

THE AESTHETICS OF IMPERFECTION: CONCEPTUAL AND VISUAL DIMENSIONS OF FLAW IN ART

A ESTÉTICA DA IMPERFEIÇÃO: DIMENSÕES CONCEITUAIS E VISUAIS DO DEFEITO NA ARTE

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Arzu Parten Altuncu*

*Kocaeli University, Faculty of Fine Arts, Department of Sculpture, Kocaeli, Turkey

Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7852-8003>

partenonarzu@gmail.com

Yasemin Tanrıverdi*

*Kocaeli University, Faculty of Fine Arts, Department of Ceramics, Kocaeli, Turkey

Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6869-4454>

yasemin.tanriverdi@kocaeli.edu.tr

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Abstract

The concept of imperfection has long occupied a central place in aesthetic and philosophical debates in art history. Rather than being regarded merely as deficiency or deformation, imperfection has frequently been adopted as a creative and expressive strategy. In contrast to ideals of perfection, artists have deliberately employed flaw to develop alternative modes of representation and aesthetic experience. Across diverse cultures and artistic movements, imperfection has thus been redefined as a meaningful aesthetic value. This study examines how imperfection has been conceptualized in art, its role within aesthetic discourse, and the historical contexts in which it emerged as a conscious artistic choice. Attention is given to the Wabi-Sabi philosophy in East Asian aesthetics, which values transience, simplicity, and the beauty of flaws, as well as to modern and contemporary Western movements such as Dadaism and Conceptual Art, where imperfection functions as an intrinsic artistic strategy. Through selected examples, including Yeesoookyung's *Translated Vase* series and the Japanese Kintsugi tradition, the study explores how fracture, repair, and material trace operate as aesthetic and conceptual devices. Imperfection is approached not only as a visual quality but also as a means of meaning-making and of renewing the dialogue between artwork and viewer.

Keywords: Flaw. Art. Aesthetics. Wabi-Sabi. Contemporary Art. Kintsugi.

Resumo

*O conceito de imperfeição tem ocupado, ao longo do tempo, um lugar central nos debates estéticos e filosóficos na história da arte. Mais do que ser entendida apenas como uma deficiência ou deformação, a imperfeição tem sido frequentemente adotada como uma estratégia criativa e expressiva. Em oposição aos ideais de perfeição, os artistas empregaram deliberadamente o defeito para desenvolver modos alternativos de representação e de experiência estética. Em diferentes culturas e movimentos artísticos, a imperfeição foi, assim, redefinida como um valor estético significativo. Este estudo examina como a imperfeição foi conceituada na arte, seu papel no discurso estético e os contextos históricos nos quais se tornou uma escolha artística consciente. Dá-se especial atenção à filosofia Wabi-Sabi na estética do Leste Asiático, que valoriza a transitoriedade, a simplicidade e a beleza das imperfeições, bem como aos movimentos modernos e contemporâneos ocidentais, como o Dadaísmo e a Arte Conceitual, nos quais a imperfeição funciona como uma estratégia artística intrínseca. Por meio de exemplos selecionados, incluindo a série *Translated Vase* de Yeesoookyung e a tradição japonesa do Kintsugi, o estudo explora como a fratura, o reparo e o traço material operam como recursos estéticos e conceituais. An imperfeição é abordada não apenas como uma qualidade visual, mas também como um meio de construção de significado e de renovação do diálogo entre a obra e o espectador.*



Palavras-chave: Imperfeição. Arte. Estética. Wabi-Sabi. Arte Contemporânea. Kintsugi.

1 INTRODUCTION

Ring the bells that still can ring, forget your perfect offering, there is a crack in everything that's how the light gets in. Leonard Cohen, *Anthem*¹

The concept of imperfection in art is regarded not merely as an aesthetic deviation but as one of the fundamental dynamics of creative expression and artistic thought. Throughout history, within different cultural contexts and aesthetic paradigms, imperfection has at times been treated as a deficiency that must be corrected, and at other times as a deliberate choice and expressive device. In this sense, imperfection is not only a formal distortion; it is also a concept that expands the artist's freedom of expression, transforms the viewer's perception, and challenges the boundaries of aesthetic judgment.

The Western aesthetic tradition long relied on ideals of symmetry, order, and perfection, where imperfection was generally defined as the opposite of the ideal. In contrast, Eastern philosophies, particularly the Japanese aesthetic approach of *Wabi-Sabi*, regard imperfection as a fundamental component of beauty. Transience, naturalness, and incompleteness are elevated within this framework. The aesthetics of *Wabi-Sabi* reflect the depth and impermanent nature of life through incompleteness and irregularity.

Contemporary artists, inspired by this understanding, transform imperfection into an aesthetic strategy; cracks, deformations, and accidental errors become a language of expression. Especially in fields such as ceramics, sculpture, and conceptual art, imperfection, grounded both in the nature of the material and in the artist's conscious intervention, has become an element that reinforces the uniqueness and conceptual depth of the artwork.

This study examines the relationship between imperfection and art on historical, aesthetic, and cultural levels, arguing that imperfection is not merely a deficiency, but a value situated at the center of artistic meaning production.

2 THE DEFINITION OF IMPERFECTION IN ART

Although imperfection is generally defined as a deviation from ideal beauty and perfection, within an artistic context, it is a multilayered concept capable of acquiring aesthetic value.

¹ Cohen, L. (1992). *Anthem* [Song]. Columbia Records. Album: *The Future*.

In this context, the approaches of aesthetic theorists such as Immanuel Kant and Edmund Burke to the concepts of beauty and the sublime provide an important theoretical foundation for understanding the aesthetic function of imperfection in art. Kant defines aesthetic experience as a free and subjective process. According to him, aesthetic judgments are not based solely on the perception of beauty; they also involve an intuitive evaluation of the balance between beauty and imperfection. For Kant, imperfection is not merely a formal distortion but also an aesthetic element in terms of the emotional and intellectual resonances it may produce in the viewer (Kant, 2007, pp. 1–17).

Edmund Burke, while emphasizing the distinction between beauty and the sublime, frequently associates the sublime with imperfect, deformed, or irregular forms. According to Burke, the sublime possesses qualities capable of evoking feelings of grandeur, uncertainty, and even terror. In this respect, imperfection can contribute to the sublimity of an artwork by arousing intense emotions such as fear and admiration in the viewer (Burke, 2011, pp. 48–62).

The recognition of imperfection as an aesthetic value in art history not only reflects the complexity of the relationship between nature and humanity but also reveals how aesthetic norms shift within cultural and historical contexts. Particularly within Japanese aesthetic thought, imperfection is directly associated with the philosophy of Wabi-Sabi. According to this philosophy, transience, decay, and flaws found in nature are fundamental sources of beauty. Rather than concealing imperfection, Wabi-Sabi makes it visible, cultivating an aesthetic sensibility grounded in simplicity and sincerity.

In Western art, the concept of imperfection acquired new meanings, especially in the twentieth century with the emergence of Modernism, Dadaism, and Abstract Art. Marcel Duchamp's 1917 work *Fountain* constitutes a radical critique of the traditional assumption that an artwork must be flawless and aesthetically complete. Duchamp's use of the ready-made form is associated with the attempt to construct the meaning of art on

a conceptual rather than purely aesthetic level. In this context, imperfection or accidental deformation became a deliberate aesthetic strategy. In an artistic context, imperfection is not merely a physical deficiency; it is often regarded as a means of enhancing conceptual depth, expressive power, and the emotional relationship established with the viewer. Aesthetic theories and artistic practices sometimes interpret imperfection as a disruption of the ideal, and at other times as a fundamental element of artistic originality and individual expression. For this reason, imperfection is acknowledged both as a formal and conceptual aesthetic principle and as a distinctive language of artistic expression.

3 THE ROLE OF IMPERFECTION IN AN AESTHETIC CONTEXT

When evaluated from an aesthetic perspective, imperfection assumes an important role in the processes of producing originality, individuality, and creative innovation, functioning as one of the fundamental components of art. The use of imperfection as an artistic tool particularly through elements such as fracture, deformation, incompleteness, and chance can evoke powerful emotional and cognitive responses in the viewer on both visual and conceptual levels.

In art history, imperfection has been considered not only as a formal disruption but also as a meaning-generating element grounded in aesthetic strategy. Within classical aesthetic thought, imperfection was often regarded as the opposite of ideal beauty, signaling incompleteness or error. However, with the emergence of modern and contemporary art, this approach shifted; imperfection came to be embraced as a form of aesthetic value and expression. Especially from the twentieth century onward, many artists have interpreted imperfection not merely as a deficiency, but as a critical and original mode of articulation.

From the standpoint of aesthetic theory, Immanuel Kant defines aesthetic judgment based on the principle of disinterested pleasure and suggests that this experience of pleasure is open not only to beauty but also to elements that conflict with or complement it. According to Kant, the aesthetic balance established between imperfection and beauty can lend depth and originality to an artwork (Kant, 2007). Edmund Burke, within the framework of the sublime, argues that deformation and incompleteness can provoke intense emotional reactions such as admiration,

astonishment, and even fear within human psychology. Such emotional effects are regarded as complementary elements that enhance the aesthetic power of the artwork (Burke, 2011).

In Eastern aesthetic thought, the concept of imperfection is much more directly intertwined with aesthetics. The Japanese philosophy of Wabi-Sabi foregrounds the beauty of transience, simplicity, naturalness, and imperfection. In this context, cracks, deformations, and asymmetrical structures particularly evident in ceramic art are aestheticized as reflections of the artist's relationship with nature and time. By emphasizing the beauty of what is imperfect, Wabi-Sabi transforms imperfection into both a visual and philosophical value (Koren, 2008).

In Western art, the aesthetic value of imperfection was redefined under the influence of movements such as Modernism, Dadaism, and Abstract Art. Marcel Duchamp's "ready-made" approach demonstrated that art could be associated not only with aesthetics but also with conceptual meaning. Duchamp's 1917 work *Fountain* stands as a striking example of how imperfection can function as a deliberate aesthetic and conceptual force. This work constitutes a direct challenge to the traditional notion of perfection in art, while simultaneously showing that imperfection can become one of the fundamental expressive strategies of artistic practice.

In this context, the following questions constitute the main axis of the research:

- How is the concept of imperfection defined in art?
- What is the function of imperfection within an aesthetic framework?
- In which periods and artistic movements have imperfection been adopted as a deliberate aesthetic choice?

Within the framework of these questions, the study evaluates how imperfection functions not merely as a deficiency or error but as a conscious artistic strategy and mode of expression.

4 MARCEL DUCHAMP AND DADAISM: THE AESTHETICS OF IMPERFECTION AND CHANCE

Emerging in the early twentieth century, Dadaism brought a radical critique to traditional artistic norms and aesthetic values, elevating elements such as chance, chaos,

and imperfection to the fundamental principles of art. The Dadaists sought to move art beyond established aesthetic conventions, aiming to deconstruct bourgeois culture, systems of meaning production, and artistic institutions. In this context, imperfection was positioned not merely as an aesthetic deviation, but as a critical instrument (Ades, 1994, pp. 42–48).

One of the most powerful examples of this approach can undoubtedly be observed in the work of Marcel Duchamp. By developing the concept of the “ready-made,” Duchamp removed ordinary objects from their original context and repositioned them as artworks, thereby destabilizing the sanctity of art and its aesthetic ideals. His 1917 work **Fountain**, which consisted of placing a urinal within a gallery space, questioned not only artistic institutions but also prevailing aesthetic value judgments. The use of imperfection and chance in this context constituted a deliberate opposition to classical notions of beauty. This shift led art to transform not only on a formal level but also on a conceptual plane (Harrison & Wood, 2003, pp. 602–605).

Duchamp’s *L.H.O.O.Q.* (1919) consists of an ironic intervention in Leonardo da Vinci’s *Mona Lisa*, upon which he drew a mustache and goatee. This gesture, directed at one of the most iconic images in art history, constitutes not only a direct attack on aesthetic perfection but also legitimizes chance and humor as valid instruments of artistic production. In this work, imperfection does not function as a literal physical deformation; rather, it operates as a symbolic, historical, and conceptual tool of critique. In this context, Duchamp’s actions allow imperfection to be interpreted not merely as a formal deviation but as a form of resistance against hegemonic regimes of meaning (Çalışkan, 2022, p. 113).

Discussions in Turkey on Duchamp and Dadaism likewise emphasize the direct relationship between imperfection and the emancipation of art. For example, Kocabaş (2021) argues that in Duchamp’s works, chance functions not only as an aesthetic device but also as a political strategy. This approach serves the artist’s aim of removing the viewer from a passive position and engaging them in a critical and reflective process. Similarly, Altun (2020) contends that Dadaist practices, through imperfection, dismantle the sanctity of the “artwork” and assume a role in revealing the creative potential of every individual. In this framework, imperfection is not merely disruption, but also the key to liberation, critique, and transformation.

In conclusion, in the example of Dadaism and Duchamp, imperfection should be understood not simply as a formal deficiency or error, but as a strategy that transforms art, overturns meaning, and enables the emergence of new aesthetic values.

5 IMPORTANT ARTISTS WHO HAVE WORKED WITH THE CONCEPT OF IMPERFECTION

Among the artists who have engaged with the concept of imperfection are Alberto Giacometti, Lucio Fontana, Anselm Kiefer, Francis Bacon, and Yeessookyung. In this context, their approaches to the subject and the ways in which they articulate imperfection within their artworks can be outlined as follows.

5.1 Alberto Giacometti's understanding of imperfection and its aesthetic dimension

Alberto Giacometti's artistic practice represents a distinctive approach that redefined the concept of imperfection in modern sculpture. The disproportionate, thin, and elongated human figures seen in his works may at first appear as formal deficiencies or deformations; however, they are in fact expressions of the artist's profound attempt to articulate the fragility and solitude of human existence (Sylvester, 1994). In this sense, imperfection in Giacometti's art is not merely a formal characteristic but an aesthetic strategy that points to the existential reality of the human condition.

Jean-Paul Sartre (1948) described the sense of "emptiness and loneliness" present in Giacometti's figures as one of the fundamental existential conditions of modern humanity, noting that the artist renders this condition visible through formal "imperfections." The distortions in Giacometti's figures do not stem from an inability to achieve ideal beauty or classical proportion; rather, they arise from his desire to find a plastic equivalent for the alienation, solitude, and transience experienced by the individual in the modern world (Lord, 2013).

In Giacometti's production, imperfection does not signify aesthetic failure; instead, it emerges as a means of making visible the complexity of existence and the conflicted relationship between the individual and their own being. He associates figurative imperfection with the fragmentation and uncertainty inherent in human

perception of self and environment, thereby granting his works a powerful existential depth (Harrison & Wood, 2003).

Within Giacometti's aesthetic universe, the concept of imperfection is not merely a personal artistic stance but also a reflection of the new meanings attributed to deficiency and incompleteness in modern art. His figures invite viewers to question the boundaries between the ideal and the flawed, while simultaneously reminding them that imperfection is an inseparable part of the creative process. Giacometti's understanding of imperfection contributed significantly to the critique of aesthetic perfection in modern art theory and encouraged the acceptance of imperfection as an element that lends authenticity and sincerity to the artwork (Golding, 1994).

In conclusion, Giacometti's conception of imperfection should be interpreted not as a formal inadequacy but as an aesthetic position that reflects the existential reality of the human condition and the fragmentation brought about by modernity. In this respect, his work transforms imperfection into one of the central concerns of modern art and offers a new perspective on the relationship between imperfection and aesthetics in art history.

Figure 1

Alberto Giacometti, Man Pointing (1947).



Figure 2

Alberto Giacometti, Walking Man (1960).



5.2 Lucio Fontana's understanding of imperfection and its impact on modern art

Lucio Fontana's artistic practice contributed significantly to rethinking the concept of imperfection in modern art, not as a mere formal deficiency but as a creative intervention and aesthetic possibility. In his most iconic works, particularly the *Concetto Spaziale* (Spatial Concept) series, the cuts and punctures on the surface exemplify how imperfection becomes an artistic language. By slashing or perforating the canvas, Fontana introduced a third dimension, disrupting the integrity of the art object and creating a new field of existence (White, 2006). For Fontana, imperfection can be interpreted as a challenge to the surface aesthetics and search for unity that characterized modern art.

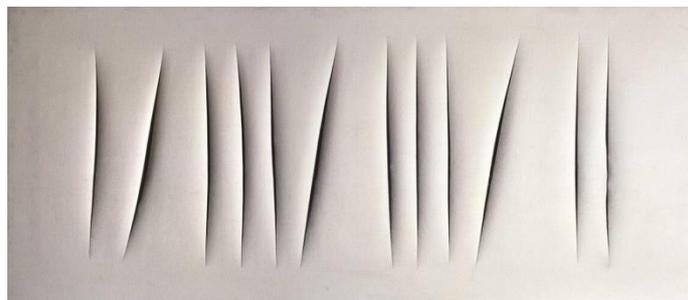
In Fontana's cuts and holes, "imperfection" does not signify damage to the surface; rather, it functions as a gesture that enables the artwork to transcend its boundaries and open itself to space. As W. Rubin (1980) suggests, this approach can be regarded as a radical intervention that transformed modern art's fundamental perceptions of material and surface. Fontana's understanding of imperfection aims to establish a relationship not only between the viewer and the visible surface, but also between the viewer and space and void. In this context, imperfection is conceived as an integral part

of creative action and experience, inviting the viewer to move beyond passive observation and confront emptiness directly (Celant, 2000).

Fontana's conception of imperfection made a significant contribution to modern art theory by positioning imperfection as an aesthetic value and a means of meaning production. His cuts express an artistic vision unconcerned with the pursuit of perfect form; instead, these marks—appearing as tears or ruptures—allow the art object to open itself to a new reality. Fontana's approach enabled modern and contemporary art to regard imperfection not merely as disruption, but as a creative freedom and a quest for infinity (Bickers & Wilson, 2007).

Figure 3

Lucio Fontana, Concetto Spaziale (1960).



5.3 Anselm Kiefer's understanding of imperfection and the aesthetics of material

Anselm Kiefer's artistic practice represents an approach that addresses the concept of imperfection on both formal and conceptual levels, deepening the meaning attributed to imperfection in modern art. The materials Kiefer employs, such as lead, burnt wood, mud, and dried plant remnants, carry visible traces of decay, erosion, and deterioration on the artistic surface. In his works, imperfection is constructed not merely as deficiency or damage, but as a means of confronting history, memory, and collective trauma (Rosenthal, 1987). In this sense, imperfection in Kiefer's production goes beyond an aesthetic preference; it becomes a mode of expression that interrogates art's relationship with historical and social memory.

The cracking surfaces, flaking textures, and burnt marks in Kiefer's works render visible the vulnerability of the artwork in the face of time, positioning the viewer as a

witness to the relationship between the art object, history, and nature (Arasse, 2001). His works stand as a counter-position to modernism's pursuit of perfection and pure formal aesthetics. As Benjamin Buchloh (2003) suggests, Kiefer's understanding of imperfection situates the artwork as a "remnant" or "wounded object," opening a space for reflection on historical catastrophes and forgotten narratives through the material presence of the work.

Kiefer's aestheticization of imperfection constitutes a significant turning point in the transformation of the concept within modern and especially contemporary art. In his works, imperfection is not simply the physical deterioration of the surface; it functions as a representation of cultural and historical destruction. By foregrounding the incomplete and fragile nature of the art object, this approach aims to provoke both aesthetic disturbance and historical inquiry in the viewer (Saltzman, 1999).

Figure 4

Anselm Kiefer, Heavy Cloud (1985).



5.4 Francis Bacon's understanding of imperfection and the aesthetics of figurative distortion

Francis Bacon's artistic practice approaches the concept of imperfection as a means of rendering visible the fragility of human existence and its inner conflicts. The deformed faces, contorted bodies, and fragmented limbs frequently encountered in

Bacon's figures do not signify formal deficiency or lack of skill; rather, they constitute a deliberate expression of existential solitude and the violence embedded within the human psyche (Sylvester, 1975). For Bacon, imperfection represents both a rebellion against the classical aesthetic ideal of beauty and a reflection of the inherent terror and suffering of human nature.

Bacon's aesthetics of deformation reveal his construction of the human body as a "site of wound or trauma" (Deleuze, 1981). His figurative distortions are not merely individual corruptions or distortions; they function as artistic reflections of the traces left on the body by collective traumas of the modern era, such as war, violence, and alienation. The imperfection in Bacon's works aims to create a direct bodily and emotional confrontation with the viewer, making his paintings unsettling yet profoundly striking (Harrison, 2005).

Bacon's understanding of imperfection integrates the disruption of formal unity into the aesthetic language of modern art. His deformations lend authenticity and intensity to the artwork while simultaneously implying the impossibility of ideal form (Davies, 2010). In this respect, Bacon emphasizes that imperfection contributes not only to the visual dimension of the art object but also to its psychological and existential weight, thereby transforming modern art's perception of imperfection.

Figure 5

Francis Bacon, Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion (1944).

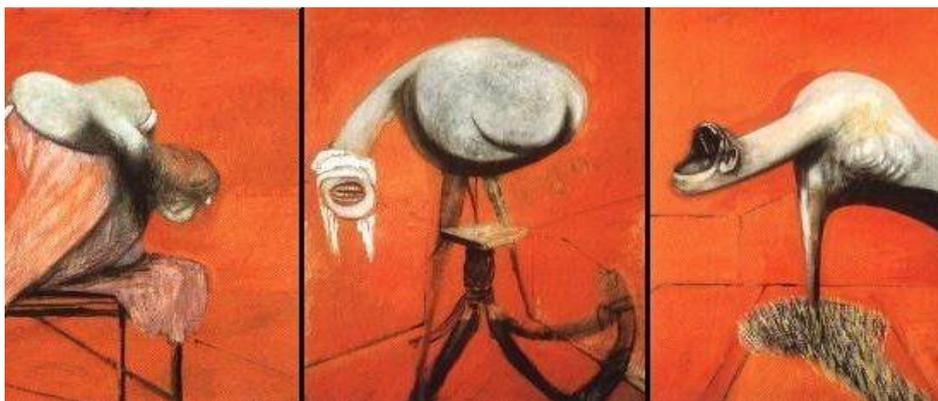


Photo Source: www.francis-bacon.com

5.5 The aesthetics of imperfection in Yeesoogyung's ceramic practice

The ceramic practice of South Korean artist Yeesoogyung redefines the concept of imperfection not merely as an aesthetic element but as a medium of memory, identity, and cultural transformation. Her most well-known series, *Translated Vase*, is created by reassembling broken ceramic fragments that were discarded by traditional Korean ceramic masters for being considered defective, joining them together with gold-filled seams. In this process, imperfection is not simply a physical trace of fracture; rather, it becomes a mode through which the forgotten, the excluded, and the past continue to exist on the ceramic surface (Park, 2018; Kang, 2020).

Although Yeesoogyung's approach evokes the Japanese aesthetics of *Kintsugi*, it clearly diverges from it. While *Kintsugi* aims to restore aesthetic unity by repairing cracks, Yeesoogyung deliberately emphasizes fractures and transforms them into constitutive elements of a new form. In this respect, her works adopt a critical stance toward aesthetic norms and convert imperfection into a conscious creative strategy (Cheyne, 2021).

The gold seams used by the artist function not merely as visual repairs but as metaphors for cultural healing and reconstruction. The irregular, asymmetrical, and organic forms that emerge from the reassembled fragments offer an alternative to the perfection-oriented aesthetic values prevalent in Korean society. Thus, the aestheticization of imperfection can also be interpreted as a symbolic form of resistance to dominant cultural norms (Lee, 2017).

Furthermore, Yeesoogyung's approach establishes a deeper conceptual layer by relating imperfection to individual trauma and collective memory (Horlyck, 2019). Traces of *Wabi-Sabi* aesthetics are clearly observable in her works: transience, incompleteness, simplicity, and natural decay find both formal and conceptual expression. Here, imperfection is not merely a physical condition of the material but a state of being. In this context, the artist's practice operationalizes "aesthetic imperfection" both as a creative strategy and as an instrument of cultural critique (Koren, 2008).

Figure 6

Yeesookyung, Translated Vase – Nine Dragons in Wonderland (2017).



The Translated Vase series consists of sculptural works reconstructed from discarded ceramic fragments. The artist gathers ceramic pieces that were thrown away by Korean master potters and joins the cracks with gold. According to the artist, this process resembles assembling a puzzle made of broken ceramics.

In this work, various reproduced ceramic fragments from all historical periods and regions of Korea including those from North Korea are used. Many of these fragments emerge during the destruction of pottery deemed worthless by ceramic masters, a practice that paradoxically preserves the rarity and value of surviving works. Through this process, the fragments are allowed to intervene through their own “translations,” allowing them to generate new narratives and to form an infinite proliferation that is no longer fragile.

The title of the work, *Nine Dragons in Wonderland*, is drawn from Chinese mythology and refers to the ninth offspring of the dragon, known for its magical playfulness within the human world. The dragon’s nine sons are hybrid beings, combined with animals such as oxen, wolves, lions, goats, and dogs. Each possesses distinctive and symbolic characteristics. Traditionally, they are placed on the four corners or rooftops of buildings, on bells, or on tombstones. In East Asian culture, the dragon is regarded as a noble and auspicious being in Korea particularly, it symbolizes the king. For this reason,

the dragon's nine sons permeate everyday life as meaningful symbols within architectural and cultural spaces.

Due to the tragic upheavals of the Japanese occupation of Korea and the Korean War, much cultural memory was lost, making it difficult to determine the original meanings of each of the dragon's nine sons. However, the artist hopes that viewers will find their own ways of establishing connections among these fragmented meanings by tracing the dispersed images of the dragon, thereby reconstructing the missing links between past and present.

Figure 7

Yeesookyung, Translated Vase – Thousand (2017).



One of Yeesookyung's most striking bodies of work, the Translated Vase series, is based on the revival of discarded ceramic fragments through their reassembly with gold-filled seams into new sculptural forms. The artist collects pieces that traditional Korean ceramic masters deemed defective during the production process and therefore destroyed, incorporating them into an aesthetic and conceptual reconstruction. This method is not merely a physically reassembled puzzle; rather, it constitutes a powerful artistic narrative centered on the acceptance of imperfection, the repair of the past, and the reconstruction of identity (Kang, 2020; Horlyck, 2019).

Figure 8

Yeesookyung, Translated Vase (2011).



The fragments used in the formation of these works originate from different historical periods and regions of Korea. In this respect, *Translated Vase* is not merely a material collage, but a map of memory carrying the traces of a multilayered cultural past. Yeesookyung’s reinterpretation of each fragment through the metaphor of “translation” presents a process of re-signification in which the artist assigns new meaning to the material through her own interpretive intervention. The cracks unified with gold seams reference the *Kintsugi* technique; however, unlike the Japanese *Kintsugi* tradition, which seeks to honor and restore the original form, Yeesookyung’s method proposes a new form of unity by accepting fragmentation rather than idealizing wholeness (Cheyne, 2021).

A mythological layer is also embedded within this body of work. The title of the series refers to the Chinese legend of the “Nine Dragons.” According to this myth, the dragon’s nine sons are hybrid beings combined with different animals, each assigned specific symbolic functions and placed on roof corners, bells, and tombstones. In East Asian cultures, the dragon is generally regarded as a noble and sacred figure symbolizing the king. In Korean culture, in particular, this figure functions as a bearer of national identity (Lee, 2017).

The artist employs this mythological framework to point to Korea’s cultural memory, which was disrupted by periods of colonization and civil war. The fragmented nature of cultural heritage, divided between North and South Korea, is metaphorically reflected through ceramic fragments. Yeesookyung presents the reinterpretation of lost or forgotten symbols as a process of reconstruction within the viewer’s memory. In this

sense, Translated Vase functions as an object of memory that builds a bridge between past and present at both individual and collective levels (Park, 2018).

6 CONCLUSION

This study has sought not only to evaluate the role of imperfection in art within its historical and cultural contexts, but also to propose a renewed understanding of its aesthetic value. Imperfection, in its classical sense, is not merely a distortion or deviation from aesthetic norms; rather, it functions as a creative tool consciously employed by the artist to generate conceptual depth within the artwork. In many examples of modern and contemporary art, imperfection is no longer simply an indicator of deficiency; instead, it has become an integral component of meaning production and artistic originality.

From this perspective, the central proposition of this study may be articulated as follows: In art, imperfection is not an aesthetic malfunction but a creative strategy that reconstructs memory, identity, and modes of individual expression. This concept influences not only the artist's process of production but also the viewer's aesthetic experience. As demonstrated particularly in Yeesoogyung's Translated Vase series, imperfection is transformed into both a formal and symbolic value, positioned at the core of the communicative relationship between artwork and viewer. The inclusion of imperfection as an aesthetic category within the art object represents a critical stance against the desire for perfection and signals the emergence of an alternative aesthetic perception.

Furthermore, this study argues that imperfection plays a transformative role not only in the artist's production process but also in the viewer's perception. The incorporation of imperfection into artistic language invites the modern viewer to move beyond the desire for perfection and to reconsider aesthetics through the lenses of fragility, transience, and incompleteness. In doing so, the viewer is encouraged to interpret the artwork not merely as a finished unity, but as a process and experience carrying traces of historical, cultural, and personal narratives.

For future research, several questions gain significance within this framework: How does the aesthetics of imperfection resonate across different cultures? Can imperfection function as a representational tool in political, ethical, or ecological

contexts? For instance, how do the concepts of imperfection and repair generate meaning within ecological art practices? How might the aesthetics of imperfection be interpreted within the contexts of digital art and new media? Addressing such questions would initiate a deeper discussion not only within aesthetics but also regarding the social, cultural, and political functions of contemporary art. Positioning imperfection as a conceptual tool that stretches the boundaries between art and society offers new perspectives for aesthetic theory and art criticism.

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Authors' Contribution

All authors contributed equally to the development of this article.

Data availability

All datasets relevant to this study's findings are fully available within the article.

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