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Prof. Dr. Hasan ARAPGİRLİOĞLU

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CHAPTER 1

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CULTURAL MEMORY AND NATURE THROUGH SIMRYN GILL'S WORKS

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INTRODUCTION

Memory is a complex cognitive process that plays a fundamental role in the formation of both individual and social identities. People store past experiences, emotional impressions, knowledge, and skills in a mental archive and, when necessary, use these to shape their interactions with the world. This process is not limited to personal memory; societies' cultural heritage, traditions, values, and social experiences are also passed down from generation to generation as part of a collective memory. Cultural memory is a form of memory that societies remember about the past, honor, and carry into the future. The process of preserving and transmitting this memory allows for the strengthening of social identities, sense of belonging, and cultural values.

Human societies have perceived nature not only as a physical environment but also as a part of their cultural identity, assigning it diverse meanings. The natural environment holds a significant place in societies' mythologies, folk narratives, and artistic productions, shaping cultural memory in this context. Furthermore, the relationship between migration, cultural memory, and nature illuminates the processes by which communities reconstruct their environmental perceptions and cultural heritage from the past in new places.

1. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CULTURAL MEMORY AND NATURE

Memory is the process by which information acquired through the senses is filtered and stored in an individual's mind, and used when necessary. In other words, memory is the ability or location to store, recall, and retrieve past experiences, knowledge, skills, and emotional impressions. Windhorst and Sutton (2011: 76) define information storage, retrieval, and processing as the three fundamental functions of neurocognitive capacity. This process, which includes these functions, plays a critical role in the intellectual, emotional, and social development of people, both individually and societally. "Memory is more than just a good memory; it is the instrument through which we perform the greatest part of our mental work" (Atkinson, 1919: 9). It fulfills a decisive function in many areas, from establishing an individual's identity to maintaining cultures. Memory is not only a cognitive function but is also closely linked to broader concepts such as identity, learning, emotional balance, social relationships, and the maintenance of physical activity. According to Windhorst and Sutton (2011: 75), there are two main reasons for the mystery of memory: First, because memory, thanks to its diversity, performs many different tasks by continuously interpreting every conscious moment. Second, because different types of memory have different standards of accuracy and criteria for success.

Memory is a crucial element that forms the foundation of personal identity. Our past experiences, memories, and learning shape who we are and what we consider valuable. In his book Memory: How to Develop, Train, and Use It, William Walker Atkinson (1919:10) argues that not only the acquisition of knowledge but also the inspiration of the poet, the genius of the painter, and the heroism of the warrior—all depend on memory; even consciousness itself could not exist without memory. Because every act of consciousness involves a change from a past state to the present, and if the past state were to disappear, there would be no consciousness of change. Therefore, memory can be said to be integral to all conscious existence and a characteristic of every conscious being. Every individual creates a

narrative based on their past, including significant events in their life, their relationships with people, and how they view themselves. Memory is the source of these personal narratives and plays a fundamental role in shaping our identity. By establishing the connection between one's past self and one's present self, it helps us understand how a person evolves throughout life.

When we examine cultural memory, the subject of our study, this concept began to gain prominence, particularly towards the end of the 20th century. This phenomenon was fueled by modernism's pursuit of innovation, abandoning traditional values, and the impacts of social events such as war, violence, and migration. Cultural memory is the creation of a collective memory based on a society's past, cultural heritage, traditions, values, language, rituals, symbols, and collective memory. Therefore, it is a type of memory produced and shared by societies, not individuals, over time. Pethes (2019: 5) argues that cultural memory theory, by examining the forms of cultural transmission that shape the historical narratives of societies, manifests itself as an element of cultural tradition. In other words, by defining cultures' ways of remembering, cultural memory theories also trace the historical structures of culture, indicating that everything related to the subject is interconnected. The existence or continuity of culture is also linked to its ability to be remembered. In societies, remembering is transformed into tangible forms through sound or visual expressions. These tangible entities, in turn, become part of culture. "As long as culture exists, it continues to exist in the memory of itself because having a common denominator is a necessity for a community. Cultural memory includes experiences that create common feelings and thoughts in a specific time and place, and the reflections of these experiences" (Sağlam, 2020: 583).

Cultural memory not only remembers the past; it also establishes a society's identity, reinforces social values and cultural norms, and carries social memory into the future. Heller (2001: 139) argues that cultural memory involves the process of identity formation and preservation, and that people maintain their existence by preserving and maintaining a shared cultural memory. Cultural memory, as a social construct, is shared by specific groups, peoples, or nations and passed down from generation to generation. This memory transcends individual memories, enabling the collective remembrance of historical events, cultural values, social norms, and social relations. According to Shincariol (2012: 8), culture, as a phenomenon, is shaped by a process that unfolds in its time and place, based on a historical and empirical foundation. This occurs through the synergy of accumulated knowledge and its concretization or transformation into experience through interaction with the sensory world. Therefore, it transforms into symbolic meaning during the process of remembering in a specific time and place.

Throughout history, people have perceived nature not only as a physical environment but also as a part of their cultural identity. Certain elements of nature, such as mountains, seas, forests, or rivers, frequently appear in societies' mythologies, legends, and folk narratives. These elements leave significant marks on a society's historical memory and become fundamental elements in shaping its identity. Nature also serves as a kind of repository of memory. By observing the natural environment, people experience the vegetation, animals, and seasonal cycles around them, and these observations become incorporated into social memory. Societies "remember" nature in different ways, and their attitudes toward it are linked to their cultural memories. Migration further deepens the relationship between cultural memory and nature. Migrating communities tend to maintain the perceptions of nature and the connections they bring from their former settlements in new places. This is linked to people's sense of belonging. Art holds a significant place at the intersection of nature and cultural memory. Artistic productions inspired by nature

demonstrate a society's relationship with nature and how it remembers and conveys this relationship.

Ultimately, the relationship between cultural memory and nature describes how human societies interact with their environments, how they perceive nature, and the role nature plays in shaping these perceptions. Cultural memory concerns how a society's past experiences, traditions, and values are remembered and transmitted over time. Nature plays a significant role in this process, both symbolically and practically. The relationship between cultural memory and nature is further deepened by the role of art in connecting these two domains. There are distinct connections between cultural memory, nature, and art. People or communities that exist and survive in nature possess a cultural memory formed by the influence of nature. Art provides a significant form of expression for the materialization, preservation, and transmission of cultural memory. The relationship between cultural memory and art encompasses several fundamental aspects, including the preservation and transmission of the past, the construction of identity and belonging, the reproduction of social memory, the artistic expression of rituals and ceremonies, the critique and reconstruction of memory, symbolic representations, and the creation of meaning.

Artworks represent significant events, figures, or values from a particular community's past, deepening individuals' sense of belonging to their own culture. Social events and experiences are interpreted by artists and presented to the audience. By reflecting individual experiences and a society's cultural memory in their work, the artist helps strengthen collective memory and secure a significant place in it. Through art, it is possible to question societies' past mistakes, and events they have forgotten or wish to forget. Such artworks challenge existing understandings of collective memory and create new meanings. The symbolic power of art connects cultural memory to a deeper level and a wider audience.

2. EVALUATION OF SIMRYN GILL'S WORKS IN THE CONTEXT OF CULTURAL MEMORY AND NATURE

Simryn Gill, one of the renowned artists of the contemporary art world, was born in Singapore in 1959. She lives and works in Sydney and Port Dickson, Malaysia. Gill, who produces works across various disciplines, particularly visual arts, photography, installation, and video arts, draws attention to social and cultural issues through her work. Her art explores topics such as personal identity, cultural memory, and social structures. Gill’s art explores the interaction between individual and social history, issues of identity, and the relationship with the past. Maria’s Garden (2021) is a compilation of direct prints of all the plants growing in the garden of Maria, a retired Italian woman who immigrated to Sydney (Image 1). Created by Simryn Gill, the work consists of 93 prints of real plant specimens, each measuring 240 × 48 cm, printed on paper.

Image 1: Simryn Gill, Maria’s Garden, Ink printing on paper, 2020/2021.

Maria's garden has been reproduced in this work, using Gill's direct printing method, at almost exact dimensions. The ninety-three prints are displayed on the walls. The work was born after Gill learned that the garden would be destroyed following the death of her neighbor, Maria. For six months, Simryn Gill took notes on the names and locations of each plant in the garden and made direct prints of them (Image 2). Thus, each print transferred to paper reflects the original plant specimens. This method is an ancient technique used in botany and was developed to examine the visual and textural characteristics of plants. In this work, the artist explores themes such as botany, colonialism, belonging, cultural identity, and the ecological role of nature, while also questioning the fate of lost or abandoned things related to migration, survival, and the traces of time. (Simryn Gill Sydney and Port Dickson, Malaysia 2023, https://www.the-national.com.au/artists/simryn-gill/marias-garden/)

Image 2: Simryn Gill, Maria’s Garden, Ink printing on paper, 2020/2021.

Maria's Garden is described as a work that explores the artist's personal experience and cultural identity. Gill uses the garden as a profound symbol related to both individual and collective memory. The artist also emphasizes that space functions not only as a physical location but also as a carrier of memory, belonging, and the past. In this context, the garden emerges as both a tangible and an abstract place. The theme of the garden is traditionally

associated with themes such as fertility, nature, growth, and the rebirth of life. However, in Gill's work, these symbols are situated within a broader cultural context, questioning the garden's diverse meanings. The colors, objects, and spatial arrangements engage the viewer in an experience where past and present intertwine. The plants and symbols within the garden explore how identities and experiences are shaped at individual and collective levels, and how forgotten or repressed memories resurface. Ultimately, Maria's Garden is a deeply meaningful work of art that challenges cultural memory, identity, and established understandings of history.

Image 3: Simryn Gill, Maria's Garden, Ink printing on paper, 2020/2021.

The garden's transformation is also linked to the erasure of this cultural memory, as property developers' plans to demolish it raise concerns about the loss of a cultural heritage. The plants growing in the garden symbolize Maria's Mediterranean origins and her relationship with foreign lands in Australia. However, each plant in the garden is also part of a time and place; these plants bridge cultural memory and the natural environment, where migrant identity and belonging merge with nature. Direct printing creates visual representations of these plants while simultaneously imprinting traces of historical and cultural memory onto paper. Each print, as a precise reflection of a fragment of nature, is a memory record that unites past and present. This work clearly demonstrates the relationship between nature and cultural memory: Maria's Mediterranean garden, through plants rooted in Australian soil, sustains both personal identity and cultural heritage.

Simryn Gill's Washed-Up (1993–1995) (Image 4) is one of her works exploring identity and locality. In this series, Gill uses eroded glass fragments collected from the coasts of Malaysia and Australia to render visible the transformative power of nature and the material remnants of human culture. By adding words to these glass fragments, the artist adds a linguistic layer to the discarded objects shaped by nature. At the same time, she renders the boundaries between nature and culture permeable. Thus, Washed-Up becomes both an object of environmental awareness and a map of cultural and linguistic memory. The transparency,

fragility, and resistance of glass to time can be considered a metaphor for Gill's approach to themes of identity and belonging.

Image 4: Simryn Gill, Washed-Up, Collected glass fragments, 1993-95.

In the context of cultural memory and nature, Washed-Up highlights the idea that nature functions as an "archive." Every piece of glass washed up on the seashore is a remnant of human traces, transformed by nature; these remnants are a composite of both past cultural productions and nature's intervention over time. Here, nature is positioned not merely as a backdrop but as an agent through which cultural memory is reproduced. The work suggests that memory is not an anthropocentric phenomenon but is shaped by natural cycles and ecological processes. Thus, Washed-Up challenges us to reconsider the relationship between nature and culture on an aesthetic and ontological level. The work also indirectly introduces us to issues such as migration, displacement, and identity. The materials Gill collects from diverse geographies bear the material and symbolic traces of global circulation. In this respect, Washed-Up contributes to discussions of postcolonial identity in the context of contemporary art: by utilizing the interactions between nature, time, and language, it demonstrates that memory and identity are not fixed but constantly evolving structures.

Simryn Gill's series Washed-Up (1993–1995) (Figure 5) can be considered a powerful artistic meditation that questions the permeable relationship between cultural memory and nature. The eroded glass pieces Gill collected from the coasts of Malaysia and Australia reflect both the transformative power of nature and the fragility of human traces. This "forgetful" yet "rewriting" function of nature parallels the fluidity of cultural memory over time. Just as waves erode and shape objects, cultural memory is constantly reshaped through historical events, migrations, and social interactions. The words Gill inscribes on the glass pieces establish a dialogue between this two-way process—nature's forgetfulness and humanity's insistence on remembering. Washed-Up transforms man-made objects recycled by

nature into a kind of cultural archaeological object. Each piece of glass Gill collects from the coasts serves as a two-layered carrier of memory, both a "natural relic" and a "cultural relic." The etched words on the glass carry the linguistic traces of the past into the natural cycle of the present. Here, nature enters as a site of transformation, a physical and metaphorical purification. It imbues a new layer of meaning by altering the traces left by humans. With this work, Gill explores the concept of cultural memory as a process intertwined with the anthropogenic environment. Washed-Up reduces the complex relationship human culture has established with nature neither to a nostalgic sense of loss nor to a romantic celebration of nature. On the contrary, through the work's materials and formal strategy, it reveals memory as a temporally multilayered phenomenon that moves alongside natural processes. Gill's "found" objects reveal both the environmental consequences of human action and the power of nature to transform these traces. Thus, Washed-Up positions the relationship between cultural memory and nature at the intersection of two forces that both disrupt and sustain each other, prompting consideration of how memory leaves its mark on nature and nature leaves its mark on memory.

Image 5: Simryn Gill, Washed-Up, Collected glass fragments 1993-95.

GENERAL EVALUATION AND CONCLUSIONS

Memory is not merely an individual cognitive process; it is also the cornerstone of identity, culture, and social existence. Individuals' storage and reinterpretation of past experiences, emotions, and knowledge shape their identities at both individual and collective levels. This accumulation transforms into cultural memory, which ensures the continuity of societies. Cultural memory encompasses shared forms of remembrance of a society's past, values, and traditions; thus, it ensures the continuity of social identity and the vitality of a

sense of belonging. However, cultural memory is not static; it is constantly reshaped by time, space, migration, nature, and human activities. In this context, nature appears not only as a stage for memory but also as an active component of it. It is both a witness and a bearer of human history. Societies have encoded nature as a site of memory, transforming elements such as mountains, seas, rivers, and trees into symbols of their cultural identities and historical narratives. Nature is in constant interaction with human actions, and this interaction transforms both nature and cultural memory. Therefore, the relationship between cultural memory and nature is reciprocal: as human shape nature, nature, in turn, shapes human memory. Art is one of the most powerful expressions through which this interplay becomes apparent.

Through art, nature becomes not only an aesthetic element but also the bearer, witness, and reproducer of memory. Art is a space where cultural memory is embodied, interpreted, and reconstructed. The artist makes individual and collective memory visible through aesthetic language, thus re-evoking memories that have been forgotten, repressed, or erased. The visibility of the connection between nature and cultural memory in art raises awareness of the historical relationship that humanity has with nature. In this context, Simryn Gill's works Maria's Garden and Washed-Up offer concrete examples of how nature carries and transforms memory. Maria's Garden explores themes of migration, identity, and belonging through nature, while Washed-Up demonstrates how nature reshapes cultural memory through objects transformed by the sea. Both works, by rendering visible the permeable boundaries between nature and cultural memory, remind us that the relationship between humanity and the past is not only a mental but also an ecological process.

Simryn Gill's artistic practice creates an intellectual space that interweaves temporal and spatial layers, questioning the deep ties of individual and collective memory with nature. In her work, the artist positions nature not merely as a backdrop but as a subject actively participating in the formation of memory. This approach allows cultural memory to transcend its anthropocentric boundaries and be brought to an ecological perspective. In Gill's works, nature becomes a site of memory that both preserves traces of the past and generates new meanings by transforming them. Through found objects, plants, and materials shaped by nature, the artist demonstrates that identity, belonging, and history are not fixed but constantly evolving structures. Thus, Gill's art invites us to rethink the interplay between humans and their environment as a manifestation of cultural and ecological continuity.

Consequently, the relationship between cultural memory, nature, and art plays a decisive role in the formation of individual and social identities. Nature is both the site and the subject of memory; Art, in turn, makes this memory visible on sensory, intellectual, and symbolic levels. This three-fold relationship enables not only the memory of the past but also its reinterpretation. While nature becomes a "space of remembrance" through art, cultural memory continues to live within the cycles of nature. In this context, Simryn Gill's work is not merely an individual artistic practice but part of a universal inquiry into the human relationship with nature, identity, and the past.

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Image 1. Symrin Gill, Maria's Garden, kağıt üzerine mürekkep, 2020/2021, https://www.the-national.com.au/artists/simryn-gill/marias-garden/, Access Date: 04.12.2024.

Image 2. Symrin Gill, Maria's Garden, kağıt üzerine mürekkep, 2020/2021, https://www.richardsaltoun.com/artists/368-simryn-gill/works/27387-simryn-gill-maria-s-garden-studies-loquat-small-2020-2021/, Access Date: 04.12.2024.

Image 3. Symrin Gill, Maria's Garden, kağıt üzerine mürekkep, 2020/2021, https://www.richardsaltoun.com/artists/368-simryn-gill/works/27380-simryn-gill-maria-s-garden-study-22-2020-2021/, Access Date: 04.12.2024.

Image 4. Symrina Gill, Washed-Up, Toplanmış cam parçaları, 1993-95. https://www.roslynoxley9.com.au/exhibition/washed-up-1993-1995/fj2en, Access Date: 04.05.2025,

Image 5. Symrina Gill, Washed-Up, Toplanmış cam parçaları, 1993-95, https://www.roslynoxley9.com.au/exhibition/washed-up-1993-1995/fj2en¸ Access Date: 04.05.2025.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS AND INTERIOR DESIGN IN THE CONTEXT OF COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT AND CREATIVE PLAY

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1.Introduction

Despite its relatively limited duration, childhood represents a critical period in human development when artistic creativity and cognitive functions begin to emerge and strengthen. Cognitive intelligence encompasses a range of mental abilities that enable an individual to perceive the environment holistically, process sensory and symbolic information, engage in reasoning, solve complex problems, and express ideas effectively. These functions, which structure an individual's capacity to think, also constitute a fundamental area for developmental psychology.

Pioneering seminal theorists such as Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, Viktor Lowenfeld, Howard Gardner, and Henri Wallon have made significant contributions to the understanding of cognitive development, each providing valuable theoretical paradigms. In the contemporary context, Human Intelligence (HI) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) are two mainstream concepts that are frequently evaluated and discussed. However, it is the central component of HI, cognitive intelligence, that forms the basis for the ability to effectively design, interpret, and guide AI systems.

Among these theorists, Jean Piaget stands out for his systematic examination of developmental stages and his division of cognitive development into four distinct stages: sensory-motor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational stages (Kol, 2011, 1–21)(Bayraktar 2017, 51–71) (Bektaş and Bektaş 2024, 40–48). Piaget's model identifies universal mechanisms that enable children to interact with and make sense of their environment. Expanding on this, Bosma and Kunnen (Südemen 2022, 40–41) explain identity formation through the dynamic processes of assimilation, adaptation, and avoidance.

In line with Piaget’s structuralist approach, Viktor Lowenfeld developed an art-based developmental model that interprets cognitive development through children’s visual expression. His taxonomy, which includes the stages of doodling (2-4 years), pre-schematic (5-7), schematic (7-9), and visual realism (9-11), shows how artistic production plays an important role in cognitive development (Ülger 2024, 201-212) (Ülger, 2024, 675-676) (Özkan and Girgin 2014, 80-81). Similarly, Rhoda Kellogg’s work reinforces the cognitive importance of children’s graphic expressions. These art-based developmental models emphasize the connection between form, color, rhythm, and emotional expression in developing cognitive and perceptual skills (Vickers 1988, 96-97). Tactile art practices such as finger painting support fine motor development (Berk 2013, 314), while works such as collage encourage coordination and compositional thinking.

Lowenfeld also argued that creativity thrives in the absence of external impositions and that environments that support autonomy are crucial to cognitive development. Importantly, the cognitive benefits of the arts extend beyond the visual domain to include auditory and performative domains such as music, dance, and theater, contributing significantly to intellectual and emotional maturation during childhood.

In addition, lesser-known theorists, such as Henri Wallon, have developed developmental perspectives that consider both biological and sociocultural dimensions. Wallon's model, which somewhat parallels Piaget's, categorizes cognitive development into five stages: impulsive-emotional (ages 0–1), sensory-motor-projective (ages 1–3), individualistic (ages 3–6), categorical (ages 6–11), and adolescence (ages 11–16) (Budak et al. 2018, 415–418) (Ekmekçioğlu 2025, 70–71). Wallon's dual focus on emotion and cognition provides a nuanced framework for understanding the nonlinear progression of childhood development.

Creative play, which usually consists of unstructured or semi-structured activities, is effective in developing imagination, problem-solving skills, motor coordination, and social interaction. Such forms of play are not only for entertainment; they create a reflective interface between the child's inner world and external reality (Yayan and Zengin 2018, 229–230). Vygotsky's sociocultural theory suggests that play is the most effective environment for interacting with the "zone of proximal development" (ZPD), where the child acquires new competencies through mediated interaction (Şengül and Katrancı 2013, 635–636) (Vygotsky and Cole 1978, 19–31).

Dramatic play and expressive artistic activities, particularly those based on dramatic play and expression, allow children to experiment with social roles and symbolic thought. Vygotsky argued that children act "above their average behavior" during play, attempting tasks that exceed their actual developmental level (Atalay and Gönül 2023, 542–543). This view confirms the centrality of creative play in expanding cognitive boundaries.

Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI), which is based on the diversity of human cognitive styles, is an important inference regarding the pedagogical value of creative play (Gürel and Tat 2010, 336). Doğan and Altan mentions that Gardner defined seven different types of intelligence based on his 1983 study (Altan, 2011, 55-56) "Framer of Mind", while Yılmaz withal Gökbulut and Dirik claim that he mentioned eight different types (Tuncer and Yılmaz, 2010, 44-46) (Loras, 2007, 2) (Gökbulut and Dirik, 2017, 249). The main intelligence areas defined by Gardner are verbal/linguistic, logical/mathematical, visual/spatial, bodily/kinesthetic, musical, social (interpersonal), intrapersonal (personal) and naturalistic intelligences (Yılmaz, 2010, 44-46) (Gökbulut and Dirik, 2017, 249). Creative

games use these areas simultaneously, providing a rich environment for integrated development. Across these theoretical traditions, a consensus emerges regarding the pivotal role of play No matter how cognitive intelligence and its development are classified, it has a character associated with childhood. Creative games are multifaceted in the context of Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences. Vygotsky establishes a positive correlation between the zone of proximal development and creative games. Piaget, on the other hand, considered games as the child's cognitive development stages of making sense of environmental data and creating mental schemes through symbolic games. Wallon, on the other hand, placed all forms of art at the basis of development. Although many psychologists and psychoanalysts have different categorizations, it is clear that creative games have an effect on cognitive intelligence and development.

The multidimensionality of play encompasses not only interpersonal interaction but also self-regulatory and reflective processes (Bodrova and Leong 2008, 1–2). It is in this fluid, experiential space that children develop self-awareness, expressive capacity, and adaptive reasoning. Creative play enables the spontaneous yet cognitively rich development of these competences, fostering abstract thinking, empathy, and imagination. It is within this fluid, experiential domain that children develop self-awareness, expressive capacity, and adaptive reasoning. Creative play enables the development of these competencies in a spontaneous yet cognitively rich manner, cultivating abstract thinking, empathy, and imagination. Defined as open-ended imaginative activities—such as role-play, storytelling, improvisation, and symbolic manipulation—creative play offers an experiential platform through which children navigate social norms and internalize complex ideas. Vygotsky stressed the symbolic dimension of such activities, while contemporary research highlights their impact on emotional resilience and socio-cognitive competence (Vygotsky and Cole 1978, 19–31) (Lynch 2015, 52–53).

Sociodramatic play, discovered by Smilansky (1968, 15–16), strengthens this link between creativity and cognitive development. It allows children to actively reconstruct their environment in a way that is consistent with their internal concepts; this is an inherently creative and process-oriented behaviours (Craft 2005, 32–35) (Smilansky and Shefatya 1990, 45–47).

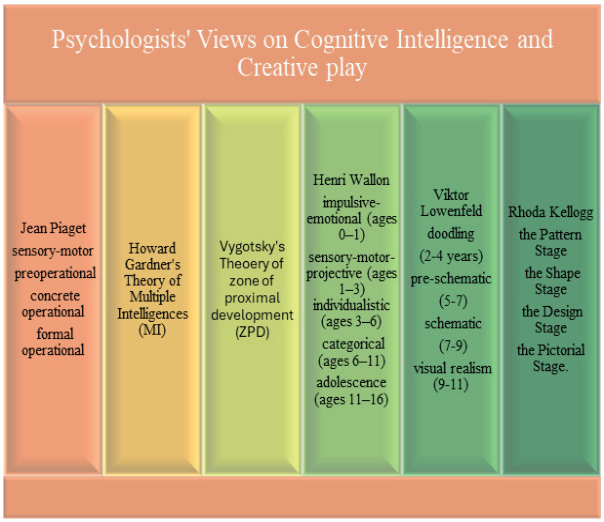

Table 1.1 Psychologists' Views on Cognitive Intelligence and Creative play

2.Typologies of Creative Play

Creative play may be categorized into seven principal types, each offering distinct contributions to children's cognitive, emotional, and imaginative development: (1) imagination-based play, (2) constructive play, (3) art-based play, (4) movement- and nature-oriented play, (5) science and exploration play, (6) language and expression play, and (7) spatially grounded play. These typologies not only diversify the child's play repertoire but also reflect a materials-based orientation wherein the affordances of tools and environments shape experiential learning (Yayan and Zengin 2018, 229) (Aytaş and Uysal 2017, 680). The history of the game is as old as human history. It can be observed that strategy-oriented board plays date back to the game of Senet played in ancient Egypt. For centuries, cognitive intelligence has been developing through games (Yalçın et al., 2023, 55-71) Types of creative play that improves cognitive intelligence is given in the chart.

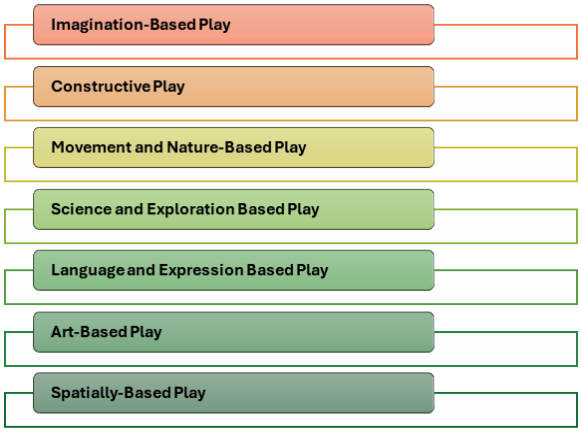

Table 2.1 Types of creative play

2.1 Imagination-Based Play

Imaginative play encompasses dramatic and symbolic forms that allow children to enact fictional narratives derived from their internal cognitive and emotional perspectives. Fiction should not be seen as the realm of the purely imaginary or unreal. On the contrary, it constitutes a fundamental component in the conceptual and aesthetic structuring of artistic and design-based works (Yalçın and Özdoğlar, 2023, 3) This form of play contributes significantly to the child's capacity for abstraction, empathy, and narrative reasoning by encouraging the development of fantasy scenarios through character embodiment, spatial simulation, and object transformation (Smilansky and Shefatya 1990, 24–27).

Symbolic mediators such as costumes, puppets, and dolls serve as catalysts for both storytelling and identity exploration, positioning the child as both performer and creator within the play scenario (Vygotsky 1978, 93–94). Moreover, this form of play allows children to reconstruct real-life experiences within a controlled, imaginative framework. Through this recontextualization, emotional tensions are reduced, and problem-solving strategies are rehearsed. Accordingly, imaginative play functions not only as a means of self-expression but also as a developmental mechanism for developing social-emotional competence, creative fluency, and adaptive flexibility (Craft 2005, 41–43).

2.2.Constructive Play

Constructive play constitutes a form of productive participation in which children actively engage in the manipulation and assembly of physical materials to achieve a mentally designed goal. Based on goal-oriented behaviours, this type of play emphasizes the processes of constructing, assembling, separating, and transforming objects, thus promoting both cognitive and psychomotor development.

This category of play is often provided through modular toy systems such as LEGO and Playmobil, which have become globally recognized tools for developing children's spatial reasoning and problem-solving abilities (Berk 2013, 292–294) (Resnick 1998, 44). Creative play provides a platform for children to transform their abstract mental schemas into concrete forms, often in collaborative settings that further develop social cognition and communication.

From a theoretical perspective, constructive play is consistent with Lev Vygotsky's concept of the "zone of proximal development" because it enables children to perform tasks beyond their independent capabilities through guided interaction with peers or adults (Vygotsky 1978, 84–91). At the same time, Piaget's theory of cognitive development suggests that children in the concrete operational stage (approximately 7–11 years of age) acquire logical thinking and categorization skills through hands-on, experiential learning (Piaget 1952, 7–9). Constructive play encourages operations such as classification, sorting, and spatial manipulation.

2.3. Movement and Nature-Based Play

Movement and nature-based play encompasses physical activities performed in both indoor and outdoor environments that emphasize physical involvement, environmental interaction, and sensory exploration. These activities, such as running, jumping, balancing, climbing, swinging, and navigating natural terrain, play a vital role in the development of gross motor coordination, spatial orientation, proprioceptive awareness, and kinaesthetic intelligence. Beyond supporting physical well-being, such play contributes significantly to cognitive and emotional growth by improving endurance, concentration, and ecological sensitivity (Pica 2006, 45–49).

Natural elements, such as changing topographies, weather patterns, or unstructured landscapes, foster children’s adaptive problem-solving skills and encourage their awareness of environmental systems. The spontaneous and unpredictable nature of outdoor play challenges children to navigate complexity and form intuitive responses to real-world stimuli. According to Sobel (2008, 27–30), immersion in natural environments enhances observational acuity and holistic perception, both of which form the basis for basic scientific reasoning skills.

In pedagogical traditions such as Montessori education, movement is considered an integral part of cognitive development. Montessori argued that purposeful movement is a channel through which internal order is structured, and environmental understanding is constructed (Montessori 1967, 111–114). Similarly, the Reggio Emilia approach treats the natural environment as an active participant in the learning process. Children construct knowledge

through open-ended outdoor interactions, interacting with multisensory stimuli and dynamic spatial forms (Edwards, Gandini, and Forman 2012, 142–144).

2.4. Science and Exploration Based Play

Science and exploration-based play includes activities that encourage questioning, observation, experimentation, and understanding cause-and-effect relationships.

Such play is consistent with Jean Piaget's concept of "active learning," especially at the concrete operational stage, when children begin to construct knowledge through hands-on involvement and logical operations (Piaget 1952, 27–30). Scientific play encourages the construction and testing of hypotheses, classification, comparison, and identification of causal mechanisms, all of which form the basis for critical and analytical thinking.

The Reggio Emilia approach similarly emphasizes experiential learning by positioning children as skilled researchers who construct meaning through interaction with the material world. Exploration is often encouraged in these environments, using materials and contexts designed to elicit inquiry and sustained participation (Edwards, Gandini, and Forman 2012, 126–128). This pedagogical orientation transforms play into a practice of inquiry, where children generate knowledge through experimentation, dialogue, and reflection.

Science and exploratory play foster adaptive and metacognitive awareness as children learn to cope with uncertainty and revise their assumptions based on evidence. When developed at an early age, these competencies support lifelong engagement with scientific disciplines and contribute to the development of knowledgeable, curious individuals.

In sum, science play represents a critical dimension of developmentally appropriate learning that combines natural curiosity with structured exploration. By transforming everyday experiences into opportunities for inquiry, it promotes not only cognitive development but also epistemological awareness and scientific literacy.

2.5. Language and Expression Based Play

Language and expression-focused play encompasses a range of activities that promote linguistic creativity, narrative construction, and verbal fluency through imagination and communicative engagement. These activities, such as storytelling, dramatization, role-playing, poetry, and rhyming games, develop children’s ability to express experiences, express emotions, and construct coherent narratives. Through such interactions, children develop their understanding of syntax, vocabulary, and discourse structures, thereby laying the foundation for advanced literacy and communicative competence (Bodrova and Leong 2007, 143–145).

In pedagogical frameworks such as the Montessori and Reggio Emilia approaches, language is not only considered as a means of communication but also as a tool for cognitive and emotional exploration. Montessori classrooms provide environments that support oral language development through storytelling corners, reading circles, and guided conversations (Montessori 1967, 205–207). Meanwhile, the Reggio Emilia philosophy conceptualizes oral language as one of the "hundred languages of children" and integrates it with other modalities such as music, movement, and visual arts to facilitate multidimensional expression (Edwards, Gandini, and Forman 2012, 165–168).

In summary, language- and expression-based play constitutes a fundamental modality for cognitive, social, and cultural development. It enables children to connect thought with language, transform experience into narrative, and participate meaningfully in the shared symbolic world of human communication.

2.6.Art-Based Play

Arts-based play refers to creative forms of expression in which children explore materials, techniques, and visual elements to produce personally meaningful and aesthetically expressive outcomes. These activities, such as drawing, painting, collage, sculpture, and mixed media, encourage fine motor development, visual-spatial organization, and symbolic communication—all critical to cognitive maturation. Children can develop a more developed world of thought through the expression of imaginative spaces in art.

Interaction with artistic media facilitates sensory integration and supports the development of abstract reasoning as children experiment with form, colour, texture, and composition to externalize internal concepts and feelings. As Berk (Berk, 2013, 314) notes, finger painting and tactile exploration help develop motor coordination, while more structured activities such as collage foster the development of planning and sequencing skills. Thus, artistic creation becomes both a process of self-discovery and a cognitive exercise in decision making.

Within pedagogical paradigms such as Montessori and Reggio Emilia, art is framed not only as a playful activity but also as a critical medium through which children make sense of their environment. Maria Montessori emphasized that artistic activity supports sensory education and environmental awareness, especially when natural, recyclable, and open-ended materials are used (Montessori 1967, 159–162). Similarly, the Reggio Emilia philosophy conceptualizes art as one of the "hundred languages" of children, a variety of forms of expression that enable multidimensional learning and communication (Edwards, Gandini, and Forman 2012, 93–97).

The space is directly linked to movement and action (Kalay, 2017, 135). In this context, art-based play acts as a catalyst for metacognitive growth and sociocultural learning, making it indispensable within the larger framework of developmentally appropriate educational environments.

2.7. Spatially Based Play

Spatially based play refers to creative activities that emerge from children's bodily interactions with the physical environment. This form of play includes climbing, crawling, hiding, building, and navigating through space, requiring children to perceive, manipulate, and respond to their environment. Such activities foster creative agency through movement and material interaction, while also developing spatial perception, bodily awareness, and environmental cognition (Maxwell et al. Mitchell, and Evans 2008, 570–571).

Design approaches in interior architecture and environmental psychology increasingly recognize the formative influence of space on developmental outcomes. According to the Reggio Emilia philosophy, space is conceptualized as a "third teacher" that is a dynamic participant in the pedagogical process and communicates, challenges, and supports learning through its form, materials, and organization (Gandini 2012, 327–329). Environments designed with elements such as changing spaces, tactile surfaces, natural lighting, and reconfigurable structures allow children to explore space imaginatively and construct narrative worlds through concrete interaction. Mobile spaces, which come to the fore as temporary shelters in the social disruptions that affect human life today, can also be used to promote child development and fantastic experiences (Kalay et al, 2022, 119)

Therefore, spatially based play is not just a matter of movement or physical interaction; it represents a multi-layered form of learning where architecture, cognition and creativity intersect. It enables children to connect abstract ideas to material forms and physical actions, thus developing imaginative fluency, motor coordination and environmental literacy. In this context, spatially guided play is indispensable for designing learning environments that support the holistic development of the child. In addition, children have the opportunity to experience beyond physical space through fictional spaces that are independent of the current time (Yalçın, 2023, 25).

In order for creative play to function as an effective tool for cognitive and emotional development, the physical environment must be organized in a way that responds to children's developmental and perceptual needs. In this context, spatial organization not only provides the necessary organization but also goes beyond mere physical organization and becomes a

critical parameter that shapes a child's self-confidence, environmental interaction, and creative expression. Developmentally focused educational models (especially the Montessori approach) advocate spatial arrangements that allow for independent movement, sensory exploration, and interaction with natural materials. In such environments, modular furniture, tactile elements, and open-ended configurations allow children to be active participants in their own learning processes (Lillard 2016, 97–100).

These environments not only foster physical and emotional connection to the environment, but also support autonomy, curiosity, and spatial cognition. Movement-based creative play, such as station games, nature walks, rhythmic activities, or shadow play, contributes to the development of kinaesthetic intelligence as described in Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences and promotes the integration of body and mind (Gardner 1993, 201–204).

Design elements such as modular systems, multifunctional surfaces, interactive sound and lighting installations expand children's capacity to experience, construct and transform space through play. Creative play should therefore be reframed not only as a pedagogical tool but also as an active, spatially transformative component. The interior environment should transform from a passive background into an interactive factor that dynamically supports and enhances the play process. The atmosphere of the interior should contribute to the child's development and the factors that determine the perception of the interior space should be organized in a way that suits the parameters of the child. Lowenfeld's art-focused classification reveals children's art perceptions according to their age groups. Therefore, the nuances related to design parameters were evaluated through this taxonomy.

3. Architectural Case Studies in Spatially Playful Environments: Spatial Examples at the Intersection of Pedagogy and Interior Architecture

To gain better understanding how spatial design actively supports cognitive and creative development through play, a random selection of architectural case studies are evaluated to demonstrate the successful integration of pedagogical principles with interior architecture.

3.1 Fuji Kindergarten – Tezuka Architects (Japan)

Designed by Takaharu and Yui Tezuka in Tokyo, Fuji Kindergarten exemplifies how open, circular spatial arrangements support unrestricted movement and social interaction. The roof's uninterrupted path encourages free-running activities, while the interior maintains a flexible layout. Mature trees extend from the building's interior, providing direct contact with nature and reinforcing a biophilic design approach. These features align with Vygotsky's "zone of

proximal development" and Montessori's emphasis on the prepared environment, allowing children to explore, interact, and self-regulate independently (Tezuka and Tezuka 2007, 14-17)(Vygotsky, 1978, 88–89).

3.2 The Nest – Alma-nac Architects (UK)

Located in London, The Nest is characterized by playful spatial articulation. The firm embraces the principle of design for everyone. Designed with child-centred spatial proportion and geometries, sloping ceilings and dynamic visual cues, the structure encourages a sense of wonder and spatial exploration. Sustainability and natural ventilation are embedded in its structure, aligning the architectural intent with both cognitive health and environmental stewardship. The gamified environment encourages curiosity and aligns with Piaget's theory of active exploration (Piaget 1962).

3.3 WeGrow School – BIG + WeWork (USA)

Designed in New York City, WeGrow School uses modular furniture and movable walls to create flexible learning environments. The circular forms feature soft colours, natural materials, and smooth surfaces. Emphasizing self-initiated exploration, the space can adapt to a variety of pedagogical needs and play styles. Sustainability and mindfulness are at the core of its philosophy, reflecting broader educational trends in holistic development. Storage areas are accessible to children. The space can also be used as play objects.

3.4 Children's Science Centre – NSMH (Turkey)

Designed by Nevzat Sayın in Izmir, the Children's Science Centre integrates architectural minimalism with pedagogical interaction. Offering horizontal spatial organization and open experimental spaces, the design encourages physical mobility and scientific inquiry. Its spatial logic is rooted in Piaget's stages of cognitive development, emphasizing concrete experience as the basis for knowledge acquisition.

4.Conclusion

The interaction between cognitive development, creative play, and spatial design constitutes an important area of study in both developmental psychology and interior design. As evidenced by both theoretical paradigms and architectural case studies, play is not just a peripheral activity for children; it is a central mechanism for intellectual, emotional, and social growth. Supporting this mechanism spatially at the child-centred spatial proportion

increases learning skills. The child's experience of creative play in interaction with space contributes to his/her cognitive intelligence. Space is not merely a background but a participatory element. The contributions of scientists such as Piaget, Vygotsky, Lowenfeld, Gardner, and Wallon have collectively illuminated how different forms of play activate multiple intelligences and support children's developmental trajectories.

When educational spaces are designed with sensitivity to children's psychological needs and creative capacities, they cease to be neutral backdrops and instead become co-facilitators of learning. Architectural projects such as the Fuji Kindergarten demonstrate how spatial openness, biophilia, and environmental integration can actively foster autonomy, exploration, and creative expression. These environments function not only as containers for activity, but also as dynamic pedagogical tools that encourage inquiry, resilience, and creative engagement.

Together, these cases demonstrate the potential of architecture as a catalyst for learning, creativity, and socio-emotional development. They show that when spatial design is aligned with developmental psychology and educational philosophy, play environments transform multidimensional learning capabilities. In addition, the modular design of the space and its flexible solutions allow them to intervene and integrate with the space.

The use of non-toxic, natural and recyclable materials in material selection protects the student's health and also helps them to be aware of environmental awareness and sustainability. The selection of soft materials in the space prevents possible accidents and eliminates psychological boundaries. Circular geometries provide freer and softer areas for the child's bright and clear mind. The application of aesthetic understandings in space design also contributes to the development of aesthetic sense at an early age. The use of furnishing elements such as stages and workshop tables for performing art strengthens artistic awareness and prepares the child for the future socioculturally.

In the context of 21st-century education, where adaptability, innovation, and interdisciplinary thinking are valued, the integration of creative play and thoughtful spatial design is more than desirable. Interior designers, educators, and policymakers must work collaboratively to ensure that learning environments respect the developmental rhythms of childhood and foster a culture of creative inquiry. Designing for play therefore becomes both a creative act and a moral imperative, aimed at raising generations who can think critically, act compassionately, and interact meaningfully with the world around them.

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CHAPTER 3

RE-EXPERIENCED THE ALLEGORY OF THE CAVE IN CONTEMPORARY ART

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INTRODUCTION

Allegory is one of the oldest forms of expression, enabling humans to express abstract ideas through concrete signs. This method reinterprets the sensory world through symbols, images, and metaphors, creating a multilayered field of meaning. Allegorical thought is not merely a narrative technique; it is also a philosophical inquiry into human existence, the pursuit of knowledge, and the perception of reality. In this respect, allegory bridges disciplines such as art, philosophy, and literature, opening up discussion of the relationship between appearance and truth, illusion and knowledge.

Plato's Allegory of the Cave is known as the story of a group of people chained in a cave seeing only shadows and accepting these shadows as reality. This allegory demonstrates that humans' understanding of reality is limited to what they can perceive with their senses. Shadows, which only represent form as silhouettes or dark spots, do not contain descriptive information about the object or figure they represent, such as texture, color, or form. Therefore, differences in form and meaning exist between the object and its shadow. Not every image representing existence fully expresses it. The conceptual relationship established between the Allegory of the Cave and Cornelia Parker's artistic production demonstrates a reconsideration of the questioning of the nature of truth, perception, and knowledge in the context of contemporary art. Through his allegorical narrative, Plato demonstrates that humans, confined to the boundaries of the sensory world, perceive reality only through reflections; truth can only be attained through questioning, reflection, and philosophical awareness. In this sense, the cave is a place of illusion where knowledge is limited to shadows, while the emergence from the cave symbolizes mental enlightenment.

Some of Cornelia Parker's works bring Plato's epistemological framework to a contemporary level. By transforming everyday objects, the artist redefines both their physical and semantic integrity. This transformation, like the illusion represented by the shadows in the cave, reveals the fragile relationship between appearance and essence. In works like Thirty Pieces of Silver, Cold Dark Matter: An Exploded View, and Neither From Nor Towards, Parker alters the material form of objects while also transforming the historical, religious, and cultural meanings attributed to them. Thus, the works represent a relative and plural understanding of reality that questions Plato's quest for absolute truth.

1. PLATO'S ALLEGORY OF THE CAVE

Humans transform the universe they perceive through their senses into audio and visual means of expression, using forms that enrich expression such as codes, symbols, icons, and images. Thus, language is created through a concise form containing multiple meanings, rather than a long narrative. Here, ways of seeing the individual and their society are also incorporated. By using common means of expression in people's daily lives and intellectual processes, communication becomes easier and is passed on to the next generation. Abstract concepts find their presence in narrative through concrete expression.

A narrative about one subject also finds a formal counterpart in a narrative about another. One of these is called allegory, also known as metaphorical narrative. Gibbs (2020: 14) defines allegory as the connection of subjects such as people's daily actions, human existence, and the spiritual afterlife with larger symbolic themes. Allegory is the concretization of abstract expressions such as thoughts and concepts related to life. Durand (1998: 10) states that, unlike symbolic narrative, allegory begins with an idea to arrive at a representation, while the symbol created represents itself. Peters (2004: 34) defines allegory as speaking, expressing, or interpreting in a way that intends or derives a meaning different from the spoken word. Allegory is a new narrative created by the expressions used to express a thought or concept. This narrative is linked to other themes that strengthen the expression. Gibbs (2020: 21) states that allegory can often be used to interpret abstract human themes, particularly those involving existential and spiritual conflicts, using concrete human events. Everything abstract, in order to find a response in a person, must find a response in concrete expressions or themes that have already been embedded in the perception of that person's environment or life. Allegory makes abstract ideas more understandable and concrete by deriving new meanings from meaning, thus enhancing perception for the viewer or reader. "Allegorical thought relies on our embodied creative abilities" (Gibbs, 2020: 24).

Allegory is a technique used to create deeper meanings in diverse fields such as art, philosophy, religion, and politics. Gündoğdu (2021: 308) defines allegory as an important concept used in philosophy, ethics, rhetoric, theology, and literary criticism, both in relation to the creation of literary works and as a specific form of interpretation (allegoresis) of literary texts. Allegory is characterized by symbolism, ambiguity, and didactic purpose. Here, characters or events are used as representatives of something else, pointing to a broader world

of meaning. Allegory generally aims to convey a message or teach a particular view, encouraging the reader or viewer to think.

The fundamental characteristics of allegory allow for a deep understanding and multifaceted interpretation. The superficial meaning of a character or event often points to a much deeper meaning. A story that appears simple at first glance carries a deeper message. The relationship between these two meanings creates the richness and layered structure of the allegory. Allegory generally aims to convey a message, one that aims to teach the reader or viewer a specific idea or value. The characters or events in allegories serve as tools for conveying the teachings of specific ideologies or social norms. These teachings are sometimes conveyed directly, sometimes indirectly.

When we examine Plato's allegory of the cave, the subject of our study, this narrative appears in his work "The Republic" (Plato, 2005: 182-184) and describes people's perceptions of reality, the process of acquiring knowledge, and freedom. Through this allegory, Plato aims to convey that there is a "reality" beyond the world humans perceive through their senses, and that realizing it is possible only through philosophical thought and inquiry. The Allegory of the Cave tells the story of a group of people chained by their necks and legs in a cave. These people have been staring at the cave wall since birth, their heads fixed forward. A fire burns behind them, and various objects pass in front of it. These shadows are cast by the light of the fire. The chained people see only these shadows and define their reality by them. One day, a person freed from his chains walks out of the cave. At first, the light pains him, but over time, he becomes aware of the outside world and sees the sun. Realizing what truly happened, he returns to the cave and tries to lead others out, but they belittle him and don't believe the reality he sees. Consequently, those who dare not leave the cave continue to live in shadow.

In this allegory, the cave symbolizes the sensory world and people's superficial perception of reality, while shadows represent unrealistic, misleading perceptions and reflections. The chained people represent those content with sensory data and closed to philosophical thought and knowledge; the person emerging from the cave represents philosophical enlightenment and the attainment of true knowledge; and finally, the sun represents true knowledge and absolute reality. This allegory demonstrates that sensory perceptions guide the perception of reality, that unless these perceptions are questioned, they

will remain limited to what we are shown, and that true knowledge is achieved through the act of questioning and thinking.

2. EVALUATION OF CORNELIA PARKER'S THIRTY PIECES OF SILVER

Cornelia Parker was born in 1956 in Cheshire, England. She produces works across various art disciplines, including installation, sculpture, photography, and video. A pioneer of contemporary British art, Parker transforms and alters the objects she uses in her work, reimagining them in different contexts. In her art, she often creates profound symbolic meanings by using simple and ordinary objects from everyday life. “Parker addresses the important issues of our time in her works with subtle touches. She transforms social and political issues such as the nature of violence, ecology, national identity, and human rights into a formal language using visual metaphors and storytelling” (Tate, 2022: 3-4). By transforming everyday objects into works of art, Cornelia Parker pushes the boundaries of academic conventions in sculpture. “Instead of carving, modeling, or casting objects like traditional sculptors, Parker creates works by shaping them through interventions such as crushing and compressing them.” (Tate, 2022: 3). The transformation of the object used in Cornelia Parker's works and the new meaning structure created by this transformation shape the form and content of the work.

Cornela Parker's Thirty Pieces of Silver was created between 1988 and 1989. One of Parker's most well-known works, it consists of numerous cylindrically flattened silver objects, including plates, spoons, candlesticks, mugs, cigarette cases, teapots, and trombones. Thirty Pieces of Silver is an example of the artist's large-scale sculptures and installations. This work represents the thirty silver coins Jesus received for his betrayal by Judas Iscariot. This biblical story symbolizes the betrayal that led to Jesus' crucifixion and encompasses themes such as power, money, and disloyalty. The work is composed of a total of thirty pieces, arranged in six rows and five rows, suspended from the ceiling by a metal wire. Each piece contains thirty metal objects of varying sizes, arranged in various ways. These objects have been crushed, twisted, and deformed. The overall work reveals a composition composed of objects transformed from their original form into a new form. The shadows of the shapes created were also included in the work.

Image 1. Cornelia Parker, Thirty Pieces of Silver 1988–9, Installation.

Cornelia Parker's "Thirty Pieces of Silver" carries multilayered meanings, both religious and social. Concepts such as betrayal, infidelity, money, and regret are explored here, alongside philosophical and religious reflections and a social critique. The use of old silver objects is also linked to commemorating the past. Initially, the crushing and flattening of objects of different shapes almost imbues them with the same formal meaning. However, the image and value are altered by the artist's intervention. Metal pieces, which are non-functional but contain traces of the past, help to convey the content.

Judas Iscariot's betrayal of Jesus is a significant event in Christian history, a story recounted in four different Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John). Judas Iscariot, one of Jesus' twelve apostles, betrayed Jesus and accepted thirty silver coins in exchange for his act. This betrayal is one of the fundamental reasons for Jesus' crucifixion in Christian belief and also symbolizes universal themes of sin, deception, betrayal, and remorse.

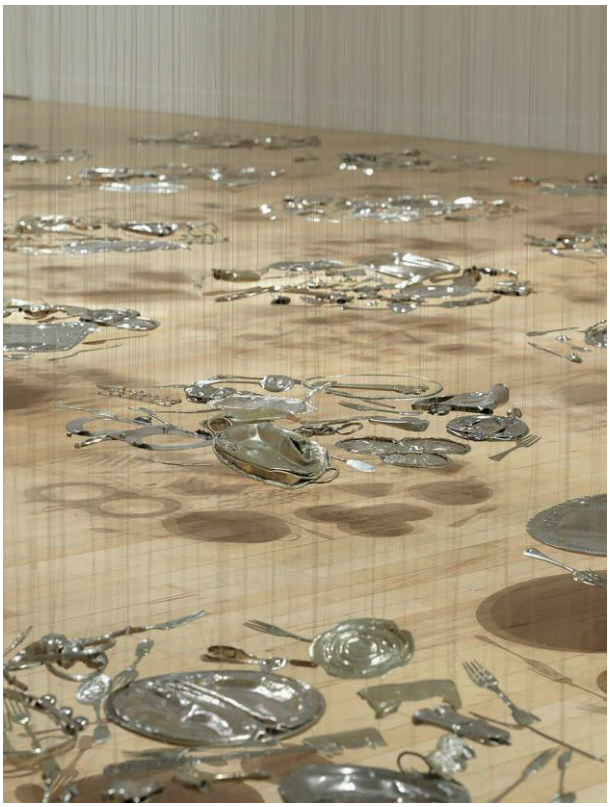

Image 2. Cornelia Parker, Thirty Pieces of Silver 1988–9, Installation.

When we examine Thirty Pieces of Silver allegorically, representations and symbols within the story, such as betrayal and disloyalty, regret, money and value, philosophical and religious reflection, and social critique, become evident. Betrayal and Disloyalty: The work directly references Judas Iscariot's betrayal of Jesus, symbolizing themes such as disloyalty and the struggle for power. The silver coins symbolize this betrayal and also demonstrate how individuals in society can deviate from ethical values for personal gain. Repentance: Matthew 27:3-5 describes Judas returning the coins to the temple in remorse, but ultimately committing suicide by hanging from a tree. This event is represented in the work by the hanging of thirty silver pieces from the ceiling. Money and Value: Money is used here not merely as a material value but as a tool that prompts the questioning of moral and ethical values. Parker's use of money in this way questions how money and human behavior intersect, demonstrating this through a work of art. Philosophical and Religious Reflection: The work explores Jesus's betrayal and its consequences on a philosophical level. The silver coins received in exchange for Jesus's betrayal can also be considered a reflection on the afterlife. Social Criticism: Cornelia Parker's work not only critiques a religious event but also social injustice, power

relations, and manipulation. This suggests how values within a society can be manipulated for material gain.

Cornelia Parker's Cold Dark Matter: An Exploded View (1991) depicts a garden shed, a commonplace object of everyday life, being detonated by the British army, reconstructing the moment of the explosion in a frozen form. The resulting installation is illuminated by a single light source placed amidst hundreds of suspended objects. This light is the fundamental element that determines both the work's spatial unity and its meaning. The fragments cast shadows on the walls and floor, allowing the viewer to simultaneously experience both the objects themselves and the shadows they cast. This situation embodies the opposition between the "false reality" represented by shadows and the "truth" symbolized by light, as described in Plato's allegory of the cave. In Parker's work, light is both a tool of illumination and an illusion. While the viewer witnesses the frozen moment of an explosion, they know that it is, in fact, a reconstructed, artificial representation. Thus, the work evokes the effort to access the truth behind the visible world, as in Plato's theory of ideas. While the prisoners in Plato's cave mistake shadows for reality, the individual who emerges recognizes the source of light—that is, truth. In Parker's Cold Dark Matter, the viewer is placed in a position of oscillation between these two planes, aware of both shadows and objects. The central position of light is almost an artistic reflection of Plato's sun metaphor: knowledge, enlightenment, and existence acquire meaning around this light. However, Parker inverts Plato's hierarchical model of knowledge. In his work, truth emerges not as pure "enlightenment," but in a moment of fragmentation, destruction, and uncertainty.

Image 3. Cornelia Parker, Cold Dark Matter: An Exploded View, 1991, Installation.

The objects dispersed by the explosion represent a physical and symbolic disintegration: they render visible the instability of reality and the fragile position of humanity in relation to knowledge and the production of meaning. In this respect, Parker's work represents not an exit from the cave, but rather an intermediary space where truth, along with the shadows within, can be reproduced. Parker's relationship with light transforms the epistemological process in Plato's allegory into a contemporary aesthetic experience. Cold Dark Matter invites the viewer not only to see the aftermath of destruction but also to question the idea of truth hidden within it. Shadows and reflected fragments remind us that the path to knowledge is not absolute illumination, but rather a fragmented and fragile process. Thus, Parker confronts Plato's static and immutable understanding of truth in the world of ideas with the plural, fractured, and experiential reality of the contemporary world. Cold Dark Matter blurs the boundaries between appearance and reality, illusion and knowledge, positioning the viewer both inside and outside the cave. Therefore, the work reconstructs the cave of the modern age—that is, the world of images, objects, and fragments—with an aesthetic consciousness.

Image 4. Cornelia Parker, Cold Dark Matter: An Exploded View Detail, 1991, Installation.

Cornelia Parker's installation, Neither From Nor Towards, was created in 1992. In this work, she collected the remains of a wooden hut that had fallen off a cliff into the sea on the Dorset coast and arranged these pieces in a suspended state, suspended from the ceiling in the gallery space. The resulting installation represents the dissolution of the material world, a transitional space where meaning, belonging, and existence become ambiguous. The phrase "Neither From Nor Towards" in its title emphasizes the work's ontological ambiguity. These pieces no longer belong; they belong neither to the beginning nor to the end. Parker's deliberate state of suspension resembles the "intermediate state" in Plato's allegory of the cave—the bewilderment and uncertainty experienced during one's transition from the world of appearances to the world of truth. In Plato, leaving the cave represents a kind of epistemological enlightenment; in Parker's work, this enlightenment is rethought within the context of the objects' state of destruction and suspension.

In Plato's allegory of the cave, people are chained, seeing only shadows and believing them to be real. To reach truth, one must leave the cave and turn to light—in other words, knowledge. In Neither From Nor Towards, Parker reverses this allegorical process: there is no light here; objects are neither fully visible nor completely lost. The fragments remain suspended in the air, accompanied by their own shadows, in a dark space. This aesthetic arrangement invites the viewer back into the cave—not as a chained prisoner, but as a

consciousness questioning the relationship between shadows and truth. The suspension of the objects, like the shadows on the cave wall, represents neither complete presence nor complete absence. Parker transforms this ambiguity into an ontological question: can reality persist after destruction, or is it merely a perceptual reconstruction? Thus, in contrast to Plato's understanding of absolute truth, the work highlights the fragmented, temporary, and relative reality of the contemporary world.

Image 5. Cornelia Parker, Neither From Nor Towards, 1992, Installation.

Parker's work, Neither From Nor Towards, invites the viewer to experience not "enlightenment" in the Platonic sense, but "in-betweenness." The remains of an exploded or fallen structure hang on the indefinite boundary of past and future, creating a kind of visual and intellectual blur, like the eyes of a man emerging from a cave unable to adjust to the light. Parker's use of materials such as burnt wood, metal fragments, and charred surfaces represent the collapse of the material world and the fragility of the pursuit of knowledge. In this context, the work rejects the absolute illuminating function of light in Plato's allegory of the cave, arguing instead that knowledge and meaning are constantly being reconstructed. Parker demonstrates that reality exists not as a fixed truth, but as an experience suspended among the ruins. By rendering visible the modern man's cave—that is, the scattered fragments of

meaning, identity, and belonging—Neither From Nor Towards questions the contemporary world's search for truth on both aesthetic and philosophical levels.

Image 6. Cornelia Parker, Neither From Nor Towards, Detail, 1992 Installation.

3. GENERAL EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

The relationship between Plato's Allegory of the Cave and Cornelia Parker's art reveals a profound interaction, both philosophically and visually. In the Allegory of the Cave, Plato questions people's understanding of reality limited to sensory perception, emphasizing the necessity of philosophical thought and inquiry to transcend this understanding. The relationship between object, shadow, and viewer, also evident in Cornelia Parker's works, embodies the philosophical inquiry of the Allegory of the Cave. Parker's works explore the distinction between reality and perception, offering viewers not only a visual experience but also reshaping their understanding of reality.

Allegory is a narrative form that allows abstract ideas to be expressed in concrete forms, adding depth to human existential and intellectual inquiry. Plato's allegory of the cave offers a fundamental philosophical framework regarding the nature of knowledge and truth; it posits the idea of a "reality" beyond the world perceived through the senses, accessible through inquiry and reflection. This allegory represents the stages of illusion, enlightenment, and transformation experienced by humans in the process of attaining knowledge. Cornelia Parker's art allows us to rethink this philosophical framework in a contemporary context. Her works, Thirty Pieces of Silver, Cold Dark Matter: An Exploded View, and Neither From Nor Towards, explore the fragile nature of meaning, values, and reality through the lens of everyday objects. The transformation, crushing, or suspension of objects signifies a process of reconstruction, both physical and conceptual. Parker demonstrates that, like the shadows in Plato's cave, the boundaries between appearance and truth are not fixed, and that knowledge is constantly reproduced. Thirty Pieces of Silver explores the concepts of betrayal, value, and conscience through historical and religious references, while questioning the ethical boundaries of the individual. Cold Dark Matter and Neither From Nor Towards, on the other hand, emphasize the ambiguity of the perception of truth through the relationship between light, shadow, and void. In these works, Parker reverses Plato's understanding of absolute truth, revealing the fragmented, provisional, and interpretive nature of knowledge in the contemporary world. Ultimately, the relationship between Plato's allegory of the cave and Parker's works reveals that truth is not static but an experiential process. Parker's works redefine the "cave" of modern man: a realm of reality filled with shadows, fragments, and debris. In this context, art is positioned not only as a means of representation but also as a philosophical space where knowledge, existence, and perception are questioned. Cornelia Parker's works transform Plato's search for absolute truth in the world of ideas into the multilayered, fragile, and ever-changing experience of reality for contemporary man.

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