

Questioning Various Effects of Centenarian Dynamics on Art and Spaces*

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ABSTRACT

The spread of Modernism and its condition of being the only dominant fact finished with the collapse of U.S.S.R. and as a result, the end of Communism, having whole unity belief. The linear interruption of Modernism caused its end with its paradox. In the turning point of this century, the common name of all expressionisms from all areas was Post-Modernism. By the end of Second World War which was the the most important event of 20th century, the immigration between societies started and individuals' identity problems occurred. These problems supported individual enterprises and caused pluralism perspectives. The Artist, having no limit on materials and methods anymore, first, activated their Works like Pollock. Dense transitions made by paint became in the form of statue by the time and developed against the flat structure of tual is the main likeness means of Modernism. The fact that this likeness was shown in the real space, not on the two- dimensions surface, caused to settlings. The real usage of began by the settlings put the space in the front place as an art element. Investigation of unlimited space by R. Smithson made the art object as unlimited on every aspect. And it is possible that unlimited art object can be crammed into exhibition area. In this sense, Post-Modern term's works of art ,searching the art object, exhibition area and public space's transformation into art object, becomes the main topic of this work in terms of object and shape relationship.

Keywords: Contemporary, Art, Postmodern, Installation, Space, Object, Museum, Public.

1. INTRODUCTION

Along with Dadaism, the early twentieth century is the time when a period of questioning came to the fore. Taking a stand against the definitions of an art of pleasure, and sublimity of the work of art and the artist, new resolutions emerged in the second half of the century stating that everything is a work of art and everyone is an artist. As a result of the new resolutions, not only the structure but also the name of the art work have changed and been called as the aesthetic object. Moving away from the Kantian aesthetics, a new sense of aesthetics emerged, which puts an emphasis on the art object's representation on the individual rather than its physical body (Akay, 1996, p.97). This also points to a new understanding of the space which deals with the object and its space as well. The first naturalist examples that handle the object with its space appear after the use of reverse perspective in European art in the Middle Ages. In reverse perspective, the space opens up and expands with the viewer. Regarding the function and position of the art object of the time, religious places or places of worship often serve as the site, and thus, there is no need for an additional object-space relationship. In this perspective, used to provide depth perception, lines diverge against the horizon, not converging towards the viewer. Therefore the depth order is reversed, and it is not to be found in the painting itself; instead, it is behind the viewer. Like a sign of dominance, this perspective bears resemblance to the new understanding of the space in works of art after the 1960s in that the former

fosters the presence of a more active viewer as well. While naturalist uses of the perspective after the Renaissance deal with the representative features of the object and the display of its image in the space, contemporary art makes use of the relationship between the object and the site of exhibition, and is established on various meanings suggested by the viewer.

The aim of this study is to examine and put forth the object-space relationship in contemporary art from the second half of the twentieth century on. Therefore, the post-1960's era is to be defined as the focal point of this study. Kant, who can be considered to be a representative of Modernism, and his sense of aesthetics focus on the Euclidean geometry of the Renaissance; thus, the viewer is to see the object in the way the artist presents it in the space. However, thanks to new mathematical discoveries from the 1900s on, and the destruction of the belief that science was absolute and unchanging, Cubists managed to represent four dimensions on their works (Akay, 1996, p.70).



Illustration 1: Juan Gris, Book, Pipe and Glasses, 1915, oil painting on canvas, 73x92 cm., New York, Mr. and Mrs. Ralph F. Colin Collection

Aesthetics, the ontology of art and art criticism are disciplines which provide insight on the understanding of the space in works of art, and the object accordingly. However, once the form of art has changed according to its content, it is thus possible to observe some changes in these disciplines, which actually support our perception of the works of art. Many philosophers, linguists, aesthetes, art historians and art educationists have put forth many different explanations in terms of interpreting works of art. Therefore, when one

thinks of the art works of the post-1960's postmodern era, it is not possible to find a single kind of art criticism, as the case in Modernism. For instance, according to R. Arnheim, a psychologist, the images in a work of art are perceived in eye-brain coordination through formal properties like dimension, color and sound, regardless of their historical and cultural values. As a consequence, formative or illusionistic art is modernist since they always foster a development through an improved or more advanced condition (Murray, 2009, p.30). Nevertheless, R. Barthes, the famous French critic, contributes to art from a different point of view, and asserts that postmodern works of art can not be criticized according to a formerly prescribed method; instead, they can only be criticized at the moment of their creation (Murray, 2009, p.41). Based on this vision by Barthes, a contemporary work of art can be a happening, a temporary installation, or a work of "in situ" that takes space into account. In these kinds of works, the object-space relationship is formed at that very moment; therefore, as the artist promotes a different understanding of the space, there are shifts in the interpretation of the critic accordingly.

Postmodern era is a time in which different perspectives of art emerged and have been supported by theorists, and it is a significant period in that the works are criticized and interpreted according to their own processes of creation. Consequently, works are created to prove their own object-space relationship. As a result, in contemporary art, there are many works of art which deal with the space in various ways. In this study, some works of the period have been chosen as examples, and a selection is to be presented.

2. EXAMPLES FROM THE NEW OBJECT-SPACE RELATIONSHIP IN CONTEMPORARY WORKS OF ART

In the 1960s, the issue of dimensions (the attempt to transfer the three-dimensional object into a two-dimensional surface) was no longer a problematic of art. Representative depiction was replaced by presentational attempts. Coming up with a new idea in each work of art, the object of art has been in search of a new space where it can present itself. In these new artistic practices, the space sometimes serves as the object of art itself, or remains as an element supporting its presentation. Despite adopting different perspectives, various artistic

practices combine the object and the space with the postmodern sense of art. One cannot claim that there is one single scientific formula to explain the object-space integration of the Postmodern era. Although it is not possible to write down all the artists' understandings and works of the time, some of them are listed below to provide more insight through examples:

2.1 Use of the Space as the Object in Terms of Land Art

Based on the idea that accustomed exhibition places like galleries and museums limit the work of art in terms of its dimension and form, and aiming to free the art work from walls or limitations, land art became widespread in the USA and Europe at the end of the 1960s. Many artists made use of the landscape as the object of art and presented it in unlimited areas. For various reasons, Robert Smithson, Michael Heizer, Walter De Maria, the couple Christo and Jeanne Claude, Richard Long and Mary Miss linked landscape with the object of art.

Robert Smithson is an important representative of land art, which made use of the site without walls or limitations. In this time, following the Modern era, "Spiral Jetty", a work of art on the landscape created by Smithson in 1970, deserves our attention among the art works of the time based on contrasts. As the dialectic of space turns into a spiral movement in this work, it refers to the continuous cycle of the nature, life and world.

Regarding materials, Smithson chose to make use of the earth, which can change or erode under natural conditions. He compared small particles of the earth and their relationship with the nature to the power of thought that changes according to brain waves. The artist thinks that works of art are deprived of their content when put into a closed space like a gallery, and assumes that the condition of the works is improved once they have been placed into an empty white space (Yılmaz, 2006, p.239).

According to C. Gintz, this jetty, in a way, is a "counter-memorial" (2010, p.33). Busts of American presidents, an earthwork on Mount Rushmore in South Dakota, can be only perceived through viewing, but Gintz says that a work of art should be perceived by moving on it, not by viewing it. However, like most of the contemporary

works of art, it is a work which was not designed to be exhibited in a museum; it is an ephemeral work created to be lost soon, and can only be viewed thanks to multiplication techniques. Michael Heizer, another significant figure to be associated with land art, integrated space to his works of art for various reasons and created large-scale earthworks.



Illustration 2: Michael Heizer, Displaced-Replaced Mass, #113, 1969, granite and concrete, Silver Springs, Nevada.

Not only does Heizer make use of the landscape as the space, but also he turns nature into an art as he removes big parts from earth, replaces them and integrates the cycle of nature with the human touch. These practices can be, in a way, called as a collage of earth. Wrapping/ Packaging the space through a different perspective, Christo and Jeanne Claude, a French couple, choose earth particles as their materials, and make use of matters such as recyclable cloth or rope to wrap them.



Illustration 3: Christo ve Jeanne Claude, Little Bay, 1968-69, Australia.

As Yılmaz says, "Wrapping is another way of uncovering" (Yılmaz, 2006, p.246), it can be claimed that the artists want to draw our attention to the parts of the nature in need of protection.

Since the components used in wrapping or packaging are natural materials which can degrade quickly in nature, it can be thus concluded that the work has been designed with regard to an environmental attitude.

2.2 Use of Public Spaces as the Object of Art

Changes in the object of art are apparent in terms of its context and physical form. At the end of the 1970s in the USA, site-specific works, in which the object is to be perceived through the space, come to the fore. While some of these works aimed at approaching art and society to one another, they also provided different perspectives on the problematic of context in the object. Since public spaces such as city centers, buildings of official institutions, or underground hallways are chosen as the setting, spacing is restructured. Therefore, the understanding of the space, which promotes the perception of the object, is now positioned between the object and space, or the artist and the viewer. The collapse of communism in the Postmodern era led to a greater sense of freedom on individuals, which, in turn, led to a greater complexity of cities. In the city, therefore, the contribution of individuals to the object of art has been more significant.



Illustrations 4: Daniel Buren, *In Situ*, 1997, Münster

By new understandings of spacing, space has been employed as a significant agent in works, which, in turn, ended in the relationship between the perception and the structure of the place. If the place is a building in the city or the city itself, its physical structure is to be paid attention as well. In this case, some questions like the city as being a metropolis, the interaction between the old and the new city, the horizontal or vertical structure of the city rise as crucial points (Tanyeli, İleri and Karamustafa, 2000, p.127). Taking all these into consideration, the work of art is a part of the whole which has lost its autonomy. When it comes to the placing of the work of art, Buren puts forward the notion of "situ". According to this notion, the work should be created specifically to a host site or installed into a specific site. If it has been designated according to that place, it is set by taking into account the historical significance of that site, and has been analyzed accordingly (Buren, 2000, p. 141-142).

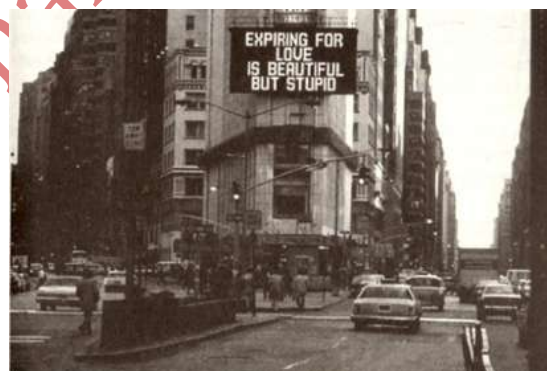


Illustration 5: Jenny Holzer, *Aphorism*, reflected on a Spectacolor curtain, Time Square, New York, 1982.

Adopting a feminine point of view when handling the public space, Jenny Holzer exhibited her work on the streets of New York in 1982. She has her own perspective through which she can penetrate into the daily life, speak up and make a direct reference. The artist makes use of language as the object of art. The common element in the works by Holzer (electronic or various visual materials) is language; however, it is not to be interpreted in one single way (Gintz, 2000, p.71).

Since people live and impose changes on nature and natural events, Alan Sonfist mentions about monumentalizing and including them as

phenomena in our daily routine, and claims that works of environmental art should be displayed to the public in public monuments like city squares or centers. In one of such works, the artist asserts that a work of clean air can be exhibited in a place in the city center so as to take a stance against air pollution (Antmen, 2009, p.256).

As these works are not concerned with limitation of their content with their spaces, it is possible for them to handle the setting on their own. While some artists are to display their art objects in public spaces, some other artists choose to turn a public space, or the city itself, into an object of art, like the way Buren did. Dating from 1983 and composed of two massive steel components, "Clara Clara" by Richard Serra stands as one of the best examples of handling the setting in the public space in different ways.



Illustration 7: Richard Serra, Clara Clara, 1983, two steel components, Concord Square, Paris.

With this work, Serra succeeded in exhibiting his art object on a public site, in the Concord Square in Paris. By abstract works of art far from being architectural, he intervened in the architecture of the city, and aimed to impose a contrast through this intervention. By installing two big steel components into the focal architectural site, the artist has here ruined the visual integrity. According to the artist, there is a possibility that the work of art can increase in its value in a place where it can create an awareness. Serra's perspective in such installations can be said to be similar to Asher's idea of situation aesthetics. These similarities require new senses of aesthetics on which works by similar perspectives can be based. Gintz (2010) explains such sense of aesthetics through "Situational Aesthetics" by M. Asher. However, this new sense of aesthetics is not one to

be stereotyped or criticized according to its rules. It serves as a framework to have a general outlook on this kind of heterogeneous works and these works are to be explained in a different section.

2.3 Michael Asher and Situational Aesthetics

Anti-modernist statements and attitudes by Daniel Buren, Broodthaers and Hans Haacke in the 1960s were transformed into a deep criticism, named "Situational Aesthetics" by Michael Asher (Gintz, 2010, p.23). Since this notion deals with space and fosters any kind of space, regardless of its formal properties, at the creation process of the work, it can be perceived as conceptual art. Adopting a postmodern point of view through the studies between sculpture and monument, or museum and monument, the notion is drawn to art works in which the mentioned three types can be mingled. A sculpture can be claimed to be monumental as it stands as a physical form which one can view or move around, and evokes admiration with its artistic qualities. Museum as a concept is also sublime and bears qualities to evoke admiration; therefore, it is also monumental. However, it should be kept in mind that museum is an architectural structure and public space as well. Blending all these components at first, and then turning them into a way of self-analysis, Asher adapts it to a practical system of situational aesthetics. As a consequence, as his ephemeral work shows up, Asher makes use of a museum, of monumental qualities, as the space, and deconstructs the museum in terms of architecture. Asher firstly divides the museum into two equal parts, and repositions the setting with new lights and sounds; consequently, he creates two different settings for exhibition. Asher also makes use of ephemeral walls of glass to include the noise and view from the outside, and makes the viewer realize the contrast between the ambiance and the dim light of exhibition centers, all of which, in turn, serve to attract attention to the effect of the space on the works (Gintz, 2010 p.35).

This work by Asher is in parallel with that of Daniel Buren in that they both take the exhibition site into account while displaying the object of art. However, Asher differs from Buren in his early stages; Buren uses the exhibition area as the setting of his work which has no object of art, whereas Asher intervenes in the exhibition area and makes

use of the outside as the exhibition hall. Both of the artists then handle the space through different perspectives in the upcoming stages.

Asher believes that an ambiguity can be created by replacing and reorganizing the objects to be placed in public spaces. In order to prove this, in a public building, the Art Institute of Chicago, he dealt with the sculpture of George Washington, an art work dating from the eighteenth century, removed it from the entrance steps of the institute, and replaced it in a hall where French art of the eighteenth century was displayed (Gintz, 2010, p.55-57). Therefore, by making use of public spaces, he questions and refers to the contribution of the setting and atmosphere to the object of art.



Illustration 7: Michael Asher, a design for the 73rd Exhibition of America, George Washington sculpture by Jean-François Houdon, at the entrance of the Art Institute, before replacement. The Art Institute of Chicago, 9 June-5 August 1970.



Illustration 8: Michael Asher, a design for the 73rd Exhibition of America, George

Washington sculpture by Jean-François Houdon, in a gallery for the eighteenth century French art. The Art Institute of Chicago, 9 June-5 August 1970.

2.4 Daniel Buren and the Exhibition Hall as his Object of Art

As a member of a group called BMPT and following its doctrine of independent action, Daniel Buren intervened in some exhibition halls in a critical approach in the 1960s.

Buren firstly created minimalist works in white and combinations of other colors using stripes or lines. Moving away from the reductionist minimalism towards a postmodern critique, he asserts that the exhibition halls are, more or less, in an interaction with the object of art. In order to prove this, in a classical exhibition hall, he covered a classical fireplace with a big, striped canvas in two colors, by which he made the perception of the works easier. The artist also proves his idea against other artists as they feel confused by the lack of harmony once the canvas has been removed (Gintz, 2010, p.21). With an ironic expression, the exhibition hall has now been Buren's object of art. Gintz considers the works by Buren as a bi-directional situation which refers to the artist-institution relationship and makes use of the space as well (Gintz, 2010, p.106).

Buren has an interest in the idea or notion of "exhibiting" the work of art. According to him, the exhibition of the work marks its death. Therefore, one must create works that are not to die when displayed, or provide settings that are not to lead to the end of works (Giderer, 2003, p.64). Buren thinks that a painting can make sense and find its value only in a museum or gallery. As a consequence, the meaning of the art object depends on its placement or displacement.

Establishing his works primarily on the act of exhibition and museum as a setting, Buren extends his works on public spaces to a wider extent apart from museums. He makes use of the public space by existing and living in that very place. In one of his works, created in Paris city center in 1968, he regards public space as the outside or the whole, physical unity of the city, and uses it as his object of art. This object is formed by covering more than 200 different spaces such as billboards and walls with striped canvas (Gintz, 2010, p.23). In this work, which, in a way, can be accepted as an

example of land art, the land or space to be worked on is taken as the surface area of the city. Buren went on with similar works and set up striped posters on the walls of the Paris Metro. As Buren thinks that the work of art decreases in value once it has been removed from its place of exhibition, he moves his work out of the museum and reverses the notion of exhibition. Since the work is displayed in the city as an outdoor space, it is not possible to let the work in, or else it will decrease in value.

Considering all these works, Buren differs from Holzer or Serra in his intention of handling the space. Buren rejects using the site, city center or streets as a means of exhibiting the work; instead, he adopts the idea that "the site of exhibition hinders the meaning of the work of art", and takes the work out of the museum, turns the city into a museum and renders it as a museum.



Illustration 9: Daniel Buren, Bus Benches, 1970-1982, the junction of 3rd Street and San Vicente Boulevard, white and colored stripes of 8.7 centimeters

Another artist from the same group, Niele Toroni is similar to Buren in his perspective of art. In a work in Bern Kunsthalle Museum in 1978, Toroni covered the walls with minimalist papers which ended in a composition of two colors, like the stripes by Buren. That he makes a direct intervention on the setting is similar to the museum works by Asher as well. With nothing else to display, he merely covers the space (the museum), which emerges as a contrast to the sublimity of the museum. As a consequence, the rigid and monumental position of art no longer exists (Gintz, 2010, p.23).

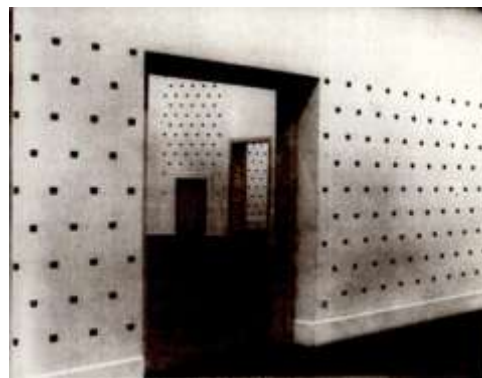


Illustration 10: Niele Toroni, 1978, a partial view of his installation in Bern Kunsthalle Museum.

The work by Toroni, in which he covered the museum walls, is similar to the installation "Zero & Not" by Joseph Kosuth regarding the space relationship. This conceptual work by Kosuth dates from 1985. Here, some paragraphs from "The Psychopathology of Everyday Life" by Freud are magnified since the artist has been impressed by them; therefore, the artist here refers to the fact that the paragraphs are open to interpretations. However, the artist provides this setting by no means of any intervention to physical elements, he merely covers the walls. Therefore, it is not possible to read the full sentences, since there are many missing parts because of windows and doors (Atakan 1998 p.86-87). Thus, the book itself starts the process of various possible interpretations, which then goes on with the installation, sweeping the viewer to a never-ending discourse.



Illustration 11: Joseph Kosuth, Zero & Not, 1985, St. Pierre Museum, details of the installation, Lyons.

2.5 Claude Rutault and His Notion on the Rejection of the Object

Aiming to question the meaning of the art work in the age of technical production or duplication, Claude Rutault deals with the artist-buyer relationship in his works in 1973-1974, and reverses the relationship. Through this perspective, the stretchers are painted the same color as the wall on which they are hung. Therefore, the artist does not depend on the buyer. He has suppressed the effect of space which can increase or decrease the value of the work; hence, stretchers which are the same color as the walls they are hung on are without any object, and yet turn out to be the object of art themselves (Gintz, 2010, p.137). Gintz (2010) regards this as post-auratic, in relation to the notion of "aura" put forth by Benjamin between the artist and the viewer. As a result, the buyer is not obliged to make a decision about the art object based on the aura.



Illustration 12: Claude Rutault, 1973-1985, acrylic, stretcher on 6 dimensions, details of the installation.

It is understood from the above installation that the artist adopts a reductionist point of view. However, it is also apparent that he is interested in the ontology and monochrome of the picture. Danto's (2010) ideas on the fact that abstract expressionism marked its own end by the paradox of using excessive amounts of paint, and turned into monochrome pictures serve as the manifestos of the stretchers by Rutault. Therefore, displaying the colors on the stretcher as a fraction of the space, which is started by Pollock, has been confirmed with white stretchers on a white background. In this aspect, a different approach is presented on the contextual problem between the picture and its object. The object-space relationship, thought to be supported by a white wall with its neutral effects, is at first rejected by artists like Buren and Asher, but

then the wall is included as the object of art by Rutault, and the object-space relationship is to be questioned in a different way that is self-referential.

3. CONCLUSION

Questioning the space or object has been one of the main purposes in these works or similar conceptual works created in Europe or America from the 1960s on. Firstly, the questioning starts with the notion of space, based on the idea that the meaning of the art object may vary while it is being displayed according to its place of exhibition. However, when the object-space relationship is taken into consideration, it becomes apparent that there are some differences between the first and second halves of the twentieth century. It is therefore not right to consider the new kind of expression as a part of the historical development of art. As an age in which social dynamics have influenced the individual more than ever, postmodernism has affected art to a large extent. Changes in the structure and meaning of art can be perceived only by relating to various disciplines such as architecture, sociology, linguistics, educational sciences, and semeiotics. Going through a critical and self-critical process, art, as a result, survives after all contrasts or rises and falls on the object-space relationship.

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