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# The Meeting Point Of Sculpture And Photography: The Statue Of The Thinking Man In The Garden Of Bakirköy Mental Hospital And Fiction Photograph

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## Abstract

The subject of the article is the relationship between the Thinking Man statue in the garden of Bakırköy Mental Hospital and the fictional photograph. In this study, which is discussed based on the relationship between sculpture art and photography, Augusto Rodin's thinking man statue in the garden of Bakırköy Mental Hospital, which has great importance in the history of sculpture art; the analysis is made through a photograph taken in the hospital garden, designed as a living sculpture. Photography, which is constructed as a living sculpture, shows how the art of sculpture is handled through photography and reinterpreted with what kind of expression language. It is important to reveal how art touches human thought and emotions, using the example of photography and sculpture, as it will help us better understand the social and cultural context. It is aimed to reveal the effect of photography and sculpture on humans by discussing the relationship between the Thinking Man statue in the garden of Bakırköy Mental Hospital and fictional photography in this article. Comparative analysis method was used in order to reveal the similarities and differences between the Thinking Man sculpture and the fictional photograph. This article focuses on the messages that sculpture and fictional photography give to the viewer in the example of the thinking man statue, emphasizing the unique features of both sculpture and fictional photography.

**Keywords:** Auguste Rodin, The Thinker Statue, Bakırköy Mental Hospital, Fiction Photography, The Relationship between Sculpture and Photography

## Introduction

The relationship between photography and sculpture has long been treated as a secondary issue. However, since the mid-20th century, photography has begun to show the potential that seems to be missing in sculpture. There are similarities between the two forms of artistic expression, largely in terms of spatiality and the emphasis on frozen poses. According to İmançer (2003, p.108), "If we accept art as an expression with any material, this material can be sound, writing, paint, clay, stone as well as photography".

The increasing interest of sculptors in photography is closely linked to the development of the concept of sculpture. In the mid-20th century, artists creating

traditional sculptures began to experiment and transcend the limits of the established artistic tradition. The changes introduced allowed sculptors to intertwine their field even more closely with other artistic disciplines, especially photography. Sculpture began to be used more and more frequently. Initially, the potential of photography as a means of documentation was exploited. Later, sculptors began to appreciate the fundamental values of photography and use it to capture and preserve a specific moment in time. Finally, they applied it in works that can be categorized as close to hyperrealism. The use of newer materials and tools made the connection between sculpture and photography inseparable (Dzwonkowska, 2010, p. 28).

The basis of the relationship between sculpture and photography is the close-up photographs used by sculptors. The relationship between photography and sculpture with the object used in both art branches and the effect of the object used on human beings are important. For this reason, in this article, it is aimed to reveal the effect of photography and sculpture on human beings by addressing the relationship between the Thinking Man sculpture in the garden of Bakırköy Mental Hospital and fictional photography. The relationship between the Thinking Man sculpture and fiction photography is based on the fact that both art branches express human thought, emotions and creativity. The Thinking Man sculpture represents thought, inner exploration and the depths of the human mind. The sculpture can be perceived as an intellectual expression of the artist. Fiction photography also focuses on intellectual expression and creativity. The relationship between fiction photography and sculpture affects the products that emerge in both art branches and the relationship between these products (Özkeçeci & Çiçek, 2017, p. 310).

It is important to reveal how art touches human thought and emotions through the example of fictional photography and the Thinking Man sculpture, as it will help us better understand the social and cultural context. In this study, first of all, in order to understand the historical and cultural context of sculpture and photography, a literature study on sculpture and fictional photography was conducted and the visual analysis of the Thinking Man sculpture was focused on. The comparative analysis method was used to reveal the similarities and differences between the Thinking Man sculpture and fictional photography.

### **1. Auguste Rodin and the Thinking Man Sculpture**

The period after the second half of the 19th century was the period in which modern art revealed important experiences. This period also had an impact on the fields of art. Rodin's Thinking Man Sculpture is one of the important products that emerged in this period when modern influences began to be seen.

The Thinking Man is one of the figures in Auguste Rodin's first major commission, The Gates of Hell, which he never completed. This sculpture actually depicts the Italian poet Dante, best known for the Divine Comedy. The Thinking

Man is one of the most important figures in The Gates of Hell, which was designed by Rodin in 1882 as a small sculpture and named The Poet. It is stated in the sources that the thoughtful man figure that Rodin placed in the center of the composition symbolizes Dante. However, as Rodin continued to work on this figure, he gave up the idea of depicting a person different from the other figures at the gate. He transformed the figure wearing a Florentine hat into a naked man. Thus, the Poet became the Thinking Man (Kardeş et al., n.d. pp. 31-32).

The original sculpture is in the Rodin Museum in Paris. There is a copy of the Thinking Man Statue at the entrance of Bakırköy Mental Hospital.

### **2. The Making Process of the Thinking Man Sculpture in the Garden of Bakırköy Mental Hospital**

The sculpture in the garden of Bakırköy Mental Hospital was completed in two stages. The first phase of the sculpture was made by Kemal Künmat, a famous painter and sculptor from Bakırköy. As mentioned in many sources, if the construction process of the Thinking Man Sculpture is to be conveyed in general; Dr. Fahri Celal Göktulga was the chief physician of the hospital between 1945 and 1960. Chief physician Göktulga had the hospital's landscaping done. Since he also attaches importance to art, he also wants a sculpture to be built next to the ornamental pool. Around that time, he sees a photograph of Rodin's statue of a thinking man in a magazine. He thinks that this sculpture could be a symbol for the hospital and decides to have the same sculpture built opposite the head physician's office, at the head of the pool. He assigns the chief physician Dr. Faruk Bayülkem to make this sculpture. Dr. Faruk Bayülkem asks Kemal Künmat, a sculptor who was being treated at the hospital. Kemal Künmat is a Rodin fan. The huge limestone mass brought from the quarries near Bakırköy is placed at the head of the pool in the garden. Kemal Künmat, wearing overalls, worked with great care and dedication. The sculpture took several months. In the end, the whole sculpture was finished, leaving only a 'right arm' and a hand to be carved out. However, it is said that Kemal Künmat left the sculpture unfinished because he did not receive the money for his labor. Dr. Faruk Bayülkem tries to convince Künmat to continue with the sculpture,

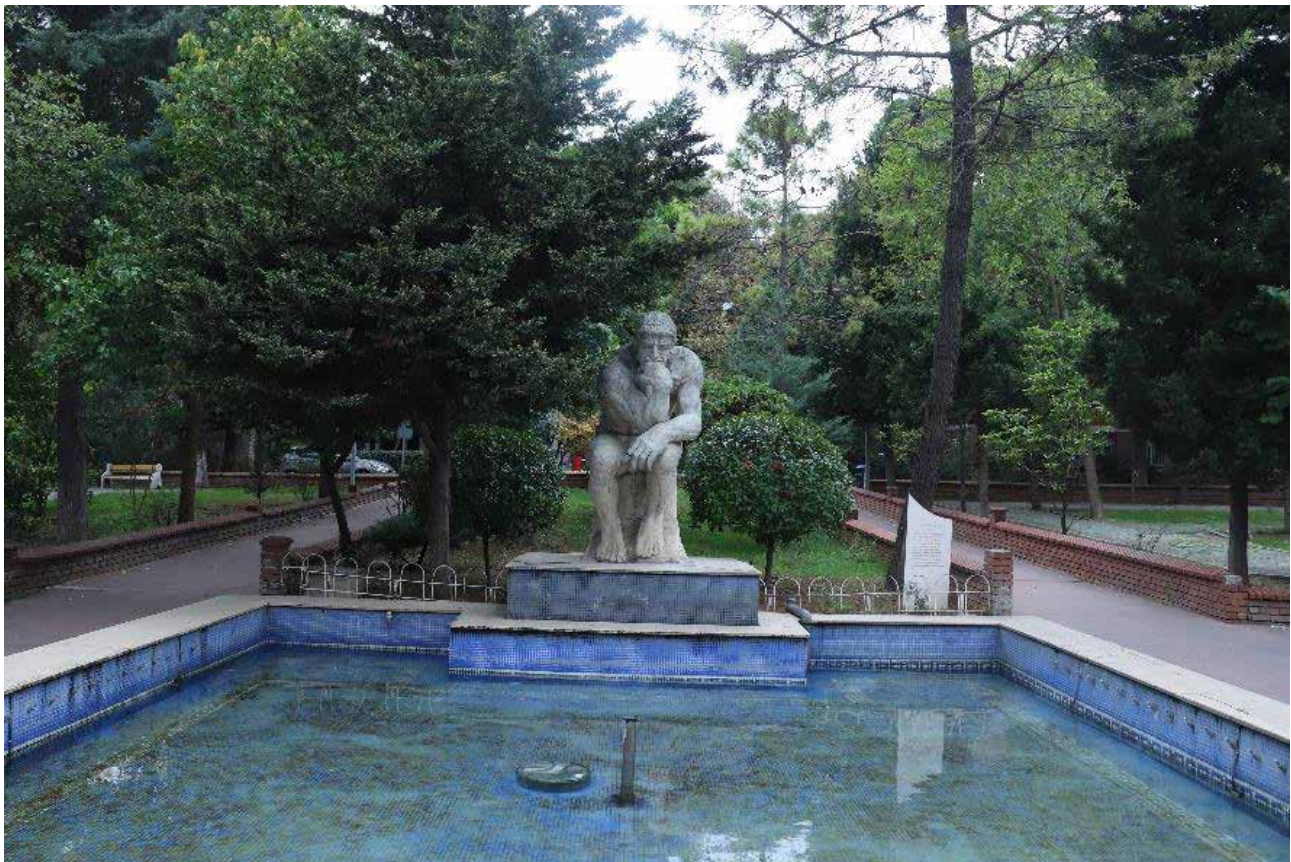
but fails. Six months later, a soldier named Mehmet Pişdar, who came to the hospital for treatment of depression, said that he was interested in painting and sculpture as a hobby. The “Thinking Man” sculpture was completed by Mehmet Pişdar in 41 days. On December 4, 1951, the sculpture was unveiled with a ceremony at the hospital. The details of the story appeared in the newspapers of that period (Kardeş et al., n.d. pp. 33-35).

The “Thinking Man” sculpture in the garden of Bakırköy Mental Hospital represents a process that was completed in the second phase by Mehmet Pişdar, who was being treated at the hospital, leaving the right arm of the artist Kemal Künmat, who completed the first phase, missing. The fact that the Chief Physician Dr. Fahri Celal Göktulga sees this sculpture as a symbol of the hospital and the efforts he

made to create the work has a thought-provoking meaning about the depths of art and the inner world of human beings. This special sculpture symbolizes the difficulties experienced during the completion process and the power of a work created through the collaboration of different artists.

### 2.1. Formal Analysis of the Thinking Man Sculpture

The thinking man sculpture offers formally very rich perspectives in the hospital garden. For this reason, in order to perceive the thinking man sculpture completely, it can be perceived that it has a dynamic structure when it is walked around and looked at from all four sides as seen in figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Thinking Man Sculpture and its Close Environment (İbrahim Teymur, personal archive, 2022).

The hospital garden is usually very quiet, monotonous and static. However, when we come to the statue, this silence can be contrasted with an exciting feeling. The huge naked stance of the statue arouses an excitement. Thus, the thinking man sculpture presents a visual contrast to the hospital garden. With its huge human size, material (a hard solid material) and color, it completely changes the visuality of the hospital garden. Water and sculpture have always been related in spatial use. The sculpture has been more of a complementary element of water. While the pool moves horizontally, the sculpture rises vertically and in this case, it emphasizes the sculpture more and makes it feel strong. The thinking man sculpture has a symbolic meaning. It creates a semantic connection with those who come to the hospital garden and makes its presence felt. It has created a sense of belonging and a spatial memory. As seen in figure 2, the sculpture is raised even higher with the pedestal and makes itself felt in the space with its large human size. It has an emphasizing feature.



**Figure 2.** Thinking Man Sculpture (İbrahim Teymur, personal archive, 2022).

According to Yılmaz (2014, p. 53), "The Thinking Man sculpture makes a reference to Ancient Greek thought with its athletic naked stance". There is a past and an uncertain future, and the naked male figure in this sculpture oscillates between the past and the future. Because when we look at the sculpture, we see a strong adult male figure. Rodin has frozen our body, which lives and flows in time, and imprisoned thought in it. The thinking man is the present that captures the future. The past follows the future with the present and never stops moving forward.

If a formal analysis of the thinking man sculpture is made; it is seen that the moods of the human being spread over the whole body. Although he appears naked with his whole body, his thoughts are not as clear as his body. It is possible to establish a connection between the features of the thinking man sculpture that reveal the face, body, foot, foot, arm, hand movements, posture and gaze and the indispensable images of patients undergoing treatment. It is difficult to infer a happy thought from his facial and body expression. He is in deep anxiety. What creates this anxiety and leads him to these deep thoughts is that he is caught between the past and the future and perhaps he has little hope for the future. There is a deep contradiction about the future. He is now alone and solitary with his thoughts. His right arm is resting diagonally on his left knee and his left hand is free and turned inward on his left knee. Despite the deep anxieties he is experiencing, there is a small optimistic hope in him. His right hand resting on his chin similarly strengthens this hope. The anxiety he is experiencing also causes him pain. However, despite everything, his attitude is oriented towards the future. Especially the anxiety is strained by the contraction of his feet and toes, pulling them inwards, towards his body. The appearance of muscle waves all over his body shows a fragmented state of mind.

### 3. Artistic Evolution of Fiction Photography

Throughout history, photography has been accepted as a tool that reflects reality, but over time, the perception of reality has changed by interacting with social, economic, political events and social perspectives. While following this evolution, artists have transformed photography into a subjective means of expression by adding their own interpretations. According to Şahin (2018, p. 85), photography has "solidified its place in contemporary

art, where it sometimes produces meaning on its own and sometimes functions as an auxiliary material, a tool, because it is one of the best indicators of reality, has the power of proving, credibility and questioning”.

Photography has the power to document reality with its ability to capture a specific moment or situation with certainty. This can be used to bear witness to historical events, highlight social issues or share personal experiences. Artists tend to use photography not only as a tool to reflect reality, but also as a form of personal expression. Photography is a powerful tool for preserving and expressing traces of personal and collective memories. By connecting with the past, artists explore memories and experiences. Photography's firm position in contemporary art is combined with its power to document reality and its potential for artistic expression. By using this powerful medium, artists are able to make the viewer think, question and make an emotional connection, which increases the artistic and cultural significance of photography.

Ensuring the integrity of meaning and presenting a photograph to the viewer interacts with the artist's design process and creativity. Fictional photography adopts a fundamentally different style of expression, and deals with an unusual point of view and a subjective understanding of aesthetics. This type of photography differs from documentary photography and focuses on background and preparation processes such as expressing the theme, subject or emotion determined by the artist with different elements, concept creation, pre-preparation process and post-shot editing (Susup, 2016, p. 49).

In the modernist period, the connection of photography with reality is quite strong. In real photographs, everything is reflected in harmony with real life. The idea of reflecting reality in the most accurate and objective way has been one of the basic principles of the modernist period. This approach in the modernist period is considered an important step in the acceptance of photography as a means of artistic expression. Fiction photography emerged with the idea of using photography as a means of artistic production. However, it found its real field of application in the Postmodern period.

In the mid-19th century, when photography technology was not yet fully developed, artists such as Gustav le Gray, Henry Peach Robinson, Andre Adolphe Eugene, Oscar Gustave Rejlander transformed photography and created fictional photographs that transcended the boundaries of reality. Another artist of the 19th century who came to the forefront with his fiction photography is the British Henry Peach Robinson (Marakoğlu, 2022, p. 609). The postmodern period emerged towards the end of the 20th century and caused radical changes in photography. In the postmodern period, the art of photography experienced a period that questioned the ideals of the modernist period, brought together various narratives and expanded the boundaries of photography. Instead of telling the concept of reality directly with photography, they aimed to tell a story using photography and to influence the audience emotionally (Uysal, 2023, p. 469).

In the postmodern period, artists started to use photography both as a documentation tool and as a visual storytelling tool. Although Demir and Gülaçtı (2022, p.3313) argue in their studies that photography should 'reflect reality' in the Modernist period, photographers in this period intervened in reality by making fictional applications. Experimental-fictional practices started to gain momentum in the postmodern period. This period represents an evolution in which artists push traditional boundaries and explore new and diverse forms of expression. In the field of art, such practices tend to combine abstract and concrete elements, offering the viewer extraordinary experiences. The fictional photography movement that emerged in Europe between the 1920s and the mid-1950s gave rise to a series of innovative practices. One of the leading representatives in this field is the "Foto-forum" community pioneered by German avant-garde photographer Otto Steinert (Birinci, 2021, p. 3). Foto-Forum members came together to share knowledge, experience and creative interaction in photography. By breaking away from the norms and rules of traditional photography, they paved the way for original and experimental approaches. They have focused on the use of visual expression to push the boundaries of photography as a form of expression and to enable new aesthetic experiments. They were influential on fiction photography. Fiction photography has been shaped by various factors

such as technological advances, art movements and social changes throughout history.

Under the influence of art movements, a more experimental and productive period began in the field of photography, especially during the Avant-Garde period. One of the many movements that had an impact on photography was Dadaism. Dadaism is a movement led by Marcel Duchamp, which emerged as a reaction to the values of its time. This movement is based on the principle of transforming objects and giving them different dimensions and meanings. The exhibition of the urinal named "Fountain", one of Duchamp's prominent works, as art is considered as an example of rebellion against the rules of Dadaism and the traditional understanding of art. Dadaism was a movement that questioned the material that the artist should use as a means of expression and took a radical and critical stance. During this period, photography discovered new and bold ways of artistic expression and freedom of expression (Sürmeli, 2012, p. 338). Fiction photography has developed a unique form of creative expression under the influence of Surrealism, which constitutes one of the art movements. The Surrealist approach stimulates the imagination by aiming to create new images by moving objects to a different environment. Photography has gradually developed and become widespread in the idea of producing art, which has led to debates about whether photography is art (Dumlu, 2021, p.130). Every photograph, in its processed or raw form, has always been and will continue to be accepted as a work of art because it contains original designs as long as it carries an aesthetic based on imagination. Postmodernist approaches in photography include fictional elements, irony and visual games. Fictional photography has pushed traditional boundaries by adopting postmodernist thinking.

The perfection of technical elements and printing in modern photography, as well as the photographer's practice of finding his or her own subject, did not find a place in the postmodernist approach. While an objective approach to the work was dominant in Modernism, in Postmodernism this approach evolved into complete personalization. In postmodern photography, the creativity of manipulations stands out as an important element. The relationship between Postmodernism and photography has become stronger, especially by utilizing its reproducibility

(Susup, 2016, p. 61). Fictional art photography occupies an important place in contemporary art. The rise of fictional photography has a complex background of time and ideas. For fictional photography, the pursuit of reality is no longer a central problem, but the problem of using various techniques to achieve its fictionality. Photographic artists such as Cindy Sherman, Richard Price, Sherrie Levine have acted without being bound by any notion of "authenticity". Therefore, fictional photography has a strong postmodern artistic identity (Qing, 2022, p. 373).

The meaning and aesthetic dimension of fictional photography creates works based on a concept beyond objective reality, expressed through predetermined abstract concepts and forms. In such productions, photography is not only used as a means of documenting an object, but also becomes a fundamental element of the act of creation in which postmodern and digital processes are integrated. Fictional photographs invite the viewer to push the boundaries of reality and go beyond the ordinary. Photography moves beyond its documentation function and becomes a tool that enriches the artist's intellectual and emotional expression.

### **3. Comparison and Evaluation of Fiction Photography and Sculpture**

The relationship between sculpture and photography has undergone significant changes with the evolution of art and the advancement of technology. Many art historians have worked on this subject to understand and explain the relationship between sculpture and photography. The German art historian Heinrich Wölfflin discussed the relationship between photography and sculpture in his 1896 article "On the problems of transferring three-dimensional sculptures onto light-sensitive paper". Geraldine A. Johnson is one of the few art historians to acknowledge the influence of photography on the scientific interpretation of sculpture and is known for her writings on the effects of photography on sculpture and the relationship between sculpture and photography. Geoffrey Batchen is a historian of photography who examines the history and aesthetics of photography. Batchen's works deal with the relationship between photography and sculpture and especially the sculpturalization of photography (Vuorinen,

2022, p. 406). Compared to sculpture, photography has only recently begun to be recognized as an art form. According to Plummer (2015, p. 3), the frequently used term “the expanding field of photography” is a concept that explains that photography does not only have a single field of application but also has more than one field of application. The expanding field of photography adds both artistic and semantic dimensions to photography. It provides more creativity in the process of telling the story of the photographer by going beyond the traditional limits of photography and including new narrative techniques in photography. Fictional photography is photography in which the photographer uses his creativity, aesthetic understanding and storytelling skills.

In this study, which is based on the relationship between sculpture art and photography, Augusto Rodin’s thinking man sculpture in the garden of Bakırköy Mental Hospital, which has great importance in the history of sculpture art, is analyzed through a photograph taken in the hospital garden, which is fictionalized as a live sculpture. The photograph, which is constructed as a living sculpture, shows how the art of sculpture is handled through photography and how it is reinterpreted with a language of expression.

The general visual narrative of the photograph is discussed in a context in which a fiction photograph will be evaluated. As seen in Figure 3, the photograph was taken in a closed composition with passive editing, as is the nature of fiction photography. It means that an abstract approach is adopted in a black and white photograph taken in black and white. Each photograph expresses a meaningful visual text.



**Figure 3.** Live Sculpture (Fiction Photography) (İbrahim Teymur, personal archive, 2022).

The figure is depicted standing on a pedestal, with his hand in his pocket and a camera hanging around his neck. This artistic composition offers viewers the opportunity to establish a connection between thought and visual expression. A comparative analysis of the similarities and differences between the Thinking Man sculpture and the fictional photograph;

As seen in Figure 2, the Thinking Man sculpture is designed with his head slightly tilted forward and his hand under his chin. This posture reflects an individual in a state of thought and introspection, bearing the traces of an intense inner world. The pedestal of the sculpture carries the figure on a high ground. This height emphasizes the sublime and important position of the thought process. At the same time, the pedestal symbolizes that thought is built on a

foundation, a rooted and solid mental representation. In the fictional photograph, the figure putting his hand in his pocket may indicate that the person is trying to balance between various emotional movements. Putting one's hand in one's pocket is a behavior that usually indicates that one feels more closed and protected in an emotional or intellectual situation. At the same time, this behavior can also reflect the figure's instinct for self-preservation, and this posture of the figure can allow the viewer to empathize with the figure and reflect on their own thought processes. The camera hanging around his neck symbolizes the expression and sharing of the thought process. The camera can also express the desire to understand the world around her, to record and share her experiences. This leads the viewer to think of thought not only as an internal process but also as an outward expression.

The thinking man sculpture symbolizes the complexity and depth of the human mind, which stems from the location of Bakırköy Mental Hospital. While this sculpture depicts a man immersed in thought, it also creates an emotionally powerful effect by reflecting an inner conflict with its physical expression and posture. The fact that the figure in the thinking man sculpture puts his hand on his chin, and that the living sculpture in the fiction photograph puts his hand in his pocket are elements that strengthen the thought process and expression. The fact that the living sculpture figure in the fiction photograph puts his hand in his pocket and carries a camera may indicate a complex emotional state in the figure's inner world. Perhaps the figure may be thinking about the past, evaluating memories or internalizing an emotional state. The thinking man sculpture may give viewers the opportunity to establish a more emotional connection. The real human figure in the fictional photograph, on the other hand, allows viewers to empathize more easily. The real human figure also offers a frozen representation of a particular moment. This can allow the viewer to better understand a story and feel the emotions of the moment more intensely.

#### 4. Conclusion and Evaluation

The comparative analysis that highlights the similarities and differences between the "Thinking Man" statue and a fictional photograph provides viewers with an opportunity

to understand the parallels and distinctions between sculpture and narrative photography. The similarities between the "Thinking Man" statue and fictional photography emphasize universal themes related to understanding the internal thought process and its external expression. The poised stance of the living sculpture in the fictional photograph may represent an internal thought process, while the posture of the "Thinking Man" statue could convey spiritual inner effort or tranquility.

While the "Thinking Man" statue is a tangible entity, the figure in the fictional photograph is that of a real person. The physical tangibility of the "Thinking Man" statue allows viewers to engage more closely with the artwork. Examining the similarities and differences between the figure on the pedestal in the "Thinking Man" statue and the figure in the fictional photograph can help us understand the emotional and thoughtful impact of both works. Both the sculpture and the fictional photograph have the potential to evoke profound emotions in viewers. The tension and uncertainty in the facial expression of the figure in the fictional photograph may parallel the internal conflict depicted in the "Thinking Man" statue.

The black-and-white tones and the vintage camera in the fictional photograph evoke a conflict between past and present, reminiscent of the timeless themes in the "Thinking Man" statue. Both the sculpture and the fictional photograph reflect the complexity of the human mind and psychological states, prompting viewers to contemplate. The facial expression of the figure in the fictional photograph may convey a similar theme of intellectual depth found in the "Thinking Man" statue. The setting and clothing style in the fictional photograph may indicate a contemporary time frame, whereas the "Thinking Man" statue exists in a more abstract environment, offering a timeless representation.

In conclusion, both the "Thinking Man" statue and fictional photography explore themes of emotion, thought, and internal conflict. However, while fictional photography provides a more personal interaction due to the presence of a real human subject and openness to various interpretations, the "Thinking Man" statue offers a more abstract expression, granting viewers greater intellectual freedom. Both sculpture and fictional photography express the complexity of human psychology through different artistic approaches, eliciting various emotional responses



from viewers. The similarities and differences between the two artworks demonstrate how art can express the human experience in diverse ways. Fictional photographs stand out for their ability to establish an emotional connection and tell a compelling story. However, they lack the physical presence and tangibility of a sculpture. Viewers can experience the emotions the artist intended when looking at fictional photographs, but it may not leave as profound an impact as the tactile experience of interacting with a sculpture in the real world.

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