



## METAPHOR AS A MARKER OF CREATIVITY IN DIGITAL VISUAL ART: ASPECT OF SOCIO-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

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**Abstract.** This article investigates metaphor as a key element of creative digital visual art within the context of Kazakhstan's contemporary art scene. The authors analyse the role of metaphor in shaping the aesthetic and communicative potential of works by Kazakhstani digital artists, focusing on materials shared on social media platforms. Special attention is given to metaphors rooted in national cultural codes, such as the yurt, camel, traditional Kazakh attire, and other symbols, and their diverse interpretations. The author highlight that creative metaphorical thinking becomes particularly active during periods of civic engagement. The yurt, for instance, serves as a metaphorical image that unveils meanings related to national identity, historical heritage, and the future development of Kazakh society. Metaphor functions as an indicator of effective large-scale communication, involving audiences in co-creation and interpretation of significant phenomena, including natural disasters and social tragedies. In this context, metaphor contributes to the interactivity of digital art. The article also emphasizes the importance of social media as a platform for sharing works with vivid metaphorical imagery and discusses the interdependence of financial support, technological innovation, and the qualitative growth of creative digital visual art.

**Keywords:** creativity, digital visual art, interactivity, Kazakhstani art, national identity, metaphor, visual culture, social media.

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## 1. Introduction

The study of metaphors in digital visual art is particularly relevant due to the transformation of cultural practices brought about by the integration of digital technologies into daily life. In contemporary society, virtual platforms, social networks, and interactive media serve as spaces where artistic, cultural, and social narratives intersect. Digital art, as a hybrid and transformative form of creativity, actively employs metaphors to reflect these interactions, offering new creative ways of interpreting social reality.

In the digital reality of the 21st century, metaphors are particularly intriguing as tools that bridge the physical and virtual worlds, carrying unique semantic content. Through symbolic imagery, artists express their perspectives on contemporary social, religious, and cultural issues. By representing a widely known fact, event, or reaction metaphorically, artists activate established cultural and historical contexts while generating new meanings, visual sequences, and personal narratives. This process enhances viewer engagement and fosters critical thinking about virtual reality and its influence on society.

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The ultrafast dissemination of digital artworks – a distinctive feature of contemporary Internet-based communication – has led to a transformation of the concepts of social demand and expectation. Specifically, these phenomena are realized and experienced more rapidly by both artists and society. As a result, the artistic messages of modern digital creators aim to be: a) relevant; b) recognizable; and c) aesthetically appealing. Only when the first two conditions are met do metaphorical images actively contribute to shaping the cultural and social consciousness of contemporaries. Precisely this determines the objectives of the article.

The purpose of this article is to identify the predominant types of metaphors in the works of contemporary digital artists in Kazakhstan, as well as to explore their artistic significance and socio-communicative functions. The study examines how metaphorical imagery in digital art facilitates a deeper understanding of social and cultural phenomena. This study contributes to the discourse of creative studies, focusing on the unique role of digital artists from Kazakhstan as representatives of both global and local cultural transformations.

## 2. Research objectives

The primary goal of this research is to select and analyze metaphorical images found in the online works of Kazakhstani digital artists. The study seeks to identify the types of events that most commonly generate metaphorical imagery, the levels of meaning embedded within these metaphors, and how associative metaphorical series link the real and artistically virtual worlds. Additionally, the research examines how semantically multilayered images contribute to the development of communication culture in both the digital environment and society at large.

## 3. Research methods

The study employs induction as its principal method. The practical methodology is grounded in the empirical examination of metaphorical images within the works of Kazakhstani digital artists. This approach provided the opportunity to analyze how artistic metaphors function within the context of socio-cultural processes, where digital art acts as a mediator between traditional and innovative creative forms of visual language. A combination of cluster analysis, diachronic analysis, comprehensive sampling of objects, observation, description, classification, and data interpretation was used to explore and classify the metaphorical imagery.

In the context of Kazakhstan, social media platforms such as *Instagram* play a key role in the dissemination and perception of digital art. The choice of social media as the primary source for analyzing digital art is driven by the underdeveloped exhibition infrastructure in the country. The digital art scene in Kazakhstan predominantly exists online, a phenomenon particularly evident against the backdrop of the scarce number of digital art exhibitions. Social media provides artists with a unique platform to reach their audience, showcase their works, and engage in dialogue. This form of presentation allows artists to freely convey their ideas and select themes of interest without the constraints of regulations or censorship, which are often characteristic of institutional exhibitions. Moreover, social media enables digital artists

to bypass financial challenges, as renting a physical exhibition space often fails to meet the commercial expectations of the creators.

The works under consideration can be classified into genres such as digital illustration, photography, collage, and artificial intelligence art. Collectively, these examples offer a diachronic perspective on the state of contemporary digital art. This study emphasizes not the distinctions but the shared involvement of these genres in sociocultural communication, focusing on the metaphorical and symbolic content of the artworks.

Representatives of digital art such as Danabol Birlesbek, Magira Tleuberdina, Aneliya Bekbass, Tair Tabiyev, Marat Dilman, Aida Issakhankyzy, Omar Ali, Darya Konopatova, and Dina Tolegenova have already established themselves as professionals, as evidenced by their participation in national and international exhibitions – *Nauryz Fest* (Nauryz Fest, 2024), *Go Viral* (Go Viral Central Asia, 2026), Efes Art Space (Efes Art Space, 2026), *Comic Con Astana* (2024), as well as their organizations of independent creative spaces – *OspanAli.qyry* (Ospan, 2026) or *Tereze* (Tereze, 2026).

#### 4. Literature review

The definition of metaphor adopted for this research is based on the work of Arutyunova, who describes metaphor as

“a trope or mechanism of speech that involves using a word denoting a certain class of objects or phenomena to characterize or name an object belonging to another class, or to name something else” (1990).

This definition encapsulates the essence of metaphor as a multi-layered and interactive image existing at the intersection of two or more realms. In the context of visual art, a metaphor is understood as an image that conveys the author’s perspective on a phenomenon (fact, event) through associated visual elements. Any visual metaphor, therefore, must include at least two semantic fields connected by a certain equivalence and the author’s emotion or thought.

The theoretical categories outlined in Manovich’s (2001) work *The Language of New Media* provide researchers with a clear framework for structuring studies in the field of digital art. Specifically, the concept of the five principles of new media (numerical representation, modularity, automation, variability, and transcoding) offers a scientific basis for explaining the formation, functionality, and audience interaction with digital objects. In his theoretical framework, the scholar introduces the concept of the database and contrasts it with traditional narrative structures. He also explores cultural interfaces – screens and multimedia platforms – emphasizing how they integrate old media traditions (such as print and cinema) with new technologies. These ideas are crucial for understanding the hybrid nature, mutability, and context-dependence of digital objects in each specific instance.

The theory of Lakoff and Johnson (1984) further expands the understanding of metaphor as not merely a literary device but a significant cognitive process that structures and organizes human thinking. Lakoff and Johnson (1984) assert that many abstract concepts and social phenomena are perceived and interpreted through metaphorical images, which are constructed based on physical experience and daily interactions with the world.

Digital art provides a unique medium for implementing this theory by enabling abstract ideas to be visualized and transformed into metaphorical images that encapsulate the symbolic meanings of various forms of existence and art. In this context, the metaphor can be viewed as a boundary marker, connecting the physical and virtual worlds where the artist operates. It serves as a tool to express perspectives on social, gender, national, and cultural issues.

Daly-Lipe (2011), in her book *Myth, Magic, and Metaphor: A Journey into the Heart of Creativity*, explores metaphor as a central tool in the creative process, bridging the internal world of an individual with cultural and artistic forms of expression. Daly-Lipe (2011) emphasizes the value of metaphor as a pathway to metaphorical knowledge, which transcends rational understanding. According to Daly-Lipe (2011), metaphor invites us to active participation and simultaneously links the temporal with the transcendent. By forming a bridge between the abstract and the concrete, metaphor not only facilitates an understanding of the world but also enables the creation of new visions unique to each creator, being capable of transporting us to another spiritual level (Daly-Lipe, 2011).

A key aspect of metaphor theory is the embodiment approach (also known as “embodied cognition”), which highlights the role of bodily and sensorimotor experiences in shaping cognitive processes. Fedoseeva’s (2017) work “Review of Cognitive Metaphor Theory and the Embodiment Approach to Cognition” provides an extensive review of studies in the cognitive theory of metaphor, highlighting its importance in perceiving the surrounding world. Digital art, particularly interactive and immersive installations, enables the transfer of physical experience and sensory perception into virtual spaces. Metaphors rooted in bodily perception and movement allow viewers to conceptualize abstract phenomena through physical interaction with digital objects.

It is worth noting that metaphor theory, actively employed in interdisciplinary research, yields intriguing and occasionally provocative conclusions. For example, Adorno (2015), in his seminal work *Aesthetic Theory* (originally published in 1970), introduces the concept of fragmentation in art as an element opposing the integrity of a work. He writes, that the truth content of art, whose organon was integration, turns against art, and in this turn, art has its emphatic moments (Adorno, 2015).

Adorno (2015) describes the fragment as a metaphor that challenges the coherence of the text to its very limits. He writes, that the fragment is the intrusion of death into the work. While destroying it, it removes the stain of semblance (Adorno, 2015). Applying Adorno’s (2015) logic to the context of digital visual art reveals that contemporary artists often use disjointed elements and non-linear structures as primary material, transforming them to express new, complex ideas. This challenges traditional forms of organizing and perceiving artistic works. Digital art thus becomes a successor to a new type of narrative construction, where the metaphor – or, in Adorno’s (2015) terms, the fragment – takes on a central role as the key responsible for shaping the true content of the artwork.

Horst and Miller (2012), in their work *Digital Anthropology*, address the issue of perceiving digital relationships through visible connections. The researchers argue that the visualization of networks is essentially an attempt to “presume to map sociality as a form of visible connectivity” (Horst & Miller, 2012, p. 277). In the digital age, where models of interdependence

are rapidly and profoundly evolving, studying these ever-changing visual representations becomes particularly relevant.

The inherent nature of metaphor leads researchers to fascinating comparisons and conclusions of great significance for this study. For instance, in *Metaphors We Live By* (originally published in 1980), Lakoff and Johnson (1984) present a compelling syllogistic chain of comparisons between argument and war, arriving at an unexpected conclusion about the structured nature of metaphor. According to Daly-Lipe (2011), arguments and wars are different things: verbal discourse and armed conflict; but argument is partially structured, understood, performed, and talked about in terms of war. The concept is metaphorically structured, the activity is metaphorically structured, and, consequently, the language is metaphorically structured.

The article, titled “The Metaphor of the Digital Cave in Conceptual Interpretations of Screen Culture” (Grigor’ev, 2022), examines the role of screen technologies as a cornerstone of contemporary media culture. The author of this article proposes a concept of three types of screens: the first reflects artistic projections, the second transmits simulations, and the third forms an internal psychological screen that shapes subjective perceptions of reality. The analysis draws on Plato’s (2003) allegory of the cave, interpreted within the context of global mediatization.

The theoretical framework of the article, titled “The Metaphor of the Digital Cave in Conceptual Interpretations of Screen Culture” (Grigor’ev, 2022) establishes a foundation for viewing screens as mediators through which visual images and metaphors are formed and transmitted in the digital environment. This perspective positions the study as a significant example of symbolic processes associated with screen culture. The author of this article notes:

“Digital philosophy insists that information systems constitute a form of being; therefore, humans, in their pursuit of knowledge through screen technologies, align themselves with the truth of the world. Separation from the screen is thus perceived as a distancing from truth and harmonious existence” (Grigor’ev, 2022, p. 173).

In Ryzhenkova’s (2020) work “Testimonies of the Future: The Digital-Turn in the Philosophy of Media and Hybrid Arts”, the author analyzes the ontology of digital objects, identifying their key characteristics as modularity, mutability, and independence from traditional material carriers. These qualities enable metaphors to adopt hybrid, dynamic forms, adaptable to context.

This work provides a theoretical foundation for understanding the transformations occurring in digital art, allowing metaphors to be examined as elements of visual representation in new media (Ryzhenkova, 2020). Ryzhenkova’s (2020) ideas clarify the role of the digital medium in the creation and interpretation of metaphors in visual art, especially in their manifestations on digital platforms.

Results of the research: a comprehensive analysis of metaphorical imagery in the works of Kazakhstani digital artists, presented on open online platforms including social media, reveals a strong potential and interest among creators in using highly associative imagery. A defining characteristic of Kazakhstan’s digital visual art scene is the prevalence of metaphorical images rooted in national cultural symbols and codes, reflecting a focus on developing national themes.

## 5. Discussion

At this stage, Kazakhstani artists are actively exploring digital technologies and the capabilities of artificial intelligence, creating diverse works utilize digital tools and techniques. These pieces are designed to engage the viewer as a participant in the artistic process, encouraging interaction through social media platforms such as *Instagram*. Viewers can contribute by liking, commenting, sharing, or engaging with the content in real-time, thus fostering a dynamic relationship with the aesthetic and conceptual dimensions of the artwork.

A review of academic research on the role of metaphor in digital art underscores its increasing importance in fulfilling both aesthetic and communicative functions. Synthesizing theoretical perspectives on metaphor and incorporating innovative interpretations from various researchers, this study proposes the following definition of metaphor within the context of visual art: a metaphor can be defined as an image that conveys the author's perspective on a phenomenon (fact, event) through the similarity of associatively linked elements. Any visual metaphor must include at least two semantic fields, interconnected by a relative equivalence (in form, content, functionality, colour, etc.). A key criterion for the effectiveness of a metaphorical image in digital visual art is the recognizability of its components. The more readily these symbols are understood by contemporaries, the more likely the artist is to gain relevance and resonance.

In contemporary digital art, metaphor serves as a crucial mechanism linking the physical and virtual worlds. It enables large-scale and rapid communication while acting as a tool for analyzing social changes in the digital age. By leveraging the flexibility and adaptability of digital mediums, metaphor becomes a dynamic and powerful instrument for understanding and critiquing the complex transformations of society in an era defined by technological innovation.

In visual art, metaphor serves as a tool for manifesting the artist's personality, life experience, artistic thinking, and worldview. The ideas conveyed through the imagery and narrative elements of their work invariably reference predecessors, intersect with the perspectives of contemporaries, and incorporate the most relevant symbols of their time, drawn from various areas of life and culture.

Art history provides numerous examples of how the profound associative creativity of artists has shaped the aesthetics of particular epochs, movements, or schools. The artist's subjective perception and reflection of a complex reality is a driving factor in renewing each subsequent stage of cultural development.

It is widely acknowledged that creating metaphor in painting involves the full arsenal of the artist's tools: material, technique, genre, and style. However, the pivotal element in this process is the artist's creative intelligence, which determines the semantic depth and aesthetic innovation of the imagery. In the era of digital activity, the consciousness of the perceiving subject plays a crucial role in forming a universal cultural language.

On one hand, the viewer, as an active participant in the global art project, serves as an evaluator, responding to or disregarding the digital artist's creations.

This trend may signify a realization of Kazakh national identity, a rethinking of historical heritage, and the formation of a new public consciousness. The frequent use of recognizable

images such as the yurt, camel, horse, ornaments, Kazakh costumes, and jewelry makes these works accessible to a broad audience. By employing these cultural codes, artists provide viewers with interpretive keys to understanding their artistic messages.

Among all cultural symbols, the yurt stands out as the most frequently employed metaphor. It appears in the works of various digital artists, including Birlesbek, Tleuberdina, Tabiyev, Dilman, and Issakhankyzy. The metaphor of the yurt is explored in diverse contexts, offering a rich field for analysis.

For example, Birlesbek, who regularly shares his works on his personal *Instagram* account, creates his art using advanced artificial intelligence programs. One of his notable works reimagines the traditional yurt by placing it against the backdrop of infinite cosmic space, blending historical significance with a futuristic and abstract perspective (Figure 1).

Metaphor in digital art is not only a bridge between personal expression and cultural identity but also a tool for engaging the audience in rethinking and reshaping social consciousness. By integrating traditional symbols with cutting-edge technologies, Kazakhstani digital artists redefine the role of metaphorical imagery in connecting the past, present, and future, thereby enriching the cultural and aesthetic landscape of the digital era.

The so-called “neo-yurt” is made of glossy synthetic material. Its exterior design mimics a street café, incorporating plastic doors and windows, booths, portable toilets, trees, lighting, and lightweight staircases leading up and down. The artwork was notably shared on the artist’s *Instagram* page on March 22, 2024, a day celebrated in Kazakhstan as the spring equinox, known as Nowruz. The piece is untitled and lacks any clear pragmatic designation (it is unclear whether it serves as an advertising image or a conceptual artistic experiment)



**Figure 1.** Artwork by Danabol Birlesbek, 2024 (source: Danabol, 2026)

but is accompanied by the congratulatory message *Happy Nowruz!* (orig. in Kazakh: *Nauryz kutty bolsyn!*). However, the combination of familiar ethnographic symbols with elements of modern urban culture and iconic cosmic motifs creates a multilayered associative message. The audience is prompted to reflect on the artist's intent through a series of questions: why is the yurt "suspended" in space? What is the significance of depicting a yurt covered with synthetic materials instead of natural ones? Why does it feature so many unconventional elements? Where do the staircases lead? If this yurt is merely a semblance of the traditional structure, how effectively does it convey a celebratory message?

A similar exploration of the yurt as a concept can be seen in the work of another artist and designer, Tabiyev (Figure 2).

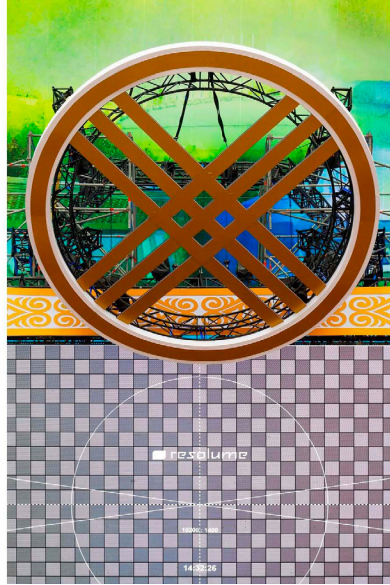


**Figure 2.** Tair Tabiyev. *Settled Life*, 2024 (source: Tabiyev, 2026)

A yurt-shaped dwelling is placed on the asphalt-paved streets of an urban environment, symbolizing a striking juxtaposition between traditional and modern ways of life. The practicality of living in the yurt is emphasized through features such as a parking space, a fenced private lawn area, an air conditioner, window bars, and even a front porch. These elements create a vivid contrast between the idealized image of nomadic housing and the reality of an urban setting. The artist appears to draw attention to the tension between preserving cultural identity and the ongoing process of urbanization.

This visual metaphor of the yurt as an "alien presence" in the city raises questions about what it means to adapt, assimilate, or resist within the context of globalization. The caption accompanying the image enhances this critique, inviting the viewer to reflect on how contemporary society engages with traditions and cultural heritage. By placing a traditional structure in a modern environment, the work highlights the challenges and contradictions of cultural integration in a rapidly urbanizing world.

In Dilman's work, also presented on *Instagram* (Figure 3), the artist skillfully employs a layered technique to create a striking visual and conceptual narrative. The foundational layer of the composition depicts an industrial facility with its towering structures, power lines, and machinery – symbols of industrialization and modernity. Overlaid upon this imagery is the shanyrak, the central and most symbolic upper part of a yurt, a cultural emblem of nomadic heritage and unity.



**Figure 3.** Artwork by Marat Dilman, 2024 (source: Dilman, 2026)

The intersection of the shanyrak's lines with the industrial backdrop is deliberate and thought-provoking, forming a visual resemblance to a stop sign. This alignment evokes a sense of caution or pause, urging viewers to consider the implications of unchecked industrialization and modernization. However, the caption accompanying the image, *resolume* (interpreted as *to resume*), introduces a contrasting layer of meaning. This word, devoid of prohibitive connotations, shifts the focus from cessation to continuation or renewal. This juxtaposition raises profound questions about the interplay between tradition and progress in the context of Kazakhstan's evolving identity. The work invites the audience to ponder: what is it that should be resumed? Is it industrial production, as represented by the facility? Is it traditional agriculture, deeply rooted in the steppe's history? Or perhaps it calls for a renewed perspective on the interconnectedness of human existence and the Earth, blending cultural heritage with contemporary realities in a way that harmonizes the two.

A visual metaphor always emerges from an emotional response to an event. This emotion must resonate with both the artist and the audience. Thus, the event that evokes such emotion must hold broad societal significance. The depth of understanding a metaphorical image relies on the interplay of two forces: public interest, embodying societal demand, and the artist's visual reflection. For example, the spring floods of 2024, which had devastating consequences across the country, explain the viral spread of images on social media depicting a boat carrying a baby camel (Figure 4). This image captured a moment of solidarity between artists and society, serving as an immediate response to the disaster. The metaphors *a sinking Kazakhstan* and *our home is in danger* unify the concepts of home and the vast expanses of the steppe. Yet, the vast steppe is replaced by a watery expanse, where familiar symbols of the national way of life lose their vitality. Presented below are some of the most iconic artworks from that period by Bekbass and Birlesbek.



(a)



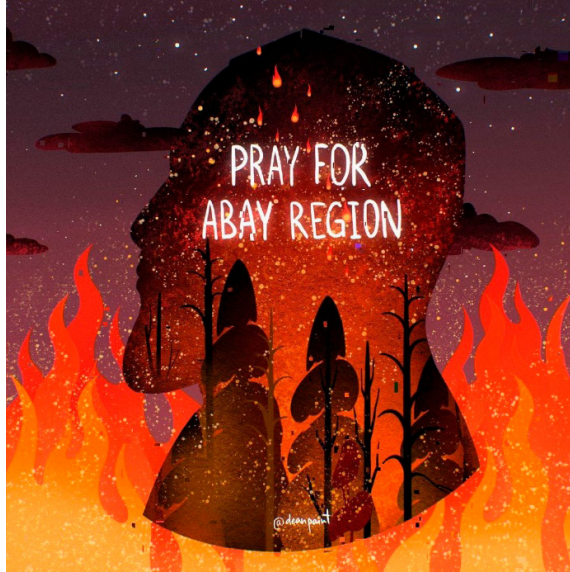
(b)

**Figure 4.** Screenshots from *Instagram* pages of Kazakhstani digital artists: (a) Aneliya Bekbass, 2024; (b) Danabol Birlisbek, 2024 (source: Bekbass, 2026; Danabol, 2026)

It is important to recognize that in an information-driven society, the processing of one stream of information is swiftly followed by another. The metaphorical images created by digital artists have a transient nature – they emerge quickly and lose relevance just as fast. This is their purpose: to facilitate communication in the immediate moment, at the emotional epicenter of the event. Such imagery shapes and binds public reactions to shared experiences.

On June 13, 2023, a devastating forest fire engulfed the Abai Region, Kazakhstan, resulting in tragedy. Heroic individuals who defended the forest, despite lacking proper equipment and resources, tragically lost their lives. An artist known as Dean Paint responded to this tragedy with an evocative artwork, overlaying the profile of the great Kazakh poet Abai Qunanbaiuly onto an image of the burning forest (Figure 5). Qunanbaiuly's literary legacy centers on enlightenment, a call for conscious living, and a critique of the shortcomings within Kazakh society. By integrating the poet's recognizable visage into the artwork and pairing it with the caption *Pray for Abai Region* (artist Dean Paint, 2023) (Figure 5), the artist not only highlights the site of the tragedy but also delivers a profound message: from the depths of the 19th century to the dawn of the 21st, through the poet's "burning heart", emerges a timeless plea for humanity – toward one another and toward the land.

In the spring of 2024, Kazakhstan was profoundly impacted by the tragic murder of Salтанат Nukenova by her husband, former Kazakh politician who served as Minister of National Economy of Kazakhstan, Kuandyk Bishimbayev. The public's engagement intensified as the trial proceedings were broadcast live during March and April, 2024, allowing citizens to follow the case closely and express their emotions on social media. This tragedy resonated deeply within the artistic community, inspiring numerous works that reflect the nation's collective grief and call for justice (Figure 6).



**Figure 5.** Screenshot from *Instagram* page of Kazakhstani digital artist Dean Paint, 2023 (source: Dean Paint, 2026)



(a)



(b)

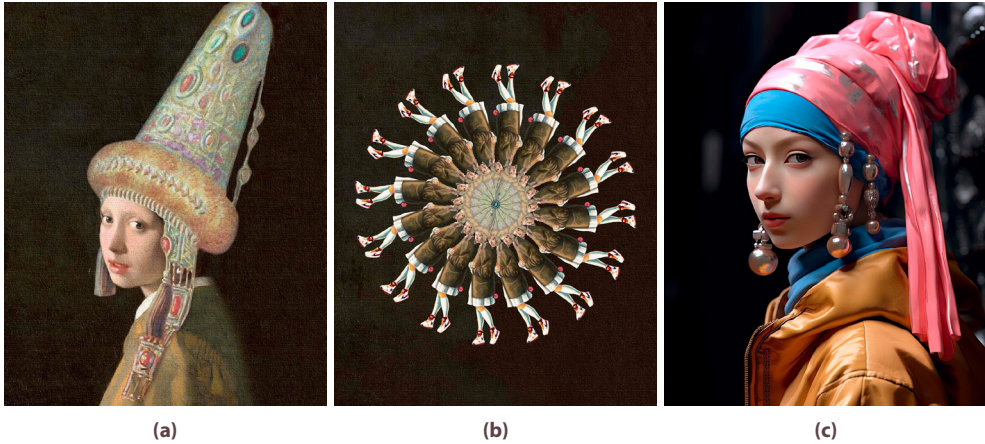
**Figure 6.** Screenshots from *Instagram* pages of Kazakhstani digital artists: (a) Aneliya Bekbass, 2024; (b) Danabol Birlesbek, 2024 (source: Bekbass, 2026; Danabol, 2026)

Striking visual metaphors convey critiques of moral decay, judicial arbitrariness, and societal corruption. One artwork portrays a face fragmented into puzzle pieces, encircled by money and symbols of justice. Another features a recognizable figure of a convicted individual depicted as a pig in a suit, flanked by mice obediently seated before them. These images unmask the hypocrisy and permissiveness of power, concealed beneath a facade of respectability. Together, they encapsulate societal anguish and condemnation, underscoring the urgent demand for justice.

It must be acknowledged that artists reach the highest level of metaphorical artistry when they incorporate allusions to prior cultural texts into their visual narratives. One notable example is Birlesbek's short video experiments. His anti-war message, crafted with artificial intelligence and composed from a sequence of curated photographs, serves as a compelling illustration (Figure 7). Birlesbek employs directed movement, one of the most powerful tools for shaping subjective perception. Structurally and compositionally, this video is designed to foster interaction between the subject and the object of the action. A symbolic digital camera, representing the viewer's perspective, focuses on a small boy – the subject – covered in ash and dust amidst the ruins of a bombed city. The camera lingers on the boy as he clasps his hands in prayer and gazes heavenward. It then pulls back, accelerating to reveal the surrounding devastation: ruins, burned vehicles, lifeless bodies, and advancing soldiers. As the scale of destruction expands, one is reminded of Fyodor Dostoevsky's (2003) famous line from *The Brothers Karamazov* (originally published in 1879–1880), that the happiness of the whole world is not worth a single tear on the face of an innocent child. Equally evocative is the haunting question from another classic of Russian literature, *but was there a boy?*. The reverse acceleration of the camera underscores the artist's longing to find the boy, affirm his existence, and prove that he was – and remains – alive.



**Figure 7.** Anti-war digital works by Danabol Birlesbek, 2023, highlighting social issues: (a) child in a ruined city; (b) child and destroyed cityscape; (c) military forces in the distance (source: Danabol, 2026)



**Figure 8.** Screenshots from *Instagram* pages of Kazakhstani digital artist Danabol Birlesbek: (a) reinterpretation of the picture *Girl with a Pearl Earring* (1665) by Johannes Vermeer in traditional headdress, 2022; (b) kaleidoscopic artwork featuring a repetitive pattern, 2022; (c) modernized version of the picture *Girl with a Pearl Earring* by Vermeer, 2023 (source: Danabol, 2026)

In another series of works, Birlesbek explores a serene theme, drawing inspiration from Johannes Vermeer's *Girl with a Pearl Earring* (orig. in Dutch: *Meisje met de parel*, 1665) (Figure 8). Through changes to the heroine's costume and accessories, the artist achieves the intended effect of freeing the subject from the constraints of her historical period. This reinterpretation invites a fresh perspective on the painting's title, bridging divisions of race, nationality, and time.

## 6. Conclusions

The analysis of works by contemporary Kazakhstani digital artists on social media platforms reveals that metaphorical imagery has become a hallmark of artistic expression and a measure of an artist's success. Concise, emotionally charged, and easily interpretable visuals result from meticulous craftsmanship, showcasing the artist's intellectual depth and cultural awareness. Not every creator identifying as a digital artist produces strong metaphorical works. To produce memorable metaphorical imagery, technical proficiency alone is not enough. A strong foundation in artistic and aesthetic education, combined with a deep understanding of cultural contexts, is essential. These attributes form the basis for establishing meaningful dialogue in the digital age.

At the same time, the intellectual depth of an artist and their work can only resonate with an audience that is both engaged with social media and possesses comparable artistic competencies. For effective communication, artists must guide their audience through the interpretive process, taking on the role of mediators in this new artistic reality. In this context, digital visual art, thriving in an era of boundless communication opportunities, serves as a powerful catalyst for fostering social engagement between artists and society.

At the same time, it is important to acknowledge several challenges faced by contemporary creators. The development of digital art in its various forms – digital paintings, photographs, video collages, and installations – necessitates continuous engagement with technological advancements. Acquiring software, renting technology-equipped spaces, and dedicating personal time to projects often demand significant financial resources. As a result, the scope of large-scale artistic endeavors is often constrained by financial limitations. This explains why many young artists operate exclusively within the *Instagram* format, focusing on smaller-scale works that cannot generate the same level of resonance as open art platforms.

We propose that digital visual art is currently in a formative stage. The maturation of a democratic, lawful society imposes its own set of values on the younger generation of artists, which inevitably influences the quality of their artistic thinking and the depth and emotionality of their metaphorical images.

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