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TRANSFORMATION OF PUBLIC ART IN ISTANBUL: SPATIAL, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL DIMENSIONS

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TRANSFORMATION OF PUBLIC ART IN ISTANBUL: SPATIAL, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL DIMENSIONS

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APPROVAL

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To My Dearest Family and Vani….

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TRANSFORMATION OF PUBLIC ART IN ISTANBUL: SPATIAL, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL DIMENSIONS

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the transformation of contemporary public art practices in Istanbul from the 2000s to the present, focusing on their spatial, political, and social dimensions. The study approaches public space as a dynamic process of social production in which physical and social memory, power relations, and individual freedoms are constantly negotiated. By questioning the role and rationale of public art in these areas through the lens of its historical evolution, the research examines how artworks shape their environments, mediate power relations, and encourage public interaction. The artworks analyzed in this study are classified into three main urban typologies based on the public spaces where they are located within the city. Considering the context of the time in which they were installed, the study examines the locations of these works within the city, analyzing the forms of art supported by institutions, more participatory and site-specific practices aimed at engaging with daily life, or situations where the works disrupt the flow of the space to reproduce its discourse, along with their consequences. In examining the selected public artworks, the study addresses issues of accessibility and context within the urban fabric, as well as their relationships to urban policy. The case studies presented aim to reveal the transformative potential of public art to reproduce the meaning and politics of space within Istanbul's multilayered structure.

Keywords: Publicness, Public Space, Public Art, İstanbul

İSTANBUL'DA KAMUSAL SANATIN DÖNÜŞÜMÜ: MEKANSAL, SİYASİ VE SOSYAL BOYUTLAR

ÖZET

Bu tez, İstanbul'daki çağdaş kamusal sanat uygulamalarının 2000'lerden günümüze uzanan dönüşümünü mekânsal, politik ve toplumsal boyutlarda incelemektedir. Çalışma, kamusal alanı fiziksel ve toplumsal hafızanın, iktidar ilişkilerinin ve bireysel özgürlüklerin sürekli müzakere edildiği dinamik bir sosyal üretim süreci olarak ele alır. Kamusal sanatın bu alanlardaki rolünü ve varoluş sebeplerini tarihsel süreçlerdeki dönüşümü üzerinden sorgulayan araştırma, eserlerin bulundukları mekânları nasıl şekillendirdiğini, güç ilişkilerine nasıl aracılık ettiğini ve kamusal etkileşimi nasıl teşvik ettiğini inceler. Araştırma kapsamında incelenen eserler, kent içerisinde bulundukları kamusal alanlara göre üç ana kentsel tipoloji altında sınıflandırılmıştır. Eserlerin kent içerisindeki konumu, yerleştirildiği zamanın bağlamına dikkat edilerek, sanatın kurum destekli biçimlerinin, gündelik hayatla etkileşim kurmayı amaçlayan daha katılımcı ve mekâna duyarlı uygulamaların veya mekânın akışını bozarak söylemini yeniden üreten durumlarını ve sonuçlarını inceler. Seçilen kamusal sanat işleri incelenirken kentsel politika ilişkileri ile kentsel dokusu içindeki erişilebilirlik ve bağlam sorunları ele alınmaktadır. Ele alınan vaka çalışmaları, kamusal sanatın İstanbul'un çok katmanlı yapısında mekânın anlamını ve politikasını yeniden üretme konusundaki dönüştürücü potansiyelini ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Kamusallık, Kamusal Alan, Kamusal Sanat, İstanbul

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

MoMA: Museum of Modern Art.

CAM: The COVID Art Museum

1. INTRODUCTION

Public space has been one of the most dynamic and contentious areas in urban life because it is where the entire community comes together. It is a physical space where social memory, political power, and individual freedoms are constantly negotiated. Although public spaces, which constitute a large part of the city, are generally areas whose physical boundaries are determined by authority through urban planners, they can change shape depending on the elements they contain and the productions of society. For this reason, we can encounter planned physical boundaries, materials, urban furniture, and other elements, as well as individual or social productions of the public. Art emerges as a fundamental element that can be found on both sides. We can encounter artworks in very different forms in public spaces. So how did these works come to be here, and what do they signify?

Public artworks transcend being mere physical elements of the space. Through their forms, scales, and colors, the works create a distinct visual perception within the area, redefining the space's boundaries and usage areas. Users experience the space in different ways according to their needs and lives through the new practices, barriers, and installations encouraged by the works. The artwork becomes an element that transforms accessibility, spatial scale relationships, visual perceptions, and emotional experiences, blending into users' daily lives. For space is not simply the sum of physical elements, but also a continuous process of social production (Lefebvre, 1974). Along with the physical interventions in the workplace, they evoke different echoes in society, thus reproducing both the public space and its users and social outputs.

Istanbul's extensive history, marked by various regimes and periods, has developed the city in many ways and fostered a diverse society. The city and society have formed a rich culture and shaped the area through their mutually reinforcing structures. However, due to the country's highly volatile political climate, it has been quite difficult for certain social concepts to take root and for a well-planned city to emerge. Istanbul's public space has been a constant arena of tension, with the state ideology imposing itself

as a showcase while society strives to make its own voice heard. For this reason, it has taken time for the public sphere in Istanbul to be properly understood and established. The city has developed a unique texture that has always nourished the arts.

Although art of all types has applications, it has generally remained in specific areas of the city. As we approach the present day, art incorporated into the city has elicited many reactions due to its unfamiliarity. It has sparked debates on both spatial balance and within society. The form, location, and meaning of public art's presence in public spaces create situations that question these spaces and test their boundaries.

Why public art is at the center of these debates, and the mark it leaves on the fabric of the city, is of critical importance for understanding both urban space and social structure. Istanbul, with its multi-layered history and heterogeneous cultural structure, offers a unique intersection and a rich source of data for understanding the dynamics of public space. In this context, the study aims to analyze how contemporary public art practices in Istanbul are incorporated into social production processes, how they intervene in existing spatial practices, and ultimately how they transform public space.

1.1. Aim

Public art occupies an important position in terms of the relationships it establishes with space and society within the city. The positioning and objectives of public art within the city have been included in urban design research. While we see examples abroad of public art included in urban planning from the outset, there are few in our country. The reasons for this can be seen as both a lack of planning and a lack of relationships within society. This deficiency within the city has also been reflected in theory, as there has been insufficient research on the production methods of contemporary public art applications, their role within the city, and the connections they establish with the public. The fact that existing studies have not gone beyond explaining the efforts of public art practices to reach and convey messages to society, as opposed to private art practices, has led to this research.

The primary aim of this thesis is to analyze contemporary public art practices in Istanbul within the context of urban space production, examining their spatial, political, and

social dimensions. The study approaches public art as a variable actor in constant interaction with the city's physical and social fabric. In a city like Istanbul, where boundaries are blurred and public space is often defined top-down by authority, the presence of a work of art raises critical questions, such as how well it fits its context or whose message it conveys.

This research first questions the fundamental relationship between the artwork and its environment: Does an intervention interact with that space and convey a message to society, or does it merely serve the criteria set by the authorities? The question of how art can transform conflicted public spaces under control into a new arena for interaction also takes shape within this framework. Through selected case studies, the accessibility of artworks will be opened for discussion: Is the artwork an untouchable object to be viewed from a distance, or is it a process that gains meaning through the active participation of the public? Furthermore, the study explores how contemporary art practices in Istanbul relate to urban political and commercial strategies and how alternative spaces that extend beyond galleries/museums, defined as “white cubes,” redefine the concept of publicness, and examines how different social groups and everyday practices shape or transform the space of these interventions in the public sphere.

1.2. Scope

Istanbul province was selected for the research because it is the city with the most public art applications in Türkiye. Istanbul, with its multifaceted socio-political and historical past and the variability of its urban dynamics, is at the center of public art discussions. In this context, it offers many examples and different frameworks. The research, shaped around the transformation of public art in Türkiye, focuses primarily on the period between the 2000s and the present day, when contemporary public art works were created. The scope of this study is limited to the post-2000 period in Istanbul, during which public art in Turkey definitively broke away from the traditional concept of the monument and transformed into a social process in the modern sense.

The cases to be examined in the study were selected from works placed in the city at different times over 25 years for different purposes. In the city of Istanbul, the study focuses on the locations of works within three spatial typologies: urban squares, neighborhoods, and temporary spaces. This allows for the exploration of the diverse interactions among the city's various public layers.

The study focuses on contemporary initiatives emerging from the dynamics of urban transformation and the increasing prominence of neoliberal policies in the city. Conceptually, the research focuses on works that align with established criteria of contemporary public art, excluding purely decorative or state-sanctioned aesthetic objects. Works have been selected that actively invite the viewer to participate in the creative process and facilitate the reproduction of the public sphere by creating experiential spaces.

1.3. Method and Thesis Structure

This study adopts a qualitative research approach to analyze the complex formation of contemporary public art practices in Istanbul and their potential to transform the urban space. This methodology aims to deeply understand not only the artworks themselves but also the social, political, and spatial processes in which these works are produced, exhibited, and received.

This thesis primarily examines the origins of the concepts of public space and public place, explains public art, and investigates how these concepts have taken shape both globally and in Turkey. The thesis examines how public art is situated within the city, as well as the physical conditions and relationships of its locations. In addition to this examination, critical theoretical frameworks such as the public sphere and the production of space have been employed to understand social relationships. This theoretical analysis will be concretized through a detailed examination of specific contemporary public art interventions and projects in Istanbul based on the criteria of the concept of public art, and the thesis's arguments will be addressed.

In this study, the case study method was adopted to determine the nature of public art practices across Istanbul and to situate them within a theoretical framework. The works

included in the study were selected through purposive sampling, taking into account their spatial characteristics within different public layers of the urban landscape, the nature of the relationship they establish with the viewer, and the socio-political dynamics they embody. The location of a work within the city, its intervention in urban flow, and the social impact it creates were accepted as fundamental determinants; in this context, the case studies were structured around three main spatial typologies. These categories are defined as "Urban Centers and Parks," which function as focal points representing power and official discourse; "Neighborhoods and Streets," the starting points of daily life and social production; and "Temporary/Alternative Spaces," threshold areas lacking a static identity where confrontations with urban memory take place (Table 1.3.1). This classification aims to systematically demonstrate how public art generates different strategies and interactions across the city's various layers.

Table 1.3.1 Selected Artworks

Urban Centers (Squares) / Parks	**Neighborhoods / Streets**	**Temporary / Alternative Spaces**
- Ayşe Erkmen-Açık Sütun (1992) / Kemal Önsoy-Karşılıklı Yardımlaşma (2005)	- Oda Project (2000-2009)	- İnci Eviner - Ortak Eylem Aygıtı (2013)
- Can Altay - PARK (2010)	- Acı Kahve (2013)	-Yan Köşe (2017)
- Gezi Park - Duran Adam (2013)		-Hale Tenger - Suret, Zuhur, Tezahür (2019)

In selecting artworks, the focus is on those with the potential to transform the viewer from a passive observer into an active participant, as well as on interventions that disrupt the flow of the urban environment. The analysis focuses on evaluating the multi-layered relationships these works establish with both space and society. Throughout the evaluation, the technical forms of the works' integration into the urban environment, their levels of public accessibility, and how they disrupt or redefine daily urban routines have been examined in detail. This entire methodological process is complemented by an examination of the production practices and spatialization of artworks within their

historical contexts, read in conjunction with the specific political, economic, and sociological dynamics of their respective eras.

The introduction outlines the study's purpose, scope, and methodology. The second section will explain the definition and historical development of public art. A presentation of the theoretical framework and development of the concepts of public and public space will precede this explanation. The starting point of public art will be explained, with examples of how art moved from museums and galleries into public spaces and of what was done outside the traditional understanding of art. The third section examines the complex relationship between public space, power, and visibility. It explores, from a theoretical framework, how public art settles into public space, what its role is within the city, and how it becomes part of our daily practices. The fourth section focuses on Istanbul, the study's main subject, and analyzes examples from the city. It examines the development of public art since the 2000s, along with its institutional and political contexts. It analyzes how site selection criteria, accessibility, and sanctity issues operate across political boundaries and within the city through interventions. Through case studies selected from Istanbul, it demonstrates the practical implications of the thesis's main arguments.

2. GROUNDS OF PUBLIC ART

The increasing visibility of the public sphere and the expansion and shaping of its use have heightened the visibility of art within it. The background of public art involves questions about where, for whom, and how art is produced. These questions are shaped by the meaning and transformation of the public and public space. In other words, public art is an intersection between space, society, and culture. It is not merely an aesthetic work of art in a public space; it is deeply embedded in political, social, and spatial processes that shape how communities experience and engage with shared spaces. (Foster, 1985) To understand public art, one must examine how it is produced, how its theoretical framework is formed, its position within the space, and its reflections in society. By considering all factors, we can understand how art's changing place, space, and society are affected. This chapter explores the origins and definitions of public art, focusing on how its meaning and function have shifted in relation to evolving conceptions of public space and publicness.

2.1 Definition And Inception

To understand public art, one must first examine the origins of the public sphere to grasp its nature, and then understand public spaces. First, what is the ‘public’? How did it come into being, and where does this word originate? The meaning of a word based on its etymology and its acceptance in society has developed slightly differently in each language. The way in which people form and understand the public sphere and publicness has shaped how this is reflected in life and space. According to Habermas, the German-based word “public” (Öffentlich/Öffentlichkeit) is derived from the root “öffen”, meaning “openness”. (1989) Thus, the meaning of the word is based on openness and expresses the opposite of the private, that which belongs to the whole community. The word “private” comes from the German word “privat,” which is derived from the Latin word “privatus.” The English word ‘private’ and the French word “privé” have the same meaning. The English word ‘public’ comes from the Latin word ‘populus’ (people) and has French origins. (Doğan, 2020) The word has a

meaning rooted in the etymology of the word, which revolves around humans. After the 14th century, it became a word based on generality that began to include the meaning of ‘people.’ (Doğan, 2020) These words generally developed around Latin in Western languages, so they contain similar phonetics and meanings.

In Turkish, the word ‘kamu’ derives from the Old Turkish word “kamag / kamug”, meaning “all”, “everything”, “the whole”. (Nişanyan, 2025) From the 13th to the 19th century, it was used more in poetic language, and after the republic, with the simplification of the language, it gained meanings such as ‘all state organs serving the people’ and ‘the entire population of a country.’ (Doğan, 2020) Later, confusion arose due to its use in place of both ‘people’ and ‘state,’ leading to the emergence of a more official meaning related to the state. Unlike German, it is somewhat distant from the concept of clarity. However, due to its original holistic meaning, it can also be used to express the people in a more inclusive manner. The use of this word in various forms has led to confusion and difficulty in questioning and defining publicness in relation to society and spaces.

The public sphere is the center of modern society, and in order to understand this formation, it is necessary to examine its historical and social development. (Habermas, 1989) The public sphere is an area that lies between society and the state. A comprehensive understanding of public art necessitates an initial foundation in the concepts of publicness and the public sphere. Rooted in political philosophy and urban theory, public space refers not merely to physical locations such as streets, squares, or parks, but to spaces that are accessible, shared, and collectively experienced. Habermas's (1989) conception of the *public sphere* emphasized a communicative space where citizens can participate in rational-critical debate, laying the groundwork for how publicness is socially and politically constructed. Similarly, urban theorists such as Henri Lefebvre (1974) argue that space is not neutral or passive but is produced through social relations, power structures, and everyday practices. In this framework, “public” does not simply denote openness, but also implies visibility, participation, and contestation.

In the Middle Ages, public space was not a separate social space. Areas where people of high status were represented in public were a status symbol and existed as areas where

they displayed their power to the people. (Habermas, 1989) Later, a public space began to emerge where public authority began to be criticized and legitimized. It began to transform into an area where society operated according to its own laws. In the modern sense, the private and public spheres began to separate. The private sphere referred to areas excluded from the state, while the public sphere belonged to the state, which had gained existence against the ruler, and was under public authority. (Habermas, 1989) Buildings and institutions operating under the state were called “public” and served the public. This was a public sphere formed by the gathering of private individuals, which began to function as a forum where governing authorities were required to legitimize themselves before the public.

With the communities forming in the spaces and the discussions that began, the purpose served by the public space changed. Public space, as defined by Lefebvre (1974), is political and strategic. It is used as a tool by those in power to ‘rationally’ plan and organize society. It is a complex social product that is constantly produced by social relations, political power, economic processes, and cultural meanings, beyond being a physical space. At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, with the intertwining of state and society, organizations representing different segments of society were able to engage in discussions with the state and reach compromises. Coffeehouses embraced broader segments of the middle class, including artisans and shop owners, by making access less formal and easier, and became a center for political criticism. (Habermas, 1989) The state and the upper classes reproduce space through social relations and use strategies of homogenization, fragmentation, and hierarchization in the process. Capitalism produces its own space through urbanization under the pressure of the global market. Plans and architectural theories play a critical role in the formation of public space, eliminating the natural process of spatial and temporal differences.

Certeau (1988) explains the situation in a similar way; according to him, there are strategies created by those with power. These people look down on cities from above and create spaces according to plans. Thus, public spaces become places created for the public by those in power, but the people who actually create the city are the ordinary

people walking below. In response to these strategies, everyday practices always develop new tactics. These are, in fact, the public spaces defined by the public itself.

Examining Türkiye, the development of public and private areas has progressed in a similar manner. In the pre-Republican era, due to the conservative structure of society, women and men had separate spaces. While men frequented places such as coffee houses and madrasas, women's social spaces were mainly bathhouses. (Akşit, 2009) According to Habermas, coffeehouses, which were the first places where public life emerged, can be considered public spaces in the Ottoman Empire, as they were places where not only a certain segment of society, but also different classes came together outside of religion. With the new ideologies formed around secularism in the Republic, the Western concept of “public space” was adopted, and certain segments of society began to design spaces accordingly. For this reason, contrary to the concept of public space described above, these spaces were designed from top to bottom with state support for the purpose of developing the people, rather than by the people themselves. With this trend, public buildings such as community centers, opera houses, and theatres began to be built. (Sağlam et al., 2019) Efforts were made to eliminate gender discrimination, and we began to see women in these spaces. Although these structures were built for the people, they were state-supported projects and progressed in a manner contrary to the natural evolution and advancement of society. They enabled the state to exert influence over the people through these spaces and were used as a political tool. In recent times, however, with the decline of state influence, the adoption of a capitalist system, and the rise of individualism, public spaces have undergone another transformation. Spaces that were initially sought to be made public with state support have, over time, been used in the opposite way, and due to factors such as security controls, these spaces have become semi-public spaces. Seeing that public spaces were becoming less public, people began to create new spaces through individual and social movements, and to “reclaim” spaces. (Sağlam et al., 2019) Thus, in addition to traditional building types, contemporary art centers, sports facilities, collectives, and other public spaces with specific functions began to emerge. Theaters, concert halls, and museums also began to welcome wider and more diverse audiences (Habermas, 1989). In this way, the public judgment of art led to people embracing art.

The fact that museums have become more accessible to the general public has pushed them to become multidimensional institutions. They create objects and exhibitions that attract the attention of the global community and try to attract visitors by planning leisure activities. (Dean, 2002) A variety of events and a well-presented exhibition program increase the trust of the community. Museum exhibitions aim to create an environment for social and academic enlightenment and a free expression environment for the cultural and scientific progress of society. (Dean, 2002)

Public art, as a distinct artistic category, emerged prominently in the 20th century as artists began to move beyond institutional settings such as museums and galleries to engage directly with urban environments. Especially after the world wars, there was a desire to establish a new order, and new explorations were reflected in art movements. Artworks created in different spaces, using new materials and methods, began to appear in public spaces as a form of resistance against the established order. (Foster et al., 2016,) While earlier forms of public art, such as monuments, fountains, or architectural ornamentation, served commemorative or decorative functions tied to state power or religious institutions, contemporary public art has evolved to challenge these traditional purposes. The modern emergence of public art was shaped by social movements, urban renewal projects, and a growing critique of institutionalized art practices. Especially during the 1960s and 70s, artists sought to democratize art by situating it in public space, making it accessible, participatory, and responsive to local contexts. This marked a shift from static, symbolic objects to more dynamic, context-sensitive, and socially engaged works.

According to Miles (1997), public art is produced and managed outside traditional art spaces such as museums and galleries. With this definition, Miles (1997) draws attention to the duality inherent in public art: firstly, public art serves a decorative function within a redesigned urban landscape centered on user needs, and at the same time, it transforms public spaces into areas for social criticism and participation in the public interest. While Miles considers and questions the existence of public artworks as aesthetic objects within the city, Remesar draws a clearer line against this situation. According to Remesar (1997), public art extends beyond sculptures, buildings, and urban furniture to encompass every place where people live and work, such as parks,

streets, hospitals, or shopping centers. It can appear in many different forms, from small sculptures to massive structures, from murals to transportation systems and landscape designs. Public art is an important part of urban renewal plans because, as Remesar explains, public art should be specific to the space and lose its meaning when removed from that space. He explains the distinction between “art in public spaces” and “public art” as follows: public art should not be placed in the city to fill a void; rather, it should be installed by establishing a dialogue with its surroundings, materials, and social memory (Remesar, 1997).

Hilde Hein (2006) removes public art from being an extension of traditional museum logic, defining it as an ‘experience-based’ practice. She does not consider state-commissioned sculptures to be public art and argues that public art has a public responsibility. A work is “public” as long as it reflects a community's shared values, discussions, and memory. This approach also suggests that true public art is a practice in which the viewer participates in the work's meaning-making process and questions the ownership of the space. According to Lacy, the new type of public art is a visual art that uses both traditional and non-traditional media to communicate and interact with a broad and diverse audience on issues directly related to people's lives. This understanding of art is based primarily on “engagement” rather than the physical placement of sculptures in spaces.

At this point, it is also important to understand the difference between art in the public space and public art. Along with constantly renewed publicness, according to Hanru (2007), contemporary public art cannot be satisfied with monumental or finished forms. It should be open-ended, participatory, and collaborative, producing social relationships and serving to construct a publicness whose meaning is constantly renewed. Hanru sees art as a legitimate part of a larger social and activist movement.

According to Lin (2025), public art also functions as a visual and cultural language through which communities negotiate meanings, shared values, and specific urban identities. It is a communication system through which communities discuss themselves and determine how they want to be seen by the world, providing cities with a space to express their values and challenge social norms.

Discussions on Public Art in the literature in Türkiye have progressed in a similar manner. Especially after the 1960s, with new dynamics, the widespread understanding of public art began to change: a new dimension of visual perception emerged alongside conceptual works in public spaces (Çevik et al. 2019). Instead of being a commodity, it sometimes challenged traditions, entered a process of instant consumption, and became something that could be documented with snapshots rather than lasting. In its new sense, public art is not limited to open spaces but can also meet the audience in enclosed public spaces accessible to communities. Furthermore, the interdisciplinary nature of contemporary art has greatly expanded the scope of artists' activities.

Between 2006 and 2007, the activities organized by Santral Istanbul as part of the European Union's Culture 2000 project led to a detailed discussion of the concept of "new-generation public art." (Aksoy & Ertürk, 2008). It was emphasized that public art should employ new strategies not merely for sculptures in public spaces, but rather for its relationship with the physical environment and within the urban and social context. It was argued that artists should establish better connections with local public life and daily life and contribute to the transformation of the environment through new potential public models.

Within the scope of the 13th Biennial in Istanbul, this definition has been slightly modified. In Turkey, traditional monuments and works are generally considered public art, but the understanding and objective of public art have changed with new expressions (Erdemci, 2013). While public art is funded and commissioned by the state, art in the public sphere may not be commissioned and may position itself critically in the public sphere, supported by independent artists' initiatives or private sources. In this context, their work has triggered a new public definition of art statements in the public sphere through periodic changes, and this has begun to take root in society.

Parlakkalay (2020) is defined as an 'interventionist' structure that addresses art in the public sphere as public art, healing the disconnect between the subject and the space, and opening up the urban fabric to mental associations. This art practice disrupts the sterility of urban space by transforming the individual from a passive observer into a participatory actor, thereby evolving it into a truly 'livable' shared space.

To explain in general terms, public art is a concept that refers to the display of art in public spaces. Such artworks, which usually take place in streets, squares, parks, and other public spaces, can take various forms such as sculpture, mural, installation, and performance art. According to the definition of the Association for Public Art, public art is an understanding of art that is not limited to a specific art form and can be produced in various forms, sizes, and techniques. (*What Is Public Art?*, n.d.) It can be produced in many different dimensions, abstract or realistic forms, and can be produced by different methods such as casting, carving, construction, assembly, or painting. It can be produced specifically for the area where it is placed, or it can create contrasts. What makes public art different is the combination of the production process, its location, and the meaning it carries. It can reflect social values, transform environmental perception, give identity to the space, or make the viewer question their assumptions. Public art projects are often multi-actor and interactive processes, involving artists, designers, architects, local communities, public authorities, and supporting institutions. For these varying reasons, as will be explained in the next section, the definition of public art has changed and is changing over time.

Public art practices, as mentioned above, constitute a broad field of production and can be categorized in various ways based on their application types, continuity, forms of expression, techniques, or intended purpose. The most common application types are installation, surface painting, urban furniture, open-air exhibitions, performance, and play. They can appear in concrete or abstract, temporary or permanent forms, using traditional (sculpture, monument, mural, surface painting, relief, etc.) or contemporary (kinetic, cybernetic, interactive, digitally controlled, etc.) techniques. (Table 2.1.1)

Table 2.1.1 Categorization of Public Art (Sivaslıoğlu Özaltın, 2015)

Application	**Continuity**	**Form of Expression**	**Production Technique**
Installation	Permanent	Concrete	Traditional (Sculpture, mural, etc.)
Mural			
Urban Furniture	Temporary	Abstract	Contemporary (Interactive, digital, etc.)
Open-air exhibitions			
Performance			
Play			

Carmona (2021) has approached the categorization of public art through the urban design process. In addition to production form, duration, and intervention form, he has categorized the other two groups differently. He has also divided production form into fine arts and performance art. He has named the third group the scale and architectural relationship. He divided the iconic structures that emerged with post-urbanism, high art or sculpture buildings, and elements that facilitate orientation within the city, such as landscape and sign elements, into three groups. In the last group, he categorized art according to the tradition to which it belongs in the city. Art can also be a decorative element that enriches the urban landscape. To enrich life, it must have a social and cultural meaning alongside urban forms (Marshall, 2016).

Based on Miles' public art definition, (1997) contemporary public art reveals itself in the urban space through four fundamental approaches that go beyond its physical existence in a theoretical sense: First, “Art as a Social Process,” where art is not a finished object but an ‘act’ or action; second, “Integrated Design,” where art becomes an integral part of urban design and infrastructure. Third, “Temporary and Critical Interventions” that question the politics of space; and finally, “Anti-Monuments” that question traditional permanence. These approaches remove art from being merely an aesthetic decoration and enable it to take on a dual role as a process of social criticism and participation in the public sphere. Ultimately, Miles advocates for art to become a democratic exercise of imagination that envisions a “livable” and “convivial” future for a successful urban experience.

The historical transformation processes that have taken place reveal that the public sphere is never a static structure, but rather a space constantly negotiated through political ideologies and shifting social relations. In this context, public art projects also play a role in transforming the space by creating new contexts through social relations. The sample group focused on in this thesis will be examined not as monumental sculptures detached from their surroundings and used solely to disseminate traditional state ideologies, but rather as public artworks that establish a critical connection with society, intervene in urban flow, and open up a visible space for public debate.

The theoretical discussions and etymological origins addressed above demonstrate that the concept of the public sphere denotes a political arena that is constantly negotiated between society and power. The definition of public art has also taken shape on this fluid ground, evolving from being an "object in space" to becoming a "process that produces the space itself." However, this conceptual transformation emerged from fractures that challenged the institutional boundaries of art (museums and galleries) and has undergone changes over time. Therefore, to fully grasp the conceptual foundation underpinning contemporary public art practices, one must examine the processes through which art has evolved and the outcomes it has achieved through these definitions, using examples at the universal level. In the following section, the practices of art spilling into the streets and the formal transformations it has undergone will be addressed from a historical perspective.

2.2 Evolution

The shaping of the concept of art in modern society has been framed within certain boundaries, and museums and galleries have worked in this direction to exhibit art and bring it to the audience. Along with social developments, the way art is exhibited and reaches society has changed, moving beyond the museum environment. Work has been done against the traditional concept of art, and we have begun to encounter public art. Public art is a concept that develops between the triad of art, society, and public space. It reaches the audience in different ways through these elements. Although we saw it in the form of sculptures or monuments within the city in the early days, it later found new motivations, forms, and functions according to the cultural values and socio-political

situation of the period. Tracing this evolution allows us to see how public art has moved from static, symbolic objects to dynamic, site-responsive, and socially engaged practices, revealing its capacity not only to reflect but also to transform the urban fabric and the lived experiences within it. In this section, we will first examine how art exists in museums and galleries, and then how it becomes public and enters the public sphere.

Museums house artworks within a specific framework based on their founding purpose, the context they encompass, and the audience they serve. For these reasons, the works there should have a specific conceptual framework and, according to their requirements, specific display formats. They ensure their sustainability by organizing exhibitions suitable for the audience, and particularly their donors. The sole reason for the existence of museums is people, so visitor behavior must be carefully studied. Dean (2002) examines visitors' experiences through different concepts: he approaches them in terms of spaces, elements, and human behavior. Well-designed spaces are necessary to create a quality exhibition area and to inform the public correctly; otherwise, visitors will lose interest without paying attention to the content. The spaces should be large enough so that visitors do not feel suffocated or oppressed, but small enough so that they do not lose control. The flow should be well organized, and transition spaces should be separated according to their functions. Elements such as color, texture, light, and shape in the space should be designed in accordance with the purpose of the exhibition and should not overshadow the artworks. (Dean, 2002)

In addition, it is very important to ensure that the viewer's attention is not distracted, as this facilitates better learning. People gather information through words (the most effort), sensations (taste, touch, smell, hearing - more direct), and images (the most powerful, most memorable). (Dean, 2002) People tend to touch what they see to confirm their experience. Therefore, if they are particularly interested in a work of art, they may want to touch it, but this is often a negative interaction for the museum and the artist. It can damage the work and the impression it leaves on the viewer. For this reason, warnings are posted to reduce touching and prevent damage to the works. These warnings can leave a negative impression on the viewer.

These arrangements, made according to the needs of the museum space, generally result to transform heterogeneous objects into a single coherent representational universe.

However, this effort can homogenize meaning by erasing the original contexts and diversity of the objects. Museums can isolate artworks from their own world, causing art to exist in an isolated universe. By commodifying the works in the spaces where they are exhibited, museums can turn them into commercial products and prevent viewers from freely experiencing them. Art becomes commercialized, supporting the institutional order and separating it from everyday life. (Crimp, 1993)

Museums also hold control as institutions of power and often serve to perpetuate bourgeois hegemony and suppress critical or political art (Crimp, 1993). When we look at the situation of museums, the public nature of institutions begins to be questioned, creating a very limited space for both the viewer and the artist. Plans made under the name of publicness lose their reality and sincerity.

The first emergence of public art can be traced back to the economic crisis of the 1930s. During the Great Depression, the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration launched the "Public Art Project" and the "Federal Art Project" to support unemployed artists (Antmen, 2013). This government support led to the production of numerous artworks for public buildings such as prisons, hospitals, and schools. This example shows how the balance of power over art shifted towards the public sphere.

Over time, as artists began to react against the institutional structures imposed on art, and against the pressures and rules of museums and galleries, we see that art has changed direction and that the spaces where artists exhibit their work have begun to change. Artists began to distance themselves from museums and galleries and look for alternative venues. Thus, art itself can now become a public object. First and foremost, artists such as Daniel Buren, Marcel Broodthaers, Richard Serra, Hans Haacke, Cindy Sherman, Sherrie Levine, Louise Lawler, and Allan Kaprow have used their own exhibition practices to criticize the institutional power of museums and the commodification of art. They have taken their work outside of the conventional, made it more accessible to society, and changed the forms and spaces of exhibition. (Kwon, 2002) Public art thus began to reveal itself and be defined.

At the beginning of the 20th century, following the world wars, a new era began, and new perspectives began to emerge. With this new world order, new explorations also

emerged in art (Öztürk, 2021). In contrast to the conventional artworks visible in galleries and museums, public art emerged in the 1960s as a reaction against the increasing commodification of art and the prevailing ideals of art's autonomy and universality. In the early period, modernist abstract sculptures were often installed in public spaces such as parks, squares, or entrance areas of federal buildings. Rather than creating site-specific works, selected works were placed in appropriate locations. Institutions such as the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) have supported this kind of art, aiming to bring the "best" of contemporary art to a wider audience. In these approaches, space is usually secondary, the chosen work of art is in the foreground, and the model is merely its accompaniment. Critics have called this kind of art's indifference to space "plop art". (Kwon, 2002, 65)

In Japan, the country most affected and devastated by World War II, we can see the changes in art more clearly with the formation of a new order. Breaking away from traditional norms and moving beyond mainstream art forms, the Gutai Art Association was formed in 1954 in Osaka by Yoshihara Jiro, Kanayama Akira, Murakami Saburo, Shiraga Kazuo, and Shozo Shimamoto, providing us with the first examples of today's definition of public art (*Gutai*, n.d). The Gutai manifesto talks about breaking ties with the art of the past and trying out new, untried things, and being original. The group criticizes the way works are presented in galleries and grand buildings as if they were something other than themselves, arguing that this causes the works to lose their identity. They aim to create art by avoiding presenting materials as something else (Öztürk, 2021). Artists from the Gutai group, known as an art movement reflecting freedom, have created works such as muddying paint with feet (Kazuo Shiraga), throwing bottles of paint (Shozo Shimamoto) (Figure 2.2.1), and wearing a dress made of electric bulbs (Atsuko Tanaka). According to some art critics, Gutai's work influenced many other artists and shaped movements. Allan Kaprow is also seen as a pioneer of the Happening movement.



Figure 2.2.1 Throwing bottles of paint by Shozo Shimamoto (1956), printed 2012, Kiyoji Otsuji. Source: Tate, https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/otsuji-shimamoto-shozo-making-a-painting-by-hurling-glass-bottles-of-paint-against-a-p82288

Kaprow abandoned traditional art forms such as painting, collage, and installation, which he defined as “gallery art,” and embraced a new understanding of art. Allan Kaprow's theory of *Art as Life* (2008) and his practice of "Happenings" during the 1950s and 60s initiated a more radical break from object-based art. Kaprow rejected the formalism and institutionalization of modernist art, advocating for ephemeral, process-based events that blurred the boundary between art and everyday life. His participatory actions emphasized co-creation, spontaneity, and the democratization of artistic experience. Unlike traditional public art, which speaks to the public, Kaprow's work sought to speak with the public. This shift marked a broader transformation in public art from permanent, symbolic structures to temporary, interactive, and socially engaged practices.

The approach seen in the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s (e.g., Richard Serra, Mary Miss) aimed to develop public art by adopting the principles of site-specificity. (Kwon, 2002) Their artworks establish a dialogue with space, integrate with landscape and architecture, and sometimes function as street furniture. In this period, site-specific works were prioritized, aiming for social benefit and a greater understanding of art by the public.

Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc* (1981), shown in Figure 2.2.2, is a 36-meter-long curved steel sculpture installed in Federal Plaza, New York, and exemplifies a transitional moment in this history. Although monumental in scale, Serra's site-specific approach challenged traditional commemorative roles by directly engaging with the physical and behavioral experience of the viewer. However, the controversy surrounding its removal in 1989 after public complaints that it disrupted daily use of the space revealed enduring tensions between artistic intent, public reception, and spatial politics. While *Tilted Arc* resisted conventional monumentality, it remained non-participatory in nature, imposing a spatial intervention without engaging users in its design or purpose.



Figure 2.2.2 View of Federal Plaza with *Tilted Arc* seen from the side
Photograph by Susan Swider. Source: Tate, Lost Art: Richard Serra,
https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/richard-serra-1923/lost-art-richard-serra

In the late 1980s, with the theories of Suzanne Lacy, the main theme of public art became social issues, political activism, and community participation. (Kwon, 2002) In these approaches, the space where work is located is separated from its physical characteristics and becomes a network of social relations and a "community" itself. Thus, art would take place in everyday life, and audiences would play a more active role, strengthening socio-political development.

One of the best examples of public art that can be cited as an example of social issues and political activism in this process comes from the Guerrilla Girls collective. Formed in New York in 1985 as a collective of anonymous female artists and activists, the

Guerrilla Girls emerged to stand against the ongoing gender and racial inequalities in the art world (*GUERRILLA GIRLS: REINVENTING THE 'F' WORD: FEMINISM*, n.d.). The group's founding was based on a protest against the fact that only 13 of the 165 artists featured in the 1984 exhibition "An International Survey of Recent Painting and Sculpture" at the MoMA in New York were women. Using the names of deceased female artists as pseudonyms and wearing iconic gorilla masks to remain anonymous and ensure their work took precedence over individual identities, the Guerrilla Girls' fundamental aim was to position themselves as the "Conscience of the Art World" and expose discrimination in art, cinema, politics, and popular culture through sharp humor, striking statistics, and eye-catching visual materials. The group's early and influential works were typically posters prepared with black-and-white typography and plastered on the streets of New York. Among the most well-known of these pioneering projects are the poster "Do Women Have to be Naked to Get into the Met. Museum?" (1989) poster (Figure 2.2.3), which highlights the striking disparity between the representation of female artists and the depiction of nude female figures at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and other early posters that reveal the economic inequality women face in the art world through statistical data.



Figure 2.2.3 Vogue,1991, Photo by George Lance. Source: https://archive.vogue.com/article/1991/1/now-then

Another type of public art that developed at the same time is called ‘land art’. In the 20th century, with the rise of environmental movements, some artists who reacted against gallery spaces also incorporated environmentalism into the core of their work (Antmen, 2013). Alongside social change and civil society movements, artists seeking alternative spaces in response to the modernist and elitist stance of museums/galleries turned not only to urban areas but also to nature. Thus, in the 1960s, many installation-based art projects were carried out on large plots of land in the United States. Artists transformed the ‘landscape’ into a real space rather than presenting nature through works such as paintings and sculptures, as had been done for centuries. This movement, referred to by various terms such as “Land Art,” “Earth Art,” “Environmental Art,” and “Soil Art,” gave rise to a new type of public monument that reflected the natural environment in cities, rather than traditional monuments depicting heroic deeds or social events.

An example of land art is Robert Smithson's iconic work Spiral Jetty, created in 1970, shown in Figure 2.2.4. Smithson chose this barren and desolate location because of its expansive surrounding landscape, the nearby abandoned oil derricks, and the Golden Spike monument, which symbolizes the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869 (Shapiro, 2019). Smithson viewed these as industrial remnants or entropic residues and installed a site-specific work intended to interact with the changing conditions of the surrounding water, soil, and atmosphere.



Figure 2.2.4 Robert Smithson, Spiral Jetty, 1970 (Great Salt Lake, Utah) (photo: Gianfranco Gorgoni).
Source: https://smarthistory.org/robert-smithson-spiral-jetty/

Public art in Türkiye generally takes the form of sculpture. From the Ottoman Empire to the present day, Turkish sculpture has undergone a profound transformation in the public sphere, evolving from architectural ornamentation to ideological symbols and then to contemporary forms integrated with their surroundings (Bulat et al., 2014). In the Western sense, sculpture appeared in the Ottoman Empire after the Tanzimat period in the form of fountains, clock towers, and non-figurative monuments, while with the transition to the Republic, it was seen as monuments to heroes at the focal points of spaces. Throughout these processes, public art has always progressed with state support and has been directed by those in power.

The Istanbul Municipality organized two competitions, the first in 1973 and the second in 1992, inviting artists to submit proposals for sculptures to be placed in public spaces. In the first competition, 20 sculptures were installed in various locations throughout the city, primarily in parks. (Ece, 2011) In the second competition, 10 sculptures were installed, focusing on more abstract works. In the second competition, greater attention was paid to location selection, and site-specific works based on the conceptual background of the projects were prioritized.

In Türkiye, due to shortcomings, social resistance, and the late development of the concept of public space, public art in the contemporary sense also emerged later. In response to state-sponsored art and power structures, young artists in the 1990s undertook many initiatives with their own resources and created archives, most of which are not open to the public. For this reason, there are not enough examples in Türkiye. Adnan Tönel (2015), influenced by the Happening movement, was one of the pioneers of this movement in Türkiye. He first organized a performance consisting of spontaneous movements and improvisations accompanied by music without a script in 1988 while he was a student at the Istanbul University State Conservatory, with the participation of his friends (Tönel, 2015). A section of these performances is shown in Figure 2.2.5.



Figure 2.2.5 Adnan Tönel's Happening performance depicts an individual subjected to violence. Source: https://www.scribd.com/document/397682193/SANATCI-REFLEKS%C4%B0-HAPPENING-%C5%9E%C4%B0DDET

The most notable of these “Happenings” led by Adnan Tönel, and the one that relatively fits the definition of public art, was the 3x10m white canvas they spread on the ground in Taksim in the 1990s when a bookstore was about to open. (Tönel, 2015) The people of Taksim, who were interested in this canvas, soon began lying down on it, and the Karga members (Adnan Tönel, Burçin Özdemir, İlhan Babaoğlu, Sevan Ataoğlu, Cem Çaltuluoğlu) began drawing the silhouettes of these people on the canvas. This work was then displayed on the wall of the publishing house for a week. Holding this performance in Taksim, one of Istanbul's most crowded venues, naturally ensured it reached a larger audience. Taksim, being both a center for arts and culture and a hub for consumption, attracted a more socio-culturally diverse audience. Furthermore, considering that the performance was held during a bookstore opening, where the crowd was already engaged with art, we can conclude that the performance achieved a more productive interaction.

The evolution of public art from static monuments to participatory practices marks a critical shift in both its form and function within urban life. Traditionally, public art was aligned with notions of monumentality, magnificent sculptures, statues, and memorials commissioned by state powers to symbolize authority, national identity, or historical memory. These works were often inaccessible in meaning and unresponsive to their spatial or social context. Contemporary public art now often prioritizes dialogue, local

relevance, and community involvement, reflecting a reconceptualization of both space and spectatorship.

The concept of public and publicness, which changed with the social structure and political ideologies of the period in Turkey, has produced results that are different from those seen from a global perspective. The same situation has also been influential in the emergence and progress of public art. The state-supported cultural and artistic environment has never fully belonged to the public or been transferred to the public sphere within certain frameworks.

Based on discussions and examples of public art, it points to its inevitable interaction with power relations within the urban fabric, visibility policies, and the flow of daily life. Therefore, before moving on to the practical manifestations and case studies of public art in Istanbul, the spatial and social codes of this interaction must be examined. In the following section, the role of public art in the urban space will be analyzed in depth within the context of the social production of space, focusing on visibility regimes shaped by mechanisms of power, interventions in the flow of the public sphere, and individuals' daily life practices.

3. SPATIAL AND SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF PUBLIC ART

3.1 Space, Power and Visibility

Public space is not only a physical condition but also a whole of social, cultural, and political relations. These spaces are reproduced through power relations; their use, purpose, and users can change. Although public spaces appear to be ‘open to the public’ by their very nature, they also have an exclusionary side in line with spatial elements and planning. Architectural designs and urban planning can highlight inequalities within society and fail to create sufficiently inclusive spaces. As Certeau (1988) says, those who plan the city and formulate strategies are administrators and upper-class urban planners. Since the power of the space is in their hands, these public spaces can take an exclusionary position towards young people, people with disabilities, or marginalized groups. Areas opened with private interests in mind or primarily for consumption cater to a specific audience, causing the exclusion of other groups.

The best example of this is Galataport in Istanbul. Designed as a supposedly public space intended to be open to the public, Galataport has turned into an open-air shopping mall by the sea, reflecting the growing consumer society, as shown in Figures 3.1.1-3.1.2. In addition, as in Figure 3.1.3, we can only access this area, which also houses the Istanbul Modern Museum, by passing through certain security checkpoints. As a result, this public space has become a ‘semi-public’ space catering to a specific segment of society. The Istanbul Museum of Modern Art is already a self-contained institution with its own security and ticket sales points, making its public nature more debatable. Being located within such a structure distances it even further from the public sphere. The open artworks located outside the venue are also generally removed from the public sphere and become less visible because they are caught at the initial security points.



Figure 3.1.1 Galataport clock tower square

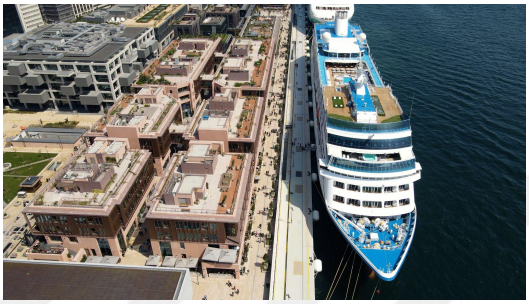


Figure 3.1.2 Galataport İstanbul Pier Source: https://galataport.com/tr/gorseller



Figure 3.1.3 Galataport Clock Tower Square Entrance

When placed in a specific area, art creates awareness in society and begins to take on different meanings for individuals. The message conveyed by a work of art determines its placement based on the potential impact it may have on society, within the framework of established laws and regulations. Thus, it is decided which segment of

society will see it and how. While the mechanisms of control over the artwork and the space continue in this way, they also gain a power of control over the audience/public. Which groups can access that space, and the visibility of the artwork, are also defined within this framework.

In urban design, power balances are used to physically separate private and public spaces in certain ways based on their usage areas. (Kilian, 1997) This separation is usually achieved through fences or control mechanisms. Spaces are thus privatized and removed from daily use. The parts that are removed from daily use and cater to a specific audience are positioned as more sacred. According to Alvarez (2005), urban design itself has now become sacred and removed from the sphere of influence of users. Because urban design is a source of income for planners, it is seen as a gateway to offering a sacred product and does not appeal to ordinary people.

According to Foucault (1986), sacred and profane oppositions shape our perception of space. The opposition between the private and the public similarly shapes our perception of space. Even in contemporary times, there are many rules and structures created by institutions that we dare to dismantle through our practices. Spatial oppositions are also accepted and nourished by a hidden sacredness. Historically, oppositions have shaped the hierarchical organization of spaces. This power mechanism, which has been taught to us, has shaped our perception and use of space and made it difficult for us to dismantle it.

At this point, Agamben's (2015) concept of profanation explains the transformation and increased visibility of these spaces through artworks. Profanation means returning things that have been removed from a sacred or special area back to the free use of people. Profanation transforms areas under the control of power and returns them to common use. According to Agamben (2007), this is the urgent task of the new generation because publicness and the points of convergence within it have been steadily diminishing under new ideologies. Profanation in public spaces can also be achieved through art; the artwork itself can serve as an example of profanation. In fact, the two feed off each other. Artworks placed in urban spaces spark interest in the use of the space and enable the development of a game. The act of play has the power to transform power structures by revealing its potential against complex mechanisms

consisting of both physical and discursive, technological, behavioral norms, and regulatory expressions. (Agamben, 2007) Art itself also reveals this play both in its creation and placement, and in its transformation of the use of space. By its very nature, art should be a playground rather than a sacred space, with actions of destruction and disruption. Avant-garde artists, in particular, have succeeded in this, providing an example of profanation against the sanctified place of art. Therefore, these artworks also play a role in altering the power dynamics in semi-public spaces or those catering to specific groups. Users engage with the artworks, each deriving meaning from different perspectives, and break down the sacred barrier through their usage. Profane art separates the space from its ordinary use, offering the viewer different experiences and providing an opportunity to question power relations. This makes the art more visible in the public sphere. Along with its own visibility, it supports both the politicization of the public sphere and the visibility of individual and collective identities (Işık, 1994; Asiliskender, 2004).

In this context, the visibility and impact of public art are shaped not only by its physical location but also by social relations and power dynamics. Public art operates within these dynamics, at times reinforcing existing spatial hierarchies, and at other times subverting them by opening up spaces for alternative uses, interpretations, and interactions.

3.2 The Role of Public Art in Urban Space

Public art can play a multifaceted role in the urban environment. These works, which remain part of daily life in the city, contribute to defining the space, creating new narratives, and forming new traces in society. The production of space is supported not only by physical elements but also by social, cultural, and economic relationships. (Lefebvre, 1974) We can approach the role of artworks in space in two ways, through physical and social contexts. It determines the boundaries of space, its area of use, and its users. The conceptual background and purpose of the artwork's placement in the space create its own audience. It may attract the interest of certain groups or evoke different responses in each viewer. However, if the space where it is placed supports its

own idea, if the space has uniqueness, it directs the users' interaction with the space and makes the social contexts visible.

If we consider the urban space as a result of all these productions, public artworks become an integral element that enhances the quality, legibility, and social meaning of the urban space (Carmona, 2021). In urban design, art has a deep-rooted place within the visual-artistic tradition. Public art is a tool for enhancing the visual quality and aesthetic experience of the city. By its very nature of inviting the viewer, it ceases to be a standalone work and transforms into a performance realized in collaboration with participants. Kevin Lynch (1960) also considers the city not only as a functional mechanism but as an aesthetic and sensory experience area, so urban design itself is an art form, and the role of art in the city is to enhance the readability and meaning of this environment. Therefore, he has established certain criteria for both public artworks and their locations to ensure that artworks leave a good impression in the city. For an element to become a landmark, it must contrast with other elements. And if these art elements are placed at an important breaking point, they create a stronger image. They can also serve as reference points that make it easier to find your way around the city (Carmona, 2021). For example, busy places such as squares should be supported by works of art. In addition to its location, it should also attract attention with its form. Along with physical elements, the location of the artwork should be in harmony with the surrounding area. In other words, the placement of a work of art should be part of the beautification of the city's overall characteristics and planning. In addition to its physical functionality, Public art serves as a practical educational tool beyond providing an aesthetic contribution (Mews & Juergens, 2025). It can spread messages that teach the community how to respect each other and show compassion.

Public art opens up a space for inquiry in the urban environment, emphasizing the importance of urban planners in beautification and creating a good social space. Its critical role in the urban environment can be deepened through Michel Foucault's concept of Heterotopia. One of Foucault's (1986) oppositions is between real and unreal/utopian spaces. Heterotopias are also real spaces. “They are places that are formed in the constitution of society and actually exist, but they are also a kind of ‘counter-space’ or ‘actually realized utopia’ where all other real spaces are

simultaneously represented, debated, and reversed." They function as 'counter-spaces' because they are in relation to other interior spaces and reverse them. Public art, which interrupts the homogeneous, continuous flow of the urban landscape, functions as a heterotopia in this context. Temporary art installations or performances interrupt the flow of daily life and offer the viewer different spatial experiences.

These artworks create a temporary 'heterotopia' that disrupts the normality and order imposed by the city's authoritarian mechanisms. For example, works such as Krzysztof Wodiczko's projections onto architectural structures or Rachel Whiteread's 'House' temporarily reverse the political and ideological weight of the space, rather than erecting a permanent monument. Wodiczko fills the surface of monuments representing power with the voices of marginalized groups, as shown in Figure 3.2.1, temporarily reopening the definition of the "public" that the monument represents for renegotiation. Whiteread, on the other hand, questions the way space represents the "absent" by materializing the internal void of a house shown in Figure 3.2.2.



Figure 3.2.1 Hirshhorn Museum, Washington, DC, 1988. Source: https://hirshhorn.si.edu/explore/krzysztof-wodiczkos-1988-hirshhorn-museum-washington-dc-restaged/



Figure 3.2.2 Rachel Whiteread House 1993 Photo: Sue Omerod © Rachel Whiteread. Source: <https://suehubbard.com/rachel-whiteread-house-1993/

Richard Serra's ‘Titled Arc’ is another excellent and well-known example of these theories of place transformation. Titled Arc was a controversial public art installation exhibited in 1981 at Foley Federal Plaza in Manhattan, as Figure 3.2.3. It consisted of a solid, unfinished plate made of rust-coated COR-TEN steel, measuring 120 feet long (37 m) and 12 feet high (3.7 m). (Masters & Herron, 2024) These plates exist in the space as a sculptural form and encourage the viewer to walk around them. In this way, the viewer establishes a new relationship with that space, can notice different details in the space and the artwork, and can awaken new feelings within themselves. Serra describes his conceptual work in terms of its interaction with the viewer: 'The viewer becomes aware of themselves and their movement in the plaza. As they move, the sculpture changes. The narrowing and widening of the sculpture is caused by the viewer's movement. Step by step, not only the perception of the sculpture but also the perception of the entire environment changes.' This was the important part for him. However, over time, this situation drew significant backlash from the people working there. It affected the movements of the workers and disrupted the daily routines of those trying to get to work or those in a hurry. This experience, which was supposed to broaden horizons by being different, turned into a torment for them. Following growing reactions and petitions, it was removed from this workplace. According to Serra's explanation, this site-specific work could not be moved to another place, and the work was now gone.



Figure 3.2.3 Richard Serra's Tilted Arc, May 10, 1985. (Photo by Robert R. McElroy/Getty Images) Source: https://www.gettyimages.com/detail/news-photo/aerial-view-of-sculptor-richard-serras-controversial-piece-news-photo/187170774

The role of public art in the urban space is not limited to the topographical interruptions created by physical forms; it also encompasses a perceptual and emotional intervention. According to Bachelard (1994), space is not merely a backdrop, but rather a living entity. Space interacts with the human spirit, connecting with the memories, experiences, and imagination present there. The location and posture of artworks in a space also customize people's experiences there, allowing them to form different connections with each person. It can customize the space for one person, but it can also have the opposite effect. In the example of Serra, this work had a negative effect on the users of the space. People going to work there could not accept the change in the path they passed every day and could not adapt to it. Their personal experiences became different, weakening their connection to the place.

In this context, public art re-creates the space. While physically defining and transforming the space in its specific location, it also continues to be nourished by social relationships. It offers new experiences, both positive and negative on an individual and collective level.

3.3 Interaction in Everyday Practices

Public artworks are, by their very nature, interactive works that engage with the audience. They draw the audience into the space as active participants rather than passive observers. In this way, they become part of the audience's everyday practices. People's experiences change depending on their daily use of these spaces, and the perception of art also varies with these practices. This becomes a process that mutually transforms each other and reproduces the space. Museums or galleries are sterile spaces created for artworks, making them places visited for a specific purpose. Although some are defined as public spaces, we generally do not encounter public artworks there. This is also a practice we have developed. We cannot incorporate museum visits into our daily practices. For this reason, the artworks there do not contribute to our daily experiences, and it becomes difficult for us to establish a direct connection with those works and engage in interactive communication. In public artworks, however, the situation is exactly the opposite. An artwork we encounter on our way to work or school becomes part of our daily life, and we can interact with it using all our senses. Therefore, understanding public art requires examining both its political and cultural content and the relationships it establishes with the audience in everyday life.

The interaction established with public art within the flow of everyday life is also a process of reproducing spatial memory through the individual's sensory and cognitive experience of the space. Spatial perception occurs when individuals select and organize stimuli in their environment to make sense of them. In this process, the physical characteristics of objects are as decisive as the user's mobility in that space (Morgan, 1993). We perceive and distinguish works of art among the elements in a space and relate to them according to our route and movements there. The presence of art in public spaces transforms the user's spatial perception, enabling them to evolve into an active subject who makes sense of the space through experience. Kevin Lynch (1960) draws attention to the concepts of legibility and imageability that individuals create in their minds in the formation of the urban image. In this context, public art functions as Lynch's landmarks, becoming a focal point that guides users within the complex structure of the city and clarifies the mental map of the space. Appearing at a

fundamental point that also enables users to find their way among their daily practices, these works thus acquire a permanent place in their memories.

Space is a memory archive where experiences accumulated over time and social events are recorded. An individual's interaction with space triggers the layers of this spatial memory, establishing a connection between the past and the present, because every new piece of data perceived gains meaning by blending with old experiences and knowledge in the mind. The concept defined by Pierre Nora (1989) as ‘places of memory’ (Les Lieux de Mémoire) refers to the concrete manifestations of social memory. Public art practices create symbolic and physical supports that bring these invisible layers of memory in the city to the surface, ensuring that collective memory remains fresh. As Maurice Halbwachs (1992) emphasized, the preservation of social memory is only possible by placing this memory within a spatial framework. Therefore, artistic interventions in public spaces serve to strengthen the sense of urban belonging by creating memory spaces that help individuals remember their shared past. According to Leveratto (2015), spatial appropriation actions such as street art help repair the disconnect between people and urban space production, thereby generating a shared sense of civic belonging. The production of urban space is not only determined by “strategies” imposed top-down by institutions or planners; it is also shaped by the socio-cultural “tactics” of street artists or city dwellers aiming to reclaim public spaces. In this way, the city evolves from a rigidly structured entity into a vibrant space with multiple uses.

According to Debord (2014), modern society is directed through visual images and forced into a passive spectator position. The more the spectator watches, the less they live; the more they identify with the dominant images of needs, the less they understand their own life and desires, and become alienated. The more distant artworks are from the viewer, the more they become objects of consumption and fail to provide a genuine experience. Therefore, the positioning of the works is crucial. Not only should there be no physical barriers and easy access, but the work itself should encourage the viewer. Does the work keep the viewer at a distance, or does it arouse curiosity, inviting them to engage and question? This is where the concern of public art arises. Once positioned in a public space where it can be accessed by everyone without restriction, it should spark

curiosity and encourage interaction among people from all walks of life. Or should it? Whether or not to engage in this interaction is often up to the viewer. Users can reinterpret the space and the work according to their own needs and experiences. At this point, social and individual transformations begin.

Unlike commercialized and sterilized sacred public spaces that have been stripped of their historical context, contemporary public art practices revive this interaction. Temporary and participatory works such as Can Altay's PARK project offer a flexible interface that can reflect the daily practices of neighborhood residents, allowing for the spatial projection of collective memory. PARK: a possibility is an outdoor exhibition held at Nişantaşı Cumhuriyet Park between May 2010 and January 2011. The installation in the exhibition was structured around three main elements: Interventions, Temporary Architectural Elements, and Activities (Performances), based on observations of the park's nature, texture, and urban flows (Altay, 2017). To this end, perches that visitors could use and gardens where they could produce were placed in certain areas of the park, as shown in Figure 3.3.1. With its touchable and modifiable structure, the work enables the viewer to transform from a passive consumer into an active "space producer." Thus, rather than preserving the local identity and neighborhood intimacy of its geography like an object in a museum, the artwork continuously reproduces it in a convivial and dynamic process.



Figure 3.3.1 PARK Photo by Laleper Aytek (Altay, 2017)

Artworks in public spaces generally do not carry a particular concern for sterility. There is no protective mechanism around them, and they aim to reach the viewer directly. Thus, the viewer can comfortably walk around, smell, and touch them. In this situation, a sense of playfulness begins, and the work can become profane. Touch is one of our primary instincts from childhood because it is how we play, understand, and learn (Alverez, 2005). Thanks to these primal instincts that facilitate our learning, we can better experience and perceive works of art. When works are joyful, creative, and practical, they have the potential to enhance collective urban well-being and even interspecies (human and non-human) well-being in unexpected concrete and abstract ways, transcending a purely human-centered perspective (Mews & Juergens, 2025). The viewer's physical or tactile interaction with art, like in the PARK example, not only enriches the experience but also strengthens their relationship with the space and their social bonds, in contrast to the rigid, untouchable, and permanent structure of the urban landscape, the temporary, soft, and touchable materials/forms offered by contemporary public art open the way for the viewer's freedom to touch and change.

According to Foster (2016), a work of art in the public sphere also creates a discursive space loaded with ideological codes. In this context, public art can trigger the viewer's political awareness or reproduce dominant discourses. The subtext of the work creates a new awareness in the viewer through the message it conveys to society. Thus, it reaches more people in society and can bring about change in social consciousness.

Examples of the dominant discourse being reproduced can be seen in the statues erected during the early years of the republic. These statues, commissioned by the state, are usually monumental sculptures depicting founding leaders or national heroes. Thus, with their high pedestals and exaggerated scale, they serve to educate the public, reinforce national identity, and legitimize central authority both physically and symbolically.

In addition, works that challenge the dominant discourse by questioning the permanence and inviolability of traditional monuments, triggering critical discourse, offer a different political perspective. Figure 3.3.2. shows Esther Shalev-Gertz's “The Monument Against Fashism”. Visitors were invited to carve their names into the work, and the monument slowly sank into the ground until it became completely invisible (*Shalev*

Gerz - Monument Against Fascism, n.d.). In this process, the viewer becomes an active participant and is responsible for the process, conveying a critical discourse based not on the aesthetics of memorializing the danger of forgetting fascism, but on collective responsibility and the transience of memory.

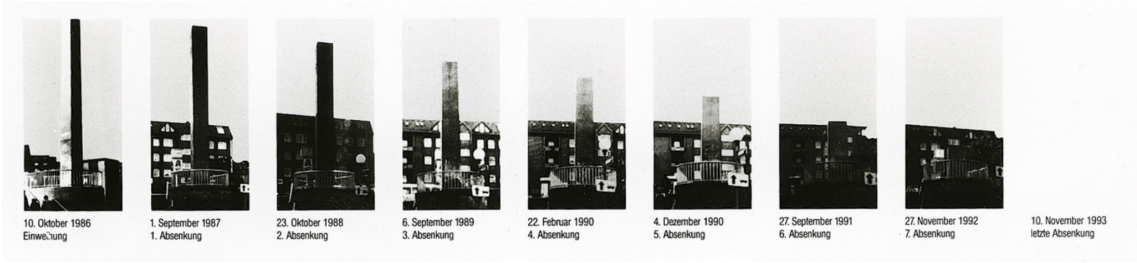


Figure 3.3.2 The Monument Against Fascism, Hamburg-Harburg, Germany. Source: https://www.shalev-gerz.net/portfolio/monument-against-fascism/

The infiltration of art into everyday life has not been limited to fixed objects in public spaces; the exhibition space itself has become an intervention tool. Today's evolving business models have paved the way for new approaches in the fields of art and exhibition. In this sense, U-Haul Gallery serves as both an excellent example and a topic worthy of discussion. Founded in 2024 by James Sundquist, this gallery does not have a permanent physical location (Refresh Team, 2025). U-Haul trucks rented for transportation are used as gallery spaces. The hourly-rented trucks are parked on city streets, with artworks placed inside them. This idea, born out of artists' financial struggles and inability to access central galleries, has garnered significant attention. While operating without permits or approvals, they describe themselves as “We are small-time criminals.” (Figure 3.3.3)

U-Haul Gallery offers an alternative that challenges traditional practices in the exhibition of art, proving that art does not need to be confined to a sterile, walled off ‘white cube’ space to exist. The mobile structure of the exhibition space transforms the traditional ‘site-specific’ understanding, where art is fixed to a specific location, and builds a guerrilla art structure that can infiltrate every corner of the city.

This traveling gallery eliminates the distance between art and society by randomly joining the city's routine flow on the streets, creating unexpected areas of interaction within everyday life. This spatial tactic, developed against the institutional art hierarchy,

takes art out of sanctified exhibition halls and returns it to the dynamism of the street, realizing a process of profanation as described by Agamben. U-Haul Gallery serves as a powerful model demonstrating how public space and art can be reproduced not only through state or institutional means, but also through mobile, flexible, and temporary interventions.



Figure 3.3.3 U-Haul Gallery, Art Fair, New York City (September 4 - 7, 2025). Source: https://uhaulgallery.com/art-fair

Therefore, the relationship between public art and its audience works in two directions: on the one hand, political, cultural, and ideological content is absorbed; on the other hand, it is reinterpreted within the practices of everyday life. This two-way process enables public art to serve both as a tool for social change and as an expression of individual creativity.

The case studies to be examined in the next section will be analyzed by grouping them within the framework of the theoretical concepts discussed in this section. This section explains the processes by which public art becomes part of the public sphere, its potential to transform existing power balances in space, the ways in which it establishes itself in social memory, and how it reproduces publicness by becoming part of everyday life. The first criterion determined for the cases to be analyzed is how power balances operate in both the production and placement processes in the relationship between art

and space. In this context, works shaped by authority and offering a specific representation will be examined under the heading ‘Institutional and Hierarchical Interventions’. The second fundamental criterion is the nature of the interaction the work establishes with the viewer; here, the focus will be on how art infiltrates everyday practices and transforms the viewer into an active participant. The works in this group will be referred to as ‘Relational and Social Practices’. Finally, the impact of works that disrupt the normal order and flow of space, altering perception and creating ‘counter-spaces,’ will be evaluated. In light of all these criteria, public art practices in Istanbul will be classified according to historical periods and analyzed in depth.

4. PUBLIC ART IN ISTANBUL

Unlike examples from Europe, Istanbul's public spaces exhibit a dynamic structure where temporary, diverse, and heterogeneous layers converge. This characteristic makes public art a far more intriguing and impactful practice within the Istanbul context (Aksoy & Ertürk, 2008). With its rapidly transforming urban landscape, complex political dynamics, and multi-layered historical background, Istanbul offers a rich research field for examining the spatial and social dynamics of public art.

Within Istanbul's urban fabric, public art occupies a contradictory position, oscillating between serving as a focal point for social critique and acting as a tool that reinforces authority. While works installed in urban spaces by authorities are generally aesthetic objects that reproduce the dominant discourse, the relationship these interventions establish with the space holds transformative potential. Depending on the characteristic features of their surroundings and the messages they convey, these works can function as "heterotopias" that temporarily suspend the political weight of that space. Furthermore, by inviting the viewer into an active participatory process and intervening in the urban dweller's daily life practices, they can evolve into a form of profanation, the act of stripping away sacredness that integrates art into the fabric of everyday life.

Building on the theoretical frameworks of the public sphere, the production of space, and heterotopia discussed in previous sections, this study draws a radical distinction between the definitions of "public art" and "art in the public sphere." In line with current literature, fundamental criteria have been established for the selection and evaluation of case studies to analyze the counterparts of contemporary practices within the Istanbul context: visibility and accessibility, social interaction, spatial intervention, experiential space, and participation. While the locations where the works are situated determine their visibility in society and how many people they reach, their form and technique play a significant role in this regard. Additionally, they influence the ability to establish communication and transform viewers into active participants. Art practice should create new spaces for production by serving as a platform for social negotiation

and discussion. At the same time, through the contextual relationships it establishes with its surroundings, it should provide a new and often critical experiential space that disrupts the flow of urban routines.

This section provides an in-depth analysis of how the case studies selected based on their alignment with the specified criteria interact with Istanbul's rapidly changing urban fabric. Istanbul's public art practices reflect Turkey's modernization project and urban spatial policies. In this context, the following section will examine the development of art in Istanbul, tracing its evolution from the ideological monument tradition of the Early Republican era, through the civil and site-specific explorations of the 1970s, to the institutionalization efforts of the 1990s. The transformation of the understanding of sculpture and art in public spaces into public art, and how this distinction is exemplified, will be examined. This historical background will demonstrate how it has shaped today's multi-layered, conflict-ridden, and experience-oriented public art scene. Focusing particularly on the post-2000 period, the research examines how these interventions challenge the city's authoritarian structures, evoke social memory, and transform daily life through spatial and political interventions.

4.1 Development of Art in Public Space and Public Art in Türkiye

The development of public art in Istanbul has progressed in parallel with social and urban modernization, the shaping of public spaces, and changes in the country's socio-political landscape. Until the 1970s, public sculptures generally represented the power of the ruling authority, but after this period, they took on new meaning with changes in artists' approaches to space and society. The social movements of the 1970s and the subsequent globalization processes of the post-1980 era have led to changes in the dynamics of power and visibility discussed in previous sections, giving way to more participatory, critical, and sometimes 'heterotopic' interventions. This section will examine how art emerged in public spaces alongside the transformation of the public sphere, as well as the formation and historical development of the concept of public art through the differentiation of its meaning.

The origins of the public sphere in Turkey, unlike Western-centric definitions, took shape around oral cultural products such as coffeehouses, Karagöz shadow plays, and Meddah storytelling during the Ottoman period. These practices formed a social "buffer zone" and a foundation for civil publicness where social issues were criticized through humor (Öztürk, 2005). However, the rise of private journalism after 1860 and the subsequent modernization efforts that came with the Republic redrew the boundaries of the public sphere through state intervention, largely leaving art under the control of the government.

During that period, public art generally appeared as architectural elements shaped by the state's authority, apart from performances. In Turkish communities, monumental structures usually took the form of towers, tombs, standing stones, and watchtowers (Bulat et al., 2014). After the Tanzimat period, as society began to modernize, sculpture began to separate itself from the prohibitions imposed by religion and became more visible in the public sphere. During this period, fountains and commemorative stones erected for sultans took on the role of monumental sculpture. The sculptures of this period served as decorative elements left behind in the space.

With the establishment of the Republic, the modernization movement in society was also supported by state power. New modern cities began to be planned, and parks, squares, boulevards, and public buildings were redesigned. Thus, these areas became the main venues for artistic works, especially sculptures. During this period, the concept of 'monumental sculptures' emerged, and these sculptures gained the characteristic of being the focal point of the space, as in Ancient Greek and Roman civilizations (Bulat et al., 2014). While works of art in public spaces became the main symbol of square culture in the West, this situation began to emerge in Turkey after the 20th century, and the relationship between sculpture and open spaces in the contemporary sense was not well established. Atatürk statues, war and heroism monuments placed in open spaces have become symbols of the Republic and modernity. During this period, art remained in the public sphere, serving as a showcase for authority in public squares, and was used to disseminate authoritarian discourse.

After the 1950s, the understanding of art in public spaces underwent a transformation that encompassed both the space and the architecture. With modernism, sculpture

became an object that created visual richness in urban spaces, gave a sense of place to its surroundings, transformed and imbued its environment, brought people together, guided them, and shaped the city's memory. The disciplines of art seen in public spaces began to diversify, with installations, performances, videos, and light shows also being produced.

Grup Espas stands out as the best representative of the change in the 1950s. Founded under the leadership of names such as İlhan Koman, Sadi Öziş, and Hadi Bara, Türk Grup Espas and, in connection with it, Kare Metal embraced the idea of "synthesis," arguing that plastic arts should be an integral part of architectural design (Yavuz, 2015). The Turkish Group Espas, defending the idea of "synthesis of plastic arts," emphasized that architects, painters, and sculptors should combine their ideas to create a unified plastic art and that the process should be an act of "holistic design." This approach, which placed social responsibility on artists, aimed to take art out of museums and integrate it into every aspect of life, including furniture, by treating sculpture as an active component of space. Its structure, which brought art out of galleries and into the streets and combined it with design, changed artists' perspectives on urban space at a technical level and facilitated the spread of a new perspective. By the 1970s, this quest had evolved into ideological debates about who art belonged to and which local values it should represent.

The debate over "Localism - Nationalism / Universality," which has been ongoing since the Tanzimat era, reignited in the 1970s around the question of how Turkish art could achieve a unique identity (Bek, 2007). It was argued that the path to 'universality' could only be achieved by remaining local and authentic ("Turkish culture"). One of the prerequisites for creating a national art was that art should break free from the monopoly of the elite and high-income groups and become something that "the people could understand, embrace, and consume." In this vein, it was proposed that art should be created directly from contemporary life and from colors and forms that the people would enjoy.

During this period, with the advent of the national culture agreement, the first initiatives aimed at the local and indigenous population in the public sphere took place in 1973. As part of the celebrations for the 50th anniversary of the Republic, a committee was

established with the support of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality and the governor's office, and 20 artists were commissioned to create sculptures to be placed in various parks, squares, and streets throughout Istanbul (Ece, 2011). With this step, the understanding that the work should narrate an event or hero changed, and artists were able to express their own unique artistic personalities and modern styles. Thus, modern sculpture art began to appear in public spaces for the first time as works that establish a relationship with the space through minimalist and geometric-abstract forms.

These works, which fall outside the traditional understanding of sculpture, have become an integral part of the local community's daily life, inviting them to think by demonstrating that art can be approached differently. However, not all of these sculptures achieved their intended purpose; often, they were misunderstood by the public or were removed or relocated due to structural issues (Şendul, 2021).

İşçi Statue was also created by Muzaffer Ertoran as part of this project. The statue was erected in the park in Tophane, in front of the Employment Agency. According to the artist's own explanation, the statue, located at this point where people looking for work or wanting to change jobs pass by and wait every day, was created to commemorate workers going abroad and to mark the beginning of something (*Balyozun Sessiz Hafızası Ya Da Tophane'den Kazınan Işçi Heykeli*, 2025). Muzaffer Ertoran saw the workers waiting there as people who were denied opportunities, carrying hope and faith. The artist depicts a Turkish worker holding a sledgehammer, not in a political sense, but purely emotionally.

Shortly after the statue was installed, the public broke its fingers, hammer, and arms. Later, its face was painted with tar and damaged during cleaning. Although the artist attempted to repair the work numerous times, the damage to the statue persisted. Ultimately, the statue, which had been reduced to an abstract object due to the damage it sustained, was removed in 2016. In an interview given in 2008, the artist stated that his complete disappearance due to his circumstances would make him feel more at ease, but that the memory of his work would not be erased. Figure 4.1.1 below shows the artwork's condition when it was first placed and its current state.



Figure 4.1.1 İşçi by Muzaffer Ertoran at Tophane (1973 / 2010s) Source: https://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bursa_Atat%C3%BCrk_Heykeli

The ruling power declares statues (or marginalized communities such as the Roma) that contradict its own norms, ideal of homogeneity, or official historical narrative to be "monsters," thereby outlawing them and targeting them for removal, turning them into counter-monuments (Ahıska, 2011). The Workers' Monument in Tophane, its face shattered, its arms broken, can no longer represent the state or a situation to be proud of; it cannot console its audience. On the contrary, these "monsters" continue to remember. Despite all the damage suffered by this statue, one of the first "civilian" monuments in Turkish history, when the artist collective "Hafriyat" attempted to secretly remove (steal) this broken monument in the middle of the night in 2010 to draw attention to the destroyed statues, they encountered unexpected resistance. The Tophane neighborhood intervened and took the statue back from the artists. Although it was not ideologically accepted by the public and was damaged, its place in the social memory prevailed, preventing its removal and the removal of its sense of belonging to itself and to that place.

As part of the same project, in 1973, Güral Duyar created the sculpture 'Güzel İstanbul' upon request to depict Istanbul. Duyar aimed to reflect the city as a symbol of delicacy, abundance, and beauty by likening Istanbul's natural beauty to the female body (Antmen, 2009). The sculpture's nudity can be associated with the emphasis on the city's 'natural' beauty. The work was initially placed in Karaköy Square in accordance with

the decisions made (Figure 4.1.2). After remaining there for nine days, it was relocated to the municipal construction site due to public outcry. It was later placed in a remote corner of Yıldız Park.



Figure 4.1.2 Güzel İstanbul by Güral Duyar at Karaköy (1973) Source: https://www.5harfliler.com/ah-guzel-i%CC%87stanbul/

The statue of Güzel İstanbul, depicting a nude woman, was met with public backlash due to its subject matter. Some media outlets claimed that the statue "corrupted the morals of Muslim Turks," and Deputy Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan demanded its removal because it was "contrary to decency." The Ministry of the Interior officially stated that the statue was "indecently exposing the Turkish mother" and decided to have it removed. It was placed in a remote location in Yıldız Park, where it would not attract attention and would be out of sight of many people. However, it still drew criticism, and families who did not want their children to see it, due to a nearby children's playground, demanded that it be removed again. In response, municipal workers planted saplings around it to conceal the statue (Figure 4.1.3). When this censorship drew criticism from supporters of the statue on social media, the saplings were removed, and the statue was revealed ("1974'ten Bugüne: 'Güzel İstanbul'un Etrafındaki Fidanlar Tepkiler Sonrası Kaldırıldı,' 2017). It still stands in Yıldız Park today.



Figure 4.1.3 Güzel İstanbul by Güral Duyar at Yıldız Parkı (2017) Source: https://haber.sol.org.tr/toplum/guzel-istanbul-heykeli-43-yil-once-suruldu-simdi-de-fidanlarla-sansurlendi-21511

During this process, permanent art activities in public spaces were generally coordinated by the local administrators of those areas. Art, a reflection of emotion and thought, has taken on a structure that is commissioned and shaped according to demand. However, with developments around the world, artists seeking to break free from museums and galleries have attempted to carve out a place for themselves in the public sphere outside of authority, particularly following the political changes of the 1960s.

The first examples of performance art in Türkiye also appeared during the same period, in the 1960s, within the Istanbul State Academy of Fine Arts. Adnan Çoker, an academic and painter, presented examples of “action painting” by painting in front of an audience accompanied by music between 1961 and 1966. In the 1970s, art projects also began to progress within this framework in the country's political agenda. The amateur theater group called “Merhaba” performed inside and outside the Taksim Art Gallery in 1978. This musical and dance performance was held as part of the fifth anniversary celebrations of the Turkish Writers' Union (Figure 4.14) to protest Articles 141 and 142 of the Turkish Penal Code (Bolat Aydoğan, 2008). The main founder of this amateur performance group, established in Istanbul and Izmir, was Günay Akarsu. Akarsu is a theater critic who has made great efforts to promote and establish Brecht's theatrical

philosophy in Türkiye. By keeping the audience's attention alive with the flow of the play, it encourages them to take a critical approach to what is happening on stage. Actors sometimes walk among the audience, involving them in the play. In these performances, the boundary between the audience and the artist is broken down through this approach.

In the 1980s, in response to the restrictions imposed by the coup in the country, artists began to use the body as a medium and the city as a field of experience. During this process, many student groups formed and staged numerous protest performances (Bolat Aydoğan, 2008). These pioneering groups, Fosseptik, Barbart, Akadeğilmi, and Mim, addressed concepts such as re-establishing the space that had lost its original function, alienated the space, or becoming alienated from the space in their performances related to historical and cultural memory (Bolat Aydoğan, 2008). The Akadeğilmi group, formed by members Karavit, Erkmen Senan, Şafak Tavkul, and Ömer Güney, performed a piece titled 'Dialog' on Kazancı Yokuşu in 1983. Late at night, they surprised the residents of an apartment building with a performance featuring a variety of lights and costumes. In 1989, the Barbart and EKG groups carried water from the Belgrade Forests in traditional vessels for 35 km. They poured it into the Basilica Cistern, presenting the 'Saka Project/Water Tale' performance to the public.

According to Caner Karavit, one of the members, reactions arising from the country's political framework in the 1980s, combined with Brecht's understanding of theater, led them to use the body as a material, choosing the city as the venue for their experimental work. Artists leaving the gallery space and choosing a civil and vital space, such as Kazancı Yokuşu, have permeated art into everyday life by removing it from the institutional hierarchy. This action, through the concepts of the space losing its function or alienation from the space, has created a sense of bewilderment among the local community by confronting neighborhood residents with unfamiliar lighting and costumes.

The 'happening' movement, which was part of performance art in the 1960s as described in the first section, found resonance in Türkiye through Adnan Tönel. He actively involved the audience in the performance, creating an instantaneous and improvisational performance with them. Adnan Tönel and his friends systematically

carried out this type of performance in the same way between 1989 and 1996, taking art out of traditional gallery walls and bringing it to subway stations, streets, libraries, and historic buildings. They wanted to remove art from being a commodity that is bought and sold and turn it into a one-time, experience-focused, and unrepeatable action. The aim was to perform spontaneous and improvised movements with participants, without any professional staging. Tönel continued these works in the years that followed. They used different venues such as Metro stations, streets, libraries, and historic buildings, thereby taking art outside the traditional walls. In 1990, he performed “Film Çekimi” on Istiklal Avenue, “Oku Oku” at the Atatürk Library in 1992, “Düello” at the Cartoon and Humor Museum (Figure 4.1.4), and “Ha! Ha” at the Taksim Art Gallery in the same year.



Figure 4.1.4 Adnan Tönel and Bedri Baykam performed "Duel" in 1992 in the ornamental pool in the courtyard of the Cartoon and Humor Museum in the Fatih district of Istanbul. Source: https://performansarsivi.org/en/archive/perw162

In 1986, Ferhan Şensoy and his theater troupe performed on İstiklal Avenue, wearing German uniforms and conducting identity checks on people in the street by saying, “Kimlik Bitte!” (ID, please) (Pekdemir, 2005). Only one citizen objected to being asked for their ID; the others showed their IDs. The artists were surprised by the lack of objection from the people, who were fearful due to the prevailing political climate of the

time. Inspired by Brechtian theater, the artists aimed to involve the audience in the art and rescue them from passivity (Bolat Aydoğan, 2008). In this performance, which was carried out by establishing dialogue with people in the public sphere, the audience became active actors whose reflexes in the face of power were tested through the dialogue that was established.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989, the ideological collapse of the socialist utopia was observed. The 1990s were a transitional period in which this ideological void was rapidly filled by neoliberal policies and the world came under a new Western-centered economic and cultural siege. This global transformation pushed artistic actors into a new plane woven with identity politics and cultural confrontations (Aksoy, 2019). In Türkiye specifically, the 1990s represented a break from the oppressive and apolitical atmosphere of the 1980 military coup. The rigid environment of the 1980s, where politically engaged artistic productions could not find a space for exhibition, gave way in the 1990s to a public sphere where traces of politicization were visible. Artists began to reckon with political history and identity struggles in this new period, while contemporary art practices also began to build their own market and institutionalization dynamics, centered on Istanbul.

The 1990s in Istanbul marked a period when public art began to acquire an institutional identity and evolved into an interdisciplinary "project" logic. A crucial milestone in this process was the "Installation of Three-Dimensional Contemporary Artworks in Open Spaces" event organized by the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality in 1992. In 1992, as the second step in placing sculptures in urban spaces, the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality organized a competition titled “Placing Three-Dimensional Contemporary Artworks in Open Spaces” (Ece, 2011). The inclusion of “Three-Dimensional Contemporary Artworks” in the event's name signifies a shift in Türkiye's understanding of art. During the competition process, a jury team consisting of urban planners, artists, art critics, architects, and sociologists was selected, and the areas where the sculptures would be placed were determined. Thirty-two of the 64 invited artists participated in the competition with 55 works. For the first time in Türkiye, each artist who submitted a model was paid a fee. Ten of the participating works were selected and placed in designated parks and squares, taking into consideration their ability to establish a

dialogue with the space (Table 2). Unlike previous examples, the attention paid to the relationship between space and artwork in this competition, the fact that some artists produced their works accordingly, and the meticulous selection and placement processes created a breakthrough in terms of the understanding and visibility of public sculpture in the city. Although the meaning of art in the public sphere has evolved and become more visible, we cannot yet say that it has fully met the definition of public art.

The conservative and nationalist policies of the 1980s, and the subsequent continuation of these policies by state institutions and projects, alienated many artists from collaborating with the state, leading them to seek support from private sources (Tan, 2008). This process continued into the late 1990s and early 2000s, with cultural and artistic professionals feeling the need to create an independent and critical space, developing collaborative practices, and contributing to international and trans-local networks. The urban dynamics of the post-2000s period, marked by the rise of neoliberal policies, are characterized by a structure in which the state and large capital groups shaped the city through ultimatum measures without involving society in the process (Erdemci, 2013). It is emphasized that Istanbul has been transformed from a single-centered industrial city into a multi-centered urban region striving to integrate into the global system. In this process, public spaces are sacrificed to projects based solely on rent and consumption, masking socio-economic injustice and the exclusion of marginalized communities.

By the 2000s, artists' individual initiatives began to gather more under institutional roofs. Alternative institutions or groups supporting art that could use space and resources more freely outside of white cube gallery spaces began to emerge. GalataPerform, founded by Yeşim Özsoy in 2003, has also become a permanent center for performance art (Bolat Aydoğan, 2008). Additionally, the Kargart Performance Days, held since 2005, have hosted numerous works that use the body as an object. In addition, technological tools have also been incorporated into these projects, and the performances have begun to be broadcast online. This has enabled them to reach not only those present at the venue but also many more people, thereby achieving their goals more effectively. Özsoy’s nylon-coated performance, which referenced the Iraq War, was presented to the world through cameras.

In 2005, santralistanbul's inclusion in the European Union's Culture 2000 Program under the auspices of Istanbul Bilgi University paved the way for the implementation of comprehensive projects in partnership with various institutions in Türkiye and Europe (Aksoy & Ertürk, 2008). The events, exhibitions, and publications held between November 2006 and 2007 marked a critical turning point in the detailed discussion of the theoretical and practical framework of public art in Türkiye. Although the Istanbul Pedestrian Exhibitions, launched during the same period, were successfully executed as public art initiatives, they demonstrated that the perception of public art often equated with the installation of sculptures in public spaces requires further discussion. In this process, it opened a discussion on the concept of "new genre public art," which focuses on developing new strategies that establish better relationships between public art and the physical environment, the city, and society within the Turkish context.

Beyond large corporate-sponsored events, initiatives established by these independent artists have progressed as more neighborhood-focused projects. Thus, open-air exhibitions have also begun to take their place within the city. Twice, in 2002 and 2005, Walking Exhibitions were held along the Nişantaşı and Tünel-Karaköy routes, curated by Fulya Erdemci and Emre Baykal. In this exhibition, Kemal Önsoy intervened by covering Ayşe Erkmen's sculpture, installed at the Tünel exit in 1992, with his work titled "Karşılıklı Yardımlaşma" (Mutual Aid). However, due to public reaction, this work was burned. It will be examined in the next section as a good example due to the attention it received at the time and the interventions made. In 2007, works by artists were placed on billboards and advertising panels along the city's main thoroughfares as part of an event celebrating the 10th anniversary of the Radikal newspaper. This work, which can also be categorized as an open-air exhibition, was criticized because it remained within the static structure of advertising panels rather than truly opening the public space for debate.

The art projects carried out during this process generally served to pave the way for Istanbul's selection as the cultural capital. To develop Istanbul culturally, more space was provided for artistic activities, allowing us to see more diverse works in the public sphere. During the process of selecting Istanbul as the cultural capital, numerous artistic interventions were made in the city. The aim was to develop the city with permanent

elements and raise public awareness of culture and art (Cançat, 2016). With initiatives such as the “Portable Art Project,” nearly 100 artists and dozens of curators were involved, and prominent European artists produced works for Istanbul. Urban spaces were designed as “urban labyrinths” and transformed into areas for artistic expression. Permanent venues such as the Panorama 1453 History Museum and Miniatürk have been added to the city's cultural inventory. This process was seen as an opportunity to rebuild the city's artistic infrastructure, and shortcomings were identified. With civil society and the state working closely together for the first time, and special laws being enacted in the fields of culture and art, an institutional discipline was established to treat the city as an art workshop where people live and produce together.

By the 2010s, public art had positioned itself as addressing and responding to social issues. The increase in political problems in the country and the tightening of moral and political restrictions on the use of public space created major obstacles for artists. In particular, the Gezi Park events that began in 2013 led to major conflicts between the government and society over public spaces. During this process, an approach was adopted that aimed to open public spaces for discussion and co-create them with the public, rather than using them as a traditional means of spreading state ideology. During action, art has evolved into a form of expression with the potential to politically transform the world and create new collectivities (Bakçay, 2019). A new understanding of art has emerged, referred to by names such as community-based art, project-based art, activist art, or new-type public art. A wide variety of participatory types have emerged, such as the use of billboards, neighborhood-based workshops, history projects, and gender-focused space occupations. There, people who came together with the same goal, opposing the government and its sanctions, created a collective living space, establishing a safe public space within themselves. In this safe environment, they began to practice their art, producing many images both on the streets and on social media, and the actions turned into a stage where each individual performed their own act. The concerts held in Taksim Square and the workshops organized there enabled the public to reclaim the public space and define its boundaries. According to Chantal (2013), the public sphere is precisely a field of conflict, as exemplified by the Gezi Park protests. The manner in which values are implemented is always open to opposition and differing interpretations. Artistic practices produced in various forms also support the formation

of these agonistic public spheres, which render the existing hegemony visible and disrupt the notion that ‘there are no other alternatives.’ In contrast to a top-down hierarchical political culture, this movement, centered on humor, art, and horizontal, bottom-up organization, is seen as a paradigm shift for Türkiye. People taking to the streets to protect their living spaces, trees, and memories have proven that the city is not just a physical structure, but also a “political forum” where citizens' demands for rights and direct democracy are staged (Erdemci, 2013).

The 13th Istanbul Biennial, to be held immediately after the Gezi Park protests, has also been shaped by the events that unfolded. Initially, the biennial projects were intended to be carried out in controversial urban transformation areas such as Taksim Square, Gezi Park, Tarlabaşı Boulevard, and Karaköy, i.e., in open public spaces (Erdemci, 2013). However, when authorities used violence to suppress the people's voices during the protests, the biennial management withdrew from these urban public spaces to avoid collaborating with these authorities and to prevent art from being used as a tool to cover up what was happening. For the first time, workshops, field trips, and forums were planned to be more active, organized from the bottom up, open to the public, and free of charge. The Istanbul Biennial placed at the center of its conceptual framework the idea of rethinking public space as a political forum and exploring the concept of “multiple publics” where different segments of society could come together. In line with this, the concept of “public art” was redefined in the biennial's texts, breaking away from its traditional meaning and establishing a clear and critical distinction.

Especially after the Gezi Park process, increased control mechanisms and security measures in urban spaces have confronted public art practices not only with legal obstacles but also with a deep-seated fear of spontaneous reactions and anxiety about being marginalized (Kosova, 2007). The role of art in this context is not to accept public space as a sterile and neutral ground, but rather to decipher the implicit contradictions and inequalities inherent in this architecturally and ideologically constructed space. The reflex to avoid accusations of ‘obscenity’ or ‘deviant behavior’ causes artists to withdraw their bold ideas that intervene in the public sphere, resulting in these works remaining merely ‘projects’ on paper. Ultimately, the transformation of urban space into an arena of control and prohibitions has led to street art evolving into a limited

representation shaped by risk management and security concerns rather than collective action.

In recent years, efforts to revive power-based public art have begun once again. The Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality has transformed old, unusable spaces within Istanbul, returning them to the community. Areas such as Metrohan, Müze Gazhane, and Casa Botter have been repurposed in a way that ensures they will not be lost from the social memory. They have begun hosting various exhibitions and performances as public art spaces, open to all.

The increase in digitalization, especially after the pandemic outbreak, has led to exhibitions and works becoming increasingly linked to technology. Online exhibitions during the lockdown period made art more public, but at the same time, restricted the public space, creating a virtual public space. The increase in 3D mapping or digital 3D works has made art more visible to the public. For example, in 2021, the 3D mapping project on Galata Tower attracted considerable attention (Figure 4.1.6). The aim of the project, which also included music and sound effects, was to bring the artwork to life without compromising its purity and to spread the world of children to the whole world through an impressive show (*GALATA TOWER ARCHITECTURAL MAPPING*, 2021). It brought a different perspective to the use of space. Thus, even though the viewer remained a passive participant, they established a new relationship with the space and gained a new experience through different emotions.



Figure 4.1.5 Galata Tower 3D Mapping. Source: https://artnpars.com/work/reflections-from-the-childrens-world-galata-tower-mapping-show/

As we approach the present day, the transformation that began in the 2010s has diversified. Most work is still produced and installed through institutions. Due to

national policies, independent artists are not allowed to exhibit in public spaces. Artists' production is severely restricted due to the tense political environment. Great care must be taken regarding who the work addresses, how it communicates, and where it is installed. For these reasons, semi-public spaces have created a more reliable and free space, especially for independent artists. The increase in small initiatives outside of galleries and the staging of exhibitions in small, accessible venues/studios has ensured that art has become public in another way.

In 2020, with the outbreak of COVID-19 and the closure of physical spaces, public artworks were moved to digital platforms in order to reach wider audiences. For example, the CAM project was launched on Instagram to exhibit artworks created at home during the quarantine period (Şanlı & Kurtaslan, 2022). Digital exhibitions have ensured that art transcends local or sectoral boundaries and is accessible to everyone worldwide, making a positive contribution to the "public nature" of art. Due to the risk of infection, spending time in enclosed public spaces has been prohibited and restricted, thereby restoring public spaces to their former value. Consequently, the importance and visibility of public art have also returned to the forefront. Although the connection we have established with public spaces has been reshaped by public artworks, and new works have been produced within this framework, accessibility remains limited. Although the pandemic initially created physical barriers to accessibility in public art, the dynamic nature of art has enabled the development of methods such as digitization, hybrid models, alternative space usage, and participatory networks.

The project named metr.cube, which reinterprets public space to realize art productions, has also been realized in Türkiye as a counterpart to the U-Haul Gallery. Defining itself as a "mobile art space for culture and art workers," metr.cube has offered an alternative option for art production and exhibition through the concepts of space and placelessness (Çelik & Yapar, 2024). By setting up exhibitions in the back of a moving truck, it has enabled pedestrians, drivers, and many residents to interact with art as it visited various neighborhoods in Istanbul. By holding its first exhibitions in 2024, it has provided a platform for independent artists to showcase their work. (Figure 4.1.7.)



Figure 4.1.6 metr.cube - Do You Want a Receipt? Source: https://www.metrcube.com/2nd-cube

Public art in Türkiye has always progressed from a more restrictive starting point than in Western countries. Public spaces, generally controlled by the government, have significantly influenced art and have been heavily affected by the politics of the era. The political environment has given rise to new processes and formations in response to the work it has directed. This ambivalent structure and transformation are progressing in parallel with the ambivalence of the public sphere.

4.2 Categorization of Public Artworks

While it is possible to classify works of public art solely according to their most prominent formal characteristics to understand them, this approach is insufficient for analyzing the profound context that individual artworks establish with space and the social impact they create. Therefore, this study adopts a space-oriented typology that relates the physical placement of artworks to different layers of the urban landscape.

Contemporary public art practices in Istanbul have been classified according to a site-specific typology based on the nature of the relationship established between the artwork and the urban fabric. To understand the site selections and differences in

interaction among works realized in various layers of public space, the works are grouped into three main categories (Urban Centers (Squares) / Parks, Neighborhoods / Streets, Temporary / Alternative Spaces) based on the power dynamics generated by the physical and social environment. (Table 4.2.1)

Urban centers and parks are not merely geographical centers; they are authoritarian centers of representation conceived as the city's "showcase," where power displays its own ideology. The artworks examined here are analyzed in terms of their capacity to profane space and reach the public, in opposition to the spatial strategies imposed by authority from above. Neighborhoods and Streets represent the "everyday life tactics" developed by ordinary people in response to the strategies of power. The practices here have been selected to analyze how everyday practices are reconstructed through art. Temporary and Alternative Spaces, meanwhile, aim to examine the interactions of interventions in the voids that open up within the city's routine. This classification seeks to understand how art develops different political strategies across the city's various layers and how their outcomes vary.

Table 4.2.1 Categorization of Selected Artworks

Urban Centers (Squares) / Parks	**Neighborhoods / Streets**	**Temporary / Alternative Spaces**
- Ayşe Erkmen-Açık Sütun (1992) / Kemal Önsoy-Karşılıklı Yardımlaşma (2005)	- Oda Project (2000-2009)	- İnci Eviner - Ortak Eylem Aygıtı (2013)
- Can Altay - PARK (2010)	- Acı Kahve (2013)	-Yan Köşe (2017)
- Gezi Park - Duran Adam (2013)		-Hale Tenger - Suret, Zuhur, Tezahür (2019)

The case studies were selected as examples representing a radical break from the traditional understanding of monuments in Istanbul's public art scene and directly interacting with the dynamics of urban transformation after 2000. The selection process was based on the artworks' capacity to trigger public engagement, disrupt urban routines, and initiate widespread discussions within society.

The categorization of public art varies depending on the approach taken and the scope of the subject under examination. However, in this study, the works have been categorized based on their relationship with space in order to understand their location in the city and their transformative effects. The analysis process was structured through a “lens framework” derived from the theories of heterotopia, profanation, and power dynamics, mapping not only the physical locations of the selected works but also their qualitative relationships with the urban fabric. The “Spatial Typology” underlying this classification focuses on questions such as where the work stands in power relations, what kind of representational space it creates in the space, its relationship with the public, and how it integrates with or contrasts with the city. In this vein, the analyses were conducted under three main headings, guided by the concepts discussed in the theoretical section. In addition to the importance of the periods in which the works were created, the areas in which they are located are also an important criterion for examination. For this reason, the distribution of the works within the city, categorized by type, is shown on the map below (Figure 4.2.1).

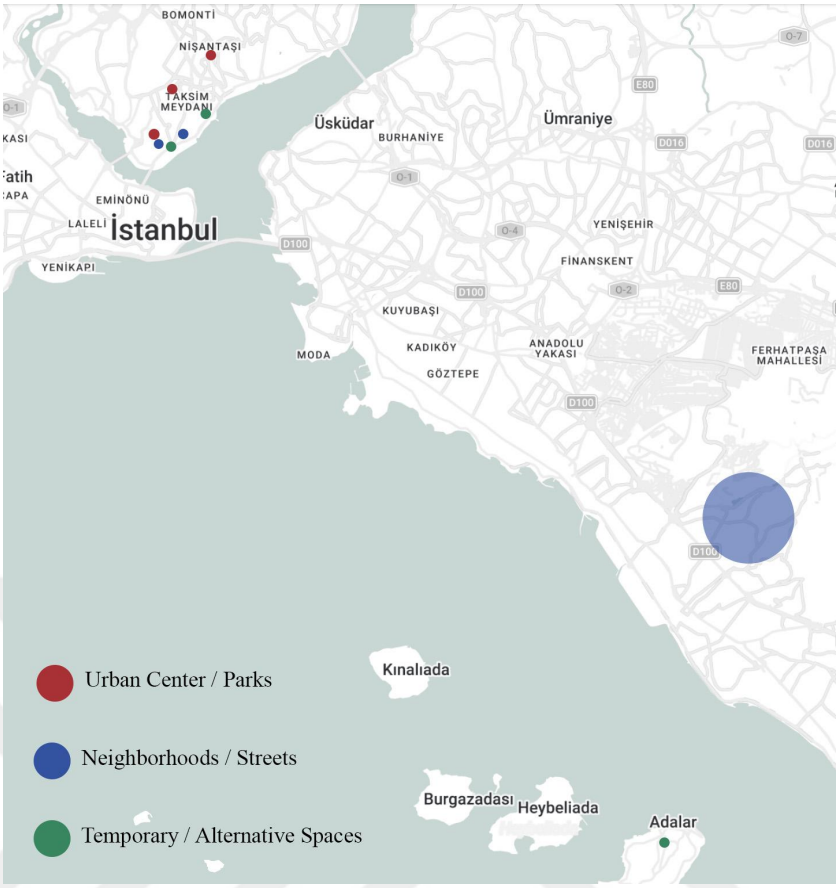


Figure 4.2.1 Map of Selected Artworks

Examining the map in Figure 4.2.1, we observe that artistic practices are predominantly concentrated in the Beyoğlu district, also known as Pera, and the Karaköy area. Since Ottoman times, Pera has been the center of Westernization, diplomacy, and culture, with its Levantine and non-Muslim settlements. In the 20th century, Henry Prost's urban planning efforts helped develop the cultural fabric of the area, making it more central and accessible (Nuran, 2016). Subsequently, the construction of the Atatürk Cultural Center and the opening of institutional galleries such as Salt, Arter, and Akbank Art in this area have made Beyoğlu an important location for contemporary art.

Similarly, with the relocation of the Ottoman palace to Dolmabahçe, the Nişantaşı district became a residential area for high-ranking bureaucrats and military officers. The presence of high-income individuals with an interest in art, who are potential art buyers in this district, led to the establishment of art institutions nearby.

Looking at the Tophane and Karaköy districts, the presence of Ottoman-era military and administrative buildings, along with the warehouses in the port area, has provided ample space suitable for art events. The opening of the Istanbul Modern Museum here in 2007 has drawn the art community to this area. Generally, the fact that art institutions, art enthusiasts, and artists are located here has made this the place where they feel most at home and understood. For this reason, since these locations serve as the primary venues for transportation and arts and culture activities, the selected works are generally situated there as well.

The three main groups identified represent art's hierarchical connection with authority, the relational processes it establishes with society, and the critical interventions that alter the city's political codes. During the analysis phase, each case will first be evaluated within its historical and political context, then the power balances of the actors in the production process will be examined, and finally, the work will be analyzed through the physical/sensory interaction it establishes with the audience and the change it creates in the routine flow of the space.

4.3 Analysis of Selected Works by Category

4.3.1 Urban centers (squares)/parks

Squares and parks are fundamental physical spaces in cities and serve as ‘urban focal points’ where social memory, political representation, and daily interactions are most intensely experienced. These areas serve as the city's showcase, with their structure designed and controlled by the authorities, while also acting as a stage where society displays its own existence and objections. In post-2000 Istanbul, these urban centers have become contested spaces that are constantly being redefined through urban transformation projects and social movements. The public art practices examined in this section reveal how they are incorporated into the monumental weight of the square, how they integrate with the social fabric of the parks, and how they reproduce the spatial boundaries defined by the authorities through artistic action.

4.3.1.1 Açık Sütun (Open Column)- Karşılıklı Yardımlaşma (Mutual Aid)

In 1992, the municipality organized a competition titled “Placement of Three-Dimensional Contemporary Artworks in Open Spaces.” According to the statement (1992) in the terms and conditions, the aim was: “To equip Istanbul with artworks in line with a contemporary urban lifestyle and its cultural development, to strengthen the relationship between art and society, and to support art and artists. ” In this context, artists were selected and invited, and open spaces were determined. Of the 64 invited artists, 32 participated in the competition with 55 works, and 10 sculptures were installed (Ece, 2011). When selecting works for this competition, greater attention was paid to spatial data. Some artists explained the conceptual connections they established between the work and the space in their application reports.

Ayşe Erkmen's abstract sculpture ‘Açık Sütun’ was also produced for this competition and placed in Tünel Square at the end of Istiklal Avenue, as shown in Figure 4.3.1.1.1. Erkmen envisioned placing a sculpture that would reflect and, at the same time, encompass Tünel Square, creating a sense that it had always been there and breathed in unison with its surroundings (Öztekin, 2021). Reinterpreting the extremely narrow, crowded, and intertwined structure of the square, the patterns, inspired by six different types of windows and balcony ironwork, reinterpret the wrought iron patterns of Beyoğlu buildings, referring to the image of Istanbul and traditional handicraft motifs, as well as balcony ironwork. Taking its form from the brick chimney of the old factory opposite the Tunnel exit, an 8-meter-high iron sculpture emerged.



Figure 4.3.1.1.1 Ayşe Erkmen, Açık Sütun, Tünel Square (Photo by Cemal Emden, 1994). Source: https://argonotlar.com/gokyuzune-uzanmak-acik-sutun-uzerine-bir-deneme/

Although made of a dominant material such as iron, its transparency and permeability allow it to remain in that ambiguous area between existence and non-existence (Öztekin, 2021). This situation, given by the material and along with the sculpture's camouflaging itself into the city's identity, has always caused the work with challenges related to visibility (Yılmaz, 2022). The artwork has been continuously damaged, becoming an open target for dump trucks carrying debris from infrastructure works on Istiklal Avenue and nearby construction sites. The grass area placed underneath it was removed after a while. In September 2005, artist Kemal Önsoy reconfigured and produced a new work about the visibility of this work for the *Istanbul Pedestrian Exhibitions II,* curated by Fulya Erdemci and Emre Baykal, focusing on the visibility of this work. However, as will be examined in another section, this work was severely damaged in the process and was repaired by Ayşe Erkmen over a period of two years (Yılmaz, 2022). In subsequent years, due to its prominent position on the street during marches and protests, flags and banners were hung on it (Figure 4.3.1.1.4). According to Erkmen, this work, used in different ways during different periods, is an inevitable outcome of public art adapting to the changing dynamics of the city and becoming public property, and he does not feel uncomfortable about this.

The Istanbul Pedestrian Exhibitions took place in 2002 and 2005, curated by Fulya Erdemci and Emre Baykal. The first was held around Nişantaşı, while the second was realized along the Tünel-Karaköy route. The Istanbul Pedestrian Exhibitions are based on pedestrians who walk within the city without the need for vehicles and demonstrate the human scale (Erdemci ve Baykal, 2005). It is an exhibition plan that integrates with the city socially and culturally, not only in spaces specifically designated for art, but also incorporating the street and public spaces, by settling in the changing and transforming neighborhoods of the city. It was planned to open in September 2005, simultaneously with the 9th Istanbul Biennial, aiming to reach a wider audience. With this in framework, the Tünel-Karaköy axis, where pedestrians are numerous and which is one of the city's important walking routes and has undergone a transformation process since the 1990s, was chosen as the location. The choice of the Açık Sütun work for intervention purposes perfectly fulfills the exhibition's aim.

Kemal Önsoy intervened in the Açık Sütun sculpture created by Ayşe Erkmen in 1993 as part of this exhibition. He produced the work ‘Karşılıklı Yardımlaşma’ by covering the Açık Sütun sculpture with styrofoam, a material used on the exterior facades of buildings. He used a wooden structure to secure the styrofoam (Öztekin, 2021). The sculpture, which had 12 stars, was kept covered throughout the exhibition to remind visitors of its presence (Figure 4.3.1.1.2). However, towards the end of the exhibition, it was set on fire by unknown individuals and quickly split in two (Figure 4.3.1.1.3).



Figure 4.3.1.1.2 Karşılıklı Yardımlaşma (Mutual Aid) by Kemal Önsoy (2005). Source: https://argonotlar.com/gokyuzune-uzanmak-acik-sutun-uzerine-bir-deneme/



Figure 4.3.1.1.3 Karşılıklı Yardımlaşma (Mutual Aid) by Kemal Önsoy after fire (2005) Source: https://argonotlar.com/gokyuzune-uzanmak-acik-sutun-uzerine-bir-deneme/



Figure 4.3.1.1.4 İstanbul Pride, Tünel Square, June 2014. Source: https://argonotlar.com/gokyuzune-uzanmak-acik-sutun-uzerine-bir-deneme/

'Açık Sütun' is an exceptional example in terms of its connection to the space, despite the struggle for visibility in the public sphere. Although the work's invisibility has made it susceptible to physical damage, it has also ensured that it is no longer an ideological target. It became a 'natural component of the space'.

Located at the end of Istiklal Avenue, this artwork engages with passersby solely through their encounters with it (Figure 4.3.1.1.5). The intervention opened up a

discussion on the issues of visibility and memory in public art. Önsoy pursued a radical visibility strategy by completely covering the sculpture, which had become spatially blind over time due to its integration with the city's fabric, with styrofoam, an industrial material. This action, which provoked the existence of the work by making it invisible, evoked alienation in the viewer and repositioned the sculpture in social memory. This intervention defined a new space with a counter-monument that emphasized its neglect and absence in the public space.

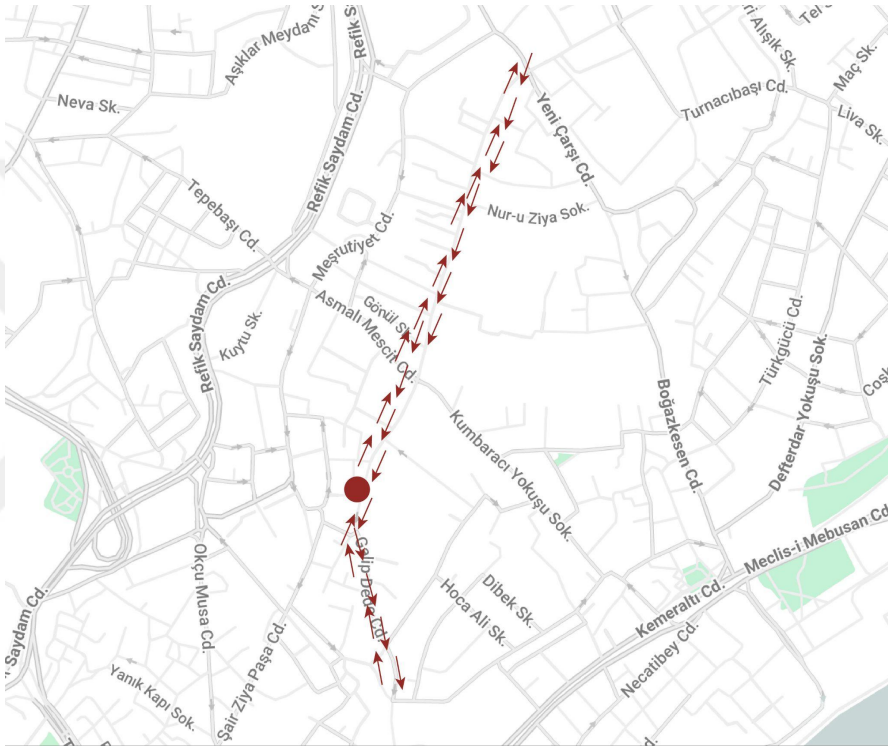


Figure 4.3.1.1.5 Interaction map of Açık Sütun (Open Column)

However, the destruction of the work by being set on fire at the end of the exhibition revealed that the violence in the public space is not only ideological but also a reaction to the unknown. This harsh reaction of the public to interventions outside the familiar images included in the routine flow of daily life shows that society perceives artistic language outside its habits as a threat. This destruction highlights the tension between transience and security in public art, illustrating how closely art's presence in space is tied to social acceptance and spatial memory, rather than physical durability.

4.3.1.2 PARK

Between May 2010 and January 2011, the exhibition PARK: A Possibility, curated by Can Altay and designed by Future Anecdotes, with the participation of Nils Norman, Ceren Oykut, and Sinek Sekiz, was held in Cumhuriyet Park, Nişantaşı (Altay, 2017). This exhibition is an artistic and social initiative focusing on the nature and potential of public space. 'PARK: a Possibility' is a micro-utopia initiative that aims to reclaim the democratic potential of space during a period when public space is under threat of privatization. The intervention aimed to break the rigid boundaries of the space through objective works, temporary architectural elements, and performative actions that re-imagined the park as an urban 'ecosystem,' moving it beyond being merely a transit route.

The interventions in the park take the form of tangible or intangible works that sometimes disappear and sometimes reappear. A detailed analysis of the park was conducted beforehand, and a plan was developed accordingly. One of the architectural interventions, the 'wooden perch,' is designed as a sculpture/architectural element/park furniture that creates a boundary where people can take shelter (Figure 4.3.1.2.1). The 'grass' extends onto the sidewalks, reflecting the idea of breaking down boundaries and responding to the 'Do not step on the grass!' warnings. It prevents the establishment of a hierarchical structure in green spaces and paving stones, creating distinct usage areas with mounds. It also intervenes in the relationship between visitors and the path by breaking down the boundaries of the walking axes. In addition, a 'city garden' where visitors can grow things in the soil has been placed in the park, and a 'playground sculpture' has been designed and placed as a single structure for children to play in (Figure 4.3.1.2.2). The audio recordings, titled "Listen-Walk," narrate the stories of those passing through the park, conveying the park's local memory to the visitor and proving that the space possesses not only physical but also narrative depth.



Figure 4.3.1.2.1 Wooden Perch in PARK (Altay, 2017)



Figure 4.3.1.2.2 Playground Sculpture in PARK (Altay, 2017)

This intervention demonstrated that it could create a space of possibility, trigger social interaction and whispering that another kind of public life is possible, as shown in Figure 4.3.1.2.3. The multi-layered interventions implemented within the project deconstructed the park's predefined functional boundaries, creating an ecosystem of sharing, discussion, and collective production shaped by the surrounding community. In this respect, the work, paralleling Lefebvre's theory of 'the production of space,' confirms that space is a living organism constantly reconstructed through social practices.



Figure 4.3.1.2.3 PARK (Altay, 2017)

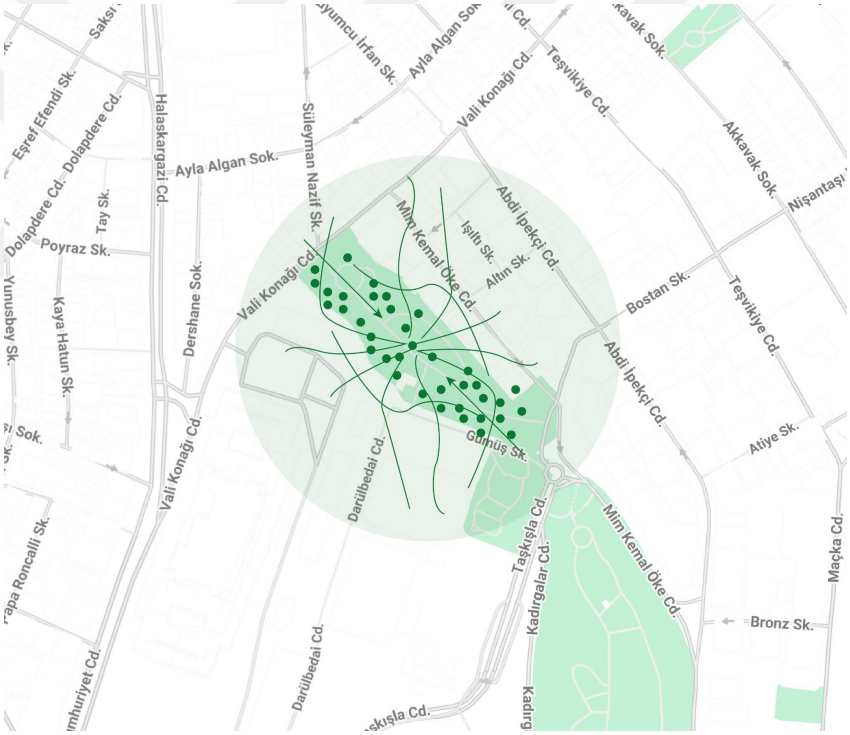


Figure 4.3.1.2.4 Interaction map of PARK

These projects, carried out in various central locations, have fostered different forms of interaction through their distinct designs. Since parks are spaces where people spend their free time, this has altered the approach of the project here, shaping it to encourage collaborative creation and enhance the quality of time spent there. By involving the local community, they succeeded in creating a social network and fostering collaborative production (Figure 4.3.1.2.4).

This initiative can also be considered one of the most significant examples of heterotopia of its time; for within the park, another place was constructed that transcends the given urban order, creates its own rules, and suspends social hierarchies. 'PARK: a possibility' successfully established a space of action where art fosters urban belonging, transforms the individual into a participatory subject, and enables the collective reconstruction of the public sphere through shared responsibility.

4.3.1.3 Duran Adam (Standing Man)

In 2013, following the decision to demolish Gezi Park in Taksim Square, Istanbul, public protests began. People, unwilling to lose this public space in the city center, resisted for a long time. This resistance resonated widely throughout the country, leading to a transformation in society. The resistance manifested itself in various ways, creating a new space for public art production. Different performances, workshops, and projects were produced, creating a new public art space.



Figure 4.3.1.3.1 Erdem Gündüz as Standing Man. Source: https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2013/06/130617_duran_insan

One of the most impactful performances was that of artist Erdem Gündüz on June 17, 2013, when he stood facing the Atatürk Cultural Center (AKM) in the middle of Taksim Square (Figure 4.3.1.3.1). It went down in history as the "Standing Man." This action, initiated by Erdem Gündüz, grew with others, forming a human chain (Arslan, 2013). Kemal Özsoy saw this performance not as something belonging to just one person, but as an action that could be continued by others (Figure 4.3.1.3.2).



Figure 4.3.1.3.2 Erdem Gündüz as Standing Man with other people. Source: https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2013/06/130617_duran_insan

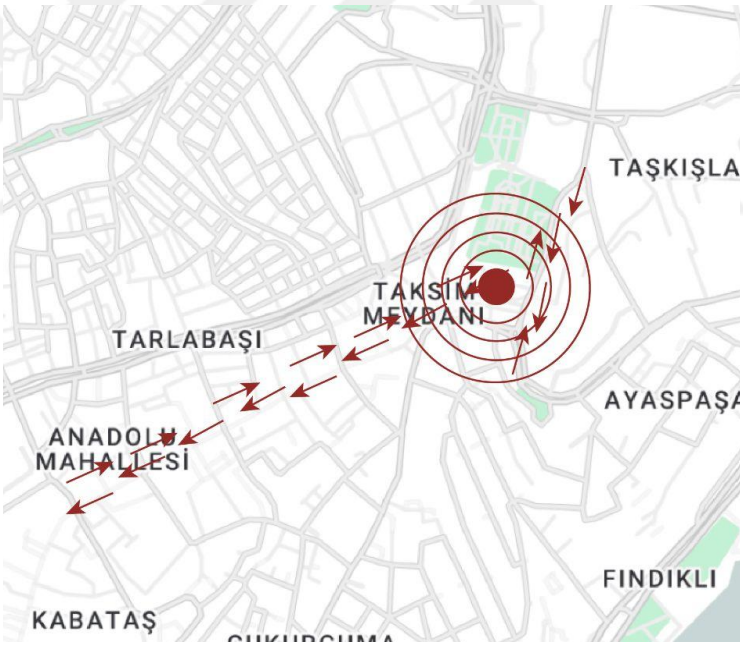


Figure 4.3.1.3.3 Interaction Map of Standing Man

The 'Duran Adam' performance, by using the human body as an object, has transformed art into a spatial image of a political protest. Defining a critical space at that location, it created a heterotopia and, by engaging with the interactions of those present there, multiplied the action (Figure 4.1.1.3.3). Rising within the new public sphere created by the Gezi Park resistance, this action challenged the spatial hierarchy of authority by

rejecting the movement. The artist's silent stance, performed in the center of symbols of power like Taksim Square, facing the AKM (Atatürk Cultural Center), is an attempt to transform the public space into a space of consensus.

As Kemal Özsoy emphasizes, the transformation of this performance from a singular artist action into an anonymous human chain is the most concrete evidence that art has evolved into a social 'collective property'. It is a good example of how public art can create a counter-balance of power within society and redefine its own space.

4.3.2 Neighborhoods/streets

The neighborhood fabric and streets branching off from the city's main arteries are areas where public art interacts with its audience in the most direct, intimate, and continuous way. Unlike the monumental and political weight of squares, the street is a living space where daily practices flow seamlessly between home and city, shaping local identity and neighborly relations. Artistic interventions at this scale ‘activate’ the neighborhood by inviting the viewer to become part of the process rather than a passive observer. Art, by becoming part of the routine functioning of the street, transforms the space into a social platform integrated with the participation of the local community. These practices, which we encounter in Istanbul neighborhoods, are ‘instruments of action’ that encourage collective production, demonstrating how public space can be rebuilt not through top-down imposition, but from within everyday life, from the bottom up.

4.3.2.1 Oda (Room) Project

The Room Project is a non-profit art collective founded in 2000 in Galata by Özge Açıkkol, Güneş Savaş, and Seçil Yersel. The Oda Project aims to explore questions about place and space in Istanbul and its residents, and to consider new relationship models using tools such as postcards, radio, books, posters, newspapers, or temporary spaces. In their first three years, they lived through the neighborhood experience by researching phenomena such as private space, neighborhood, and participation.

The Room Project, located in an apartment in Galata, functioned not as a sterile gallery space, but as a natural extension of the street, the children, and the neighborhood

residents; blurring the sharp boundaries between private and public spaces through the concept of "room." (Yıldız, 2022) Over time, the activities, extending beyond the apartment to the garden, drew inspiration from the rituals of daily life. (Figure 4.3.2.1.1) In 2005, due to gentrification projects, they left the apartment and continued their projects in temporary spaces. Instead of art being brought to the neighborhood from the outside, it represents a model of locality where the artist exists in the space as a neighbor, and production spontaneously arises from this horizontal network of relationships. Their understanding of 'locality' in this context means that they create their art practices through the combination of spatial politics and daily practice. In this process, they independently produced their projects with their neighbors, detaching the social production of urban space from institutional art hierarchies and constructing an alternative public sphere integrated with the dynamic and participatory structure of the street. In subsequent periods, they formed different institutional partnerships and realized their projects with the support of funds.



Figure 4.3.2.1.1 So far so good/so weit so gut, Nadin Reschke, Oda Projesi space, Galata, Istanbul, 2004. Source: https://urbanheritages.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/ozkan_oncurating_space.pdf

Within the framework drawn by architects Philipp Misselwitz and Nikolaus Hirsch, the Cultural Mediators project was carried out in the Gülsuyu-Gülensu neighborhood on the Asian side of Istanbul in 2009 (Aksoy, 2019). The project is considered the longest-running and most satisfying public art project in Turkey. The Gülsuyu-Gülensu neighborhood is predominantly home to Alevis from the provinces of Sivas, Erzincan,

and Tunceli. Having spent five years in Galata, the founders of the Oda Project, who are neighbors in the neighborhood, have implemented a different project in the Gülsuyu-Gülensu neighborhood as foreign artists. In the project, they aimed to explore how cultural production in Beyoğlu and its surrounding areas could be realized in the city's peripheral neighborhoods. Throughout the project period, the artists aimed to produce work in collaboration with residents, considering local dynamics. They have organized window displays (Figure 4.3.2.1.1.2 - Figure 4.3.2.1.1.2), weekly meetings (Figure 4.3.2.1.3), guest artists, discussions centered on organic structures in architecture, workshops with important figures in the neighborhood and housewives, Biennale tours, and children's workshops, establishing strong local connections.



Figure 4.3.2.1.2 Gülsuyu - Gülensu Shop (Aksoy, 2019)



Figure 4.3.2.1.3 Oda Project, First Window Display (2009). Source: https://red-thread.org/kulturel-aracilar-ve-olasi-etkileri-uzerine/



Figure 4.3.2.1.3 Meeting with neighborhood residents at Gülsuyu-Gülensu. Source: https://kulturel-aracilar-etkinlikler.blogspot.com/



Figure 4.3.2.1.4 Interaction map of Gülsuyu-Gülensu Project

In this project, the artist positioned themselves in a place where they could establish grounds for mutual learning, sharing, creating, and discussion, rather than acting as a cultural pioneer. In the context of the neighborhood, they became an integral part of the community's daily routines and created their art in accordance with their way of life. They have created new interactions and connections and established a social network (Figure 4.3.2.1.4). They co-produced the boundaries of the space and the art with the community, demonstrating how the relationship between the artist and neighborhood residents could be established. At the same time, the realization of this project outside of circles recognized as the center of art and its acceptance by the public also demonstrates how interaction between space and art can be established. This was achieved not by missionary art, but by revealing the local heritage there.

4.3.2.2 Acı Kahve (Bitter Coffee)

In 2013, Arzu Yayıntaş and Neriman Polat carried out the ‘Acı Kahve (Bitter Coffee)’ project. The artists wrote the names of women killed by men on the windows of the V.I.P. coffeehouse in Tophanede, as shown in Figure 4.3.2.2.1 and Figure 4.3.2.2.2, inviting women to drink bitter coffee at the coffeehouse to say, ‘Stop Violence Against Women’ and to promote solidarity among women (Yur, 2013).



Figure 4.3.2.2.1 V.I.P. Coffeehouse, Acı Kahve (2013) Source: https://bianet.org/haber/kadina-siddet-uygulayan-bu-kahveye-giremez-145286



Figure 4.3.2.2.2 V.I.P. Coffeehouse, Acı Kahve (2013) Source: https://bianet.org/haber/kadina-siddet-uygulayan-bu-kahveye-giremez-145286

As Arık (2009) noted in his article, coffeehouses have historically been male-dominated spaces, and their practices reinforce the masculine nature of the environment. Women are officially prohibited from entering coffeehouses due to an unwritten rule. However, with the intervention, the boundaries of the space were reorganized and, even if only for

a short time, the space was opened to women. The fact that this place was taboo for women reduced the number of women coming from the neighborhood (Uysal, 2013). The increasing violence in Tophanede made this space, where masculinity and violence are reproduced, a good example of a place chosen for anti-violent action. Men categorize coffeehouses based on their age group or social status (Arık, 2009). With this initiative, men who commit violence against women were condemned among the men at the coffeehouse, and it was stated that they would not be accepted among them.

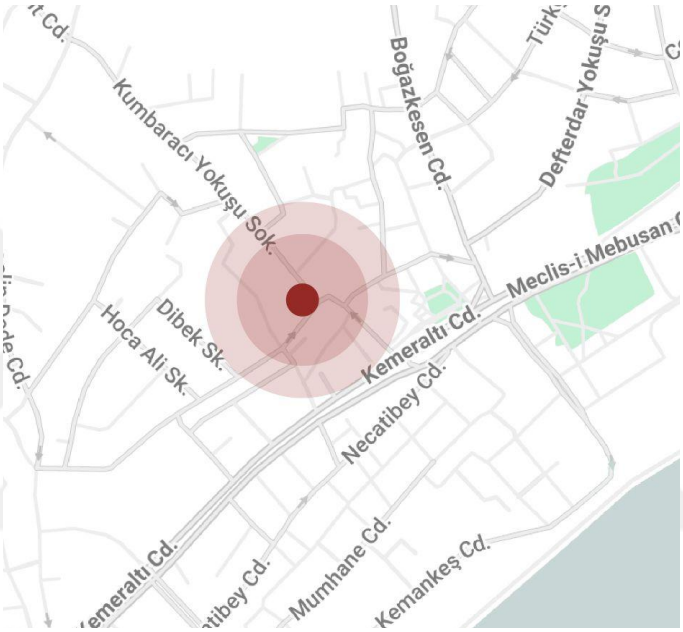


Figure 4.3.2.2.3 Interaction Map of Acı Kahve

This project demonstrates how art can be used as a spatial counter-power tool. By occupying the premises, they have reached a critical turning point (Figure 4.3.2.2.3). The physical occupation of the coffeehouse by women for a temporary period radically transformed the political character of the space. By removing the coffeehouse from its status as a social taboo and turning it into a space for confrontation, the artists rebuilt the public space. In this example, society was invited to participate in the production, with the aim of conveying a social message. By directly intervening in the existing power structure of the space, it disrupts that structure. In conclusion, “Acı Kahve” has created a public space for debate by demonstrating how art renegotiates the boundaries of space not only physically, but also through social ethics and gender norms.

4.3.3 Temporary/alternative spaces

The city's ‘threshold spaces’ and temporary areas, which cannot be defined as either entirely public or entirely private and lie outside traditional exhibition spaces, host experimental and critical examples of public art. Metros, underpasses, construction facades, or areas temporarily used outside their function and lacking a static identity have the potential to be transformed into ‘another place’ (heterotopia) through art. Artistic practices in this category bypass the permanent ownership and authoritarian control of the space, creating areas of liberation where art can appear anywhere at any time. By breaking away from the ‘white cube’ hierarchy of art and connecting with the dynamism of life, these interventions remove the space from being a physical structure.

4.3.3.1 Ortak Eylem Aygıtı (Co-Action Device)

The 13th Istanbul Biennial, curated by Fulya Erdemci and titled "Mother, Am I a Barbarian?", was held in 2013 (İstanbul Kültür Sanat Vakfı). Focusing on public space and social struggles, this biennial featured works that specifically questioned the role of art in the public sphere.

Co-Action Device: *A study by İnci Eviner* produced in 2013 as part of the 13th Istanbul Biennial (*İnci Eviner’in 13. İstanbul Bienali’nde Sergilenen Çalışmasının Filmi Dijital Erişime açıldı*, 2022). Forty students and young artists, invited through an open call, participated as active components of a utopian educational model, utilizing the possibilities of art throughout the exhibition period, to produce a continuous, ever-operating Co-Action Device. Over the course of forty days, the participants, influenced by each other's practices, experiences, words, and physical presence, continued their performative research.

This biennale, structured around the political and social situation created by the Gezi Protests, incorporates elements inspired by that period in its design. Students from diverse disciplines engaged in discussions in the fields of art, politics, and philosophy, interacting with each other to create unique works (Figure 4.3.3.1.1). Here, it is the process, not the resulting product, that is defined as a work of art. Rather than producing a work of art, the artist has constructed a machine in which participants interact with

each other's bodies, words, and practices. Taking movement and space as their subject and questioning the relationship between aesthetics and politics, they created a collective production and learning space at the Galata Rum Primary School.



Figure 4.3.3.1.1 Co-Action Device Source: https://bienal.iksv.org/tr/haberler/inci-eviner-in-13-istanbul-bienali-nde-sergilenen-calismasinin-filmi-dijital-erisime-acildia

İnci Eviner created this space by inspiring from her other work, which is called 'Nursing Modern Fall'. Through her drawings and by deconstructing areas in this work, she revealed the physical elements and their arrangements in space (Figure 4.3.3.1.2). This has created different interconnected spaces for them, much like Istanbul's current construction site environment, increasing their mobility and defining a space that encourages physical movement. By redefining the space not only as a physical boundary but as a constantly evolving production and learning laboratory, the common action device demonstrated the potential of public art to transform individuals from passive spectators into founders of a collective future.



Figure 4.3.3.1.2 Co-Action Device Source: https://bienal.iksv.org/tr/haberler/inci-eviner-in-13-istanbul-bienali-nde-sergilenen-calismasinin-filmi-dijital-erisime-acildia

The project has demonstrated the performative power of creating a new sociality within the space. The transformation of an institutional and historical memory space, such as the Galata Rum Primary School, into an open-ended utopian education model for forty days has harmonized with the static structure of the space.

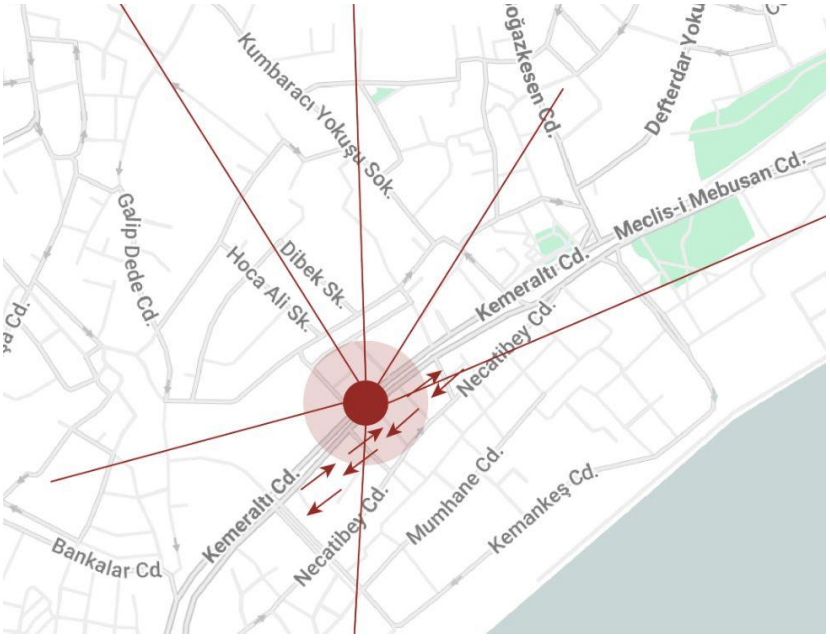


Figure 4.3.3.1.3 Interaction map of Co-Action Device

While the concept of school is one of the institutions of society, the questions of whether the school, at its very core, can create a free space, whether art education can break free from its bureaucratic context, and whether its transformative power can be realized here, have been the subject of considerable debate. Unlike previous examples, by limiting the concept of publicness under an institutional umbrella such as the Biennale and to a specific social group (young artists and students), it has created a semi-public space that isolates the group of artists from society and is closed in on itself, rather than the collective production of art with society. Although it occupies a school building, it has managed to bring together people from diverse backgrounds and foster connections (Figure 4.3.3.1.3). As a central hub, it has attracted the attention of passersby and created a space for people to meet.

The fact that production takes place in a space with predetermined physical and institutional boundaries has detached art from the spontaneity of everyday life, transforming it into a controlled ‘exhibition object’. The direct social intervention seen in ‘Acı Kahve’ or ‘Oda Project’ and the connection established with the chaotic dynamics of the street have given way to a disciplinary performance that takes place only to the extent permitted by the institution. As a result, although the work claims to be a public production, it remains at the level of ‘representation’; rather than expanding the public space, it has reduced it to a small area. At the same time, the digital release of this temporary project's film in 2020 transformed it into a lasting memory and a platform for discussion. The technique, which directly aligns with the 13th Biennial's main theme of "rethinking public space as a political forum," was continued in the digital realm, opening up the discussion of its public nature from a new perspective.

4.3.3.2 Yan Köşe (Side Corner)

Yan Köşe is a unique non-profit public art project launched in 2017 in Turkey, offering an unconventional exhibition space (*YANKÖŞE*, 2017). Funded by a coffee chain, the project utilizes the side surfaces of a building in Kabataş, bringing art and community together in a neglected part of the city. It aims to showcase works by different artists using various techniques, with two projects per year (Figures 4.3.3.2.1 and 4.3.3.2.2)

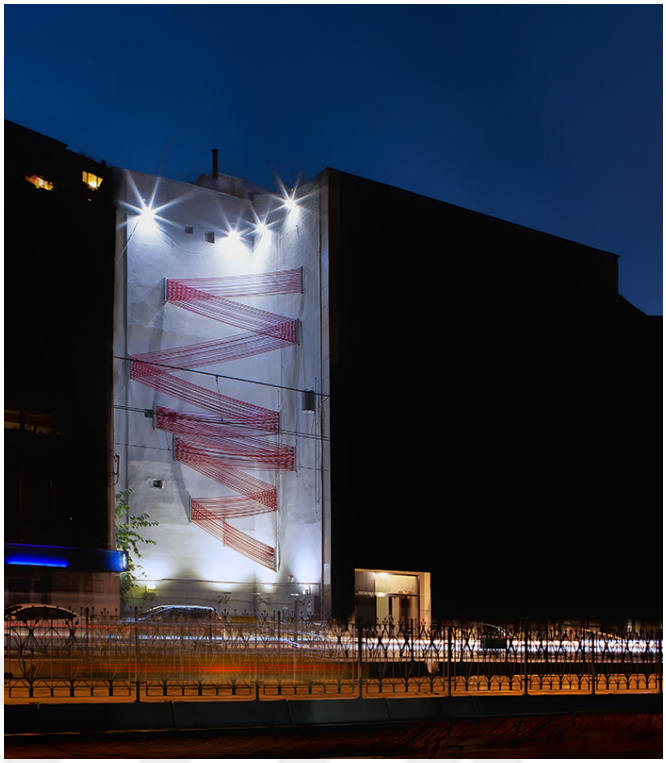


Figure 4.3.3.2.1 Pray for Rain by SO?, 2018-2019 Source: https://www.yankose.org/isler.html

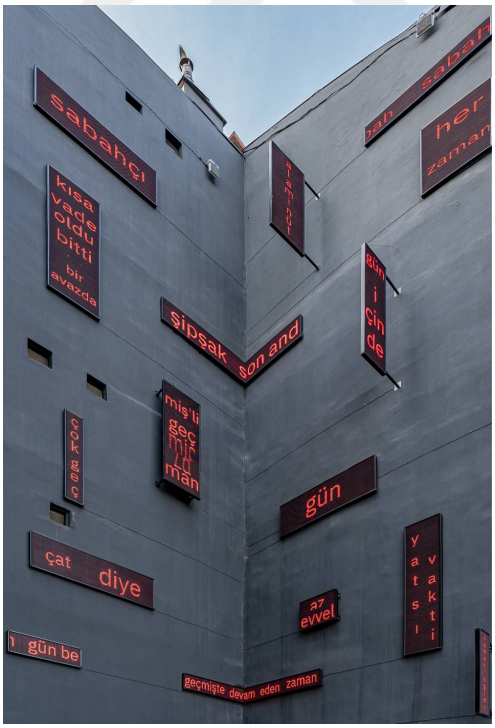


Figure 4.3.3.2.2 Balık Kavağa Çıkınca (When Pigs Fly) 2023
by Cansu Cürgen & Avşar Gürpınar Source: https://www.yankose.org/isler.html

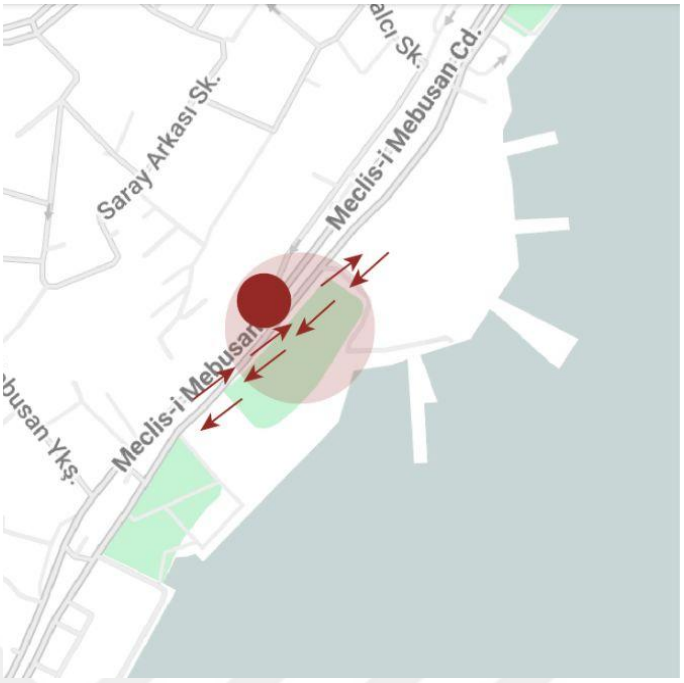


Figure 4.3.3.2.3 Interaction map of Yan Köşe

The relationship that the artworks establish with the urban space can be defined as a temporary intervention and spatial transformation. The transformation of these gray walls, located in one of the city's most central areas, can be explained in two different ways: as an effort to beautify the city or as an artistic intervention. It is also an example of public communication, demonstrating that dysfunctional spaces can be reevaluated through art. The content and context of the works can vary depending on their relationship with the viewer. They can create a context that is integrated into the daily lives of the people who use this route every day, with whom they interact daily, or they can create a community that comes solely to see these works. Although it is part of the routine of those walking by, its large scale and inaccessibility from the front limit interaction. As an inaccessible, untouchable object, it becomes something that can only be observed (Figure 4.3.3.2.3).

Mostly engaging and intriguing works, disseminated through social media, create a new environment and a kind of virtual public space. It produces a new production space, both physically and socially, creating publicness. It becomes a destination that can be tracked but not fully accessed. This newly created counter-space has become a space of institutional and public consensus. In this example, artists and works selected with

restrictive criteria and institutional support have followed a path that appeals to the public. Public art has played a role not as a single event, but as something that connects the space with the city.

4.3.3.3 Suret, Zuhur, Tezahür (Image, Manifestation, Appearance)

"Suret, Zuhur, Tezahür" was installed by Hale Tenger in the garden of the Taş Mektep on Büyükada during the 16th Istanbul Biennial. The 16th Istanbul Biennial takes its name, "The Seventh Continent," from the garbage patch forming in the Pacific Ocean. Within this framework, the Biennial aims to explore the current state of art in the face of ecological challenges, bringing together numerous artists and thinkers to examine a world where the boundaries between humans and non-humans have become increasingly permeable, a world shaped by the intertwining of nature and artificial intelligence in this era (Örer, 2019).



Figure 4.3.3.3.1 Suret, Zuhur, Tezahür in Taş Mektep (Karaağaç, 2022)

Hale Tenger, drawing inspiration from nature and humanity's destructive actions toward it, created the work "Suret, Zuhur, Tezahür". (Figure 4.3.3.3.1) This piece is composed of organic and inorganic materials. She has created an experiential environment that references the injustices experienced within the context of time and space (Karaağaç,

2022). Drawing inspiration from the “girdling” method in botany, the historical significance of obsidian, and the Chinese philosophy of “Wu Wei” (doing nothing), she has created black mirrors. According to the artist’s explanation, this work symbolizes a tree animated through humanity’s cruelty toward nature. In the “girdling” technique, the artist sought to depict humanity’s insatiable greed, which cannot be satisfied by mere production. Tenger also drew on the fact that obsidian, due to its composition, was used as the first known mirror in ancient times and created additional mirror surfaces using containers filled with water. (Figure 4.3.3.3.2.) A recitation of the poem he wrote based on the “Wu Wei” philosophy accompanies the other objects.



Figure 4.3.3.3.2 Suret, Zuhur, Tezahür in Taş Mektep (containers filled with water) (Karaağaç, 2022)

The installation titled “Suret, Zuhur, Tezahür” came to life in 2019 in the garden of Taş Mektep, one of Büyükada’s most memory-laden sites, when the building was still abandoned and in ruins. The building’s history is a multi-layered palimpsest, spanning from its origins as a magnificent summer residence (Sofronios Mansion) commissioned by Patriarch Sofronios in the second half of the 19th century, to its service as the island’s first official Turkish school (Köprülü Mehmed Paşa Numune School) beginning in 1922 (Cansız, 2023). Evacuated following a fire hazard in 1979 and left to silence and decay for over forty years, this structure, in its very suspended state during

Tenger's intervention, stood as a spatial testament to humanity's destructive attitude toward nature and history.

The ruined and abandoned state of Taş Mektep at the time the work was installed creates a spatial unity with Tenger's theme of "injustice" toward nature and history. While the ruin itself serves as a symbol of human abandonment and the destructive power of time, the "black mirrors" and the metaphor of the drowning tree (girdling) that Tenger installed here reinforce the message conveyed by the state of the space.

"Suret, Zuhur, Tezahür" invites the viewer to be not merely an observer, but an active participant in that experiential environment. The black mirrors in the installation, composed of obsidian and water-filled containers, serve as interactive tools that enable the viewer to confront their own reflection. When the viewer looks into these mirrors, they see not only themselves but also the dilapidated building behind them and Tenger's interventions symbolizing violence against nature, all on the same plane, thereby becoming a part of the destruction. Created alongside the artist's poetry rooted in the philosophy of "doing nothing" (Wu Wei), this environment fosters a moment of stopping and turning inward amidst the city's noise and pace. Through this meditative yet confrontational setting, the work transforms the individual into a subject who questions their own attitude toward nature and the environment. In this sense, the work is an experiential "heterotopia" that temporarily suspends the political and ecological weight of the space, leaving the viewer alone with their own conscience.

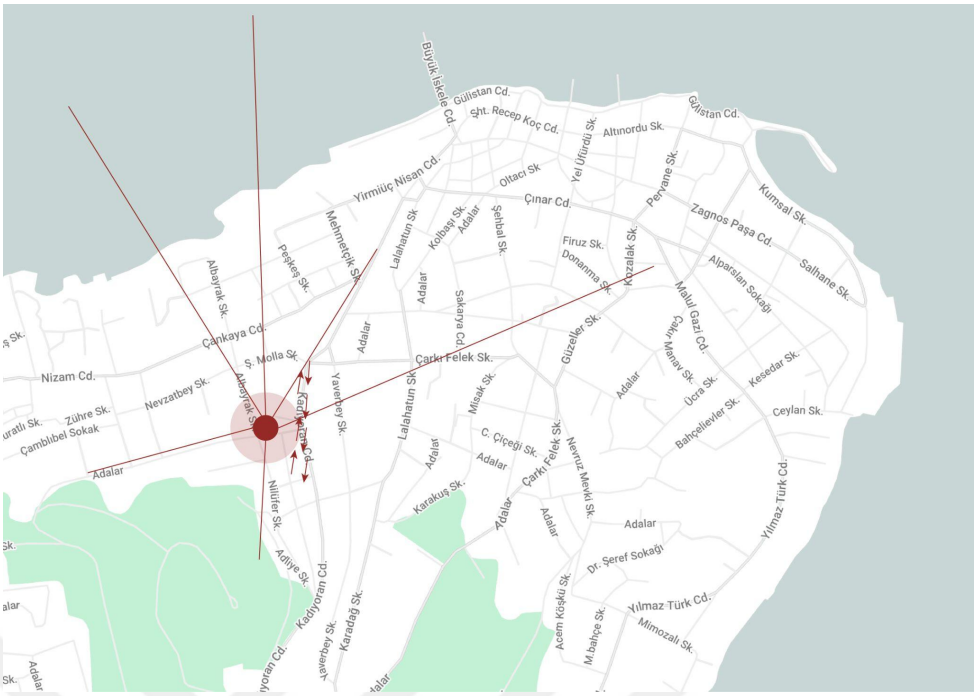


Figure 4.3.3.3.3 Interaction map of Suret, Zuhur, Tezahür

Its inclusion in the Biennial, combined with its remote location on Büyükada, makes it a destination worth visiting (Figure 4.3.3.3.3). However, its inclusion in the Biennial also allows it to reach a wider audience, fostering greater interaction and expanding its reach. At the same time, its occupation of an old schoolyard makes it a critical stopping point.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 Evaluation

Public space has been a dynamic structure shaped by power dynamics, societal production, shared boundaries, and transformations. Public art is one of the central components of these balances within the public sphere. It functions as an active actor that questions, reinforces, or transforms the meaning of urban space. Therefore, the roles of public art in space and its physical, social, and semantic relationships have been the subject of discussion across various fields. This study examines the debates and historical development surrounding public art. It explores the public nature of public art in Istanbul from various perspectives.

In Istanbul, public art has become a significant tool in the expression of public spaces. Selected works, examined through the lens of different public spaces, explore how these spaces construct their public character through the dynamics of the space and society. Sometimes it serves as a tool to reinforce the ideological messages of authority, and sometimes as a means of resistance, expressing the demands of society for democratic rights. The theoretical approaches examined in this study, and particularly the case studies analyzed in Istanbul, demonstrate that public art in urban spaces is not merely an aesthetic object, but a process that reveals the dynamics of spatial power relations and rewrites the meaning of public spaces. In Istanbul's dynamic political climate, public art occupies an ambiguous position, caught between a tool representing authority and a stage of resistance where society makes its voice heard. The evolution of art from monumental objects to relational performances from the 2000s to the present also demonstrates the democratization processes in the ways public spaces are used.



Figure 5.1.1 Interaction Map of Selected Artworks

Throughout this study, it has been observed that the case studies examined range from interventions that disrupt the authoritarian structure of public squares to horizontal solidarity networks within neighborhoods and confrontations with memory in alternative spaces. The interactions between the works examined separately in the previous section are shown on a single map of Istanbul (Figure 5.1.1). Their formation in various public spaces is demonstrated, including their temporary and permanent nature. As visualized in the spatial analysis in Figure 5.1.1, the spatial placement of contemporary public art in Istanbul does not form a homogeneous or random order; instead, it demonstrates the operational and transformative capacities of each intervention. Arrows indicate the routes people take and their encounters with these works, while straight lines show the direct networks the works establish and their becoming destinations, and curved lines show more permeable relationships with their surroundings. Circular forms that progress around them create critical points, showing how they disrupt the flow within the city.



Figure 5.1.2 Interaction Map of Selected Artworks - Beyoğlu

In this context, the location of these works within the city and their relationship with authority are the first connections established. The most prominent example of this spatial behavior occurs along the Beyoğlu-Taksim axis (Figure 5.1.2). Here, the concentration of concentric circles and multifaceted vectors expresses a contested space where institutional visibility, such as the state-approved Açık Sütun stance or the institution-supported Yan Köşe facade, intertwines with bottom-up tactical performances such as Erdem Gündüz's Standing Man performance. While previous chapters highlighted how public spaces in city centers serve as showcases for authorities, acting as tools to spread their messages and define boundaries through public sculptures, public art can exist in various forms.

In contrast to the differences in the city center, the business capillary network structure in the periphery of the city reveals an entirely different spatial paradigm. The decentralized blue grid mapping the short-term initiatives of the Oda Project in the Gülsuyu-Gülensu neighborhood represents a self-sustaining, community ecosystem. By distancing itself from the institutional perspective and regulatory mechanisms of the city center, public art in this periphery has emerged in opposition to traditional formations. As the mapping shows, the intervention is not a physical turning point, but rather a localized relational process intertwined with the daily routines, domestic thresholds, and social solidarity networks of the neighborhood residents.

The long green vectors stretching along Büyükada (Hale Tenger's work, Suret, Zuhur, Tezahür), situated entirely outside the physical and administrative urban mainland, form a linear threshold. This detached configuration creates a heterotopia by activating an isolated 'counter-space' where the historical and routine time of the mainland is temporarily suspended. The public artwork is no longer encountered randomly or temporarily by daily commuters or ordinary pedestrians but becomes a highly specific 'destination' requiring deliberate physical passage, thus leading the participant to a meditative, tactile, and historical experience by engaging with spatial memory.

The independently organized events, though short-lived, are designed to encourage more active participation from the audience. Instead of being merely passing-through experiences or critical destinations, they have become more participatory, involving the local community and integrating into daily routines through collaborative production. This situation appears to make continuity difficult and occurs only in the short term. Permanent tasks have become object-based, while temporary ones have become process-based.

On the other hand, although the ‘Açık Sütun is a fixed object, it has become something that people incorporate into their actions, using it in different ways throughout the process. The ‘Karşılıklı Yardımlaşma project, meanwhile, involved converting the existing ‘Açık Sütun’ and relocating it to a different site than where it was originally intended to be situated. Karşılıklı Yardımlaşma demonstrates how existing structures can be repurposed, and even when supported within the scope of an exhibition, it has evolved into an independent and active field of participation by leaving the initiative to the artists. Karşılıklı Yardımlaşma, on the other hand, stands apart by creating awareness among viewers by dismantling a work that was rigidly established and had become deeply ingrained in memory.

In conclusion, as demonstrated by the diverse spatial behaviors mapped within Istanbul's urban fabric, these contemporary public art practices are fluid, multifaceted, and variable, defying rigid and static classifications. Instead of fixed, unchanging positions within closed typological boundaries, these selected works exist in a state of transition, adapting their semantic forms to changing social reflexes and urban dynamics. An intervention that begins as an institutionalized, state-approved object can

transform into a tactical object of a vibrant public space when reclaimed by collective social action; conversely, a temporary community-based project can become an alternative institutional heterotopia surrounding a neighborhood. Therefore, public art in Istanbul should be understood as a multi-layered process that refuses to be confined to permanent typologies.

5.2 Rereading Istanbul's Public Art Scene

This section presents a synthesis of the theoretical framework and case study data presented in previous sections, in light of Istanbul's unique urban fabric and social dimensions. The aim here is not only to identify the current situation, but also to interpret the paradoxes observed during the research process and the city's problematic yet potentially promising relationship with art.

The spatial placement and technical production methods of public art are the most fundamental elements that directly determine the nature of the dialogue it establishes with the viewer. The technical differences among the cases we examined, ranging from a work being an image rapidly viewed along a transit route, to another transforming into an everyday object on a furniture scale, or being integrated into the urban space as a facade installation, constitute a threshold indicating the degree of the art's public nature. In particular, works in the form of furniture enhance art's potential to be tangible and usable; whereas works installed on a facade that remain inaccessible create a physical distance between the viewer and the art object, reducing interaction to mere visual consumption. For example, in projects like the PARK, the technical setup, which blends seamlessly into the environment like street furniture, removes barriers to participation and integrates art into the rhythm of daily life. In contrast, the installation-focused techniques in Hale Tenger's work in the Taş Mektep garden turn art into a "destination" to be reached.

Works located in areas with restricted access or on enclosed facades can undermine the principle of "accessibility for all," the most fundamental promise of public art, reducing it to merely an aesthetic decoration of the urban landscape. Consequently, the technical form of art (furniture, sculpture, facade cladding) is the primary factor that determines

not only where it is situated, but also how it negotiates power and ownership relations within that space, and whether it frames the viewer as a passive spectator or an active user.

Istanbul's public art process is shaped by the tension between the authority's efforts to create monumental representations and the liberation practices of civil initiatives. The cases examined in this thesis reveal that sculptures, initially conceived as a means for the government to prove its civilized and democratic face through competitions, have over time been subjected to censorship and intervention, transforming them into active political subjects. This interaction mapping shows that the impact of public art should be measured not by its physical permanence but by the semantic fluidity created between the power balances of the space. In the Istanbul of the future, public art must move away from being static objects imposed from above and instead maintain its presence through temporary but effective interventions that permeate the urban fabric, blurring digital and physical boundaries and transforming the city into a dialogue space that is renegotiated every day. In this context, art is not an end result; it emerges as an interaction that questions different values in the construction of public space, which has become part of social life and challenges urban justice.

The future of public art in Istanbul's multi-layered structure lies in the intermediate zones where rigid institutional boundaries intersect with completely independent practices. In this context, hybrid models offered by examples such as Yan Köşe serve as an interface between institutional power and artistic freedom, providing critical clues for the future potential of public art. Such models create a space for negotiation where content and artistic expression can remain fluid, polyphonic, and independent, despite being grounded in institutional ownership or financial support. This breaks the dichotomy between art being merely an instrument of authority or solely a marginal focus of criticism, opening up a sustainable and dialogue-based space for existence in the urban environment.

The shift observed in practices such as Metr.cube, where public art, which traditionally occupies a fixed, monumental space, takes on a “mobile and temporary” character, can be viewed as a creative “tactic” developed to circumvent the strategic control

mechanisms of authority and open up unpredictable spaces for expression within the city’s fabric.

The post-2020 period in Istanbul's public art scene has seen a shift from civic and interventionist practices to more controlled and protected "institutional public spaces." The difficulty in finding civic cases in the post-2020 literature and urban space that fully meet the thesis's core criteria was identified as the most concrete outcome of the city's changing political and social climate. Particularly in the post-pandemic era, restrictions on the use of urban open spaces and increased security policies have weakened the role of public spaces as "forums" and "conflict zones"; this has led to art moving from the streets to "new generation enclosed public spaces" restored by local administrations, such as the Gazhane Museum, Metrohan, or Casa Botter. Thus, art projects have increasingly become subservient to institutions. In the prevailing political climate, the restrictions on the use of public spaces prevent artists from freely utilizing them, forcing them to cooperate with local administrations, a process they are reluctant to undertake. Although institutional structures provide physical accessibility, they risk eroding art's identity as a force that disrupts urban flow and questions authority, reducing it to a controlled space. Consequently, in contemporary Istanbul, public art is seen to be moving away from the "transformative and profane action" character that is the focus of this thesis, evolving into a safe and sterilized construct of public life.

Within the scope of this study, the methodological framework and this analysis model developed for Istanbul provide a reading tool that is not only specific to a single city but can also be applied to different geographical and cultural contexts where public art conflicts with or is integrated into urban dynamics. This developed lens framework allows for the reassessment of public art practices in other cities through power balances, interaction methods, and spatial strategies. On the other hand, these analyses not only provide an academic observation but also serve as a guide for promising art production processes. For artists, designers, and local administrations, the importance of focusing on the social interaction potential of the work, balanced hybrid models between institutional support and artistic autonomy, and interventions that open up the city's routine flow to negotiation has become apparent.

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