

The Aesthetics of Steps: Place, Art, and Education

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Abstract

If life is akin to walking, as the folk poet Aşık Veysel suggests, walking can arguably be a useful tool for making sense of life-art practices. The present study examines the relationship between the setting in which a daily practice takes place (as a physical environment within a social context), and the subject and process behind the aesthetic experience, in the context of the boundary between art and education. What separates walking as an art form from walking as a daily life experience? Exploring the intersection between the act of walking on the one hand, and pedagogy and art on the other, the study encouraged participants to make sense of aesthetic experiences in art education through various art-based practices. The findings of a thematic analysis are presented. The participants moved away from the accepted meaning of walking and, in doing so, were able to develop various conceptual and affective perspectives. They were able to form connections between life, art, and pedagogy as prospective teachers, creating diverse meanings and discovering forms of subjectification while developing an awareness of their experiences.



Figure 1. Hasan's performance as an aesthetic experience of walking.

“I'm on a long and narrow road
Day and night I go
I know not my state
Day and night I go

The moment I came into the world
That moment I began walking
In a han¹ with two doors
Day and night I go”

Aşık Veysel Şatıroğlu (1894-1973)

¹ A han is a Persian-derived word meaning mansion or dwelling.

Introduction²

Walking is a bodily and sensory act involving interactions with place and perceptions of the physical environment, and it is shaped by the people or objects found in the place in question. Different meanings are assigned to walking in different forms of art. In the poetry of Aşık Veysel (1894-1973), an important name in Turkish folk literature, the journey of life can be considered an inner journey, associated in Anatolian culture with the path of Sufism. Walking along a road is a process in which the walker looks both inside and outside. The places we occupy and pass through are connected to identity, and to the social, cultural, and societal structure of the place. Walking through places shapes our identities, and the interaction is mutual, that is, the individual is shaped by the place, which, in turn, is restructured by the individual and societies. Similarly, in a process of artistic expression, walking serves as a medium through which one can understand and reflect upon the relationship between the mind, body, and place. The emotions felt in places that we pass through are, in a sense, a reproduction of knowledge and an ordering of experiences by the body; in other words, they are an embodiment of sensations. On the other hand, by facilitating discovery and perception thanks to the slow pace of walking, the act subverts and disrupts our established knowledge of the existing order, forces us to make choices, and, in doing so, creates new possibilities. The everyday act of walking thus has the potential to turn into an aesthetic experience (de Certeau, 1980/2009; Edensor; 2010; Triggs et al., 2014).

Michel de Certeau (1980/2009) similarly calls attention to the eclectic nature of the city, suggesting that our steps weave through space like a fabric, and disappear into the city creating a sort of language. In this regard, the aesthetic experience can be seen to emanate from daily life and serves as a stage for art performances that adopt different perspectives of everything that we have become desensitized to in daily life. Examining, questioning and trying to make sense of such works in this new light would contribute to conscious actions and the development of a visual and aesthetic awareness. The experience, imbued with new meaning, is thus given an aesthetic appearance (Dewey, 1934/2021). Taking this as our starting point, we have developed a new training approach for prospective teachers in an undergraduate teaching program – one that involves walking, creating visual and textual diaries, taking pictures, asking questions of the visuals, and creating their own works of art or designs – thus following an art-based methodology. This article discusses how a daily life experience can turn into an aesthetic experience through art-based practices, with specific focus on the act of walking.

² This research summary was presented as an oral presentation at the InSEA World Congress, September 07, 2023.

Theoretical Framework

When introduced to a learning/teaching process, walking can encourage the individual to question and develop their relationship with place (in terms of awareness, belonging, and responsibility). The individual is thus encouraged to make sensory, individual/collective, or relational/social investigations, among others, all centred around corporeality, in intersection with place/community-based critical art education. Place-Based Education associates place with identity and society (Smith, 2002; Smith & Sobel, 2010), while place-based critical art education encourages the individual to produce art based on, for example, interpretations and explanations of themselves, the world, and consequently, their experiences; creative thinking; the search for solutions to personal, environmental, and social problems; and nature and culture and society (Graham et al., 2023; Gruenewald, 2003; Knapp, 2005). It creates opportunities for individuals to become active members of their communities through the development of a learning process that is sensitive to the environment and the local culture (Smith, 2002; Smith & Sobel, 2010; Woodhouse & Knapp, 2000). In the present study, walking supports the development of a critical perspective through which the act is perceived as a modest form of bodily resistance to established social hierarchies. It involves long-term contact and perception. This critical approach to walking is different from the fleeting “tourist gaze” (Urry, 2002/2009), that disregards the reality of a place and what is local, often shaped by the clichés and symbols of global consumption, and the flâneur’s gaze, which involves catching hasty, chaotic, and short-lived glimpses of places (Springgay & Truman, 2017, 2022; Strohmayer, 2023; Urry & Larsen, 2002/2022).

Walking-oriented studies have mostly adopted art-based methods or aesthetic inquiry approaches. Louder (2022) compares walking to a work of art, defining it as an experimental and multi-sensory act. Petri (2022) describes walking as an aesthetic inclusion of the body in the setting of a transactional game that involves urban adaptation and discovery. He argues that walking is not merely a physical/bodily form of movement, but also a form of artistic expression that reveals the bodily style of every individual. In an art-based study supporting the development of visual and aesthetic awareness through walking, Griner (2019) treats walking as an interactive act that helps form connections between art and daily life. Kraehe and Brown’s (2011) study aims to develop the social justice awareness of prospective art teachers and utilizes aesthetic inquiry to this end. Mäkelä and Aktaş (2023) contend that, within the learning process, walking serves not only as a source of experiential material—typically characterized as lived memories and emotions—but also encompasses the practical engagement with, and physical collection of, objects and experiences. According to Drexler (2012), these experiences can guide students’ cognitive abilities, supporting them in making connections between classroom learning and real-world applications. Additionally, Drexler argues that the aesthetic dimension of these experiences promotes learning by enhancing social and sensory awareness. Dewey (1934/2021) argues that everyday practices and

aesthetic experiences can enrich one another. Images in the environment can be represented in daily life through practice and perception, and can be associated with olfactory, tactile, auditory linguistic, or textual experiences (Lynch, 1960/2010; Siegenhaler, 2021).

We thus chose to focus on walking in this study, and to follow Hoppe's (2023) approach in her critical art-based study in which she sought to make room for provocative and transformative acts by increasing resonance through sounds, touch, and associations. This study was motivated by the question, "How can walking be used to foster greater environmental awareness and proactive engagement among prospective teachers?" Following the recommendations of Barone and Eisner (2012) and Greene (2001), we created opportunities for the participants to encounter various works of art (Richard Long, *A Line Made by Walking*, 1967; Vito Acconci, *Following Piece*, 1969; Hamish Fulton, *Repetitive Walk*, 2018; Mona Hatoum, *Performance Still*, 1975; Song Dong, *A Pot of Boiling Water*, 1995; Marina Abramovic and Ulay, *Great Wall Walk*, 1988). More specifically, the lesson plan revolved around an aesthetic inquiry of Francis Alÿs' video work "The Collector" (1991-2006) on the city and its sounds. Alÿs' video shifts attention to manual labour, which is a rare thing to do in conceptual art. His "blue-collar conceptualism," the ways he uses the body as a symbol of taking action, has been an inspiration. In his lexicon, walking is an instrument of social and political criticism, as well as introspection (Edensor, 2010; Gümüş, 2020; Kızılırmak Çekinmez; 2024; Wilson, 2013/2015; Yood, 2024). It thus made sense to turn to Alÿs when developing a perspective on the dichotomy of the individual and society in place-based critical education. Alÿs' walks took place mostly in city centres and were documented in a sketchbook as a visual record of his fleeting impressions, an approach aligned well with the location and aims of the instruction we provided related to aesthetic experience.

According to Dewey (1934/2021), aesthetic experiences can be gained through the adoption of the language of art within our lives. Aesthetic experience is a holistic act that requires us to understand ourselves, reshape our lives, address our deficiencies, and solve our problems. It is not merely a sensory act, possessing also a conceptual aspect. The conditions required for a complete experience are sensation, intellect/mind, will, and space/time, all of which are combined within one's consciousness. Maintaining a consciousness necessitates the continuous reconstruction of the self and the world through one's experiences, as well as the integration of one's past and present experiences, while learning from one's mistakes and incorporating emotions into experiences (Eroğlu, 2017). Arts educators recommend the creation of a learning milieu that fosters intuitive, conceptual, empathetic, and sensorial connections between students and their environment, facilitated by experiential learning and the utilization of senses in one's interactions with objects and ideas (Kraehe & Brown, 2011; Uhrmacher, 2009). In our study, we tried to create this space through walks, asking the participants to create visual and textual expressions of their experiences in visual diaries while

walking, which allowed them to make conscious sense of their experiences and to develop long-term interactions with them.

That said, walking is just as intimately connected to the “self” as to place and community. In his project “Seven Days Walking,” pianist Einaudi draws inspiration from the winter walks he used to take in the Alps in his commentary on walking: “Everyone creates their own images – you probably have your own walk, your own background, in mind” (Mossman, n.d.). Unexpected encounters between the outside (the environment) and the inside (the self) have a phenomenological aspect to them that creates fields of possibility (Butler, 2022/2024; Edensor, 2010; Gros, 2009/2017; Springgay & Truman, 2022). Such encounters can thus contribute greatly to one’s aesthetic experience, whether of a concerto, a painting, or a sunset. The emphasis here is on the subject having the experience, not on the object (Carroll, 1999/2012; Uçar, 2023). In this regard, the process went beyond the mere examination of works of art through aesthetic inquiry, requiring the prospective teachers to experience the act in their own lives, to visualize it, and then to use it in their draft plans.

Methodology

The study was conducted over 10 weeks in 2023 as part of the undergraduate fine arts teaching program of a university in western Türkiye, for which three hours were set aside each week. Included in the study were seven prospective teachers (four female, three male) who enrolled in the course and who agreed to take part. An art-based methodology was adopted for the study to examine the process by which an everyday practice turns into an aesthetic experience that can be represented through images, as well as a phenomenological perspective in terms of paradigms. Detailed descriptions, interpretations, and explanations were made to gain an in-depth understanding of the meaning and nature of walking and its multi-sensory aspects. Consequently, the study was grounded in an interpretive paradigm (Creswell, 1998/ 2013; Creswell, 1994/ 2014; Patton, 2002/2014). As Leavy (2008) notes, art-based methods make it easy for the participants to express themselves, especially in experience-based studies, which led us to opt for art-based methods in this study. According to Barone and Eisner (2012), art-based research seeks to go beyond the limitations of discursive communication for the expression of indescribable meanings, fostering multiple narratives and challenging and expanding the boundaries of centralized perspectives.

Study Setting

The study was conducted under extraordinary conditions when all classes were being held online following the 2023 earthquake in Türkiye. To encourage participants to be present in the moment, we asked them to integrate a walking route into their daily routines. As Le Breton (2022) notes, walking is a “sensory relationship and bodily experience” (p. 99), as it

acquires rhythm and embodiment through the senses of hearing, sight, touch, and smell. Of the sample in the study, two of the participants, one female and one male, engaged in daytime walks in natural environments, two walked in the city center in the evenings, and the remaining participants walked in city squares, neighborhoods, and parks during daylight hours.

Participants

All of the participants in the study were residents of cities that were unaffected by the earthquake, and none had physical disabilities that would hinder walking. Upon the suspension of face-to-face education, participants Hasan, Sevgi, Sedef, and Damla returned to their respective home provinces. Of the seven, Yasin and Mustafa both had family and close relatives living in the region hit by the earthquake, and so, while the entire nation mourned following the disaster, they experienced a deeper emotional impact. Under these challenging circumstances, we believed a daily routine would contribute to the creation of a cohesive learning environment, providing the participants with an outlet for emotional expression and processing, and keeping them engaged in the course. After providing an overview of the study to the course participants, they all signed informed consent forms containing a detailed explanation. The participants were all given the choice not to participate in the study and reassured that non-participation would not affect them negatively in any way. To protect participant anonymity, we assigned each participant a code name based on gender and the meaning of their first name.

Data Collection Tools

Art forms played a bigger role in the study than traditional research materials. We collected visual diaries, class recordings, and texts produced by participants throughout the course (referred to as Course Texts) to form our dataset, and an interview was conducted with each participant at the end of the process. The participants were encouraged to express their fleeting impressions in visual diaries, and questions connected to the aims of the study posed in interviews helped reveal how the participants made sense of their experiences of walking and walking-related course activities. The combined data were collected, analyzed, and reported in the native language of the participants and researchers and then translated.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Axial coding was used for a thematic analysis of the data (video transcripts and participant output). Axial coding is a process in which initial codes are linked to categories and subcategories, and subsequently to main categories, to arrive at themes (Liamputtong, 2009). Following initial coding, the data were reviewed once again and re-arranged to create preliminary themes. After verifying the correspondence between the codes and themes

extracted from the data, we created a thematic map of the analysis (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Liamputtong, 2009).

Plausibility

We used triangulation when collecting data to enhance the credibility of the data garnered through the study (Patton, 2002/2014), and we used a diverse range of data collection instruments. The course recordings and student texts, as well as the works of art produced throughout the course, were analyzed to achieve data triangulation. The visuals produced and quotes used in the study were shared with the participants for participant validation. Moreover, multiple coders were assigned to avoid researcher bias in the data analysis (Johnson, 2008/2015; Patton, 2002/2014). The first researcher, having taught the participants in previous years, acted as a participant observer, combining the roles of artist, teacher, and researcher. The second researcher acted as an outside observer, assuming the roles of artist and researcher. This ensured a diversity of viewpoints.

Research Process and Analysis

The participants were first asked to write and share a text (in essay format) describing their knowledge and experience of walking. They were then asked to create visual diaries and to produce texts on their “moments of walking” for one week, with the aim being to encourage a conscious awareness of walking. As Dewey (1934/2021) notes, a conscious awareness of the act in question is needed to turn a daily life experience into an aesthetic experience. Following Stewart’s (2019) recommendation to include place-based assignments in the syllabus to encourage the engagement of students with the outdoors, and his simple instruction “we’re going for a walk” (p. 2), we included outdoor activities in the program to help the participants develop personal connections with the place. We then analyzed Francis Alÿs’ performance “The Collector” (Figure 2) and posed a series of questions as an aesthetic inquiry—an approach to the investigation of the meaning of aesthetic experience in the teaching/learning process involving the questioning of the artifacts, practices, or performances considered to be works of art (Greene, 2007). Aesthetic inquiry investigates the value, nature, and meaning of art, and supports the cognitive processes of students through inquiry-based learning and engagement in artistic production (Costes-Onishi & Kwek, 2023; Gulla, 2018; Lampert, 2006).



Figure 2. Francis Alÿs, *The Collector* (1991-2006), Mexico City.

Note. This photograph is a still from a film of the performance.

Moreover, information about the works of art mentioned previously were provided to help participants recognize the possibilities. Consistent with Damla’s observation during this study that “examining the works of artists who focus on walking provides a multifaceted perspective” (Damla, personal communication, 27th June, 2023), the aesthetic inquiry served as a framework for the promotion of an art-based perspective. The participants started working on their own works of art with sketches and shared their drawings the following week. They had no difficulty articulating their observations and insights verbally or in writing but struggled to produce works of art based on their subjective experiences. We, therefore, asked them to take another walk, but to take pictures this time of the sights they encountered or that attracted their attention. The photography activity was intended to compel the participants to stop and think about the sights they encountered rather than just passing them by. We provided them with guidance on the legal and ethical considerations related to photography, particularly regarding data privacy and obtaining permission. Griner (2019) encourages the use of photography in an educational context to develop visual and aesthetic awareness through walking, and he argues that it is an important part of the experience that reveals different aspects of place, as it requires finding a physical focus to obtain the best perspective and the acquisition of inner knowledge. The course participants were asked to read chapters related to their selected focus from *A Philosophy of Walking* (Gros, 2008/2017), and they were thus able to arrive at meanings by asking questions in an analysis of their selected photos (Visual Inquiry: VI). The use of questions for analysis was important for the participants to gain in-depth insights: Hasan used the sound of store shutters closing in his reflection of the relationship between night and the city; Sevgi and Yasin used images from nature, specifically the seashore and water; Damla used images to depict urban rhythm; and

Nurten and Mustafa used images of the social problems they encountered while engaged in the act of walking. The participants were thus able to expand the meaning of the act of walking while creating their own works and designs. A visual representation of the course process can be seen in Figure 3.



Figure 3. Course Process.

The findings will be discussed based on the themes identified in the thematic analysis (Figure 4), with separate sections on “from conceptual perception to sensory experience,” the “artistic inquiry of walking,” and “place in art-based practices” in the light of the research questions.

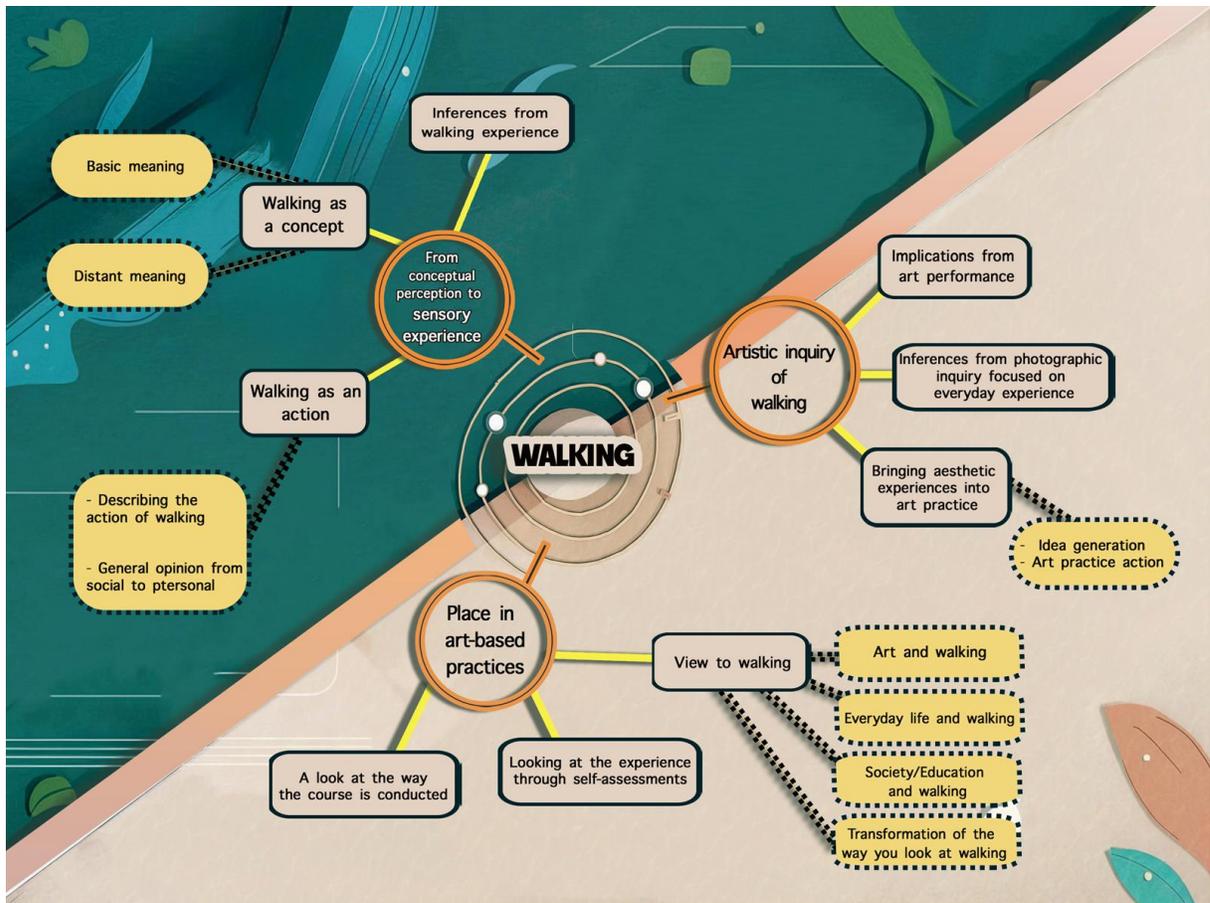


Figure 4. Thematic Analysis Map.

From Conceptual Perception to Sensory Experience

The participants developed different perspectives by expanding upon the usual meaning of walking and the conceptual meanings they attributed to the act of walking. Although the participants' comments were usually shaped by dominant social perspectives, they gradually began to interpret the concept more consciously, based on their own perceptions, expanding their viewpoints and questioning their experiences.

In their visual diaries at the beginning of the study, the participants defined walking as “moving from one place to another,” “an activity that is part of life,” “the beginning of running,” and “physical movement that changes from person to person,” (Course Text) in line with the primary meaning of the word. After being initially described as an ordinary/simple act, the meanings attributed to walking expanded in time to include further meanings after the activities examining works of art and questioning visuals. Thereupon, the participants started to describe walking using such expressions as “leaving the real world behind,” “paving the way to the achievement of one’s dreams,” “making a living,” “finding oneself,” “death,” “freedom,” and “making advances to the opposite sex” in slang (Course Text, 2023). Many of the participants mentioned the connection between walking and health, while others commented on the connotations with people, distance, and streets, among other aspects. The participants tended to focus on two perspectives in their first questioning of the walking experience – the relationship between technology/speed and the avoidance of walking; and the act of thinking (or lack thereof) when walking. For example, during the course, Sevgi said walking made her feel free; Hasan said he enjoyed walking; and Damla said she did not like walking, pointing out that society often discourages walking:

Among the contemporary technologies are many vehicles that deter us from walking. Cars, buses, electric bikes and scooters have become a part of our daily lives. As such, the avoidance of walking appears to be perfectly normal, walking being a drain on time given the fast pace of our lives, right? (Damla, Course Text, 2023)

Artistic Inquiry of Walking

The participations thus developed their sensory awareness through physical engagement, and this dynamic was reflected in their art. The convenience of relying on images that reflect dominant perceptions was replaced by their exploration and visualization of subjective viewpoints informed by personal experiences. The participants started to draw from their personal experiences for their aesthetic inquiries, and to make sense of repeated walks and the photos taken for their visual diaries.

Following the walking experience, the participants explained their walking habits, the locations in which they walked, and things they focused on when walking. Sedef said she had a planned route for walking, Mustafa said he had both a route and a designated time for walking, and Sevgi said she “did not go out for a walk specifically, but focused on the moment when walking” (personal communication, 28th June, 2023). The participants chose to walk in parks, neighborhoods, streets, and the beach, and some reported walking at night or when it was cold outside. Damla said she enjoyed walking in the park, although it made her tired, whereas Sevgi said walking relaxed her (Course Text, 2023). The participants focused on animals (cats, dogs, snails), people (a balloon seller, a dumpster-diving woman, people waiting for a bus, people going about their business) and places (buildings such as houses, shops, and historical buildings, streets and alleys, garbage piles on streets, sea shores, cliffs, places without any people) while walking, and reported noticing such sounds as vehicle engines, horns, roller shutters, and waves (Course Text, 2023). Hasan said he enjoyed and was excited by the silence he encountered while walking at night, whereas Mustafa said he was unable to hear the sounds of animals and birds over the car engines and horns:

I keep walking. I try to hear birds chirping or bugs buzzing, but no, there’s not a bird or bug in sight. Where have they all gone? I get it, though. This is a polluted environment, filled with the sounds of cars and people talking. If I were a bird or a bug, I would also choose nature over the city!!! (Mustafa, Course Text, 2023).

Sevgi and Yasin opted to walk in the city rather than in nature, seeking noise rather than silence, and engaging with the crowds and sounds of the city, while two of the participants focused on experiencing the act in nature and by water, which eventually steered their biographic focus. It might be the case that nature made it easier for them to look inward through the unification of mind and body, as described previously by Henry David Thoreau (1862/2020). In this sense, their approach can be considered distinct from the “flâneur’s walk that provides food for impressions” (Le Breton, 2000/2022, p.108). According to Le Breton (2000/2022), “Walking in the city is an experience of suspense and awareness” (p. 10), potentially opening the door to creativity in the making and teaching of art.

The participants commented on the things they noticed while walking, including “walking without paying attention,” “feeling too lazy to walk,” and “encountering different emotions depending on the surroundings” (Course Texts, 2023). As stated by Sevgi, “I realized that I was doing many of the things that I criticized, such as being too lazy to walk or walking without paying attention” (Visual Diary, 2023), while Hasan documented his observations during his walks in his visual diary with sketches of things that caught his attention (Figure 5).



Figure 5. Hasan, Visual Diary.

After watching the “The Collector” during an online class, the participants offered their assessments of the subject matter, figure, objects, and overall meaning of the piece. The audio recording of the online class discussion provided additional data. Addressing the subject matter, the participants mentioned “walking” and “having to walk,” while commenting on the figure’s “loss of mind,” “ostracization,” “overcoming of obstacles,” “struggle,” and “apathy.” The participants suggested that the figure seemed lonely, being different from those around him and having lost loved ones, but kept clinging to life despite his loneliness, refusing to succumb to it and using an object that represented an animal to serve as a companion. In particular, Yasin’s referral to his need to leave his hometown suggested that his perspective of the work of art was affected by his personal experiences, as his family was in the earthquake-hit region.

It was suggested by the participants that the object dragged around by the figure was meant to represent the artist himself, or the unwanted or persistent emotions or state of mind that he was unable to escape. Sedef said that, overall, the piece was a “protest against urban life,” saying “To me, it looked like a protest – a protest against urban life, urbanization and crowds.” Some of the participants said that the artist’s narrative style was “uncharacteristic of an artist” in the sense that it was “socially grounded,” promoting “visual literacy” among viewers. The participants recognized the potential of artistic interpretation through walking and the interconnected meanings of such an interpretation. After examining Alÿs’ piece, the participants analyzed and interpreted the meaning of the pictures they had taken during their walks, resulting, arguably, in an expansion of their viewpoints.

Daily walking routines are guided by the organized roads that separate human movements, and by temporal and spatial points of intersection (e.g. stores, cafes) that collectively constitute space. These marked spaces are considered geographies of community and continuity, where social activities are synchronized, thus creating rhythms in space (de

Certeau, 1980/ 2009). In the study, Elif called attention to this rhythm in her work on “a marked space” (personal communication, 27th June, 2023), explaining the motivations behind the selection of this space and her inquiry with reference to a clock tower, as a symbol of modernity. Damla, on the other hand, visualized the rhythm of the city with particular focus on shapes, taking photographs of the neat designs she encountered (Figure 6).



Figure 6. Damla, Photo.

Focusing on a particular photograph she had taken, and inspired by a problem she encountered in daily life, Nurten presented her visual interpretation of a social problem (Figure 7). In her visual diary, Nurten said “I looked back at the past and remembered situations in which I had been obstructed, and where restrictions had been placed on my thoughts and actions. This led me to question my future life,” emphasizing the concepts of obstacles and limitations imposed by spaces. Asking questions to the visual, in her visual diary, Damla noted that “there are different lives behind every door,” and talked about “being ordinary,” “the sense of belonging to a home and a neighborhood,” and “the increasing lack of communication resulting from urbanization.” Arguing that “being different can lead to loneliness,” in Sedef’s visual diary he focused on a historical cafe, and underlined how popularity can affect preferences: “It is true that we usually follow the crowds and accept stereotypes. Even our choice of a cafe is influenced by its popularity and the preferences of other people.”

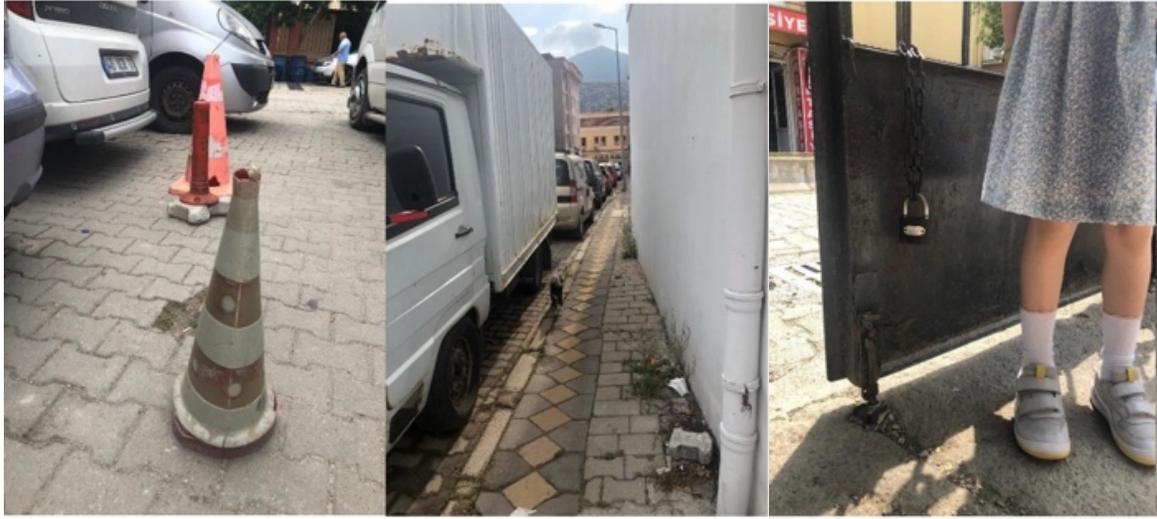


Figure 7. Nurten, Photo.

The participants recorded their observations in their visual diaries and used and built upon them in the design and creation of their individual works. In their idea designs, some of the participants treated walking as a visible and direct part of their work of art, while the works of others featured things that had caught their attention while walking. The participants wanted to experiment with different forms of expression, including videos, short films, performances, and installations, and put forward various ideas in this regard, such as exploring the metaphor of the sea swallowing one's troubles, questioning the concept of pollution by walking in white clothing, symbolizing the monotony of life through the passage of seasons, and creating works of art that provide an understanding of those who cannot walk. Not all of the ideas were implemented exactly as proposed, as the participants opted to experiment with various methods of artistic expression, including videos, walking as performance (Figure 1 and Figure 8), creating collages (Figure 9), and producing digital works (Figures 10 and 11).



Figure 8. Hasan's Performance Video.

Note. A still from Hasan's video, which can be found at: <https://youtu.be/EGTGt3mGECE>



Figure 9. Sevgi, Collage.



Figure 10. Mustafa, Digital Art.



Figure 11. Sedef, Digital Art.

The participants drew attention to such themes as “peace,” “the reflection of what is seen from the outside,” and the “sounds of the street” (Hasan and Yasin, personal communication, 26th June, 2023). In an attempt to produce a different perspective of the sounds of the street, Hasan dragged his earphones along the ground:

I created a performance that involved me wearing my earphones and walking at

night – my favorite time. The earphones were not plugged into anything, the plug was just dragging along the ground. In fact, they were plugged into the street, and so I was listening to the sounds of the street (personal communication, 26th June, 2023).

Place in Art-based Practices

The participants attributed diverse meanings to the relationships between art, life, and pedagogy, and associated these meanings with the individual and social aspects of place. As prospective teachers, the participants not only developed their ability to engage in conceptual and artistic inquiry, but also to evaluate the pedagogical aspect of walking, drawing on their experiences in the classroom.

The streets we walk, the neighbourhood in which we live, the people we meet, our communities ... They all shape and transform us. Just as artists are inspired by walking, society and environment are affected by the artist. (Nurten, personal communication, 27th June, 2023)

Art is everywhere. We do not stop thinking, planning sketches, or dreaming when we walk; our brains remain active, planning things all the time. This is how walking can be related to art. (Yasin, personal communication, 26th June, 2023).

The artists not only reflected their urban experiences in their works (although some of the pieces were almost biographical), they also challenged or even reproduced their experiences in the pendulum of individual and social images (Siegenhaller, 2021). Similarly, some of the experiences that were initially biographic were progressively expanded to touch upon social issues as visualized. This seemed to neutralize the anesthetic effects of the act as an everyday life practice. Although the participants initially described walking as an ordinary, simple, and often overlooked action, over time, they discovered various concrete and abstract meanings within the act that differed from person to person. Sevgi described the expansion of her understanding of the concept as follows: “In general terms, walking is an act that we undertake often in our everyday lives. When you think about the word, however, you can arrive at many different meanings” (personal communication, 28th June, 2023). It is thus implied that encouraging reflection on concepts and actions contributes to the questioning and exploration of possibilities in an effort to gain aesthetic experience.

The participants stated that, as a result of their encountering of different works of art, their perspectives had changed the interactions noted within their environment while walking. In a class recording, Nuray voiced a social stereotype, noting that “people would laugh if I said I’m an artist and I walk,” whereas, according to Sevgi, her perspective had been broadened by

the performance she examined in class. Finally, the participants noted that walking can serve as a connection between daily life and art, and that the act of walking could become a work of art itself, with possibilities for social change.

Even the simple act of walking can turn into art, and can involve people from all walks of life if we adopt a critical perspective in our evaluations and come up with different readings. You don't have to pick up a brush to make art. Critical thinking makes it possible to reflect walking (something everyone experiences in their everyday lives) in productions, which expands the audience significantly. The sensory and critical aspects of the experience, in addition to its visual aspects, can activate visual literacy in the audience, raise awareness, and contribute to social progress (Nurten, personal communication, 27th June, 2023).

Concurring with the broader literature exploring the use of interactive methods in art education, Griner (2019) argues that walking, as a daily practice, is an ideal approach to knowledge development based on experience and analysis, especially when it comes to enhancing visual and aesthetic awareness. The author recommends conducting further studies involving such interactive activities as walking to explore the connections between daily life and art. The methods used in the present study improved the participants' ability to identify the connections between art, life, and education. The participants stated that they had not thought of using daily life activities as a subject of art or for course content. Reflecting on their experiences of walking in their draft plans helped them establish connections between everyday life and the teaching curriculum. The participants, on the whole, provided positive evaluations of the use of walking as a teaching tool, stating that the methods used allowed them to develop multiple perspectives and to underline the contributions of visual diaries (Figures 12 and 13), inquiring visuals, and examinations of their artistic performances.



Figure 12. Sevgi, Visual Diaries.



Figure 13. Damla, Visual Diaries.

Hasan explained how his use of walking as a teaching tool facilitated the adoption of multiple perspectives:

In the first class session I thought the walking experience was too simple. I thought we would be doing the walking stuff only in the first few weeks. However, we ended up spending the whole semester walking, and I started to see walking in a whole new light. The course helped me establish connections between walking and art, and I am now able to look at works of art from a new perspective. I liked how we were able to use the simple act of walking in so many different and effective ways, and I was happy with the results. It led me to pay more attention to the course (Hasan, personal communication, 26th June, 2023).

Hasan and Sevgi reported having difficulty visualizing their thoughts and feelings after walking; Damla had difficulty deciding on a subject for her art assignment; Yasin had difficulty being satisfied with the amount of work he put in, and was worried that his work would be too simple; while Hasan found it difficult to perform art in public places and to shoot videos. In their self-assessments, the students said the visual diaries had helped them

produce relevant, creative, original, thought-provoking, and open-ended works. Moreover, some of the participants said they had encountered problems in expressing emotions, in the creation of visually appealing works, and in creativity and working with materials, but aimed to rectify these issues.

Discussion

Vehicles such as scooters and e-bikes have replaced walking for many people, changing the bodily and sensory experience of movement, which used to provide opportunities for discovery, but is now experienced as a series of flickering images. The fleeting images that are a byproduct of speed result in reduced contact with our surroundings, forcing us to focus only on our destination. This study viewed walking as an experience that allows interactions distinct from the rapid sequence of images on e-scooters and the walking tourism industry's practice of selling street experiences. It is, therefore, different from a walk centered around the "the tourist gaze" (Urry, 2002/2009; Urry & Larsen, 2002/2022) and the flâneur's walk, in that it encourages questioning "the right to the city" (Andron, 2018; Lefebvre, 1968/2015). The study met its goal of training prospective teachers how to utilize everyday subjective experiences in their lesson plans. By taking an everyday experience as a starting point, the participants were able to develop multiple perspectives through the language of art, which is important for training prospective teachers who follow contemporary works of art that focus on life practices and are inspired by them in their own creations and lessons. The need to hold the class sessions online at a time when face-to-face education was suspended, drawing the attention of the participants back to the reality of lived spaces, was both difficult and meaningful. We believe that studies of this sort can benefit the training of prospective teachers who want their voices to be heard at the intersection of art, life, and education, and who take and invite action through art.

In this study, we found that focusing on subjective perspectives as part of an aesthetic experience led to the opening up and expansion of the sense of place of the participants and the relationships they formed with place. Participatory and community-based art can play a considerable role in the aesthetic experience in terms of shaping interactions and the experience itself, and future studies should focus on this aspect of the relationship between daily life and aesthetic experiences.

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