Sarah-Neel Smith

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**D Group**

The D Group was a loose association of painters and sculptors who exhibited regularly together between 1933 and 1947. The group took its name from the fourth letter of the Latin alphabet because its founding members—Nurullah Berk (1906-82), Abidin Dino (1913-93), Zeki Faik Izer (1905-88), Zühtü Muridoğlu (1906-92), Elif Naci (1898-1987), and Cemal Tollu (1899-1968)—identified as the fourth generation of modern Turkish artists since the late nineteenth century, following the Ottoman Painters’ Society (Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti), the Fine Arts Federation (Güzel Sanatlar Birliği), and the Federation of Independent Painters and Sculptors (Mustakil Ressamlar ve Heykeltraşlar Birliği). The title also signalled their progressive stance, as the Latin alphabet had only been adopted in Turkey five years earlier as part of nation-wide modernizing reforms. United by shared experiences studying in France and at the Istanbul Fine Arts Academy during the first decade of the Republic in the 1920s, the D Group artists favored Cubist modes of formal abstraction, which they infused with traditional motifs drawn from local handicrafts, textiles, and miniature painting. These artists’ interest in using abstract idioms to portray aspects of Turkish life was linked to the two-part goal with which they tasked themselves: to demonstrate Turkey’s integral role within an unfolding history of modern art where abstraction functioned as a global *lingua franca*, while also conveying what they thought of as a distinctly Turkish experience.

By the beginning of the 1940s, their ranks had grown to include Hakkı Anlı (1906-91), Sabri Berkel (1907-93), Halil Dikmen (1906-64), Bedri Rahmi Eyüboğlu (1911-75), Eren Eyüboğlu (1907-88), Arif Kaptan (1906-79), Nusret Suman (1905-78), Salih Urallı (1908-84), Eşref Üren 1897-1984), Turgut Zaim (1906-74), and Fahrünnisa Zeid (1901-1991).

The collective’s activities were widely covered in the local press, and they came under fire from conservative critics who advocated a realist art directly in the service of the state. At the same time, the D Group artists were soaked in the Kemalist ideology of the early republic: their interest in folk culture was deeply colored by the Kemalist regime’s emphasis on the Turkish people (*halk*) as the source of an authentic Turkish identity. For example, most of the collective’s members participated in the government-sponsored Homeland Tours (Yurt Gezileri) of 1938-43, which sent artists to rural Turkey to produce art inspired by their experiences there. This issue would continue to preoccupy Turkish artists in the following decades, in part because of the lengthy tenure of many members of the D Group—including Berk, Eyüboğlu, and Tollu—as instructors at the Istanbul Fine Arts Academy. Other members of the collective were prominent critics, poets, museum directors, and journalists who also shared a commitment to introducing abstract art to a wider Turkish public. The D Group’s position at the heart of this broader community of intellectuals was an important aspect of its immediate success and sustained legacy. By all accounts, the 1947 breakup of the collective was amicable, and it was generally agreed that the debates that had stimulated the group’s formation in the 1930s had simply run their course.

**References and further reading**

Shaw, Wendy M. K., *Ottoman Painting: Reflections of Western Art in the Ottoman Empire.* London: I. B. Tauris, 2011.