# Body Identity and Symbolism in the Sculptures of Algerian Artists Mohamed BOUKERCH and Ali YAMANI.

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**Abstract:**
Sculpture is considered one of the visual arts that have greatly influenced humanity in shaping its identities. It has played a significant role in embodying the details of history across time in shaping religious, political and economic beliefs. It has contributed greatly to enhancing and developing aesthetic visual awareness, representing cultural connections, and achieving identity in a way that reflects the symbolic expression of the individual through these three-dimensional forms. This paper aims to identify the distinctive characteristics of some sculptures by the Algerian artists Mohamed Boukerch and Ali Yamani through an aesthetic and artistic approach. These artists combined the symbolic and aesthetic dimensions in a philosophy that accentuate the Algerian reality, achieving a unique style. They drew inspiration from sensory and aesthetic desires through the kinetic skills and intense emotions they acquired to express national identity with their individual ideas and talents. The study explores how they employ the symbolism of the body within their sculptural works. What are the implications of these representations within the context of Algerian identity and culture? This study aims to foster critical and creative thinking through analytical analysis.

**Keywords:** Sculpture, Body Symbolism, Representations of Identity, Mohamed Boukerch, Ali Yamani.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Humans have known the art of sculpture since approximately 50,000 BC, making it one of the oldest art forms humans have created since their existence on Earth. It is one of the most widespread and common art forms, closely linked to humankind as they sought to express their aspirations and environment. The oldest sculptures found today date back to the Early Stone Age and primitive societies. These sculptures were small and round, crafted from clay, bone and wood. They were carved directly onto cave walls and flat stones for ritual purposes, amulets or religious beliefs. This demonstrates that the art of sculpture predates recorded history. Archaeologists have discovered examples of carved bones and horns made by humans during the Early Stone Age. It is considered one of the visual arts that have greatly influenced cultural life throughout history by making a significant difference to civilizations in achieving various aspects of life. It offers visual insights that allow us to understand the level of civilizations and nations beyond paganism and theology. We can find examples of sculpture in ancient civilizations in various forms, including the Pharaonic, Roman, and Greek civilizations where sculpture was one of the most widespread and expressive arts reflecting the surrounding atmosphere. The purpose of this art varied, but it was often religious representing their various deities. Furthermore, we also find the spread of sculpture during the Renaissance and Baroque periods with great sculptors such as the work of Michelangelo. While the use of sculpture in our modern era is primarily for artistic creation and conveying a specific message to the public, the style employed varies including abstract, geometric, and academic.

With the expansion of experience and the development that has occurred within the current human dimension, the art of sculpture began to take a correct direction transforming from a mere primitive practice that influenced beliefs and silenced the fear of the unknown into a creative, artistic means that expresses beauty, documents daily life and tells us about the unknown course of time. With the emergence of the first civilizations of Mesopotamia and the Pharaohs, the art of sculpture developed and rose to its peak where large-scale statues and monumental murals appeared

immortalizing those great events, embodying the image of humanity and its relationship with the universe and the spirit. As for the Greek and Roman civilizations, being classical civilizations, sculpture reached its new peak of distinction and mastery, so that the mass became dominant over the silent meaning. Importantly enough, the body became represented in its true reality that pulsates with symbolism and movement. These sculptures give the true impression and facilitating the idea, as they are overflowing with movement and dynamic meanings filled with integrated artistic anatomy. From here, the sculpture of the human body began to take a fundamental axis to reflect beauty and significance. Sculpture has not stopped at the limits of formal significance, but has come to record memory and provide symbols that interpret and clarify the visions of the person who will see these forms at future times. To put it differently, it presents the future in a contemporary visual language that embodies the existential issues of that period and rethinks the relationship of the body. This is only possible if the artist is consistent with the ideas put forward by one society so that the sculpture remains a witness to historical identity and the human journey. Thus, the artist began to produce works from one ideas and imagination that are subject to the creative material, as he adheres to his national constants and cultural ideas that represent his country and region, so he utilizes the sculptural material (stone, clay, wood, metals, etc.) to create forms that contain symbolic meanings, forming statues that reflect national identity and civilizational affiliation to become more precise and symbolic. This study sheds light on the works of sculptors Mohamed BOUKERCH and Ali YAMANI, where we will attempt to compare their sculptures from several perspectives giving importance to their Algerian heritage and distinct regions. We will explore the physical representations they employed to express identity, symbolic structure and form. We will exclude from their works the metaphysical philosophy through which they presented abstract forms devoid of pagan meanings. Their artwork carries connotations of identity and expresses Algerian patriotism and belonging reflecting the history of memory and the transformations of cultural affiliation. This leads us to question their relationship to the Algerian social environment and their

use of a visual language in parallel with the artistic discourse derived from national identity and Algerian historical events. These works form a semantic unit that reveals the depth of the Algerian artists' creative experience and the reasons behind their approach to such creative endeavors. This study examines the structure of a semiotic analysis of sculptures that originated from a historical perspective and were inspired by the Algerian heritage dimension, reflecting national identity, allows us to address the central question of this research which is about the nature of the physical presence in the works of artists Mohamed BOUKERCHE and Ali YAMANI. The form of the body does not appear as an absolute, traditional shape, but rather transforms from an idea into a semantic structure that challenges critical interpretation and provokes the viewer, in a symbolism that reveals beauty and individual creativity. This leads us to pose **the following problem:**

**-How is the body constructed and shaped in the sculptures of the Algerian artists so that it embodies with symbols and meanings which reproduce identity and transcend the aesthetic function to express visual messages towards broader cultural and intellectual aims?**

Through this central question, we are guided to ask other sub-questions:

• How are cultural and existential symbols embodied within physical gestures?

• What is the relationship of these symbols to the contexts of identity, belonging, and the contemporary Algerian experience?

• What artistic and technical methods do artists employ to distort or reconstruct form in order to produce meaning?

This leads us to several hypotheses, which can be formulated as follows:

1-The body, for the Algerian sculptor, is not a representation, but a visual discourse accompanying cultural memory.

2- Symbolism in the sculptures of the Algerian artist does not present coded riddles, but rather reflects a visual construction that allows for deduction and inference.

3-The physical structures in the works of the Algerian sculptor express an existential condition linked to the Algerian people, their suffering, and their transformations.

This research is based on an analytical and descriptive approach that reads the artworks and explains their aesthetic and semantic structures, while also utilizing an understanding of symbols and their meanings to analyze the formal elements within each sculpture.

## 2. The Body between Representation and Symbolic Construction in Contemporary Art.

### 2.1 Definition of Sculpture:

Sculpture, also known as statuette art, is a visual art form that dates back thousands of years BC. This art deals with mass, space and objects taking us from the world of two-dimensional drawing and painting to the world of three-dimensional representation and embodiment. Here, the sculptor transforms tangible mass into a statue that carries within it all the details, existence and work in tangible space. It is one of the ancient arts that many different civilizations were famous for, and they used it extensively to express their history, political and religious purposes."[1]We have often received the history of past nations and their civilizations through sculpture in its various forms. “The art of sculpture differs in style from other arts; it does not deal with flat forms like painting, but includes three-dimensional forms. The artistic pleasure that emanates from sculpture comes not only from viewing, but also from touching the three-dimensional movement. The artist shapes the works with his hands, which are the most capable means of conveying a high artistic sense through touch. In addition, the sculptor uses some materials that enhance the sculpted form and its realism, such as polished marble, wood, and steel". [2] Sculpture is also defined as a formative art that transforms abstract, one-dimensional objects into three-dimensional artistic forms. "Sculpture is embodied in the design of three-dimensional shapes or the engraving of patterns on surfaces, whether on clay, wax, stone, metal, or other existing materials. Sculpture also includes shaping, casting, manufacturing and combining objects in different ways. While this is true for formative art in general, the

contemporary sculptor's vision, in particular, of the surrounding nature has changed. The modern sculptures have acquired a new character according to the new vision, and sculpture has broken free from its old molds, keeping pace with the contemporary spirit".[3]

**2.2The Concept of the Body in the History of Art**

Since the dawn of time, the body has been subject to numerous interpretations and judgments varying according to its different positions and representations across cultures and societies. These interpretations, judgments and questions have become, in our time, the focus of scientific studies and research addressing diverse topics such as gender, race, identity, science, technology, and other areas. This research has concentrated on the relationship between the body and beauty despite the antiquity of this relationship, evidenced by the history of thought, art and customs. This indicates that appearance has held significance since ancient times. "The body, first and foremost, is a matter of the self with all its psychological, social and philosophical dimensions. This explains its intersection with various analytical and epistemological interests, most notably: sociology, anthropology, literature, philosophy and psychoanalysis. Indeed, it has become at the forefront of research in artistic aesthetics and the social transformations experienced by contemporary societies."[4]What has led to its strong emergence now is the development of media and communication, which has become a powerful inspiration for the individuals who are fascinated by the aesthetics of colors, designs, shapes and sizes.

**2.3 Types of Sculpture.**

**Main Sculpture Forms:** The main forms of sculpture include circular sculpture which is viewed from all sides, and relief sculpture in which the work appears on a flat surface. In addition to other types such as kinetic sculpture which is about moving, and abstract sculpture which does not represent anything realistic. Another type is composite sculpture which is made up of assembled parts.

**2.4The diversity of sculpture forms based on the style and materials used.**

**Relief sculpture**: "In it, the figures are partially projected from the back surface, such as the reliefs found on walls and temples, and it may be on a slab of stone or wood, where the material to be shaped is removed from around the body."[5]**(Figure 01)**

**In relief sculpture:** In this technique, the figures are carved into the surface. It is common in ancient Egyptian art, where it is considered a sculpture on a slab of stone or wood. "The material is removed from inside the figure to be sculpted, so that it becomes recessed under the surface of the slab. This type of sculpture was used by the ancient Egyptians as an art form, to represent the daily life of people in those times, and also to represent their kings and gods. It was also used in the art of writing among the Iraqis, and it is also the method used for writing in ancient Iraq and ancient Egypt."[6]**(Figure 02) (Figure 03)**

**Freestanding sculpture:** This is a statue that can be viewed from all sides, like most famous statues throughout history."It represents a form of sculpture that relies on creating three-dimensional figures that can be seen from all directions. It differs from relief sculpture, as freestanding sculpture is independent and not attached to a flat background".[7]**(Figure 04)**

**3. The Body as Visual Discourse.**

The body as visual discourse means transcends from being merely a physical entity to becoming a means of communication and self-expression. It tells stories, reveals identity, demonstrates power or belonging and interacts with its surroundings through a silent language of gestures, expressions, and appearance. It is read and interpreted by others and this is embodied in the concept of body language and the influence of power upon it (as Foucault argued)[8], as well as the experiences of others making it a text that is constantly being read visually, as he observed.

**3.1The role of the symbol in building artistic meaning:** The use of the symbol in artistic discourse gives us possibilities to challenge and transcend the phenomenon of signification in terms of embodying movements and suggestions of the body. It allows ideas and feelings to be in tangible

images and forms because symbols is not based on stating the meaning directly, but rather on suggesting the interpretations that the recipient sees when he sees the statue of the body from the angle he chooses. So, it gives a complex and non-complex aesthetic and philosophical dimension. From this standpoint, the semantic symbol in sculptural works contributes to opening multiple horizons for interpretation and understanding. Plus, it enhances artistic cognitive readings.

**3.2 The aesthetic vision in dealing with material and the body among some Algerian artists:**

**Algerian sculptors during the occupation period:** Only a few Algerian artists emerged during the French occupation period due to the miserable conditions in which the people lived at that time."Personalist school styles prevailed among them, especially the realist school. Among those who appeared during that period were the artist Azwar Al-Maamari in 1916, and the painter Abdel Rahman Sahouli in 1920. In the period between the thirties and forties, a group of Algerian artists emerged, including Mohamed Zemirli, Ahmed Ben Slimane, and Baya".[9]The development of fine art in Algeria went through difficult circumstances with the emergence of a considerable group of artists until independence, when some artists appeared who had a good knowledge of sculpture matters, some of whom studied abroad. "We mention (Boufersaoui), as the matter was initially about shining with the history of Algeria, its glories and its heroes, and it was about retrieving the memory and glory of Algeria and correcting the national character".[10]

**Algerian sculptors after the independence period:** The sculpture movement in Algeria witnessed a distinctive artistic renaissance represented by the emergence of a new generation of sculptors who focused in their works on establishing aspects of Algerian identity based on a vision derived from national memory, targeting forms of sculptures represented in the physical structure that express historical and aesthetic connotations. These sculptors also contributed to establishing the visual discourse and consolidating the Algerian beauty that expresses patriotism. Among the **most prominent of these artists are:** (Boufro Saoui, Bouhaddaj Hami,

Azzoun Abdel Rahman, Chakier Kamal, Bouchbah Saleh, Boulmès Hassan, Rahmoun Mahdi, Noui Ammar,"Bougtaia, Ahcene Mesli Choukri, Ibn Khadda, Ibn Yahia, Ahmed Belkacem Boufro Saoui). The sculptures of these artists represent an important reference for the contemporary Algerian sculpture movement in order to understand the fields of contemporary Algerian sculpture and the paths of its aesthetic and intellectual development".[11]

**Sculptor Bachir Hadji:** Born in 1956 in Constantine, a graduate of the Higher School of Fine Arts in Algeria, he is a sculptor and poet, a founding member of the Biennial of Contemporary (Of) Art in Lyon, where the artist exhibited bronze and copper sculptures depicting his favorite animal, the donkey, which he sees as (a victim and stubborn) as well as (opening up to our humanity). (He also focused on sculptures of the body).

Sculptor Bouchbah Saleh: Member of the National Union of Cultural Arts (Bejaia branch), born in Bejaia in 1963. His first sculptures were created in 1985 (he also focuses on sculptures of the human body).

**Sculptor Yeken Mourad:** "A graduate of the National School of Fine Arts, specializing in sculpture since 2004. He participated in the first National Salon of Fine Arts, the Ighil Ali Exhibition, the Fine Arts Salon in Ouargla, and the Sculpture Salon in Batna. He has also participated in group exhibitions in Bouira, Algiers and Tizi Ouzou. He lives and works in Algeria (he also focuses on sculptures of the human body)".[12]

We mention, for example, some of the many Algerian sculptors, including the sculptor Boutrif Younes, who was born in 1956 in Algiers. He is a standard sculptor in Algiers since 2004, with group exhibitions in Bordj Bou Arreridj in 2006 and Algiers in 2004. He lives and works in Cherchell. Also, there is the sculptor Demagh Mohamed, who is considered one of the pioneers of the first generation in Algeria who were influenced and inspired by the characteristics of the Dadaist art movement, "which emerged after the World War and reflects the artist's ability to express those brutal massacres committed by the colonizer against the Algerian people. It can be said that the artist practices sculpting on wood with high professionalism during the process of creation. For him, the relationship of sculpture is an

emotional, commemorative, and historical one that touches and controls him in a strange way in his feelings and circumstances, a hallucination that is unparalleled in his soul and being."[13]For the artist Mohammed Demagh, the sculpture represents a dramatic historical event that occurred in a specific place and time, embodied in a sculptural composition. "It is made of pieces of wood that were burned with napalm and incendiary weapons. It is a partial, immortal movement that ensures the survival of art and literature in human life. It is a movement whose form and effectiveness were led by the Romanian poet Cristian Tzara in Switzerland in protest against the First World War. It was characterized by an attempt to get rid of the usual mental contexts and causal relationships in thinking and expression. Its mission was to get rid of everything that hinders freedom and curbs. The spontaneity in artistic expression and creativity"[14] is the use of certain materials that convey to us a sense of the realism of the sculpted form, and among these materials are polished marble, wood, steel, copper, etc. In this regard, the artist Mohamed Boukerch says: "Sculpture, for me, is the means of the age, a tool for communication, and a method of self-expression".[15] Therefore, we ask: What type of art did Algerian sculptors generally specialize in? How far back does the art of sculpture in Algeria go? And was it influenced by classical art schools?

**Artist Mohamed Bouthelidja:** "Born in 1951 in Souk Ahras, Algeria. He studied at the National School of Architecture and Fine Arts in Algiers, starting in 1968 in the capital. He then traveled to France, where he enrolled at the Fersaoui School of Fine Arts in 1973 and the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris in 1974. He further enriched his artistic journey by attending the Royal School of Calligraphy Improvement in Egypt. He is considered a well-rounded artist, combining painting, Arabic calligraphy, and sculpture".[16]One of his most famous sculptures is the memorial to the martyr Badji Mokhtar. **(Figure 06)**

## 4. A critical analytical study.



**4.1 Artist Mohamed Boukerch:** A prominent Algerian visual artist; on the international and Arab scene, known for his bold sculptures and drawings as well as his writings and work in authorship and teaching. He is considered one of the great artists who have served Algerian art over the years. He rose to prominence on the international stage through his participation in the 'Tunis International Festival' which he frequented, and his subsequent selection to create the "Giant Spring Sculpture" for the Sculptors' Meeting in Changchun, China, in 2000.

His prolific and diverse output is well-documented. He is renowned for his sculptures that embody Algerian cultural heritage, including the "Porter" statue in Tafourah, Algiers, and the "Spring" sculpture in the Museum of Giant Works in China. An artist who has given significant support to the visual arts movement, he is now considered the spiritual father of Algerian sculptors. In this sculpture in the capital, the Algerian artist Mohamed Boukerche has created a work imbued with historical significance, vibrant with its heritage, and located in the heart of the city. This artwork, like other sculptures by Boukerche, is distinguished by its artistic merit and aesthetic appeal. Therefore, we have deliberately studied this local sculpture and its visual aesthetics to ensure its place in the future. The level of artistic appreciation reflects the Algerian heritage during the brutal French colonial period. The nature of the subject matter necessitated the use of a historical-aesthetic approach with a heritage dimension drawing on the philosophical and epistemological foundations of the artist's work. This includes the essence of sculpture, its origins, roots and aesthetic dimensions imbued with rich heritage. The statue of the "Porter," standing in Tafourah Square, commemorates a tragic event that occurred on May 2nd, 1962, when the French colonial forces killed two Algerian porters with live ammunition. On that day, the Algerian porters, gathered in Martyrs' Square near the port of Algiers refused to unload cargo from a ship in compliance with orders

from the National Liberation Front (FLN). Their fate was martyrdom. This idea remained firmly in the mind of the artist Boukerch, who completed this historical work in 1985, sculpting the statue of the "Porter" in the very spot where the porters were martyred, to commemorate their memory, their sit-in and their martyrdom.

The statue of the porter, made of genuine bronze, is large rising to over two and a half meters in height and spanning one and a half meters. It tells the painful story of the toiling Algerian people who struggled for a living under the tyranny of the oppressive colonizer. They would gather at dawn in Tafourah Square, the lower entrance to the capital, waiting to be offered their services in unloading goods from ships and trucks arriving at the port or loading them. These porters were among hundreds of men from the province and surrounding areas who stood there. The strongest, those capable of carrying heavy loads were chosen for this arduous work. Thus, we can say that the sculptor Mohamed Boukerch succeeded in expressing their misery through his choice of a pose that was difficult to execute. He is a renowned Algerian sculptor who used his art as a means of artistic, intellectual, and philosophical expression, employing heritage to give voice to the repressed suffering of the Algerian people. This statue is one of the most important examples that embody the problematic role of the body as a symbol of identity in contemporary Algerian sculpture. Here, the body not only conveys its aesthetic and anatomical dimensions but also its symbolic and anthropological significance. It is a burdened body; its back bent and arched, its muscles taut, carrying a heavy load on its shoulders. This weight represents the social dimension of the brutal colonial era, portraying the individual as isolated and struggling to secure his livelihood. This bent body expresses the collective memory of the Algerian people representing the working class who contributed to maintaining the Algerian economy in the ports at that time. The statue of the porter has thus become a visible symbol of official history and identity. In designing this statue, artist Boukerch embodied the lived reality through the form of a body that affirms an identity imbued with the rhetorical expression he forged in the physical form. The body here becomes a visual document that encapsulates

the impact of suffering, poverty, and silent resistance, highlighting muscles and physical mass in an expression devoid of simplicity. It represents the strong Algerian man who bears the burden of colonialism on his shoulders, values patience, and awaits his ultimate reward. From this perspective, the "Porter" statue has become a symbolic marker in the transformation of the Algerian artist's creative expression in sculpture. Boukerch shifted art from representing the body as an aesthetic form to a vehicle for writing a popular identity that was once marginalized, struggling for daily sustenance, but is now more firmly established and a symbol to be emulated in liberation and resilience. Thus, we can say that Boukerch succeeded in making the body a space where memory, work, and identity intersect, so that the sculpture becomes a visual discourse that resists oblivion more than it celebrates the past. Mohamed Boukerch is now bedridden, suffering from a terminal illness. We pray to God for his recovery and healing. Amen. **(Figure 8)**

**4.2Artist Ali Yamani:** Born in 1989 in Tissemsilt, this handsome and witty young Algerian, with his pure, cheerful, and generous spirit, is a professional painter, sculptor, and social media activist. He follows in the footsteps of his mentor, Boukerch, and is considered one of the young Algerian artists who have significantly enriched the art scene with contemporary sculptures. A distinguished Algerian visual artist, he specializes in sculpture and designs inspired by nature. He represented Algeria at the China International Festival in 2023. He is renowned for his sculpture of Emir Abdelkader, completed in 2025. This artwork represents Emir Abdelkader, a symbol of authenticity, heritage, and popular resistance, and the founder of the modern Algerian state. Yamani masterfully blends national symbols and artistic meanings, captivating audiences with his many sculptures, particularly those featured in the series "Ashour El Asher," where this harmonious integration of his works is evident. Yamani's sculpture highlights the heritage of the figure in those marks he leaves outside of iconic representation. The image is inscribed with the words "Statue Not for Worship," reflecting the artist's belief in



religious conviction and Algerian identity, which carries a rich cultural dimension. He maintains an aesthetic perspective without resorting to paganism, demonstrating his keenness to avoid conflating the cultural with the pagan.

This sculptural work, a statue depicting the figure of Emir Abdelkader, serves as a visual model reflecting national symbolism within a contemporary Algerian artistic discourse. Yamani, a bold young artist, tackles a fixed, historical, and national figure, embodying the symbolism of the country, conveying its semantic essence even before analytical interpretation. The fact that he used clay to construct the large-scale body reaching several meters in height and one and a half meters in width embodies the delicate facial features and the depth of the gaze within that thick beard. This sculptural composition allowed the artist to utilize his imagination before beginning, employing structural wires to weave this artistic vision of a prominent figure. He then began constructing the statue of Abdelkader, the founder of the Algerian state, associated with wisdom, leadership, and historical legitimacy. The artist, Yamani Ali, took great care and dedication in portraying the national features. He wove in successive stages, employing clay as a living material that bears the marks of touch. He imbued the sculptural work with an existential energy that invites contemplation from the viewer and urges them to participate in recalling memory rather than merely being content with visual observation. Yamani deliberately constructed this anthropomorphic statue in his workshop, where he lives, taking ample time to build a form with a symbolic dimension, incorporating patterns of plant motifs and crescents. The image on the Emir's chest transcends the metaphysical dimension of visual interrogation and the realization of memory, fostering pride in belonging, including its spiritual dimension, embodied in the Algerian burnous, which represents cultural heritage. This statue is not merely a monument; it establishes the Emir as a hero and founder who restored Algeria's position between past and present, embodying leadership in contemporary times. This conscious engagement with the body as a visual discourse grants the work its place within the trajectory of Algerian sculpture, representing a

serious attempt to move from commemorating history to deconstructing and re-enacting it visually. This approach blends expressive realism with symbolic abstraction, re-establishing a new relationship between the past and the observer. This work is not simply a statue of a historical figure, but a re-enactment of the spirit of a leader in a contemporary visual form. **(Figure 9)**

An analytical comparison between the Porter statue and the Emir **Abdelkader statue:**

Through this critical approach, we attempt to delve into the most important analytical details that constitute a paradox in the sculptural process, yet we find a unity in content and artistic purpose, which represents contemporary Algerian visual art.

**Comparison:** The Porter Statue by Mohamed Boukerch vs. Emir Abdelkader Statue by Ali Yamani.

| **Comparison** | **The Porter statue by Mohamed Boukerch** | **The Emir Abdelkader statue by Ali Yamani** |
|---|---|---|
| **Personality** | Unknown person, Unknown, marginalized | A well-known historical national figure |
| **Career objective** | Career objective | Recovering a forgotten professional memory |
| **Reference** | Boukrache speaks out from the depths of the people. | Yemeni speaks from the history of the hero |
| **Value** | A hunched, tortured, nameless body | A piercing, reassuring figure |
| **The paradox** | The porter bears the cause upon his body. | The prince carries the homeland |
| **Standard** | Realistic, impressionistic, expressionistic | A realistic, spiritual approach |
| **Meditation** | It causes pain to the eye (historical document) | It makes the eye gaze in contemplation (a historical icon) |
| **Identity** | Social nationalism | historical nationalism |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **symbolism** | The porter, the working man | The prince, the leading resistance figure |
| **raw material** | Forming from bronze and sculpting | Formed from a wire structure made of clay. |

## 5. CONCLUSION

This research study, through the analysis of two sculptures by the veteran artist Mohamed Boukerche and the young artist Ali Yamani, reveals a distinctive artistic path. The analysis of the two sculptural experiences of Mohamed Boukerche and Ali Yamani reveals a unique artistic trajectory in which they employed the diversity of Algerian historical and social memory. They also combined aesthetic exploration with iconic form, creating a contemporary artistic presence within two different scenes. The statue presented by Boukerch (the porter) restores the prestige of a popular figure long associated with the lives of ordinary people, transforming him into a visual symbol that resonates with everyday life. Meanwhile, the artist Ali Yamani, through his head of Emir Abdelkader, offers a sculptural interpretation of an enduring national symbol, highlighted the strength of his features and the profound impact of history on the Algerian consciousness. This comparison leads us to a fundamental conclusion: contemporary Algerian sculpture is not merely a technical exercise, but a cultural act that seeks to reconstruct identity through design, creativity and form. It is also evident that the Algerian artist possesses a visually and aesthetically rich awareness, deeply rooted in values, and progressively blending tradition with the demands of modernity. This is achieved through the adoption of a visual language with local references and modernist visions open to history, identity, and global experiences. Based on the foregoing, it can be said that the representation of the body possesses a symbolic significance that is employed according to artistic considerations, whether in its political or social leadership aspect. This is further enhanced by the Algerian artist's awareness of creative experiences in this artistic skill, and their mastery of sculpture in various materials such as copper, bronze, or clay, enabling them to skillfully and masterfully shape the symbolism of the body. This leads us to conclude that the future of sculpture in Algeria

depends on the artists' ability to develop their expressive tools and elevate their symbolic and aesthetic awareness in addition to the necessity of providing exhibition spaces and institutional support. The works of Boukerch and Yamani constitute a clear model of the transformation of Algerian art from representing reality to interpreting it, and from retelling history to rewriting it visually. Together, they embody the spirit of contemporary art in Algeria, an art that draws inspiration from heritage, engages with the present, and establishes a deeper and broader vision for the future. In this regard, we recommend the following:

- Encouraging sculptors to re-represent historical and artistic Algerian figures.

- Diversifying sculptural materials to utilize the body within symbolic representations that reflect values and memory.

- Establishing the fundamental principles of body sculpture in universities, art institute’s and encouraging training in these disciplines.

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## 6. Appendices



**(Figure 01:** A relief carving on stone showing the surface carving method, carved with white gypsum from one of the hotels in Tlemcen**)**





**(Figure 03**: Relief and sunken relief of horses from Chinese sculptures**) (Figure 02:** Pharaonic relief carving of a cow's body engraved inside the rock)



**(Figure 04:** Sculpture of a Greek man)



( **(Figure 05:** A manuscript carved in relief, located in the Umayyad Mosque in Syria, written in Kufic script)



**(Figure 07:** Statue of Emir Abdelkader, designed by the for the Polish sculptor Marian Konieczny)



(**Figure 06:** Sculptor Mohamed Bouthelidja - artist touches to the memorial of the martyr Badji Mokhtar)



**( Figure08:** Porter Sculpture by sculptor Mohamed Boukerch, Algiers**)**

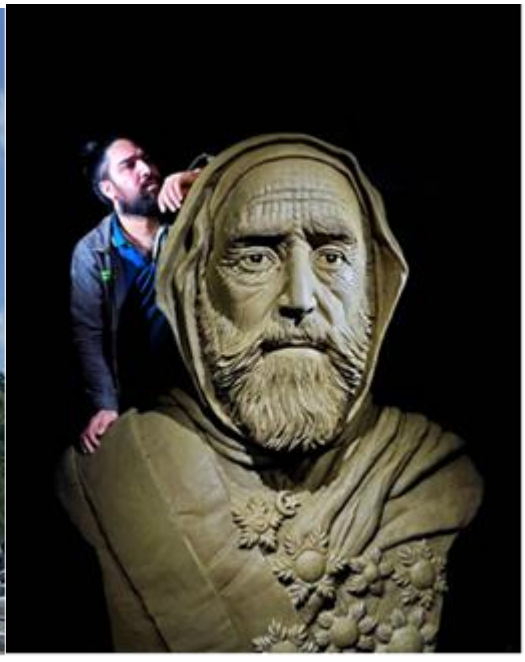


**Figure 09:** A statue of Emir Abdelkader by the sculptor Ali Yamani)



**(Figure 11:** Mohamed Boukerch, a Tunisian iron sculpture**)**



**( Figure 10:** Ali Yamani sculpted a statue of a woman from the Ashour series **)**

## Marginalization:

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**10** - National Union of Cultural Arts, Algerian Sculpture, Catalogue, Ministry of Culture and Arts, 2011, p30.
**11** - The previous reference, Ibrahim Mardoukh, The Journey of Fine Art in Algeria, p. 84.
**12**- The previous reference, National Union of Cultural Arts, Algerian Sculpture, p. 32
**13** - Abdul Wahab Abu Saleh, Apamea: Creativity in Sculpture and Mosaic from 64 BC to 636 AD, Ministry of Culture, Damascus, Syria, 2015, p. 66.
**14** - See: Ali Shanawa Al Wadi, Alaa Ali Aboud Al Hatmi, Conceptual Dimensions and Their Reflections in Postmodern Art, Amman Dar Safaa, 1st Edition, 2011, p. 71.
**15**- Salon of Sculpture for Eastern Algeria, Constantine, Capital of Arab Culture 2015, Algeria, Ministry of Culture, p. 12.
**16** - Khaled Khaldi, Arabic calligraphy in Algeria between reality and hope, 1st edition, Sawt Al-Kitab Publishing House, Algeria, 2025, p. 144.