Notions such as “artist” and “fine arts” had no equivalent in the Greek-speaking world of the Ottoman Empire. The professional status of the artist, namely of painters and sculptors, emerged in Greece with the creation of a state-founded institution, the School of Arts (1837), that introduced art education based on western European models. Throughout the nineteenth century the cultural conception of the artist was animated by multi-level tensions: between art and craft; ancient and modern art; national identity and European belonging; community and the individual. Cutting across some significant samples of institutional discourse, art criticism, the nascent art historical and aesthetic thought, and fictional representations of the artist, I will present the ways in which these tensions were articulated. “National art,” genius, and originality will be the key concepts interrogated throughout this material.

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