important word reflecting the deep transformation Turkish has undergone and the long-term relationship it has established with Arabic culture.

Origin of the Word Sculpture

The word sculpture (heykel) is of Arabic origin. This word, written as □□□□□□□ in Arabic, carries meanings such as skeleton, large body, temple, or structure. The fundamental meaning of the word in Arabic refers to the skeleton or the main structure of something. This root meaning is extremely significant in that it points to the act of creating a three-dimensional structure. The word sculpture, which passed into Turkish from Arabic throughout the Ottoman period, gained the meaning of plastic art and became established with this meaning, especially with the entry of the Western understanding of art into Ottoman lands during the Tanzimat period.

The Concept of Sculpture in the Ottoman Period

During the Ottoman period, the art of sculpture remained a limited field for a long time due to the prohibition of idols in Islam. Therefore, the use of the word sculpture in an artistic context was quite restricted. Along with the Tanzimat reforms in the second half of the 19th century, the Western style of sculpture entered the Ottoman Empire, and in this process, the word sculpture gained the meaning of plastic art. Osman Hamdi Bey is among the pioneering names who introduced both the

art of sculpture and museology to Ottoman lands during this period.

Transformation of the Concept of Sculpture in the Republic Period

With the proclamation of the Republic of Turkey, the art of sculpture gained a new meaning and function. Adopted as the visual language of the Republic ideology, sculpture dominated the public sphere through monuments symbolizing the leaders of the revolution, especially Ataturk. During this period, the word sculpture found a much wider field of use in daily language and became identified with the visual expression of national identity. Language revolutionist attempts to use the Turkish-origin word "yontu" instead of sculpture are also products of this period.

The Place of the Word Sculpture in Language

Today, the word sculpture continues its existence as an extremely deep-rooted and established concept in Turkish. In the Turkish Language Association dictionary, sculpture is defined as a work of art and "yontu" made of stone, metal, plaster, clay, and similar materials. The word has become a living and productive part of the language not only in an artistic context but also through its metaphorical uses. Etymological research reveals deep information about both language and cultural history by following the journey of a word through history. The adventure of the word sculpture is also a concrete reflection of the deep-rooted relationship Turkish has established with Arabic, Persian, and Western languages. You can also gain a different perspective by reading our What is Sculpture article.

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