

## Original Research Article

# Searching for Intercultural Concepts in the Works of Contemporary Artists\*

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## Abstract

**Problem statement:** Intercultural themes are usually discussed by semioticians from the perspective of intertextuality and interdisciplinary. Such issues have been considered interdisciplinary by different disciplines. The scopes of intercultural discourse can be the subject of a study. However, due to various reasons including today's necessity, it is assumed that contemporary art approaches culture through almost unlimited access. Hence, the position of cultural concepts and the constructive values of cultures are presented and preserved differently from the past.

**Research objective:** The subject of the research is interpreted and analyzed, through exploring intercultural concepts among the works of three contemporary artists, Anselm Kiefer, Ahmad Nadalian, and Jean-Michel Basquiat, to provide young artists and researchers with the foundations of art, thought contexts, and deeper thinking according to the existing universal contemporary art circumstances.

**Research method:** The nature of the present research is descriptive-analytical and data was collected using the library research method.

**Conclusion:** Contemporary art deals with an endless range of themes and the variety of languages used and the abundant media are available to the artist to present visually cultural concepts to its audience in various ways. It can be said that this has led to the emergence of new definitions of art, artist, audience, work of art, and even tools.

**Keywords:** *Culture, Art, Intercultural Concepts, Contemporary Art, Kiefer, Nadalian, Basquiat.*

## Introduction

The resistance that can be seen in the constant exchanges between two cultures usually goes back to the hidden and overt beliefs of each. In other words, if one is considered valuable and approved by the prevailing criteria, the other is considered

incompatible with the prevailing cultural criteria. That is why it will be ignored. That is where we are facing kinds of dominant and submissive cultures. This seemingly discriminatory view is also commonly expressed through formal and informal institutions in the cultural and artistic atmosphere. A piece of art is only discovered and evaluated when it is matched with the intended factors of formal and informal institutions like galleries, museums, art communities,

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and auctions. This research addresses young artists who often struggle with choosing content, tools, norms of society, art market and economy, social and cultural perspectives, personal interests. Because the artist should always decide: whether to create as others expect him or to act according to his perspective toward art, society, audience, and cultural values. In some cases, and due to various reasons, this adaptation is considered as a deviation from the personal principles of the artist and causes him or her challenge and even frustration. The artist starts his professional project by choosing the subject of the artwork, but how he or she deals with the audience is very important in the success. The young artist today has to think about an important ontological question: preserving personal values or acting according to the common norms of society? According to the above needs, this article, by reviewing the works of three artists with features in the framework of intercultural concepts, introduces and evaluates the components considered by the artist, society, audience. In this regard, the cultural configuration of a contemporary period can be examined by the following questions: What is the difference between the manifestations arising from the requirements of today's world, such as multiculturalism, cultural confrontation, and interculturalism? What considerations do these characteristics provide for the contemporary artist in selecting and performing works of art? The results of this research show that despite the cultural similarities, it is possible to analyze the differences from an intercultural perspective in the works of the studied artists, and in this way, more influence can be achieved on the global audience.

### Research background

On the subject of interculturalism, the following studies can be mentioned in English: Articles entitled Interculturalism (Dietz, 2018). The Discourse Approach by (Scollon, Scollon & Jones Rodney, 2012), focuses on the topics of educational sciences, communication, and linguistics, and is shared in a theoretical framework with the present article.

Also, the article on intercultural exchanges in the internationalization of higher education and topics

related to linguistics such as: Improving Intercultural Competence through Literary Texts and the Strategies of Teaching it in French Language (Saadat Nejad & Farsian, 2020), can be seen. These articles, as their title implies, are limited to educational sciences and linguistics. Also, the article entitled "Analysis of the semantic sign of the mechanism of intercultural relations in the discourse system of Kerman carpet" by (Zakariaei, Shairi & Sojoudi, 2013) "Modeling the structural equation of dimensions with an intercultural approach in Naghsh Jahan Square" (Babaiimorad, Majedi, Zabihi, 1397) are two articles that have dealt with different subjects from an artistic point of view.

On Anselm Kiefer, the article "Reconstruction of the Roots of Violence in Germany after the Second World War based on the views of Slavoj Zizek" (Sharifzadeh & Bahrampour, 2020), and on Ahmad Nadalian by (Oskeui & Marasi, 2008) in the article "A Study of the Performance of Photography in Iranian New Arts". These titles indicate their focus and do not overlap with the present article. Jean-Michel Basquiat can be seen in the book "Art History for Dummies" (Wilder, 2017) which deals with the life and description of some of his works, which are different from the work selected in this article.

### Research method

The method of this research is descriptive-analytical and the sources used have been collected in a documentary manner. The study population represents successful and impressive works of contemporary artists since the 60s. Sampling was done by non-random and purposive methods. The method of qualitative data analysis was inductive reasoning.

### Theoretical foundations and definitions

According to the Cambridge Encyclopedia, culture is "the way of life, especially the grand traditions and beliefs of a particular group of people at a given time, including behavior, habits, and attitudes towards each other, moral and religious principles. But culture is more limited to music, art, theater, literature, and the like."

The Webster encyclopedia defines culture as beliefs, social norms, material manifestations of a racial,

religious, or social group, as well as clear characteristics of everyday life shared by people in a given place or time. Also in a more specific sense is “enlightenment and exaltation of the taste of aesthetic education. In fact, culture is the familiarity with the fine arts, the humanities, and the vast manifestation of science by skill and technical contracts by a human being.

It must be acknowledged that culture can be defined as a quality in the individual or society that is manifested as a value in art, writing, behavior, scientific achievements, and so on. These values in a specific form can present a stage of civilization belonging to a nation or a certain period. Thus, intellectual development or progress takes place through the education of a community and manifests itself as a behavioral feature or beliefs of a particular community, ethnicity, or age group. In the combination of cultures, which began in a new way in the twentieth century, we are faced with various forms of human interactions, which makes it possible to talk about a new combination today. These new words should be considered as the achievement of today’s societies and the result of interactions between them, and include concepts such as multiculturalism, cultural confrontation, interculturalism. It can be said that these manifestations are due to the possibility of relocation, access, and the decision to settle in new areas. Put it simply, it stands for the promotion of interaction between communities. According to what has been said, the differences should be sought in the perspectives of the interaction of the unity of each society with other cultures and the characteristics of each should be stated as follows:

Multiculturalism refers to a society that includes ethnic or cultural groups (Reynolds, Fletcher-Janzen, 2008). In such a society, people live side by side, but each cultural group does not necessarily interact with others in a committed way. For example, in “multicultural coexistences, people may even go to shops or restaurants offering ethnic products without having real contact with their other ethnic neighbors from other countries. In this situation, each culture lives by its own characteristics. It is interesting that the history of the coexistence of cultures in our land dates back to the distant past and

can be seen from the oldest time in the Achaemenid era (Menek, 2020, 119). On the other hand, new terms have been generated in the application of this concept today. For example, the word “salad bowl” is used instead of the word “multicultural”, which refers to the parallelism of the various cultures of the United States as a mixture of salads. Although relatively old amalgam corrections can be heard synonymously with the above term, the term cultural mosaic is also used in societies such as Canada (Baofu, 2012, 22).

Cultural confrontation implies a kind of comparison between cultures. In this form of cultural coexistence, differences are understood and acknowledged and can even lead to individual change, but this behavior will not necessarily lead to collective change. “In societies with confrontational culture, one culture is often referred to as custom, and other cultures are evaluated in opposition to or in comparison with the dominant. Patrice Pavis has a theory in the art world called the hourglass. In this view, he argues that intercultural concepts tend to the cultural, sociological, and doctrinal structure of the target society through elements of the culture of origin by various filters.” (Viegeant, 2022, 157). In the meantime, many comments have paid attention to these filters: “Instead of ignoring the differences and values of different cultures, we should use these differences as a factor for better management of societies and organizations. Cultural managers and policymakers must always identify different values and cultures and use cultural diversity as an effective and efficient factor in cultural management and planning” (Dehshiri, 2014, 28). It must be acknowledged that, unfortunately, it is not always considered and implemented. “We have to pay attention to the multiplicity of concepts of civilization. One of the most disturbing and unbelievable legacies of nineteenth- and eighteenth-century European thought for the whole world was the diminishing meaning of civilizations to civilization. This mental illness occurred in eighteenth-century French Enlightenment which reached its peak and was observed in nineteenth-century Germany and England when the concept of development reached its peak” (Nasr, 2016, 44). Thus, in most of today’s societies, which can be traced back to the past centuries,

cultures or civilizations have eliminated each other with a repulsive approach and shown a tendency for a dominant culture, which can be attributed to cultural confrontation.

The term Intercultural is an adjective and needs to be accompanied by a noun. In other words, to make a meaningful accompaniment, we have to mention something with intercultural characteristics (such as intercultural principles, intercultural characteristics, intercultural interactions, etc.), so we can talk about intercultural concepts. Intercultural concepts as a branch of contemporary study are presented not only in sociology but also in psychology, philosophy, education, and even marketing as a combination of disciplines. According to Claude Claret, “the term intercultural refers to the interchangeability and complexity of intercultural interactions.” (Claret, 1993, 21). In defining this characteristic, it can be said that the intercultural aspect is applied to societies in which there is a deep understanding of all cultures. In an intercultural society, none of the cultures is left unchanged because they learn from each other and therefore grow together. “Accepting the fact that different cultures, although having different cultural backgrounds, because they want to understand a pluralistic world and achieve some kind of adaptation and cooperation, use different backgrounds, beliefs, and lifestyles as an opportunity to synergize. With the perspective of a happy future, each culture gives its ability to influence and be influenced, so they can participate in the process of interactive interaction with other cultures in social development research and constructive and active participation” (Dehshiri, 2014, 27). Hence, there must be coexistence in a reciprocal way for all cultures in a so-called pluralistic society. It means, in intercultural production, the target culture will be actively present in the culture of origin, which needs to respond to serious needs (Freeman, 2010).

Obviously, in this definition, the world community can also be used as an example for intercultural communication. Today, with all the ups and downs of the past decades, it seems like an ideal, and in the slogan, many international organizations and groups between countries have confirmed this and are trying to achieve

it. In any case, whether we consider the subject of the national society or the international community, the need for a balanced exchange between cultures will be emphasized and equal. It should be imagined that in a society with the desire for intercultural activities to enable the possibility of dialogue and communication of cultures, we must witness consistency and permanence. “If the role of cultural globalization, as the focus of economic globalization, is to move deeply into the intercultural experience, something more than mere sequels (...) must be seen. In other words, we should consider cultural globalization as the negation of the predictable orientations of the art world, to which almost all museums, art colleges, and related institutions are subject.

Instead of quasi-academic exaggerations, the concerns of cultural globalization should be how to address the preoccupations with art in various parts of the world, including areas that have declined culturally through reactionary economic policies (such as Iran). “(Mirzaei, 2014, 186) The synergy of cultures, by promoting the ability of positive and constructive competitiveness of cultures, causes cooperation between them to meet the common needs of human society and brings a new culture or lifestyle that changes the way of life. The thinking and behavior of cultures towards each other are based on an interactive approach. “The synergy of cultures can be seen as a level of shared understanding of similar and interacting ideas while embracing diversity and differences based on specific cultural identities, opens the door to success, progress and inspiration to the environment” (Dehshiri, 2014, 28).

On the other hand, we must also pay attention to the apparent combination of the terms in question. The word “Inter, not only negates the dual but also reconciles them. This prefix connects two units that were previously separated from each other.” (Namvar Motlagh & Lankarani, 2009, 77). Of course, this meaning may not always be true, but it may be said that “there are commonalities between all the visions. These visions express a certain attitude and vision that have related characteristics. One of these characteristics disturbs the binary contrasts. This dual thought, often known in the

West as Manichaeism thought, seeks to think and analyze in binary divisions. “ (ibid.). It has been successful in concluding and finding the relationship between phenomena. In other words, this has been the way that has helped him to understand the relationship between concepts and examples throughout history. This point is well visible in the intellectual principles and method of thought of Islamic and Western thinkers, especially in the period called modernity<sup>1</sup>.

### Contemporary art and intercultural concepts

The proliferation of human thought in recent decades has made it possible to study common themes in various scientific and research fields. For example, in contemporary art, “some of the disciplines that look at art from an intercultural perspective can be listed as follows: ethno-aesthetics or ethnic aesthetics, visual anthropology, and postcolonial studies. These branches do not separate art from the general body of people’s beliefs and actions and believe that aesthetic experience is embedded and institutionalized in our physical and emotional relationship with the world. Therefore, the relationship between art and culture in the general sense is more important to them than the analysis of individual objects “(Darabi, 2014, 185-186). An important point to note about intercultural concepts is the timing of the issue. If we talk about the need for dialogue between different cultures today, it means that our time has reached a consensus for closeness and not a conflict between cultures. Of course, there are always ups and downs in this regard. In other words, there may be extremism in any society, and some, believing in their own truth, impose their views on others and insist on it. But in general, in the present era, most cultures tend to have commonalities and mutual understanding. On the other hand, the change in the concepts and themes of contemporary artists compared to the previous generation, or the early twentieth century is also something that cannot be forgotten. The different styles and issues and concerns of artists at any given time prove this. For example, in the early twentieth century, when abstract tendencies pervaded all aspects of the visual arts, we see the concern of artists

like Kandinsky to link painting to music. In this sense, Western art, having passed through the ancient tradition of formalism, had reached a stage where the presentation of spiritual subjects in art in the form of abstraction was better manifested. We see the same thing in styles like Dadaism and Cubism. In the middle of the twentieth century, it expanded the common tendencies to pop art and conceptual art. This concern of artists emerged in the late twentieth century and the beginning of the new millennium to intercultural concepts in a global perspective, regardless of geographical boundaries. With this perspective, the influential factors in globalization can be listed as follows: “The compression of time and space by modern telecommunications (such as the Internet); daily life beyond national borders, the existence of strong networks with bilateral dependencies and tasks; the great duality; the multiplicity and power of global players; the growing importance of the source of capital and labor; the range of economic centralization and global competition at the same time; the leading lifestyle of capitalism spreading throughout the world, including in its particular artistic expression (consumer culture) “(Klinke, 2003, 82) But despite these facts, it must be remembered: “No art can be found that does not have a message. This message is not the same among civilizations.” (Nasr, 2016, 43) And this also makes intercultural concepts important and unforgivable. In other words, the differences between cultures and common issues between civilizations re-emerge the need for intercultural communication and exchange, and this historical fact gives contemporary art and contemporary artists a new inspiration and mission.

To understand the seemingly contradictory aspects of simultaneous differences and similarities in contemporary cultural exchanges better, one must reconsider modern definitions of culture from the perspective of recent thinkers: “There is no such thing as a single Asian or Western culture. The difference between aesthetics, for example, India and China areas important as the difference between the two cultures and Western ones (and we know that this culture, like the special Asian traditions, is historically diverse).” (Deutsch, 2006, 222) The ontological question that an

artist today might ask is, where do I belong to? Which geography am I bound to, and to be more precise, what is my identifying geography?

“When the world defines its art based on fashion and political-ideological slogans, as it does, and instead of constantly contemplating and thinking, constantly seeks approval and guarantee, art would not be from within and autonomous. The work of art will be subject to the approval of predetermined signs, rather than the criterion of aesthetics. Under the pressure of the current situation, artists turn into commercial-cultural brands that are inadvertently pushed into this marketing system, and many of them are afraid to reject it” (Mirzaei, 2014). Of course, this is a fact that the artist for which culture and which society engages in artistic activity? If some of its audience is in its geography, which has a definite culture, should the artist limit himself to the Iranian audience or think of a global audience? The answer to this question is what makes intercultural concepts remarkably important to the artist. The good news is that the audience of contemporary art today inadvertently transcends its limited geography and desires global culture. History has reached a point where it is somewhat clear to us. “In 1940, Fife, in his book *The Illusion of National Nature*, described a scale of units or degrees by which one feels superior to another. He wrote in early history, families quarreled with families and then tribes were fighting with each other. Today, the nation is the unit on which people come together in a group. Fife believes that the nature of the individual is not determined by his original nation, but by his government; this means that if one leaves his culture and enters another environment, one’s nature changes; Like the English people in New England who quickly lost features that seemed to be specifically British. He continued; He quotes Emmanuel Kant as saying, “Geography has its roots in history,” and admits that if its inhabitants had been closer to England, they would not have declared independence and would have been part of the British Empire. “Even within a nation, there are many different tendencies and, consequently, many different natures.” This means that pluralism must be accepted as part of the inevitable characteristics of human beings today. The issue becomes even more

significant when it acknowledges pluralism within a society with given geography, something that was not possible before, and its design has been the subject of much debate. For example, Clifford Geertz has dealt with this in a book entitled *The Interpretation of Cultures*. Cultural imperialism means that we inadvertently impose the concepts and categories of our culture on the culture under study and thus assume that Those cultures have universal characteristics and prescriptive power, and localism means that we naively try to keep our assumptions and values completely suspended and replace them with values and assumptions that are fundamentally foreign or incomparable to our cultural context (Deutsch, 2006). Of course, remembering that “art is the key to communication in the world and art is able to convey meanings that can hardly be expressed in theological and philosophical terms. To alleviate the pain and worries of people who are concerned about the dominant and submissive culture may be effective. But it is not to be overlooked that the views of thinkers who comment on art express a worldview that can be synergistic or even emphasize cultural confrontation. Here are some examples: “Art always expresses the truths of religion in traditional civilizations” or “Religious art is the art whose subject matter can be religious and sacred art is the art whose every component represents divine truths with transcendental symbols.” (Nasr, 2016, 14). In other words, the perspective of the artist’s activity and work of art in a transcendental situation is emphasized here, and material used as a vehicle for achieving transcendental and religious concepts is considered. But whether it is religious or materialistic and consumerist, the contemporary artist tries to convey the message of his work and wider communication in intercultural language, and it must be acknowledged that this has been achieved through thinking and research.

### **Impressiveness or impressibility**

To apply intercultural concepts in contemporary art, it could be said that artists who only imitate Western art cannot properly speak of the concept of dialogue and communication because the influence of Western civilization with fascination leads to imitation. This

contradicts the establishment of communication and will be one-sided. "Dialogue requires a focus on enduring and shared values and moving away from a dominant culture. Just as the emergence of transnational corporations operating within cultures has become a global trend. Fiderstone explains that a similar process "De-nationalization and globalization have taken place in professional activities such as architecture and advertising. In this sense, IBM, Philips or Sony produce products suitable for all parts of the world" (2003) Therefore, if civilizations accept that precious values and concepts can also be found in other civilizations, then communication will make sense, otherwise, the distances will be greater, in other words, the imitations will be deeper. To achieve a balanced and sustainable cultural exchange, it seems that the owners of any culture, while trying to find a common language and intercultural concepts, must be aware of their concepts and values and protect them as lasting cultural elements. Intercultural concepts can be considered in a balanced way by the artists and thinkers of the world when the concept of the civilized world today is equally applied to all subjects. "We confuse concepts that do not belong together," says Matsius. He points to the history of art geography as an example of Polish efforts to classify their national art. We tend to consider the work of art to be representative of a country, and art historians have developed methods that nationalize all forms of the past, making it possible to identify any particular object as both German and Polish. "Therefore, due to the confusion of the concepts of popular knowledge with an emotional burden with scientific objectivity, the national art is the invention of our time" (Klinke, 2003). Of course, this news may also seem desirable. The importance of art has risen to the point where it has competed with religious values. "In modern Western art, art has become very important. For many people, has taken religion's place. Today, if you insult the name of Christ, no one will object to you. But if you insult Michelangelo, you are done. You will be behaved like an uncivilized person" (Nasr, 2016) In conclusion, it should be said that in today's world, most cultural exchanges are from west to east, and the term cultural dialogue means

more listening by non-Western countries and speaking by Western civilization. Of course, the provision of media tools to convey their words to others has made significant progress compared to the past, but it must be acknowledged that in today's world, components, criteria, importance, necessity, valuations are measured by Western standards. And non-Western artists always have to turn their attention to the Western world to be heard and seen. If we do not want to end the discussion with a pessimistic view before paying attention to the works of contemporary artists, we must think about the audience. The audience perceives the work of art through its culture and this creates a deep communication between itself and the work. Emphasis on knowing and being aware of one's own culture is a possibility that must be carefully considered to preserve cultural assets. At the same time, while establishing cultural relations with other civilizations today, intercultural interactions can also be believed. Interestingly, the thinkers who laid the foundations of Western civilization also referred to the search for and finding ways of communication among cultures. "Plato, as the founder of the tradition of dialogue in Western thought and even among Islamic thinkers, believes that to create dialogue, a common standard and context must be sought." (Nasr, 2016) Therefore, it should be concluded that art and cultural tools provide the best function for a common language between societies, but the common criterion and context may be the acceptance of the superiority of Western media tools over the East, which in turn conceives of the superiority of thought and intellectual message which will also be followed subconsciously.

### **Manifestation of intercultural concepts in works of art**

The study of contemporary works of art in this research is important in many ways. First, the mindset of the intellectual foundations cannot be defended without stating the examples of studies. Another reason for the importance of examining works is that if we accept that intercultural concepts are expressed in artistic activities, one of the most important areas of cultural interaction is nothing but works of art, then the necessity of discussing,

and analyzing artistic examples will be obvious. In this part of the article, the works of three contemporary artists who have had national and transnational successes among the artists. They have attracted the audience in national geography as well as the audience outside the geography of the country. We will pay attention to the successful communication they achieved. In our opinion, these artists can be considered common in at least two characteristics:

1. They have used referential elements in certain history and geography and so-called identities, and therefore national concepts can be seen and received in their art.
2. The selected artists have used themes that draw contemporary attention to common issues, and this achievement can be seen regardless of the tools and media they use. This statement of the current situation means the need to review and find a common and collective solution to the characteristics of contemporary art and explain intercultural concepts.

In other words, in the works of these artists, personal intellectual concerns, local and national issues have been raised, which finally led to the stage of problem-solving and accuracy. For these artists, the local context, due to having a common dilemma, has become a pervasive and expandable subject for all human beings. In this way, the choices of the artists, while similar, distinguish them in some respects.

Anselm Kiefer, a German artist born in 1945, is active in the field of contemporary art and is known as a neo-expressionist artist. Like many contemporary artists, he cannot be limited to a particular tool or medium. But most of his works are in the form of a combination of materials on the surface and installations. His activities, especially since the eighties, show a great deal of global fame and success.

The element of books can be found in the works of Kiefer. Perhaps, this utilization is a metaphor for the Bible or a general concept of culture and consciousness for man. He generally makes his books out of the lead, which may be ambiguous in the sense of weight and flexibility at the same time. Kiefer lead books have also been used in a volume work called "Birds' Language" (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Anselm Kiefer, Bird Tongue, Metal, Wood, Resin and Acrylic Oil Layer, 1989. Source: <http://www.artsobserver.com>.

This artwork was made in 1989, shows two eagle wings set to a giant pile of lead books over metal folding chairs. From a metaphorical point of view, the wings seem to indicate the victory or transcendence of human culture and consciousness. But we carefully question the material used in the work, and ask ourselves, is it not strange to use lead to show flight? At the same time, we think about the possibility of other symbolic concepts, and if we are aware of the symbols used in the German government, we realize a different relationship and think of the hegemonic and destructive system that the wing can symbolize. This dual feature is manifested in the concept of the work for the audience aware of the history and national culture of Germany in a way that is not the same for the viewer with historical awareness in another country. On the other hand, the use of philosophical knowledge may lead to different conclusions. Just as it gives meaning to something else for the audience referring to personal memories. Kiefer is an artist who is interested in doing works on a large scale. Even the books made in his works have been impressively large. His works and thoughts do not act in a clear and simple way in conveying the message. To understand his works, one must think carefully about them and, of course, perceive meaning from them with more knowledge and awareness. Perhaps the main feature of his work is that it creates variable probabilities for each viewer. His audience is human and concepts related to human commonalities. Gender is not important in his works and human essence is questioned and emphasized.

Ahmad Nadalian's works have been done in

contemporary times, but due to his inspiration from ancient arts, he wants to be classified among the primitive works, and on the other hand, because of the way he works, his artwork can be classified as performance, installation, video and conceptual art. The allegory used in the themes of his works suggests an ethnocentric approach and may be the subject of further study in this regard. The roles he uses are selected from mythical elements that are common and historically traceable among humans, and the symbolic aspects of his designs, include humans, hands, goats, fish, snakes, etc. The importance of nature is a subject that has never disappeared from the works of Nadalian and he has always drawn himself together with his audience to the accuracy in nature, as well as the importance of nature in the lives of creatures, including humans. The human environment, along with other living things on Earth, is a topic of contemporary concern, and perhaps, Nadalian is one of the leading artists in focusing on preserving the environment and protecting Mother Nature. What always stands out as a message in Nadalian's works is to provide a living environment for communication and away from conflict for contemporary human beings. On the other hand, his performing method, especially in rolling stone seals on the sand and creating a work, although temporary, has several dimensions. Although this type of artwork can be classified as performance art, because of the material used, which is stone and sand, we encounter a kind of conflict and unity at the same time. Sand is made of crushed stone and for us, it is a symbol of transience and non-permanence. How can you not think of having the same roots but manifesting completely different symbols? (Fig. 2). Also, the stone cylinder is one of the elements used in the ancient art of this land, especially in the Achaemenid period, which provides the work with reference to the local and indigenous situation. Meanwhile, the role used in this stone cylinder goes back to mythical symbols that both on the plateau of prehistoric Iran can be found its important concepts in human life and other human civilizations. Choosing a fish symbol by the sea can also indicate other concepts. The vulnerability of animals in nature, especially fish and its habitat, the sea, is seen in this vulnerable and

unsustainable sand role. Therefore, if we call him a land art artist, we should also mention the issues and crises that these artists have usually raised during the last fifty years, and are among the concerns of contemporary art and this artist.

Jean-Michel Basquiat made this work on canvas in 1981 (Fig. 3). He shows a patched skull metaphorically. In the background, the New York City subway map looks like a skull, at the same time like a street painting based on the Western tradition of portraying an unknown person. Basquiat's life as a drug dealer, a homeless, and a nightclub wanderer, is depicted in this painting as a Puerto Rican immigrant. However, in the eighties, he moved to the uptown neighborhood and seemed successful. Basquiat is the product of the punk culture in New York. This non-professional urban<sup>2</sup> painter entered the realm of international art galleries from the lower suburbs. He is perhaps the most successful American self-taught artist in the neo-expressionist movement. He was one of the artists who was recognized by critics in the punk culture of the eighties in America, despite the common social norms. It emerged as an artistic phenomenon and in this respect resembled American hip hop music of the same period. Despite his Non-academic appearance, he was able to combine different traditional elements and styles in his art to achieve a visual combination of his street roots, far removed from his African heritage and race. Unfortunately, its fame and, ultimately, its unpleasantness quickly faded, and the mid-eighties star disappeared like a new economic bubble. Basquiat is an

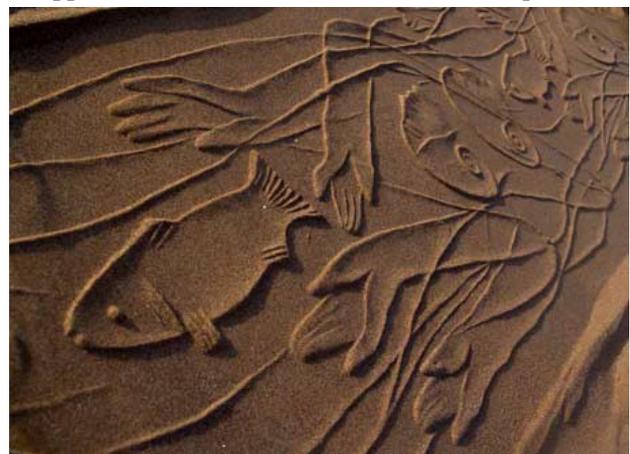


Fig. 2. Ahmad Nadalian, the role of a stone cylinder on the sand, performed for the first time in 2007. Source: [http://www.riverart.net/hormoz/my\\_art/persian/index.htm](http://www.riverart.net/hormoz/my_art/persian/index.htm).

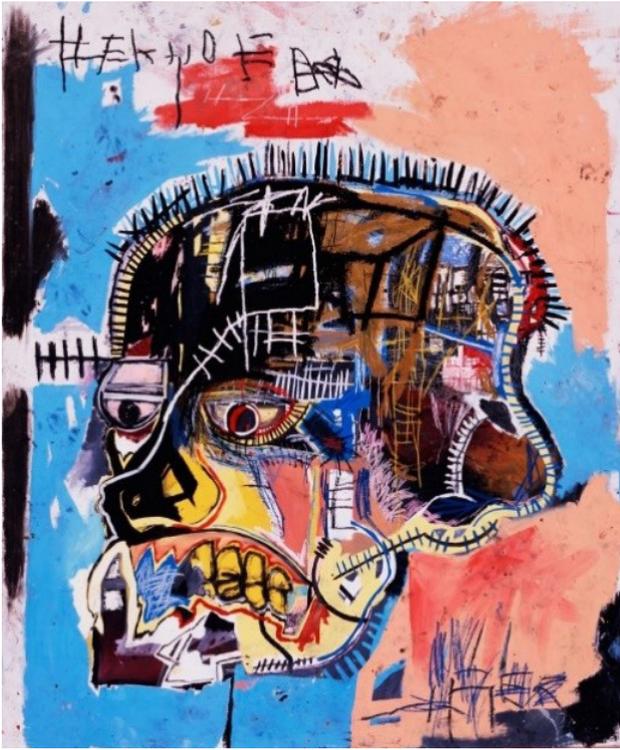


Fig. 3. Jean-Michel Basquiat, Skull, Acrylic, and Composite Materials on Canvas, 1981. Source: <https://www.theartstory.org/artist-basquiat-jean-michel.htm>.

example of an American artist who, after overcoming minimalism and conceptual art, was able to re-introduce the human body in his work. It is interesting to note the beginning of the work of an artist who used public property according to the definitions of social law to paint on clean municipal walls, under bridges, and on the bodies of buses and city trains. The slogan he used as a signature soon added to his artistic value: "SAMO is Dead". The myth-making of artists like Basquiat was done differently. His work is like a page from the office of a sloppy, unruly artist. If this work can be called iconography, it should be considered in the works of artists such as Paul Kale. The skull element is commonly used in African artwork. Next to it, a bone and a bow are found in the artist's use, in a modern form, with dense color and quick performance with fast lines that pass through the visual space. This approach can express the beliefs of the natives of uncivilized areas in distant lands such as Africa and concepts such as the belief in the immortality of nature, the life of living things, and the destruction of the earthly body. Examining his work in this study shows how the old tradition of the still-life

painting can be performed in an almost unforeseen way, like the improvisation of a black jazz musician.

## Conclusion

The stance on globalization and the negative reaction to the free flow of information and economic and cultural activities are mostly raised by developing countries. In this perspective, considering the western definitions of freedom, the possibility of cultural and artistic exchange is less seen, and there is often an attempt to impose concepts and definitions based on specific cultural values. The important question is how to validate the concept of interaction between civilizations despite the existing differences. Ambiguity about the possibility of dialogue to understand each other makes it difficult to lay the groundwork and provide new ideas. To open the way and create a conversation, one has to look for common ground. The proposed solution is to establish interactions with works of art to create communication between audiences in diverse intellectual geographies, in other words, to provide interculturalism. On the other hand, measuring the audience's understanding of works with intercultural aspects also seems difficult and sometimes impossible. To address this problem, the artist can choose subject matters that deal with the personal but common problem of contemporary man. In such a case, communication with the audience can be assured. Also, in contemporary art, we come across cases where the artist's choice not only contains intercultural features, but the immortality of the concepts he seeks, regardless of his specific geography or audience, or even the culture of the work, is promoted to cross-cultural references. Methodologically, the three selected works are summarized into general concepts with intercultural aspects and are placed in a comparative table. A comparison of the options taken from these works shows the similarities and commonalities chosen by these three artists (Table 1).

The study of the works of contemporary artists in this study shows that in response to research question raised at the beginning of this article on how to choose the theme of the artists' works, we can say: The subject of their choice refers to a specific example such as the art of

Table 1. Manifestation of intercultural concepts in the works of selected artists. Source: Authors.

Intercultural concepts	Anselm Kiefer	Ahmad Nadalian	Jean-Michel Basquiat
Metaphor	X	X	x
Tools & mediavariety	x	x	-
Indigenous/national identity	X	X	X
Human myths	X	X	X
De-stylization	X	X	X
Informing	X	X	X
Questioning	X	-	X
Personal memories	X	X	X
Human essence	X	X	X
The environment	X	X	X
De-genderization	X	X	X
Friendship message	X	X	X

Egypt, Iran or Black Africa. But in another layer, it also refers to mental concepts, such as time or the immortality of the universe. At the same time, in a different sense, it addresses the need to protect the environment or tangible examples such as the oppression of people of color. All of this, in terms of intercultural concepts, paves the way for a mutual understanding of the contemporary world and efforts to improve the current situation. However, the actual realization of this goal will be possible through paying attention to the work of art, artists' research efforts, and raising the audience's awareness of the contemporary world.

## Endnotes

1. For example, we can refer to the intellectual foundations of Peripatetic philosophy according to Bu Ali Sina or the intellectual principles of René Descartes, a French thinker of the seventeenth century.
2. refers to the common painting of recent decades, known as street painting or graffiti, and the Basquiat is considered to be one of its leaders.

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