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# Ebru Dede: Tracing Identity Through The Layers Of Art

By Hajra Salinas | April 5, 2025 | No Comments

“Through painting, I try to trace myself in the meaning—or meaninglessness—of life.”

## A Journey Shaped by Figures and Faces

Ebru Dede's artistic path has been deeply influenced by her early fascination with figurative painting. From childhood, she found herself drawn to capturing the human form, a passion ignited by the model sketches and fashion catalogues that filled her home. Her mother's work in the textile industry exposed her to an array of stylized figures, shaping her understanding of composition and movement. As she refined her skills, she turned to dynamic subjects—sports pages from newspapers and the Olympics—where the fluidity of human motion and the intensity of facial expressions became a central focus in her art. This pursuit of understanding the human figure through various poses and emotions laid the foundation for the themes she would later explore in her professional career.

Beyond the technical aspects of representation, Dede's early interest in body language and expression fueled her curiosity about human psychology and philosophy. While she initially engaged in teamwork-based activities during her youth, her intellectual inclinations gradually shifted toward deeper inquiries into identity, subjectivity, and the complexities of the human experience. These themes would later surface in her artistic exploration, as she sought to dissect the connections between internal emotions and external presentation. Her art became an avenue for tracing her own presence within broader existential questions, a pursuit that continues to define her creative output.

Before fully committing to an artistic career, Dede followed a different academic and professional path. She first completed her studies at the Vocational School of Social Sciences, where she specialized in foreign trade and teamwork dynamics. For a decade, she balanced a corporate career in foreign trade with her love for painting, dedicating her weekends to artistic expression. Eventually, the joy she found in creating art outweighed the stability of her professional role, leading her to take a decisive step toward her true calling. She left her job to pursue a formal education in painting, enrolling at Marmara University's Department of Painting. During her third year of undergraduate studies, she participated in an Erasmus program at Accademia di Belle Arti L'Aquila in Italy, further expanding her artistic perspective. Graduating with honors in 2008, her academic journey continued with a PhD at Yildiz Technical University, where she deepened her engagement with art and design research.



## Ebru Dede: Blurring the Boundaries Between Mediums

Dede's artistic approach defies rigid categorization, embracing an interdisciplinary practice that seamlessly integrates painting, mixed media, digital art, and video production. While figurative painting remains at the heart of her work, her exploration extends beyond traditional techniques, incorporating a diverse range of materials and conceptual frameworks. Whether working with acrylics, watercolors, or oils, she infuses her compositions with a sense of movement and depth, often experimenting with unconventional textures such as buttons, rope, gauze, and handwritten text. These tactile elements introduce layers of meaning, transforming her pieces into intricate dialogues between materiality and concept.

Her engagement with digital media and video art has expanded her creative possibilities, allowing her to merge photography, drawing, and animation into cohesive visual narratives. Utilizing tools such as Photoshop and Procreate, she reinterprets her paintings into digital compositions, sometimes developing them further into animated sequences using After Effects. This synthesis of traditional and contemporary methods reflects her ongoing interest in evolving artistic forms, ensuring that her work remains dynamic and relevant in an ever-changing visual culture. Her experiments with video date back to her student years, and in 2016 and 2017, she ventured into underwater photography, capturing ethereal imagery that introduced new dimensions to her practice.

Through her multimedia explorations, Dede engages with complex themes such as gender, consumer culture, identity, posthumanism, and migration. Her work often interrogates the fluidity of identity and the ways in which individuals navigate personal and societal constructs. The objects she selects—such as buttons and badges—serve as metaphors for connection, fragmentation, and healing, embodying unresolved narratives within the human experience. By bridging physical and digital realms, her art transcends conventional boundaries, creating a dialogue between past and future, tradition and innovation.



## The Artist's Creative Process and Inspirations

Dede's artistic process is deeply intertwined with her daily experiences, drawing inspiration from her surroundings, travels, and the simple act of observation. Whether walking through a city, sitting in a park, or capturing a fleeting moment with her camera, she collects visual and emotional fragments that later find their way into her work. Her sketches and notes, often derived from books she reads, serve as a continuous archive of ideas, feeding into her creative evolution. She describes her artistic journey as one in which the sense of location sometimes dissolves, replaced by an immersion in thought and emotion, as she channels her inner world onto the canvas.

Her workspace is a crucial element in her creative process. She has transformed part of her home in Istanbul into a personal studio, where she spends hours painting in deep concentration. Music plays an essential role in setting the tone for her work; pieces like Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata accompany her sessions, enhancing the contemplative atmosphere of her studio. This meditative environment allows her to fully engage with the act of painting, channeling her thoughts and emotions into each brushstroke.

The physicality of her materials also contributes to her artistic exploration. While she has experimented with plexiglass, engraving, and various mixed-media techniques, her current focus remains on painting and digital transformation. Her ability to seamlessly transition between traditional and digital mediums highlights her adaptability and curiosity. Whether working on a canvas, a digital screen, or a video composition, she maintains a consistent theme—one that explores the intersections of identity, memory, and visual storytelling.



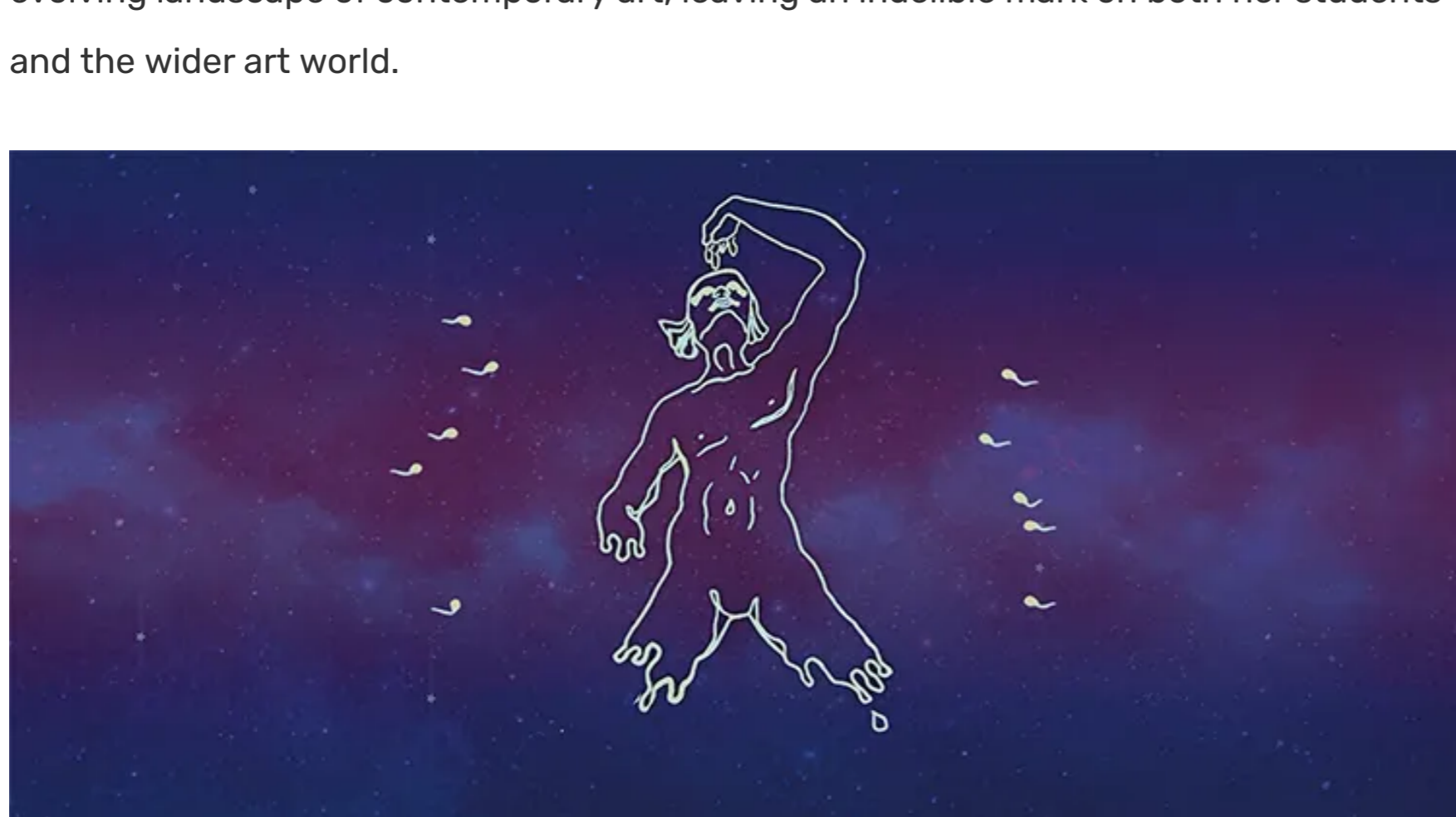
## Ebru Dede: Contributions to Art and Education

Beyond her personal artistic practice, Dede has made significant contributions to art education and the contemporary art scene. Since 2019, she has been a faculty member at Maltepe University's Visual Communication Department, following a decade of teaching graphic design, photography, and animation at Kadir Has University. Her role as an educator allows her to bridge theory and practice, guiding her students through the complexities of visual expression while incorporating her own research on contemporary art. In 2022, her dedication to academia was recognized when she was awarded the title of Associate Professor by the Head of the Interuniversity Academic Council.

Dede's impact extends beyond the classroom. In 2023, she launched Q Art Space, an online exhibition platform aimed at fostering artistic dialogue and providing opportunities for emerging and established artists in Turkey. By creating a digital space for exhibitions, she continues to expand the reach of contemporary art, challenging traditional notions of how art is displayed and experienced. This initiative reflects her broader commitment to supporting the artistic community and pushing the boundaries of how art is shared in an increasingly digital world.

Her presence in the international art scene has been marked by numerous exhibitions, symposiums, and residency programs. Since 2007, she has showcased her work at prestigious venues, including the X Edition Florence Biennial, Berlin Art Goes Live 2015, the Camac Artist Residency Program in France, the Niagara Falls History Museum in Canada, and the Anima Mundi International Art Festival in Venice. Through these platforms, she has engaged with diverse artistic communities, presenting her work to audiences across different cultural contexts. Her participation in these events underscores her commitment to expanding the dialogue between local and global art narratives.

Dede's artistic journey is one of continuous exploration, driven by a desire to understand, interpret, and reimagine the human experience. Through painting, digital media, and education, she not only traces her own path but also contributes to the evolving landscape of contemporary art, leaving an indelible mark on both her students and the wider art world.



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