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## ARTICLE

# THE ROLE OF ARCHIVES IN PRESERVING ARTISTIC MEMORY VISUAL ARTISTS FROM TURKEY IN THE NETHERLANDS

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## INTRODUCTION

Archives preserve artistic legacies and connect past and future generations. Safeguarding the archives of artists in the regions where they are located gives a critical understanding of the impact of diverse communities on the evolution and historiography of contemporary art, challenging the singular/canonical narrative. At this point, institutional archives play a crucial role in collecting, preserving, and providing access to primary sources that document the visual arts within a specific geography. This means that institutions act as first-hand sources for accessing materials related to artists' works, often providing access to resources that may not be available directly from the artists themselves, thus preserving the broader historical and cultural context of their work. Archives, along with oral and ritual traditions, help transfer information across generations, sustaining memory over time and space.<sup>1</sup> This connection depends on accessibility, inclusivity, preservation and interpretation of marginalized and diasporic histories. Visibility, interpretation and engagement strengthens archives, while neglect weakens them.

Many archivists and social scientists argue that neutrality is not possible in the archive of the institutions. Even if neutrality in archiving is part of the preserving process in the institutions, it can still disadvantage certain communities. At this

point, while not all migrant artists experience marginalisation to the same degree, scholarship shows that non-EU artists in the Dutch art world have historically faced structural disadvantages.<sup>2</sup> Archivist Sam Winn notes, “True neutrality is an impossible aspiration, because we as archivists are individual practitioners called upon to distill the historical record.”<sup>3</sup> Or, as Jules argues, neutrality often erases marginalized voices from historical records.<sup>4</sup> As documented in the ideas of archivists as well as social scientists Michel Foucault, Hal Foster, and Jacques Derrida, archives can be corrupted and manipulated, and therefore it is not possible to completely democratize or neutralize institutions.<sup>5</sup> For this reason, there is a need to diversify forms of representation, provide equal access to sources, challenge dominant narratives, engage with communities, and enrich presentations/interpretations by focusing on inclusivity and diversity in archives.

The article examines the representation of artists within the archive and the interpretation of their activities through archives of selected key Dutch museums and institutions, including the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, The Netherlands Institute for Sound & Vision (NISV) in Hilversum and the Rijksakademie in Amsterdam. For the purpose of this article, three Dutch museums were excluded due to the paucity of relevant material in their archives.<sup>6</sup> Archival collections of selected institutions, which include exhibition catalogues, correspondence, photographs, multimedia, and other historical documents about artists. These institutions were chosen for their prestige and prominence within the Netherlands, as well as their historical engagement with artists from Turkey. This dual significance underscores the importance of evaluating how these archives preserve and interpret artistic memory, offering insights into the depth and nature of these relationships. Instead of focusing on the technical possibilities of an archive’s preservation function, this article addresses the critical and cultural aspects of how archives actively shape the understanding of artistic memory by representing and interpreting the materials related to artists from Turkey who have relocated to the Netherlands. It explores the role of archives as dynamic spaces for documenting and reframing histories, emphasising their impact on shaping inclusive narratives in contemporary art.

This article is part of an intensive research project titled “The Impact of Contemporary Artists Who Moved from Turkey on the Dutch Art Ecosystem.” Officially launched in early 2021, the project has been funded by the Mondriaan Fonds.<sup>7</sup> It presents a certain part of findings from this research, focusing specifically on the period between the 1960s and 2000s. As the first study of its kind, this research provides a pioneering exploration into the contributions of artists from Turkey within the Dutch art scene by foregrounding the role that institutional archives play in documenting, interpreting, and making those contributions visible. The aim of the article is what is the role of the archives in safeguarding the artistic memory with a particular attention on visual artists from Turkey who have relocated to the Netherlands. While the article provides insights into the intersection of archival practices and artistic memory, its scope is limited to archival records and artistic

contributions documented within the specified timeframe. This research focuses on artists who currently live and work in the Netherlands, as well as those who have lived there in the past, and who have actively contributed to the field of visual arts through their artistic practices, exhibitions, and public engagements.

## UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF INSTITUTIONAL ARCHIVES

Institutional archives in the art field serve as repositories for records produced or acquired by their parent institutions.<sup>8</sup> Institutional archives in art are pivotal in documenting, preserving and also interpreting the legacies of artists, particularly those who have relocated from different cultural geographies. For example, artists from Turkey constitute one of the earliest and most consistently present non-Western groups in the Netherlands' post-1960 art scene, yet they remain under-researched and underrepresented in Dutch art historiography; focusing on them addresses a documented scholarly gap and provides a coherent case study for testing archival inclusivity.<sup>9</sup>

Institutional archives serve as critical spaces for negotiating historical narratives, offering a platform to challenge dominant histories by integrating marginalised voices into broader cultural and art ecosystems.<sup>10</sup> While participatory programmes can democratise archives, institutions may simultaneously reinforce dominant canons through selective acquisition policies, thus archives occupy a paradoxical position, both enabling and constraining narrative plurality. In addition to this, migration in the institutions often disrupts established cultural identities and narratives, leaving artists to navigate new environments while retaining ties to their origins. Archives help bridge this divide by preserving the stories, works, and personal artifacts of artists following migration, ensuring that their contributions to cultural and artistic ecosystems are not lost. As Charles Jeurgens highlights, migration necessitates the reconstruction of memory, allowing communities and individuals to maintain a sense of continuity and identity amidst displacement.<sup>11</sup>

Therefore, institutional archives must evolve to address these challenges. Moving beyond preservation, institutions must adopt participatory approaches and inclusive practices, ensuring that archives remain open, flexible, and experimental, thus transforming them into spaces for dialogue and innovation. By fostering accessibility and engaging with artists and communities directly, archives can transform into spaces of dialogue and innovation, reshaping the narratives of contemporary art to reflect its true diversity.

Inclusive archiving requires institutions to move beyond custodial preservation and adopt practices that are participatory, culturally-responsive, and iteratively accountable. Drawing on community-archive scholarship and guidelines such as Michelle Caswell's theory of "descriptive sovereignty," the Protocols for Native American Archival Materials (2006), and the Anti-Racist Description Resources developed by Archives for Black Lives in Philadelphia, an inclusive archive is one that describes records with, not for the communities they

document, ensuring language and subject headings reflect lived identities rather than institutional defaults; negotiates discovery and access conditions that honour community protocols-recognising, for example, that unrestricted digitisation may conflict with cultural or ethical norms; and subjects its metadata and access policies to regular, equity-focused review in dialogue with stakeholders. Applied to art institutions, these principles translate into co-writing catalogue entries with artists, embedding community-preferred terminology in collection databases, and establishing feedback mechanisms that allow marginalised groups to flag harmful or exclusionary descriptions. By integrating such frameworks into their daily workflows, museums and archives can shift from merely housing artists' legacies to actively co-curating them, thus transforming archival spaces into platforms for reparative cultural memory.<sup>12</sup>

## **HISTORICAL CONTEXT THROUGH INSTITUTIONAL ARCHIVES: ARTISTS' MIGRATION FROM TURKEY TO THE NETHERLANDS**

Although large-scale Turkish migration to the Netherlands began in the early 1960s under labour-recruitment agreements, the artists who relocated did not come as part of that guest-worker (in Dutch: *gastarbeider*) programme. Instead, they moved independently. This movement was shaped by both push factors in Turkey, such as political instability and limited institutional support for contemporary art, and pull factors in the Netherlands, including the presence of artist residencies, modern art institutions, and international networks. Artists such as Nur Tarim and Nuray Ataş reinforced this idea. In the 1980s, Ataş recalls that she left Turkey primarily "to develop my artistic identity" in Amsterdam's freer climate, yet once settled she began to address the everyday problems of the Turkish community<sup>13</sup> Tarim likewise describes how "in the seventies, the climate in Turkey was neither politically nor culturally suitable for manifesting yourself as an artist... there was hardly a museum, you could not see any originals. Then there is no other option but to go to Europe."<sup>14</sup> Even in the 1990s, similar reasons were at play when artists such as Servet Kocyigit and Sefer Memisoglu settled in the Netherlands.<sup>15</sup>

Esma Yiğitoğlu and Nuray Ataş laid the groundwork for Turkish-Dutch artistic engagement. These artists reflected Turkish culture and community in their practices, blending them with the modernist influences they encountered in the Netherlands. Their works reflect a hybrid identity, addressing themes of cultural memory and belonging, which have since become defining features of this artistic diaspora [Figure 1].<sup>16</sup>

Artists who moved from other countries in Amsterdam began challenging the exclusionary nature of Western art institutions, leading to debates on cultural policy and artistic inclusion.<sup>17</sup> During the 1970s and 1980s, the first wave of artists from Turkey in the Netherlands navigated an art scene dominated by Western modernist traditions, which often marginalised non-European perspectives.<sup>18</sup> Despite these challenges, these artists integrated into the ecosystem by studying





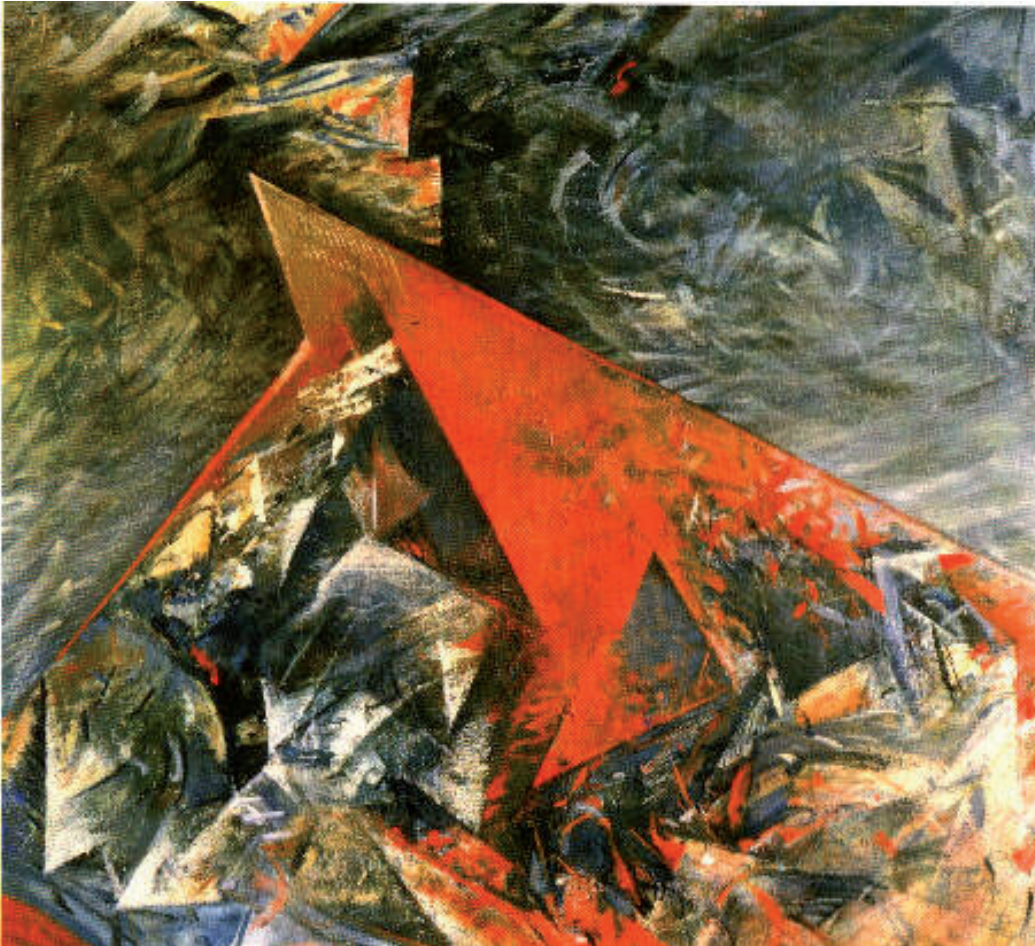
**Figure 1.**  
Esma Yiğitoğlu, *Omslag/Muska*, 1986,  
Watercolour, Paper, Stelatex, Chalk,  
101x78cm,  
Courtesy of Wouter Welling.



at leading Dutch academies such as Willem de Kooning, Rijksakademie, HKU, AKI/ArtEZ and Gerrit Rietveld.

Early pioneers such as Şerefınur Ayiter (1927-2018), Nuray Ataş (1942), Mustafa Şener (1945), Arhan Günermengi (1947), Nur Tarım (1947), Işık Tüzüner (1954) and Atilla Kanbir (1955) were drawn to the Netherlands after completing formal education at institutions like Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University in Istanbul.<sup>19</sup> Others, such as visual artist Esmâ Yiğitoğlu (1944 -2009), Saniye Bildircin (1946), Bülent Evren (1955), Ferit Bölük (?) and Hüseyin Karadeli (1956), Neval Gölay (1961) and Halil Üngör (1969) came to the Netherlands to study at (post) academies or they such as Nesrin Düring (1947) built an artistic career in the Netherlands. According to the results of archival research, Esmâ Yiğitoğlu (Istanbul, 1944-Rotterdam, 2009) is the first artist to move from Turkey to the Netherlands in 1961 to study art and the first student in Willem de Kooning Academy and Nuray Ataş follows her as the first student to attend Rijksakademie in 1966. Others from their generation moved to the Netherlands in the 1970s.<sup>20</sup>

The migration experience significantly influenced the artistic practices of artists from Turkey in the Netherlands, fostering a synthesis of their heritage and the new cultural environments they encountered. While early artists such as Mustafa Şener, Nur Tarım, Esmâ Yiğitoğlu and Nuray Ataş focused on abstract and/or figurative works informed by both their Turkish and Dutch training [Figure 2],



**Figure 2.**  
Mustafa Şener, *Zonder Titel*, 1989,  
Oil Painting on Canvas,  
Courtesy of the artist.

Nuray Ataş's works, especially, became a medium to navigate her dual identities and articulate her experiences of migration.<sup>21</sup>

The artists brought diverse practices that enriched the Dutch art landscape. Şener is known for his abstract paintings, which are rooted in modernist aesthetics. Yiğitoğlu, a pioneering sculptor, incorporated natural materials and cultural motifs inspired by Turkish heritage, creating a unique dialogue between Eastern and Western artistic traditions. Tuzuner utilizes recycled materials to create works addressing consumerism, balance, and communication or Evren blends abstract geometry and mythology, emphasizing concepts of love and war in later works.

In more recent decades after the 1990s, Fahrettin Orenli, Servet Kocyigit and Ahmet Ögüt have introduced socially engaged and critical practices into the art scene. Their works often address pressing global issues, including migration and cultural politics, collective memory and identity. For example, Kocyigit's works explore the intricacies of the human experience and the relationship between individuals and their surroundings, while Ahmet Ögüt's works interrogate political power structures and societal norms. These artists represent a generation bridging the first and current waves of artists, not only challenging traditional artistic practices but also redefining the narrative of migration and identity.

## SAMPLES OF KEY INSTITUTIONAL ARCHIVES PRESERVING ARTISTS' LEGACIES FROM TURKEY

In this article, I specifically focus on the role of archives for making visible the artistic memory in the art ecosystem through Dutch Institutions. The archives of the institutions provide a critical foundation for understanding the intersection of migration, artistic practice, and cultural exchange and offer invaluable resources for reconstructing the narratives and reclaiming the memory of these artists. The research was conducted in the archives of these institutions at various intervals between 2021 and 2023, examining the representation of artists from Turkey in both their collections and archival materials, as well as how these resources are utilized within the institutions.

The Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven is one of the key institutions preserving these histories. One of the centrals to its archival holdings is the Gate Foundation Archive (GFA, 1988-2007), which focuses on the activities of non-Western artists in the Netherlands and examined in detail through this research. The Gate Foundation was founded in 1988 by Els van der Plas in Amsterdam and donated to the museum in 2007 and artist materials from the collection were relocated to the museum's clippings archive (in Dutch: knipselarchief).<sup>22</sup>

"Initially established as a foundation to promote Asian art, defined geographically as art created by Asians within Asia. By the late 1990s, the foundation transitioned from showcasing art in museums and galleries across the Netherlands to operating its own exhibition space, focusing on artists living and working in the Netherlands who came from immigrant or non-Western backgrounds. This shift became



particularly evident in 1997 when Plas departed the foundation, and Sebastian Lopez assumed the role of director, steering its mission toward greater inclusivity and representation.”<sup>23</sup>

Therefore, this archive is especially relevant for understanding the role of artists from Turkey in fostering cross-cultural dialogues. In the archive, the documents about many first generation artists from Turkey such as Nuray Atas, Nur Tarim, Isik Tuzuner, and Bulent Evren can be seen.

Similarly, the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam plays a vital role in safeguarding the legacies of artists from Turkey. Its collection includes a rich assortment of materials documenting the works of notable artists including Esma Yiğitoğlu, Isik Tuzuner, Bulent Evren, Fahrettin Orenli and Ahmet Ögüt. A part of the collection is now online and the works of some artists such as Isik Tuzuner who are available to check.<sup>24</sup> These collections reveal how artists from Turkey have engaged with contemporary art trends while exploring themes from abstract and figurative to identity, politics, and social critique. The museum’s archive of artist books, multimedia installations, and exhibition records provides an understanding of the artistic practices of these individuals, demonstrating their significant impact on Dutch and international art scenes. Also, even if it is possible to do research remotely in the library, you cannot see the images of the documents.<sup>25</sup>

The Netherlands Institute for Sound & Vision (NISV) in Hilversum stands out as a critical resource for exploring the social and artistic impact of artists from Turkey in the Netherlands. Its extensive archive includes a wealth of audio-visual materials such as interviews, documentaries, and moving images, which provide invaluable insights into the experiences of artists and their cultural connections between Turkey and the Netherlands. These materials not only document the personal narratives of artists like Esma Yiğitoğlu, Nur Tarim, and Nuray Atas but also highlight cross-cultural influences, such as Marlene Dumas’ work *Turkse Schoolmeisjes* [Turkish Schoolgirls], which reflects the impact of Turkish culture on artists from different backgrounds.<sup>26</sup>

During my research, I uncovered hidden gems within this archive, including significant works like the *Zeeklimaat* documentary<sup>27</sup> and talks such as Mapping System, a dialogue between artist Bulent Evren and Özkan Gölpınar.<sup>28</sup> These moving images are as vital as written materials in constructing a nuanced understanding of the artistic and cultural exchanges between Dutch and Turkish societies. They emphasize the intersection of personal and collective memory in shaping the works of artists from Turkey, while also capturing the broader socio-political themes of migration, diaspora, and identity.

The Rijksakademie in Amsterdam is equally essential in preserving the legacies of artists from Turkey. As a renowned residency program, it has supported numerous artists from Turkey such as over the decades, providing them with platforms for experimentation and collaboration.<sup>29</sup> The Rijksakademie’s archives include materials from residency programs, studio practices, and curated

exhibitions, offering valuable insights into how artists from Turkey have evolved their practices within a global context. The types of materials preserved in these archives collectively provide a comprehensive understanding of the artistic journeys. The art collection/artists' documentation and library (online) catalogue document their participation in major events as well as their works, offering detailed accounts of their contributions and critical reception.<sup>30</sup>

## CASE STUDIES: REVEALING ARTISTIC CONTRIBUTIONS

Institutional archives serve as crucial repositories for preserving and illuminating the artistic contributions of artists from Turkey in the Netherlands. These archives, housed in institutions, play a pivotal role in safeguarding and interpreting artistic legacies. The positive and negative aspects of different kinds of institutions in the context of inclusive archives are addressed in the following.

### THE VAN ABBEMUSEUM AND THE GATE FOUNDATION ARCHIVE

The Van Abbemuseum actively safeguards and represents artists through its archives by adopting a multifaceted approach that includes preserving primary materials, collaborating with artists, and fostering inclusivity in their exhibitions and research initiatives. A notable example is its collaboration with the Gate Foundation Archive (GFA), which documents the works of artists from non-Western backgrounds, including artists from Turkey.<sup>31</sup> The GFA exemplifies both the potential and limitations of institutional archives in preserving and interpreting artistic contributions. This archive includes exhibition catalogues, correspondence, and other valuable materials that chronicle the artistic practices of underrepresented communities, offering a glimpse into their contributions to the art world.

The utilization and interpretation of these materials often aligns with specific institutional agendas, such as thematic exhibitions or research projects which focus on not just western art world but also non-western art world in the scope of the GFA. For instance, the research *THROUGH THE GATE/an(g)archivery* by artist susan pui san lok, the exhibition 'Still at the Gate' by curator Gemma Medina or the library exhibition 'Gate Keepers' by artists Bulent Evren [Figure 3] and Penny Siopsis and curator Claire Butcher in the Van Abbemuseum highlighted migration and identity, yet their reliance on institutional priorities raises questions about the consistent representation of marginalized artists. These materials illustrate how artists from Turkey have navigated and contributed to conversations about cultural hybridity and inclusion. Additionally, artists like Ahmet Öğüt have maintained a longstanding relationship with the museum, underscoring its commitment to nurturing artistic development through exhibitions like *Forward!* (2015), which highlighted Öğüt's multifaceted approach to addressing socio-political themes [Figure 4].<sup>32</sup>

Through these initiatives, the Van Abbemuseum illustrates the importance of archives as tools for documenting, representing and interpreting the legacies of



**Figure 3.**  
Bulent Evren, Mapping System, 2004,  
Cartographic Prints, Gate Foundation  
Archive. Courtesy of Van Abbemuseum.



**Figure 4.**  
Ahmet Ogut, the exhibition "Forward!,"  
2015. Courtesy of Van Abbemuseum.

diverse artistic communities. While these archives contribute significantly to the broader narrative of art history, their accessibility, interpretation and utilization often remain contingent and limited on institutional agendas. A systematic approach to inclusivity and representation in the context of migration-focused inclusive archives within modern and contemporary art museums would involve a structural shift across proactive curatorial practices, community relationships, and archival frameworks.



## STEDELIJK MUSEUM AMSTERDAM AND CONTEMPORARY ART PRACTICES

The Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam's museum collection and archive house a collection documenting the works of artists who relocated from Turkey such as Esma Yiğitoğlu, Isık Tüzüner, Bülent Evren, Fahrettin Örenli, Ahmet Ögüt, and Özgür Kar.<sup>33</sup> There are also documents in the archives about artists such as Nur Tarım, Nuray Atas, Müge Yılmaz or Artun Alaska Araslı who are not in the collections.<sup>34</sup> The museum's engagement with migrant artists and their communities often reflects an institutional tendency to frame their works through thematic or politically charged exhibitions, such as *I Am a Native Foreigner* (2018) and *In the Presence of Absence* (2020). While these exhibitions are significant for raising awareness about issues of migration, memory, and historiography, they risk reinforcing the perception of artists from Turkey as peripheral figures within the mainstream art history.

Ahmet Ögüt's work, which was featured in *In the Presence of Absence* and subsequently acquired by the museum, highlights the complex interplay between institutional representation and collection-building.<sup>35</sup> Although this acquisition underscores the museum's commitment to documenting diverse narratives, the broader accessibility of archival materials and the interpretation of them remains a challenge.<sup>36</sup> The archives, while rich in content, are often difficult to navigate due to the lack of a fully digitized system.

Moreover, the museum's thematic focus on migration and identity, while valuable, tends to overshadow the multifaceted contributions of artists from Turkey. For instance, while exhibitions such as *I Am a Native Foreigner* provide a platform to address migration issues, they often frame some artists' works solely within the context of their cultural or migrant identities, rather than as integral to contemporary art's broader evolution. This selective framing risks limiting the perception of artists' practices to a narrow thematic scope, rather than celebrating the diversity of their artistic approaches and intellectual engagements.

The archival materials housed at the Stedelijk, including catalogues, correspondence, and photographs, have significant potential for deeper research into artists' contributions from Turkey. For instance, artists like Esma Yiğitoğlu and Isık Tuzuner, whose works explore themes of cultural heritage, memory, and consumerism offer critical insights into the intersections of art and migration. However, without improved accessibility and a systematic approach to interpreting archival materials and engaging with communities, these contributions risk being underexplored.

The museum's efforts to digitize parts of its collection and make them available online as well as acquisition policy for artists of colour and non-Western artists (2021-2024) after Black Lives Matter are steps in the right direction. Programs such as its online collection platform provide a more inclusive avenue for researchers and the public to engage with the works of artists from Turkey. However, there is still a need for the museum to move beyond thematic exhibitions and embrace a more holistic representation of these artists. Beyond preservation,

more interpretation, proactive curatorial activities, interaction with the community and an institutional policy beyond acquisitions to the collection are needed. This would not only enhance their visibility and representation but also affirm their integral role in the contemporary art discourse, moving beyond the confines of migration narratives and recognizing and celebrating their broader artistic achievements.

## THE RIJNSAKADEMIE AND ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT

The archives of the Rijnsakademie provide valuable insights into the residency experiences of artists from Turkey, showcasing their evolving artistic practices and contributions to cross-cultural dialogue. The Rijnsakademie, with its long-standing residency program, has played a crucial role in supporting artists from Turkey, including more than twenty alumni and notable figures such as Nuray Atas, Cevdet Erek, Ahmet Ögüt, Müge Yılmaz, and Kubilay Mert Ural.<sup>37</sup>

These archives not only document the artists' studio practices and exhibitions but also provide an understanding of the institution's role in fostering experimentation and collaboration. Artists benefit from individualized support, which includes access to creative, theoretical, and technical facilities, as well as guidance from experienced advisors, many of whom are themselves distinguished artists.<sup>38</sup> The Rijnsakademie thus serves as a dynamic space for artistic growth, offering participants the freedom to explore their own creative paths while benefiting from a supportive and well-resourced environment. The emphasis on individualized artistic development, rather than a fixed curriculum, has been a cornerstone of the Rijnsakademie's philosophy, allowing artists to shape their practices in response to personal interests and creative challenges. At the same time, the institution has an active and growing community of artists after the residency, who are aware of each other and open to solidarity with each other. The artistic community of Rijnsakademie is the most important feature that distinguishes it from other institutions.

For many artists from Turkey, the Rijnsakademie has been instrumental in bridging cultural and artistic divides, enabling them to navigate the complexities of migration while contributing meaningfully to the Dutch and international art scenes. Artists such as Ahmet Ögüt and Müge Yılmaz have used their time at the Rijnsakademie to explore new materials expanding artistic research. Their works, often informed by their experiences at the Rijnsakademie, have made significant contributions to discussions around cultural hybridity and inclusivity in contemporary art.

However, challenges persist in the physical organization of these archives, which often require researchers to rely heavily on archivists to navigate fragmented collections. This reliance underscores the necessity for a systematic approach to archival organization and digitization to ensure that the contributions of diverse artists such as Nuray Atas who were a resident in 1966 however there is no information about her work/background in the archive are comprehensively documented and readily accessible for study. Despite these challenges, the

Rijksakademie's commitment to artistic freedom and cross-cultural dialogue has made it a pivotal institution for artists from Turkey, providing a vital platform for experimentation and artistic exchange.

### THE NETHERLANDS INSTITUTE FOR SOUND & VISION (BEELD & GELUID)

The Netherlands Institute for Sound & Vision in Hilversum stands out as a crucial resource for exploring the social and artistic impact of artists. This institution's extensive archive includes a wealth of audiovisual materials such as interviews, documentaries, and moving images, which offer invaluable insights into the experiences of artists from Turkey and their cultural connections between Turkey and the Netherlands. These materials provide a nuanced understanding of the dialogue between the Dutch and Turkish societies, highlighting cross-cultural influences and the contributions of artists from Turkey to the Dutch art scene.

During my research, I watched the videos of artists in their own studios such as Esma Yiğitoğlu, Bulent Evren, Nur Tarim, and Nuray Atas who provide personal reflections on their artistic journeys, contextualizing their work within broader socio-political frameworks.<sup>39</sup> Notably, the archives also contain a talk about Marlene Dumas' work *Turkse Schoolmeisjes* [Turkish Schoolgirls, 1986] in the collection of Amsterdam Museum,<sup>40</sup> which illustrates how Turkish culture has influenced artists from other backgrounds, further emphasizing the cross-cultural dynamic within the Dutch art landscape.

The archive holds video materials, such as interviews from the MTV (Migration Television Amsterdam) Turkish Broadcast (Migratie Televisie Amsterdam V Turkse Uitzending) was founded in 1984 to produce television programs for Amsterdammers of Antillean, south American, Surinamese, Moroccan and Turkish origin and to inform immigrants about Dutch Society,<sup>41</sup> which document the practices of artists. Examples include interviews with Esma Yiğitoğlu, who discusses her visual practice and her engagement with teaching literacy to Turkish migrant women and in emancipation of Turkish migrant women with a cultural centre in Rotterdam, as well as Mustafa Şener, who talks about the differences in art education between Turkey and the Netherlands. These audiovisual records not only document the individual artistic practices but also capture the broader socio-political themes that inform their work, such as migration, diaspora, and identity. The NISV archive allows for a richer and more dynamic understanding of the artistic and cultural exchanges between Turkish and Dutch societies. The archive includes items like the *Kunst Onder Druk* video, which deals with the political atmosphere in Turkey during the 1980 military coup, and *Turken Kunst en Samenleving* [Turkish Art and Society], which presents portraits of artists from Turkey working in the Netherlands. Digital access to programs like *MTV Turkse Uitzending* [MTV Turkish Broadcast] and *Turken Kunst en Samenleving* [Turkish Art and Society] ensures that the voices of Turkish artists are effectively incorporated into the broader art historical narrative. This archive demonstrates the potential of digital preservation



to bridge gaps in accessibility, ensuring that underrepresented voices are effectively incorporated into the art historical narrative.

Additionally, the institute actively encourages the reuse and interpretation of its digital collections through initiatives such as the *Open Archive* program. In collaboration with Het Nieuwe Instituut and International Institute of Social History - IISG, this program invites makers to create innovative media works using archival materials, fostering new stories and perspectives. Selected works are exhibited, showcasing the potential of archives to inspire and generate contemporary cultural narratives.<sup>42</sup>

By preserving and promoting these audiovisual materials and fostering creative reuse and interpretation, the NISV safeguards the legacies of Turkish community and artists while enriching the broader narrative of Dutch art history. As a positive example, this archive contains the transformative role of migration and cultural exchange in shaping artistic identities and demonstrates how digital preservation and accessibility can bridge gaps in representation, ensuring that underrepresented voices are effectively incorporated into the art historical narrative.

## THE IMPACT OF MIGRATION ON CONTEMPORARY ART HISTORIOGRAPHY

Migration has emerged as a transformative force in contemporary art historiography, reshaping the way national art scenes and artistic practices are understood. This phenomenon not only disrupts monolithic narratives of art history but also foregrounds the diversity of artistic voices that enrich cultural and historical discourse. By integrating migration into the study of contemporary art, scholars and institutions can better reflect the dynamic interplay between global and local identities, particularly within national art ecosystems like that of the Netherlands.

Migration challenges nation-centric art histories by introducing diverse perspectives and practices. As Edward Said and Vilém Flusser highlight, displacement fosters creative innovation, enabling artists to reimagine their practices and identities within new socio-political contexts.<sup>43</sup> In this sense, migration, in a positive way, not only expands the scope of art historiography but also decentralizes its focus, enabling marginalized voices, such as artists from Turkey in the Netherlands, to participate in and reshape dominant narratives.

Turkish artists exemplify migration's transformative potential in Dutch art. Artists such as Esma Yiğitoğlu, Nuray Atas, Ahmet Ögüt, and Servet Kocigit have brought critical and fresh perspectives on Turkish diaspora, cultural heritage, identity, power structures, and environmental consciousness to the forefront of Dutch art. Through works that reflect both their heritage and engagement with Dutch society, these artists blur the boundaries between the personal and the political/social, offering nuanced interpretations of contemporary issues such as migration, displacement, belonging and more.

Dutch institutions, including the Rijksakademie and the Van Abbemuseum, have played pivotal roles in fostering this dialogue, though not without limitations.

While these institutions have preserved and showcased/interpreted the works of artists, their engagement often reflects broader institutional priorities—such as emphasizing climate change, social justice, avant-garde practices, aligning with specific curatorial themes, or highlighting internationally recognized artists—rather than a sustained commitment to inclusivity. The selective visibility of migrant artists in exhibitions and collections underscores the need for a more integrated and proactive approach to representing diverse voices within the Dutch art ecosystem. The inclusion of migration as a critical lens in contemporary art historiography has far-reaching implications. First, it challenges the traditional dichotomy between center and periphery, emphasising the interconnectedness of global art practices. Second, it compels institutions and scholars to confront systemic biases that have historically excluded migrant and non-Western artists from the canon.<sup>44</sup> Migration reshapes contemporary art historiography by broadening its scope and challenging its foundational narratives. Through the lens of migration, art becomes a dynamic site of negotiation and transformation, reflecting the fluid identities and cultural exchanges that define our globalized world.

## CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This article underscores the critical role institutional archives play in preserving and interpreting artistic memory. Through detailed case studies of key institutions, the research reveals both the potential and limitations of archives in documenting artistic contributions, interpreting the materials, translation into proactive curatorial activities, interacting with the community and building an institutional policy.

The analysis highlights that while these archives house invaluable materials—ranging from exhibition catalogues to audiovisual interviews—challenges remain in terms of accessibility, inclusivity, interpretation and representation. Physical archives often suffer from limited access, preservation risks, and fragmented collections, while digitization efforts are inconsistent across institutions. These limitations restrict the visibility of artists from diverse backgrounds and perpetuate systemic silences in art historical narratives. On the other hand, each of the institutions takes action to have inclusive archiving in different ways; however, the one focuses on community, the other one focuses on the reuse of materials or not totally embedded institutional policy for non-western artists. In addition, the museums—Van Abbemuseum and Stedelijk Museum—are moving towards an inclusive approach through well-known international artists from Turkey in their curatorial activities. Overall, the conclusion is that the artistic memories of artists from Turkey in the institutions are still underrepresented by the activities of the institutions.

The article further situates these findings within a broader conceptual framework that critiques the exclusionary nature of Western art institutions. The discussion aligns with calls for epistemic and mnemonic justice, advocating for proactive curation, systematic digitization, and participatory approaches

by engaging with communities to ensure that underrepresented voices are fully integrated into the art historiography.

The challenges are not only conceptual but also logistical. Physical archives are often plagued by preservation risks, fragmented collections, and dependence on archivists for navigation, limiting researchers' ability to construct comprehensive narratives. Institutions such as the NISV provide a contrast, showcasing best practices in digitization, accessibility and interpretation through innovative programs such as, "Open Archive" collaborative project. Their emphasis on digitizing audiovisual materials, creative reuse of archives and fostering open engagement offers a model for addressing these persistent challenges.

Turkish artists have significantly shaped Dutch contemporary art through themes like migration, heritage and identity. The representation of artists from Turkey often appears fragmented and sporadic within the broader art historical discourse, also often related to the issue of migration. From Ahmet Ögüt's socially engaged projects to Esmâ Yiğitoğlu's reflections on cultural heritage and Isik Tuzuner's critiques of consumerism and gender roles these artists have enriched the Dutch art ecosystem. Yet, their representation in archival practices and the interpretation of them often remains peripheral, highlighting the urgent need for systematic digitization, transparent archival processes, easily accessible collection of information, a community interaction, an institutional policy and proactive curation. For archives to move beyond passive preservation, they must adopt participatory practices that prioritize inclusivity, interpretation and accessibility. Proactive collaboration with artists and underrepresented communities can transform archives into dynamic spaces of dialogue and innovation as the Open archive collaborative project run by BeelenGeluid. By embracing such strategies, institutions can ensure that the stories of artists from Turkey are preserved, celebrated, and fully integrated into the broader narratives of contemporary art.

In conclusion, institutional archives are not merely repositories of historical materials but active sites of knowledge production and cultural negotiation. The role of archives today extends far beyond preservation; it involves critical attention to how materials are preserved and digitized, but also how they produce, transform, interpret and make knowledge visible. Through such practices, institutions can honor the complex legacies of artists from Turkey and contribute to a more inclusive and dynamic historiography of contemporary art. This research serves as a foundational step in this direction, offering both a critical reflection on current practices and a call to action for the future.

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