

## Exhibition Strategies of Video Works at Istanbul Biennials

### Authors

Öykü Demirci<sup>1\*</sup>

### Affiliations

<sup>1</sup>Master's Program in Arts and Culture Management, Yeditepe University Graduate School of Social Sciences, 34755, Istanbul, Turkey

\*To whom correspondence should be addressed; E-mail: [oyku.demirci@yeditepe.edu.tr](mailto:oyku.demirci@yeditepe.edu.tr)

## **Abstract**

The introduction of electronic image recording tools in the 1950s provided a unique structure that could affect the production processes of artists. At the beginning, video art was used by artists to criticize television and later on, artists developed new strategies using the possibilities of video from different disciplines and perspectives. Since 1960, artists have started to use video as a means of expression and video has spread rapidly. In Turkey, the spread of video art coincided with the 1990s, and the interest of artists in video art increased in the 2000s.

The elements to be considered in the exhibition of video art differed from the exhibition of traditional artworks due to nature of the video. In this respect, in addition to formal concerns, hardware and technical possibilities were decisive, especially until the introduction of the first digital cameras in the mid-1990s. The use of display devices in displaying video art depends on the conceptual and formal relationship with the tool used in the demonstration. The unique space and image relations of the video have transformed the normative viewing conditions in the modernist white cube gallery space. Consequently, art institutions have started to create special spaces, which will be known as the black cube in the future.

In this context, within the scope of the study, starting from the origins of video art and after the use of video as an artistic expression have been revealed in order to provide a basis for the interpretation of the approaches used in displaying video art in the editions held until the 17th Istanbul Biennial; the development of video art in the historical process in the world and in Turkey will be examined and the determining factors in the exhibition of video art are discussed. In the last part of the study, video works in the biennials will be detected and the approaches used in the exhibition were presented.

**Keywords :** Exhibiting strategies; istanbul biennials, video, video art

## INTRODUCTION

This study covers the use of video as a form of artistic expression, its development in the historical process, as well as the exhibition paradigms arising from the unique characteristics of the medium, and the strategies of using these paradigms in displaying video art in the 17 editions of Istanbul Biennials.

Furthermore, the development of the technological infrastructure, previous artistic developments, and social movements, which were effective during the process until video, an image production technique, was started to be used as an artistic form will be discussed and will focus on the tendency of artists from different disciplines to use video as an artistic expression within the possibilities offered by the medium. In this context, the different forms of expression that emerge as a result of the use of video by the artists will be revealed in the context of purpose, method and result relationship. The development of video art in the historical process, the basis of which was prepared with technological developments in the second half of the twentieth century, the increase in the use of mass media and the emergence of video technology in the market, have been investigated from the 1960s to the present, through the characteristics of the period. Despite the pioneering works in Turkey at the end of the 1980s, the fact that the adventure of video art started with the first samples in the 1990s and began to rise with the institutionalization in the field of contemporary art in the 2000s and international events such as the Istanbul Biennial, will be revealed.

In the Paradigms of Exhibiting Video Art chapter, as distinct from traditional and static works of art, the determining factors in the exhibition of video due to its dynamic structure based on time and technology will be discussed. The changes created by the developments in recording technology in the production and display of video art, the first examples of which date back to the years when the analog format Portapak recording system that was recording on magnetic tape was introduced, will be discussed and the effect of the display devices that create the image by receiving the video signals on the display of the video in terms of content and formality will be examined. The artists using video art challenged traditional art institutions while experimenting with progressive forms of the medium with their unique style and concerns. On the other hand, the simultaneity and changeability of the unique

space- movement-image relations of the video transformed the rhythms of viewing the art inherent in a modernist gallery space. In this context, the change of the exhibition space as a result of the changing needs of video art over time will be revealed.

In the Istanbul Biennial and Video Art chapter, after investigating the purpose and history of biennials, which are defined as international contemporary art festivals, the 17th edition of the Istanbul Biennial, which brings together the trends of contemporary art while creating a meeting point between viewers and artists from different cultures in Istanbul will be discussed. In order to reveal the strategies used in the exhibition of the video art works in the editions, the paradigms used in the exhibition of video art will be examined.

This study, aims to contribute to future studies by examining the origins of video art and its development in the world and in Turkey, after it started to be used as an artistic expression, through national and international events, by examining the paradigms used in the exhibition of the medium due to its unique nature, and by revealing the strategies used in the exhibition of video art in the Istanbul Biennials

## **RESULTS**

This study, which aims to reveal the strategies of displaying video art in the Istanbul Biennials, has reached the following conclusions within the scope of the exhibition paradigms of video art under the headings of recording media, display devices and exhibition space.

It is observed that the 3rd Istanbul Biennial, where video art was exhibited for the first time, coincided with a period when user-friendly digital devices were invented. Since the 4th Istanbul Biennial, DVD, the video distribution format that replaced VHS tapes, has become widespread, and the precision rewind and fast forward features of DVD technology have prevented tape jams and made it easier to display videos. Especially since the 7th Istanbul Biennial, tape-based videos have been replaced by file-based digital format videos, so the dependency on the hardware and technical possibilities of recording media in displaying video art has been eliminated.

Considering the display devices, which is the second paradigm in displaying video art, it is observed that CRT televisions are frequently used in the display of both single-channel and multi-channel video installations and video sculptures in the 3rd and 4th Istanbul Biennials, due to the domestic viewing conditions of the works and the relationship they establish with the media. However, since the 5th Istanbul Biennial, in line with the developing technology, studies investigating the medium's own technical possibilities without reference to television have increased, and consequently, video projectors have been used frequently in addition to CRT televisions in the display of video works. Since the 9th Istanbul Biennial, flat panel plasma screens have been used, especially for the screening of single-channel documentary videos. Plasma screens were replaced by LCD screens in the following years with the developing technology, while CRT televisions, which were once the main display tool of video art presentation, continued to be used only in the display of video art at the Istanbul Biennials as a specific form of artistic expression.

The spatial strategies used in the exhibition of video art in the Istanbul Biennials have also changed in line with the demands of the exhibited works, as in the display devices. In this regard, especially the Hagia Eirene and Yerebatan Cistern, which were used as venues in almost all biennials until the 9th Istanbul Biennial, and the historical buildings in Büyükkada, which hosted video works in the 14th Istanbul Biennial, are linked to the architectural features of these spaces in terms of form and content, as well as their past functions. They were used to exhibit the works of the founders. Especially Yerebatan Cistern is frequently preferred for the exhibition of installations where reflections on the water support the narrative by establishing a relationship with the narrative of the works. The Antrepo buildings, another structure frequently used as a biennial venue, were used as venues for the first time in the 4th Istanbul Biennial, where they hosted multi-channel installations and video sculptures displayed using monitors in the main exhibition space without using spatial partitions. In the 1990s, technological developments in video projection allowed artists to produce works that challenged the spatial order of traditional exhibition spaces, creating a need to transform exhibition spaces where video art is shown. In this context, the 8th Istanbul Biennial focused on the spatial arrangements required for the exhibition of video art for the first time, and by constructing round-shaped video display areas made of light and soundproof materials in the Antrepo, the video works shown in the same space of the audience were created in a way

that sounds and lights do not affect each other. In the 9th Istanbul Biennial, besides the main exhibition halls, video works were exhibited in black boxes, as in Antepo No.5. Although this approach continued in the 10th Istanbul Biennial, especially in Antepo No.3, which was destroyed by referring to the city plan of Istanbul, the spatial design did not prevent the permeability of the sounds of the works, causing the physical space demanded by the video works not be met. Since the 11th Istanbul Biennial, an exhibition model has been created in which flat panel screens are used in the group exhibition areas and black boxes are created for video installation and single-channel videos in the solo exhibition spaces connected to these areas. While this model meets the viewing practices required by video art through black boxes, video works in undivided spaces have allowed relatively static and silent traditional artworks to be displayed in a way that can relate to them without preventing their viewing.

## **DISCUSSION**

Video defines an electronic medium that converts messages into audio and visual codes. The primary function of the video technology was to record the programs broadcast on the television when it emerged (Derman, 1993, p. 14). In addition to this feature, it records sounds as well as producing images of real images.

Portable video tools, which emerged as a result of the increasing effectiveness of television starting from the 1950s, bring a new perspective to the art of the 20th century. Since 1960, the works produced by the artists who have been searching for new ways in their art production using video techniques are considered as video art (Sönmez, 1997, p. 1885). In order to understand the video art, it is necessary to examine the technological, social, and artistic environment in the process until the use of video as an artistic expression, as well as its historical development in the process after its artistic use.

The video art has emerged from the processes and counter-movements of a series of art movements, as well as the production independence offered by the medium. The functions of the 'video' tool such as recording, reproducing and duplicating are used in a way that serves the purposes of science, entertainment industry and other branches of art, as is the stage that painting,

and photography go through until they are evaluated in the context of art. And the evolution of the language of video benefits from its predecessors cinema and television tradition (Derman, 1993, p. 14-15).

Invention of photography not only changed the visual/conceptual language of art, but also became one of the significant tools that contributed to the development of cinema. Along with the social movements, the development process of the camera became the development process of the image, new art styles and genres. Thus, in the nineteenth century, the definition of the image largely became synonymous with the definition of photography. Most of the modernist art movements that developed in the twentieth century were shaped in this period. (Bozkurt, 2005, p. 36).

Following the invention of the photograph, the process of film's becoming an art can also be compared to that of the photograph. The theory that formed the basis of the film was created by a series of optical inventions (Ellis, 1979, p. 1 as cited in Altunay, 1999). These optical inventions and developments create the necessary environment for the formation of the artistic language of cinematography. This development also formed the basis for the Lumiere Brothers to begin filmmaking in the late 19th century (Bozkurt, 2005, p. 48).

The unique language of the cinema, which is created by its technology, technique, and editing, enabled the audience to learn the general structure of this language and to grasp the reality of the pictures they watched in the film. Audience met with the fictional reality with the movie, and that prepared the audience for the structure of the television that would follow it. On the other hand, the unique structure of the movie allowed it to be used by subsequent picture techniques and to create a visual language that these techniques would benefit from (Altunay, 1999, p. 80-83).

In early 1920s, modernist movements such as Cubism, Futurism, Bauhaus, Dadaism and Surrealism also influenced the cinema. The form and content structure of cinema was re-questioned. Artists producing in different disciplines embarked on new quests in cinema and produced many successful experimental works. Experimental attempts that emerged in photography and cinema since the 1920s also became the references on which video films are

based. Experimental productions in cinema, as in other art disciplines, started a crucial process that formed the basis of video art (Bozkurt, 2005, p. 52-62).

Another important development in this period was the invention of television. Television is the general name of the broadcasting system in which the electronic image is used as a mass communication device. Video, on the other hand, is a recording and display device developed for television broadcasting and for individual (household) use (Bozkurt, 2005, p. 83).

If the cinema cameras are excluded, it is possible to say that the first electronic video recorders were used in the early 1950s. As Alper Altunay quoted in his doctoral dissertation, Frank Popper stated that the technological developments related to the process of obtaining the electronic image allow the recording of electronically produced images. In this way, the image could be produced by using optical and electronic technologies together, and it was possible to record the image on a magnetic tape on a channel separate from the audio, but also together with the audio. Furthermore, the image and object could be recorded simultaneously and in real time, by allowing the recorded image to be re-played on the moment it was saved or later. Moreover, it was possible to obtain a denaturalized picture by rearranging the forms of the objects or destroying the relations between the objects or by adding or removing color from the electronic picture. A new dimension was created in the timeline by repeatedly recording different images of objects at different periods (Popper, 1993, as cited in Altunay, 1999)

Another important feature of the electronic image is that the recorded image can capture the time of the object. In this phenomenon called instantaneity, the object and the picture of the object can be seen on the monitor simultaneously due to the speed in the picture generation process. This phenomenon later evolved into the concept of producing live pictures. Due to all these possibilities, the fact that the final image obtained in the electronic image is completely different from the first image, made it possible to use the camera not only as a recording device, but also as an interpreting and creative gadget. This phenomenon presented a unique structure that could directly affect the creation processes of artists (Altunay, 1999, p. 89-90).



Sylvia Martin, in her book *Video Art*, states that the technological beginning of video art coincided with the beginning of television broadcasting. For Martin, the development of video parallels the developments in the field of television and is shaped according to the needs of television (Martin, 2006, p. 8). Jameson (1994) states that video art still targets television broadcasting, although television broadcasting supports and represents mass culture. The use of television as a device of the capitalist system caused the artists to feel responsible for this issue. Artists criticized the device using its possibilities, opposed the logic of television and worked for the change of these perceptual structures by using the structures it established as a mass media (p. 109).

On the other hand, television created the viewer's sense of readiness in front of the screen and feeling itself as part of the event. It can be argued that just as theatre has created an artist-audience environment that prepares audience, produces, and consumes the cinematic art; television has also created such a situation for the video artist (Bozkurt, 2005, p. 93).

### **Video as an Art Form**

Video was shaped by the new technology, real-world politics, and the ever-changing volatility of the contemporary art. The video which was originally developed for commercial television in the 1950s as a space-age medium, left out of the interests of artists. The space race caused by the Cold War ignited advances in technology that led to the introduction of audio equipment in the consumer market, including wireless telephone, satellite television, and videotape. The tape contributed to the rise of consumer video, a byproduct of both the Vietnam War and the rising porn industry. From then on, every technological advance would give new hope to the users: radio and television networks that sent Vietnam War news directly to their living rooms were moving away from Broadcast and switching to cable, which allowed public access to alternative programming. In the late 1970s, the stereo and then the Discman and cell phone expanded the portability of sound (London, 2020, p. 5).

With no established origins, the video has attracted artists from different disciplines and different perspectives. Artists have developed new strategies for making art dealing with both music, dance or sculpture and video. These young pioneers were encouraged by the work of previous early

interdisciplinary artists. Since video also offered cheap distribution opportunity, artists saw it as a way to circumvent the rigid art system. Many dissident painters, sculptors, and other artists, including women, turned to a brand-new field to leave a mark and make history (London, 2020, p. 10-11).

The pioneers of video art explored the technology of video and introduced video into the art environment in different forms and contexts. As a result of these initial attempts; electronic depictions consisting of the manipulation of two and three-dimensional surrealist depictions with sound and motion; drawings and paintings produced by the color creation system of the video and guided with audio; video sculpture created with audio by reflecting the electronic picture as light, have emerged (Kılıç, 1995, p.11).

### **The Periods of Video Art**

Art can be influenced by previous art movements that find a place in society and affect the society's cultural structure. Likewise, it has the power to influence the art movements that will succeed it. That can be perceived as the art movements' preparing the ground for the next one in the historical process. When video art is examined in its own historical and social process, it will be observed that it was influenced by previous art branches and movements (Altunay, 1996, p. 136).

Wulf Herzogenrath, as quoted by Muammer Bozkurt (2005), states that the beginning of video art dates back to the Happening and Fluxus movements, in which increased consciousness and radical redefinitions took place with the questioning of traditional art. The second half of the twentieth century preformed the infrastructure of video art through various factors such as a series of technological developments from photography to cinema, the transformation of technical and artistic relations, and the first experimental works of the Productivists. From this perspective, it is natural for the video recorder to easily find a space for itself in such an environment (p. 173-175).

Although Ernie Kovacs made various visual experiments by distorting television signals in 1952, Nam June Paik, Wolf Vostell and Dara Birnbaum were the first artists to use video images in the

art environment. (Kılıç, 1995, p. 10). After 1959, the German artist Wolf Vostell used working television sets in his works, “de/collage” (Arapoğlu, 2017, p. 272). Vostell buried a barbed-wire television which continues to transmit the images in New Brunswick that same year. Vostell’s reaction was directed not only to the device itself, but also at the viewer. (Derman, 1992, as cited in Uşar, 2006). In his first experiments in the 1960s, Nam June Paik deforms the electronic image on the screen with the help of a magnet, or manually interferes with the flow of the image while playing the pre-recorded videotape. (Kılıç, 1995, p. 10-11).

In 1995, Sony released electronic equipment called Portapak that can record and replay motion picture. This technology could only be used by television before portapak. One of the first people purchased and used portapak was Korean artist Nam June Paik. Paik recorded the Pope’s visit to New York on November 4, 1965, while he was in a taxi. Then, he announced that he would show this image at Cafe Au Go Go, with an advertisement on which it said “as collage technique replaced oil-paint, the cathode ray tube will replace the canvass” (Walther, 2020, as cited in Uşar, p. 20, 2006). This incident is considered as the turning point of video art.

Video began to spread rapidly in different countries of Europe in 1960s. In 1965, video art was well embraced by the audience as well as European artists. The different languages of video and television and musical films brought the language of video together on a common plane. The new space created by entertainment records and musicals, the process of removing the language of video from its medium and bringing it closer to the language of television, developed a different tone. Another important feature of these years is that it was the beginning of the period of curators in the exhibitions held in the field of video art. The styles and different perceptions of the video artists became more evident during the events. Bozkurt (2005) states that this situation can be accepted as a new era for video art (p. 182). In this period, the distinction between the sub-titles of video art: installation, performance and film began to become clear. The developments in scientific and computer technology that took place in the late 60s attracted the attention of artists from the very beginning. In 1969, Gerry Schum’s TV Gallery, which hosted important video performances and installations especially in the 1970s, was opened, followed by the Dusseldorf Video Gallery.

In the following years, Castelli Gallery in New York has become a center where the works of many artists working in the field of video are exhibited and recognized (Bozkurt, 2005, p. 177-188).

The 1970s can be called the golden age of video art. This period coincides with the development of camera lenses as well as the articulation of color and sound phenomena in video. Although loss of quality during reproduction of video technology was a disadvantage, both its multiple reproducibility and its three-dimensional production as an installation made it possible for this technology to stand out. Despite the fact that the technological devices themselves were expensive, the recording cassettes were cheap. It also allowed to delete a recording and dub over it. With all these features, video has become widespread in alternative galleries and nonprofit environments. During this period, artists focused on issues such as civil rights, feminism and environmentalism, aiming to create public opinion through video art. At the same time, they carried out studies criticizing television as a mass media tool controlled by companies. Television has been manipulated and transformed by artists. Video artists were among the first to resist to television hegemony (Arapoğlu, 2017, p. 271-273). The 1970s is also the period when video art was discussed from theoretical aspects, and conferences and publications began to emerge. International joint projects were produced on every continent, foundations related to this field were established, popular television and art video collaborations became stronger during these years (Bozkurt, 2005, p. 194-199).

In the 1980s, developing countries have started to use international television broadcasts with new opportunities such as satellite rental and that has increased the power and influence of television even more. In this regard, television has become the biggest weapon of globalism and liberal economy. While the monopolies of international communication became stronger, the national borders of communication technology began to disappear.

Various program systems and technologies such as Microsoft MP-DOS, Microsoft Windows, Apple Macintosh, IBM-PC, and compact discs have been developed since the early 1980s. The mass production of and the cheap access to desktop computers for amateur use have launched a new era in all sectors and cultural fields. Likewise, the combination of the developments in video technology with computer technology facilitated and popularized the use of video cameras in the

amateur field. With the Video Home System (VHS), the recording, erasing, and replaying of tapes in camcorders and displays, and with the increase in image quality, cheaper cost, and the opportunity to cheap access to these tools as a result of the development of the market, have allowed the cameras and video players to enter into almost every home together with television sets. Video has entered almost every aspect of daily life, just like the camera (Bozkurt, 2005, p. 211-212).

However, institutional support for video art by publishers and museums began to decrease in the early 1980s, and the excitement for this promising medium of the 1970s began to fade. The efforts of video artists were inadequate against the dominance of television. Museums held many group video screenings during this period. They analyzed the artist movements under the influence of the video. However, the museum staff did not have the skills to edit the video displays. Museum curators, on the other hand, were not willing to pay production companies for the equipment and expertise needed to display video art.

Yet, commercialization of video art was a problem for private galleries. Likewise, collectors found it difficult to accept this intangible form as a piece of collection. On the other hand, due to the worldwide economic recession of 1981, public broadcasters were reluctant to display their experimental video work in 1981. In the mid-1980s, museums decreased the costs and once again invested in painting and sculpture, which led video artists to seek opportunities in public broadcasting spaces. Video projectors of this period were both expensive and limited in resolution and sharpness. On the other hand, as installations have got larger in size from the form of video sculpture to (large) representations inspired by the trade fair, the video installation has shown up in public spaces. Although many of them failed, video art festivals began to embrace the idea of “new media” in the mid-1980s.

Almost twenty-five years after the emergence of video art; museums and galleries finally opened their doors to video artists in the early 1990s. The internet network was about to leap forward during this period (1994-1995). Yet, as the era of “new media” began, it became the determining history of video art. Museums around the world include video art into their collections as installations and work with galleries to create their collector portfolio. Video installation

production was dominated by American and European artists in this period. By the mid-1990s, museums had lost their interest in single-channel works. Video work displayed on a single monitor or screen is never preferred in museums or galleries. Likewise, viewers do not like the idea of watching television-like shows in museum galleries. In the late 1990s, museums shift their attention to “new media” group displays. Group shows presenting the artists working in the web space and other information technologies have replaced the group shows organized around the video tool (Sherman, 2008, p. 4- 5).

Digital video has almost completely dissolved the boundaries between cinema and television as a result of technological developments in the decades since video was used as an artistic form. Easy access to reliable cheap production equipment, the availability of DVD, Blue Ray Disc and large-capacity computer hard drives, high-definition recording and projection facilities have increased the use and popularity of video as an artistic medium and a display format used in galleries.

This 40-year technical revolution has had profound impact on artists and curators. Video has become available in all art institutions, from galleries to museums. Artists now use this medium as a natural part of their art production. Likewise, curators are eager to organize exhibitions that include or shine their video work.

In this context, the representation of video artists in the UK Turner Awards, which is internationally recognized as one of the most prestigious awards in contemporary art world, makes it possible to infer that video is not only recognized as one of the mainstreams of contemporary art, but also it has a powerful and culturally interested environment. Many of the artists who have been awarded the Turner Prize in the last fifteen years use video as the primary medium for their production, or video is a key element in their corpus (Andrews, 2014, p. 328).

On the other hand, media art’s position in the art world strengthened in the 2000s as media art has begun to be handled more seriously by professionals of the art world and adopted the general classification for any art that depended on a technological component to be dealt with by art institutions and has quietly included the term video art to the field of art history (London, 2020, p.159). After the developments since the 1990s, the changes in video art went on in the 2000s and

a period when video art began to be evaluated within the “media art” has started (Arapoğlu, 2008, p.5).

The spread of video art in Turkey coincides with the 1990s, although it was not so common (Uşar, 1995). However, the works of Nil Yalter, who produced her works by using this medium in Europe in the 1970s, and Teoman Madra in Turkey (Özdemir Satıcı, 2020, p. 12), Handan Börtüçene with her “Broke/See” for which she received a success award at the 5. New Trends Exhibition in 1985 (Töle, 2015, p. 126), and Ergül Özkutan’s works in the exhibition titled “Installation No:1” in 1987 (N. Sönmez, 2021) can be counted among examples of video art in early avant-garde Turkey.

Video art expands its field in Turkey in the 1990s (Uşar, 2006, p. 107). The 1990s were the years when video art began to spread and bear its first examples in Turkey. This period coincides with the period when video transmission and editing techniques got relatively cheaper with the beginning of widespread use of computers in Turkey. Digital video technology was not that widespread in the 90s, and mostly magnetic tape-recording systems were used. The 1970s would be referred as Late-Avanguard as defined by Acar and the first examples of the video art would begin to be produced in the 1990s and 2000s. In the mid-90s and towards the 2000s, the pioneering examples of video art were created around some prominent curators and events that influenced the art environment of that period. Large-scale exhibitions such as the Istanbul Biennale, Habitat Exhibitions, The Youth Action Exhibitions, Contemporary Artists, Young Art, New Suggestions / New Proposals have played a significant role in the spread of video art (Acar as cited in, Özdemir Satıcı, 2020, p. 12-13). In the 1990s, besides the exhibitions focusing on video art itself, various events, exhibitions and broadcasts were organized for artists to exhibit their video installations.

2000s corresponds to the years when governmental art institutions replaced by private institutions in Turkey. During this period, there has been a rapid increase in the number of private galleries, private capital owners have enriched their collections, private museums have been opened, the sponsorships to the exhibition have been increased and various award-winning competitions have been organized. Capital owners, by taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the state, also created a significant brand value for the country’s cultural industry and thus proved their presence.

The corporates, foundations and companies, whose numbers have increased rapidly especially after the 2000s, have evolved into an influential powers that directs cultural and artistic activities via their personal investments (Sülün, 2019, p. 194). Furthermore, the artists, who could not gain a seat in international exhibitions and participate in the global circulation, continued to produce within the limited possibilities of the local art environment, sought alternative spaces and structures where they could exhibit their works. Therefore, it is observed that the number of artist initiatives, collectives and alternative venues, which are defined as anti-institutional, started to increase in these years (Töle, 2015, p. 369).

In this context, artists had to rearrange their visibility strategies in this new art order in which new institutions and actors emerged. At the end of the 80s, when the first biennials were held, and the beginning of the 90s, the art environment, where the concept of curator could not be mentioned, progressed in the center of art groups, artist-focused, and the exhibitions organized by galleries gave way to curated exhibitions. In this environment, artists began to look for a curator to debut (Özdemir Saticı, 2020, p. 22).

One of the most important changes in the art environment of the 1990s was the change in the materials used by the artists. This situation has continued rapidly until today and still continues with the inclusion of innovations that emerged with technological developments.

Since the mid-90s, the use of video technology in artistic production has gradually increased in Turkey, and this increase has accelerated since the 2000s. The increase in the number of video works produced in this period was also reflected in the inclusion and visibility of video art in artistic events and exhibitions (Töle, 2015, p. 376).

The transmission, editing and recording process of the video, which could only be performed in professional editing studios in Turkey before 2000s, overburdened the production not only in terms of effort but also because of its high cost. Therefore, only a few video installations benefitted from editing techniques in this period, and mostly the pieces based on the recording of the action were created as in the video works produced in the USA in the early period of video art. After the 2000s, the easy and cheap access to technology allowed computers, video recording, editing and



exhibition tools to enter into individual areas of use, and this paved way for the increase in the interest of artists in video art. The fact that video art is democratic and easily accessible, and its interdisciplinary and hybrid structure that enables it to produce fast solutions, has made this medium popular among artists. (Özdemir Satıcı, 2020, p. 20).

In the 2000s, artists held video art exhibitions in galleries, museums and art centers, as well as in the spaces of initiatives and collectives. In these years, several institutions and organizations that focused on video art, made screenings and interviews, and supported video production with open calls were established.

### **Paradigms of Exhibiting Video Art**

In addition to the multifarious, time-oriented and dynamic nature of video art, the fact that the video art is determined by the technology of the time it emerged and was produced, and the fact that the form itself is inextricably linked with the technology of the time it was produced, brought about a change in the paradigms valid for the exhibition of traditional art types (Manasseh, 2009, p. 233).

### **Recording Media**

Recording media means any removable, physical audio recording medium. (<https://www.lawinsider.com/dictionary/recording-media>) Historically, the fact that video art, which is dated between film and digital media, is a technology-dependent space, causes it to be largely dependent on technique and equipment in its exhibition as well as its production. (Manasseh, 2009, p. 11).

Film made it possible to create a still perception of reality of painting and photography in motion, and used the same technical infrastructure as photography in the process of creating the image. On the other hand, the material of the film has changed over time. Since it is not possible to transfer the continuous movement that happens in a time flow to a single plane, the surface used in the film consists of successive still frames. The film camera divides the motion that happens in one second into twenty-four equal parts, and records each part of this motion that occurs in a twenty-fourth of

a second into separate frames (Feldman, 1982, as cited in Altunay, 1999, p. 81). Detection of the moving image requires a precise optical, mechanical and chemical process. After this process, when the image is projected onto the screen, the continuation of the impression on the retina of the eye for a short time “creates an uninterrupted image, in other words, the impression of a moving picture” (Öz, 2012).

The size of the shooting format of a movie is directly related to the quality of the image that will be projected onto the screen. On the other hand, the growth of the format means that the equipment is larger, heavier and more expensive. Therefore, considering the ratio of price and performance, professional motion pictures aimed at screening in movie theaters are usually shot in 35 mm format (Yıldırım, 2013, p. 33).

Cameras using film can generally only be loaded with films from the specific film format for which they are produced (such as 16mm, 8mm). Since the size of the film is parallel to the size of the area where the light will reflect, increasing the format of the film increases the image quality. However, larger formats require larger and heavier equipments (Yıldırım, 2013, p.19). Although there have been many different film format sizes from 3mm to 75mm in the more than 100 years since the emergence of film formats, video artists have generally preferred 16mm and 8mm film formats due to factors such as cost and desired image quality.

Video, with the development of technology, is a low-cost alternative to film, which is the only method of producing motion pictures (Yıldırım, 2013, p. 32). Although as in films, video produces images by capturing photographs at certain intervals and numbers per second; unlike film, it produces the motion image in an electronic environment, not in chemical environment (Canıklıgil, 2014, p. 22-23). The light changes in the video are perceived as voltage changes by the pixels in the electronic emulsion carrier and converted into electrical signals, which are called “Video signals” (Küçükcan, 2013, as cited in Kılıç, 2019). In the first years, this technology was used to convert the lights received by the tube into electrical signals and then send them to televisions in homes for live broadcast (Canıklıgil, 2014, p. 22-23).

In the first years of television broadcasting, broadcasting only live was a great burden for television studios. Another problem was that it was not possible to replay live broadcasts and did not allow editing. Film, the only technology that made it possible to record television programs, was a very expensive alternative in the long term (Oven and Dunton, 1982, as cited in Yıldırım, p.32). In 1956, Ampex company developed VTR (Video Tape Recorder) technology, which allows recording video and audio on magnetic video tapes that are two inches wide. Being able to record video eliminated the important disadvantages created by film technology, and thus the area of video technology began to expand significantly (Canikligil, 2014, p. 22-23).

Analog signals are naturally occurring signals that change over a period of time, continuous, and progress smoothly. Analog video signals, on the other hand, are formed by converting light reflected from objects into electrical signals. The changes in the amplitude and voltage of the electrical signal show the changes in the bright and dark points of the video image. The frequency of these waves creates the details in the image (Fener, 2012, as cited in Kılıç, 2019, p. 62). With the recording of electrical signals on magnetic tape, the concept of video recording emerged (Canikligil, 2014, p. 32). After the video recording technology developed by Ampex in 1956, many recording formats with different features emerged.

In this context, firstly, it would be correct to examine the Portapak video recording system, which was released by Sony in 1965. The use of Portapak by Korean artist Nam June Paik following its release is considered as the beginning of video art. This system, consisting of a camera and a recorder, was almost 40 times cheaper than equivalent professional TV broadcasting units (Kılıç, 1995, p. 33-34). Recording on ½ inch magnetic tape, Portapak was powered by a battery system and produced a black and white image. The fact that the recording unit can be hung on the shoulder and has the features of Super 8 mm cameras for the camera to be used by a single person, and Sony announced this system as the “world’s first portable camera recording system” (Esin, 2017, p. 30). The low cost of the camera system made it accessible to a wider mass, while its portability attracted the attention of video artists and guerrilla filmmakers.

In 1971, Sony introduced the U-matic recording system, which records on  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch magnetic tape. The most important feature of U-matic was that magnetic tapes contained inside a cassette for the first time. Thus, Sony started the cassette system with U-matic (Canikligil, 2014, p. 23).

During this period, the need for a compact and one-piece device that could meet the needs of a typical consumer arose. Betamovie released by Sony was the first device to meet this need. This system consisted of a camera, camcorder and reader. This system included Betamax cassettes, the forerunner of the Betacam system to be released by Sony in the following years. Betamax tapes has the capacity of recording 20 and 30 minutes (Kılıç, 2019, p. 65-66).

In the early days of the advent of video technology, the technology was rejected by filmmakers. One of the most important reasons for this was that the small black and white picture had very low resolution and lacked depth of field (Spielmann, 2006, p. 55). Contrarily, the fact that the video works with the emulsion carrier technology has caused it to be a very cheap alternative to the film material. Furthermore, the video did not require chemical processes in the post-production phase of the film. The compactness of video cameras paved the way for individual use. With all these features, video technology has been used by artists as a means of expression since the first years of its introduction. In the early years of video art, artists used motion picture technology tools that were suitable for them within the possibilities of current technology.

The development of digital devices following analog video has led to a crucial change in motion picture acquisition technologies, allowing the image and audio to be converted into digital data rather than chemical or electrical information (Yıldırım, 2013, 41). The concept of digital is used to express codes created from the numbers 0 and 1. This concept refers to the conversion of signals with numbers 0 and 1 into numerical codes that the computer can process. Unlike analog signal, digital signals have a sequence of discrete values. Digital technology allows all of the video or audio signals to be converted to 0 and 1 values, to be recorded, stored, and formatted. Digitalization offers opportunities such as putting data in a virtual form, copying and publishing it in this platform (Cevher, 2016, p. 297-298).

The first cameras capable of recording picture and audio as purely digital data were introduced in the mid-1990s. These cameras, called DV (Digital Video), were recording in a new semi-professional video format. Recording the images taken with semi-professional cameras as digital data on cassettes for the first time in history turned DV into a revolution (Canikligil, 2014, p.30). In the following years, Sony continued to manufacture digital video cameras.

Cameras have largely been developed to record on memory cards rather than cassettes since 2005. This ended up classifying cameras based on the tape formats. Nowadays, it is quite difficult to come across the use of cassette or cassette cameras except for special purposes. Although tape technology is one of the main components of the digital video revolution, waiting for the tape to rewind or forward to watch the captured pictures, not being able to transfer real time to the computer environment and being susceptible to damage make them disadvantageous (Canikligil, 2014, p. 25).

The earliest examples of video art installations date back to the years when the analog recording system Portapak which was recording on magnetic tape was first introduced. In these periods, museums were timid about acquiring and displaying videos, primarily since the preservation of video works was a complex issue and it brought responsibilities such as fixing damaged hardware and software of obsolete works (London, 2020, p. 18).

Sony's introduction of U-matic cassettes in 1971 enabled video to become a transferable and convertible medium. Unlike half inch open reel video of Tape, which requires manual processing, three-quarter-inch tape is placed in a closed cassette. In this way, it could work by itself when placed on the playback desk. The fact that play decks have an auto-rewind button has somewhat freed technophobic programmers from their fear (London, 2020, p. 27).

Technophobia and institutional resistance to the display of video art continued until the introduction of convenient digital devices in the 1990s (London, 2020, p. 18). In the second half of the 1990s, DVD, the video distribution format which would replace VHS tapes, was introduced. DVD as a format had two qualities that were not available in any other interactive medium at that time: enough capacity and speed to provide high quality. Moreover, DVDs had more precise

rewind and fast forward capabilities and did not need to be rewinded before being played back. Therefore, no tape jams occurred ever.

After the beginning of the 2000s, cameras began to record on memory cards instead of tapes. After then, tape-based video works started to be produced file-based in order to be able to store and display them. More and more artists have begun working completely in digital media. The production and display of video art have lost its dependence on hardware and technical possibilities and has become operable on any laptop (Falcão & Ensom, 2019, p. 238).

Today, videos are mostly stored in digital media in file format and are circulated entirely online through websites used to send large-sized digital data. Displaying may be carried out by playing the video works on an external media player via USB sticks, or by complex projection devices with built-in media players.

## **Display Devices**

The evolution of video as a means of communication has depended heavily on technology. Therefore, the use of display devices that create the image by receiving video signals in the display of video art is mostly dependent on the same technological developments (Derman, 1993, p. 14). However, as well as the technological possibilities, factors such as the conceptual and formal relationship of the work with the medium used in its presentation or its relationship with the elements of the place it exists were effective in determining the video display devices used in the exhibition of video art (Bozkurt, 2005, p. 91).

Monitors are devices that decode audio and video signals and broadcast the image on the screen, that is, in a way performing the function of the camera in reverse (Derman, 1993, p. 14). On the other hand, the meaning of the monitor is identified with what television represents in the twentieth century. Since the definition of monitor is limited in terms of today's art environment and

production, the word ‘screen’, which covers all variable format display devices, has been used (Bozkurt, 2005, p. 91). Video display devices can strongly influence the appearance of a particular piece of art.

The uses strategies of video display devices since the first years when video art emerged may be grouped under the following five groups:

1. Regardless of the form of the device and what it represents, with the purpose of displaying single-channel video installations
2. In relation to the form of the device and what it represents with the purpose of displaying single-channel video installations
3. Enabling the physical participation of the viewer and establishing a relationship with the space for the display of multi-channel video installations
4. Enabling the audience to watch as a sculptural object in the function of a furniture in video sculpture installations
5. In relation to the form of the device and what it represents, in the installations that focus on television technology itself

Another display device, video projection, is reflecting a moving image created in digital platform on a designated flat surface in certain formats (Alpay, 2015, p.2). The technologies developed for capturing and reflecting the moving image and presented detailly in the previous chapter of the study on video art formed the basis of cinematography. With the success of cinematography, the areas of use of reflection techniques began to diversify and the presentation forms began to change in the following years. In the early years of video art, although the image quality of early video projector was quite low, especially when compared to film, some artists still used it in their works.

As with other aspects of video technology, video projectors’ quality increased dramatically. Video projectors decreased in size and bulk, whilst the cost of purchase continued to decrease. With the

increasing accessibility of projectors, growing number of artists began to explore the potential of this new mode of presentation. One significant feature of projection is the potential to project images onto surfaces rather than a conventional screen. Not only did this have an effect on the size of the image that an artist might consider, but it also presented the possibility of abandoning the standard broadcast TV ratio (3:4) that the traditional TV rectangle constrained. This change liberated the video art from the inevitable reference of television. It also contributed to the erosion of the different features between video and film (Andrews, 2014, p. 305).

The video projection has become the most preferred presentation format in recent video work combined with other new technological developments such as the DVD and USB driver over the last two decades. Video monitors, once the main tool for the presentation of video art installations and films, are used today only as a specific form of artistic expression. Curators now include video installations with classic art forms in group shows, and present in endlessly repeating loops indiscriminately (Andrews, 2014, p.309). The improved brightness settings and resolutions of today's projectors allow video works to be displayed in the main exhibition venue without the need to create special blackbox spaces for them to be displayed. Video projections are used as an effective display strategy for displaying both single-channel and multi-channel complex video installations in the main exhibition venues and black boxes.

Video mapping, on the other hand, has the same principle as the cinema, but unlike the dark screen projection process in the cinema, the moving image is created by projecting it onto three-dimensional surfaces by means of one or more projectors (Atiker, 2011, p. 2).

The purpose of video mapping is to create a physical illusion by combining the image with sensory and visual elements. The harmony of the projected image with the three-dimensional form to which it is mapped and the effect of the result on the viewer are the concerns of this process (Ekim, 2011, p. 2).

One of the first artists who used this technology in his work is Tony Oursler. In the 1980s, Oursler experimented with compact low-cost LCD video projectors and produced a series of dummies to project human features onto their blank faces (Andrews, 2014, p. 307-309). Although video



mapping technology was used in the installations of video artists to endeavor a “situation rather than an image” in order to engage the viewer in a more active relationship with the work (Andrews, 2014, p. 307), it was not used as an exhibition strategy in displaying video art installations.

## **Exhibition Space**

In the era of high modernism, when video art emerged, the medium’s interactive and simultaneously time-oriented presence in the exhibition space demands more flexibility, leading to the need for a formal change. The works of artists challenging the traditional gallery space will be the driving force for the gradual creation of “non-hierarchical, non-modernist or non-categorical” museum spaces in time (Manasseh, 2009, p. 85).

The phenomenon of the white cube was first discussed in Brian O’Doherty’s article “Inside the White Cube-The Ideology of The Gallery Space” published in Artforum magazine in 1976. (Antmen, 2016).

Brian O’Doherty states that the history of modernism is directly related to the history of space and argues that it is possible to read the history of modern art through the relationship between changes in space and how we perceive these changes. The ideal gallery subtracts from the artwork all cues that interfere with the fact that it is “art”. As a result, “some of the sanctity of the church, the formality of the courtroom, the mystery of the experimental laboratory joins with chic design to produce a unique chamber of esthetics” (O’Doherty, 2016, p.30) appears. The new gallery paradigm has become an operational standard for most modern museums and galleries over the years, characterizing the modern exhibition structure Brian O’Doherty has outlined (Manasseh, 2009, p. 65-66).

However, video art’s interactive and time-based presence in an exhibition space in 1960s, prompted a need for institutional modification demanding more flexibility in exhibition space (Manasseh, 2009, p.85). The simultaneity and convertibility of the unique space-movement-image relationship of the video disrupted the rhythms of viewing the art inherent in a modernist gallery

space and transformed the normative conditions required for viewing the art in the gallery (Manasseh, 2009, p. 91).

The durational breadth of works, and the complexity of fixing comprehension into strict temporal frameworks would often demand more than one viewing. Because of these problems, through MOMA's pioneering, some institutions created a separate area for video exhibition. By doing this, institutions would position themselves to chart and promote the current social-artistic practices of the age in a secure situation apart from, yet within the overall framework of their collection. This display strategy of video art, later called as blackbox, has been created with a full devotion to the codes and customs of traditional cinema (Manasseh, 2009, p. 94).

Especially in the late 70s and early 80s, artists such as Dan Graham, Bill Viola and Bruce Nauman have worked to create a kind of interactive cinematic spaces that challenge the fixed modernist frameworks of art museums and reorganize the logical and spatial spaces of the gallery. As developing video productions such as these and installing them in galleries such as MOMA, and the Tate, Nauman would crucially blur the boundaries and architectural parameters related to the meaning of space in the gallery. In the 1980s, Nauman continued to create creative spaces that would prefigure the video art he would create in the following years. In the 2000s, he installed floor-to-ceiling screens for his video installations and created black boxes with sitting units that would create the expression of watching a movie in the cinema for the audience (Manasseh, 2009, p. 114-118).

Black boxes are mostly rectangular and black-painted rooms created by using soundproof panels. There are usually thick, black curtains that prevent the two-way passage of sound and light at the entrance of the rooms. Inside the room, there are seating units that provide the audience with a cinema-like long-term viewing, and the floor is sometimes covered with carpets that match the color of the walls. The audience entering the dark boxes from the white and bright atmosphere of the main gallery often loses their sense of direction.

Today, black boxes are the most widely used display format for displaying both single-channel and multi-channel video installations in contemporary art museums, galleries and venues.

On the other hand, in the late 1960s the artists began to create their own exhibition spaces in front of shops, in abandoned factories, studios and lofts with the purpose of creating an alternative to the structure of modern art museums attached to modernism and its selections. The primary aim of these spaces created and controlled by the artists, was to recover the control of the artist over what he produced. Inside the alternative spaces, artists were free to show whatever they wanted to and how they wanted to show. For this reason, at the beginning, these spaces were mostly preferred by the artists excluded by the dominant cultural system (Pimantel, 1994). These areas are defined as alternative spaces. An alternative art space is a term used to define the venues used for presenting, creating and distributing art that is distinct from the traditional commercial art gallery and the art museum. The descriptor of alternative indicates its defiance of galleries driven by profit and museum models critiqued as exclusive and exclusionary. By often featuring works that focus on what art could be, and works expanding the definition of art, alternative spaces posed a profound challenge to the art world's status quo (Fiske, 2020).

Today, the hybridization in art, architecture and design has expanded the boundaries of art. The artists brought new perspectives to the concept of space with works that ensure the active viewer-artwork relationship in public spaces other than museums, in order to produce multidimensional results on the relationship between art and life. Today, from libraries to abandoned industrial buildings, from airports to opera houses, from banks to restaurants, many venues have become spaces for artists to work and display their arts (El- legood, 2014, p.7 as cited in Özen Tanyıldızı, 2016, p. 76). Today, alternative spaces continue to be used as a strategy used as a stance against the elitist attitudes of art institutions, which are the symbols of the status quo, as well as as a strategy for the exhibition of both video art and other disciplines of contemporary art with the aim of contributing to elements like the unique architectural structure, forms and history of the space used to the narrative and activating the relationship of the audience with the work.

### **Istanbul Biennials and Video Art**

The French word “biennale”, derived from the Latin word “biennus” meaning two-year period, is defined as repeated every two years or every other year (<https://www.nisanyansozluk.com/kelime/bienal>). The word biennial was used for the first time in

the Venice Biennale to describe artistic events held every two years (Eroğlu & Aslıtürk, 2017 p. 133). Art historian Wu Chin-tao states that the definition which describes the international contemporary art festivals usually take place every two years, has expanded as to include triennials and Documenta as a quadrennial (2016).

Beral Madra (2003) states that the aim of an international biennial is to introduce the artists who contribute to the general development of art in the local and international art environment, as well as to recognize the contemporary art approaches of countries, and to present this phenomenon to art experts, collectors and large masses (p. 13).

The Venice Biennale, the world's first biennial, opened on April 30, 1985 with the title "Venice International Art Festival" which would later be called as biennial since it was held every two years (<https://www.labiennale.org/en/history-biennale-arte>). 56 years after the first Venice Biennale met with the audience, the second oldest biennial in the world, the "San Paulo Biennial", was created in 1951, based on the example of the Venice Biennale (Özdemir, 2019, p. 76). After this process, especially since the 1950s, biennials have emerged in various countries of the world, taking the style of the Venice Biennale as an example and named after the city in which they were held. Today, the number of biennials held around the world is over 300 (Özdemir, 2019, p. 73).

The first edition of the Istanbul Biennial, which is currently listed among the twenty best biennials in the world, was held in 1987 (<https://news.artnet.com/art-world/worlds-top-20-biennials-triennials-and-miscellennials-18811>). Beral Madra states that the narrow-framed and introverted environment of thirty to forty years restricts the development of art potential in Turkey, and states that the artists of 1980s faced the obligation of closing a huge gap in a short time. The idea of international effectiveness, which is inevitable in the face of this necessity, is put into practice with two biennials (Madra, 2003, p. 44).

The first biennial in Turkey is the "International Asian-European Art Biennial", which first held in 1986. This biennial was organized by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, General Directorate of Fine Arts and could only be held four times (Pelvanoğlu, 2009, p.243). After Ankara International Asian-European Art Biennial, Turkey's second Biennial was the "International

Istanbul Biennial”, which still continues today and constitutes the main focus of this part of the work. The “International Istanbul Festival”, which has been organized by the Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts (İKSŞV), founded by Eczacıbaşı in 1973, was created with the aim of “gaining a characteristic in line with the understanding of the era, attracting international attention to the branches of plastic arts in Turkey, and bringing the international art scene to Turkey”. (Madra, 2003, p. 13).

With the approval of the 1st International Istanbul Contemporary Art Exhibitions to be held every two years, the name of the “International Contemporary Art Exhibitions” was changed to the “Istanbul Biennial” (Madra, 2003, p. 42). The Istanbul Biennial, the first edition of which was held in 1987, continues its existence as an art event for 35 years and is listed among international biennials.

Director of Istanbul Biennial and İKSŞV Contemporary Art Projects Bige Örer (2022), in his article titled “Istanbul Biennial Management” from his book Culture.Art.Management. states that the Istanbul Biennial aims to create a meeting point in Istanbul today by focusing on visual arts between audiences and artists from different cultures. While the Istanbul Biennials bring the trends of contemporary art together with the audience, they also mediate the establishment of an international network between artists, curators and critics. It opens a space for discussions in the field of contemporary arts, and also plays a role in the international recognition of artists from both Turkey and many different countries (Örer, 2022, p. 200-201).

The first two editions of the Istanbul Biennial, which created a space for the exhibition of contemporary art productions, were shaped around the theme of “contemporary art in historical space” and mainly works of painting were exhibited.

The 3rd Istanbul International Biennial was held in a 19th century textile factory in Feshane between 16 October and 30 November. The main theme of the Biennial, which was not mentioned in the catalogue but was announced to the press, was determined by Vasıf Kortun as “Production of Cultural Difference”. The foreign curators invited to the Biennale also held exhibitions within the framework of the theme of “Production of Cultural Difference” (Pelvanođlu, 2009, p. 266-

271). In the Biennial traditional art forms such as painting and sculpture as well as video works were displayed for the first time. In the display of 5 video works of 7 artists and artist groups in the biennial, CRT televisions, the technology of the period, were used due to the domestic viewing conditions of the exhibited works and their relationship with the media.

In the 4th Istanbul Biennial curated by Rene Block in 1995, 14 video works of 11 artists were shown. The title of the biennial was determined as “ORIENT/ATION – The Vision of Art in a Paradoxical World” (Pelvanoğlu, 2009, p. 274). In the Biennial, video projection was realized in various ways in the display of video art, CRT televisions were used to present single-channel videos, video sculptures and multi-channel installations, and the architectural features of the historical exhibition spaces functioned as exhibition spaces in the display of works. In this context, although the 4th Istanbul Biennial is crucial in terms of hosting various types of video art, it has not revealed a holistic strategy in terms of video art display.

The 5th International Istanbul Biennial, curated by Rosa Martinez, was held between October 4 and November 9, 1997 with the theme of “On Life, Beauty, Translations and Other Difficulties” (Örer, 2011, p. 12). In the 5th Istanbul Biennial, 15 video works of 13 artists were gathered in different exhibition spaces in relation to the function of the space they are exhibited and what they represent many video art works are displayed with special spatial arrangements. With these features, the 5th Istanbul Biennial was the first Istanbul Biennial to develop a special approach in the context of video art display.

The 6th International Istanbul Biennial was held between 17 September – 30 October 1999 with the title “The Passion and the Wave” curated by Paolo Colombo (Colombo, 1999, p. 14-19). At the 6th Istanbul Biennial, 19 video works by 13 artists were exhibited. While the video works in Yerebatan Cistern, one of the biennial venues, are installations that connect the features of the place with content and formality, the works exhibited in Dolmabahçe Cultural Center and Hagia Eirene are installations and single-channel videos that create their own spaces independently from the features of the space. The Biennial, which mainly focuses on the art of painting (Colombo as cited in Pelvanoğlu, 2009, p. 280), did not reveal a strategy for the exhibition of video art.

The 7th International Istanbul Biennial, curated by Yuko Hasegawa, opened on September 22, 2001, 11 days after the World Trade Center terrorist attacks in New York on September 11 and continued until November 17, 2001. The theme of the Biennial was determined by the curator as “Egofugal—Fugue from Ego for the Next Emergence” (Pelvanoğlu, 2009, p. 281-283). At the 7th Istanbul Biennial 18 video works of 15 artists were exhibited. 7th Istanbul Biennial show the technical possibilities of digital video released in the mid-1990s, as well as the use of DVD technology, high-quality image and sound projection tools, on the display of video art. As seen in the examples exhibited at the Biennial, technological developments in the 1990s allowed artists to produce works that challenged the spatial and logical spaces of traditional exhibition spaces, and the exhibition spaces were reshaped according to the needs of these works. In this context, the Biennial, which uses historical sites such as the Hagia Eirene Church, the Imperial Mint and Yerebatan Cistern, has not been able to create spaces that will fully meet these new needs, but has transformed existing spaces or established contextual and formal links between the spatial features and the exhibited works.

The 8th International Istanbul Biennial which was curated by Dan Cameron between 20 September and 16 November 2003. The theme of the Biennial was determined by the curator as “Poetic Justice” (Pelvanoğlu, 2009, p. 287). The 8th International Istanbul Biennial, where more than 50 video works of 36 artists were exhibited, made it possible to create exhibition spaces that could meet the needs of video works produced in different methods and formats by using Antrepo, unlike the previous Biennials. On the other hand, the round video display spaces made of light and soundproof materials in Antrepo have enabled the light and sound of the many video works shown in the same space to be visited without disturbing each other. Furthermore, Tophane, Hagia Sophia and Yerebatan Cistern provided the opportunity to exhibit works that relate to the architectural history of Istanbul in terms of form and content. In this context, the 8th Istanbul Biennial is the first and only edition of the Istanbul Biennial to develop strategies by focusing on video art and the paradigms to be considered in its display.

The 9th Istanbul Biennial, curated by Charles Esche and Vasıf Kortun, was held between September 16 and October 20, 2005, under the title of “Istanbul” (Esche & Kortun, 2005, p. 19). At the 9th Istanbul Biennial 32 video works of 23 artists were shown. The video works, mostly

consisting of single-channel documentary videos that establish a contextual relationship with the theme of the Biennial, were shown for the first time via plasma screens, which were the technology of the period, as well as video projector and CRT televisions. On the other hand, spatial designs were not realized for the exhibition of video art in the Biennial, while the videos were shown in rooms allocated for individual presentations in Garanti Building, one of the venues where video art examples are most frequently used, and they were exhibited in black cubes built in Antrepo No.5. In this context, the 9th Istanbul Biennial has not developed strategies for displaying video art.

The 10th International Istanbul Biennial was held under the title of “Not Only Possible, But Also Necessary: Optimism in the Age of Global War” between September 8 and November 4, 2007, curated by Hou Hanru (IKSV, 2007). In the 10th Istanbul Biennial 49 video works of 39 artists and artist groups were exhibited. Although special spatial designs are not created for the exhibition of the video works, the video works were exhibited in a way that is related to the themes assigned to the spaces in terms of content and narrative, but the physical space demanded by the video works could not be met, especially since the exhibition area designed in Antrepo No.3 did not prevent the permeability of the sounds of the works. On the other hand, the “Nightcomers” video screening program (IKSV, 2007, p. 458), which is held in line with the Biennial, is an significant approach that the Biennial offers to the presentation of video art due to its wide scope.

In 2009, the 11th Istanbul Biennial, curated by four women who are members of What, How & for Whom / WHW, featured 41 video works of 26 artists, most of which were documentary has been displayed. However, despite using the possibilities of existing technology in the Biennial, which is presented through LCD screens and video projections, a holistic strategy covering the entire exhibition has not been adopted for the exhibition of the works.

The 12th Istanbul Biennial was held between 17 September and 13 November 2011 and curated by Adriano Pedrosa and Jens Hoffmann. The title of the Biennial was determined as “Untitled”, referring to the way Felix Gonzales Torres names his works (Örer, 2022, p.209). 16 video works of 14 artists, mostly single-channel videos, were displayed in the Biennial. While the video works in the group exhibitions are displayed through flat panel screens, the video works in the solo



exhibition spaces are displayed in the rooms shaped according to the formal needs of the videos, in a way that relates to the main themes as content. The exhibition design of the 12th Istanbul Biennial, in which the main exhibition areas and black boxes are used together, did not reveal a special strategy in displaying video art, but adopted a contemporary exhibition model.

At the 13th Istanbul Biennial, curated by Fulya Erdemci between 14 September and 20 October 2013 (IKSV, 2013), 51 video works, most of them documentation, belonging to 35 artists or artist groups, were created in a way that establishes a contextual relationship with the themes assigned to the spaces, similar to the work displayed in the 12th Biennial. In this frame, the 13th Istanbul Biennial did not offer a holistic approach for the display of video art.

The 14th Istanbul Biennial was held between 05 September – 01 November 2015 and curated by Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev. The Biennial, which was held under the title of “Salt Water: A Theory of Thought Forms”, focused on the transformative power of art. It referenced the healing power of art in order to combat the traumas experienced in the land where it produced (Örer, 2022, p. 211) At the 14th Istanbul Biennial, 32 video art works of 24 artists and artist groups, including single-channel video, video installation and performance videos, were displayed. The works are spreaded in different locations in the city instead of being gathered in a single venue in a way that relates to the theme of the Biennial, while the installations, which have a parallelism between form and content are displayed in Büyükdada, special designs are created for the installations to be displayed in ARTER, Italian High School, Galata Greek Primary School and Istanbul Modern. In this sense, the 14th Istanbul Biennial presented a wide variety of forms and examples of video art with different spatial and technical approaches.

The 15th International Istanbul Biennial was held under the title of “A Good Neighbor”, curated by the artist duo Elmgreen and Dragset, who participated in many biennials and exhibitions in Istanbul between September 16 and November 12, 2017 (IKSV, 2017, p. 19). The 15th Istanbul Biennial, presented 10 video works by 10 artists and artist groups. In the Biennial, in which a contemporary model of displaying video art was applied with a similar approach to the 12th Istanbul Biennial, there was no diversity in the use and exhibition of the works shown.

16th Istanbul Biennial was held under the title of “The Seventh Continent”, curated by Nicolas Bourriaud, between 14 September – 10 November 2019 (IKSV, 2019). The Biennial presented 34 video works by 20 artists/participants. While single-channel video works were exhibited in black boxes at the Biennial, especially the video installations in the Istanbul Painting and Sculpture Museum created their own spaces within the museum’s rooms, and the documentary videos, which are part of anthropological research, were exhibited in relation to the other documents of the research. While the 16th Istanbul Biennial does not present an approach specific to the display of video art, it has frequently used exhibition formats in which the video that the audience will encounter in the next biennial is only a documentary as a part of social science research.

In the 17th Istanbul Biennial, curated by Ute Meta Bauer, Amar Kanwar and David Teh, in 2022, 34 works of 27 participants and participant groups, including videos, are exhibited. Throughout the Biennial, the videos were exhibited as part of the documentation or together with other works in the group exhibition areas, and this approach for display of the documentary works, mostly focusing on the formation process of the projects, did not allow the viewing practice that required the time and attention demanded by the video due to its dynamic and interactive nature.

## CONCLUSION

In addition to the developments that paved the way for the use of video as an artistic expression, this study, which examines the development of video art in the world and in Turkey in the historical process, through the conditions of the period and the activities carried out, explored the unique features of the medium that differentiate it from the display of traditional art forms and the strategies of using the exhibition paradigms arising from these features in the 17 editions of the Istanbul Biennials, with examples within the scope of each biennial.

Video art, which has come to the fore in contemporary art exhibitions as a tool from the mid-1960s to the present, has started to take place in Istanbul Biennials, which aim to bring together the trends of contemporary art and bring them together with the audience, since the 3rd Istanbul Biennial in 1992 and video art examples in different narrative styles were displayed until the 17th edition.

The evidence presented in this dissertation suggests that, in the fifty years since the emergence of video art, the changes in the use of the medium by the artists and the viewing habits of the audience, and the development of screening technology make it compulsory for the transformation of the strategies to be used in the display of video art. At the Istanbul Biennials, where contemporary art trends meet with the audience, the approaches adopted in displaying video art have changed over time in line with these needs.

Nevertheless, as this study reveals, although the number of video works shown at the Istanbul Biennials has tended to increase, the paradigms of displaying video art were only introduced as a strategy in the 8th Istanbul Biennial, and no holistic approach was developed in the other editions of the Biennial.

The exhibition of video art in the Istanbul Biennials, which aim to create a space for discussions in the field of contemporary arts and bring them together with the audience, with an approach that distinguishes it from traditional art forms by considering its interactive, time-based and dynamic structure, creates a necessity for video art that continues to be used frequently in contemporary art as an effective tool for social, cultural and political analysis, to serve this aim of the Biennial in the most effective way.

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