THE RUPTURE IN VISUAL LANGUAGE: THE TRANSITION OF ARTS IN TURKEY 1970 – 1980 AND THE WOMEN ARTISTS OF THE PERIOD

by
ÖMÜR KULA

Submitted to the Institute of Social Sciences
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Sabancı University
Fall 2006

APPROVED BY:

Dr. Hasan Bülent Kahraman …….

(Dissertation Supervisor)

Erdağ Aksel …….

Selim Birsel …….

DATE OF APPROVAL: 06.02.2006

© Ömür Kula 2005

All Rights Reserved

ABSTRACT

THE RUPTURE IN VISUAL LANGUAGE: THE TRANSITION OF ARTS IN TURKEY 1970 - 1980 AND THE WOMEN ARTISTS OF THE PERIOD

Ömür Kula

M.A Visual Arts and Visual Communication Design
Thesis Advisor: Hasan Bülent Kahraman
February 2006, x+222

The shift of arts from conventional forms of canvas-painting and sculpture to collage, ready-mades, installations and performances as it had occurred in the history of western art follow a linear and natural unfolding in parallel with socio-political evolvements. In the case of Turkish visual arts, this kind of a transformation projects to the time period between 1960s to 1990s where the face of arts change not smoothly but rather in the form of a 'rupture' as new tendencies are embraced, practiced, applauded and exhibited; substituting the traditional forms of art-making in Turkey. The hypothesis, while seeking the possibility of naming this transformation as a 'rupture', runs in order to single out the contributions of significant women artists of the period, Füsun Onur, Ayşe Erkmen, Canan Beykal, Gülsün Karamustafa and Nur Koçak; whose visibility, active participation, production and unique artistic style happens to conquer the scene. Discussed within the western understanding of concept and conceptual art, and also through the socio-political environment of Turkey during the particular time period; these women artists, who are categorizing their works as 'conceptual' or themselves for that matter as 'conceptual artists'; appear as the most remarkable figures active in the years especially between 1970 and 1980 naming the era as one turning point in the history of Turkish Visual Arts, where fine arts in Turkey move out of the canvas and converge to 'conceptuality' as new subject matters, forms and concepts are integrated within the artistic representation and composition.

Keywords: conceptual art, conceptuality, visual language, rupture, women artists, Turkey

ÖZ

GÖRSEL DİLDE KIRILMA: 1970 – 1980 DÖNEMİNDE TÜRK GÖRSEL SANATLARINDA GEÇİŞ DÖNEMİ VE DÖNEMİN KADIN SANATÇILARI

Ömür Kula

Görsel Sanatlar ve Görsel İletişim Tasarımı Yüksek Lisans Programı
Tez Danışmanı: Hasan Bülent Kahraman
Şubat 2005, x+222

Batı Sanatında yaşanan, alışılagelmiş kanvas-resmi ve heykel formlarından, kolaj, hazır-obje, yerleştirme ve gösterilere uzanan değişim, batı dünyasının içinden geçtiği sosyo-politik gelişmelerle paralel olarak doğal bir evrim sergilemiştir. Türk görsel sanatları özelinde, bu tarz bir değişim kabaca 1960 ve 1990 yılları arasında yaşanan döneme tekabül ederken, sanatın değişen yüzü, yeni eğilimlerin benimsenmesi, pratikte uygulamaya konulması, takdir edilmesi ve sergilenmesi sürecinde, düzgün bir gelişim çizgisinden ziyade görünürde bir 'kırılma' şeklinde gerçekleşmiş ve Türk görsel sanatlarında geleneksel formların yerini yeni formların aldığı gözlemlenmiştir. Bu tez, bu geçişi bir 'kırılma' olarak adlandırmanın mümkün olup olmadığını sorgularken, dönemin; kamu önündeki görünürlükleri, aktif üretkenlikleri, katılımcılıkları ve kendilerine özgü sanatsal tarzlarıyla bu sürecin yaşandığı sahnede belirgin olarak yer alan kadın sanatçılardan, Füsun Onur, Ayşe Erkmen, Canan Beykal, Gülsün Karamustafa ve Nur Koçak'ın bu sürece katkılarını ortaya koymak üzere yola çıkmıştır. Batıdaki tanımıyla kavram ve kavramsal sanat çerçevesinde tartışılan ve Türkiye'de dönemin getirdiği sosyo-politik değişimlerle birlikte okunan bu kadın sanatçılar, işlerini 'kavramsal' ve bu bağlamda kendilerini 'kavramsal sanatçı' olarak konumlamaları dolayısıyla tartışılmış ve özellikle 1970 ve 1980 arası döneme, Türk sanatının kanvas dışına taşan ve kavramsallığa yakınsayan yüzünün Türk görsel sanatları açısından bir dönüm noktası olmasındaki en etkin figürlerden olarak; sanatsal kompozisyon ve temsile yeni konuların, formların ve kavramların entegre edilmesi suretiyle imzalarını atmışlardır.

Anahtar kelimeler: kavramsal sanat, kavramsallık, görsel dil, kırılma, kadın sanatçılar, Türkiye

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to Hasan Bülent Kahraman for being the source of power, inspiration and discipline in completing this thesis and being my guide and my advisor through this remarkably important step forward in my life without whose support and profound knowledge, this work would have never been realized. Thanks to my masters in academy, Erdağ Aksel and Selim Birsel for their patience and warmth, for their eager to continue being my advisors in life; Lewis Keir Johnson for showing me new directions in my academic works and for never hesitating to share his friendship with me. Thanks to Füsun Onur, Ayşe Erkmen, Canan Beykal and Gülsün Karamustafa for their welcoming approach and their eager to share their experiences with me; whose challenging and interested approach was the source of my motivation. Thanks to my associates at work who devoted their time and effort in order to share my long nights with me and special thanks to R. Paul McMillen who walked me through it all, helped me to meet many important artists during this period that feed into my work and encouraged me to finally meet 'myself'. I owe much of this work to my family and my friends who were always there to share their lives with me and cherish every moment.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 1

CHAPTER I: Conceptual Art in the West 14

i) The Early Conceptual Minds of the West 14

ii) The Integration of Concept as a Representative Element into Art 23

CHAPTER II: Selective Arguments and Suggestions within Conceptual Art 34

i) Conceptuality versus Physicality 34

ii) Time versus Space 39

iii) Dialogue versus Monologue and Artist versus Viewer 42

CHAPTER III: Socio-political Background of the 1960s to 1980s 47

CHAPTER IV: The *Possibility* and the *Adventure* of Turkish Conceptual Art 58

CHAPTER V: The Case of Altan Gürman: The Artist Who Paved the Way 69

CHAPTER VI: The Women Artists in Question 74

6.1 Füsun Onur 74

6.2 Canan Beykal 86

6.3 Ayşe Erkmen 94

6.4 Gülsün Karamustafa 99

6.5 Nur Koçak 107

CONCLUSION 110

BIBLIOGRAPHY 115

APPENDIX A: Figures 121

APPENDIX B: Interview with Füsun Onur (English Version) 176

APPENDIX C: Interview with Füsun Onur (Turkish Version) 181

APPENDIX D: Interview with Ayşe Erkmen (English Version) 186

APPENDIX E: Interview with Ayşe Erkmen (Turkish Version) 197

APPENDIX F: Interview with Canan Beykal (English Version) 208

APPENDIX G: Interview with Canan Beykal (Turkish Version) 216

LIST OF FIGURES

1. Altan Gürman, *Montage 4*, 1967 (Cellulosic Paint and Barbed Wire on Wood 123 x 140 x 9 cm Bilge Gürman Collection)
2. Şükrü Aysan, *Peinture*, 1977
3. Sarkis, *When Attitudes Become Form*
4. Füsun Onur, *Untitled*, 1970
5. Füsun Onur, *Untitled*, 1970
6. Füsun Onur, *Untitled*, 1970
7. Füsun Onur, *Untitled*, 1970
8. Füsun Onur, *Untitled*, 1970
9. Füsun Onur, *Pompa ile Şişirilmiş Yelken Bezi*, 1971
10. Füsun Onur, *Morning Exercise*, 1980
11. Füsun Onur, *Dolmabahçe Memoirs*, 1992
12. Füsun Onur, *Elma Ekmek Dedin De Aklıma Geldi*, 1978
13. Füsun Onur, *Nude*, 1974
14. Füsun Onur, *Untitled*
15. Füsun Onur, *Untitled*
16. Füsun Onur, 1990
17. Füsun Onur, *Untitled*, 1976
18. Füsun Onur, *Untitled*, 1997
19. Füsun Onur, *Dream of Old Furniture*, 1985
20. Canan Beykal, *İzm'ler*, 1981
21. Canan Beykal, *İsimsiz – Ölüm Tutanakları*, 1988
22. Canan Beykal, *Texttual and Kara Kutu*, 1990
23. Canan Beykal, *Savunma Önlemi*, 1991
24. Canan Beykal, *8 Parçalık 1 Bütün*, 1985
25. Canan Beykal, *Avant Garde*, 1986
26. Canan Beykal, *11 Düzeltme*, 1987
27. Canan Beykal, *Herşey, Hiçbirşey, Birşey*, 1991
28. Ayşe Erkmen, *Uyumlu Çizgiler*, 1985
29. Ayşe Erkmen , *Adsız*, in 1980
30. Ayşe Erkmen, *K-A-İ-D-E*, 1983
31. Ayşe Erkmen, *Tasarlanmış Düzenlemeler*, 1985
32. Ayşe Erkmen, *Zamanla*, 1949

33. Ayşe Erkmen, *Karşılaştırmalar*, 1988
34. Ayşe Erkmen, *Burası ve Orası*, 1989
35. Ayşe Erkmen, *Geçmişe Tören*, 1989
36. Ayşe Erkmen, *Bir Yer*, 1992
37. Gülsün Karamustafa, *Sıradan Bir Aşk Halısı*, 1985
38. Gülsün Karamustafa, *Monument*, 1988
39. Gülsün Karamustafa, *Promised Paintings* I
40. Gülsün Karamustafa, *Promised Paintings* II
41. Gülsün Karamustafa, *Promised Paintings* III
42. Gülsün Karamustafa, *Kıymatlı Gelin*, 1976
43. Gülsün Karamustafa, Örtülü Medeniyet, 1976
44. Gülsün Karamustafa, *Kapıcı Dairesi*, 1975
45. Gülsün Karamustafa, *Praying Carpet with Elvis*, 1986
46. Gülsün Karamustafa, *Double Jesus and the Baby Antelope*, 1989
47. Gülsün Karamustafa, *Çifte Hakikat*, 1988
48. Gülsün Karamustafa, *24 Saat için Birer Mask*, 1990
49. Gülsün Karamustafa, *Plastik Kurdeleli Onbir Ayna*, dating 1990
50. Gülsün Karamustafa , *Mystic Transport*, 1992
51. Nur Koçak, *Vivre*, 1974
52. *Nur Koçak, Nesne Kadınlar*
53. Nur Koçak, *Yeni İnci*, 1995
54. Nur Koçak, *Şeritler Ya Da Bahçeli Hamama Özel*, 1992 – 1993 (Detail)
55. Nur Koçak, *Siyah Gül ve Buse*, 1989 - 1990

INTRODUCTION

When did the art in Turkey moved beyond the conventional forms of painting and sculpture? The answer to this critical question lies at the heart of discussions about the art that was practiced in Turkey between the years of 1970s and 1990s. The transformation from canvas painting and figurative sculpture to non-canvas installations, assemblages and conceptual works was realized by the artists of the period in question. The existence of women artists, who had been publicly exhibiting their works starting with 1970s, appears as one of the major transformative forces which narrow the context of this transformation to these artists' significance on the scene. Their works analyzed in comparison with the movements of art that were emerging in the west in the 1960s, reveals ideological and practical similarities with that of the dynamics of Conceptual Art in particular. Categorizing their works under the title of an artistic movement, which is practiced almost inline with the Conceptual Art of the west, and recognizing these artists as a group for the sake of the possibility of them being the initiators of the rupture occurred within the forms of Turkish Art in this pre-defined period; is an attempt to suggest an answer to this question of transformation.

In this context, reading into the Conceptual Art in the west and the Turkish women artists (Füsun Onur, Ayşe Erkmen, Canan Beykal, Gülsün Karamustafa, Nur Koçak) who were actively exhibiting their works in 1970s and 1980s with conceptual tendencies in their works; the main discussion of this thesis will evolve around the transformation of the Turkish arts from two-dimensionality to three-dimensionality while searching for the significance of the role of these women artists in this transformation. This thesis will try to follow the adventure of the new tendencies in Turkish art and will try to figure out if this transformation was a natural unfolding or a simple imitation of the western art movements dominating the 1960s and to what extend these women artists of the period contributed to this transformation. The actual question that this thesis is proposing is if this transformation of visual language in Turkish arts

that corresponds to the period of 1970s and 1980s can be identified as a rupture, as a breakthrough, as an irreversible change that altered the meaning and interpretation of artistic representation in the practice of arts in Turkey, or not. In order to identify this transformation as rupture, the socio-political dynamics of the period, as well as the individual artistic identities and their works during that period of the women artists in question will be dealt with in detail.

The theoretical discussion will mainly focus on the changing dynamics in artistic representation of reality and the meaning of the art-work, the material, the identity of the artist and the position of the viewer as all of these are the elements of art that caused the rupture as they were re-configured, re-named, re-defined. How the Turkish women artists arrived at the need to change the meaning and role of these elements in artistic representation and to what extend they achieved the transformation will be attempted to be revealed through interviews that are conducted with some of the artists in question.

The reason why these women artists are chosen is for the sake of narrowing the discussion to the most significant characteristic of the era as I recall it; which was the *visibility* that these women artists attained with their arts; an aspect that is unique to the history of the women as well as to the history of Turkish arts in terms of their independence and their courage. Compared to most of the male artists of this particular period, the women artists in question are still holding onto their identities as artists and still pursuing an art that is beyond conventionalities since the first day they flooded out of the canvas or denied the formal meaning of arts and attempted to change it.

Ayşe Erkmen, as she problematizes the meaning of spatiality in her works; Füsun Onur as she deals with the issues of two dimensional and three dimensional spaces and memory; Canan Beykal as she attempts to free her art of any form, sometimes the material itself and integrating language into visual representation an Gülsün Karamustafa as she challenges and brings forth into discussion the problematics and issues of the daily culture onto the surface of her works both through the usage of material and figuration will be discussed as the first practitioners of such artistic expressions dealing with the issues stated above and bringing them onto the artistic stage as new concepts in Turkish arts. Their significance was also their prioritization of the concept within the artistic representation of the reality; in their works their priority

appears never as the form nor the material nor the figuration but always as the concept, the idea. As their ideas were their machines that created their art; their art bears similarities as well as proximities to that of the western Conceptual Art and therefore another question throughout this thesis is formulized as the possibility of categorizing their art under the title of a Turkish Conceptual Art or not.

The analysis shall begin with the brief introduction and discussion about the 'Conceptual Art in the West', mainly dealing with the issue in five different subtitles. The section about the early conceptual minds of the west attempts to highlight the examples of conceptual thought preceding that of the conceptual art of the west. The tension between the physicality of any creation and its content which tends to be more abstract than concrete as it is always a mentally initiated thing; was explored before the arts of the 1960s were named as 'conceptual'. Conceptuality was not therefore an invention but rather a question that had been sought for an answer for long. In all categories of creation, mimesis would exist as an unsolved equation, which had never been able to attain any perfection like that of the reality; but despite this impossibility the arts would pursue its slightest probability. Because as Hannah Arendt would also explain it, arts, as one format of mimesis, was the inescapable urge to supress the pressure of reality by re-creating and simulating it.[1]

It is crucial to outline the challenges that conceptual art suggested, proposed and achieved in terms of opening the nature of the art work into question in order to construct a parallel context that would enable the discussion of the Turkish Conceptual Art in comparison with that of the Western Conceptual Art. Conceptual Art, born as a revolt against the dogmatic formations of Modernism, had its natural unfolding in the socio-political changes within the dynamics of social systems and the cultural politics.

> The literalist refusal of aestheticist Modernism (…) was fuelled by a quest for the core, a drive to strip away the inessentials from the practice of art. It resulted in a trek from paintings and sculptures, to 'specific' objects, to objects on the threshold of perception, to objects of thought, and to the assertion of art as an analytical proposition. (…) An analytical form of Conceptual Art problematized the primordial convention of art's visuality. This use of language

[1]Arendt, Hannah 'Dünyanın Kalımlılığı ve Sanat Eseri' *İnsanlık Durumu* çev. Bahadır Sina Şener (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1994) 251

> to question the status and framing conditions of the art object led to a second-order practice explicitly concerned with the status of the modern art object. This practice was premised on the redundancy of any further expansions to the range of art's 'objects'. If the object had a role, it was to serve as the focus of inquiry into its own now manifest contingency. (…)[2]

In order to understand the problematic that conceptual art had with Modernist approach, Clement Greenberg's views must be laid down as the definition of what the Modern Art had been came to be known and depicted as. According to Greenberg's modernism, art was the activity characteristic of humanity since the dawn of civilization and the Artist was the one, by his given virtue of special gifts, who expressed that which was the finest in humanity, in other words the historical essence of civilization. The clearly stated and outlined limits of what the arts were and who the artist was how the Modernism projected the arts as. Besides, Greenberg would move further to categorize the artist as the visual artist whose borderline of production would be limited to pure visuality as radically distinct from verbalization; clearly dismissing the role of written language in visual representation.

Another aspect of life that was dismissed from the sphere of artistic expression was the everyday world of social and political life. Greenberg suggestion of this exclusion was for the sake of claiming the autonomy of a sphere of artistic activity; plus, he would move on to assign a responsibility to art which can be summarized as a function to preserve and enhance its own special sphere of civilizing human values in an increasingly dehumanizing technological environment.[3] Conceptual Art had a complete different preposition on the matter of what art could be and who the artist was possibly:

> Greenberg's aesthetics are the terminal point of this historical trajectory. There is another history of art, however, a history of representations (…) conceptual art opened onto that other history a history which opens onto history. Art practice was no longer to be defined as an artisanal activity, a process of

[2] Harrison, Charles & Wood, Paul 'Insitutions and Objection: Introduction', *Art in Theory: 1900 – 2000*, ed. Charles Harrison & Paul Wood, (USA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003) 815.

[3] Burgin, Victor 'The Absence of Presence', *Art in Theory: 1900 – 2000*, ed. Charles Harrison & Paul Wood, (USA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003) 1069-1070, quoting Clement Greenberg.

> crafting fine objects in a given medium; it was rather to be seen as a set of operations performed in a field of signifying practices, perhaps centered on a medium but certainly not bounded by it. The field of concern was to be as I put in a publication of 1973, 'the semiotic practices of a society seen, in their segmentation of the world, as a major factor in the social construction of the world, and thus of the values operative within it.' As a statement of intent, this had the advantage of being sufficiently vague to allow anything to happen. The ensuing decade has been a period of working-out and working-through various specific responses to the problem of going beyond conceptual art. I have mentioned the re-emergence, out of conceptualism, of attention to the political; an initial, and continuing, consequence has been the production of work in which political issues of the day are represented – often, and it seems to me increasingly, by means of painting. Another response, one which has tended to eschew such means, has been based less upon the notion of the 'representation of politics' and more on a systematic attention to the politics of representation. (Burgin, 1969, 1070)

On this matter, Hannah Arendt's views are of significance concerning the meaning of modernism in terms of its unique definition of the artist and the formulation of the arts as a holistic entity. Imitation of nature, the mimesis, the blinding beauties of the world and the men's desperation against the nature's power and perfection, the proof-lacking but at the same time unquestionable existence of God and the admiring miracles and legends about the religions and prophets, were among the few eligible issues the artisans were allowed or limited to deal with; once. Until 'Modernity'; the arts were mainly dependent on myths and religions in terms of subject matter; Hannah Arendt defines arts after Modernity as a man's inescapable way to deprive the Nature and the World off their independent respectability in order to finalize their roles in life as just mere tools for survival.[4]

This conflict she says arises from what the modern times had brought as in the form of another tension: the fact that men has declared sovereignty over nature to a serious extent. The relation that was defined by men as his to that of the nature was a relation of production, valuing 'things' in accordance with their functionality and benefits. Arts would grant men the rejoicing of re-creation and creation in the form of a production that would not have any concerns of being usable, functional or effaceable.

[4] Arendt, Hannah 'Dünyanın Kalımlılığı ve Sanat Eseri' *İnsanlık Durumu* çev. Bahadır Sina Şener (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1994) 251

Arts as a way out, stands as a mere materialization of thought existing only for the sake of producing itself, satisfying no other needs than that of its own.[5] In terms of its creation process, the role of the material itself, the idea, the identity of the artist, the position of the viewer and the exhibition place that the piece is first laid down; art is a holistic entity which has a self-demanding and self-determining nature of whose elements stand inseparable.

Having laid down the basic intentions and forces of transformation within the conceptual art, which appear as the natural unfolding of the history of art that would arrive at an art that would not only flood out of the canvas physicality but would also re-configure the dynamics within the relations of memory (in the sense of memory being the bearer and mirror of the social and political phenomena), space (in the sense of the localities, spatial existence of individuals, institutions as well as the spaces of exhibition considering particularly the space of art), the artist, the viewer, the material and the concept, the urge that would inescapably transform the artistic activity into a physical reality. The transformation among these elements of art, on the basis of the accumulated experiences of artistic representation of the past in terms of what starting from Cubism, to Dadaism, Pop Art and Minimalism had to suggest as variations of mimesis; was a process that was self-demanded, only initiated by the intellectuals producing and thinking about Conceptual Art, who realized Conceptual Art by making these discussions visible within the surface of the art work itself.

> The twentieth century brought in a time which could be called 'the end of philosophy' and 'the beginning of art'. I do not mean that, of course, strictly speaking, but rather as the 'tendency' of the situation. Certainly linguistic philosophy can be considered as the heir to empiricism, but it is a philosophy in one gear. And there is certainly an 'art condition' to art preceding Duchamp, but its other functions or reasons-to-be are so pronounced that its ability to function clearly as art limits its art condition so drastically that it's only minimally art. (…) I bring this all up to analyze art's function and subsequently its viability. And I do so to enable others to understand the reasoning of my – and by extension, other artists' – art, as well as to provide a clearer understanding of the term 'Conceptual Art'.[6]

[5] Ibid. 250

[6] Kosuth, Joseph ' Art After Philosophy', *Art in Theory: 1900 – 2000*, ed. Charles Harrison & Paul Wood, (USA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003) 853-854

Conceptual Art, suggestively substituting the *philosophy about art* by the realization of *philosophy within the art itself*, was a constructed attempt to prioritize the role of the idea over the physical manufacturing of the art work. Embracing the politics of the daily life, problematizing the issues of culture and sociology, taking a stand against the conventions of the modern art and formulizing a statement through its emergence and existence; Conceptual Art in the west was radical in the sense that the work it required was beyond the object; it was about recognition, intervention, realignment, reorganization of the object and all networks of differences in which the very definition of 'art' and what it represents was constituted. As Joseph Kosuth also outlines, conceptual art's enablement in art was the allowance it created of the possibility of the absence of presence and thus the possibility of change as the visible physicality in an art work.[7]

Before putting forth the details of what conceptual art is and attempted to be; the overall outline of the discussion with special emphasis on the matters that will be dealt with thoroughly throughout this thesis appears as crucial. In this sense, the emphasized matters on the subject seem to be designated as a matter of getting even in its simplest framing. Conceptual Art's need to come to terms with the propositions of Modernity; the poesis behind the making of art becoming the number one priority and the art work itself over the physical perfection of its form – which was the concern of the artist who had been acknowledged as the artisan, once –; the dialogue that was formed between the material, the content, the context, the artist and the viewer as well as the impossibility of remaining indifferent to socio-political issues of the day that was well met by the nature of the conceptual art were the basic arguments within and features of the conceptuality in art. In a sense, a perfect suggestion for how mimesis could ever be achieved; conceptual art can be said to be all about the mental communication of any two parties, issues, location, dimension and existence where the discussions were made visible in the form of an art work; while at the same time freed art off its strictly drawn conventions as to what it was allowed to be.

[7] Kosuth, Joseph ' Art After Philosophy', *Art in Theory: 1900 – 2000*, ed. Charles Harrison & Paul Wood, (USA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003) 853-854

> The conceptual artist conceives of a pure art without material base, conceived simply by giving birth to new ideas – an art that would ideally mean and not be of baseball or Monopoly in the den, a game without a ball, bat, gravity, dice or money. But it's free and like sex, minimum of two people (subject/object; inside/outside; yin/yang; receiver/sender; people who take pictures of each other just to prove that they really existed) anyone can play, making their rules as they go along.[8]

The arrival at the anti-formalist statements in art after Minimalism's 'less is more', was the result of the exhaustion of modernity in all aspects of life. Obsessed with structure, modernism seemed to lose track of substance, and instead of opening up possibilities, it tended increasingly to close them off, becoming like technology, both coercive and brutal.[9] As the New York critic John Perreau was to write about the issue: "Presently we need more than silent cubes, blank canvases, and gleaming white walls. We are sick to death of cold plazas, and monotonous 'curtain wall' skyscrapers … [as well as] interiors that are more like empty meat lockers than rooms to live in."[10] The breaking of the conceptual art into the art scene was also an attempt to deconstruct the form itself. As Sol Le Witt would also state the conceptual art's understanding of the physicality of the art work as not necessarily an indispensable element of the art work. "Since no form is intrinsically superior to another, the artist may use any forms, from an expression of words (written or spoken) to physical reality, equally;" and since "ideas alone can be works of art; they are not in a chain of development that may eventually find some form. All ideas need not be made physical."[11]

---

[8] Graham, Dan 'Presentation to an Open Hearing of the Art Workers' Coalition', *Art in Theory: 1900 – 2000*, ed. Charles Harrison & Paul Wood, (USA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003) 917.

[9] Wheeler, Daniel 'The Post-Modern Reaction: Conceptual, Performance and Process Art', *Art Since Mid-Century*, (Thames and Hudson, London: The Vendome Press, 1991) 243.

[10] Wheeler, Daniel 'The Post-Modern Reaction: Conceptual, Performance and Process Art', *Art Since Mid-Century*, (Thames and Hudson, London: The Vendome Press, 1991) 243, quoting John Perreau.

[11] Le Witt, Sol 'Sentences on Conceptual Art' *Art in Theory: 1900 – 2000*, ed. Charles Harrison & Paul Wood, (USA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003) 850.

As the discussion would unfold onto the definition of the conceptual art; the aspects of the question that conceptual art was proposing through its definition and position in its relation and problematization of time, spatiality, memory, the identity of the artist, the demands of the material, the concept, the position and participation of the viewer and the process of art-making itself; the new propositions generated through conceptual art will be dealt with under the sub-titles of conceptuality versus physicality, time versus space and the integration of concept as a representative element in art within the first chapter of this thesis.

The rupture in form, stands as a valid problematic also in the western art world, the transition from a 2-D physicality to a 3-D physicality and the shift of the determinant factor in art work where the idea as the core element of an art work forestalled the pre-defined physical forms. The works of the artists that are being analyzed throughout this thesis will be addressed with the same question of conceptuality versus physicality. Besides the transformative role of these artists, which will be dealt with under the question of the rupture in Turkish Art; their works and artistic identities will be attempted to be challenged within the debates relevant to the western understanding of conceptual art and the socio-political conditions paving the way for the emergence of their art will be given a brief analysis to complete the big picture of their quest.

Following the discussion of what conceptual art is and how it came to being in the western art world and after addressing the theoretical discussions about conceptuality in artistic representation, the case of arts in Turkey will be dealt with in terms of its socio-political conditions, cultural developments and through the discussions about the artistic identities and the analysis of the works of the women artists in question. This second part of the thesis will be built upon the conclusive remarks stated at the end of the first chapter and the quest for conceptuality within the arts in Turkey and the search for the hints for a transformation will be argued through the guidance and from the analogy of these remarks.

The importance of the period lies in the deepening transformations that Turkey was going under as the system was trying both to adapt to the universal dynamics of governance and to local needs of the culture and its reactions to changes. The women

stand out in this specific period as their attempt to become visible in all kinds of scenes pay off towards the end of the century in terms of changing the modern face of the republic[12]. The rupture appears as a key term to orient the discussions to figure out the direct result of their involvement in arts in the chosen period of time.

Starting with the 1970s, Turkey was going through a period mainly characterized by uncertainties experienced in many aspects of social and political life. The economic depressions of the late 1960s, had already clouded over the libertarian and democratic climate created by the legislation of 1960. The tensions resulting from the economic uneasiness had gone as far as the closing down of universities after many brutal and violent cases of occupations and attacks occurring like a war between the groups of opposing political views. Starting with the 1970s, when the freedom of association is banned, newspapers are shut down, intellectuals are arrested; politics of suppression were in power.

This period would end with the military coup of the 12th of September 1980; after which the legislation would change dramatically resulting in the changes in law that would have direct effects on the social and cultural life. The establishment of YÖK can be an example in this case. While the social and political life of individuals were deprived of basic freedoms of speech and thought; as well as institutional autonomy, the period of the 1980s would mark the scene with the liberal politics concerning the economic dynamics of the society. Accelerated by the economic liberalism that put in power, the consumerist culture would go wild resulting in the widespread acceptance and practice of a popular culture that was consumed fast and easy through the assistance of the tools of media.[13]

The years of 1970s in terms of the artistic milieu was bearing the reflections of the uncertainties that were being experienced in various layers of the society. The artists of the period were still in need of a financial aid that would be supplied by the

[12] Madra, Beral '80'lerde Türkiye'de Sanat Üretimi' (downloaded from the website on 5th August 2005 : http://www.btmadra.com/articles/articles.html)

[13] Akkoyunlu, Begüm '1980'li Yılların Türk Sanatından Bir Kesit: İstanbul Sanat Bayramı ve Yeni Eğilimler Sergileri' *Sanat ve Sosyoloji*, ed. Aylın Dikmen Özarslan (İstanbul: Bağlam Yayıncılık, 2005) 178

government; meaning that their artistic existence would only be limited to that of the fine arts academy. Though this stands as the main tendency in terms of the definition of the artist – also an academician as a result –, one of the other characteristics of the period was the attempts to establish a Ministry of Culture and artists' independent gatherings. As the period would be approaching to the period of liberal and free-market economy; arts were turning into a profitable market as well and the flourishing of galleries as well as the emergence of private collections were the most significant incidents of the times.

In terms of artistic fashion, the themes of the 1970s appear as the international versus the national and the concrete versus the abstract.[14] The problem of artistic identity was still valid for a Turkey that was still on its way to Europe in terms of westernization and integration. Towards the middle of the 1970s, new tendencies emerge other than that of the abstract painting and sculpture and conventional categorizations within art fail to explain this new approach that aims to apprehend and undertake art as an intellectual integrity. Altan Gürman appears as the artist who puts forward the early examples of this new art.[15] This new art suggests new materials as well as new volumes and dimensions bringing forth new discussions considering the role and meaning of time, space, authorship and content in an art work.

Organized by Adnan Çoker, his students' performance-like trial that involved them painting together as a group, towards the end of 1960s, as a part of their lecture in the Academy appears as another example of the search for the new in art.[16] While a new language was being proposed as a medium of representation in art with the emergence of Conceptual Art in Turkey, lead by the works of Altan Gürman, intellectually attempted to be addressed by STT and Şükrü Aysan and widely practiced and made

[14] İskender, Kemal ' Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türkiye'sinde Resim' *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, C.6, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1983a) 1691

[15] Özsezgin, Kaya *Cumhuriyet'in 75 Yılında Türk Resmi* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1998) 90

[16] Akkoyunlu, Begüm '1980'li Yılların Türk Sanatından Bir Kesit: İstanbul Sanat Bayramı ve Yeni Eğilimler Sergileri' *Sanat ve Sosyoloji*, ed. Aylın Dikmen Özarslan (İstanbul: Bağlam Yayıncılık, 2005) 179, quoting Adnan Çoker and Semra Germaner.

visible in the works of artists like Füsun Onur and her contemporaries; figurative art interpreted within alternative formalities were being practiced through the influence of the new representational language like in the works of artists like Nur Koçak, Gülsün Karamustafa, Bedri Baykam and Yusuf Taktak. Besides introducing new materials onto the canvas as well as realizing an art out of the canvas; the art of the period was being distinguished in terms of its subject matter as well. The social and political issues of the day (identity problematizations, urban life, center versus periphery, class conflicts, cultural gap, etc.) were finding their representation in arts where the artists were placing individuality both as a way of expression and a matter of subject in their art.[17]

The analysis of the Turkish women artists, mainly Ayşe Erkmen, Fusün Onur, Gülsün Karamustafa and Canan Beykal, with also emphasis on the arts of Nur Koçak; who were chosen for the purpose of narrowing the discussion to a particular time period of artistic production from the early 1970s to 1990s within the question of their initiative role in the blossom of Turkish non-canvas art; will evolve around mainly four critical areas of research: The journey of western concept(ual) art with its historical background in the relevant disciplines stated above, the Turkish background of the times in question, the analysis of the works of these artists followed with the interviews conducted with some of them about their art during those times and the theoretical questioning of the adventure of conceptual art as to where it stands and what it means in the context of both the Western and Turkish contemporary art.

For the question that this thesis is proposing, the method of analysis will mainly consist of gathering historical and sociological background that paves the way for this specific period and how the dynamics in Turkish non-canvas art came to be formulated within the attempts of the modern artists of Turkey between 1960s and 1980s. Bringing up and collectively presenting the relevant arguments that surround the issue; though would maybe not result in a single answer, would help to grasp a bigger picture of the content. Before doing so, the western understanding of Conceptual Art, how it came to being and how it was formulated in the works of the conceptual artists of the west will

[17] Akkoyunlu, Begüm '1980'li Yılların Türk Sanatından Bir Kesit: İstanbul Sanat Bayramı ve Yeni Eğilimler Sergileri' *Sanat ve Sosyoloji*, ed. Aylın Dikmen Özarslan (İstanbul: Bağlam Yayıncılık, 2005) 180, quoting Semra Germaner.

be approached for the sake of rising the questions of conceptuality versus physicality, the notions of time and space and how they were given role within the conceptual art work.

CHAPTER I

Conceptual Art in the West

i) The Early Conceptual Minds of the West

Challenging conventionalities and already accepted notions of artistic representation is a never-ending process dominating all movements of art and all theories of aesthetics of the past. When one looks back at the art of 1960s and 1970s, one can see that the reaction against all that was pre-defined in terms of art was continuing with the pace the Cubists, Dadaists and even the Minimalists had started. The movements of Actions, Arte-Povera, Body Art, while contemporarily making way for Conceptual Art, were questioning the role of the artist, the participatory involvement of the viewer as well as the usage of materials and the possibility of representation. This innovative as well as an inventive burst was an attempt to create alternative materials and technique to that of painting and sculpture and to reconstruct the status of the viewer as well as the artist while expanding and re-configuring the meaning of art.

Mallarmé had already started thinking conceptually as he was imaging the thought in his very famous poem called, 'Un Coup de Dés' in 1897. [The poet, Paul Valéry would remark about the poem that 'it seemed to me that I was looking at the form and pattern of a thought, placed for the first time in finite space'.][18] The idea of chance and randomness were visually tried to be conveyed rather than literally. Guillaume Apollinaire would later claim that, [his inkwell as a 'readymade' work of art, so he took chunks of overheard conversation and plopped them into his poems.][19]

[18] Godfrey, Tony; 'Conceptual Art: Anti-Art Gestures in Early Modernism – Duchamp and Dada' *Conceptual Art* (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 1998) 24.

[19] Ibid. 25

Pablo Picasso's, 1912 dated *Still Life with A Canning Chair* was for the first time in art history, introducing the everyday objects as material to art. It was an epistemological inquiry into the representation questioning how to know what was already known. As it was not easy to call this piece a painting instantly, it foiled and disrupted the expectation of the viewer, demanding an active participation and some intellectual sophistication on the viewer's side. Plus, it was a suggestion that, fusing media was now a possibility for making art. Cubism was to further the promise and realize it for the sake of what was to come in modern art, but before it reached its peak, Kasimir Malevich made the *Black Square* in 1914 and crisis in picture reached a climax. His almost-contemporary colleague, Wassily Kandinsky was discovering the interior necessity of pure art. Abstraction being the only way to externalize what one was not capable of understanding or resolving, he chose to subjectify the object.[20]

For him, copying the past was ridiculous, his times were different so had to be its products. When modernity was all about slippery realities, spontaneity, change and speed, the artist had no chance but to return to his own soul for answers. In a lecture where he was explaining his art, he named his quest as the search for an absolute art.[21] If the times were causing fears and furies, courage was necessary; if uncertainty was ruling, innovation had to interfere; and in such an atmosphere, pathway was the 'feeling' which could be nothing but the 'talent' of the artist. He declared through his works that colors were to touch the human soul for a finer nature, abstracting the image was the only way to refine the complex existence of reality as well as of the modern artist.

---

[20] Malevich, Kasimir 'Non-Objective Art and SuprematisKm' *Art in Theory: 1900 – 2000*, ed. Charles Harrison & Paul Wood, (USA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003) 293

[21] Malevich, Kasimir 'From Cubism to Futurism to Suprematism: The New Realism in Painting' *Art in Theory: 1900 – 2000*, ed. Charles Harrison & Paul Wood, (USA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003) 173-183

Malevich was attempting to reach a purer abstraction as well with his Suprematist style. With Piet Mondrian, Malevich was one of the greatest artists of geometric abstraction. He claimed to have arrived at the 'end of the painting' with his *White on White* in 1918. Malevich's elemental forms were designed both to break the artist's conditioned responses to his environment and to create new realities 'no less significant than the realities of nature herself'. Art, Malevich believed, should have never sought to satisfy material needs, the artist must maintain his spiritual independence in order to create. With his 'White on White', it can be said that he tried to convey a final emancipation: a state of nirvana, the ultimate statement of suprematist consciousness. Malevich's suprematism was therefore 'a state of mind' rather than a painterly technique.

Contemporarily, as cubism was happening in Europe, it was an attempt to appall 'the ways of seeing'. As Malevich was abstaining from imitation but arriving at the same time the same primitiveness of the early minds of civilization, as he was referring to a blackened square as the humblest act the human sensibility can perform, he was re-creating art; so was the Cubists. Differently, they were openly giving reference to African primitive art, as they were using the masks as models of distorted perspective. (*Mademoiselles D'Avignon*, 1917) Cubism was of course not only that. Picasso and Braque, with their collage works, were exploring the possibilities of external materials integrated to an art work.

As art was becoming all about the idea and the meaning of reality as it was conceived in the artist's mind, the artists of the early 20th century were in need of forming groups, writing manifestos, establishing magazines and joint workshops, exhibitions. As they were attempting a revolutionary new art, this act in particular required explanation. This new art was referring to universals rather than specifics therefore appealing to principally to mind rather than the senses. Cubist destruction of conventional modes of representation the idea that painting should be an absolute entity with no relation to the objects of the visible world and that it should be completely abstract forms whose origins were in the mind, was the one successful breakthrough as it changed the language, the technique and the ways of seeing in art. Cubism also freed the world of art from the limited sphere of the painting and pushed it off the edge of the

canvas and paved the way for experimental artistry of fusing media. Abstraction being the new trend in art in the beginning of the 20th century, Vladimir Tatlin, created the first purely abstract relief construction of metal, glass and wood pushing to an extreme yet logical consequence what the cubist idea of collage and construction had brought the art world upon. (*Monument to the Third International*, 1919)

Abstract Expressionism, with Gorky, Newman, Pollock, Motherwell, Cliff, Rothko and Still would form the intellectual basis of American Art for the upcoming art movements that was about to generate within America. As Abstraction was now a conventionality within the frame of the Modern Art, the elementary shapes that would form the picture within the 'picture space' were practiced by the Cubists and their followers to create alternative perspectives. Surrealists on the other hand were pursuing the Freudian understanding of the conscious and the sub-conscious, and were creating a surreal representation of reality through spontaneous drives or motivations from their personal dreams or childhood experiences. Americans on the other side of the world were keeping an eye on these developments. Despite their inherited handicaps like their provincialism, over-reliance on half understood European models, non-existing or unsupportive critics, indifferent or hostile public; with the help of the World War II, driving European avant-garde (Dali, Ernst, Leger, Lipschitz, Masson, Matta, Mondrian, Targuy, Breton)[22] from their natural habitat in Europe were sent to exile in New York and that became the twist of faith for American Art. Abstraction and Expressionism was brought to their homeland with the artistic genius.

The challenge against the presuppositions for the structure of art was at its peak between 1960s and 1970s almost all around the world. The theory and the 'pratique' were distancing away as the gap and conflict between the acceptable and unacceptable notions of art grew bigger. At first, the reaction was against painting and sculpture ecolé, the hegemony of the abstract expressionism and the Modernist school of formalism. Formalism was based on the deconstructing or resolving the works of art according to their formal visual elements they consisted; a theory invented mainly by

[22] Wheeler, Daniel 'The New York School: Abstract Expressionism: 1945-60', *Art Since Mid-Century*, (Thames and Hudson, London: The Vendome Press, 1991) 25-26.

Clement Greenberg.[23] As he would define it, the fundamental character of painting as it's its flat pictorial surface, was extended in meaning and moved forward and gave birth to the avant-garde.[24] So the usage of light, shadows, volume, tones of colors were rejected and instead geometric and simplified forms that were basically determined by the shape of the canvas, were favored. Neither painting nor sculpture had to have the responsibility of dealing with social, economic or political realities but instead had to be on a quest to find their own formal strength and dynamics. Greenberg believed that the artistic material as a medium itself call it paint, call it marble or stone; could be the only means to the ends of creating new localities, surfaces, shapes, colors and their arrangements.[25]

Modernism had spaced out the burden of decorative-ness with the speed of life it was offering as well as dictating. More was in need to be told in a less amount of time and space; functionality was overruling the aesthetics where aesthetics needed to steal back its new – in a sense 'corrected' in accordance with the needs of the era – definition and positioning within the sphere of art. The promise of Modernism as betterment for humankind in all areas of life, had failed with the side-products which the industrial revolution brought with itself: pollution, consumerism, crime, alienation…[26]

> It was the unhomely nature of the object – its ability to resist urban assimilation by its insistence on the inescapable strangeness of urban space – that brought [the] postmodernist work back to one of the central themes of literary and philosophical modernity: that consciousness is marked by the transcendental homelessness. In the writings of Schegel, Baudelaire, Kierkegaard, Benjamin, Kafka, Adorno and Heidegger we find the idea that being is a form of alienation; that life is a form of exile or the registration of an inescapable and catastrophic loss. It is then, the simultaneous strength and weakness of art that it is generated

[23] Atakan, Nancy 'Arayışlar – Resim ve Heykele Alternatifler' (downloaded from http://212.58.11.161/mag/may03/kavsan052.asp on 5th of August 2005) 4. & Wheeler, Daniel 'The Post-Modern Reaction: Conceptual, Performance and Process Art', *Art Since Mid-Century*, (Thames and Hudson, London: The Vendome Press, 1991) 245.

[24] Wheeler, Daniel 'The Post-Modern Reaction: Conceptual, Performance and Process Art', *Art Since Mid-Century*, (Thames and Hudson, London: The Vendome Press, 1991) 244.

[25] Ibid. 250

[26] Ibid. 251

> from this experience of estrangement from the world; (…). In an age where museums and art galleries begin to resemble shopping malls by processing and marketing consumption and leisure as 'experiences', perhaps it is those forms of art that reach for the utopian through the melancholic that deserve our greatest attention.[27]

Trodd's approach to the art of postmodernism is the deification of an intellectually sophisticated art which is after an utopia as a result of the obvious exhaustion of individual resulting from the demanding nature of modernity but which also represents the alienation, the estrangement from the world that an individual has to experience living in the fast-forwarded life of a metropolitan. This kind of an art would inevitably draw in the use of daily objects, the accumulated memory of localities and would seek to build alternative forms that would represent the uncanny nature of this transformation: the change of times from modernism to postmodernism.

It was an era when there was desperate need for new values in a problem – fraught world where every solution (Marxist, nationalist, utopian) seemed to fail along with all art, whether representational or non-objective that had accompanied it. Another destructive war that had conquered the World had not been able to be hindered. It was an era of ideological and aesthetical bankruptcy and the artists were left with their private insights and whatever myths or symbolic forms these might inspire as new and more valid means of giving epochal expression to profound social, psychological and moral concerns.

Abstract expressionists went for the sublime, the spiritual and the pure in art. Pollock (*Number 32*, 1950), following Hofmann, created his drip, spill, pour paintings, using automatism advocated mainly by surrealists. Besides his style of automatism, he was spontaneously but with intended purposes, using the canvas as a performance arena. The making of the painting was now a process not just an instant or the artisanship necessary to reach the final product of 'art'. With Pollock, the process of making the art piece was now an integrated and crucial part of the art work itself.

---

[27] Trodd, Colin 'Postmodernism and Art' *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*, ed. Stuart Sim (New York: Routledge, 2001) 101

As he put the canvas on the floor, his approach resulted in a change in the conventional functions of drawing. There were no more planes to outline or images to define before-hand and the process itself was the end of the painting. There was no under-image, [the controlled and looping skeins of paint had become both subject and content.][28] It was very different than the earlier works of abstract painting, there was no grid or geometric construction as there was in Cubism or Neo-Plasticism, there were not any biomorphic references as there was in Surrealism, no premeditated form as Kandinsky's style, or no illusion of spatial recession. The surface was virtually uniform and the artist had his/her own presence as part of the painting. Walking around the canvas and participating in the making of the art with his whole bodily existence, Pollock had every right to claim that it was not "chance but choice" and the work had "a life of its own." His works were suggesting artistic performances and those performances to be understood as individual works of art themselves.

Barnett Newman was experimenting with limits and boundaries as his works were hinting of a metaphysical approach to art. His paintings were 'extreme' as he was playing with the minima and the maxima (*Vir Heroicus Sublimus,* 1950-1951) – [how narrow an area can be and still 'hold' from the appropriate viewing distance; how great a tonal contrast or complementarity of color can be sustained without disintegration of the whole; how 'simple' a painting can be in 'means' while sustaining the great complexity of the 'effect', etc.][29]

Newman was an important figure as times were about to bring forth Minimalism, with the motto of 'Less is More'. Going back to Malevich's *Black Square* of 1914, which he was referring to as 'an art that can exist, in and for itself, without things'[30], it can be seen that the foundations for a secular art was laid then. His art was a way of detachment from the utilitarian purposes and a removal from the ideological function of representation. His art was very mathematical, and had the sublimity and the transcendental aspect of geometry; just like Minimalist sculptures of 1950s had. Minimalist sculptures had the specificity and the power of actual materials, actual space

[28] Moszynska, Anna *Abstract Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1990), 151

[29] Stangos, Nikos *Concepts of Modern Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994) 198

[30] Malevich, Kasimir; Catalogue.

and in a way, aestheticized functionality within the nature of the material itself, i.e. their matter-ness.

> "We were pressing downward toward no art – a mutual sense of psychologically indifferent decoration – a neutral pleasure of seeing known to everyone."
>
> Dan Flavin[31]

> It's a logical continuation of my earlier work. A few years ago when I was painting, it seemed that paintings would look one way in one place and, because of lighting and other things, would look different in another place. Although it was the same object, it was another work of art. Then I made paintings which incorporated as part of their design the wall on which they hung. I finally gave up painting for the wire installations (two of which are in the show). Each wire installation was made to suit the place in which it was installed. (…) Color became arbitrary. I started using thin transparent nylon monofilament. Eventually the wire became so thin that it was virtually invisible. This led to my use of material which is invisible, or at least not perceivable in a traditional way. Although this poses problems, it also represents endless possibilities. It was at this point that I discarded the idea that art is necessarily something to look at.
>
> Robert Barry[32]

What Minimalism brought as new into the sphere of art was mainly about the structure and form of the art work. Situated on the legacy of the Bauhaus ecolé, influenced by the principles of Gestalt, the minimalist perspective while bearing the principle that less would be more, was all about the autonomy of the art work as a self-contained unit, the indivisible and the undissolvable whole that would find its specific definition in the particular space, light and physical viewpoint of the spectator.[33] The only immediate aspect of the work would be that the experience of the art work by the viewer had to exist in time. The challenge was to break through the instantaneity of the sculpture and painting and break the éspace into parts that would allow the art work to

---

[31] Group Exhibition: *A New Aesthetic*, 1967, Washington Gallery of Modern Art, Washington, D. C. Curated by Barbara Rose.

[32] Barry, Robert 'Interview with Arthur R. Rose', *Art in Theory: 1900 – 2000*, ed. Charles Harrison & Paul Wood, (USA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003) 851

[33] Morris, Robert 'Notes on Sculpture 1-3' *Art in Theory: 1900 – 2000*, ed. Charles Harrison & Paul Wood, (USA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003) 832.

exist in its own life span, creating itself a duration in which the experience would gain the necessary forth dimension, which would be the aspect of time.

By using symmetry and re-defining structure, in substitute for sculpture in the sense that it was both the thing itself whereas it also meant how things were put together. Three-dimensional objects of art would have the range from monument or ornament, where sculpture would have meaning that would fall in between these polarities. The minimal art, whose canvas was the ground, whose figures were three-dimensional geometric objects and whose structure of composition was symmetry; did not bear a nature of a figurative or an architectonic art. The minimalism was in search for the third dimension as an extension in space that would exceed that of the painting and sculpture. Three-dimensions were real space which got rid of the problem of the illusionism and of literal space, space in and around marks and colors – which is riddance of one of the salient and most objectionable relics of European art. [34] In that sense what was wrong with painting was that it was a rectangular plane placed flat against the wall, determining the limits and size of the content on and in the space pre-defined by its shape. The minimalist structures of the 1960s were constructing analytical functions of light, space and the viewer's field of vision, approaching to a theatricality especially in the works of Sol Le Witt as examples of the minimal art's serial attitude.

History of art is actually a linear unfolding of a challenge against its own conventionalities. Conceptual art in that sense is another challenge as oppose to all previous meanings of art in terms of uniqueness, collectability and saleability of the art work, as well as the participation of the viewer, questionability of the cultural values, everyday objects, forms, materials, ideas, museums and etc. Conceptual art is reflexive; it has the presupposition that 'thinking about thinking' is possible and is actually essential. It is intervening, documentative and not typological. Conceptual art is about the artist's choice so it is not a dictate by any aesthetic delectation. It is about challenging authority, decency and ideality. Conceptual art is about the disbelief in art and the inevitable quest to re-define it; but above anything else, it is about the relationship between time, space, memory and the language that binds them all in order for them to be self-spoken. As the modernism had witnessed the crisis of the painting

34 Judd, Donald 'Specific Objects' *Art in Theory: 1900 – 2000*, ed. Charles Harrison & Paul Wood, (USA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003) 827.

and the terms of expression and the ways of practicing of mimesis / representation were challenged; Conceptual Art came into the scene as a result of and resulting in the crisis of art when times were changing from modernism to post-modernism.

More important than the questions that Conceptual Art was proposing in terms of the meaning and construction of the status of the art, its object, the identity of the artist and the role of the viewer, the integration of the concept as the core element in the artistic representation was a problematic on its own in the sense that it was to create a contradiction within the conventional methods of mimesis where the abstract, non-physical nature of the concept needs to be theoretically discussed and historically traced back in terms of its articulation into the three-dimensionality of the art work.

ii) The Integration of *Concept* as a Representative Element into Art

Dadaism, which in terms of style, attitude and philosophy was the one modern art movement where the roots of Conceptual art can be looked for. In 1917, Marcel Duchamp, who claimed to be 'more interested in the ideas than the final product'[35], made art out of an ordinary urinal by simply turning it around and signing it 'R. Mutt'. (*Fountain*, 1917) This 'readymade' as he would call it was the quintessential 'proto-Conceptual' art work, one of the first to question self-consciously and irreverently both its own status as art and the multi-faceted context of exhibitions, critical criteria and audience expectations, which had traditionally conferred that status.[36]

After his *Fountain* of 1917, dynamics could no longer hold their status-quo in the context of art. The creative act was sarcastically reduced to a single, very individual, random decision which demanded only the intellectuality of the artist and *art-making* was mocked to be equal to *art-naming*. Challenging the meaning of art through the intension of the artist, which was ironically given the number one priority, is a way of

[35] Godfrey, Tony; 'Conceptual Art: Anti-Art Gestures in Early Modernism – Duchamp and Dada' *Conceptual Art* (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 1998) 28-29.

[36] Ibid. 29

claiming that the hand-made beauty could no longer be the determinant when trying to make a statement through art. Conception and meaning preceded plastic form, and mind overruled any recitations on the definition of art. While abstraction was pursued to be established as the new formality in art with Cubism and Mondrian, Malevich, Matisse and their persecutors, Duchamp changed the reason-to-be of the arts. It was no longer 'art for art's sake' but 'art as idea'. This way, it was convicted that the question that if art could be made of anything or by anyone was valid more than ever; in fact the question itself was the work of art, where Dada, a word that simply meant nothing, was the name of the art movement that initiated this transformation in art.

Duchamp was the one influential artist of Dadaism which launched the alternative tradition of the 20th century avant-garde. He used language and all manner of verbal and visual punning (*Tu'm* of 1918), randomness as well as deliberately plotted chance (*The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* of 1923), trivial and ephemeral substances, his own person (*First Papers of Surrealism*, the gallery installation of 1942), provocative gestures directed to his own or other art (*L.H.O.O.Q.* of 1919), as the means of and subjects of his work.

Where 'normal' art behaved as if it was a statement, Duchamp's *Fountain* was not a statement, but rather a question. It was not saying that this was a urinal, but instead, asking, if this urinal could really be considered as an art work. Since Conceptual Art is an intervention within an unexpected context, or documentation not as the actual work being presented as itself but through evidence, *Readymade* was the symbol: the evidence to the actual concept, meanings, and the history behind, socio-cultural values associated with everyday objects. Idea was the transformative machine that was now used to create art, it was paramount, and the material was secondary.[37]

The miracle of transforming a banal object into something with transcendental significance like an art work was rapture in artistic language. As Karl Marx points out in 'Das Kapital', a man-made object becomes a socio-political object when the value of labor is attached to it. Duchamp's attempt to re-define 'art' was similar to Marx's re-

[37] Le Witt, Sol 'Paragraphs on Conceptual Art', *Art in Theory: 1900 – 2000*, ed. Charles Harrison & Paul Wood, (USA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003) 846 -847.

definition of fetish objects of the society.[38] The drive to collect was a cultural motive, because objects were ways to socialize. Objects would come into the lives of the people with the meanings attached to them, with the words they made one remember, the history and the connotations they formed. Objects as commodities were the actual reasons that created the dilemma and the nervous breakdown of modernism.

They created false perceptions, shadowed the social roles or changed or transformed them, became parts of personal identities or reference with which they were defined and as a result became the soul cause of estrangement and alienation. Duchamp was the first to challenge this dominance of the fetish objects over the daily lives and the ideas of individuals. He challenged the unquestionable mastery of Mona Lisa (*L.H.O.O.Q* of 1919), and the basic definitions that were written next to the well known words in any dictionary. (*Traveler's Folding Item* of 1916 and *The Bicycle Wheel* of 1913) He made everyday objects uncanny things – or revealed the actual but hidden 'uncanny' within their nature – and he unbalanced their meaning as he shook the viewer's perception of them.

[38] Godfrey, Tony; 'Conceptual Art: Anti-Art Gestures in Early Modernism – Duchamp and Dada' *Conceptual Art* (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 1998) 32.

Using the ready-mades, another artist who laid the concept as the core element of the art that had mattered before the form itself; was Man Ray and his 1921 dated piece called *The Gift*. Combining iron and tacks, materials that had different functions individually, he can be said to have been questioning the hybrid narration of dialogue within an artistic work. Rather than the physicality of the piece being either aesthetic or completely disturbing, going against all conventions of being esthetic; the idea that was formed within the artist's mind was important. Following his case where he explains the beauty he had seen within the concept of this particular work; the feelings that he attaches to this peculiar end-product he has transformed from iron and tacks appear as the beauty of the violent, the fetish and the erotic.[39]

In terms of turning the exhibition into a spectacle and questioning the role of the text within an image and the image that is to be named with some certain text, Francis Picabia's paintings which can actually be called as 'anti-paintings' were clear examples of early conceptuality. In his piece called *The Cacodylic Eye*, dated 1921, the viewers of the painting were invited to contribute to the painting as they could write and sign wherever on the canvas with whatever words or images they liked. Accepting the deconstruction of sculpture with Duchamp's Fountain, Picabia's attempt can be considered as the deconstruction of painting.

Réne Magritte's *Ceci n'est pas une pipe* of 1929, can be considered as the artist who problematized the relation between the words and the images after Duchamp, but in its naked nature of the question. This particular work while challenges the correctness of representation from a Platonic perspective, as if proving the distance of the image as three-degrees farther from that of the real truth; it is also suggestive of the impossibility of the co-existence of the different layers of truth. While written language stands as the mere tool to explain, point out, prove or disapprove the truth; the word that corresponds to a truth is not the truth itself, just as the way the image, the reflection of that truth is not it as well. Foucault's cogitation on this work by Magritte, theorizes this relation of

[39] Godfrey, Tony; 'Conceptual Art: Anti-Art Gestures in Early Modernism – Duchamp and Dada' *Conceptual Art* (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 1998) 37, quoting Man Ray: "You can tear a dress to ribbons with it. I did it once, and asked a beautiful eighteen-year-old coloured girl to wear it as she danced. Her body showed through as she moved around, it was like a bronze in movement. It was really beautiful."

written language to the image in 1968, when they had already become representative elements within art:

> Magritte knits verbal signs and plastic elements together, but without referring them to a prior isotopism. He skirts the base of affirmative discourse on which resemblance calmly reposes, and he brings pure similitudes and nonaffirmative verbal statements into play within the instability of a disoriented volume and an unmapped space. A process whose formulation is in some sense given by *Ceci n'est pas une pipe.* (...)
>
> 3. To allow discourse to collapse of its own weight and to acquire the visible shape of letters. Letters which, insofar as they are drawn, enter into an uncertain, indefinite relation, confused with the drawing itself--but minus any area to serve as a common ground.
> 4. (...)
> 5. To verify clearly, at the end of the operation, that the precipitate has changed colour, that it has gone from black to white, that the "This is a pipe" silently hidden in the mimetic representation has become the "This is not a pipe" of circulating similitudes.[40]

Following Foucault's remarks on this particular painting, with which Magritte had played around a lot later on in terms of re-configuring the positioning of the text and the image against each other as elements of presentation, parts of an art work; the integration of text into artistic representation, which had come to be practiced as only visual; the functionality of the art object would be expanding to a new level where not only the conventional forms would be open to discussion but something that was not the subject of art until then, semiotics, would start to be dealt with on an artistic platform. The arts' quest for truth would exceed the arts' own problematics and expand into the arena of philosophy and function as medium to contribute to the theoretical discussions considering the relations amongst the signified, the signifier and the sign.

While Surrealism was taking another path despite Magritte's problematization of the text as part of a visual experience of an art work, the path to conceptualism was being traversed through the usage of the ready-made and found-objects sometimes configured against their nature, challenging the hidden similitude outside the word

[40] Foucault, Micheal 'To Paint is not to Affirm' *This is not a Pipe* (downloaded from website: http://foucault.info/documents/foucault.thisIsNotaPipe.en.html on 10th of June 2005)

versus the image relation, but rather within the indirect meanings hidden within the connotations of everyday objects. Meret Oppenheim's, *Fur Covered Tea Cup, Saucer and Spoon*, dated 1936, appear as an example of the mentioned style which also sticks out as a significantly feminist work, more illustrative in terms of making a remark on the womanly nature of some objects and adding the sense of touch into the configuration of the art work. The feeling that the fur conveys when surrounding the domestic objects resembles the female skin. Once again there is an attempt to force the viewer and the artist herself to re-consider what is already established in terms of meaning and stereotypes which inevitably requires an art that places the idea a priori to that of the form.

Besides the usage of ready-mades and the conceptualization of the object within the pre-defined spatiality of an art work, call it a gallery space or a public space; the idea, the content, the essence of an art work was being interpreted in other forms as artists like John Cage were eager to experiment. "Why do you waste your time and mine by trying to get value judgments? Don't you see that when you get a value judgment, that's all you have? They are destructive to our proper business, which is curiosity and awareness." would say John Cage, who believed in the chaos and the silenced melody of the world that he could not disturb it by playing his music on top of it.[41] He can be considered as a conceptual musician, who was thinking and questioning and forming a mental dialogue that was not passed through the pleasant notes of his music but rather through his ideas and the platforms he stood strongly on.

John Cage's negation of the content as well as the authorship of the artist since he would deprive the work off the contribution of the artist, by only defining an origin for the artistic experience both for the viewer and himself; the authority of the artist would be reduced to a guide only; whose idea was presented in some sort of a form, preferably at its purest, un-intervened and non-transformed state; and the viewer and the artist would play along from there. The process of the art-making would then sail into an uncertainty where the operation of production would become the art work itself. A similar kind of negation and abstraction can be traced down in the work of Robert

[41] Wheeler, Daniel 'The Post-Modern Reaction: Conceptual, Performance and Process Art', *Art Since Mid-Century*, (Thames and Hudson, London: The Vendome Press, 1991) 252.

Rauschenberg. The authority of the artist, as to what extend the artist can be a creator was challenged at its highest extreme when Robert Rauschenberg attempted to erase a Willem De Kooning painting. Named as *Erased De Kooning Drawing*, the work dating back to 1953, initiates the confusing discussion about the author within a creative work. Who would be considered as the owner of this work, whereas the initial idea belonged to De Kooning but the end-product was Rauschenberg's idea, which caused the initial drawing to disappear. But the final product was an art work maybe only because it was the termination of a work that was already accepted as art before.

Another challenging issue within this particular context can be stated as the mental condition that De Kooning was in when Rauschenberg had done this painting. As someone who was slowly losing his memory, not being able to remember anything, Rauschenberg was trying to emphasize the temporality of the artist's identity. The identity of the artist was not like the talent of the hand or like the craftsmanship but was the collective memory and the accumulated knowledge that formed the mental power of the artist which could turn into ideas that would create the arts.

In 1917 when Marcel Duchamp submitted a urinal signed by an artist named R. Mutt with the title *Fountain* to the Open Exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists in New York; the piece was rejected for the reasons of it being un-ethical and resulting from plagiarism. Duchamp's sarcasm created the necessary effect as the content of the artwork and the identity of the artist were challenged. Followed by admiration, the art work which was 'an ordinary article of life', transformed the *criticism directed at art* as *a venue for producing art*. John Baldessari's *I Will Not Make Any More Boring Art* in 1971 or John Latham's *Art and Culture* dated 1966-1969 can be recognized as the extensions of this approach. All these works had within their background a solid argument as to what could be the content of the art work and in what context it could be represented.

The sarcasm, the mocking of the definitions and pre-suppositions were preferred styles of conceptualizing the discussions about art in the Turkish examples of conceptual art as well. Piero Manzoni's *Merda d'artista*, was not much different. The work which consisted of the artist's own excrement filled in ninety cans, sold at the price of gold; was bringing forth the suggestion that the body could be a material in

artistic production; [he even enlarged his concept of art to include the entire world; where unadulterated individuality itself becomes art.][42]; while at the same time was literally suggesting that excrement, as long as it would belong to the artist, was a piece of art to be sold in the market. His marketed excrement was a reminiscent of Yves Klein's *La Vide*, zones of empty but spiritually filled space in 1958.[43] Klein emptied Clert's Left Bank gallery and declared that it was an exhibition entitled the Void. The meaning of art in Klein's interpretation had exceeded its physicality and any possibility of its containment in a single form. The exhibition of Void was a free, boundless space, in which the Void itself was a commodity. The cocktails served at the exhibition was another dimension of his challenging suggestion to meaning and context; as the participants took the cocktails they drank home with them and the exhibition was not over until they each had to go to the toilet to see that the cocktail was 'blue' enough to cause them urinate in the same color.

Despite all the works mentioned above, Ed Kienholz's *The Portable War Memorial*, 1968, is considered as the first conceptual art work.[44] The reason why they were attributed with the speciality of being one of the first conceptual art works could be stated as his style of producing them. Kienholz was one artist who would be commissioned to create the concept only. Followed by drawing of the concept the viewer would be able to commission the artist for the last round to actually make the art work. Some of his works remaining as only concepts without being able to be produced, Kienholz was one artist who had very clearly made sure that the idea was beyond phsyicality and *coming to being* was a priori to the *being* itself.

While Andy Warhol was taking the concept of the 'ready-made' down to a less transcendental level of 'conceptuality' where he was dealing with the ideas that were already the common commodities of the masses and their invisibility was shadowing

---

[42] Godfrey, Tony; 'Realities in the 1960s' *Conceptual Art* (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 1998) 90.

[43] Wheeler, Daniel 'The Post-Modern Reaction: Conceptual, Performance and Process Art', *Art Since Mid-Century*, (Thames and Hudson, London: The Vendome Press, 1991) 252.

[44] Godfrey, Tony; 'Realities in the 1960s' *Conceptual Art* (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 1998) 92

the necessity of questioning their fetishistic nature and artificially attached meanings arising from the industrial and popular culture resulting from consumerism. As Andy Warhol and the representatives of this Pop-Art were striping the object naked, Minimalists on the other hand were going down on to the essence of the material, they were in quest to arrive at the primary structures within form. Wittgenstein was describing the Minimalists exhibitions as visual representations of ideas, the activity being more conceptual than aesthetic.[45] Their objects were less radical, in that sense less political and critical compared to Duchamp's; the transcendentalism within the nature of the minimal objects were mainly because of the characteristic of the minimal art that was defined as 'what you see is what you see.'[46] Objects were presented rather than being depicted or re-presented.

Late sixties of the 20th century, can be named as the heyday of Conceptual Art in the west. Bruce Nauman's *A Rose Has No Teeth* of 1966 and Robert Smithson's *Mirror Displacement* of 1969 were considerably important conceptual works of the era, where the artists had started to define their works on the basis of conceptuality. If the concept or action was paramount, the exact nature of the documentation would be contingent on the context that it appears in.

Looking at the works of Joseph Kosuth, who fanatically combines words and their visual representation where the precedence is given to the text; his Photostat, called *Art As Idea As Idea*, dated 1967, was one of the purest conceptual works of the era as Kosuth himself would describe it as an inquiry into the foundations of the concept "art" which would narrow the field of definition to analytical and linguistic work.[47]

Object being given no special aura, on the contrary, being dematerialized and demystified; the role of the artist minimized and blurred to an extent; the concept is the emphasized element within the art work as a result of which the piece stands as a plain

[45] Wheeler, Daniel 'Minimalism: Formalist Sculpture in the Sixties', *Art Since Mid-Century*, (Thames and Hudson, London: The Vendome Press, 1991) 213.

[46] Ibid. 214

[47] Godfrey, Tony; 'Realities in the 1960s' *Conceptual Art* (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 1998) 93.

documentation of what the viewer and the artist are made to think of themselves while thinking.

> Roland Barthes used the term 'writerly' for texts by which the reader is first irritated and then activated. So in reading the poems of Stephané Mallarmé such as A Throw of Dice, the eyes dart back and forth across the page, as though following the steps of a complex dance. The act of reading becomes not passive but active. It is an operation of immediate enactment and interpretation. This was to become a crucial aspect of late Modernism, and what has come to be called Post-Modernism: It is the reader's experience that matters, not the writer's. This has repercussions for the status of the author. In the 'Death of the Author', Barthes argued that we read language, rather than author. Mallarmé, he says, was the first person to see 'the necessity to substitute language for itself for the person who until then had been supposed to be its owner.[48]

Conceptual Art was an art of questioning, the questioning of the language of supposed truth propositions as Wittgenstein would suggest.[49] The fact that the Conceptual Art in the west was not very fertile in terms of generating more women artists; is worth pointing out for the comparison of the Turkish Conceptual Art and the Western Conceptual Art when the former blossoms and achieves visibility by the presence and production of the women. After the rise of the feminist movement, a few considerable conceptual artists took the stage amongst whom, Barbara Kruger, Louise Bourgeois and Carolee Schneemann, all representing three different fragments of conceptuality.

Schneemann was an early and radical example, mainly influenced by and a part of the Fluxus Group, constructing her art with performances and happenings, as the movement of assemblages, environments and happenings start emerging from the late 1950s. These movements, earlier than that of the conceptual art, as it was defined by Sol Le Witt, were already practicing art which was anti of what art came to be known as. [Performance, held the promise of liberating artists from the art object, simultaneously

---

[48] Zurbrugg, Nicholas 'Barthes, Belsey, and the Death of the Author' *The Parameters of Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 1993) 16

[49] "Most of the propositions and questions to be found in philosophical works are not false but nonsensical. Consequently we cannot give any answer to questions of this kind, but can only point out that they are nonsensical. Most of the propositions and questions of philosophers arise from our failure to understand the logic of our language." Wittgenstein, Ludwig; *Tractatus Logico – Philosophicus*, 1921

as it also freed them to adopt whatever medium, material or subject matter appeared likely to serve their purposes.][50] The nature of the early performances, mainly initiated by that of John Cage and Merce Cunningham's Event in 1952; were attempts to disorientate the meaning of art in order to re-constitute it, but were excessively expressive and the absolute, elemental essence of the concept as the core value in art was being missed. The demands of the subject matter, not as configured as the concept of the work yet; were overruling the aesthetics and the use of the material and the urge to arrive at extremes, in order to ease the pain of being modern or to lighten the burden of being the responsible but insignificant world citizen struggling against the insensibility of the modern world.

After having laid down the historical progress of the adventure of the conceptuality in art, the theoretical discussion in terms of the relation and possibility of co-existence of conceptuality and physicality and how it is solved or approached both in the western and Turkish understanding of conceptual art will be given a detailed analysis.

[50] Wheeler, Daniel 'Minimalism: Formalist Sculpture in the Sixties', *Art Since Mid-Century*, (Thames and Hudson, London: The Vendome Press, 1991) 254

CHAPTER II

Selective Arguments and Suggestions within Conceptual Art

i) Conceptuality versus Physicality

Philosophy in its questioning of the meaning, the possibility of beauty, knowledge and the existence of God; serves the purpose of theoretically fulfilling the demands of the discussion as a powerful tool and a proper platform, to seek the answers to those same questions of epistemology and ontology. Plato would discuss to what extent the arts were imitations of reality and how much the works of art could be considered as creations.[51] He would come to conclude that works of art were the obstacles or even fake tools that would shadow the process of the searching for the truth.[52] His definition of arts names arts as a representation that stands three degrees farther than that of the truth.[53] Crafts, just because they do model the Idea of the truth in its true sense and what they create is more than just an image; stands before the arts as they seem to stand more close to the transcendental reality.[54]

Aristotle would theorize that arts, in relevance to their resemblance of *imitations of reality*, were the righteous escapes of men from the burden of the reality. His analysis would defend that the emulation of reality in arts would not be secession from truth but an attempt of preservation of the essence of the model; in a way a form of

[51] Plato, *Devlet*, X, 595b-601c

[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid.

acknowledgement or a form of *mathesis*.[55] Using the word *mimesis* to describe the general but necessary *representation* of reality within the experience of the artist which shall be as subjective and as much in touch with genesis as possible; is what Aristotle puts forward as the explanation of what art is.

Concept is an abstract or generic idea which is generalized from particular instances; it is a notion conceived in the mind, at the end a thought, which is intangible and an almost vague entity which can never be completely revealed or conveyed. It is a very transcendental and at the same time a very subjective process which includes in its formation the elements of time and space, as well as the artist's personal identity; which ends up becoming a historical record on its own and a tool as well that defines the possibilities and obstacles of experiencing an object and its perception and stands beyond the physicality of that object or experience in particular.

When the definition of 'concept' is an abstraction in itself and tends to add to reality an epistemological dimension (leaving the role of being the *doxa* to the object and complementing it by being its extension or the truth behind and beyond it as the *episteme* – in Platon's wording[56]) and/or attempts to fill in the blanks of the rigid physicality of the world by allowing abstraction, negation and the creation of the ongoing processes in the form of dialogue and evolvement; the boundaries of art as it is a physical experience seems to fail to conquer any concept.

The idea that concept and conceptuality have become the core, the ideological and/or philosophical base and/or the essence / the meaning of fine arts in the contemporary world; inevitably arises the discussion of how something so intangible like 'concept' can ever be referred from within or can truly be represented through something very solid and physical like form and structure.

The tension between the concept and the structure which are the two basic elements of contemporary conceptual art is a challenge on its own to the definition of

[55] Aristotle, *Poetika*. Böl. IV., 48b4-19

[56] Lenoir, Béatrice 'Platon: Sanatın Yalanı' *Sanat Yapıtı*, translated by Aykut Derman (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2003), 38

representation of reality when the form of the representation has to be 'visual'. When it is not possible to detach the two neither from each other nor from the definition of today's art, one has to start analyzing their co-existence and their problematic nature of serving a single purpose by questioning the inner contradictions that they bring to what contemporary art is.

The possibility of concept as a core value in artistic production and its involvement as a represented and representative element in the art work, is the open suggestion that [when an artist uses a conceptual form of art], would mean [that all of the planning and decisions made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair.][57] Idea, as the machine to make the art possible, would generate an art that would be intuitive inclusive of all the mental processes as well as the outcome of this process, - if ever ends up as a physical form; still the work would bear the notion of the concept or the idea as the prior concern and the prior element and reason of the work. The form would then appear to be only a simplistic solution which would stand as the grammar of the total work.[58]

Following Sol Le Witt's suggestion for the relation between the form and the idea in an art work; the tension between conceptuality and physicality seems to resolve. Idea being the machine that operates within and being the cause of the physical form of any art resembles the co-existence of the soul and flesh of any 'living organism'. Art, as in these terms becoming inclusive of the processes of its before and after, creates space for the artist and his / her cognition to be represented and extends and expands into the viewer's perception while considers and satisfies the demands of the elements of the piece like that of the time, space and the material.

Where the attempt is to telescope (collide) conceptuality with physicality, trying to arrive at the reasons of their co-existence and the possibility of art as their venue; [the notion that the aesthetic values associated with 'high art' which was to be found only within the arts of painting and sculpture; as it was subjected to attack by the Avant-

[57] Le Witt, Sol 'Paragraphs on Conceptual Art', *Art in Theory: 1900 – 2000*, ed. Charles Harrison & Paul Wood, (USA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003) 846 -847.

[58] Ibid.

Gardes] must be regarded as a problematic in itself[59]. This new venue was described by Donald Judd as a new three-dimensional work which obviously resembled sculpture more than it does in painting, but it was nearer to painting; as it was more narrative and more concerned with the issues of time and memory[60]. The conceptual art movement gave the art work, the space to appear more organic in the sense that inclusive of the processes of creation and planning, it was given the chance to be of a livelier generic, embracing a life-span of its own. This was what was being challenged as well as what was tried to be realized in the works of the Minimalists and Conceptual artists. Their statement can be considered as an opposition to the so-called 'impossible' or 'unconventional' in art by surfacing the very 'impossible' and 'unconventional' dynamics of artistic representation and bringing it forth as the final art work itself.

Concept can be defined as the mental appearance or the intellectual flow of mind of any trace of a reality. Somehow it is a process with infinite limits; allowing the reality to expand beyond physicality and never can completely end up in or shape up to become some tangibility. If concept can be then, just like a thought, featured as something volatile, slippery; how art could or will ever be able to capture and reduce it to any kind of a form or structure.

Ali Akay and Emre Zeytinoğlu ask the question how a work of art, which an artists points out and declares as 'art' can actually reflect and represent a flow of mind and how can a melody that pops up in an individual's mind ends up within the limitations of and is acknowledged to be equal to a peculiar and dilapidated form of an object.[61] This very problematic dynamic that the artists of the Avant-Garde found very appealing, challenging and worth dealing with in order to give birth to the alternative definitions and aesthetic theorization of the artistic representation; which can be called as both the cause and the end product of the conceptualism.

---

[59] Harrison, Charles 'Conceptual Art and the Suppression of the Beholder: Minimalism and Post-Minimal' *Essays on Art&Language*, (London: The MIT Press, 2001) pg. 37

[60] Ibid. 40

[61] Akay, Ali & Zeytinoglu, Emre *Kavramın Sınırlarında*, (Istanbul: Bağlam Yayınları, 1996) pg.10

The extend of discussion about Conceptual Art so far may create an illusion that the participatory and the transformative role of the viewer's presence and his / her perception seems to remain as 'not-yet-dealt-with'; but just on the contrary, the physicality of the art work which is reduced to the most economical representation of the idea, calls upon the mind of the viewer rather than his / her eyes or senses.[62] Notion of the aesthetic, the beauty; shifts from its mere appearance of physical perfection, smoothness and the careful details of physicality to the platform where the mental integration of the work, the artist and the viewer is made possible. In this sense Conceptual Art addresses and fulfills the need of conversation, dialogue within art and its power lies at the core of realizing the '*differancé*'.[63] As the meaning is slippery and as subjective as it can be; the artist individuality differs in perspective and defers the direct, obvious representation of truth in order to create an art that would capture many layers of the reality. The quest for individuality when times are changing from modernism to post-modernism captures the soul of the artist and supplies him / her, the necessary platform to share his / her voice. Conceptual Art appears on the scene as an unprecedented venue for artistic expression in this sense.

One of the most significant expansions that the conceptual art introduced to the norms of representation in art was the capability it had created within the artistic mimesis in terms of capturing or embracing the notions of time and space. The fact that the two-dimensional representation of the painting and the limited three-dimensionality of the sculpture were failing to conquer these two slippery but at the same time problematic notions in their nature of dominating all aspects of life to an extend of dictation was a problem on its own that the arts would have to confront sooner or later.

As conceptuality was prioritized over the physicality of the art work, the machine of mimesis were freed from its chains to a remarkable extend and was granted with the possibility of re-presenting these two crucial characteristics of reality. The demanding nature of time and spatiality requires a closer attention in order to understand why the conceptual artists of the era, both in Turkey and in the west could not escape the urge of

[62] Le Witt, Sol 'Paragraphs on Conceptual Art', *Art in Theory: 1900 – 2000*, ed. Charles Harrison & Paul Wood, (USA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003) 846 -847.

[63] The word used in the sense that Derrida uses it...

problematizing their existence in their works. This discussion is worthwhile also in the sense that it is an attempt to ask the question whether it was conceptuality that invited their presence as represented elements in art or was it particularly their existence which triggered the integration of conceptuality into artistic representation causing it to expand to both a three-dimensional physicality and sometimes zero-dimensionality.

ii) Time versus Space

Both time and space had become aesthetic issues starting with the 19th century.[64] As both are amongst the basic categories that define 'existence', they bear in their nature the tendency to go unnoticed, felt but not visible, dimensions of life that one gets used to, adopts, accepts since they remain uncontrollable as a result of which they also are disturbing. Because of such notions like power and governance, the best defense in order to stand unconquered and not dominated or at least to create the illusion of having control over their existence, one has to rely on the 'habitual' and the 'repetitive', and consider their relativity as a mental inconsistency or an inability to calculate.[65]

The uncertainty about the whereabouts of the direction of evolvement and development; the habits and the repetitive daily experiences are a source of confidence; the shield that enables the preservation of perception. To sense time and space through this perspective absorbs the destructive effects of change and the slippery base and the continuously shifted meaning of their existence stands bearable as much as it can be ignorable. As times were changing and the basic but different perceptions of time and space were forced to apply to and within various but similar physicality of the world, a conflict arose.

---

[64] Harvey, David 'Mekan ve Zaman Deneyimi' Postmodernliğin Durumu, translated by Sungur Savran (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2003), 227.

[65] Ibid. 228

As David Harvey exemplifies; the rhythms in life start being forcefully exposed to more than one possible equation for solutions. Harvey asks the question if it is the interest rate or the environmentalist concerns that is to define the optimal rhythm of consumption of a natural resource, in order to sustain the resource until the end of that uncertain faith of ecology arrives. Another example is that when short termed financial debts are preferred in order not to delay instantaneous needs in a society; while in one opinion this stands as the way forward for growth and development, in another view this stands as the core reason why poverty grows and deepens.[66]

Following Harvey's example, it is possible to configure time and space as two dimensions of life whose existence can not be omitted but they can be re-created and indeed they are. In accordance with the conditions of any sociological or individual case; time and space are created and defined by men; as a result of which, they do not always come to be acknowledged or experienced as the same in different cultures or in different times. Stating the fact that both time and space can be re-created by men's perception; the trauma that was caused by the acknowledgement and apprehension of this possibility can be considered as one of the reasons why canvas in art or two-dimensionality in representation was not enough.

This resolution is also relevant for the discussion about the *process* which has now been given the priority over the *end-product*. The improvement and development in history have always come to mean the abolishment of spatial obstacles, the occupation of new spaces and finally the termination of its boundaries transforming its identity through the power of time and duration. Whereas; with modernity; the emphasis has shifted to the process of the *coming-to-being* rather than *being*.[67] Plus the transformative affect of writing on the notions of time and space has become more visible than ever when the printing machine was invented[68]; because, that was when the word was placed within a space and language was given a physically possible spatial dimension.

---

[66] Ibid. 229
[67] Ibid. 232
[68] Ibid. 231

As aesthetic theory tries to define the rules that would enable ways to convey the unchanging reality of the world which is embedded in an infinite swirl of change and transformation; space needs to domesticated and time has to be captured in order to be stopped. Bearing in mind the above discussion that Harvey frames; Conceptual Art's argument as it proposes the creative conflict of time and space, and the importance of process and as it uses in its physical representation the elements of various disciplines inclusive of textual language; stands right in place when times were changing from modernity to post-modernity.

One of the main arguments that this thesis is suggesting as both the cause and the critical creation, the end product of Conceptual Art; the controversy between physicality and conceptuality when the attempt is to represent a reality whose only reality is that it is not stable and whose essence is the notions of change and changing; Harvey also draws attention to the same dilemma, naming it as the actual paradox.[69] As long as flow and change remain as the basic reality of living; their representation, especially when this representation has to appear physical; is very problematic. Ideas require their defined, situated spaces and their coded times, as well as their bodily existence. Futurists had tried to shape the element of space through the representation of speed and kinetics[70]; conveying the *passing*, *being-passed-from* effects of time and space.

When the bodily existence of time and space was not possible in the form of a true representation; their characteristics that were visible as effects on the bodily elements were inevitable signifiers. The industrialism of the era was the cause of this proposition of Futurism. The solution was presented by the dynamics of the time itself. The behavior of the industry as one big machine, its fugitive dynamism and power of its ability to mass-produce; is as appalling as it is demolishes the slow and calm nature of time and space. As times would be changing into aggressive consumerism and production; representation of reality could not escape the nature of this transformation.

[69] Ibid. 233

[70] Ibid. 233

Dadaism, just on the contrary, was an opposition against the spatial positioning of any kind.[71] What they were after was not a specific and pre-defined and as a result bordered duration; but rather a form of infinity; which would always seek for the revolutionary alteration of the given circumstances; causing them to arrive at *happenings* as artistic representations.

The main drama surrounding the arts was arising from the individual experience of time. As events or social happenings were easily imported in both theory and practice to different geographies, causing occurrences almost in a simultaneous manner; the reality of experience would not overlapping or would not have the possibility of definition through its locality of appearance. As the raw material of art remains as the artist's individuality and his / her individual experiences and contents; this dilemma carries itself to the platform of artistic representation and the question itself becomes both the transformative and the signified subject matter of the modern and post-modern art. Cubists were trying to deconstruct space within their claim of multi-perspective. As there was more than one perspective, there was more than one reality, or more than one version of it. The refraction that was caused by the changing dynamics of social relations as a result of industrial growth and technological innovations; that would cause the notions of time and space to be questioned in accordance; would find their reflection on the canvas and would inevitably start questioning the predefined boundaries of the space of canvas.

iii) Dialogue versus Monologue and Artist versus Viewer

Conceptual Art can be said to have established a freer arena, where the individuality of the artist did find itself the necessary space to reveal, realize and practice its ways of expression and representation. The extended process of the creation of an art work, as it came to include the idea, the evolvement, the material, the time, space and even the viewer's perception and as a transformative force within the concept

[71] Ibid. 233

of the art work itself; was just the right formula that would meet the needs and demands of the postmodern times. The idea being forwarded brought forward within the sphere of art and the discussion enabled surrounding its context; was a venue that was satisfying the need to be political. Artist's voice was freed to personate in the form of an art work where the artist could actually construct sentences, statements and reveal issues that were problematic to him or her. As Kosut also specifies, the conceptual art work was the humanization of the idea of the artist which was also the mediator of the social context of that particular idea:

> (…) For these reasons, 'consciousness' in the function of self-reflexivity should be operating within the elements of the work (propositions) or art itself. In this way the subject of the maker is present and 'humanifies' the work. The proposal is for work which understands itself as a context which mediates (as it is mediated and is part of) the social context.[72]

On of the most obvious outcomes of Conceptual Art was the renovation it made possible in terms of creating an area for dialogue; a dialogue between the artist and him/herself, between the artist and his work and his idea, between the elements of the art work, as well as between the artist and the viewer; and various combinations of the parties in relation. Conceptual Art was a form of art where discussions were made possible, visible as well as inescapable. In postmodern times, when the problem was that the problems and issues that were bothering the minds of individuals, who were seeking platforms for recognition, apprehension as well as solution; everything becoming a copy of a copy of a copy, and reality being summarized in the form of simulations, Conceptual Art was practiced as a way out of this exhaustion. The memory, which was forced to defend itself against what the times had been requiring and demanding; was represented without bearing the concern to be lasting. Settling for the temporality; the installments, language oriented, or readymade based art works that the Conceptual Art was offering, memory can be said to find its right platform to be represented without going extinct at least for a duration that it would decide for itself.

The nature of the conceptual art work was not allowing the piece to become a commercial entity. As the permanence of the originality of the art work was being

[72] Crowther, Paul 'Aesthetic Ideas versus Conceptual Art' *The Language of Twentieth-Century Art* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press: 1997), 181, quoting Joseph Kosuth.

questioned as to what extend it could survive in terms of a specified time and locality; the memory was being captured to the life span of the piece that was determined by the elements that were determining the physicality and the conceptuality of the art work. The attempt to stop the time, as times were offering esthetic surgeries, materials being favored according to how long they would stand, the speed of consumerism and the men's struggle against this pace as he / she was trying to accumulate, saving and collecting in terms of objects, money, knowledge, people, land, etc; the conceptual art's answer to it all stands as appealingly destructive as in its nature conceptual art criticizes the temporality of the times by offering a temporal physicality.

As the process was being favored over the other determinants of art-making, the production relations as in between the product and the producer were being questioned. The idea that the conceptual art could not be satisfied by a two-dimensional physicality or singularity in discipline or media, can be said to have appeared as a natural result of what the times had been demanding.

Conceptual Art's burst against authority, in terms of ownerships and rigid rules and conventionalities conquering the content and the context of art; created a way out for ideas and their ways of representation and praised them. The 'different' can be said to have found its voice where the minorities in terms of identities and ideologies could take off from what the Conceptual Art had to offer and created their own space within this kind of artistic representation. This could be the reason why women artists chose this path or with the help of Conceptual Art, women artists found themselves a space to reveal their existence.

The temporality that Conceptual Art takes refuge in as its opposing position against the commercializing effect of the consumerist culture; disturbs the economical dynamics which had been trying to draw in the arts as one commodity that would be a collector's item to be sold and bought; is a rejection of the packaged notions of time and space. The organic nature of the conceptual art works, as they absorb the perception and the participation of the viewer as well; would lengthen the duration of the process of creation to infinity. The memory, the history that is created through the conceptual art work, would then remain un-captured, impossible to frame and as long as the dialogue that was achieved in between all the elements involved in the discussion of the concept

proposed by the piece was lasting; no single spatial identity would be able to conquer the work. The conventional ways of art would have to be ruptured to invent a way out of this exhaustion, which was exactly what postmodern times were demanding from the intellectual mind. As Lyotard suggests, this rupture was nothing but a deconstruction for the sake of an inescapable construction that would have to replace the *deconstructed*:

> A postmodern artist or writer is in a situation of a philosopher: the text he writes, the work he performs are not in principle governed by already established rules, and they cannot be subjected to a determined judgment by applying known categories. It is these rules and these categories which the text or the work seeks. The artist and the writer therefore without rules, in order to establish the rules of what will have been done. Hence the work and the text have the quality of an event; they arrive too late for their authors, or –what amounts the same- their realization begins always too early. The postmodern needs to be understood through the paradox of the future anterior tense.[73]

Besides, because of the uncanny nature of its physicality, the mixture of media as the material of the work, as well as the fragility of its one-time-ness; causes the work to belong to itself only. In that sense, the conceptual art work can be said to extend only to the arena of the daily life which also unstoppably keeps on flowing. The time and the space of the work form homogeneous relations with the actual time and space resulting in the hybridization of the experience. The representation leaks out into the actual reality and the question of possibility of any kind of a representation becomes more visible than ever.

Conceptual art, in its authority-delegating nature; involves the viewer in an intellectually sophisticated manner. But this is for the sake of creating a common platform where the artist, the material of the art as well as its concept and the viewer could meet without being denied their roles and demands because of the unbreakable rules and presupposed boundaries. As soon as this platform is achieved, the dialogue is constituted. As a result of this dialogue, the communication is enabled and the process is keeps evolving.

---

[73] Bauman, Zygmut 'The Meaning of Art and the Art of Meaning' *Postmodernity and its Discontents* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997) 104, quoting François Lyotard.

> The author of postmodern images is an animator or performer, rather than creator… The authorship consists in the act of setting the process in motion, while the process thus originated does not aim at some point of final objectivation in a reified form, running instead in a free, unbridled fashion, through many paths – and stays incomplete and open…[74]

The reason why this chapter was necessitated as the conclusion of this part of this analysis is to pave the way for the discussion of the Turkish Women Artists in question who were because of the socio-political environment that they proposed their art into and created their works from within were just in need of this alternative method of representation. The natural out-flow of arts from the boundaries of pre-defined limits of canvas and figuration was mainly because of the need to expand in order to capture the larger-than-life aspect of changing nature of times. The proposed alternatives that the Conceptual Art provides in terms of representation and subject matter are the perfect venue for these artists who were themselves minorities, struggling to adapt to the same nausea of the modernity and post-modernity; for whom the real uproar would be both to make themselves visible as shaking their own status-quo as well as the present scarce definition of Turkish Contemporary Arts which did not embrace them in the beginning.

The natural out-flow of arts off the canvas space was an inevitable conclusion for these Turkish artists as well since their basic arguments in terms of existence and production perfectly matched with those in the West. Their approach in terms of their artistic identities and the nature of their works will be questioned as natural phenomena as the Conceptual Art stands as an adequate tool to address their sociological as well as individual needs in terms of their personal problematics. Before moving on to specific discussions of these issues in the works of the Turkish women artists, the socio-political background of the era, with brief introduction to pre-conceptual art in Turkey will be given closer attention.

[74] Bauman, Zygmut 'The Meaning of Art and the Art of Meaning' *Postmodernity and its Discontents* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997) 107, quoting Anna Jamroziak

CHAPTER III

Socio-political Background of the 1960s to 1980s

Many critics, who have attempted to theorize or analyze the artistic nature of the 1970s and 1980s, have felt the necessity to first of all describe the unique political atmosphere of the period. For a nation that was for its own sake planned to be built 'modern' as if a 'country' consisted only of a few parameters (like institutions on one side and people on the other); both the successes and the failures of the so called 'westernization project' were interstitial. Decisions were made for once, goals were set for the whole; but the pieces that could and could not follow the program, showed that there were individual and thus, uncontrollable segments. The assignments to reach the 'level of modern civilizations' were given to the people, to the governments, the youth, the scientists, the peasants, the athletes, to the soldiers, teachers, institutions; but they all had their different social-clocks and the project could not be cruised linearly.

> Despite the fact that Turkey was not a colony, a similar contradictoriness and insolubility results from the adoption of a Westernization project while at the same time clinging on the distinctive cultural traits. The paradox of Turkish nationalism which resulted in both a hostility towards and an imitation of Western ways has accompanied the modernization process since the turn of the nineteenth century. Accordingly, it is quite obvious that Turkish nationalism was not the awakening of Turks to national consciousness. It was rather a project undertaken by intellectuals whose discourse was laden with the dilemma of a choice between imitation and identity stemming from the aforementioned paradox.[75]

Irregularities came as a shock; disturbances within the system, unexpected occurrences in all kinds of political, economic and social environments hit harsh and

---

75 Kadioglu, Ayse 'Turkish Nationalism and Official Identity' *Turkey: Identity, Democracy, Politics* ed. Slyvia Kedourie (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1996) 185

social dynamics were altered or were feared to collapse in every turning point in its history. Individual and social traumas as well as depressions emerged and the lack of know-how in terms of dealing with change remained as the inevitable result of the immaturity of the young Republic of Turkey; which was also true for the art that emerged on this land after the foundation of this country.

Needless to say, Turkey and the people living in this geography did not inherit a culture of democracy. The culture of tolerance could never be fully transformed into a principle of governance. When one looks at its history, one feels that a good-hearted dictator is far more favored than a chaotic but democratic system. Looking at its history, it can be said that this geography is consisted of complicated individual identities. As cliché as it can be but still has a point in the issue, the feeling of not-belonging-anywhere-but-here (west of the east, east of the west) that the people of this climate has; was a source to cause traumas when targets were set elsewhere, as the way to forward was to the west, today in the European Union. The laicism as Atatürk's key reformation and after his death as his holly legacy could be sustained to some extent –an extent at its maximum possibility in a Muslim society. Many segments of many religions and various backgrounds of ethnicity were present, but a collective nationalist approach was constructed to create a single umbrella that would unite all minorities. Truly it was a resolution, but fractions were never oppressed and the need to find a unique individual voice that would finally be defining the so-longed identity of the people; was never exhausted.

The period that forms the background of the movements of art in 1970s and 1980s could be tracked back to 1950s. With a brief list of incidents that occurred and re-shaped the social and political culture of the society, the big picture could be clear. When in quest for the possibility of a claim for attributing the title of 'pioneers' to the women artists of 1970s and 1980s for the emergence of a Turkish Conceptual Art; especially for the reason of them being women and their art being both lyric and political, a quick look at history in this sense is necessary.

The so called 'westernization project', defined as the only way by the leaders of the nation as 'the way forward', the second phase of salvation was a top-to-down renovation of a system which seemed to lack the necessary infrastructure to fulfill the

requirements of such a rapid development; the whole project was a heavy burden both on the opinion leaders of the society and the public itself. From education to clothing, from laws to daily life; there were a thousand things to adapt to and accept. The trauma that must have been created through this strict and fast transformation, which had no time to stop and explain why or wait for the natural occurrence of some of the changes within the society, had been an issue for historians and the academia of political philosophy. As history must be judged with the conditions of the times in question; it does not make any sense to address a judgmental analysis to the westernization process. The possibility of a social trauma that might be the result of this fast-forwarded development enthusiasm, which had been a success story to a great extend can not be ignored especially when the quests for individual discourse in artistic representations bear the possibility of having this among its reasons that would arrive at an emergence of a rupture in the Turkish art.

The intellectuals who had been given the homework to protect and sustain this legacy that Atatürk had left behind were to carry the burden of such a noble mission and an honor that was not easy to live up to. While setting the example for the society all kinds of production were meant to be inline with the Kemalist principles. The path to democracy was through the path of patience and hard-work. Until the day when the people were mature enough to enjoy their civil rights, a lot had to be taught to them even if they resisted. So creativity and cultural and artistic activities had to bear this mission of being socially responsible.

As Sezer Tansuğ also points out, painting in particular was one field that had shouldered this responsibility of speeding up the westernization process in art. With the multi-party electoral system being established in 1945, liberalism was being favored and as long as the liberalist tendencies were on the agenda, the quests for unique individual discourses found space to be chased after, especially in the discipline of painting. Plus, it was becoming easier to be exposed to western evolutions in art as well as adapting them to art in Turkey.

A parenthesis shall be opened here in order to define liberalism compared to what was in rule previously. It was an approach that was favored by the new wave of politics that was practicing populism in order to mobilize the masses against the only political

party so far, the People's Republican Party founded by Atatürk. It was an attempt to loosen the rigid principles that were in power in order to offer the masses more choices in terms of politics, economy and social lives. When Democratic Party entered the elections and won; the socio-economic development that was initiated by the new government mainly consisted of imported practicalities. New roads were being built, entrepreneurial activities were being encouraged and without thinking if the society had already gained the necessary strength to digest this potential of growth, the face of the country started to change both physically and mentally.

> "It was not until the 1950s that the first generation of Turkish businessmen came into actual contact with Western institutions. Their business relations began to soar after that point. Factors such as the DP's ascent to power in 1950 which gave high priority to private enterprises the acceleration of foreign capital investments, the Western education of a great number of students, and the establishment of academic institutions which provided Western-type education in Turkey, all created favorable conditions for the second generation of Turkish businessmen. It was this group which took the reins of economic life in their hands at the end of the 1950s."[76]

As Selim İlkin points out, whatever damage the populist political approach of DP had brought, it also created a boom in terms of economic courage. The scarcity discourse which the Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi had based its politics on in order to protect and preserve the nation's economic and social stability was freed from its chains in a quiet uncontrolled manner. As Adnan Menderes was out in the meetings, asking for votes, he was also telling people to demand for more, because there were a lot of opportunities for a young country like Turkey, with a not-yet explored local economy.

In literature, particularly in novel, this populist approach was paying off as well. "By the 1950s, social realism constituted the mainstream of Turkish fiction, relentlessly exposing the plight of the poor peasant oppressed by the landlord or the plight of the rural migrant to newly industrializing areas. Social realism introduced, nurtured, developed, and popularized the notion of class conflict for the Turkish reader at a time

[76] Selim İlkin, 'Businessmen: Democratic Stability' *Turkey and the West: Changing Political and Cultural Identities* ed. Metin Heper, Ayse Öncü, Heinz Kramer (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 1993) 180

when an urban industrial class was barely emerging."[77] The changing nature of the identity of the bureaucrat, the political leader, the artist as well as the intelligentsia formed the national nausea of a country that was going under the process of modernization.

The competitive electoral system was inevitable and healthy and was expected to grow an anti-perspective against the so-far-never-challenged national ideology. But, as mentioned before, the maturity of the nation as well as the infrastructural efficiency that would ease the harsh effects of these disturbances, were not yet secured.

Change, no matter what, was bringing forth, whatever extension it had accelerated in terms vision, systems of thought and horizons. Social realism the novelists were practicing was followed by the Garip movement in poetry, appearing on the stage starting with the first poems of Orhan Veli. Followed by Melih Cevdet Anday and Oktay Rıfat, they attempted a de-construction and a re-construction in the conventionalist Turkish Poetry. Before them, Nazım Hikmet Ran's heroic, ideologically and politically sensitive reactionary poetry was dominating the scenes. They distanced away from the scaled, assertive narratives that stood as the antagonist expressions of Modern Turkey. They replaced the long tirades opposing the leaders or the ignorance of the people with a lyrical approach that was proposing a structural alternative. They negated the rhyme but instead looked for plainness. As Orhan Veli himself, explains in the foreword of his book 'Garip', the new world was demanding a new language.[78]

---

[77] Ahmet O. Evin, 'Novelists: New Cosmopolitansim versus Social Pluralism' *Turkey and the West: Changing Political and Cultural Identities* ed. Metin Heper, Ayse Öncü, Heinz Kramer (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 1993) 98

[78] Kanik, Orhan Veli 'Önsöz' *Garip* (Istanbul, 1941) "…Bugüne kadar burjuvazinin malı olmaktan, yüksek sanayi devrinin başlamasından evvel de dinin ve feodal zümrenin köleliğini yapmaktan başka hiçbir işe yaramamış olan şiirde bu değişmeyen taraf; 'müreffeh sınıfların zevkine hitap etmiş olmak' şeklinde tecelli ediyor. Müreffeh sınıfları yaşamak için öyle çalışmaya ihtiyacı olmayan insanlar teşkil ederler ve o insanlar geçmiş devirlerin hâkimidirler. O sınıfı temsil etmiş olan şiir lâyık olduğundan daha büyük bir mükemmeliyete erişmiştir. Fakat yeni şiirin istinat edeceği zevk artık akalliyeti teşkil eden o sınıfın zevki değildir. bugünkü dünyayı dolduran insanlar yaşamak hakkını mütemadi bir didişmenin sonunda bulmaktadırlar. Herşey gibi şiir de onların hakkıdır ve onların zevkine hitap edecektir. (...) Yeni bir zevke ancak yeni yollarla ve yeni vasıtalarla varılır. bir takım ideolojilerin söylediklerini bilinen kalıplar içine sıkıştırmakta hiçbir yeni ve san'atkârane hamle yoktur. Yapıyı temelinden

The movement of Garip, was both a criticism to the state policies as well as an attempt for forming unique local representational languages. The followers of this movement were telling the stories of daily lives of ordinary people. They attempted to erase the boundaries that defined the conventions. Simple frustrations were told in a surreal like language. When Orhan Veli wrote his poem about Süleyman Efendi, it came both as a shock was acclaimed as a fiasco. The essence within this novelty was understood in time, when critics thinking on this new movement came across real people on the street who reminded them of one of the many 'Süleyman Efendi's.[79]

They were using voices of nature and were visualizing the stories; they were reading the surrealists, modern poetry of the West, Baudelaire and alike. They were playing around the forms of poetry and its structural principles were challenged through them. Them being called as 'Garip' should not therefore be regarded as odd. What was even more significant about this movement was that they did succeed to create a locally unique language. The collective memory on textual representation was building up. Nazım Hikmet's position as a refuge national-socialist abroad, lyric in his longing for his homeland, his anger and power to mobilize masses was one milestone. Garip movement paved the way for a childishly sensitive and naïve but structurally challenging and reformative representation. New subjects of matter were introduced into the world of the artist. Small people, small worlds, small problems and so the life would go on. Ignorance was always a source of frustration. The blindness of the people and their state of being invisible were pointed out. Context was tried to be constructed in different social scenes whereas the existentialist crisis of the people were kept as the

---

değiştirmelidir. Biz senelerden beri zevkimize ve irademize hükmetmiş, onları tayin etmiş, onlara şekil vermiş edebiyatların sıkıcı ve bunaltıcı tesirinden kurtulabilmek için, o edebiyatların bize öğretmiş olduğu herşeyi atmak mecburiyetindeyiz."

[79] Kaplan, Mehmet; *Şiir Tahlilleri II*, (Istanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 1973): "...hiç unutmam, bir gün babıali yokuşundan aşağıya doğru inerken, elinde eskimiş çantası, ayağında patlamış ayakkabıları, buruşmuş yüzü, zavallı paltosu ile, ara sokaklara dalan küçük bir memur gördüm. Birdenbire "kitabe-i seng-i mezar" şiirini hatırladım. Kendi kendime "Şairin bahsettiği Süleyman Efendi böyle birisi olmalı" dedim. Ona karşı içimde bir merhamet ve şaire karşı bir sevgi hissettim. Daha önce başkaları ile beraber benim de alay ettiğim şiir, hayatta o zamana kadar benzerlerini çok gördüğüm, fakat kendilerine karşı alaka duymadığım insanların çehrelerine adeta bir ışık tutmuş, onların boş ve manasız varlıklarını bir muamma haline getirmişti…"

center and source of meaning. Loneliness, alienation, pleasure, fear of death, the joy of love and living, as well as the beauty and temptation of the homeland were still the emotions to be dealt with; whereas sarcasm and humor were introduced in a plain and undecorated way, deprived of rhyme and formal rules.

Why this especially has significance when it is question of representation evolvement in artistic language in Turkey is quiet obvious in the sense that these early movements of thought were the initiators of the abstract mind. The quest for individuality and independence in identity, the need to capture the modernity's expansions were causing these egressions.

Followed by the "İkinci Yeni" movement in poetry, the Turkish abstract mind was in acceleration in terms development and expansion. As both could easily be subject to independent research projects, their effects on the artists' production in fine arts can not be denied. 'Ikinci Yeni' in Turkish poetry was rather different from the Garip movement that had preceded it. The poets that were categorized under this declination in Turkish Poetry were never officially a part of a group; they never named themselves as part of such a movement or any movement in fact. What they achieved in Turkish Poetry, was the proposition and practice of a new language, an alternative to verbal representation of the world which had its effects on the Turkish language as well as assisting the evolution and development of the Turkish abstraction and conceptuality. Their recognition as the suggestion of a new language in poetry, named as the Ikinci Yeni dates back to 1956 whereas Ilhan Berk's poetry was on the scene since 1938. As Hasan Bülent Kahraman also suggests, Ikinci Yeni was a poetic quest that depended and traveled into the evolutions and ascensions of the Turkish Language.[80]

At the turn of the twentieth century, as the concept of relativity is introduced, the idea that there exists a singular version of truth that is concrete is shaken; as a result of which the hegemony of the rationality as it was came to be defined then along with the language it had produced no longer was in reign. Out of this transformation was born the language of the unconscious that was widely being used by poets like Rimbaud, Lautréamont and Mallarmé. The reflection of this language was experienced in the

80 Kahraman, Hasan Bülent 'Ikinci Yeni Siiri' *Türk Siiri, Modernizm, Siir* (Istanbul: Büke Yayinlari, 2000) 104

paintings of Kandinsky and the music of Schoenberg.[81] Ikinci Yeni was an attempt to set the Turkish Language free of the object; its sole mission of being the signifier of the world and further it beyond its function of verbalization of the sensual world in its simplest and one-dimensional form. As the ways to perceive were changing and were being multiplied, the ways to reflect and represent the new perspectives would change inevitably causing the grammar to evolve accordingly.

The Poetry of Ikinci Yeni succeeded to transform the written language to an extend through methods of invention such as the vocal bias (sessel sapma), textual bias (yazimsal sapma), reversal of meaning (tersine çevirme), bias in the order of the words (sözdizimsel sapma) and similar; which introduced the concepts of irrationality, meaninglessness and abstraction into the sphere of the verbal representation of the reality. What Ikinci Yeni did for the Turkish Poetry was revolutionary, despite its literal defects that are subject to a discussion of literature; what is significant of their transformative role must be stated as the alteration of the Turkish intellectual mind when it is the question of representation, language and conceptuality.

In terms of cinematographic representation, 1970s were a period which was producing movies dealing with or opening up for discussion the current civic issues at different levels: Umut (1970), Arkadaş (1974), Otobüs (1974), Sürü (1978). In parallel with these productions, the novel of the period was also tending to have a politically sensitive branch which would generate novels like the "Bir Düğün Gecesi" by Adalet Ağaoğlu, "Yaralısın" by Erdal Öz, "Şafak" by Sevgi Soysal and "47'liler" by Füruzan.[82]

Besides these developments in literature, the urbanization project that was inline with the industrial developments and the westernization program was creating new influences in terms of the usage of forms and color. Sezer Tansuğ explains this changing face of architecture in Turkey as a result of the modern technology. The

[81] Karaca, Alaattin 'Ikinci Yeni Siiri' *Ikinci Yeni Poetikasi* (Ankara: Hece Yayinlari, 2005) 200

[82] Antmen, Ahu 'Türk sanatında yeni arayışlar (1960-1980)' *Phd Thesis*, submitted to Mimar Sinan University, Academy of Fine Arts; advisor : Prof. Dr. Semra Germaner, 2005, p.103-104

structural order and the individual structural elements bearing the characteristic of functionality were appearing as the hints that the contemporary composition was trying to be achieved or at least implied in terms of 'design'. Tansuğ also specifies that 'line' and 'color' were breaking through their cliché forms and creative approaches were being appropriated as new orders and new humorous fantasies in illustrative and graphic applications.[83]

One of the first artistic gatherings and organizations of the period was the Görsel Sanatçılar Derneği; whose activities like that of the 1976-1977 Maltepe open-air exhibition was exemplifying the active role of the artist who in search for ways to better integrate to the society and the quest of the arts in Turkey for a more publicized platform to realize itself. In these specific activities, the sculpture Mehmet Aksoy would take the ordinary people during the exhibition as his models and make their busts in an attempt that could be defined as breaking through the understanding of the people who had come to know the notion of sculpture as only the statues of Atatürk; and expand their vision in their perception of sculpture.[84] In other words, 1970s were years crowded with the quests for the new and the searches for the different in all areas from music to literature, from visual arts to the cultural practices themselves.

There are many issues that define the nature of the period. Social fragmentations as a result of political inconsistencies, inflation and corruptions resulting in serious poverty of some social classes lead the way that ended with the military coup of the year 1980. The following period was marked by the a-politicization of the public especially the youth.

The military coup that occurred in 1980 was an intervention in order to stop the violence which had been going on all through the 1970s. The public had already grown an expectation for a military intervention; people were looking forward to an

---

83 Tansug, Sezer 'Dünyaya Açılmanın Yeni Bir Aşaması' *Çağdaş Türk Sanatı* (Istanbul: Remzi Kitabevi A.Ş., 2003), 245-248.

[84]Antmen, Ahu 'Türk sanatında yeni arayışlar (1960-1980)' *Phd Thesis*, (submitted to Mimar Sinan University, Academy of Fine Arts; advisor : Prof. Dr. Semra Germaner, 2005), 106

enforcement that would put end to all that blood-shed and uneasiness. The democratic legislation of the 1960 had paved the way for young minds to think and act freely. The university students of those times were freely enjoying their rights of education and with the knowledge and awareness they accumulated, they were criticizing the system; looking for ways of betterment. Within a nation that had not yet done its homework in terms of expanded education in all levels and had not yet grown the necessary maturity in terms of politics and civil society, altered forces were practicing their right of organization as well.

Leftist and rightist movements were polarizing at two radical extremes. When violence as a result of this polarization made the civil life unsafe towards the end of the 1970s, the military intervention received big applause by the community. The fact that it was undemocratic; that it would come with unjust random arrests and with bans on the freedom of rights did not interest the public as much. The public maybe had not yet developed a mature conscious in terms of republican governance and democracy so crowds took it for granted. The fact that the country had a history of being governed from top to bottom since its foundation had most probably oppressed the public's reactionary mechanisms. People were already dealing with financial crisis, an international alienation caused by the fact that history had shown that Turkey was surrounded by enemies, nobody was to be trusted. Military was the one organization that the public had confidence in. They were the symbol of salvation and protection. Like the big brother within the state, whatever that came from them had the illusionary affect that it was supposed to be for the sake of the nation.

The period that was approaching the 1980s was a path that was headed to cultural rupture in the first place, since after the military coup of the September the 12th Özal regime was succeeding in transforming the inner-perspective of the people of Türkiye. West being the far-away target from whom this part of the world had to accept the unbearable fact of being different and behind; the effects of globalization and the speed of time and information conquering the daily lives, the times were turning into an opportunity to incorporate into that seemingly distant and highly sophisticated –thus feared culture of the West.

Despite the interruptions within the democratic system which just on the contrary resulted in the politicization of the masses and when armed with the economic blossoms of the free-market ideologies towards the 1990s; the consumerist culture, which was yet hungry but eager and tabula-rassa as it can be; was already laying the foundations of its unique synthetic identity. Conceptual art in Turkey, despite all its lateness and unoriginality – as some Turkish art critics of the time would state so; was paving the way for this creation of the hybrid identity. If for all the fanatic sake of nationalism, there had to exist an independent culture of Turkish-ness, Conceptual Art, like any other intellectual movement, was not to shadow or stain the purity of local values but instead, incorporation into the system of the World, on the basis of ideas, thoughts and critical approach; was the tool that would enable the inner dilemmas and problematics of this incorporation to surface and to be opened for discussions to accelerate further progress.

CHAPTER IV

The *Possibility* and the *Adventure* of Turkish Conceptual Art

> 1914 kuşağı olarak bilinen Çallı Kuşağı Cumhuriyet ile birlikte yeni resim oluşumlarına katkıda bulundular. Eleştirmen Sezer Tansuğ bu dönemde ressamların kendi bireysel "iç dünyalarını resim diline aktaracak bir duyarlılık atmosferine" sahip olmadıklarını dile getirir.8 Burada hemen hemen herkesin hemfikir olduğu şey, Akademi kurulunun resim ve heykelde tekeli elinde tutmuş olduğudur. Sezer Tansuğ'a göre bu dönemde "tarihsel geleneklerden çok, Avrupa'ya ait bir sanat eğitimi hakim oldu". Bu kısmen doğru olabilir, ancak "d Grubu"na baktığımızda bu ressamlar arasında yerellikle Avrupalılık arasında gel-gitlerin olduğunu, biraz aşağıda göreceğiz. Ancak başka bir açıdan baktığımızda ve o döneme ait sanat dergilerini karıştırdığımızda, ilk başta, kapakların bile Avrupa sanatının başyapıtlarıyla süslü olduğunu farkedebiliriz. Sanatsevenlere Avrupa sanatının gelişimi anlatılır ve bu bilgilendirme süreci sanatsal faaliyetleri de etkiler. 1929'da kurulan Müstakil Ressamlar Heykeltraşlar Birliği bu açıdan önemli bir atılımdır. Avrupa'da Almanya ve Fransa'da okuyan sanatçılar yeni bilgileri ile yurda dönerek eğitimde yer aldılar. Akademi'nin içine de 1914 kuşağı hocalar ders vermekteydiler. 1933'te Türk modernleşmesinin önemli bir adım olarak kabul edilen d Grubu ortaya çıktı.[85]

In Ali Akay's summary of the background of the 1950s, the shift of the authority in defining and navigating the arts in Turkey from the institutions of government to the independent formations of artists' groups can be neatly traced. In terms of form and structure, this shift was being experienced from conventional figuration to non-figurative and then to abstraction in painterly depiction. The artists were also taking political positioning against the politics of the day with their art as well as their social status.[86]

---

85 Akay, Ali 'Devlet Himayesinden Serbestlesmeye Plastik Sanatlar' (downloaded from the site http://www.sanalmuze.org/paneller/Mtskm/34dhs.htm on 14.12.2005)

86 Iskender, Kemal '1950-1990: Türk Resminin Gelisim Süreci Içinde "Çagdaslik" Kavraminin Anlami' *Sanat Çevresi* (Vol: 140, June, 1990, Istanbul) 23

Bearing in mind the preceding discussions about conceptual art and the artistic, humane, social, economic and political conditions surrounding the movement; in the environment of Turkish contemporary art, there might exists two possible resolutions explaining the emergence of an art that might be called 'conceptual'. The first approach will of course be that of the inevitable influence the western conceptual art and the changes in the meaning of art had on the Turkish artists. As the challenge the contemporary art had to face in terms of meaning, authorship, form and aesthetics; the ideological rationales the artists had to develop with their art grew more radical and freer. The ideas were bigger and the possibilities were overwhelming. The way that the ready-mades of Dadaism had paved the way for the proceeding movements of the late modernity was being explored at its highest potential. The artist was becoming a creator and a curator; an independent intelligentsia who were able to re-shape a meaning as well as re-discovering it.

Besides the western influence, - which to an extent means that the influence may have only resulted as imitation; but the ideas born abroad were beyond imitations, at least were combined by the local perspective of Turkish culture, affected by its geographical and political heritage and the current socio-economic conditions of the republic then. A rather unique language, within the works of the leading Turkish conceptual artists could not cease to come to being, as some kind of synthesis was inevitable.

Conceptual art may be claimed to be the most easily praised or the fastest imported art movement when Turkish and Western contemporary art histories are compared which will be explained further in this chapter later. On the other hand, the women artists that are interviewed within the context of this thesis deny any kind of an influence.[87] Still, the shrinking distances of the highly technological world and the unstoppable flow of information and knowledge must have had their effect on the matter. While Dadaism or Abstract Expressionism never were fully practiced in the Turkish artistic environments in their true and exact nature, Bauhaus and Minimalism seemed to have leaked faster into the Academy of Fine Arts as they achieved to formulate easy-to-adapt and theorize principles of design and artistic form.[88]

Altan Gürman, who had used ready-mades a part of his art, in his series called "Montajlar" in 1967 (Figure 1), had a role in establishing the Department of the Education of Basic Arts at the year of 1969. The education offered through this establishment was based on the basic design principles that the Bauhaus ecolé had given birth to; in terms of the deepening challenge and the questioning of the *grammaire* defining the inner relations amongst the plastic elements in a work of art. This could be defined as the one important threshold within the adventure of Turkish contemporary art, as the Academy was converging to the Western Contemporary Art as the educational philosophy and applications were being shaped in accordance with the international ascensions concurrently; but what surfaces after the interviews conducted with the Canan Beykal and Ayşe Erkmen, Altan Gürman and the Basic Design education seems not have that much of a transformative role in the changing face of the Turkish arts.[89]

---

[87] Private Session with Füsun Onur (Kuzguncuk: 09.12.2005, Istanbul), Private Session with Canan Beykal (Suadiye: 15.12.2005, Istanbul), Private Session with Ayşe Erkmen (Cihangir: 02.12.2005, Istanbul)

[88] Köksal, Aykut 'Türkiye'de Çağdaş Sanat' *Cumhuriyet'in Renkleri, Biçimleri* (Istanbul, 1999) 168-177 (downloaded from the site www.arkitera.com on 21st of August, 2005)

[89] Private session with Ayşe Erkmen, Cihangir (02.12.2005) and Canan Beykal, Acıbadem (20.12.2005)

Canan Beykal on the contrary defends the fact that Basic Design had caused a disharmony within the academy education as what the Basic Design offered to the students had nothing in common or in parallel to the conventional education practiced in the artists' ateliers. Despite Aykut Köksal's attribution of importance to the foundation of Basic Design, considering that it was not a department long-lived; it would be an over-reading to accept it as a milestone in the history of arts in Turkey; nevertheless its emergence is significant. The department could not survive for long since the conventionalist understanding governing the Fine Arts Academy could not thoroughly integrate and expand this curriculum to its entire system and the department was abolished shortly after the loss of Altan Gürman in 1976.[90]

As a result of the interviews conducted with Ayşe Erkmen and Canan Beykal; Altan Gürman appears as the first artist to have practiced a non-conventional canvas art but his influence in the Academy had not been of great significance. Canan Beykal states that the Academy was not very fond of him and that he was not called to participate in exhibitions.[91] His influence was limited to the students who were interested in his works and Canan Beykal was one of those students; his works had been acknowledged as the first examples of an art that was challenging and discussing the relation between the painting and the object and his art is accepted as the early interpretation of conceptuality.[92]

Şükrü Aysan, a student during the 1960s in the Fine Arts Academy of Istanbul, was sent abroad to Paris, on scholarship after his graduation with a group of his friends. They attended the Paris National High School of Fine Arts, some being registered and some unregistered. In his words, he describes those times as refreshing as well as shocking. The avant-garde movements of 1970s in Europe were mainly Hyperrealism

---

[90] Ibid.

[91] Private Session with Canan Beykal (Suadiye, 15.12.2005)

[92] Madra, Beral '80'li Yıllarda Türkiye'de Sanat Eğitimi', pg.9 (downloaded from the site www.btmadra.com/articles/articles.html on 01.12.2005) and Köksal, Aykut 'Türkiye'de Çağdaş Sanat' *Cumhuriyet'in Renkleri, Biçimleri* (Istanbul, 1999) 168-177 (downloaded from the site www.arkitera.com on 21st of August, 2005) and Antmen, Ahu 'Türk sanatında yeni arayışlar (1960-1980)' *Phd Thesis*, submitted to Mimar Sinan University, Academy of Fine Arts; advisor : Prof. Dr. Semra Germaner, 2005

and ‘L’Art Conceptuel’. He explains his confrontation with Hyperrealism, Conceptual Art, Photorealism and the preceding movements of Arte Povera, Land Art, Body Art and Minimal Art.

Despite the dominant pessimism in the retro-views of today’s artists looking back at their years in the Academy; Şükrü Aysan talks about his days at the academy as a form of free education that had enabled the students to be flexible to changes. He believes that the reason why they could form closer relations with the movements, dominant in the art circles in Paris was their professors back in Istanbul. He immediately refers to Adnan Çoker and his minimalist approach which he was practicing as the head of the Cevat Dereli atelier. This shows that the group that went abroad in those years was not that unprepared. They lacked the philosophical and epistemological background in the issues of semiotics and grammar; rhetorically they were unequipped but their formation being yet incomplete gave way for them to develop their individual artistic language under the influence of the contemporary art movements. This shall not be recognized as a blind imitation but rather an enriching exposition to ‘other’ possibilities. Their adventure was not a blind one in that sense.

The environment that had backed this openness in the Academy back in Istanbul to new ideas and developments in art must have been the democratic and optimist mood of the 1960s. The Academy as one of the institutions that have shouldered the burden of living up to the legacy of the Republic was looking forward into west trying to bring up artists that could catch up with the up-to-date contemporary art world. The road to the formations of the individual artist was an open-ended education; the system was not conservative.

After they were back in Istanbul, in 1977, Şükrü Aysan and his friends founded the ‘Sanat Tanıtımı Topluluğu’ through which they could create themselves the space to generate discussions on the issues surrounding the contemporary art circles in Turkey. He proceeded with his conceptual works as an artist who was also a part of the Academy, lecturing students. He also had significant contributions in terms of creating the environment necessary for the conceptual art to flourish. With his group, they translated references to Turkish and wrote their own ideas about art. The Academy, as the sole institution with the mission to renovate and reform the Turkish art, as the

movements abroad started to be practiced in Turkey between the years of 1975 and 1980; sponsored and organized the first 'Istanbul Sanat Bayramı'.

Remembering that Conceptual Art as it emerged between 1960s and 1970s in the west, following the footsteps and presuppositions of what the Minimal Art of the period suggested in terms of representational alternatives in art; had come to be the center of a lot of hot debates; the definition and recognition of the conceptual art, as it stood different since it was suggesting a systematic shift from the canvas to non-canvas in art, and was prioritizing the concept, the idea and the intellectual activity within art-making over the physical formations that art had to fit in; was complicated but necessary. The need to outline this art movement caused many artists to write about and defend their art besides producing it. As a result of which, the artists' gatherings constituted sophisticated circles that produced the vital background of groups that fed into the intellectual activities that surrounded the movements of art; like in the example of the relation of Art & Language group with Conceptual Art.

Previous examples to this kind of relation between that of the intellectual written activity about movements of art were realized before in the cases of Dadaism, Futurism and Surrealism in the forms of manifestations. Art & Language is an important case in order to point out the similarities of the art of 1970s in Turkey as the artists practicing non-canvas art constructed associations that would back their artistic production and minimize their desolation and in their case the freezing out as a minority. Sanat Tanımı Topluluğu, (The Definition of Art Group) STT, founded by Şükür Aysan and his colleagues in 1978 was one parallel formation that was realized in the case of Turkey for the artists' independent separation in a group. STT was an attempt to make believe of what the conceptual artists of Turkey were trying to achieve in arts; it was the platform through which they proposed a definition for their conceptual art. Perfectly in line with what the conceptual art was trying to achieve in terms of transforming the nature of the art work; Art & Language group, produced both the intellectual documentation concerning the definition and outlines of the conceptual art, while at the same time, sought the possibility of 'art-theory' (in that sense the written texts of the Art &Language group) as a conceptual art work.

Proposing itself as a work of art was not within the missions and visions of STT of Turkey, where STT remained as a basis on which the artists and the viewers could formulate a meaning of conceptual art and attain prevalence for this kind of art.[93] Besides outlining the dynamics and problematizations of conceptual art; Art & Language existed as a platform which helped retain a clear memory of what the conceptual art demanded to change, as issues proposed and challenged; a feature that also can be found in the nature of the STT formation, which is still up and running as an independent artistic coordinating point for both the artists and the viewers.

> Suppose the following hypothesis is advanced: that this editorial, in itself an attempt to evince some outlines as to what 'conceptual art' is, is held out as a 'conceptual art' work. At first glance this seems to be a parallel case to many past situations within the determined limits of visual art, for example the first Cubist painting might be said to have attempted to evince some outlines as to what visual art is, whilst, obviously, being held out as a work of visual art. Initially what conceptual art seems to be doing is questioning the condition that seems to rigidly govern the form of visual art = that visual art remains visual.[94]

STT's perspective on art was clearly defined and laid down in the form of an academically sophisticated manifestation. Deriving the roots of conceptual art from the same sources as this thesis is attempting to assemble and defining the conceptual art in a western understanding; STT's manifesto is an evidence to prove the correctness of suggestion that the conceptual art in Turkey was the natural extension of the conceptual art of the west; as it succeeds to exceed the state of being only an imitation of the conceptual art of the west but existing in its own character and environment. The role of the STT foundation can not be claimed to have worked as a transformative force that had changed the face and dynamics of the arts in Turkey as much as the actual conceptual artists of the era, but the urge that must have been felt to form an independent art circle outside the academy, functioning as the intellectual prolongation of the conceptual art in Turkey was the obvious example that helps one accept the emergence of a transformation within the artistic minds of Turkey.

---

[93] Madra, Beral 'Modern'den Postmodern'e-2' *Hürriyet Gösteri*, 126, Mayıs 1991: 45

[94] Atkinson, Terry ' Editorial Introduction to Art & Language', *Art in Theory: 1900 – 2000*, ed. Charles Harrison & Paul Wood, (USA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003) 885.

> The Definition of Art Group is a Conceptual Art group. Conceptual Art was founded to research the structure and nature of art. Conceptual artists question the structure of art through a progression of work refers to the concept of art. What is being considered is a work or an idea directed towards the analysis of all the facets of and contradictions within the concept of art. Sol LeWitt said, "this type of art is related to all intellectual processes". Impressionism and Cubism gave the first formulas for questioning art. Later, as a result of Duchamp's systematic operations about art's boundaries, function, language and its being, art again became an intellectual process. Today, the subject of art itself and its place in the universe has reached a stage where its effort are directed towards understanding existence. The stages of this change makes twentieth century art history. Only an art audience informed about the development of art can comprehend contemporary work. To be able to understand today's artistic endeavors, it is necessary to make a conceptual history of art. Pure Conceptual Art by taking this situation to its extreme point, accepts no other audience or observer than the ones actively participating in the making of the work. Thus, art transforms into a state as serious as science that needs no audience. When using the term, Conceptual Art or its more characteristic name, Analitical Art, in refering to a specific period in the history of Conceptual Art as an approach to art, one is speaking of an art that has completely eliminated the production of objects and all plastic art forms. But if one conciders the broader understanding of conceptualism, within our twentieth century art, in addition to the side that verifies by analyzing itself, there is also a logical and philosophical dimension directed towards comprehension of its structure. In other words, a strongly intellectual art continues its hegemony today. In our time, art without an idea can not be effective.[95]

While some art works that were larger than life were being produced and continuing to astonish the whole with their genuinely unique ideas, the art circles of Istanbul, with the support of the academy and the independent collectors and gallery owners; was already organizing biennales and was hosting some of the most famous artists of the era. Starting from 1991, there were the biennales but before them, the "Yeni Eğilimler Sergisi" starting at the year 1977, as part of the 'Istanbul Sanat Bayramı' were the first platforms where the young conceptual artists, mainly women, had their chance to go public. The significance of this event was also the symposiums that created a chance for the Turkish artists and the Turkish public to discuss the dynamics of the 'new' in art. The accelerated development initiated by Şükrü Aysan and his contemporaries did succeed in bringing out new artists on the scene through these exhibitions. After the first exhibition, the organizing committee dismissed defined

[95] STT, ' Definition of Art', (downloaded from the website on 10th November 2005 : http://sanattanimitoplulugu.com/)

categories of painting, sculpture and ceramics and the awarded young artists at the end of these competitions were mainly those who were dealing with mixed media, creating conceptual works. In this sense the exhibition was inline with the contemporary art world.

The military coup that happened on the 12th of September in 1980 and the legislation that followed the intervention to change the structure of the Academy slowed down these developments. The Academy could not anymore be in favor of these liberal approaches and the invasions of places by politicized students caused these artists to return back to the isolated atmosphere of the closed environments like personal ateliers and the 'Yeni Eğilimler Sergisi' did not continue after the year 1983, in the sense it was formulated in the beginning. The award winning work in this last exhibition was tried to be intervened by the President of the University and its exhibition was not allowed. Şükrü Aysan and his friends wrote a report condemning the act and after this year the Yeni Eğilimler Sergisi was transformed in terms of identity and meaning.

As the Academy was becoming more of an institution of the status-quo; the events outside the academic circles were being flourished in the forms of galleries and private spaces of exhibition.[96] This transformation Şükrü Aysan suggests had pacified the leading role of the Academy as the initiator and the supporter of the new developments in Turkish Art, which he says is the situation since then. The Avant-Garde which was an opposition to the present in terms of meaning; could not find space to be practiced within the Academy anymore, because as an institution bounded with and legislatively governed by the state could not afford oppositions and the 'new'. Conservatism was favored in place of reformation.

With Şükrü Aysan, another student who had gone abroad was Nur Koçak, who took the path of Hyperrealism and generated her unique language around this perspective. Serhat Kiraz was another student who could benefited from the knowledge of this era of free practices of new art. Şükrü Aysan explains the graduation project of Kiraz as one conceptual work which was using all the localities within the structure of

[96] Balkır, Sedat 'Şükrü Aysan' *Akademiye Tanıklık 1: Güzel Sanatlar Akademisi'ne Bakışlar – Resim ve Heykel* ed. Ahmet Öner Gezgin (Istanbul: Bağlam Yayıncılık, 2003) 285-299

Academy, constantly referring from one piece to the other in continuation but he gives Kiraz's work in order to state that no such thing was possible after 1980s. Not all places, not even within the Academy were open to the use of the students and the artists.

Füsun Onur was one of Aysan's contemporaries. He came back to Turkey shortly before Şükrü Aysan and opened her first show in the Taksim Gallery in the year of 1970. She was mainly dealing with conceptuality in her works and she was different from Altan Gürman and Şükrü Aysan in her position as being outside of the Academy. She had studied Sculpture in the Academy but was persuading her artistic career as an independent artist who had also stepped outside the traditional rhetorical frame. Her works that date back to then are mainly fragile sculptures that embrace the plurality of material and source which challenges the temporality of the physical reality that could be attained through 'sculpting'.

Aykut Köksal recognizes her attempt as a first in Turkish Art History.[97] Coming out of these revolutionary exhibitions of the Yeni Eğilimler, amongst the award-wining young artists were Ayşe Erkmen who was given the Success Award of the 1979 exhibition with her works called 'Sürekli Düzenleme, and Şükrü Aysan was awarded with the 1st Runner Up prize with his work called 'Peinture' in 1977. (Figure 2) Osman Dinç also was awarded with the Mansion Prize with his conceptual work called the 'Rakamların Mekanı'.[98] Ayşe Erkmen was forming her individual artistic language during these times and the Yeni Eğilimler Sergileri were witnessing her development. In 1981 with her work called 'Yüztaş' she was setting her main problematic as clear as it is: art developing within the context demanded by the locality itself. Tomur Atagök, Füsun Onur and Gülsüm Karamustafa were other artists who were awarded through these exhibitions.

This new generation of artists was all following conceptualism in their works and the Turkish Conceptual Art was becoming more than just a western influence but a contemporary Turkish approach that was given the chance to go public and be

[97] Köksal, Aykut; 'Türkiye'de Çağdaş Sanat'; *Cumhuriyet'in Renkleri, Biçimleri*, (Istanbul: 1999)168-177

[98] Ibid.

recognized by the Academy. Altan Gürman as the professor back in the Academy who was bold enough to establish new structures within the present educational system; Şükrü Aysan and his friends who imported the new ideas from abroad and pursued their art along with this knowledge and awareness; Füsun Onur on the other hand who was challenging the traditional understanding of the form of structure and expanding its unexplored possibilities; Adnan Çoker working on his minimal art and Zeki Faik İzler who was an inspirational figure back in the Academy for the young students as to his open-mindedness to change and his effort in bringing in books and images of the western artists into the classroom were all due to these the most important figures in Turkish Art Arena in the 1960s and 1970s.

Following the views of the interviewed artists, Altan Gürman's art appear as a source of reference as his works were the closest encounter that the young artists of the era had experienced in terms of waking up to the possibility of alternative ways of representation within the limits of the canvas painting and beyond.

CHAPTER V

The Case of Altan Gürman : The Artist Who Paved the Way

As Aykut Köksal, Nancy Atakan and Beral Madra, all recognizes; Altan Gürman was a milestone figure at this turning point of the Turkish contemporary art adventure leading the way for the evolvement of a Turkish conceptual art; if not with his role as an educator but as an artist. Sarkis, contemporarily and with his involvement abroad rather early, is not considered as a part of this transformation by the women artists of the era, especially by Füsun Onur and Canan Beykal; even though he was practicing an art that was challenging the formalities within art.[99] Still, his art has importance in the sense that he was a Turkish artist living and producing art abroad but he was never a visible artistic figure in the circles of Turkish art in the period of 1970s as a result of which he could not be an influence on the transformation that the Turkish arts were about to go through.

He was settled in Paris starting from the year of 1964 and was pursuing his art mainly as works on paper or canvas. He was producing collages as well but he always envisioned himself as a part of the discipline he called as the attitude-art. He included ready-mades into his works but his transformation from watercolor to 3D physicality was not that radical. He was giving lectures in the Paris School of Decorative Arts since 1964 and he joined the exhibition of 1969 called 'When Attitudes Become Form' where he used alternative techniques of presentation. This particular exhibition was at the same time a milestone in the history of conceptual art. Organized by Harald Szeemann, opened in Kuntshalle Bern in Switzerland, hosting 69 artists whose works were varying from ready-mades to installations, from performances to process art; the show was turned out to be a scandal causing Szeemann to resign. Following his resignation, he

[99] Private Session with Füsun Onur (Kuzguncuk: 09.12.2005, Istanbul), Private Session with Canan Beykal (Suadiye: 15.12.2005, Istanbul)

announced himself as a freelance artist-curator who started to organize art-shows or exhibitions independent of any institution, creating the notion of the curator and causing a shift in the authority as to who is the beholder of decision in terms of the placement, announcement and definition of arts within a platform where artists would come together to produce and a collective base in the world of arts.[100] Sarkis was crowned to have been invited to this exhibition and given the chance to exhibit with the masters of conceptual art such as Joseph Beuys, Michael Heizer, Eva Hesse, Allen Ruppersberg and Robert Smithson. Sarkis was using ready-mades or used objects as the objects called by his memory serving his purpose for producing his art or as the reference material demanded by his memoirs to be reflected in his art; but he never fully acclaimed himself as a conceptual artist. Though he mainly pursued his works abroad he could still be acclaimed to be one of the initiators of the conceptual art or an art that was proposing a new language.

In Nancy Atakan's words, his works that date back to 1970s where he used metal plates, tar, electrical circuits, wires, neon lights and heat were mainly dealing with the notion of war, which was a cultural symbol for many people. His uniqueness in style can be mainly described as the compressed energy within the usage of mixed media in a delicate balance. There were controversies as different materials recalled different concepts but his art remained ideological and political as he was referring to the notions of war and dictatorship form a critical perspective. He was clearly stating his position as being against these notions and was conveying message as he was rotting and distorting the materials that were symbols of war and violence. His approach was also a form of documentation. He was using sounds and the duration of a process and was involving these as parts of his works. His problematic with the notion of memory would reveal itself in his retrospective that was opened in Ankara Gallery Zon, 1989; as he would re-paint his previous works with whatever trace they had left in his memory and place them on a large scale wood on floor and stab their identity – which exhibition and when – on those paintings to attach them to the wood. (Figure 3)

[100] Fowle, Kate 'Curating Now' *Curating Now 05*, (San Francisco: California College of the Arts, 2005) 6.

As Conceptual Art was being practiced within or not within the consciousness of the artist, the recognition of the works by the art critics of the period was not in place. The works were of alienating nature; they were uncanny, not habitual, and uneasy and were also too 'easy' in another sense. While some critics would choose to ignore the new art in Turkey, some would find it hard to frame it. Most of the writings on the issue in 1970s were against the new form in art not based on intellectual reasons but based on preferences, inconveniences and the problems of authority delegations.

In Kaya Özsezgin's article from Milliyet Sanat Dergisi, from 1976 is titled as '1976: The year in which the old values re-considered within the Plastic Arts in Turkey'; deals with the issue of the new, the plastic only in its title and does not include any discussions other than that surround the painting.[101] The farthest limit this small article can reach in terms of the new remains in abstract painting; whereas 1976 was a year Altan Gürman, Şükrü Aysan and Füsun Onur, as well as Sarkis abroad were already producing works that had exceed abstraction.

Güneş Acar's article in 1985 or Erhan Karaesmen's article published the same year do not still include any references to the works of the artists in question of this thesis.[102] They are still invisible in these highly read, small in number Turkish Art Magazines. Their names most of the time appear in columns that written in a manifesto-like manner, despising their art as one that is spoiled, self-centered and blame them for calling themselves the 'pioneers' in the Turkish Contemporary Art. The exhibitions that were mainly organized or thought of by the same group of people in which Şükrü Aysan, Serhat Kiraz, Füsun Onur, Ayşe Erkmen, Canan Beykal, Gülsün Karamustafa, Yusuf Taktak and Tomur Atagök were embraced with hesitations and sometimes with very harsh criticisms because of their so-called attitude of keeping to their enclosed social environment and disregarding artists other then themselves.

The criticisms that were written about the Yeni Eğilimler, as well as the *Öncü Türk Sanatından Bir Kesit* exhibitions were far away from being a solid analysis of the

[101] Özsezgin, Kaya *Cumhuriyet'in 75 Yılında Türk Resmi* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1998) 90-93

[102] Acar, Güneş 'Plastik Sanatlarda 1985'; Karaesmen, Erhan '1985'in Genel İzlenimleri' Sanat ve Edebiyat Çevresi *Hürriyet Gösteri* (1985) 30-34

works that were exhibited. They even lacked the attempt to discuss these works because bureaucracy was more important of a question. Their oppositional standing points and their non-conservative systems of thought; through which they were also proving that the gatherings of the artists were possible and there need not be the existence of third parties as the museums, old members of the jury from the previous generations or gallery owners. The attempt was to create a voice that would represent the spirit of these experimental as well as the strong 'buildings' of the individuality of these artists but they could not be seen beyond that of the young and foolish minds. The critics that were written about the exhibitions of the 1980s were mainly gossiping about the works and the way they were organized.

The repetition of the names of the artists in all these exhibitions was identified as selfish and the exhibitions were to be denounced as incomplete by the authorities. One shall also bear in mind the fact that the socio-political environment of the 1980s was rather conservative. The ease was looked for and found since 'the new' was a challenge and for the sake of sustainability in the systems of thought, which would simplify the mechanisms that had to control these 'thoughts'; old schools were praised and new tendencies were not understood and applauded much.

Adnan Çoker's support in that sense diverges from this widely accepted ignorance. He has stated for the first exhibition of the '*Öncü Türk Sanatından Bir Kesit*' that the artists exhibiting in this show were bold enough to welcome the new in their unique understanding of quality and contemporality. He was very bravely defining these exhibitions as platforms showing the way forward. Adnan Çoker would receive some criticisms just because he was a defender of the exhibitions as well.

Under the shadow of the period and the unsupportive art critics of the time, the invisibility, ignorance and blindness that surrounded the works of these artists remained like a dark curtain hiding their art. Tomur Atagök's art was too Americanized; she was acclaimed to be the annuitant of the already accepted and tried western art movements, whereas Canan Beykal's works were commentated as weak. Serhat Kiraz and Yusuf Taktak, though they were sometimes recognized as bright young artists were found far

too experimental as if stuck in experimentalism.[103] Their exhibitions bearing the name of the 'pioneer' were accused of being formed by the prodigal artists feeding on the annuity of the western culture.

[103]Dingin, Emin Çetin; "'Öncü Türk Sanatından Bir Kesit' Ressamları", Gösteri, July 1986, Issue: 68

CHAPTER VI
The Women Artists in Question

6.1 Füsun Onur

Born in 1938, Füsun Onur was the smallest child of a wealthy and republican family. She was to become a sculptress, starting from a very early age, as she states, with her father's motivation, who was very fond of arts but had not had a chance to practice this ever, was encouraging of his daughter to pursue her interest in arts. She explains that she had been making sculptures since elementary school, only with the slightest problem that she was sure that women would not be allowed to become a sculptress.[104] She explains her early curiosity and talent as something inevitable, as she would close her eyes, the horses would appear, demanding to be depicted in some form.

Graduated from the Üsküdar American Collegiate for girls, Füsun Onur was a supported young artist; with her high school teacher Miss Blatter's encouragement and her father's support; as soon as she finds out that women are also accepted into the academy to study sculpture, she passes the exams of Mimar Sinan University, as one of the only two students who had willingly chosen to study sculpture specifically. There she works with Hadi Bara, about whom she talks very highly of. She notifies that Hadi Bara would be the first to distinguish her unique path, right then; as he would inform her that her style would soon become that of the abstraction; which inevitably realizes itself in her years in USA studying at the American University in Washington, D.C. and Maryland Institute of College of Arts in Baltimore, respectively.

[104] Private Session with Füsun Onur, 9th of December, 2005, Kuzguncuk, Istanbul.

Her PhD thesis titled as 'The Art Object as a Possible Self in a Possible World, Publicly put forth on its own Account as a Possibility of Being' hints her search for the answer for the notion of *being* and its physical reflection as a possibility. While her sculpture had already taken the path of abstraction, one of her professors takes notice of the drawings she had been saving for herself. She explains that though she was an opposing type, the general tendency in the drawing class was to depict patterns from nature, whereas she was questioning the spatiality of the paper in her other works. When her professor David Hare sees these other drawings, he becomes the next person to encourage her in her quest by clearly stating that, as her teacher, she would go and he would follow.[105]

After finishing her studies in USA, she decides that she is bound to come back to Turkey; if there is a possibility of her art being worth anything, she wanted that to be realized in her own country. It would be the year 1969 when she was back in Turkey, opening her first solo exhibition in 1970, in Taksim Galerisi, in Beyoglu.

The basic problematization within her work in her early years was the function and usage of space as the platform of representation. She would call this as her *mesele*, as she was not searching for consciously radical or marginal revolt against sculpture, what she was producing was inevitably exceeding the potential of the sculptural structure as it had came to be known as in the formal definition of arts. Her works were mainly abstract in 1970s, mostly amorphous white entities which were not being volumes themselves but rather were three-dimensional objects that intervened in pre-existent spatial volumes.[106] (Figure 4, Figure 5, Figure 6, Figure 7, Figure 8) Her early works are nevertheless abstract sculptures, which are reductive wooden constructions that were revolving around the relationships between the organic and geometric.

[105] Private Session with Füsun Onur, 9th of December, 2005, Kuzguncuk, Istanbul.

[106] Brehm, Magrit *Füsun Onur: Aus Der Ferne So Nah* (Staatliche Kuntshalle Baden-Baden, 2001) 16

In these works Füsun Onur was mainly dealing with the 'massive-ness' of the sculpture as Nancy Atakan points out.[107] Their smoothness on the edges and the conquering of the spatiality they occupied were evident of their livelihood, in that sense their organic nature as well as their lyrical style; which would come to dominate the artistic language of Füsun Onur.

Füsun Onur, as one of the very early representatives of what this thesis is in search of, the possibility of a conceptual art in Turkey; was well aware of the fact that her work and definition of art was exceeding the possibility that the discipline of sculpture was offering. Her works were arrangements in that sense; passive rather than self-assertive, they were microcosms that she was building. As her attempt was to construct systems of spatial coordinates that were designed carefully, step by step, in the guidance of the concept in her mind that had demanded the work; she would be narrowing the formal scope of her work in years to come. In general her works were bearing an aura that was poetic, austere, and quiet in a delineating nature. Her works were idiosyncratic compositions that had biographical references carved onto their ambiance.

Her description in terms of why she had chosen this path is simple: she believes that this was the natural unfolding of how her mind and senses demanded of her; as it was just the same case in the arts of the times; even though she had never paid attention to what was new in the art world. She states in dignity that she had never been curious of anybody else's art work, with the fear that she would be influenced and loose her uniqueness; but, despite her disinformation her art would be falling right in place in harmony with the times. When she is asked if she categorizes her work as Conceptual Art, she claims not to know exactly but accepts the fact that her work is a form of conceptualization.[108] While the idea is the core determinant of her work, she cannot stop to deal with the spatiality that the concept of her art work would occupy. Spatiality being one of her main problematic issues in terms of representational language; is driven out of another challenging aspect of her work: the position of the viewer.

---

[107] Atakan, Nancy 'Arayışlar – Resim ve Heykele Alternatifler' (downloaded from http://212.58.11.161/mag/may03/kavsan052.asp on 5th of August 2005) 56.
[108] Private Session with Füsun Onur, 9th of December, 2005, Kuzguncuk, Istanbul.

She explains that the need to break through the espace is a direct result of trying to create a space for her viewer, to sustain duration for her work, to make it exceed the instantaneity of a painting or a sculpture. Her work was analytical rather than conceptual in that sense; the idea would be evolving around the structure or the form of the art work; whereas the content would come later. While her early works dating back to 1970s are mainly dealing with the analytical problematics within the physicality of an art work; as she would be approaching to 1980s, her art would reveal more of her womanhood, as it would come to bear narration, fiction and a story-telling nature where domestic values, nostalgia, memory and the past would surface in her works.

Going back to the relation of the viewer with that of her work; her works seem to take a position where they allow the necessary space for their viewer to join the structure. Her works and her identity as an artist were demanding that the espace within the art work would have to be filled with the observer's own associations. Her superfluous and tedious works would only be finished when they were out, released to the public. As she was constructing almost all of her works on the porch of her house by the sea in Kuzguncuk; she claims that when it was time to install them in the exhibition area, arrangements had the possibility to differ from that of the initial work first sat on the porch. Her works, as the suggestion of a new perspective on space were propositions of scenarios that would be unfolding before the eyes of the public that would have its own time, rhythm as well as its own life span welcoming the viewer to join and integrate with her arrangement of that particular space.

Going back to the pioneering activities of the 1970s, a close look at Füsun Onur's works would reveal her Minimalist take-off arriving at an art form that would exceed Minimalism as she would attempt to visualize the notion of 'locality' in her works. Her attempts were a challenge against the formal understanding of sculpture; she was abstracting the figure and was trying to find a solution to the problematic relation between the art work and the physical platform where it was exhibited. Figurative sculpture was challenged in her abstracted sculptures formed of various different object contemplations and the Turkish Art had not seen anything like it before.

Her oppositional position-taking against the traditional understanding of art and sculpture and her works in which she included small objects with which she intended to avoid figuration in a pictorial sense but tried to capture it through already made realities / entities of daily life; can be said to have romantic, domestic and lyrical tendencies. Her being a woman can be said to have a role in her choices. An example that might help to give righteous base to this argument can be her work, which was sent to the 1971 Paris Biennale. That work, the 'Pumped Sailor's Cloth' – Pompa ile Şişirilmiş Yelken Bezi- (Figure 9) was made of soft material in the shape of a question mark that was covered with the sail clothing. The piece could be pumped up by the viewer to arrive at its final shape. The usage of such a direct symbol like the question mark itself shows her ambition to be visible, but this was a rarely direct symbolism that was not very frequently witnessed in her works. She especially would insist that she would avoid being direct on any statement and hated slogans; if she was ever too argumentative or politic, it would not be more than her effort to be aesthetic.[109]

The problematic about this particular piece besides being obvious and very direct can be stated as, as Nancy Atakan also suggests, its unsolved equation with the position of the viewer. Most viewers were reported to just glance at the work and walk away. This piece can be called as the reason why she also included into her art the problems about the thin line between the representation, the represented and the spectator as the participator.

[109] Private Session with Füsun Onur, 9th of December, 2005, Kuzguncuk, Istanbul.

In one of her very first works she was more in an attempt to crack the mold of a minimalist initialization in order to arrive at conceptuality. She was more in concern with the nature of the material and the material's cross-relations in terms of placements. Her other work in 1980, the 'Morning Exercise' (Figure 10) was dealing with spontaneity as well as the possibility of fictionally re-constructing the 'spontaneity' through the hand of a creator, in her case the artist. The temporality in this particular work, reveals her struggle with the form and the place – as the form's plinth – and appears as conceptually metaphorical work that is not yet a mere installation and stands closer to Conceptual Art.

Her work titled as the *Dolmabahçe Memoirs* dated 1992 (Figure 11), can be viewed as this kind of a development within her art. That piece was dominated by the object of the chair; an object she used in her works before. The viewer would recall the notion of invitation as the empty seats were laid in front of them. But the thin clothing that covered the chairs as well as the rope that tied them together gave way to the feeling of them being parts of a single 'whole'. The viewer would then back up on his/her position of being the participator and just watch the work from a distance. In terms of her womanhood being projected in her works, the examples from her works can be numbered as one where she used the chair again as a ready-made placed on top of the turning plate of a music-box, where the music box is can again be attributed as womanly detail; as in another of her works where she within an enclosed glassware placed soil from which flowers blossomed, small dolls as well as angels and other objects; and as in another example could be her work where she used a real bread cut in half and a bitten apple protected by chemicals against decaying. (Elma, Ekmek Dedin de Aklıma Geldi, 1978, Figure 12) For this last work mentioned, she has used small figurations in order to depict the process of bread making as well as agricultural harvest of apples; how people collect them from the trees and with small trucks representing the harvested product to be transported to the marketing place.[110]

[110]Atakan, Nancy '*Arayışlar – Resim ve Heykele Alternatifler'* (downloaded from http://212.58.11.161/mag/may03/kavsan052.asp on 5th of August 2005) 56.

Susan N. Platt's interpretation of Onur's art as an art based on the equity of content and style draws attention to her state of stability[111]. She truly stands firm in her belief of her art being at one unexplored corner in Turkish artistic circles as she disrupts social conventions arriving at her previously described aggressive and impatient sculptures and installations. An interesting maneuver in her career is when she decides to come back to Turkey to pursue her artistic career rather than staying in America when she had had the chance to be recognized in an international platform. Looking at her works, it is obvious that she draws her problematic issues from the concerns and dilemmas of this geography's conditions as a result of which she must have decided that the only to fulfill her urges was to produce within this environment. Platt draws attention to her choice of materials in which she finds evidence of her this kind of a domestic spirit. She mainly deals with tulle, silk, satin, ribbons, dolls and old furniture; which are the materials from the culture that defines this part of the world as well as, as stated above appears as the reflection of her womanhood in her art.

As she was passing from quasi-sculptures to ready-mades, her works gain a significant characteristic of narration where from then she starts to tell stories. In these kinds of her works, her artistic identity as a woman was becoming harder to be concealed. In her work titled as the Nude, dating 1974, (Figure 13) she uses broken glassware, a naked baby doll, all enclosed in a small box. This is her first experimentation with the foreign bodies. This work is significant in the sense of Onur's growing receptiveness towards integrating everyday objects into her art and also in its sense of its motivation of opposing the government's decision of banning a nude sculpture on a public square in Istanbul.[112]

This composition draws attention to the discrepancy between official hard-line morality and social reality. The nude doll in the composition is like a sex-symbol whereas the mirrors also resemble the shopwindow atmosphere of nightclubs. As the figure's reflections are refracted on these mirrors, the nude's body is divided into pieces making its corporeality more like a conglomerate of body parts. This way, the holistic

[111] Platt, Susan N.; 'Public Politics and Domestic Rituals: Contemporary Art by Women in Turkey, 1980 – 2000'
[112] Brehm, Magrit *Füsun Onur: Aus Der Ferne So Nah* (Staatliche Kuntshalle Baden-Baden, 2001) 20

beauty of the doll is shattered living its place the detailed bodily parts which are magnified and disturbing to some extend. This particular micro-cosmos that she creates is playful and exemplifies the transformation that Onur is about to go through in her works. The integration of everyday objects into her works will continue after this piece but more than that, her discovery of the narrative power she has in her plastic representation of reality will reveal itself in her later arrangements. This particular work is significant also for the fact that it is the reflection of Onur as a woman. The doll is not only a toy or a sex-object, but also a patriarchally defined role model – and is therefore dismembered, dissected, and revealed to be the hollow construct it is.

What make her unique in the history of Turkish Contemporary Art are her usage of mixed media and her introduction of these rather new subject matters into the context of an art work. She was a pioneer in that sense since her applications that were exceeding that of the sculptural representation were the early hints of conceptuality in the Turkish Contemporary Art.

Atakan hesitates to draw conclusions in an attempt to summarize Onur's artistic style.[113] Onur's path leading to the 1980s reveals itself as a quest in search of the resolution with material, spatiality, the position of the viewer as well as the identity of the artist. Starting with abstract sculptures consisting of wood, plexi-glass, sponges, stretched canvas and plaster of human size she denies figuration. Then she adds romantic objects as ready-mades into her art drawing the problematic issues of daily life and the artist's relation to it into her conceptual representation. Towards the end of the 1970s, she starts dealing with her dialogue as an artist with the spectator as well as the dialogues between the various materials she uses and the viewers' response to the art work as an object placed within their sight.

She challenges sculpture as she breaks through that discipline and furthers her opposing stand as she includes empty canvas or language in a pictorial sense into her works where she adds rhetorical dimension to narrated concepts which had already

[113] Atakan, Nancy '*Arayışlar – Resim ve Heykele Alternatifler'* (downloaded from http://212.58.11.161/mag/may03/kavsan052.asp on 5th of August 2005) 57.

arrived at their three dimensional physicality. The basic issues she deals with are her memoirs in connection with the memory of the object, the material and the locality she exhibits in. She is very much affected of her gender as a woman as she makes significant emphasis on domestically-ty, hand works and craftsmanship. She stands romantic and lyrical in that sense since she is continuously creating confrontational representations in which she deals with the past, the history as well as the conscious of the people, the places and the objects.

She is said to believe that the art viewers or people in general have habitual perceptual behaviors and prejudices that shape their understanding and their notion of sight in terms of making a choice as to what to see. Looking at Füsun Onur's works between the late 1970s and 1980s, her artistic standing can be defined through her womanhood, her problem with the sculptural discipline chained within the conventions and as well as the uninvited or never planned position of the viewer in accordance with the art work to be viewed. Opposition and the ambitious attempts to drive the viewer within the work or to make the viewer understand can be read as visibility versus invisibility problematic.

Starting with abstraction, and then dealing with the problem of spatiality on paper, Füsun Onur's initial concern stands out as her need to problematize the notion of space and time. Her drawings on paper (Figure 14, Figure 15) when she was studying in the States were followed by her first quasi-sculptures of the 1970s. While she deals with the issues of memory, nostalgia and womanly domestication of objects in her later works; towards the end of 1990s, she re-problematizes the notion of space and decides that it is the system of music she can not escape to aspire to. (Figure 16) Therefore she starts to re-configure the space as if divisions and separations within an area are like that of the music chords[114]. One of her earlier works can be read through the same perspective as well.

In her Untitled work, dating 1976, (Figure 17), she has already created a self-rhythmic arrangement of sculptures that were suggesting a continuity and a systematic equilibrium. This work's end-detail, which is the expanding corner of the last plinth that

[114] Private Session with Füsun Onur, 9th of December, 2005, Kuzguncuk, Istanbul.

she had placed upwards, like an opening, resembles the progressive blossoming of a flower. This is a work that bears a musical reference in it as well. This interpretation is not for the sake of summarizing all kinds of geometrical repetition as reference to musical systems but her interest in the continuity within the systems and the referential positioning of bodies within her work that are in communication with each other appears as her personal proofs on her relation and aspiration to music.

Füsun Onur's progression from the spatiality problematization, then narrative challenging and the politization of current discussions of everyday life were all fed upon epistemological discussions about the definition of art. In her work Untitled, 1997 (Figure 18), [she had installed a sandstone replica of the original mosaic, positioning a flowering red plant between the stones].[115]This was suggestive of the possibility of art next to life, their co-existence and the alienation caused by their side-by-side existence. Also the bordered –in a golden frame- detail of reality, re-presented to the viewer with the greatest emphasis on its being 'borrowed' 'with a minor touch' and 're-placed' back in its place, reveals the duality of reality and its representation. It is important to state that her works were not dramatic though feminine and domestic. She is rather playful and humorous. Taking off from challenges directed at sculptural forms and conventions, she draws a path through which she forwards her artistic language as one that puts the content and the narrated, neatly-titled meaning or the message more and more obviously before the eyes of the viewer.

Finally, Füsun Onur's 'Dream of Old Furniture' dated 1985 (Figure 19) deserves close attention. So far, in Onur's works, the notions of time versus space relations; the problematization of the representation of reality and its possibility, the conventionalities within the disciplines of painting and sculpture, the changing role and position of the viewer and the art-work being substituted in meaning with its process of creation were experienced and discussed. In her work titled the "Nude" the fact that Füsun Onur was a woman, who was sensual about issues of gender and politics and interested in concepts of memory, past and nostalgia; this particular work is of great significance in its sense that it problematizes the issues of memory and nostalgia in a very autobiographical way,

[115] Brehm, Magrit *Füsun Onur: Aus Der Ferne So Nah* (Staatliche Kuntshalle Baden-Baden, 2001) 26

using ready-mades and constructing a dialogue; actively opening up a discussion that consciously invites the viewer to participate.

This work is the compositional rearrangement of ready-mades that are collected from the antique stores and from Onur's personal life. They are mainly objects of detail that are re-constructed in a womanly neatness in the shape of stations of remembrance. They are dependent story-tellers, narratives which call upon the viewer to participate in the parade of the past that reincarnates the past and expands to its final element, which is the viewer and arrive its final completion. They are liberated from their original functions for the sake of becoming a sole re-presentation of a single concept which can be the curtsying the tales of the possible, sometimes secretive hallucinations of the past. As they are returned back their visibility, they are re-alienated to extend that they were once unnoticed and now they are being highlighted. Their forgotten-ness, their desolation, their nature of being cast-aside are reversed and they had become the protagonists of their own fables; which would only be told if the viewer is willing to interact, participate and empathize.

This particular arrangement is romantic; it is womanly. Decorativeness and domesticity are daily professions of women; household objects are managed by women, they are recognized and reorganized according to the needs, demands and moods of women. The choice of objects within this work are obviously very womanly, they are like the silent witnesses of the life of a woman; especially those women who are hiding in aging households surrounded by objects that they had inherited from their mothers and grandmothers.

The idea of the 'new' coming as a shock rather than being welcomed; Füsun Onur's art was a lonely art in the beginning of the 1970s. Besides the small experimental attempts within the Academy, early 1970s were mainly dominant with the male abstract painters who from time to time put besides paint, daily materials onto their canvas. In Füsun Onur's article from the Hürriyet Gösteri Magazine - Sanat ve Edebiyat in 1985; she defines the invisibility surrounding her art as a fact due to the lack of art critics as she gives examples of western art world where the critic remains as

the creator of the art movement and the artist.[116] The famous example she also states is that of the Clement Greenberg and the Abstract Expressionism personified in Jackson Pollock's art. Besides this lack of constructive criticism, she also draws attention to the inter-relations of the artists of her time; where she regrets of not having a common language even to discuss art in social gatherings. According to her, what they know as the artists of the 1970s, are hidden as if they are shameful knowledge. Plus, there is the fear of being visible. Controversial enough, while their art remains as daring as it can be in terms of suggestions to new forms and representations; she defines their attitude as one that is captured in fear.

In her article, her frustration about the definition that is made of her art as the Turkish representative of Minimalist Art reveals itself. Clearly one can draw the conclusion that, despite the abstracted forms and concepts she deals with; she definitely is able to define her art in terms of 'what it is not.' In attempt to avoid the entitlement as the representative of Minimalist art, she claims to be beyond and defines her particular work in the exhibition of the 'Öncü Türk Sanatından Bir Kesit', July 1985, as a pre-design; drawing into her art the notion of process and time which definitely contrasts as the complete, finished, distant nature of minimalist art.

Her righteous critic addressing the lack of a constructive criticism that is directed at and guides the Turkish Contemporary Art is true in the sense that the intellectuals who wrote about art in Turkey in the 1970s and the early 1980s usually did not recognize or failed to identify and as a result could not defend the real individualistic and unique blossoms in Turkey.

[116] Onur, Füsun 'Görsel Sanatlarda Eleştiri Yokluğu' *Hürriyet Gösteri: Sanat ve Edebiyat - Plastik Sanatlar* (Istanbul: 1985) 43-45

6.2 Canan Beykal

Canan Beykal, born in 1948, graduated from the Istanbul Academy of Fine Arts (İDGSA) in 1972, participated for the first time in an exhibition in 1974, as part of Deneysel Grup Sergileri, Şehir Galerisi, İstanbul.[117] She was a student in Adnan Çoker's atelier and remembers those days and her attitude towards art as significantly different to extend that her teachers would criticize her that 'her mind was ahead of her hands" or that she would not be involved in any kind of empirical work.[118] Besides her identity as an artist, she pursued a career as an art critic as someone who had started writing as early as 1974. The title of her PhD thesis, "Kolaj'ın Yağlıboya Resminden Özerkliği" (1977), clearly shows her early position on the matter both as an artist and as a critic, whose main problem within artistic representation was her need to question the possibility and impossibility of painting as a discipline. Her artistic existence was based on her ambition to get even with the discipline of painting; to challenge the dynamics of canvas and paint and to settle with it on a different platform since she was seeking the possibility of the alternative. Though she was formally educated to become a painter, she clearly states that she had no belief in talent of the hand and she states that she had let go of the brush and the paint with her first personal exhibition called the İzm'ler, that was realized in 1981 in IGDSG.[119] (Figure 20)

Canan Beykal's 'İzm'ler' exhibition was the first time that the text, language was appearing as a representative element in an art work and this textuality is being introduced for the first time by a woman artist in Turkey.[120] The works that lacked the symbol, the object as well as the conventional imagery were complemented with the

[117] Private Session with Canan Beykal 8th of January, 2005; Suadiye, Istanbul

[118] Interview with Canan Beykal, conducted by Arzu Parten, 29.05.2003; *Canan Beykal – Dosya: 1981-2003*

[119] Private Session with Canan Beykal 8th of January, 2005; Suadiye, Istanbul

[120] Interview with Canan Beykal, conducted by Arzu Parten, 29.05.2003; *Canan Beykal – Dosya: 1981-2003*

voice of the artist; the viewer was welcomed and guided with the voice of the 'creator' through the works ('creations') and the complete area of exhibition was being filled as voice would leak into every corner of a spatiality. In her statement that she submitted later on, she would call this as 'Tüm seyir alanını ayaklarınızın altından çekip alıyorum.' This was clearly an attack to the conventional ways of viewing an art work. She was taking a stand against the fact that texts, even if they were exhibited in a gallery space were not imageries to be viewed like paintings, or had no aesthetic, visual, and formal value. Her main concern appears as her struggle to explain the relation between the meaning (the reality) and definition (the representation of reality.)[121]

Reading Beykal's this particular work in line with the definition of the conceptual art of the west, her interest in semiotics and the epistemology; and her furthering of the concept before the visuality; shows that despite the year was already 1981, Beykal's approach to art and her re-configuration of it appears as a natural emergence within its own dynamics. Looking at her background where she was raised as a well-read young mind, her personal search into the meaning of art and the possibility of the representation of reality within art would inevitably flower in her rejection of the conventional disciplines of painting and sculpture. She also states that this was the direct outcome of her critical approach towards the Academy education. She had figured out that the master-apprentice relations in the ateliers of the academy that were working in favor of the abstraction as a reference for mastership or aesthetics or unique style; were nothing but a big lie. Her comprehension of the arts would exceed that of the allowed extremes of abstraction or non-figuration because in her view those tendencies in art were surviving because of their serving the market and their decorativeness.[122]

In her own interpretation of herself as an artist, she barely sees any influence of her womanhood in her works; she hesitates to name a difference in her art and the art that was practiced by her contemporaries in the 1970s compared to that of the works by the male artists. She describes their art as more masculine than feminine, in terms of their oppositional nature against the formalities in artistic representation as well as the

[121] Private Session with Canan Beykal 8th of January, 2005; Suadiye, Istanbul

[122] Interview with Canan Beykal, conducted by Arzu Parten, 29.05.2003; *Canan Beykal – Dosya: 1981-2003*

current issues of the day. Also seen and discussed in the works of Füsun Onur previously, Beykal's works also bear a characteristic that is sharp, acute and loud in terms of their claims. Nevertheless, her configuration of the contexts she was interested in such as the child-deaths, (İsimsiz (Ölüm Tutanakları), 1988, Figure 21) or writers who committed suicide, (Texttual and Kara Kutu, 1990, Figure 22) or human rights in general (Savunma Önlemi, 1991, Figure 23) show her romantic tendencies in terms of realizing an art that was sensual, reactionary against the current issues the society was dealing or had to deal with. Her identity as a woman, despite the fact that she does not openly attend to it as a problematic within her artistic production, surfaces in this kind of idealism where she does not take shelter in direct slogans or messages or any dramatizations, but rather lays the issues down from a critical perspective 'the way they are', in a way untouched only maybe framed for the sake of making it visible, first to herself.

She describes her attitude as a philosophical one, through which she would be approaching arts from a conceptual point of view rather than an aesthetic view, as a result of which she would not be able to find place for decorous elements within her art.

> […despite what we have been thought, I had became aware of the fact that just like in philosophy, the thing to transform the form, especially in arts and painting; would have to be the 'reality'; the 'truth' itself. If what you mean by idealism is its philosophical meaning, of course it is inevitable to link it with conceptuality; because what makes the art of painting a mental activity is this problem of the truth itself. As the art of painting attempts to achieve the ultimate formal expression of the truth itself; it is forced to realize this transformation through a series of mental transformations. So, long before conceptual art was defined as it had been in the west; the discipline of art was a philosophical question for me which had a conceptual basis underneath.][123]

After the lexicon that she had made out of wallpaper (given to her by Şadi Çalık) on which she wrote words with tampon, her works continued to include texts and utterances. She describes this adventure in the catalogue of the Pi Artworks exhibition of June 1999 as her transformation of the text and the utterance into objects to be 'viewed' (bearing in its nature their opposition against being viewed as a problematization) and from then on, she states that she had been acknowledging the

[123] Private Session with Canan Beykal 8th of January, 2005; Suadiye, Istanbul

word and the text as plastic elements of art. In reply to the criticisms about her art claiming that her works were the bankruptcy of art; she points out her consistency in terms of her theoretical framework on which her art was based since the beginning and sarcastically states that [obviously, art had not been harmed by her intentions, not at all.][124]

Canan Beykal's art had been having recourse to the power of sarcasm as well. In her work called 8 Parçalık 1 Bütün, in 1985, (Figure 24) was sarcastic as well as critical in its sense to open up the discussion on the collector's attitude within the museum's system. She explains her work as an attempt to make the museum's approach to the art work visible. She states that for the museums to run smoothly the archiving of the material is crucial and for that matter, all art works in a museum need to be numbered and classified. As a result of this systematic approach, the visuality of the art work loses its significance and the art work becomes an entry in the archive whose security, preservation and existence can only be sustained through the number it is associated with. The museum's systematic approach to the art works can be considered as a de-aesthetization of arts; as if the museums are no longer bound to perceive them as pieces of art but rather as simple but expensive, valuable objects.

This approach immediately proves that the art work is given two faces of reality; while one appears as its relation to its viewer to the other is constituted in accordance with the rules of the system that guarantees the art work a long life. For the museum, this second face that the art work has gained as a result of its being collected becomes more important once it enters the museum; it is nothing but a registration number that is written on the back of its frame and by making this visible Beykal creates yet another work that is both critical, sarcastic but above all challenging. Her attitude in terms of her continuous attempt to open the conventional understandings that define, run, systematize, categorize the arts to discussion can be evaluated her as an artist who was dealing with the politics within art.

Besides her being political in her statements criticizing the current socio-political issues of the day; her art being political was beyond her social awareness and

[124] *Yazı Sanat: 1999 > pi artworks: 8 Mayıs > 15 Haziran 1999 > pi artworks*, pg.7

involvement. Her art was also political in the sense that it was argumentative and suggestive; pin-pointing the then-virgin aspects of art in Turkey that had not been brought into discussion at the level of a relation between the public viewer and the art work itself. Her attempt to create a dialogue through her works can be considered as another aspect besides her direct politically sided opposition revealed as the subject matter of her art, what made her art political. For reference that her work is political in terms of the choices of subject matter, Susan N. Platt states that:

> Canan Beykal takes on political issues more obviously. A 1994 installation at the Atatürk Library in Istanbul, Whoever Has Silence on His Lips, Speaks with His Fingertips, addresses censorship and book burning in Nazi Germany, but it also indirectly makes reference to the situation in Turkey during the politically chaotic 1960s and 1970s. The artist herself was interrogated for signing a petition in the late 1960s. In Beykal's view, speaking with your fingertips is a useless exercise – it is like not speaking at all.[125]

[125] Platt, Susan N.; 'Public Politics and Domestic Rituals: Contemporary Art by Women in Turkey, 1980 – 2000'

In her work titled as Avant Garde, in 1986, exhibited in the Öncü Türk Sanatından Bir Kesit of 1986; (Figure 25) was bearing the humor and sarcasm in its context as well. By making fun of the historical categorization of some movements in art, as well as the title of this particular exhibition as being Avant-Garde, she was asking what it really meant or how much it mattered what it meant to be the pioneer, the first, the advanced in art. As she had stated before, her problematization of the arts need not to have any attributes in terms of an adjective, or a classification; as a result, it was first herself who found it funny that she was consciously being a part of an exhibition that was defining itself as the avant-garde of the Turkish arts.[126] This particular work was also an open invitation for the viewer to participate in the current discussions of what was Avant-Garde or if an Avant-Garde was possible in arts. It was an autonomous question in need of a thoroughly discussion. Her material was the questions directed at her art and she was re-directing the same question by positioning herself as an artist and as an individual who had the right to ask the same question; in a way eliminating the attack of the critics by participating in the discussion rather than taking a defensive position against the criticisms.

As an artist who was seeking nakedness, a form that would be free of nonessentials and affectations in her art; was trying to achieve an art that would have the same simplistic function that of the life, the nature itself had. Laying down the discussions, the issues and the questions that the life and nature was demanding to be asked and to be revealed in the form of an art work, she was inevitably never indifferent to what was happening around her. Her denial of the existence of a market for arts, the economic aspect of art-making and the relations of purchasing; she was proposing the ready-made as the indication of social behavior; what was existing in the daily life would therefore find its place in the artistic representation. Objects in her works would then appear as documentations of their own existence; textuality was her tool to explain or seek to explain the reason-to-be of those objects and their meanings. By proving the existence and the reality of life surrounding her, trying to capture the zeitgeist, she was in a way, proving her own existence.[127]

---

[126] Atakan, Nancy '*Arayışlar – Resim ve Heykele Alternatifler'* (downloaded from http://212.58.11.161/mag/may03/kavsan052.asp on 5th of August 2005) 59.
[127] Atakan, Nancy *'Arayışlar – Resim ve Heykele Alternatifler'* (downloaded from http://212.58.11.161/mag/may03/kavsan052.asp on 5th of August 2005) 58

In her work titled 11 Düzeltme, 1987 (Figure 26), she once again composes a satire about the conventions that dominate the authority-bearers of arts; which is in the case the Academy. This work is consisting of texts that are taken from her own thesis, which could not be published due to its typing mistakes and she actually at the end abandoned her decision to publish it because it was funny for her, too funny to even bother.[128] She was too tired to correct the whole text and she transformed this procedural detail that would enable academic recognition into an art work, maybe in order to reveal the flows within the system of the Academy. I personally evaluate this work as a sincere and personal statement; in a way a kind of performance that draws attention to the individual details of an artist who is also a woman of thought; in this case where the thought is chained or prevented from 'printed' (in that sense distributed or publicized) because of formal procedures or in other words because of the correct shape it was allowed to be presented. This can also be read as the problematization of the representation of thought, the idea or the concept in the form of letters.

Starting with the 1990s of the A,B,C,D exhibitions; her two-dimensional and sometimes dimension-less works once again go back to invade the spatiality of the gallery place trying to avoid the illusionary, temporary aspect of the two-dimensional representation, through the integration of three dimensional ready-mades as well as sound-recordings into her art. Her works in these particular exhibitions appear as puzzles where the viewer has to attend to the case that is being discussed within the suggestive-ness of the art work and has to participate in reading into the hints she proposes.[129] In her work titled as the Texttual and Karakutular, she uses words and texts as her material but this time from the writers like Plath, Zweig, Yesenin and Mayakovski who had committed suicide and complemented these black-boxed texts with the voices of Hitler, Marinetti and Goebbels in an attempt to create a collage of destruction. Her playfulness in terms of re-configuring the grammar of the words text-tual appears as an attempt to make visible her announcement of the text as the new canvas in visual arts.

---

[128] Interview with Canan Beykal, conducted by Arzu Parten, 29.05.2003; *Canan Beykal – Dosya: 1981-2003*

[129] Ibid.

Her work exhibited in the 10 Sanatçı 10 İş: C exhibition, titled as "Herşey, Hiçbirşey, Birşey" (Figure 27), can be evaluated as a proposition of a conceptual understanding of the co-existence of the corporeality of bodily things as well as the boundaries of rigid definitions about the reality. Personally what I read in this particular work is her never ending dilemma about the possibility and the impossibility of the representation of reality; referring to a 'thing' as both a 'nothing' and 'everything'; suggesting a multi-perspective towards existence and its possibility of being perceived, proved or stated. While questioning this possibility of perception and expression; she represents this dilemma as a concept with an inner rhythm like that of the 'order of things' despite their complications. Repetition, in the sense of creating a pattern maybe for the sake of emphasizing her statement, is a method of creation for Beykal in many of her works. She creates series, maybe for an attempt to eliminate the loneliness or the fragility of her works as she describes her art to be; so that the dialogue, the conversation that she would propose through her works, would live on at least through its own interrelated-ness.

Canan Beykal is one of the significant women artists of the period in terms of her self-discovery of the need for conceptuality in artistic representation. Her definition of the arts, as art had already included in its nature the urge to flood out of the canvas and would demand to leak into all spatiality available; was the example of a self-configured rupture in visual language. The question that this thesis is proposing that if one can refer to this unfolding of three-dimensional arts in Turkey as a sudden intervention or in other words a rupture, Canan Beykal's personal history proves the relevance of the question. Despite the late emergence of conceptuality in arts in Turkey compared to that of the west; the art of Canan Beykal, Ayşe Erkmen and Füsun Onur are the breaking points of the irreversible transformation in arts in Turkey. Canan Beykal was one of the artists, who continue to produce her art in the same manner, though today Canan Beykal shows tendencies to further de-construct the physical elements in art rather than to compose and construct any physicality[130]; who succeeded to sustain the rupture she had achieved in her own visual language.

[130] Private Session with Canan Beykal 8th of January, 2005; Suadiye, Istanbul

6.3 Ayşe Erkmen

Born in 1949, Ayşe Erkmen graduated from the Mimar Sinan University, Academy of the Fine Arts, from the discipline of sculpture in 1970. Despite her background in sculpture, she had been producing works of art that would exceed the potential and allowance of sculpting. Nevertheless, she claims herself as a sculptress still and acknowledges her works that are mainly dealing with the issues of time and space as sculptures.[131]

Ayşe Erkmen had started her adventure in seeking the alternative in artistic representation through her work that she had submitted to the 1981, 3. Yeni Eğilimler Sergisi. In this particular work, she had washed clean 100 pieces of stone that she had found in nature; painted them with red, yellow, blue and red stripes and placed them in between the works of other artists, which were both inside and outside the gallery. In this particular work, Ayşe Erkmen asks the question of what exactly is competent enough to become an art work; by placing the ordinary elements of daily life, things that are not anymore recognized by the individuals as they are alienated from the actual reality of the world as they being more and more exposed to the simulated realities through the illusionary representation of truth that the mass media offers; she attempts to unveil the artificial rituals of indirect relations between men and the objects surrounding him. As Semih Kaplanoğlu suggests, Ayşe Erkmen's art was a rejection of the systematization of the jungle or was a conscious decision not to participate in this vicious cycle of consumption.[132]

As truth lies before the eyes of the artist and any individual, as insensible, deprived by instant perception and heavily camouflaged by habits; to re-discover the

[131] Private Session with Ayşe Erkmen, (Cihangir, Istanbul: 02.12.2005)

[132] Kaplanoğlu, Semih *Ayşe Erkmen*, (Istanbul: Ada Yayınları, 1990) 5.

reality from where it is hidden; Ayşe Erkmen materializes her perspective as she converts the intellect into an art-creating phenomenon. Kaplanoğlu states that her approach resembles that of an archaeologist where all areas in which the nature and the mankind co-exist, Ayşe Erkmen attempts to re-configure. Her allocation of the ordinary things, like that of those stones brought back into the gallery; can be considered as an attempt to put them back into their places through her method of abstracting them for the purpose of attaining them visibility.

> She creates concepts which merge into one another, linking the created with the innate; the truth with the alternative self-engendered truth behind it; the rational with the irrational; the orthodox with the unorthodox; the exhibition hall with the outside world. She does this in the mind, in space, in the selection of materials, in dimensions and in meanings.[133]

Her significance for the question that this thesis is proposing lies at the heart of her works that problematize the notion of time and space. Ayşe Erkmen is another artist, who had not chosen the figurative expression in her artistic representation. She was another artist who had reduced the context to the concept deprived of figures and conventional ways of depiction. In her works the experience of having lived is represented in its most indirect manner, in that sense converging to the works of Füsun Onur[134]; where both artists escape direct-ness but hint the organic nature of the concepts that proves their involvement in or reference from life. This resemblance in between the works of these two artists can also be proved in Kaplanoğlu's description of Erkmen's unique style:

> Since she does not dramatize or stage her concepts, but on the contrary refines them down to seek their essence and their meaning rather than their semantics, her works are not ostentatious. They are pure. Naturally this attitude reflects on her use of the material. She is satisfied with minor retouching. At most she frames her material. This imposition is prompted not so much by plastic considerations as by a concern to underscore the concept created in accordance with the object's essence and implications.[135]

---

[133] Ibid. 6

[134] Atagök, Tomur 'Kadın ve Sanat' Cumhuriyet'ten Günümüze Kadın Sanatçılar ed. Selmin Kangal and Zehra Erkün (Istanbul: TC Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1993) pg. 21

[135] Kaplanoğlu, Semih *Ayşe Erkmen*, (Istanbul: Ada Yayınları, 1990) 7.

Going back to Ayşe Erkmen's relation with time and space and the co-existence of these two problematics in her works, her work titled as Uyumlu Çizgiler, in 1985; (Figure 28) shows her interest in repetition and translation of rhythm and harmony in architecture and in nature. In this particular work, Ayşe Erkmen, follows the directions that the spatiality she is working in gives her and configures her art within the demands of the locality. This work captures the flow of time as it creates duration in its nature that can be followed and witnessed by the viewer as well. In this work, she has borrowed architectural elements of the gallery space and has repeated them in her geometric representation that works as a juxtaposition of the exhibition area onto the art work itself.

She uses the spatiality that her work will be exhibited as the frame of a canvas painting and through these pre-defined boundaries of its architectural frame she attempts to fit in the space's own time and dimensions. This is again her attempt to bring back the reality of the nature, in this sense its balance, back to the mimetic nature of arts. Despite the dilemma that arts can never reach a perfected mimesis; burying the artistic representation of reality in accordance with the demands and needs of the reality itself, in a way making it less obvious, making it a part of the actual whole; she attempts to escapes this impossibility by accepting and working within its restrictions.

As she herself also points out, her works bear in their nature the belief that the art work has its own life span and requires to be represented in the visible form of a process. In one of her earliest works that is titled as Adsız, in 1980 (Figure 29), she places metal plates vertically and horizontally on the ground of an external space, dividing the ownerless, unclaimed territory of the ordinary world as if she is suggesting the existence of invisible divisions of space whose distribution and particularization happen in time and in its order. This highly metaphorical reading of the work is for the sake of drawing attention to her cutting, covering, unveiling and unfolding nature of the spatiality in its relation to reality. The metal plates in this work are placed in their order to leakage; as the space is once built up, it will expand, it will be allocated and re-allocated and the actual whole of its complete entity will only be completed by the experience of the viewer who can not escape his relation with time and space.

> She attributes special status to time, which occupies an important place in her art. Whether it be the potential energy of number of series or the eternal motion created in the space/time dimension by interaction between parts, the forward or backward motion of time is continually being questioned. The spectator is included in the interrogation because from the moment he encounters the work and comes into its orbit he indirectly becomes a subject reiterating the logic and dynamics of the work and experiencing the process of the concept.[136]

Her work titled as K-A-İ-D-E dating back to 1983 (Figure 30); is an autonomous structure, which resembles a plinth without its subject on top; announces its independent existence as a structure on its own. Once again, she attempts to unveil the essence in the concept by only laying down the structure in its true form; as if she is only picking the necessary object that would perfectly represent her ideal conceptualization of the work and brings it forth to the eye of the viewer and as an artist stopping right where she has re-located the object.

In her work in 1985, titled as Tasarlanmış Düzenlemeler (Figure 31) she draws attention to the unknown history of compositions that are experienced in our daily lives. In this series of eight photographs; she shows the co-existence, the coming together of different materials and objects and the indifference that the viewer would grow in front of these visual combinations just because they would be happening on the street. This work is interesting in its challenging nature as it opens up a discussion about the territory and content of the art work. As she also states; it is big mockery to declare the artist as the God-like authority in the establishment of arts.[137] This work is an attempt to discuss this particular issue as the viewer would inevitably wonder about the difference between the visualities of daily life and the chosen imagery of the artist that is laid down in the gallery space and become an art work.

In her work called Zamanla, dating 1949 (Figure 32), Erkmen once again harmonizes with the spatiality she is to create into, which is in this case the nature of the concept of 'art exhibition'. This particular work is one perfect example in terms of how she relates to the architecture, the conceptuality already configured for the space in question, the position of the viewer, and the concept of memory in terms of how it is

[136] Kaplanoğlu, Semih *Ayşe Erkmen*, (Istanbul: Ada Yayınları, 1990) 11.

[137] Private Session with Ayşe Erkmen, (Cihangir, Istanbul: 02.12.2005)

constructed, changed and shared and to the actual flow of time. By placing white clean sheets of paper in the form of a trail that directs the viewer from where to approach the art work and in that sense invites him / her as well; she creates an extension within her work that reaches and embraces the participation of the viewer as well.

The colored dust-paint that is scattered around these sheets of paper, works as the assistants who will help the viewer and the art work to exchange their marks. As the viewers would leave their footsteps on the white sheets of paper, they would participate in the evolution and the transformation of the art work, attending to its unique life and span and witnessing its existence. What awaits the viewer at the end of this trail is the calendar that shows the timeline of the open days of the exhibition. As each viewer will leave his or her own trace on the surface of this art work; the art work will escape its solidarity and will have evidence to prove its integration with its viewer at the end of its life time. This particular work is a very clever representation in terms of the conceptualization of the role of the viewer and the duration of an art work.

This kind of process-creating, dialogue-enabling works of art are very frequently observed in Ayşe Erkmen's personal history as an artist. In her work dating back to 1988, titled as Karşılaştırmalar (Figure 33); she has placed numbers on the windows of the gallery space allowing them to be viewed both from within the exhibition area and from outside. Numbers, in their nature, have the tendency to be followed in the exact same manner or order by everyone; because they are learned, known, well-taught, memorized tools for organizing life. Because of the two-faced representational nature of this particular work, the people to pass outside the gallery who have no intentions of acknowledging what they see on the windows as works of art would have a different comprehension of this composition than that of the viewers inside the gallery who would be consciously looking to see a work of art. Ayşe Erkmen asks the question of the difference between the external and internal apprehension of the systems by configuring such a work.

In her other works, like that of the Burası ve Orası, 1989 (Figure 34), Geçmişe Tören, 1989 (Figure 35), Aslında Aynı, 1990 and Bir Yer, 1992 (Figure 36), once can see traces of similar discussions that she has been suggesting to be opened up. Amongst these works, Burası ve Orası and Geçmişe Tören hint her relation and her curiosity in

trying to formulate the notion of the past and memory without being nostalgic or dramatic. Her work called Bir Yer, is significantly different in its attempt to destroy, to correct or to re-link the divided spaces within a spatiality.

6.4 Gülsün Karamustafa

Gülsün Karamustafa was one of the pioneering artists of the Yeni Eğilimler exhibitions. In an interview that was conducted in 1985, Zeynep Avcı asks the artist to define her works from a surprisingly non-judgmental perspective. As an artist who has been exhibiting since 1978, she explains her artistic quest as one that arrives at the objects themselves or in other words the physical reality as it is laid before our perception in our daily lives. Dealing with the tensions created by the contrast of the rural and the urban state, her works always had references to or celebrations about the sub-cultural identities or domestic rituals. She defines her art as one in which she re-presents to the viewer the ordinary daily objects after her contribution to their beings in the form of re-interpretation and shaping them to become 'her art'.

She explains this as due to the urge to draw attention to these objects. While explaining her art she refrains from concluding to attend the responsibility of explaining her art as the artist; despite the risk of being misunderstood or not being understood at all. She stands in favor of asking questions rather than explaining the answers. She believes in the creation of a question within the mind of the viewer - and in that sense in the non-satisfaction of the viewer as the art work is not that easy to grasp in an instant – which stands as a complimentary element of the work itself.

This kind of positioning of the viewer, when thinking of the roles attributed to the Turkish Art viewers stands out as a new approach, a new edition. The idea of conceptualism was introduced to the people reading this article as she was suggesting that the viewer was a part of the process and the concept was there not to be explained but to be self-revealing as naturally as it can be. As Wittgenstein would suggest, 'what can be shown, can not be said' or as he states in another of his propositions; the general

form of a proposition, may it be in art or in philosophy can only formulated like this: *This is the way things stand.*[138]

Gülsün Karamustafa's conception; in terms of her distance with the inner dynamics of her art as she withdraws from forming direct relations with the viewers on the basis of the core concept; hints that she prefers to leave the dialogue between the viewer and the art work untouched, so un-directed and un-biased. The natural flow of the conceptuality travels from the artist's mind to that of the work and then to the viewer's perception and is re-shaped in every phase; which is a small simulation of how the perceptual behavioral rules of the world work within; which is exactly *the way the things stand.*

Karamustafa, as Platt suggests, maybe because of her father who was a [prominent radio personality], can not escape the influence of the weird dynamics of the interlacing cultural layers of Turkish society; appearing in a rather Pop style in her works.[139] Due to her interest in culture in this sense; she was mainly dealing with kitsch and the constructed cultures of urban minorities like the migrants or the middle-class or the housewives. Her art stands political in that sense even though she does not speak out large scale, national wide issues but rather concentrates on individual politics; like traumas, depression, alienation and depravation.

Interesting in terms of her political background, Platt states that she has a [dark side to her story.][140] From 1970 to 1986 she was deprived of her right to leave the country because of her alleged political activities. This could be the reason why she has the tendency to address the invisibility of the womanhood of the women in a critical manner in her works. As a politically re-situated individual (as she is denied of her right to travel is differentiated from other citizens in that sense) because of her opinion; she may be analyzed as an identity who is twice the minority of the other women artists in question. The powerful dialogue hidden in her art; through which she is attempting to

[138] Wittgenstein, Ludwig; Tractatus; Propositions 4.1212 & 4.5

[139] Platt, Susan N.; 'Public Politics and Domestic Rituals: Contemporary Art by Women in Turkey, 1980 – 2000'

[140] Platt, Susan N.; 'Public Politics and Domestic Rituals: Contemporary Art by Women in Turkey, 1980 – 2000'

communicate with the in-house, in that sense trapped domesticated identity of the women; she reveals the possibility of politicization of the womanly production. The language of the hand-made crafts; the narratives that are configured by women embedded in this secret art works; combines with aggression and the ultimate eager to make visible of the woman's denied role in terms of having an opinion.

Her work stands obvious and romantic when compared to her contemporaries. Despite the aggression she can not hide behind conceptualism; the nature of her work, as she chooses her material from the traditional Turkish Arts; her problematic with the past remains within the feeling of longing rather than a quest for re-positioning the concept of the past within the present.

In her work called "Sıradan Bir Aşk Halısı", dated 1985 (Figure 37); which is a textile collage; one can see the traces of her usage of kitsch notion of the hand-woven identity of the Turkish Carpets; which has come to be defined as the diaries of the teenage girls who chose themselves these carpets as the venue for their self-expression. The design of the carpet in Karamustafa's work, is a de-constructed, fragmented totality; consisting of vertical and dark cleavages. As the work could also be read as the representation of a yet immature sexual identity, which can not escape its history of conservatism that provides the woman the safest environment to exist; the easily attainable, latest fashion of sexuality and its symbols, like the leopard-skin causes both the ritualistic traditions of the Turkish women as well as their attempt to adapt to the contemporary world to co-exist on the same platform. The colored representation of this work creates the effect of a tragic disharmony as well as the indifference that is present according to this status-less sexual identity of the women.

In one of her works, called the Monument, dated to 1988 (Figure 38) composed of various media; she places a plexi-glass bell jar with twin dresses in colors of pink and blue to be placed in it, situated on plastic grass. Lighting the composition from within, the composition stands on the emptied rectangular space in the middle of the red carpet that covers the ground of the whole room. In her words:

> "Since I saw the small room in Hareket Kiosk, I have been thinking about how joyously my plastic grass would meet with the space in the middle of the rug

> which is especially woven this room. The Joy of this meeting with the rug which has been added to this environment and the plastic grass in not found in the other elements. This is equally important for me. I have found that spot I was looking for to erect "Monument 88". The man at the shop where I bought these dresses told me how happy I would make 'those' little girls.[141]

She was re-decorating the place with her womanly insight, harmonizing with the volume of the room by suggesting the placement of dresses of children, as if assigning an age for that space, creating a history; causing the viewer to remind of a constructed, fiction story that you have entered a little girl's room – or a grown-up woman's room who was once a little girl, keeping her childhood trapped in a lighted, romantic, self-made statue on green grass, surrounded by red carpet. She traps them into a lighted bell jar, which reminds of Sylvia Plath's novel The Bell Jar; sad in that sense. This particular work is poetic in its sense that it stands as the statue, the physicality of one's imagination and memories of childhood. It is like a simulation of remembrance, traumatic as if it hides its own complicated connotations that every viewer is free to associate them with their own stories. It is naïve, lyrical and sincere; not as typically Turkish as her other works, though.

As Sezer Tansuğ also suggests her search within the limitations of the figuration and the canvas was towards the representation of the popular culture[142] whose subject matter was the woman. Arabesque was in that sense, one perfect and uncanny sub-culture within the Turkish society, which was a direct result of the cultural clash that was being experienced in the cities caused by the confrontation of the rural and the urban. An example to this could be her work called the Arabesk Kompozisyon. In this work, her figuration exceeds the conventional representation of the woman and the man and once again the concept of the work as the story behind the composition stands out. As if there is a story being told, the man and the woman in the painting seem as the two actors of a sad love story.

---

[141] Karamustafa, Gülsün Exhibition Catalogue 1988 (Garanti Platform Archives)

[142] Tansug, Sezer 'Dünyaya Açılmanın Yeni Bir Aşaması' *Çağdaş Türk Sanatı* (Istanbul: Remzi Kitabevi A.Ş., 2003), 303.

Reminding the viewer of the scene from a bridal chamber, where the ritual elements specific to the occasion like the quilts from the brides dowry; saved or made only for that night stand as an obstacle between the bride and the groom; they tend to be distancing away. The pressure of the sociologically exaggerated notions like the first-night phenomenon wiping out the nature of the sexual identities of the man and the women, questions the concept of love, sexual intercourse and how few visible representations these have in the daily social life. Arabesque to the extend that this kind of romance is out-fashioned and lame; this piece also challenges the existence of the culture of arabesque, which remains to be valid as a life style for a considerable crowd. What one part of the society defines arabesque as, stands just on the contrary of how the real inhabitants of this culture perceive it. In that sense, titling the work as the Arabesque Composition; Karamustafa draws in the discussion of this sociological rupture of cultures.

In her series of paintings called the Promised Paintings (Figure 39, Figure 40, Figure 41) she once again deals with her most favored issue of 'being a woman'. She depicts the role of the woman in a society, in a family or in a crowd as one that is expected not to see, not to talk. The woman figure is depicted with traditional accessories and appropriate colors of the culture as Turkish ordinary woman of any class would look like. A similar conceptualization of the figure, role and meaning of woman, especially Turkish woman, can be found in another series that she had made in 1975 and 1976, with titles Kıymatlı Gelin (Figure 42), Örtülü Medeniyet (Figure 43) and Kapıcı Dairesi (Figure 44). The women are depicted almost expression-less in the sense that they have no opinion, no idea, no opposition, no question.

They appear as they have always belonged to the overly-decorated environment they live in; they appear as they are another object within that constructed model of a house. One of them is a bride, waiting for the groom, surrounded by her dowry; a woman who has long before accepted a pre-constructed role and a pre-defined future; she is waiting to be taken. In the next painting (actually they are made with mixed media applied onto the canvas), the woman is knitting lace and she is surrounded, almost drowned by lace; that is the job or the only function she is assigned to. In the last painting, the woman is the wife of a superintendent; an invented profession as migration was causing crowds to flow into the city, hoping to escalate their economic power.

With all the domestic talents they had which were all about the homely activities; so they turned them into a profession. They started living in small houses and accepted to be lowest class segment within the small simulation of life that was going on in an urban apartment. They would decorate those very small flats as if they were still living in a village; they would carry on their own rituals. In this particular figuration, different than the other two, the woman is not seated, she is surrounded by her children; the space around her is too small for her and her children. She is more alert compared to the other women; she must have had a glimpse of the outside world.

In her work titled Praying Carpet with Elvis, dated 1986 (Figure 45); she has woven the cult imagery of Pop Culture, which was not only known in west but also in Turkey, almost cloned in the outfit and style of the highly praised popular icon of Turkish music, Erol Büyükburç. She has woven Elvis images in the form of cult carpet,

a very traditional Turkish hand-craft. She combines the traditional motifs with current cultural details that are as modern, as consumerist, as commercial as they can be. In these works, one can sense Warhol-like and even Duchamp-like de-mystification of fast-consumed and much-adored figures of popular cultures; people that have turned into commodities; just like Elvis and then Jesus Christ. In her work titled, Double Jesus and the Baby Antelope, dated 1989 (Figure 46); she presents a leopard patterned blanket that seems like the simulation of hell and heaven. Sarcastically enough, Karamustafa has depicted Jesus carrying sheep; the holy animal of Islam that is destined to be sacrificed for the love of God.

Her large scaled, monumental work titled Double Reality (Çifte Hakikat, 1988, Figure 47) is a very direct problematization and politicization of the conflicting roles of being a man and a woman, how their roles integrate or surpass into each other's social niches. Plus, this particular work can also be read as a connotation of the transvestites; who were becoming a more visible reality in the Turkish society. This work is a male plastic model which does not have one of his arms, dressed in a woman's dress that resembles a night gown. S/he is surrounded by nested two cubic constructions, one green; one red. Her direct-ness and loud-ness in terms of her way of conveying the message she is determined to deliver, she invades the conceptualization of the issue that is to be realized by the viewer.

She is political; she chooses objects that are from a feminine world, with a lot of connotations to womanhood; she treats them like toys to play around with; she is very fond of expressionist colors; uses symmetry or series to make her story visible and she re-configures the 'concept' of woman. In her conceptualization of the Turkish feminity, she emphasizes the invisibility and the reverses it. She is sharp, acute and manly aggressive in her statements but she reveals the fragility within her true nature as she can fails to obey it. Her works are hand-crafted, serves the eye, problematize the owner of the gaze, attempting to alter the system that she believes is trapping the women. In her work called 24 Saat için Birer Mask, dated 1990 (Figure 48) is like a mockery of the programmed routine of a woman's emotions. Most of the time only associated with loud laughs or capricious cries, the toy-like faces of the women are wired to show those pre-programmed feelings. In her work titled Plastik Kurdeleli Onbir Ayna, dating 1990 (Figure 49), she once again patterns her message. The mirrors are directed at the viewer

and what is inside the circle of these mirrored plates is left alone in the darkness, the blindness of the back of the mirrors.

In 1992, she constructs this expansive spatiality which titles as Mystic Transport; (Figure 50) her symmetry, her poetic choice of womanly labor objects is once again re-presented. In general, the nature of her works reveals the most significant odor of being a woman compared to the other artists that have been subjected to the discussion of this thesis. Not only they are feminine in terms of their material, in terms of their compositional arrangement but they are also very directly and very subjectively, narrate the story of being a woman.

Her visualization of the concept of womanhood and bringing it back to the artistic stage of the representation of the reality, she refers to the banality of popular culture and the invisibility of the women stuck in between the defined social classes. Her problematization of the arabesque culture falls right in its place in that sense. It was a culture that was forcefully invented, as a result of the segment of the society who was left with no accepted identity and no space to socially practice their existence. They had to re-create their own music, their own rules and rituals; just like Karamustafa has invented her art as she could not escape the disturbing unnoticed, cornered reality of the denial of women as a minority.

6.5 Nur Koçak

For the last part of this thesis, two other women artists of the period will be given closer attention for closure. Nur Koçak's attitude towards the re-representation of reality was also an attempt for breaking through the conventions of art; this time in terms of subject-matter and perfection of figuration. Just like taking a photograph, she attempts to grasp the instantaneous, perfectly textured moment of the reality. As 1970s were the years that visual image processing was becoming advanced, art movements like new realism or photo-realism were being practiced. The reflections of these movements in the Turkish art correspond to the same period when the young Turkish artists were becoming more exposed to the art of the west. Nur Koçak was one of the leading artists who exported the photo-realism to Turkey. Her works that are mostly figures of naked women, or women in their underwear, bikinis and also figurations of the fast-consuming goods that are mainly used by women; lipsticks, fashion magazines, etc.

Despite the fact that this kind of an approach is alien to the artistic representation that is habitually practiced in Turkey, the reason why movements like photo-realism that was pursued by artists like Nur Koçak was the accelerated urbanization and the fast forwarded progress of liberal economy in Turkey. Sense of humor combined with precise observation resulting in criticism of the unbalanced transformation of the cultural environment in Turkey meets the unique representation of reality in Nur Koçak's photo-realism starting with her work titled the Vivre, dating 1974 (Figure 51). Her problematization of the concept of womanhood, especially in the widely consumed imagery of women as massively selling visuality in commercials of commodities, cosmetics and all kinds of womanly products was for the first time being represented as a subject-matter in art. She explains about her first work as the turning point of her artistic career:

> Parfüm şişesinin resmi olan 'Fetiş Nesneler 1'I 1974'te yapmıştım. Kendi 'milad'ım kabul ediyorum o resmi. Foto-gerçekçiliği, yani fotoğrafı kaynak olarak alıp püskürtme tabancasıyla akrilik boya kullanarak yaptığım resimlerin ilki çünkü.[143]

In her other works as previously described, she mainly uses images of half-naked women. Examples to these can be her 'Nesne Kadınlar' series, which appears as a protesto against the cheap consumption of the woman-objectified (Figure 52). Her work is also lyrical, narrative and aggressively political. She might seem not to be dealing with the spatiality dimension of conceptualization of reality in artistic representation, or challenging the form to the extend that Füsun Onur, Ayşe Erkmen and Canan Beykal problematize or reform within; she creates a rupture that is earlier and different than the figurative works or works made with daily objects by these three artists above; she ruptures the content.

She directly reaches out to the viewer and states her case through the mental power, the beholder of the moment of decision that lies in the control of the photographic click. Her clear imagery in a photographically perfectionist style draws reference from the brightness and transparency of clean colors. She had mostly worked

[143] Antmen, Ahu 'Türk sanatında yeni arayışlar (1960-1980)' *Phd Thesis*, submitted to Mimar Sinan University, Academy of Fine Arts; advisor : Prof. Dr. Semra Germaner, 2005, quoting Nur Koçak, pg. 164.

with high scale canvases; magnifying the details of her compositions. Her works show evidence of her patience, neatness and sensuality; they bear the obvious traces of feelings of anger, misery, desperation, loneliness, curiosity and etc. In her exaggerated imagery of the women or women's bodily details, she problematizes the fetishism of the female body. They are identity-less, dully cloned, resemble the models in a shop-window but they are powerful in their function of visualizing the invisibility of the high-consumption or commercialization of the feminine beauty. (Figure 53, Figure 54, Figure 55)

CONCLUSION

In order to create a parallel platform where it would be possible to bring the Turkish Non-Canvas Art into discussion in accordance with the dynamics of the Western Conceptual Art; the critical issues that needed to be addressed individually had so far in this thesis been given close attention. The claim after all, surfaces as the suggestion that the way that the Conceptual Art had paved for the future of the art and the artists was a rare opportunity, stands as an already constructed suitable model for the Turkish artists of the 1970s and 1980s to import and apply; as systems of thought and alternative possibilities and also as a natural unfolding in itself that would inevitably arise in the arena of the Turkish art as the next possible method of artistic expression when the conventional ways of art-making were being exhausted as times were changing.

The definition of the conceptual art in the west was mainly significant in its re-positioning of the process of the art-making as one that was prioritizing the idea before the form. As the initiator, the machine that caused and mentored the process of creating an art work; the idea or in other words the concept became a representative element in art overruling the contradiction that it was absolute whereas an art work demanded physicality to be experienced. This collision enabled discussions about the dynamics of art itself to be brought up as subject-matters and the role of the material shifted to being a complementary medium whose eligibility for becoming a tool for art was dissolved of any boundaries. This transformation in the west; if not invented then definitely accelerated by the introduction of conceptuality into the mimesis that arts were trying to achieve; was rather a natural embodiment of the suppressed congestions within the dynamics of art which had been obstructing further developments within art. The

problem that the art object had to be trapped into pre-defined boundaries that limited spatiality that artistic representations were allowed to conquer and as a result eased arts to be accepted by the authorities was an issue that had to be challenged and was at the end refracted. The arts, welcomed the re-constructed role of the viewer, the notion of time as an expressed and presented aspect within the visibility of an art-work and the dialogue that was created within the space and duration of the art work through the various media that arts started to use as material and the Turkish arts were not too delayed in the inevitable participation and catching up of this new trend in artistic representation. This transformation was therefore a need for the Turkish art which had started to believe that the arts as it was practiced and appreciated in the Academy had come to an end; that it was necessary to surpass the notion of the beautiful within the arts; that it was time for the arts to re-appear as a platform, a venue through which news could as well be transferred and discussed and that in accordance with the times anything was now allowed to become an art work within the holistic frame of art. This was triggered and also enabled with the changing face of the authority within the Academy of Fine Arts as well. As students were taking over the administrative positions within the Academy, they were more open to changes and renovations in art than their previous professors. (Özdemir Altan, Devrim Erbil, Adnan Çoker, Dinçer Erimez period that came after Ali Avni Çelebi, Cevat Dereli, Zeki Faik İzer, Nurullah Berk and Neşet Günal.)

The period of late 1960s until the late 1980s, the new tendencies in Turkish art were born out as a result of the exhausted methods of figuration, abstraction and painterly practices folkloric patterns among which political depictions were either too obvious in their nature of being in the form of slogans or were struggling in the dilemma of inefficiency. The idealism of the period that was triggered and had outburst as a result of the politicization and polarization within the social and political arena of Turkey, had paved the way for a ‘idealism’ in arts as well. The fact that the conventional ways of representation, in visual arts, in literature, in cinema, were not expressive enough or were incompetent to express the dynamics of the changing times, the speed, urbanization, consumerism, popular culture, the emergence of sub-cultures and sub-identities within the society, alienation, the body as a political entity, technology as the new extension and dimension of daily lives and the fact that socio-political issues were in need of new areas to be discussed and make visible; were all

reasons for Turkish artists to turn to new possibilities in art. Since the spatial limits, the possible subject-matters and the materials of painting and the allowances of sculpture were pre-defined and were already exhausted; the new possibilities in art which were pop art, photo-realism and conceptual art; were new ways to approach, discuss, challenge and transform the arts in Turkey.

As the practice of these new art movements become more and more visible with the help of the exhibitions like Yeni Eğilimler of the late 1970s which also officially tore down the categories; and since these movements were both imported from abroad and also were self-discovered by the young artists who were in search for their identities both as an individual and as an artist, and whose ambitions were too strong to fit into the conventionalities; the face of the visual arts in Turkey went through a transformation that was irreversible and could be distinguished as a rupture.

Starting with the works of Altan Gürman, the definition and implications of painting and sculpting were challenged and slowly refracted. As painting and sculpture were expanding into each other's areas of competency; the introduction of new materials as well as no materials and conceptuality within the visual arts; made way for the preceding artists to realize the rupture of visual language in Turkish Arts. Despite the fact that, this rupture was not firstly seen in the works of the women artists in question of this thesis; their existence and artistic production in this particular period in Turkey had a significant role in this transformation. Their conscious and self-determined choices while defining their arts and their unique style; the fact that they were very brave, politically involved and formally challenging taking the stand of opposition against the traditional methods of art; they were the visible face of this rupture. Each of these artists, with their detachment from formalism and their arrival at their individually unique problematizations of the political, social, cultural, spatial, epistemological and ontological concepts, they stand out as the sole fraction within the artistic environment of Turkey who were sensual, lyrical, poetic, sensitive, aggressive, idealistic and ambitious in their attempts to re-discover the visual language of Turkish arts as well as to re-invent their identities both as women and as artists.

The fact that the women artists were not the most accustomed group of artists as they were not represented within the faculty, academy or any other institution of artistic

authority and the changing role of the women bearing in mind the changing dynamics of the society was a fact that might have pushed women forward in their struggle to become more visible. As this rupture within the visual language of Turkish arts was realized, it made way for the viewers of the Turkish public to be more welcomed into the arena of art-appreciation and they were invited to participate in the discussions that were raised by the works of these artists.

Conceptual Art in Turkey was both self-discovered and consciously preferred as a new way of representation and was borrowed for its further implications from the western world; it was harvested with the legacy of the Turkish arts and was influenced by the hot debates of the period and ended up being a highly praised and practiced method of art-making. It was not practiced in its pure definition for long, neither in the west nor in Turkey; but it was influential enough to breakthrough the already existing machine of mimesis and to reinvent it through the suggestions and propositions of the western conceptual art as an art movement, through the meaning of conceptuality and the demands of this particular geography. The relationship and dialogue between the artist and the art work, the artist and the concept, the artist and the viewer, the material and the concept, the viewer and the concept and combinations of these were re-constructed in a freer sense of thought and speech and the arts were expanding into the public sphere more and more as history, presence, individual experience, ordinary objects and spaces of life were being chosen as the tool as well as the source of the new art in Turkey. This was a rupture as the visual arts flooded out of the canvas, conquered other possible spaces and localities and the sculpture exceeded its potential of volume, expression and raw material; and as language was introduced as a representative element in art; Turkish visual arts were moved up to the level of being an issue that was to be discussed within the framework of philosophy, aesthetics theory and politics, sociology, modernism, postmodernism and consumerism. The meaning of art would then not anymore be configured or determined by the category of an art work or by the talent of an artist or by the appreciation of the viewer or the authority; but by the conceptual problematization of the artist that would invoke a process which invited the viewer to step in and take part in this dialogue.

The role of the women artists, Füsun Onur, Ayşe Erkmen, Canan Beykal, Gülsün Karamustafa and Nur Kolçak; who all dismissed conventional subject-matters in art and

respectively did deal with and problematize the issues of space, rhythm; spatiality and the position of the viewer; the essence and meaning of the art work and the local, global and individual politics of the day as well as identity; the voicing of the sub-cultures and sub-identities that were forced to remain invisible or ignored by the rest of the society and the role and meaning of being a woman, who was a sex object and the reason for consumerism were unique in their nature of opposition. Their role within this rupture was their visibility and productivity during the years in question. The fact that they were women was revealed within this transformation in the form of the political and poetic nature of the art that was practiced by them; which can be evaluated as the locally embroidered version of a three-dimensional art that was unique to this particular time and particular geography.

WORKS CITED

Acar, Güneş 'Plastik Sanatlarda 1985'; Sanat ve Edebiyat Çevresi *Hürriyet Gösteri* (1985) 30-32

Ahmet O. Evin, 'Novelists: New Cosmopolitansim versus Social Pluralism' *Turkey and the West: Changing Political and Cultural Identities* ed. Metin Heper, Ayse Öncü, Heinz Kramer (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 1993) 98

Akay, Ali & Zeytinoglu, Emre *Kavramın Sınırlarında*, (Istanbul: Bağlam Yayınları, 1996)

Akay, Ali 'Devlet Himayesinden Serbestleşmeye Plastik Sanatlar' (downloaded from www.sanalmuze.org/paneller/Mtskm/34dhs.htm on 14.12.2005)

Akkoyunlu, Begüm '1980'li Yılların Türk Sanatından Bir Kesit: İstanbul Sanat Bayramı ve Yeni Eğilimler Sergileri' *Sanat ve Sosyoloji*, ed. Aylın Dikmen Özarslan (İstanbul: Bağlam Yayıncılık, 2005) 178-185

Antmen, Ahu 'Türk sanatında yeni arayışlar (1960-1980)' *Phd Thesis*, submitted to Mimar Sinan University, Academy of Fine Arts; advisor : Prof. Dr. Semra Germaner, 2005

Arendt, Hannah *İnsanlık Durumu* çev. Bahadır Sina Şener (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1994)

Aristotle, *Poetika*. Böl. IV., 48b4-19

Art in Theory: 1900 – 2000, ed. Charles Harrison & Paul Wood, (USA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003)

Atagök, Tomur 'Kadın ve Sanat' *Cumhuriyet'ten Günümüze Kadın Sanatçılar*, ed. Selmin Kangal, Zehra Erkün (Istanbul: T.C. Kültür Bakanlığı, 1993) 16-23

Atagök, Tomur 'Kadın, Yaşam, Kültür' *Cumhuriyet'ten Günümüze Kadın Sanatçılar*, ed. Selmin Kangal, Zehra Erkün (Istanbul: T.C. Kültür Bakanlığı, 1993) 11-16

Atakan, Nancy *Arayışlar – Resim ve Heykele Alternatifler* (downloaded from http://212.58.11.161/mag/may03/kavsan052.asp on 5th of August 2005)

Balkır, Sedat 'Şükrü Aysan' *Akademiye Tanıklık 1: Güzel Sanatlar Akademisi'ne Bakışlar – Resim ve Heykel* ed. Ahmet Öner Gezgin (Istanbul: Bağlam Yayıncılık, 2003) 285-299

Bauman, Zygmut 'The Meaning of Art and the Art of Meaning' *Postmodernity and its Discontents* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997) 103-112

Beykal, Canan *Yazı Sanat: 1999 > pi artworks: 8 Mayıs > 15 Haziran 1999 > pi artworks*, pg.7

Brehm, Magrit *Füsun Onur: Aus Der Ferne So Nah* (Staatliche Kuntshalle Baden-Baden, 2001)

Crowther, Paul 'Aesthetic Ideas versus Conceptual Art' *The Language of Twentieth-Century Art* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press: 1997), 181

Çalıkoğlu, Levent 'Kimliğin Bulgulanması, Çağdaş Olma İsteği' Anonim.

Çoker, Adnan 'Öncü Türk Sanatından Bir Kesit' (downloaded from www.sanalmuze.org/paneller/Mtskm/28ots.htm on 14.12.2005)

Dingin, Emin Çetin; "'Öncü Türk Sanatından Bir Kesit' Ressamları", Gösteri, July 1986, Issue: 68

Foucault, Micheal 'To Paint is not to Affirm' *This is not a Pipe* (downloaded from website: http://foucault.info/documents/foucault.thisIsNotaPipe.en.html on 10th of June 2005)

Fowle, Kate 'Curating Now' *Curating Now 05*, (San Francisco: California College of the Arts, 2005) 6.

Godfrey, Tony; *Conceptual Art* (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 1998)

Group Exhibition: *A New Aesthetic*, 1967, Washington Gallery of Modern Art, Washington, D. C. Curated by Barbara Rose

Gürel, Haşim Nur 'Şablon Kimlikler, Şablon Koleksiyonlar...' (downloaded from www.sanalmuze.org/paneller/Mtskm/31dhs.htm on 14.12.2005)

Harvey, David 'Mekan ve Zaman Deneyimi' Postmodernliğin Durumu, translated by Sungur Savran (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2003)

İskender, Kemal ' Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türkiye'sinde Resim' *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, C.6, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1983a) 1691-1698

İskender, Kemal '1950-1990: Türk Resminin Gelişim Süreci içinde "Çağdaşlık" Kavramının Anlamı' Sanat Çevresi (Vol: 140, June, 1990, pg. 22-24)

Kabaş, Özer 'Yeni Eğilimler Sergisi ve Değişik Çağrışımlar' (downloaded from www.sanalmuze.org/paneller/Mtskm/23yes.htm on 14.12.2005)

Kadioglu, Ayse 'Turkish Nationalism and Official Identity' *Turkey: Identity, Democracy, Politics* ed. Slyvia Kedourie (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1996) 185

Kahraman, Hasan Bülent ' Türkiye'de Kültürel Söylem Kurguları: Kopuştan Eklemlenmeye ve Geleneksizlik'(downloaded from www.sanalmuze.org/paneller/Mtskm/27dhs.htm on 14.12.2005)

Kahraman, Hasan Bülent 'Ikinci Yeni Siiri' *Türk Siiri, Modernizm, Siir* (Istanbul: Büke Yayinlari, 2000)

Kahraman, Hasan Bülent, *Sanatsal Gerçeklikler Olgular ve Öteleri* (Istanbul: Agora Kitaplığı, 2005)

Kanik, Orhan Veli 'Önsöz' *Garip* (Istanbul, 1941)

Kaplanoğlu, Semih *Ayşe Erkmen*, (Istanbul: Ada Yayınları, 1990)

Karaca, Alaattin 'Ikinci Yeni Siiri' *Ikinci Yeni Poetikasi* (Ankara: Hece Yayinlari, 2005)

Karaesmen, Erhan '1985'in Genel İzlenimleri' Sanat ve Edebiyat Çevresi *Hürriyet Gösteri* (1985) 32-34

Köksal, Aykut 'Türkiye'de Çağdaş Sanat' *Cumhuriyet'in Renkleri, Biçimleri* (İstanbul: 1999) 168-177

Kula, Ömür *Private Session with Ayşe Erkmen* (Cihangir: 02.12.2005, Istanbul)

Kula, Ömür *Private Session with Canan Beykal* (Suadiye: 15.12.2005, Istanbul)

Kula, Ömür *Private Session with Füsun Onur* (Kuzguncuk: 09.12.2005, Istanbul)

Lenoir, Béatrice *Sanat Yapıtı*, translated by Aykut Derman (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2003)

Madra, Beral '80'lerde Türkiye'de Sanat Üretimi' (downloaded from the website: http://www.btmadra.com/articles/articles.html on 05.08.2005)

Madra, Beral 'Modern'den Postmodern'e-2' *Hürriyet Gösteri*, (Vol: 126, Mayıs 1991), 45

Malevich, Kasimir; Catalogue (Garanti Platform Archives)

Moral, Şükran 'Yaşasın Alternatif Sanat' *Sanat Çevresi* (Vol: 106, August, 1987, pg. 12-14.

Moszynska, Anna *Abstract Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1990)

Özsezgin, Kaya *Cumhuriyet'in 75 Yılında Türk Resmi* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1998) 90-93

Parten, Arzu *Interview with Canan Beykal*, 29.05.2003; *Canan Beykal – Dosya: 1981-2003*

Plato, *Devlet*, X, 595b-601c

Platt, Susan N.; 'Public Politics and Domestic Rituals: Contemporary Art by Women in Turkey, 1980 – 2000'

Sadak, Yalçın 'Türk Resmi S.O.S.' *Sanat Çevresi* (Vol: 106, August, 1987, pg. 16-19.

Sanatta Buluşma, ed. Tomur Atagök, Gönül Nuhoğlu (Exhibition Catalogue, Istanbul: 1-10.09.1997)

Selim İlkin, 'Businessmen: Democratic Stability' *Turkey and the West: Changing Political and Cultural Identities* ed. Metin Heper, Ayse Öncü, Heinz Kramer (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 1993) 180

Stangos, Nikos *Concepts of Modern Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994)

STT, ' Definition of Art', (downloaded from the website on 10th November 2005 : http://sanattanimitoplulugu.com/)

Tansug, Sezer *Çağdaş Türk Sanatı* (Istanbul: Remzi Kitabevi A.Ş., 2003)

Tansuğ, Sezer 'Turkish Painting in the 80's' *2. Uluslararası İstanbul Bieaneli*, 25.09.1989-31.10.1989

Trodd, Colin 'Postmodernism and Art' *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*, ed. Stuart Sim (New York: Routledge, 2001) 101-107

Wheeler, Daniel *Art Since Mid-Century*, (Thames and Hudson, London: The Vendome Press, 1991)

Wittgenstein, Ludwig; *Tractatus Logico – Philosophicus*, 1921

Yüzyüze, ed. Yusuf Taktak, Emre Zeytinoğlu, Orhan Taylan (Exhibition Catalogue, Istanbul: 20-31.05.1997)

Zurbrugg, Nicholas 'Barthes, Belsey, and the Death of the Author' *The Parameters of Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 1993)

APPENDIX A:
FIGURES

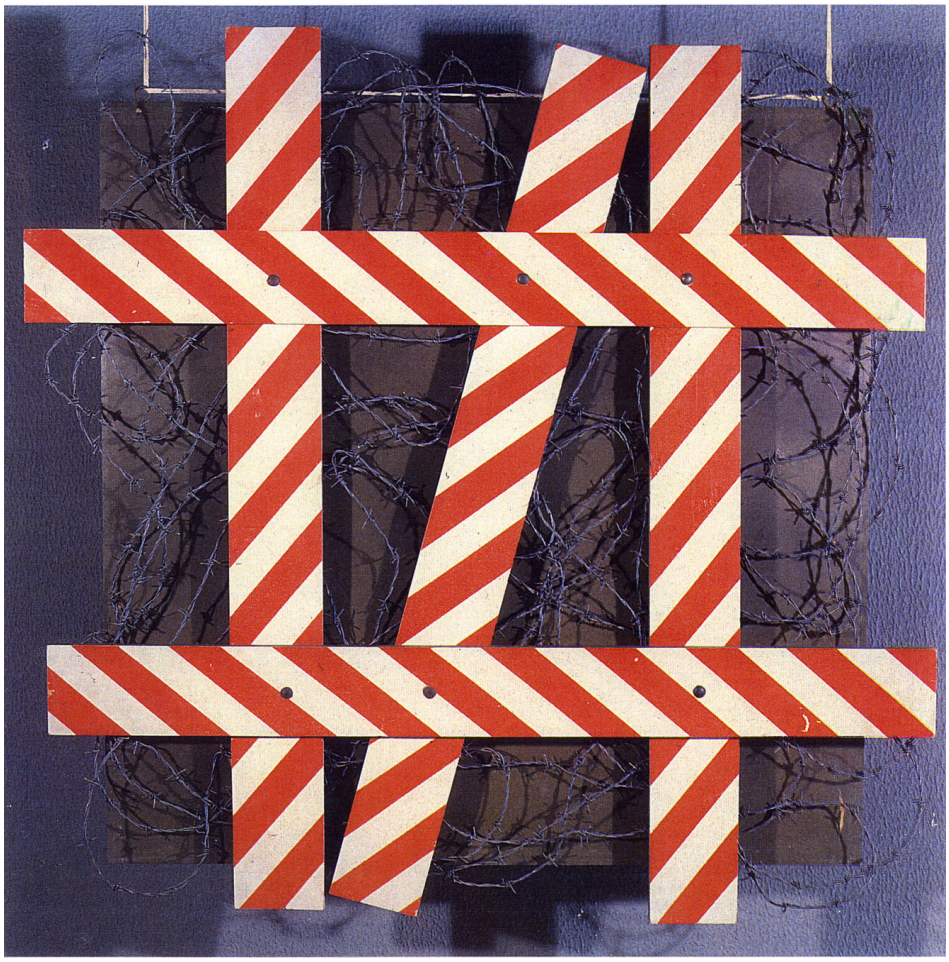


Figure 1

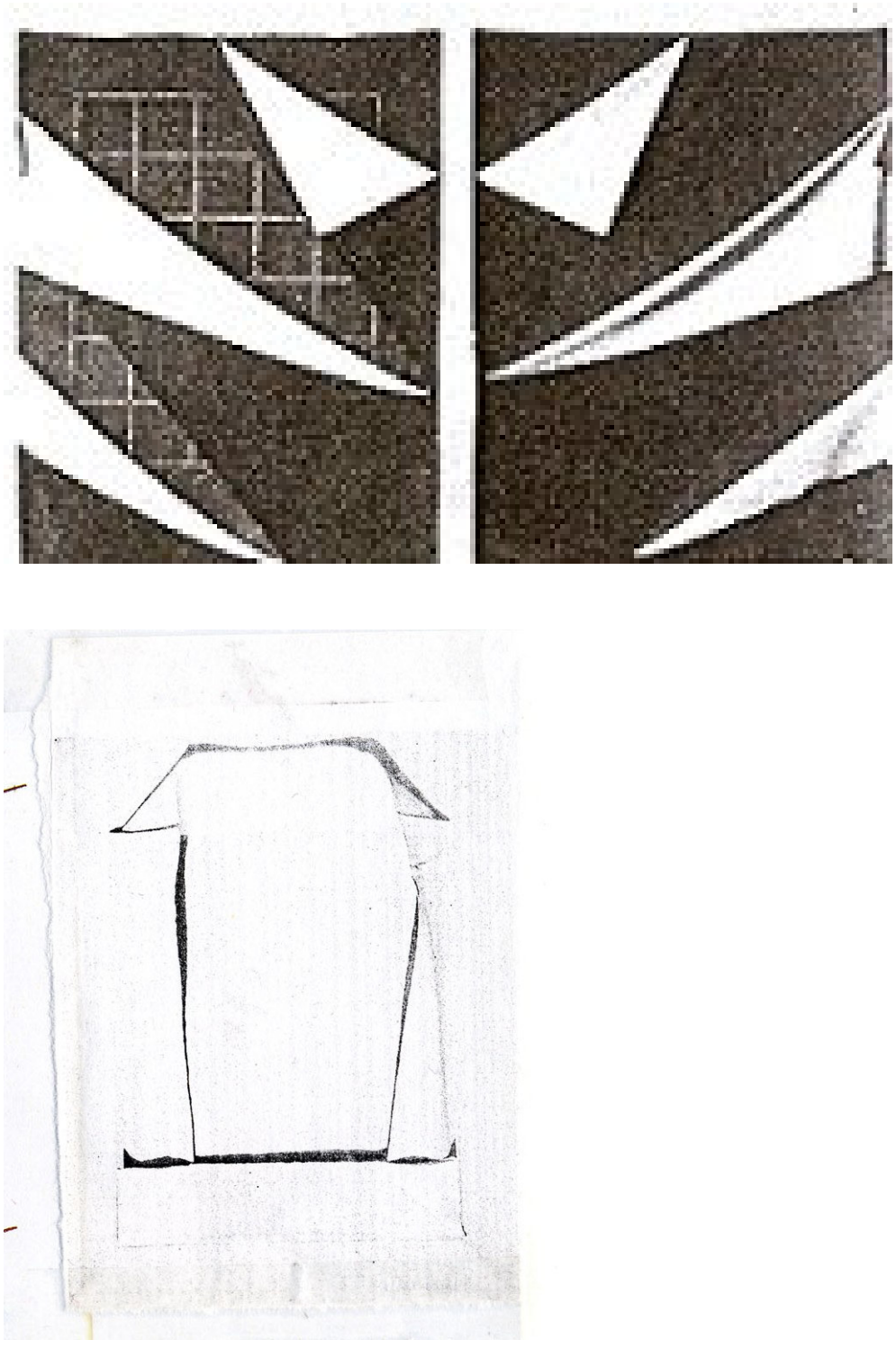


Figure 2

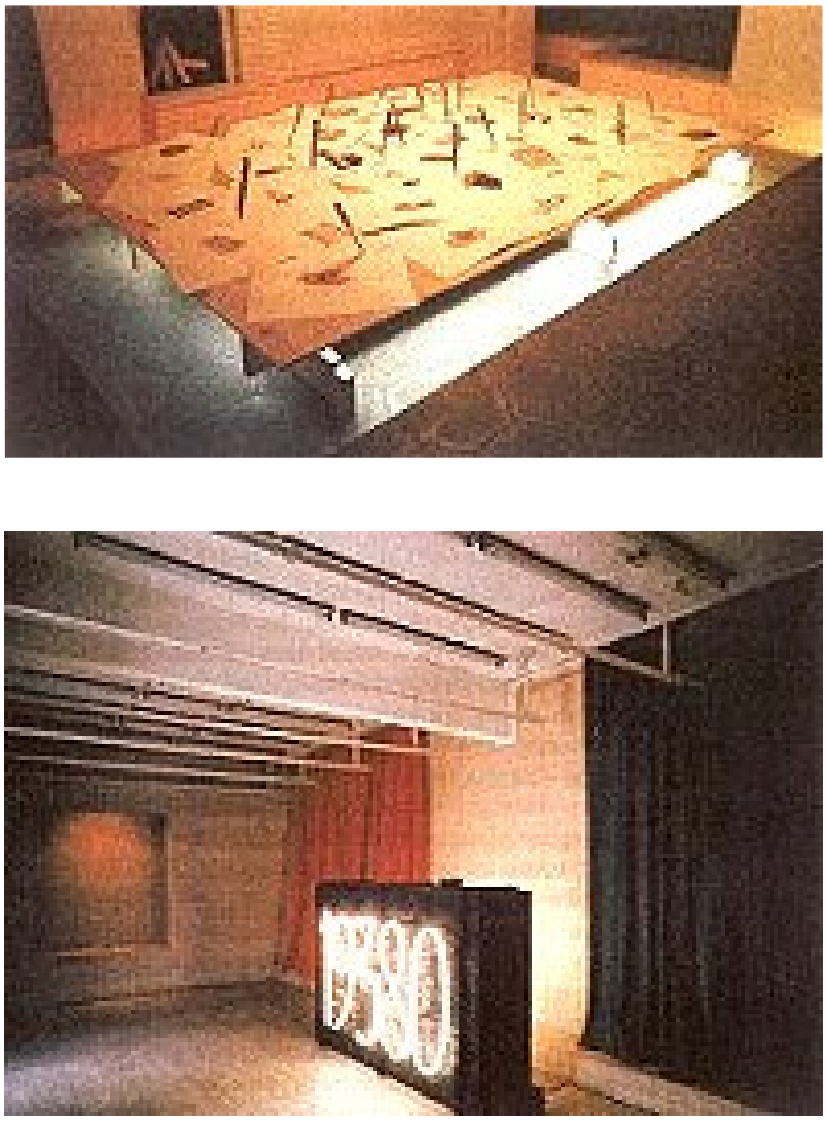


Figure 3

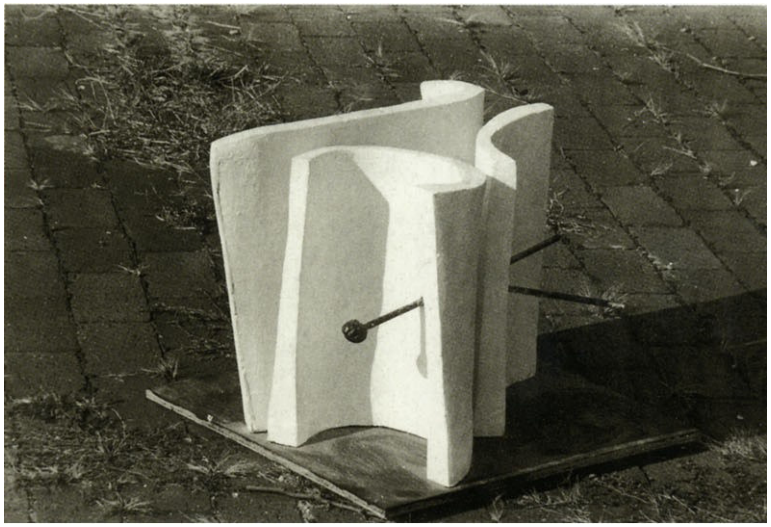


Figure 4

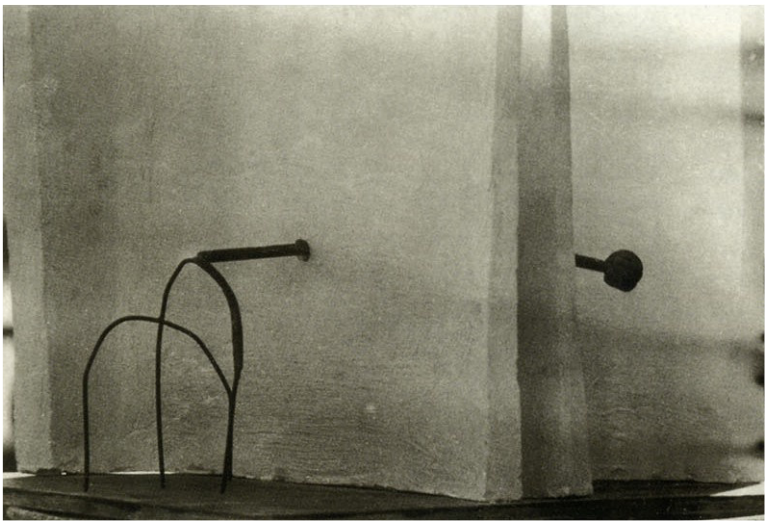


Figure 5

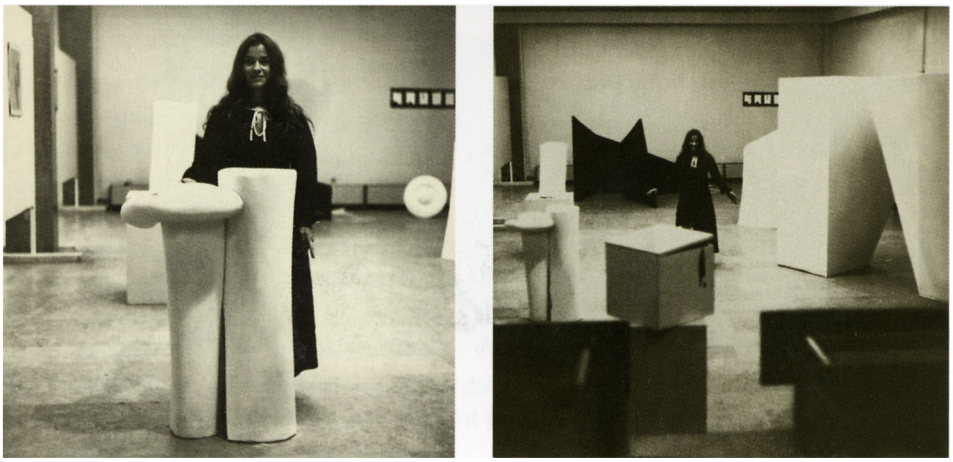


Figure 6

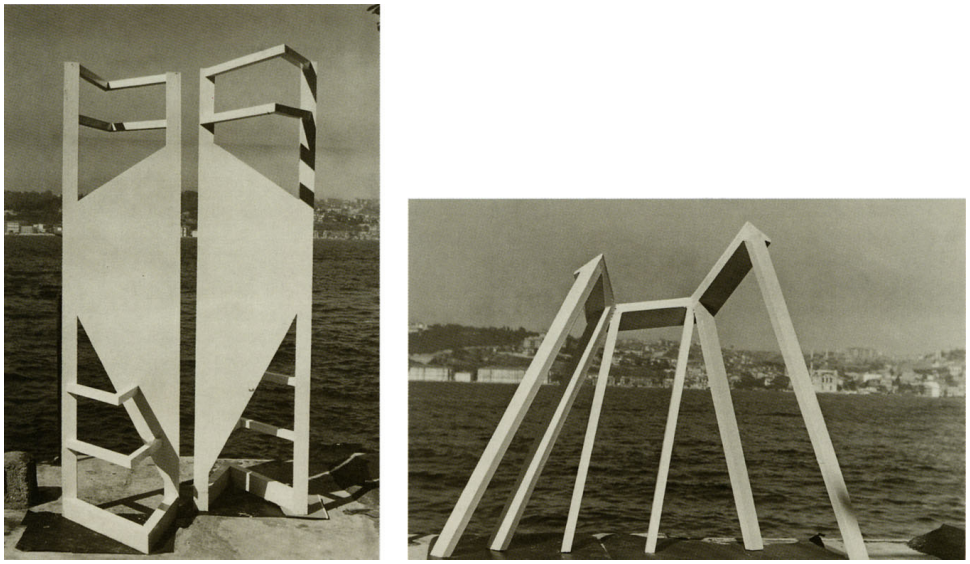


Figure 7

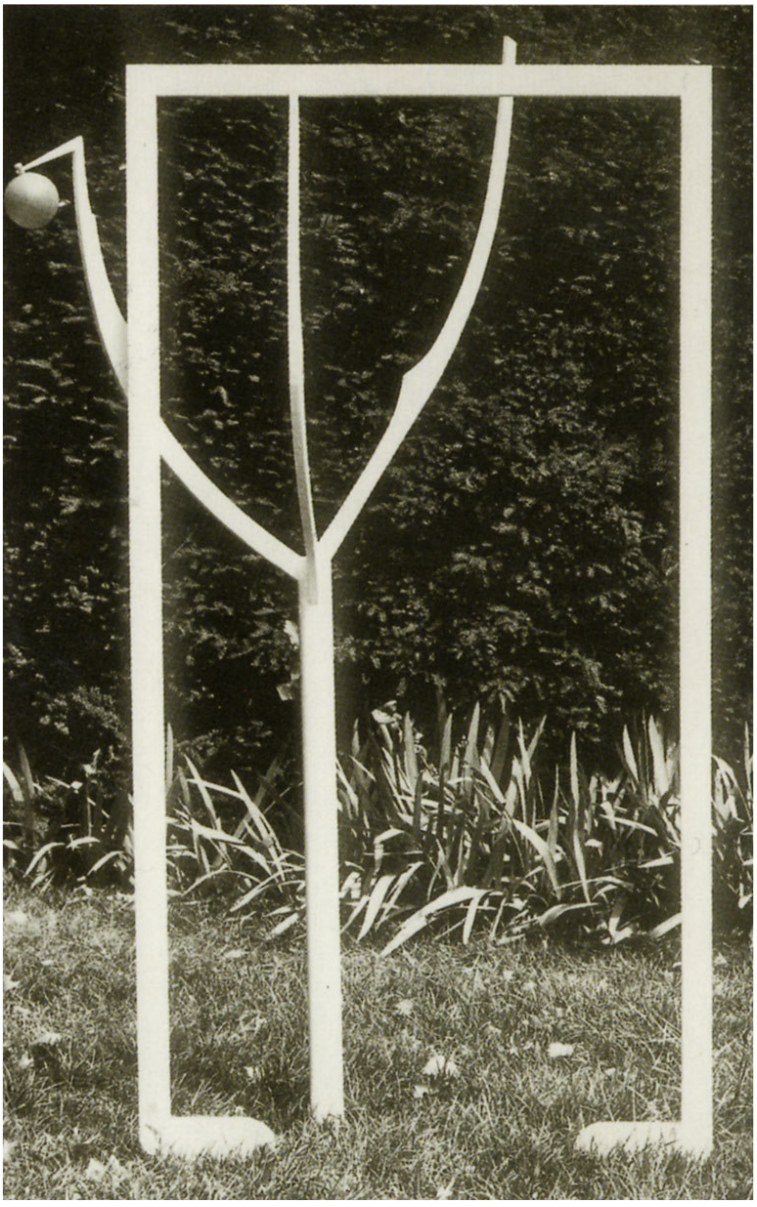


Figure 8

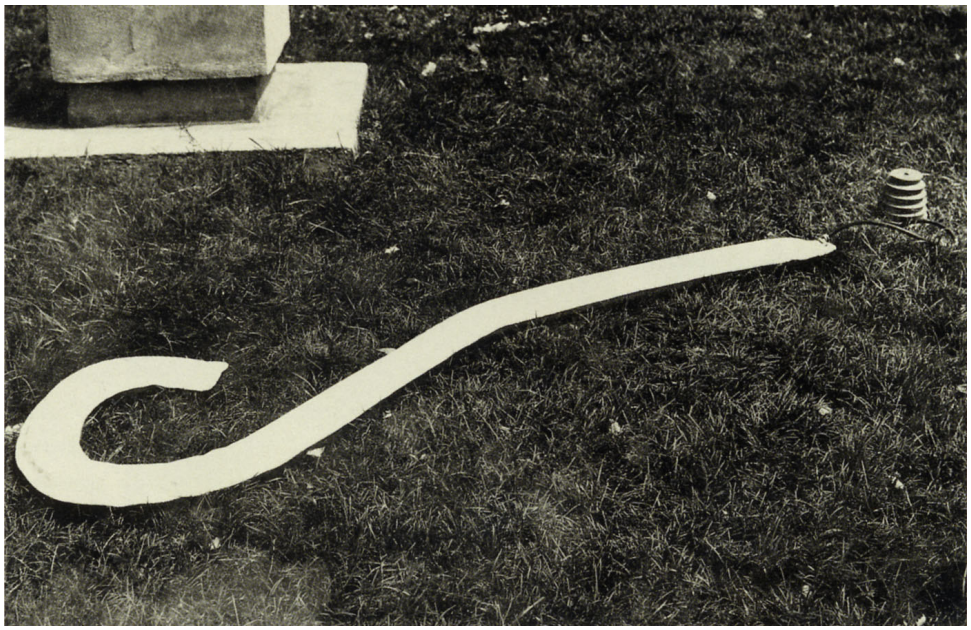


Figure 9



Figure 10



Figure 11



Figure 12



Figure 13

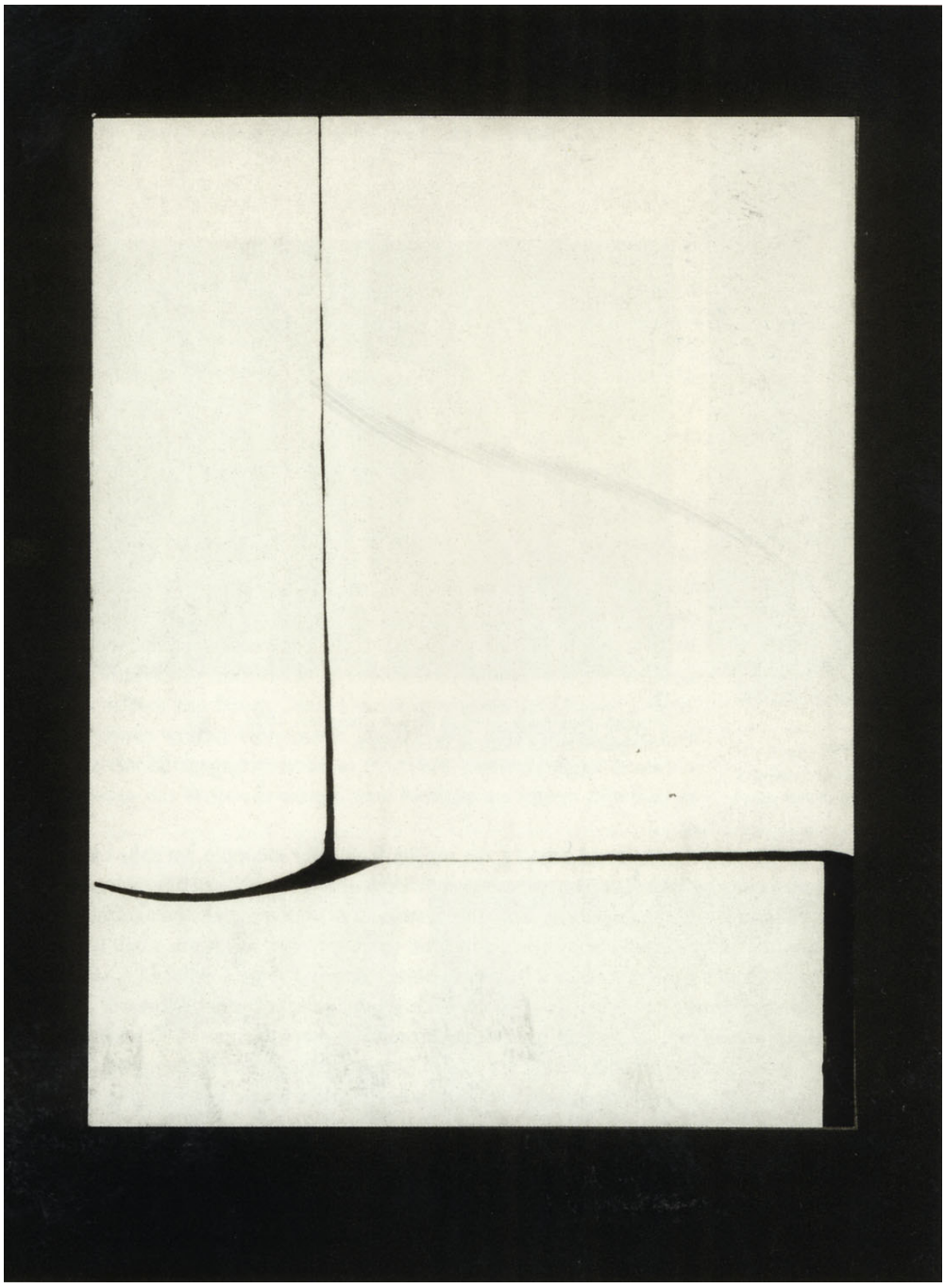


Figure 14

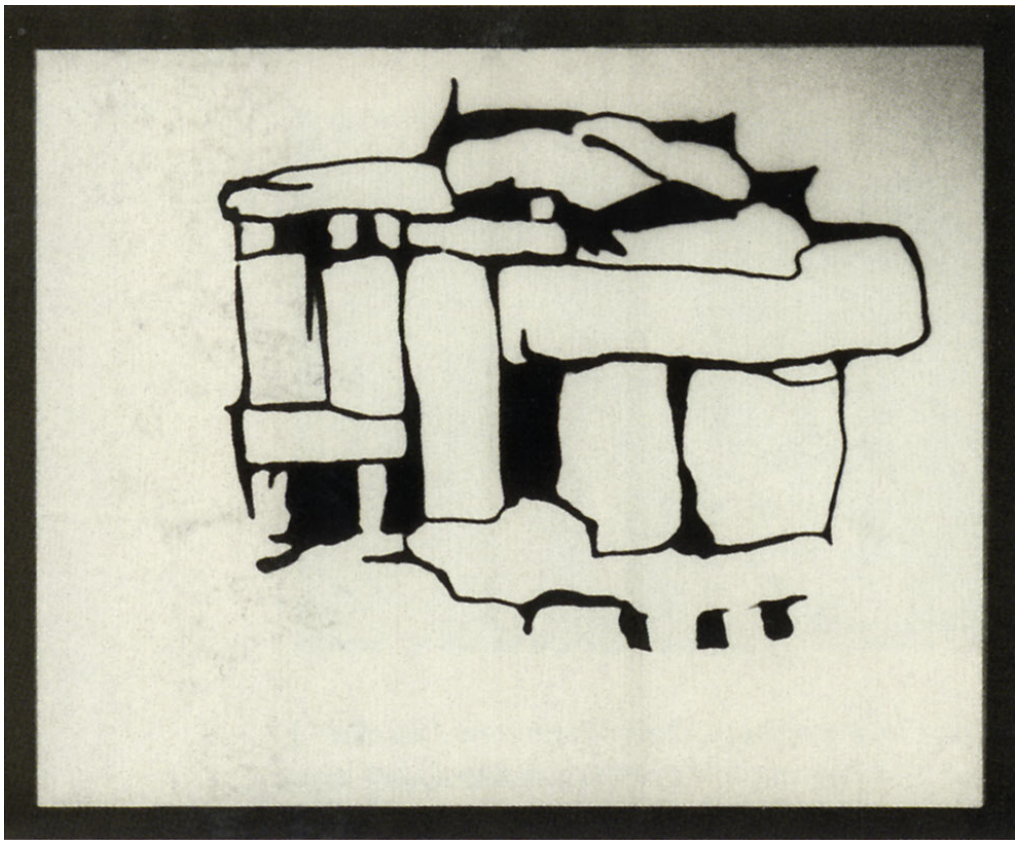


Figure 15



Figure 16



Figure 17



Figure 18





Figure 19

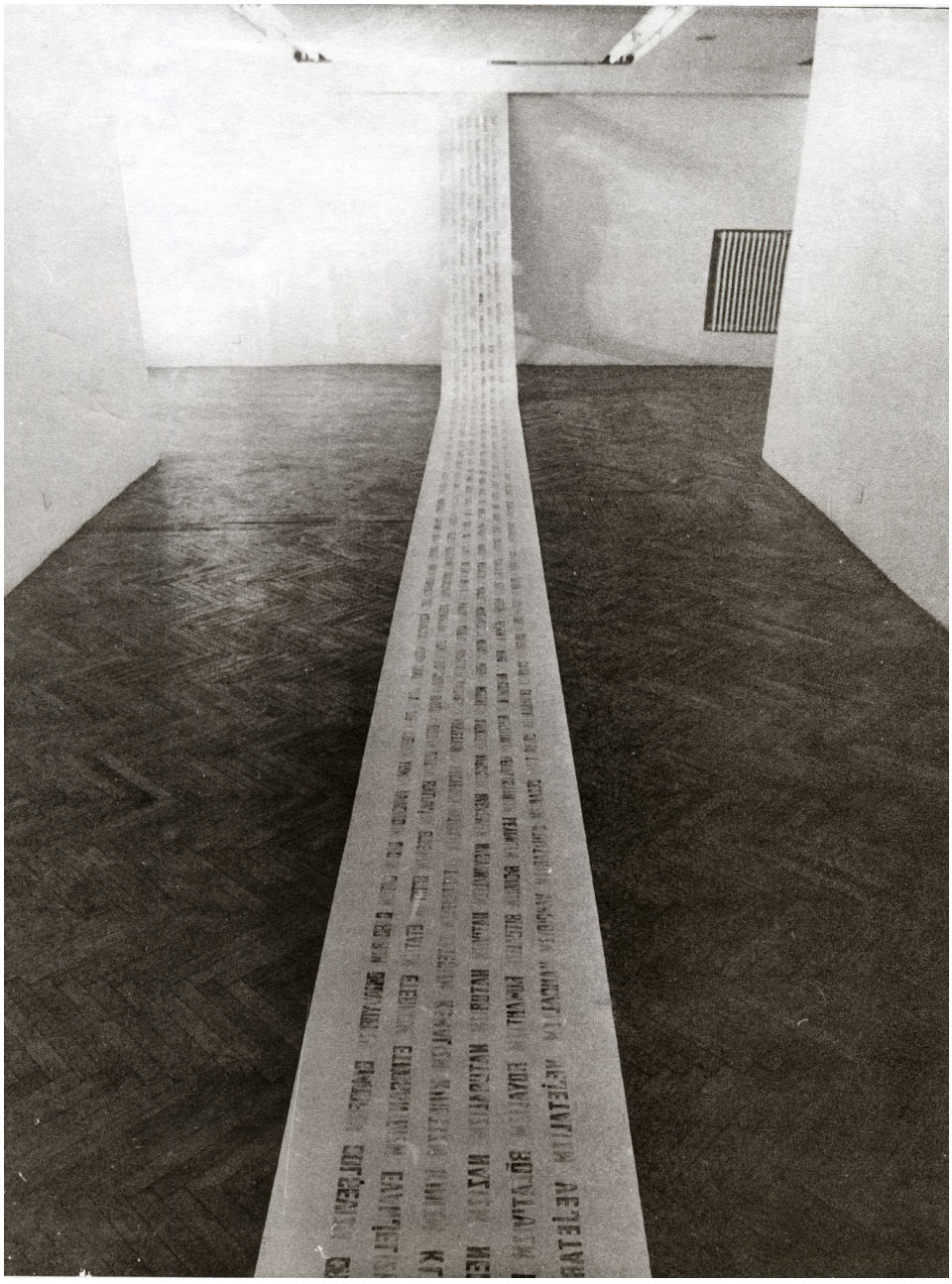
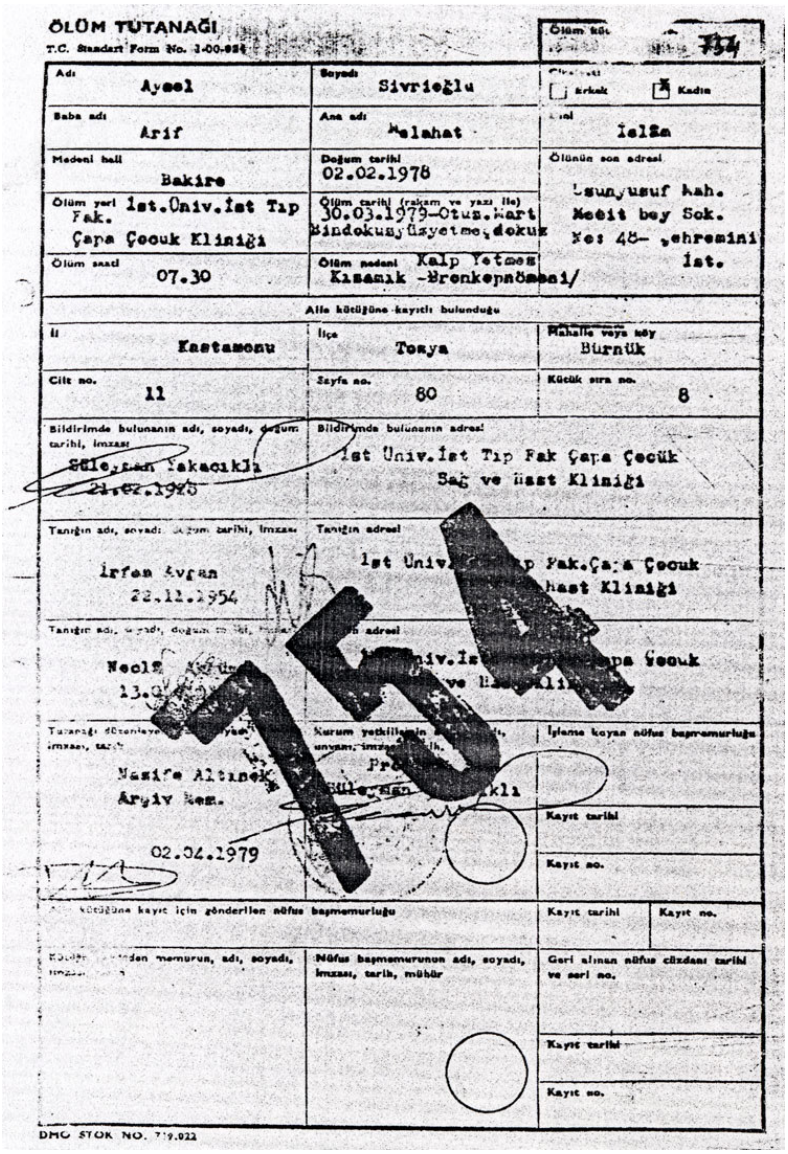


Figure 20



ÖLÜM TUTANAĞI

T.C. Standart Form No. 2-00-031

Ölüm kütüğü no. 754

Adı: Aysel	Soyadı: Sivrioğlu	☐ Erkek ☒ Kadın
Baba adı: Arif	Ana adı: Melahat	Meslek: İşsiz
Medeni hali: Bakire	Doğum tarihi: 02.02.1978	Ölünün son adresi: Usunyusuf kah. Meeit bey Sok. No: 48- Fehremini İst.
Ölüm yeri: İst.Üniv.İst Tıp Fak. Çapa Çocuk Kliniği	Ölüm tarihi (rakam ve yazı ile): 30.03.1979-Otuz.Mart Bindokuzyüzyetmişdokuz	
Ölüm saati: 07.30	Ölüm nedeni: Kalp Yetmesi Kısamık -Bronkopnömoni/	

Aile kütüğüne kayıtlı bulunduğu

İli: Kastamonu	İlçe: Tosya	Mahalle veya köy: Bürnük
Cilt no.: 11	Sayfa no.: 80	Küçük sıra no.: 8

Bildirimde bulunanın adı, soyadı, doğum tarihi, imzası: Süleyman Takacıklı 21.02.1925	Bildirimde bulunanın adresi: İst Üniv.İst Tıp Fak Çapa Çocuk Sağ ve Hast Kliniği
Tanığın adı, soyadı, doğum tarihi, imzası: İrfan Avşar 22.12.1954	Tanığın adresi: İst Üniv. Tıp Fak.Çapa Çocuk Hast Kliniği
Tanığın adı, soyadı, doğum tarihi, imzası: Necla [illegible] 13.0[illegible]	adresi: [illegible]niv.İs[illegible]apa Çocuk [illegible]ve H[illegible]kli
Tanığı dinleyen memurun adı, soyadı, imzası, tarih: Nazife Altınel Arşiv Kem. 02.04.1979	Kurum yetkilisinin adı, soyadı, unvanı, imzası, mühür: Pr[illegible] Süleyman [illegible]klı

İşleme koyan nüfus başmemurluğu

Kayıt tarihi

Kayıt no.

Aile kütüğüne kayıt için gönderilen nüfus başmemurluğu	Kayıt tarihi	Kayıt no.
Kütüğü tutan memurun adı, soyadı, imzası, tarih	Nüfus başmemurunun adı, soyadı, imzası, tarih, mühür	Geri alınan nüfus cüzdanı tarihi ve seri no.
		Kayıt tarihi
		Kayıt no.

DMG STOK NO. 719.022

Figure 21

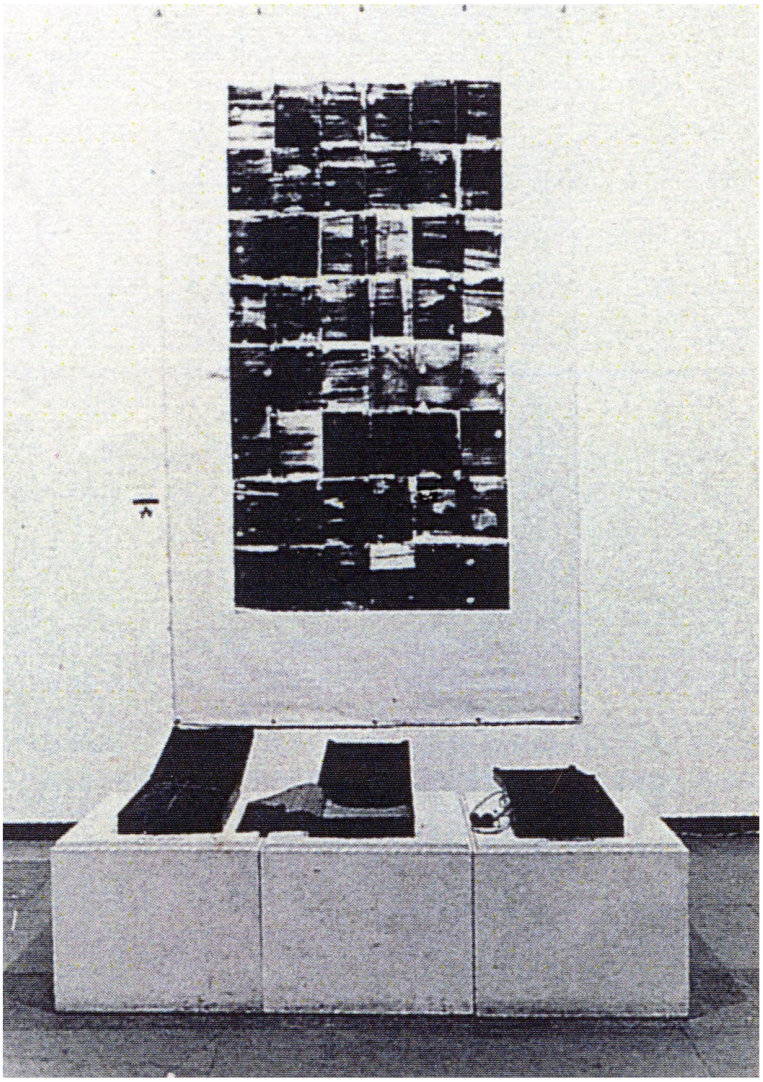


Figure 22

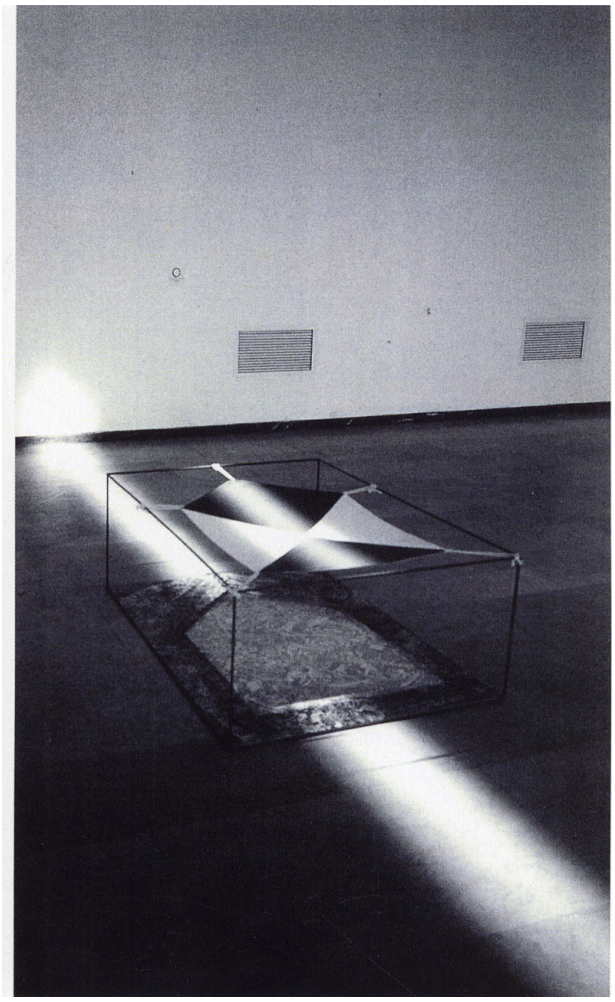


Figure 23

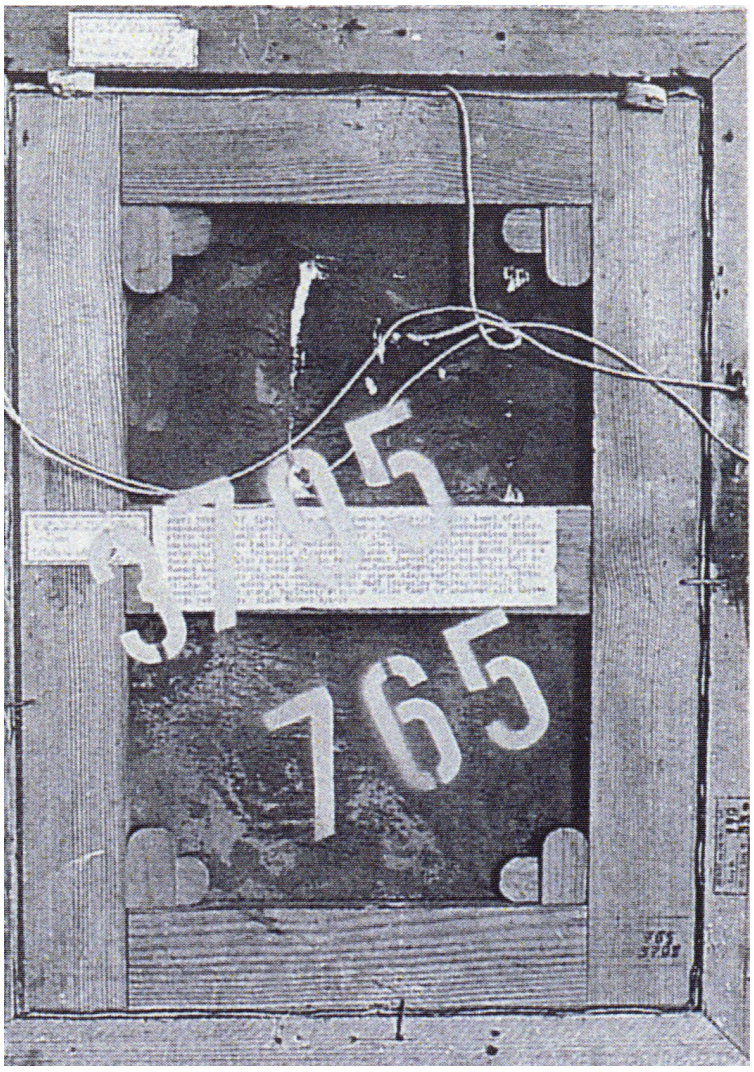


Figure 24



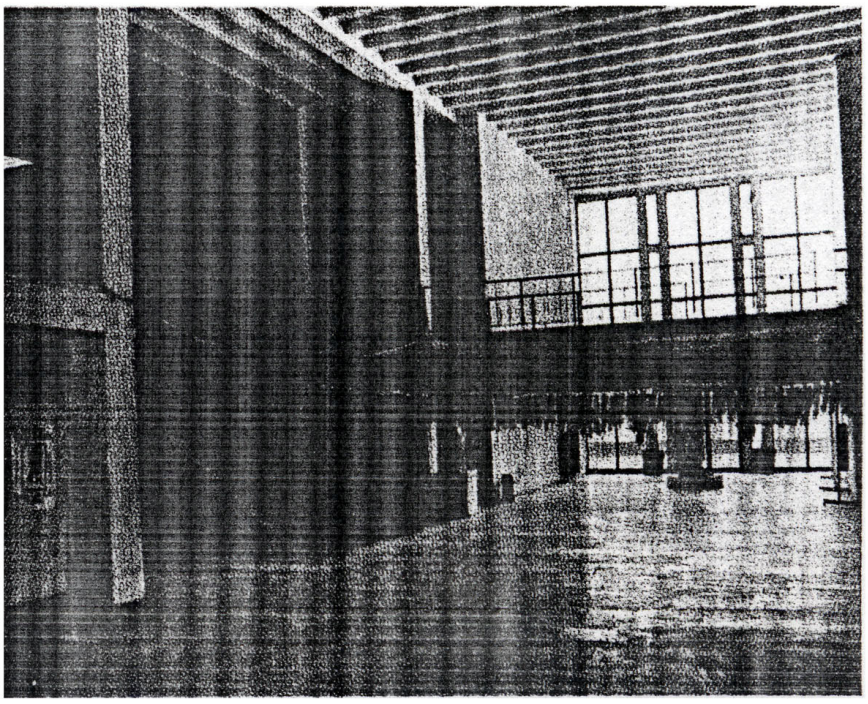
avangard *s. Fr.* Öncü[2].

AVANT-GARDE n. f. Première ligne d'une armée, d'une flotte, etc., en bataille, en marche. Pl. des *avant-gardes.*

à·vänt-guärd′, [Fr., lit. advance guard.] vanguard.

die **Avantgarde** *avãgardə*, † Vorhut. *die* **Avantmain** *avãmẽ*, Vorhand. [franz.; 30jähr. Krieg]

Figure 25



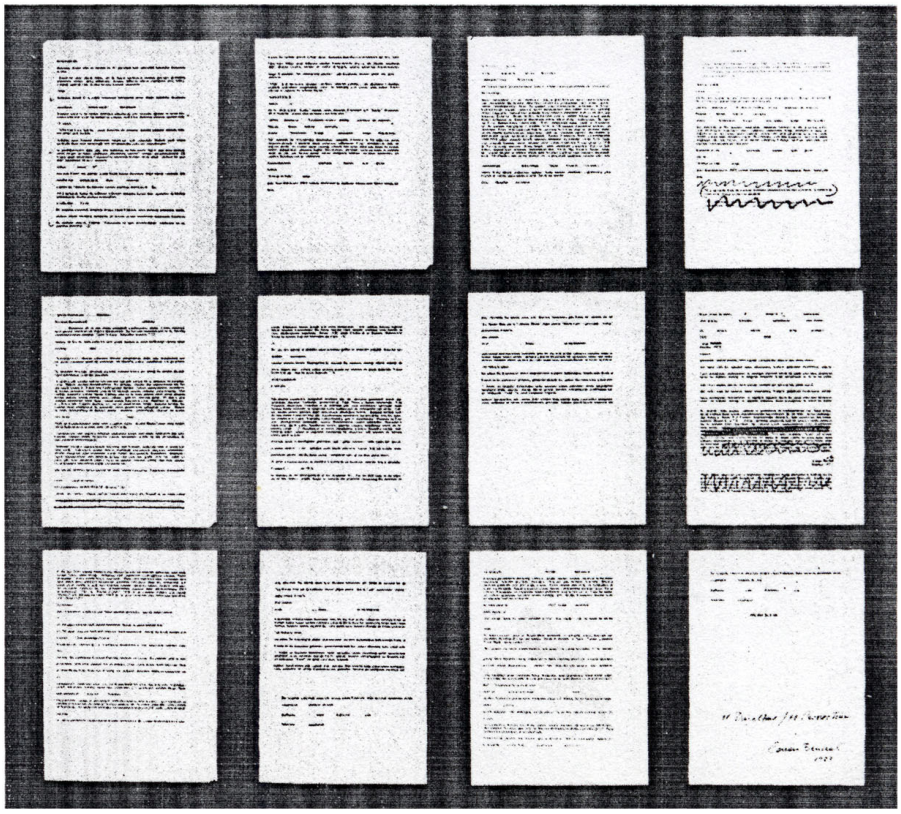


Figure 26

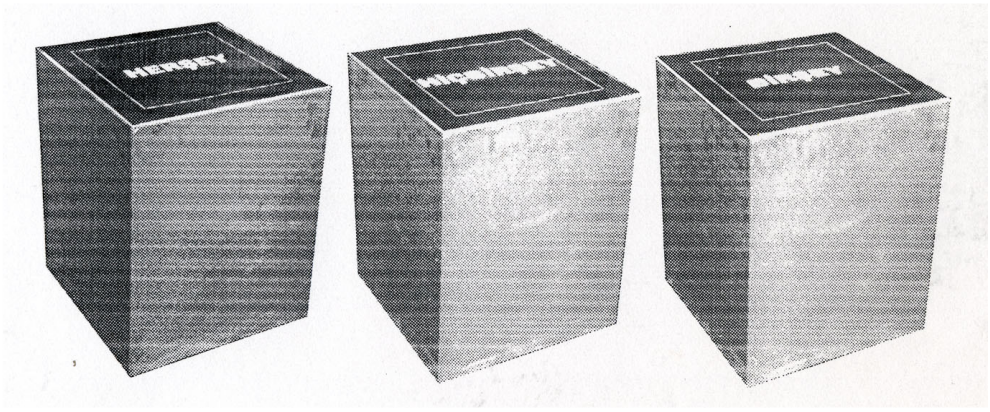


Figure 27

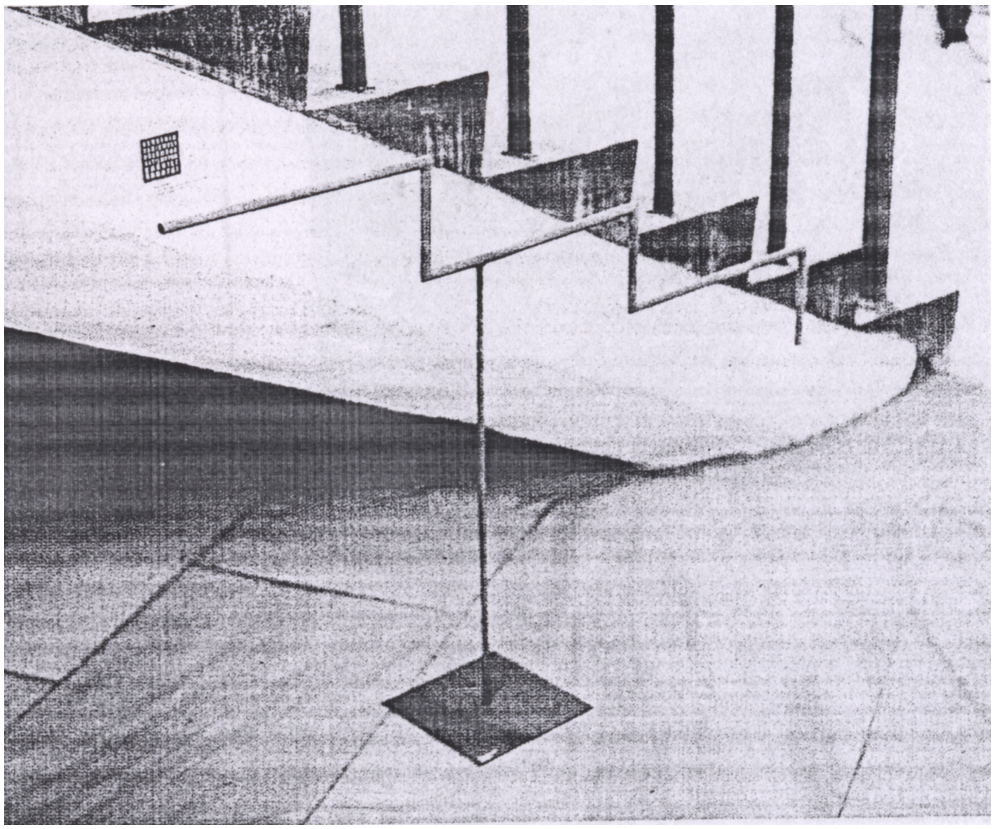


Figure 28

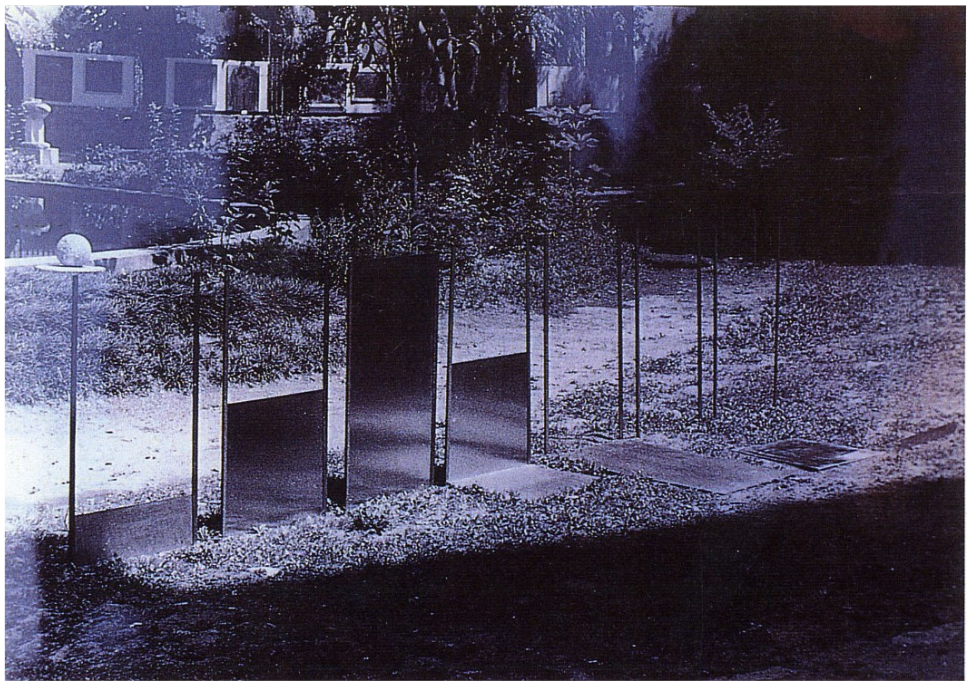


Figure 29

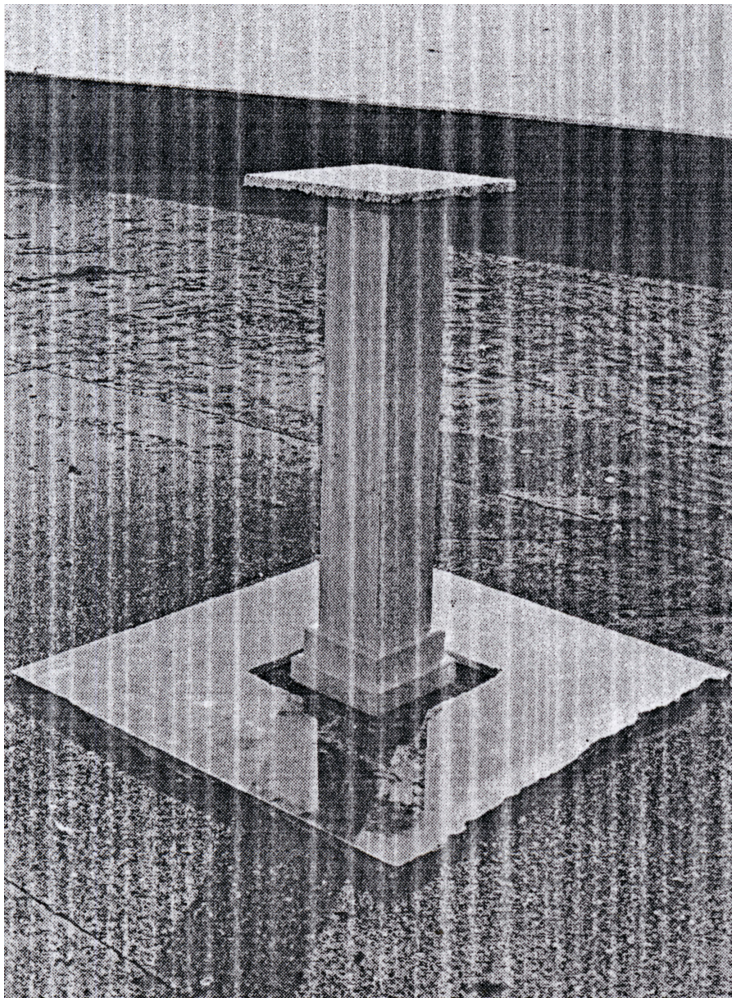


Figure 30

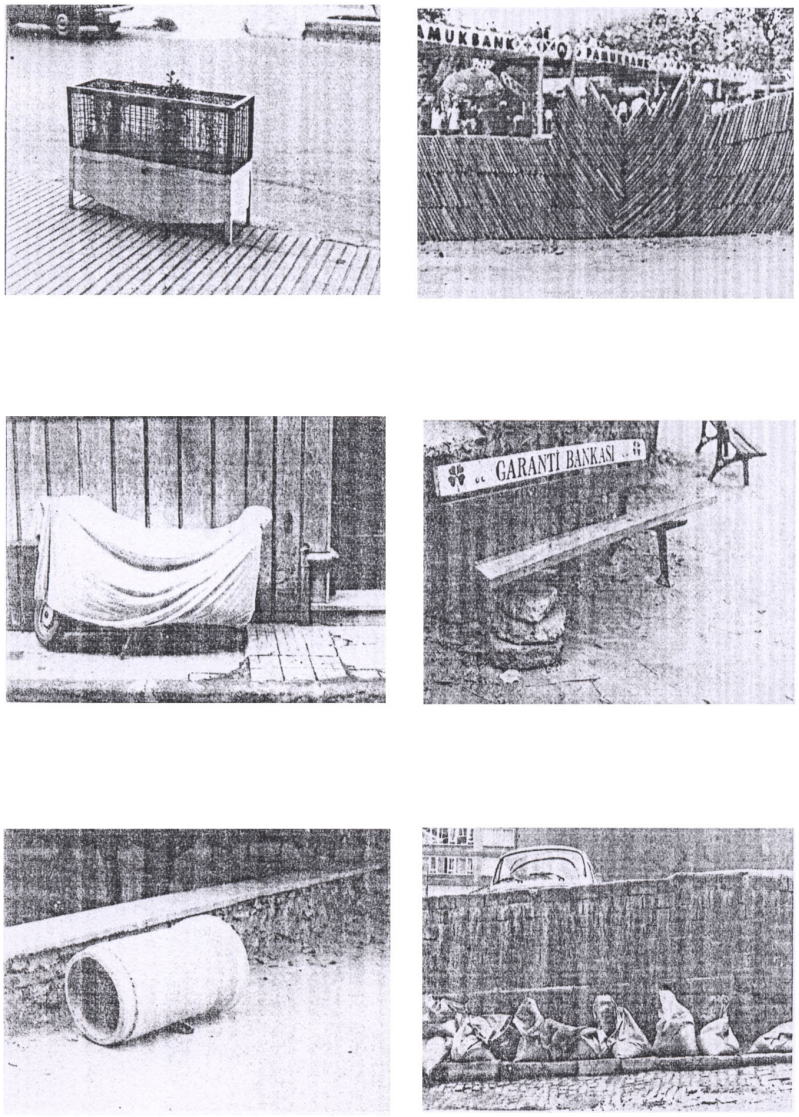


Figure 31

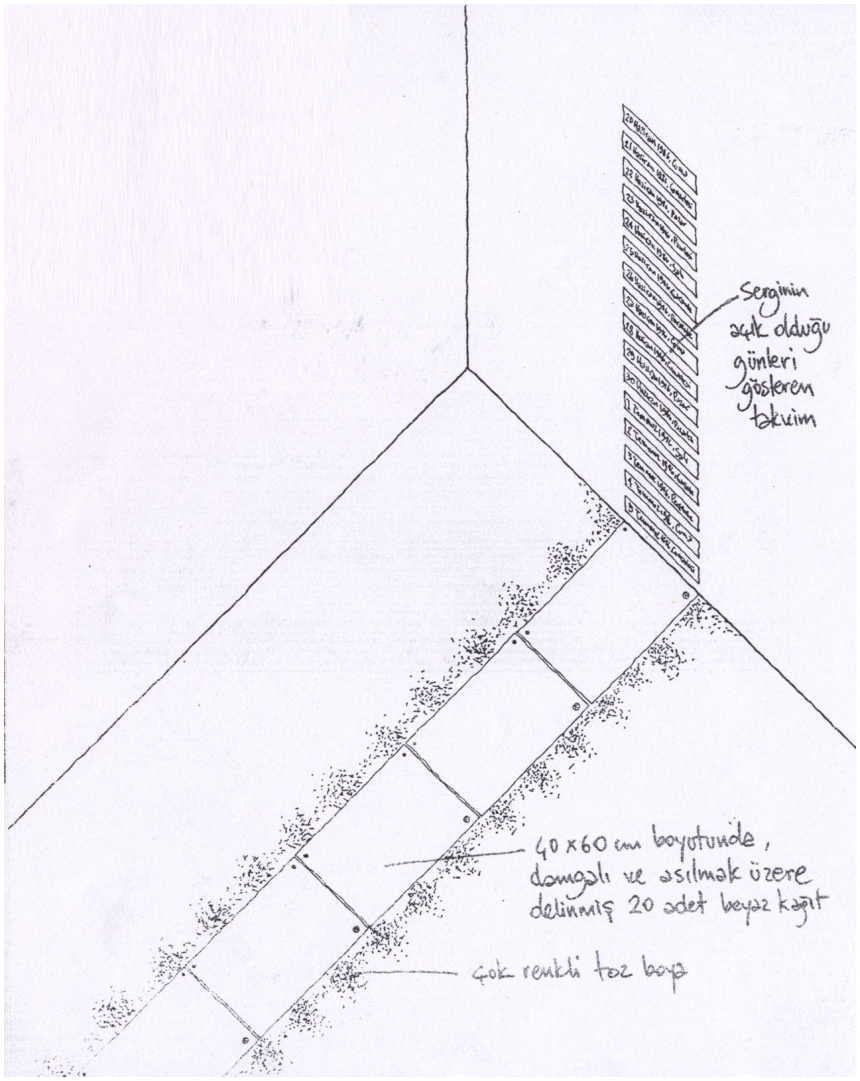
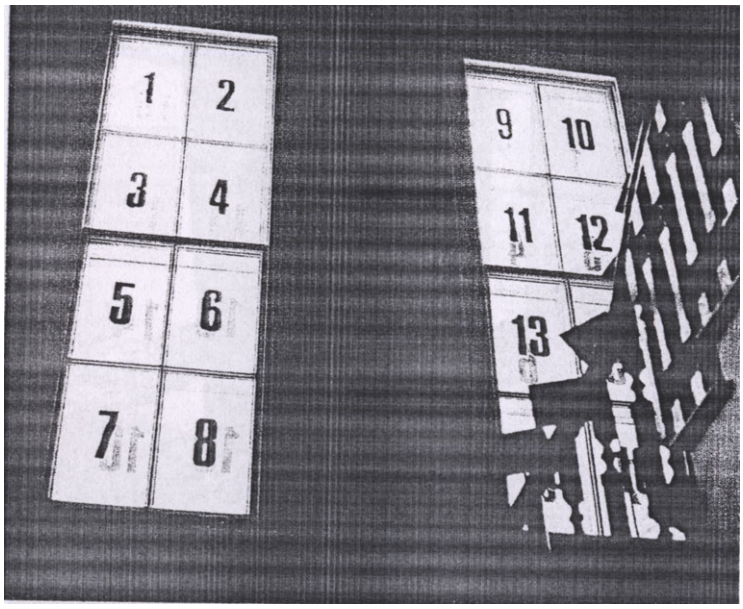

Sergimin
açık olduğu
günleri
gösteren
takvim
40 x 60 cm boyutunda,
damgalı ve asılmak üzere
delinmiş 20 adet beyaz kağıt
çok renkli toz boya

Figure 32



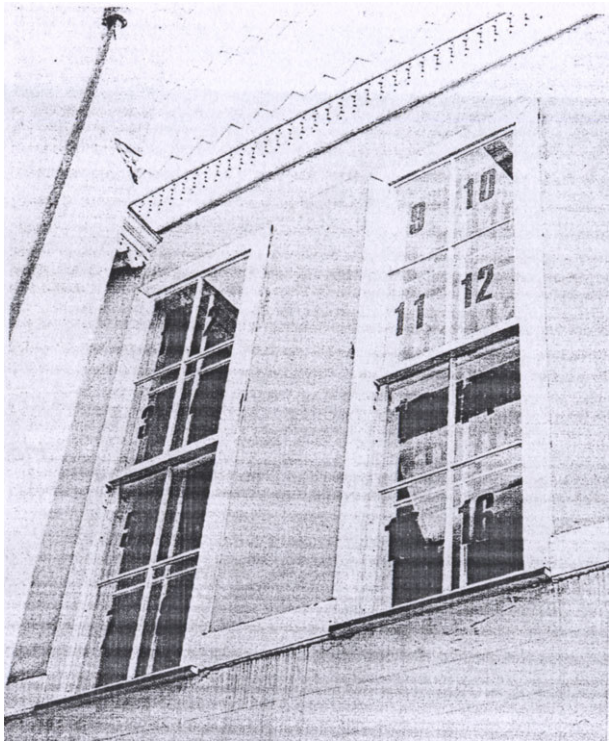
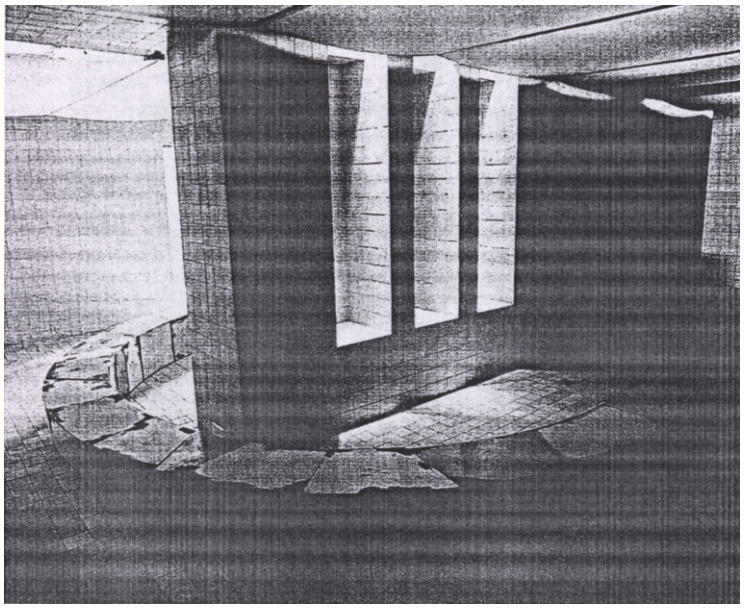


Figure 33



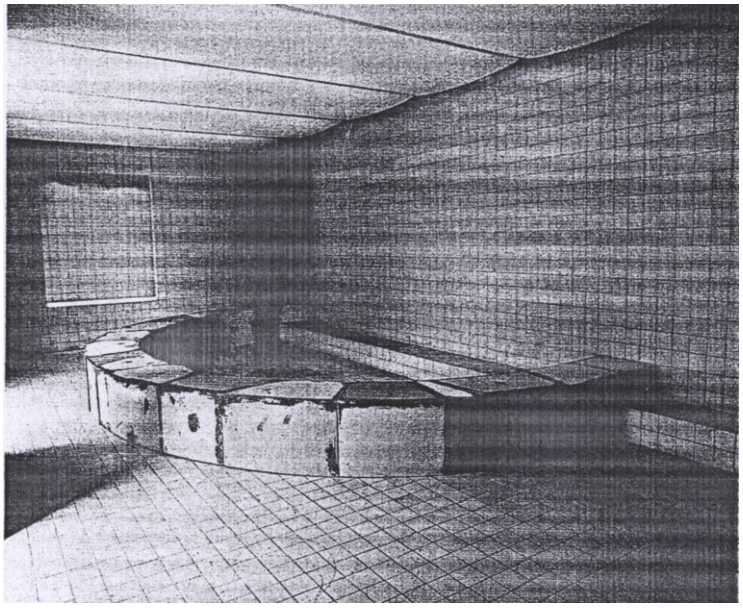


Figure 34

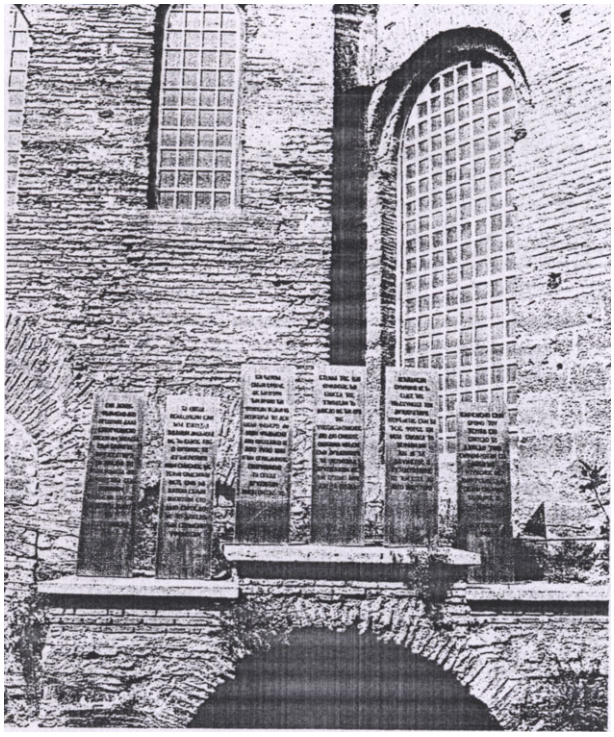




Figure 35

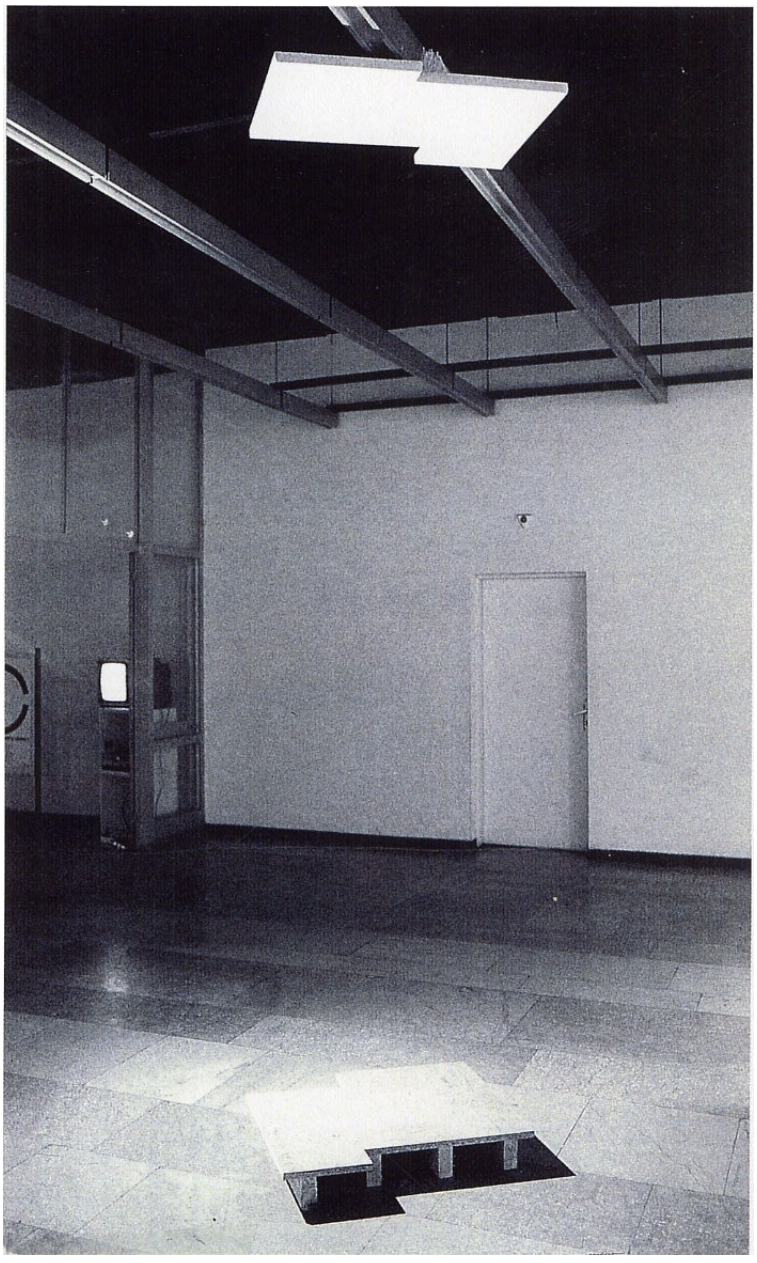


Figure 36

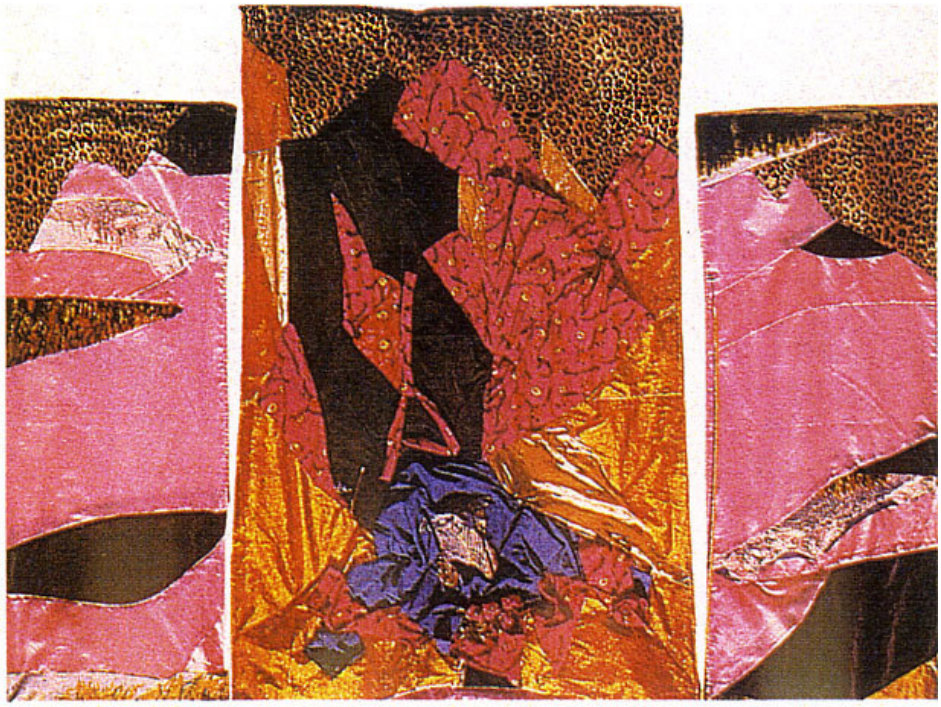


Figure 37

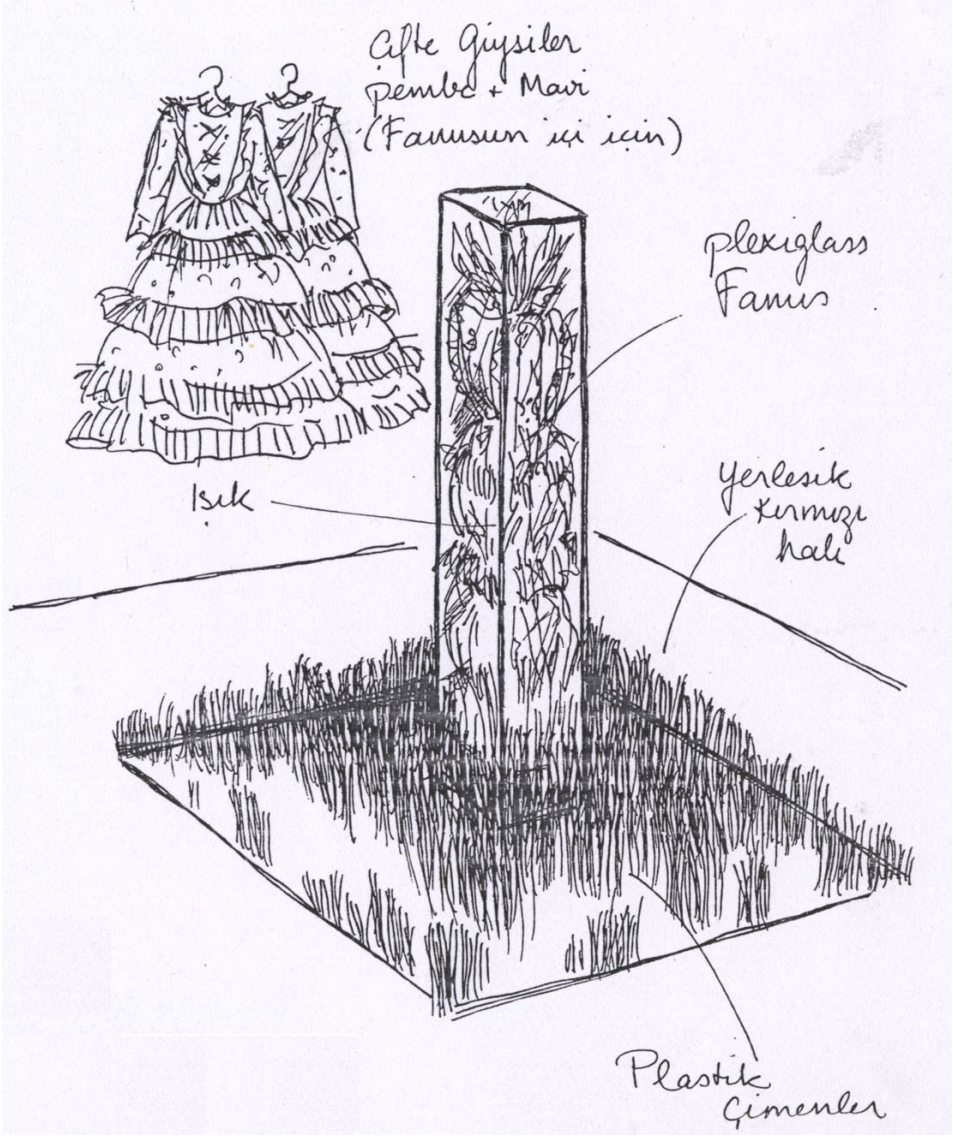

Çift Giysiler
Pembe + Mavi
(Fanusun içi için)
plexiglass
Fanus
Işık
Yerleşik
kırmızı
halı
Plastik
Çimenler

Figure 38



Figure 39



Figure 40



Figure 41



Figure 42



Figure 43

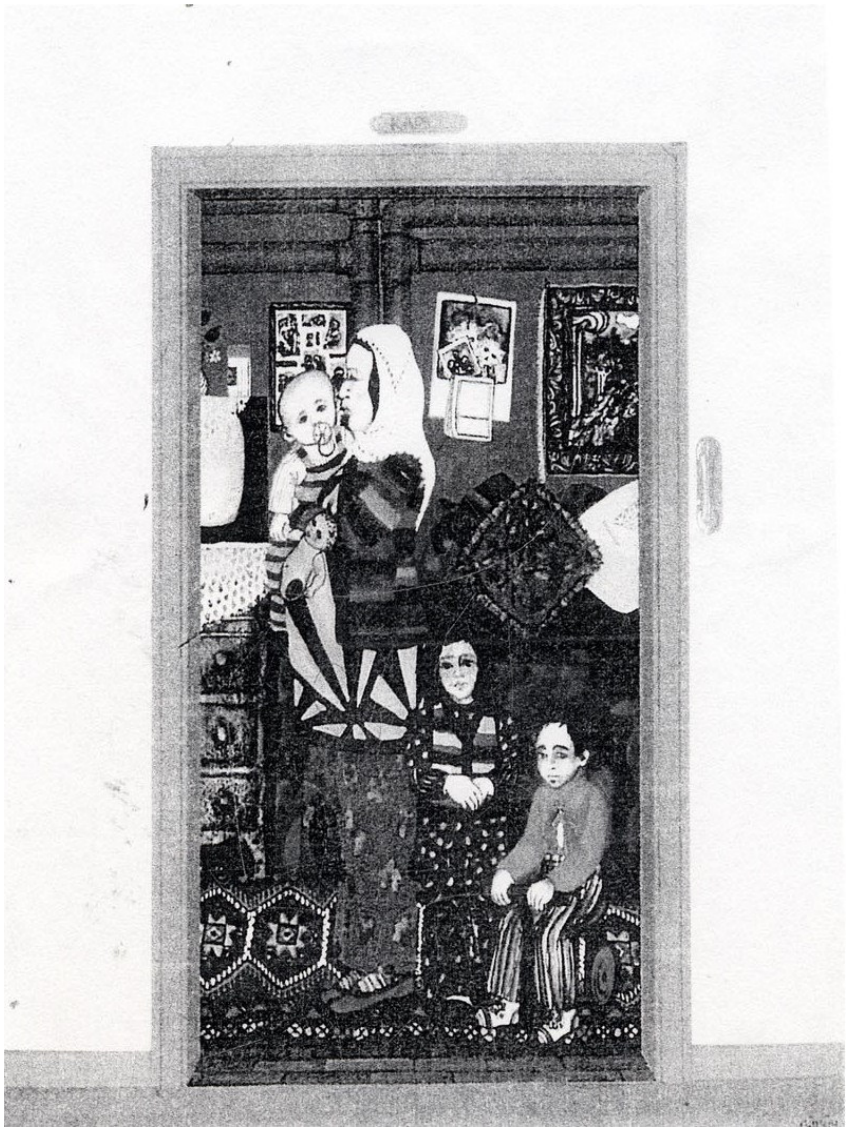


Figure 44



Figure 45



Figure 46

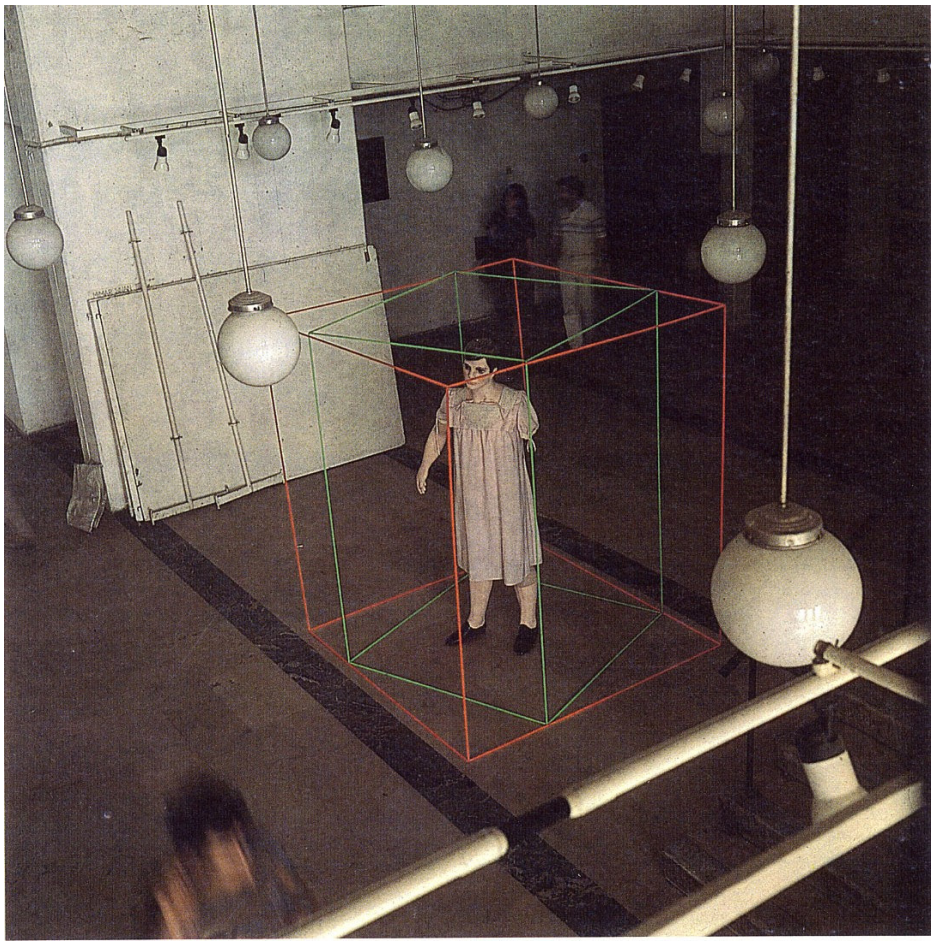


Figure 47



Figure 48

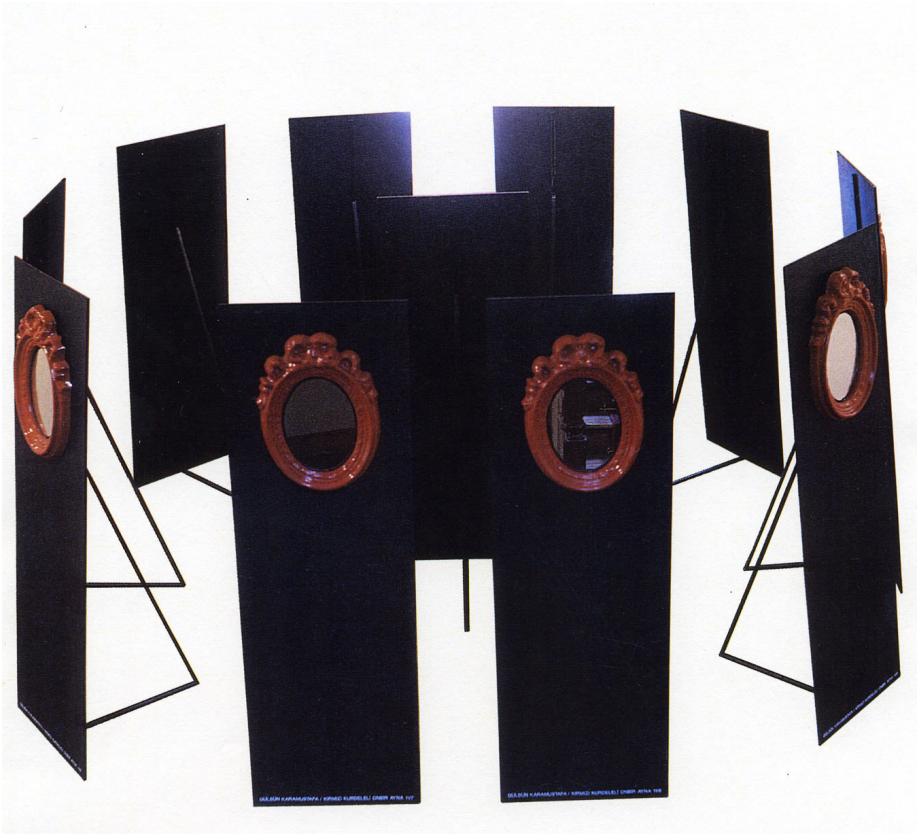


Figure 49



Figure 50

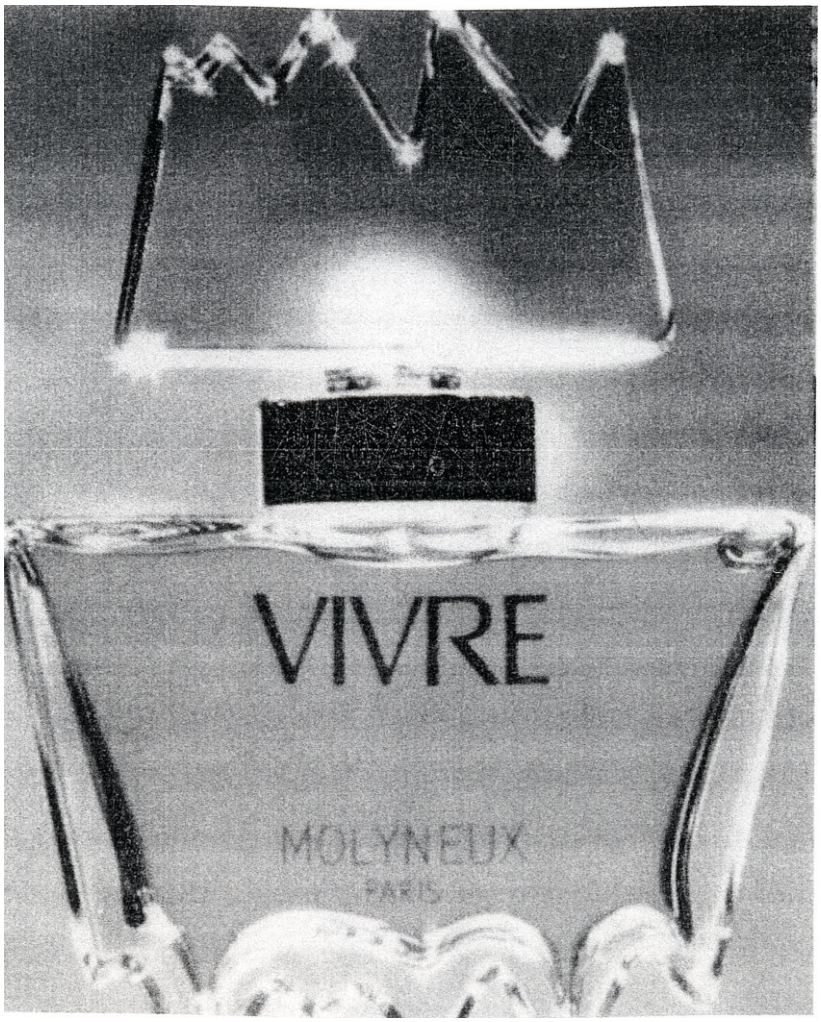
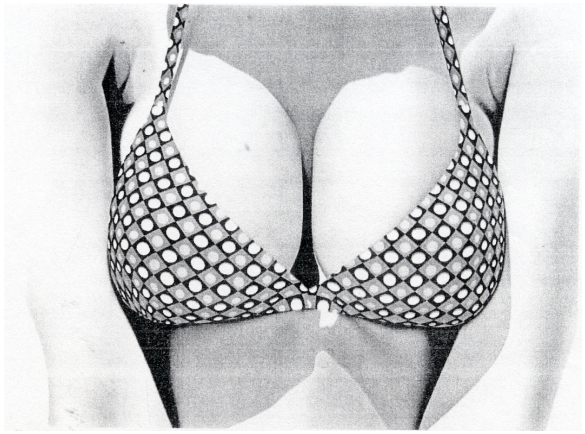


Figure 51





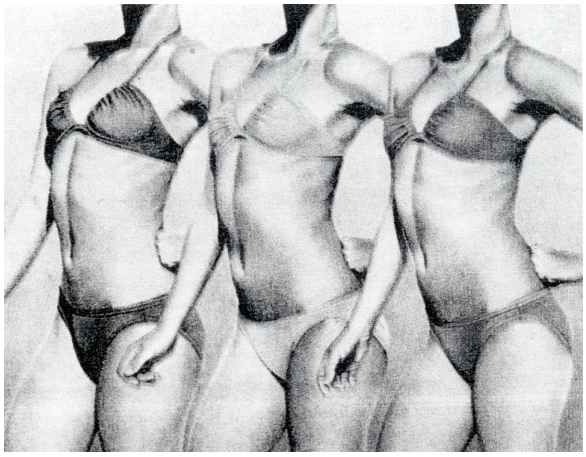


Figure 52



Figure 53



Figure 54

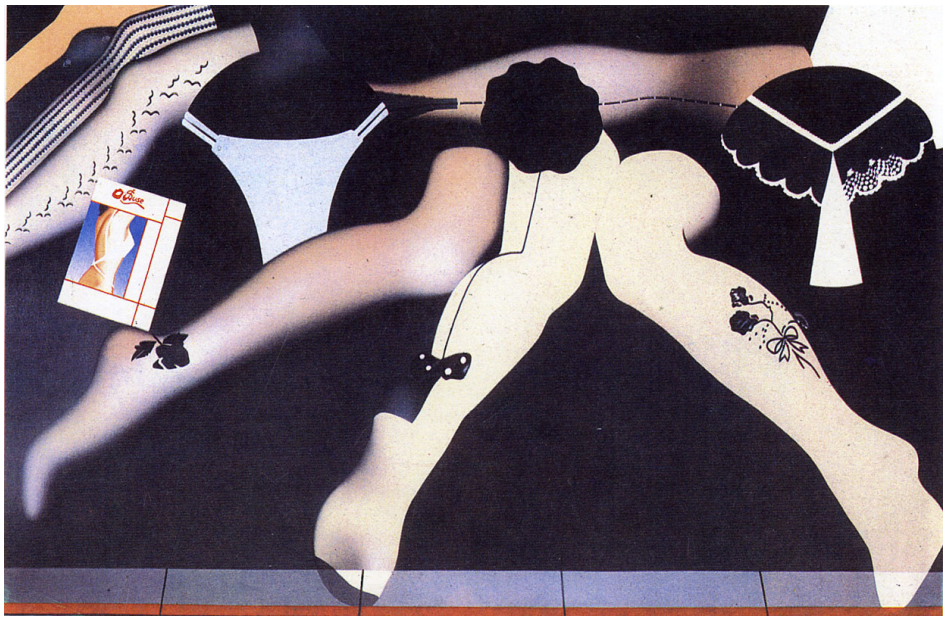


Figure 55

APPENDIX B

Interview with Füsun Onur – 09.12.2005 – Kuzguncuk, İstanbul

ÖK: What was the motivation for you to become an artist? How did you end up being the artist you are today... Can you tell me about your story....

FO: I always wanted to become a sculptress. I knew it since I was a kid. I used to make sculptures out of clay and then would put them in the oven, to cook them. Let me show you. (She takes out a horse cart made of clay, neatly colored, very detailed small sculpture, hidden in the antique cupboard in the corner) Like these... I would close my eyes and images would come to my head and I would start creating. My father was very fond of my interest. He himself had wanted to be a painter, he had sophisticated taste. He always encouraged me in my aspiration. But, I was thinking that women could not become sculpturors, only men were allowed. One day I saw this woman who was a sculpturor, at that moment I made my mind up and then I entered the Academy and the rest maybe you know... Interestingly I was among the only two students who had willingly chosen to study sculpture; because then sculpture was the department in which the unsuccessful ones, who could not make it to the painting would be sent.

ÖK: Then you went abroad... But before that, with whom did you have a chance to work with during your times at the academy?

FO: I worked with Hadi Bara... He was my teacher. He was a man with vision. He had seen where I was headed in my art. He told me that I would be passing on to abstraction as the next level and he had sensed that I would not be settled with sculpture.

ÖK: You also dedicated one of your works in his name...

İO: Yes. She loved him very much. He was very interested in her progress. He was a very tough man. He would always follow Füsun very closely.

ÖK: Did you ever consider returning back to the Academy as a lecturer?

FO: No, how could I? They were not accepting woman academicians.

ÖK: My thesis is mainly about your works and the works of your contemporaries like Ayşe Erkmen, Canan Beykal, Gülsün Karamustafa, mainly and also Nur Koçak and Tomur Atagök briefly and I am looking for the existence of a possibility in terms of a Turkish conceptual art, that

was initiated in your works in particular and were pursued by the women artists of the era... Do you believe that your art was in that sense a renovation for the Turkish visual arts? What was your problematization that ended you up in this transformation?

FO: I was not satisfied with what the volume of the sculpture was causing me to forsake in terms of spatiality. For me the occupancy, the strike (doluluk) was very crucial and sculpture was falling short in its potential of offering me the necessary space. I was mainly involved in the division and occupancy of the spaciality. I was trying to breakthrough the espace of the architecture. This was not attempted before me in arts. I did this because I was feeling the need to open up space for the viewer. I was looking for a way to invite, call upon my viewer. As a result of this search, I arrived at my re-figuration of the space and now I understand that all it had to do with the notion of time. I was also trying to grasp the time of the world and integrate it into my art. Now I draw my influence mainly from music. Because time is the music.

ÖK: In your latest works, there are a lot of repetitive patterns, symmetrical placement of objects and they all stand in harmony. So you find the melody in that of an arrangement, if I may say; and you resemble it to music?

FO: Yes, very much...

ÖK: Interesting... I liked the idea... If I may go back to the story of your adventure in arts, can you tell me more about your background? It looks like as it but is this the terrace that I had seen as the background of many of your quasi-sculpture like works?

FO: Yes.. I build them down in the basement and we photograph them on the porch. İlhan always insists that we should take a photograph of it. It was very expensive then...

ÖK: Your education after the academy?

FO: I went abroad, I was given this scholarship. I was studying at the American University in Washington, D.C. and then I transferred to Maryland Institute of College of Arts in Baltimore. Because I met this man; an artist… I was trying to find myself a job that would be relevant with arts so I started to work in his graphic studio. He advised me to transfer to Maryland, because that was more of an art school. Then I realized that it would be better for me to transfer and I did. There they gave me a separate studio, which was farther away than the other students' studios. I did not make a big fuss about it, but then one day when the jury would come to evaluate my work, they told me that I was too far away for them to come and visit me. I was a rebel as a young person, I did not like to obey, plus I was right. I told them to either move me or since they were the ones to place me here in the first place, they

had to come to me. They accepted and visited me in my place. Plus, those sculptures were too big to carry around.

I had a teacher, David Hare; I was taking his drawing class. He had a style to draw patterns from nature and everybody else in the classroom was doing works alike. I thought that this was what the course was demanding and I moved on with it. But I had my own drawings as well, the ones that I kept for myself. One day he saw them and asked me why I was still doing those patterns in class. I told him that I did not want to disrespect the class. He told me that he was a teacher and as a teacher, he would follow me wherever I go. In those paintings, I was dealing with the spatiality within the boundaries of the paper. I was dividing and re-opening the spaces available, I was experimenting. He told me to pursue them and I did. After my graduation he and my other teachers asked me if I wanted to stay or not. I thought I could not. First I was on a scholarship which had the condition of going back. My teachers assured me that it was fixable. I did not want to stay anyways. I told them that I would want to be an artist in my own country. For that, they could not say anything, so I came back.

ÖK: While you were there, you must have been exposed to works of other artists, the movements of the west… Do you think that your art was influenced then?

FO: No, not at all. I was scared to go to the art shows because I was afraid that I would be influenced and lose my own. Once on the phone one of my friends were describing a work that she had seen in an art exhibition that she had really liked and suddenly an image came to my mind. I went to see the actual work and frankly, what I had imagined was something that had taken off from a completely different resource. The work that I saw was completely different.

ÖK: After you came back, you had your first exhibition in 1969?

FO: Yes. Let me show you the works…

(For about 2 hours, she showed me her archive of all of her works. Her sister, İlhan Onur, had kept a perfect archive of her works, fully classified chronologically. Fusün Onur remembered everything but İlhan Onur was even more ambitious in terms of her memory. We talked about each of her works and the analysis of her works throughout this thesis is shaped in accordance with these talks. They are not recorded unfortunately.)

ÖK: How do you define your art in general? What are the basic characteristics in your view? Your works appear as lyrical, poetic and organic. As if it is obvious that they had been coming out of the hands of a woman… They are neatly configured, touched… What do you think?

FO: I believe in the harmony and cooperation of the mind and the senses, till the end of the process. I don't like to be direct, I do not use directly

transferred messages. I do not like slogans, I am not a sharp person, not aggressive at all. I do not know how much it has to do with me being a woman. But I have works that are more romantic than the others. But I don't believe that my early works bear the signature of a woman. They are plain, argumentative statements on what the form of sculpture or art shall be… Yes they are white and have a smoothed surface and they have the resemblance of pregnant moments but still, I am not sure. I was not producing my art through my awareness of my womanhood. When I was in the States, I was reading a lot of Nietzsche and I truly agreed then his idea of being intuitive, sensitive and creative would end up being destructive. Destruction is where I started to create my own art. I destructed the space and then re-created it.

ÖK: How was the artistic environment in Turkey, do you think you were visible enough? You had a lot of exhibitions, both in Turkey and abroad, you were actually a widely recognized artist but, was that good enough for you?

FO: I did exhibit a lot but the difficulties were always there. I mean it was not always possible to get an exhibition area available. You had to fill out forms to get the permission. Once, after I had filed my request, I did not hear from the gallery for a long while. I did not know what was going on. Then I learned that they had hesitated to exhibit my works, because nobody would buy them. Now and then those kinds of things were happening. Also somebody told me that the owner of the gallery did not like women artists. Who knows…

ÖK: Do you consider what you achieved in arts as a rupture in Turkish visual language? I mean Altan Gürman had started doing collages and non-conventional canvas works; but your works were completely on ground, they had flooded out of the sculpture and that of the canvas and were literally all around the place. Would you call this a sudden change, like a breakthrough?

FO: That I can not decide. I follow the form, wherever it takes me. There are no restrictions as to whether horizontal or vertical is better than the other. The integrated and interrelated forms excite me. I started to problematize the meaning, function and freedom of the line on the canvas. I always found pattern insincere, because it was too obvious, too quick to be recognized.

ÖK: Maybe anything too obvious lacked its poetry… I say this in a sense that metaphors and indirect connections and connotations appear as your medium of context as far as I see in your works especially in the 1980s?

FO: Maybe… Many find my works poetic and lyrical. I do not know why.

ÖK: I read one of your articles in which you were complaining about the absence of true art criticism in Turkey. Do you think that this could be

one of the reasons why you and the women artists of the period of 1970s and 1980s are not fully analyzed and studied, even today?

FÖ: Could be. The art critics of our day were not art critics, to tell you the truth. There were a lot of lobbying between the artists and these people, who later on called themselves as curators. We started out as friends but later on I realized that they were only using me and my name in some exhibitions; some of them do not call me anymore. I find it odd. Beral Madra is a self-made curator; she was never a real curator. In of our exhibitions she was called in for help and then she attained herself some sort of an authority and moved on. I do not know what she was irritated with but I later on learned that from an exhibition abroad, when they had requested my participation, she was the one to turn them down. The people of that exhibition told me about it. She had told them that I was no good for that exhibition. The curator of the exhibition came and saw my works and told me that I was exactly what he was looking for and told me about this story. What I am trying to say is that the environment was not a very professional one. Sezer Tansuğ for example is a very well known, highly published art historian in Turkey. He never mentions our names.

ÖK: Canan Beykal believes that was because he was defending another kind of an art and had consistency in that manner. He appears as a conventional art historian; he is not very fond of sub-categories or quasi-structures.

FO: I do not think so. He was a well equipped man, he knew our art and what it meant; but he was not a very nice person. That is all I can say.

ÖK: What about your relation to the material, do you think that it is a source or only a medium? What is your priority in your process of creation? Do you deal with the demands of the material, your mind or the position of the viewer or are you mainly concerned about conveying your message in a perfected format?

FO: Concept. I know that I always had the idea before anything else. Then its vision would hit me and then I work together with the material and its place of exhibition. I sometimes invite the viewer and that is of course a configuration within the composition of the work. It is calculated in that sense. I listen to the material sometimes but most of the time I choose the material that is going to work best for my work.

ÖK: Thank you very much…

FO: You're welcome…

APPENDIX C

Füsun Onur ile Söyleşi – 09.12.2005 – Kuzguncuk, İstanbul

ÖK: Füsun Hanım, sizi sanatçı olmaya iten ne oldu? Yani bugün olduğunuz sanatçıyı olmanız yönünde sizi neler geliştirdi. Önce sizin anlatmanızı rica ediyorum ben, biraz kendinizden bahsederseniz...

FO: Ben hep heykeltraş olmak isterdim. Çocukken de... Kilden heykeller yapardım, sonra fırınlardık onları. Bak göstereyim size bir tane... (Antika bir dolaptan çok detaylı yapılmış bir at arabası heykeli çıkardı, oldukça küçük ama ince ince uğraşılmış.) Bunun gibi... Gözlerimi kapatınca gözümün önüne gelirdi ben de yapardım. Babam çok önemserdi benim bu ilgimi. O da ressam olmak istermiş zaten, çok zevkliydi. Beni hep yüreklendirirdi. Ama ben o zaman kadınların heykeltraş olamayacağını sanıyordum. Sırf erkekler olur sanıyordum. Sonra bir gün gördüm ki, bir kadın vardı, heykeltraşmış, o zaman karar verdim akademiye girmeye. Sonrasını biliyorsunuzdur. İki kişiydik heykele isteyerek giren, çünkü o zaman diğer bölümlerden dökülenler kalırdı heykel bölümüne, resim daha öndeydi çünkü.

ÖK: Sonrasında yurtdışına gittiniz. Peki öncesinde akademide kimlerle çalışma fırsatı buldunuz?

FO: Hadi Bara benim hocamdı. Vizyon sahibi bir adamdı. Benim sanatımda nereye gittiğimi sezmişti. Bir süre sonra abstre'ye geçeceğimi söylemişti. Heykelde durmayacağımı o görmüştü.

ÖK: İşlerinizden birini de onun adına adadınız değil mi?...

İO: Evet. Ben çok severdim onu. Füsun'la yakından ilgilenirdi, onun gelişimiyle... Çok sert de bir adamdı ama Füsun'u hep yakından izlerdi.

ÖK: Akademiye dönüp hocalık yapmayı hiç düşündünüz mü?

FO: Yok, nasıl düşüneyim?! Kadınları almıyorlardı ki akademiye o zaman.

ÖK: Benim tezim esas olarak sizin ve çağdaşlarınız olan Ayşe Erkmen, Canan Beykal, Gülsün Karamustafa ve Nur Koçak gibi sanatçıların ve sizlerin işlerinizde, Türk Kavramsal Sanatı diye birşeyden söz etmenin mümkün olup olamayacağını sorguluyor, özellikle de sizlerin işlerinizden bunun doğmuş olabileceği ihtimalini araştırıyor. Özellikle sizler gibi dönemin kadın sanatçıları tarafından... Siz bu bağlamda işlerinizin Türk görsel

sanatları açısından bir yenilik olduğuna inanıyor musunuz? Ve siz bu dönüşümü kendi sanatınızda nasıl yakaladığınızı anlatır mısınız?

FO: Ben heykelin hacim olarak bana verdiğiyle yetinmedim çünkü mekanı daraltan birşeydi o benim için. Benim için kapsam, doluluk çok önemliydi ve heykelin potansiyeli bana bu gerekli alanı açma konusunda yetersiz kalıyordu gibi düşünüyordum. Ben alanın bölünmesi ve işgal ile ilgileniyordum. Mimarideki espace'ı kırmaya çalışıyordum. Bu benden önceki işlerde yoktu. Biraz da izleyiciye yer açma çabam vardı. Davetimi görünür etmek için bir alan arıyordum, izleyiciye seslenmek için. Bu arayışımda gördüm ki, ben alanı yeniden kurgulamışım ve şimdi bugün anlıyorum ki bunun özündeki kavram 'zaman'mış. Bir yandan da zamanı tutmaya ve işlerime katmaya çalıştım. Ama şimdi hep müzikle alakasını kuruyorum işlerimin, oradan geliyor. Çünkü zaman müziktir.

ÖK: Son işlerinizde görünür bir kendini tekrar eden düzenler var, objelerin simetrik yerleştirilmesi, hepsi bir harmoni içinde. Bu durumda bunun içinde bir melody buluyorsunuz belki, bu tarz bir aranjmanı müzikle bağdaştırıyorsunuz?

FO: Evet, çok...

ÖK: İlginç, düşününce güzel... Tekrar sizin kendi tarihinize dönersek, bana biraz daha geçmişinizden bahseder misiniz? Bu arada bu gördüğüm teras işlerinizin fonunda gördüğüm teras ve manzara sanırım, burada mı çalışıyorsunuz?

FO: Doğru, aslında aşağıda bodrumda yapıyorum ama ön tarafa çıkarıyorum fotoğfarlarını çekiyoruz. İlhan her seferinde fotoğrafını çekmek istiyor. Eskiden çok pahalıydı bu fotoğrafları çekmek!

ÖK: Akademiden sonra eğtim hayatınıza yurtdışında devam ettiniz...

FO: Dışarıya gittim, bir burs verdiler bana. Amerikan Üniversitesi, Washington'da, sonradan Maryland Institute'e geçtim, Baltimore'da. Çünkü bu, bir sanatçı adamla tanıştım. Ben iş arıyordum, sanatla alakalı olsun istedim, bir grafik stüdyosunda başladım işe. Bu adam bana Maryland'e giderseniz sizin için daha iyi olur, orası asıl sanat okuludur, bu taraf öyle değil dedi. Dinledim. Geçiş yaptım. Bana ayrı bir stüdyo verdiler ama diğer öğrenci stüdyolarıyla aynı yerde değil. Ben birşey demedim. Ama bir gün işlerimi görmeye gelecek hocalar, bana dediler ki, sen gel, orası bize çok uzak. Ben de tabi o zamanlar daha hırçınım, beni buraya siz koydunuz siz gelin dedim. Hem o kadar heykelleri nasıl taşıyacağım. Kabul ettiler, beni görmeye onlar geldi.

Sonra bir hocam vardı, David Hare, ben onun çizim dersini alıyordum. Doğadan desenler çiziyordu o, sınıfta da herkes öyle yapıyordu. Ben de ders gereğidir diye yapıyordum. Ama kendi çizimlerim de vardı, kendime sakladığım işler. Birgün hocam gördü bu işleri, neden derste diğerlerini yaptığımı sordu. Ben de saygısızlık etmek istemediğim için dedim. Ama

o bana, ben senin hocanım, benim görevim senin gittiğin yere seni takip etmek dedi. O çizimlerde de ben alanla uğraşıyordum, kağıdın sınırlarıyla. Bölüyordum, yeni alanlar açıyordum, deniyordum. Beni cesaretlendirdi o. Mezun olduktan sonra bana kal dediler ama burs gereği dönmem gerek. Kalamam dedim, işte burs var. Onlar bir çözüm bulacaklardı ama, ben kendi ülkemde sanatçı olacağım dedim, ona birşey diyemediler, ben de döndüm.

ÖK: Orada bulunduğunuz süre boyunca, pek çok sanatçının pek çok işini görme fırsatı bulmuş olmalısınız, batıdaki anlamıyla sanatı tecrübe etme fırsatı... Sizi etkilediğini düşünüyor musunuz?

FO: Yok, hiç değil, çünkü ben korkardım sergilere gitmeye, etkilenirim diye, kendi yolum kaybolur endişesi. Bir keresinde bir arkadaşım telefon açtı bana, gördüğü bir işi anlattı bir sergideki, birden gözümün önüne bir görüntü geldi. O işe bakmaya gittim ama neyseki benim gözümün önüne gelen çok başka birşeydi, o iş çok başkaydı. Ben başka kaynaktan almışım o görüntüyü.

ÖK: Döndükten sonra ilk serginizi 1969 yılında gerçekleştirdiniz?

FO: Evet ben size göstereyim o işlerimi…

(Yaklaşık 2 saat boyunca, kendi kişisel arşivinden bana bugüne kadar yapmış olduğu tüm işleri gösterdi. Çok düzenli bir şekilde kızkardeşi İlhan Onur tarafından oluşturulan bu arşiv sanatçının tüm işlerini kapsıyor. İlhan Onur, Füsun Onur'un hafızası konusunda çok daha hırslı. İşler üzerinden detaylı olarak konuştuk ancak bu bölümler maalesef kayıtlı değil.)

ÖK: Siz sanatınızı nasıl tanımlıyorsunuz? En temel özellikleri neler sizce? Örneğin lirik, şiirsel ya da organik buluyor musunuz işlerinizi bana öyle geliyor örneğin. Sanki bir kadının elinden çıktığı belli. Özenle kurgulanmış dokunulmuş. Sizce?

FO: Ben aklın ve duygunun birlikte bir harmoni içinde olması gerektiğini düşünüyorum, sonuna kadar. Direkt olmayı sevmiyorum, böyle direkt mesajları sevmem. Slogan sevmem. Ben sert biri değilimdir, saldırgan değilimdir. Ne kadarı kadın olmakla alakalı bilmiyorum. Ama bazılarına göre daha romantik olan işlerim var evet. Ama özellikle erken işlerimde hiç kadınlıktan eser yok bence. Çok düz onlar, iddiası olan işler onlar, yüzeye dair, heykelin formuna dair, sanatın ne olması gerektiğine dair. Evet hepsi beyaz ve düzgün yüzeyliler ve hamile kadınlara benziyorlar ama yine de emin değilim. Kadın olduğumun farkında olarak yapmadım ki onları ben. Amerika'dayken, Nietzsche okuyordum bolca, ve şuna çok katılıyorum, yaratıcı, hassas ve sezgisel olmak yıkıcı olmayı getiriyor beraberinde. Ben de yıkarak başladım işe. Alanı yıktım sonra tekrar yarattım.

ÖK: Döndüğünüzde Türkiye'deki sanat ortamını nasıl buldunuz? Yeterince görünür kılabildiniz mi kendinizi? Hem Türkiye'de hem dışarıda pek çok sergiye katıldınız, son derece tanınan bir sanatçısınız aslında, bunlar sizin için yeterli oldu mu?

FO: Evet çok sergiye katıldım ama zorluklar da vardı. Her zaman sergi alanı bulmak kolay değil. Formlar dolduruluyor, izin alınıyor. Bir keresinde ben izin için başvurdum, galeriden haber gelmiyor. Sonradan öğrendik ki benim işlerimi sergilemekten çekince duymuşlar, kimse almaz diyerek. Öyle şeyler oluyordu tabi. Bir keresinde de bir galeri sahibinin kadın sanatçılardan hoşlanmadığını duymuştum. Kimbilir.

ÖK: Siz yaptığınız işlerin Türk görsel dilinde bir kırılma yarattığı düşünüyor musunuz? Demek istediğim evet Altan Gürman da örneğin kanvas dışı, alışılmışların dışında birşey yaptı ama siz işlerinizi başından beri yere koydunuz, heykelden taşan resimden ödünç alan işleriniz oldu. Siz bunu bir değişim bir devrim gibi görüyor musunuz?

FO: Onu bilemiyorum. Ben formu takip ederim, beni nereye götürürse. Benim için dikey ya da yatay bir sınırlama yok, biri diğerinden üstün değildir zaten. İçiçe geçmiş ve ilişki halindeki formlar beni heyecanlandırıyor. Ben anlamı, fonksiyonu ve kanvasta çizginin özgürlüğünü tartışmaya açtım. Ben aslında deseni hep samimiyetsiz bulmuşumdur, çünkü barizdir, hemen farkedilir.

ÖK: Belki çok bariz olan herşey gibi şiirselliği yoktur içinde yeterince... Bunu metaforlar ve indirekt bağlantılar ve çağrışımlar anlamında söylüyorum çünkü sizin için bunlar özellikle 1980'lerde işlerinizin ana ekseninde yer alan bağlamlar...

FO: Belki... Çok insan benim işlerimi şiirsel ve lirik buluyor. Sebebini ben bilmiyorum.

ÖK: Bir keresinde bir yazınızda okumuştum, siz Türkiye'de gerçek sanat eleştirisinin yokluğundan yakınıyordunuz. Sizce bu, 1970 -1980 dönemine rastlayan kadın sanatçıların yeterince anlaşılamamasını ve yeterince incelenmemiş olmasını getirmiş olabilir mi?

FÖ: Olabilir. Bizim zamanımızın sanat eleştirmenleri sanat eleştirmeni değildi ki. Hep lobi vardı, sonra kuratör oldular hepsi. Biz hepimiz arkadaşlar olarak başladık ama sonra ben anladım ki aynı sergide yer alarak adımı kullanmış benim, şimdi aramıyorlar bile. Beral Madra mesela, kendi kendini kuratör yaptı, hiçbir zaman kuratör değildi. Biz onu bizim sergilere yardım etsin diye çağırırdık. Could be. The art critics of our day were not art critics, to tell you the truth. Oradan yürüdü. Neyden rahatsız olduğunu bilmiyorum ama bir keresinde benim bir yurtdışı sergisine davetim vardı, onu almayın demiş onlara benim için. Bana da sergiyi düzenleyenler anlattı. Gelip benim işlerimi görünce tabiki aldılar beni. Sezer Tansuğ mesela, çok basılırdı, tarihçiydi o, sanat tarihçisi, ama bizden hiç bahsetmedi.

ÖK: Canan Beykal'ın söylediği, onun bu işleri sanat olarak kabul etmediği yönünde, o yüzden dahil etmiyordu eleştirilerine. Daha gelenekçi bir sanat tarihçisiydi, bu bağlamda tutarlıydı, ara kategoriler ve heykelimsi formlarla ilgilenmiyordu belki.

FO: Yok, hiç öyle değil. Donanımlı bir adamdı, elbetteki biliyordu sanatımızı, işlerimizi ve ne anlama geldiğini ama iyi bi adam değildi. O kadarını söyleyebilirim.

ÖK: Malzemeyle olan ilişkinizi nasıl tanımlıyorsunuz? Bir kaynak mı yoksa bir araç mı? Yaratım sürecinde size dikte ettiği birşeyler oluyor mu? Malzemenin ihtiyaçlarına kulak veriyor musunuz?

FO: Kavram. Önce fikir geliyor. Sonra onun görüntüsü geliyor bana ve malzemeyle ve onun sergileneceği yerle birlikte çalışmaya başlıyorum. Bazen seyirciyi de dahil ediyorum, tabi bu işin kompozisyonu dahilinde kurgulanabilir birşeyse. Böyle hesaplıyorum. Dinliyorum tabi malzemeyi, hangisi çalışacaksa, onu kullanıyorum.

ÖK: Çok teşekkürler…

FO: Birşey değil…

APPENDIX D

Interview with Ayşe Erkmen/02.12.2005 19:00, Cihangir, No:18, Istanbul.

ÖK:
Thanks for inviting me first of all…

I am working on a thesis where I am looking for the answers of a question that basically deals with your art and the Turkish women artists who are you contemporaries, asking if it is possible to categorize your art as a new art form in Turkish Contemporary Art converging to the conceptual art of the west...

Before asking particular questions regarding your artistic production and perspective, I would like you talk about your adventure as an artist? How and where did you inherit your art and your unique artistic language?

AE:
Well your assumption in terms of relating our work to that of the western conceptual art is a correct one. But in our times when we were in the academy, there was not much in terms of international interaction. We did not get to see much of what was happening abroad in terms of new art. Unlike today, there were no books, no magazines; and we weren't much aware of what we were doing. In order to say that there was some sort of an influence, there has to be awareness. There were restrictions in terms of traveling and then there were the financial inabilities, plus not even the books were coming in. That's why one tends to define conceptual art as innate; born from within. I was an art student and it must have come out of my individual questioning of art as to what I was doing, why I was doing it.

ÖK:
How did you come with the challenge you proposed with your art, as far as I know you had a classic education of sculpture…

AE:
Yes, I did study sculpture but my works were different from the very beginning. Of course I had to do what the system had demanded, I had to do all the scholarly assignments, had to work with ceramics, metals, but all these obligations tended to direct to me to another way, my way as I see it now. But because I wasn't very aware of it, I didn't know exactly what I was doing, so I didn't know where it came from but I guess all I wanted was to do something 'new', I looked for it. Maybe I was thinking that the education that was offered to us was a little old-fashioned. So because of this learning process taking a long time, it was becoming too late to be aware but; I think I was quiet lucky in a sense because Şadi Çalık was one of my teachers, he

was very supportive of me and all kinds of experimental works and ideas. I studied basic design, with Altan Gürman and Ercüment Kalmık.

ÖK:
So in a way maybe we can say that you were exposed to the western understanding of art, because the basic design curriculum was based on the principles that arose with Bauhaus, and then shaped minimalism, which were actually the history behind the western conceptual art… Altan Gürman came from abroad, with a lot west's influence on him as well…

AE:
Yes, right, true, for example I attended classes from the architectural discipline; that fed me as well. That class was my favorite, I felt like then that all that there was to know was in that class.

ÖK:
Thinking in terms of the times of 1960s as the legacy behind the 70s and 80s, all of which seem to have their very different characteristics political wise and social wise, how do you see yourself as an artist of those times and also a citizen, like do you think what the times had brought affected your art? Do you find your art political for example?

AE:
I believe that art itself is political. I think and I was thinking so in those times as well, political art should not mean to be direct in matters. I believe in order to be political in art, what is political in art in that matter must go under some transformations, and the political art of those times was very direct, incisive. The sculptures and objects used were very sharp, aggressive and the colors were flashy, explosive.

ÖK:
Yours are rather lyrical in that sense… Do you think so?

AE:
Maybe… The political art works of the time were very pessimistic, but I am not in favor of the idea that art and politics should meet in this kind of a platform. Anything political should be filtered in order to become art, that's what I think and that was what I was thinking then.

ÖK:
How did you integrate the political atmosphere of those times into your art, or how were you affected if not as an artist, as a citizen for example? Can you say not affected at all?

AE:
Of course I was affected, I must have. Because the civilian police was everywhere, ID checks were regularity; those times were such times a student like you today can not imagine. Thank god, you can't imagine.

ÖK:

Yes… You are right. There is also another thing that strikes my attention as I look deeper into your times. You and your contemporaries, who appear on the artistic scene with their new forms, new artistic language, are mainly women. Bearing in mind the oppressive nature of those times, I find it odd; interestingly you are all women and you go public with your art… How do you evaluate the case?

AE:
Yes true but this was not only about fine arts.

ÖK:
Right, literature and popular culture, women were appearing in those circles as well…

AE:
Exactly… But I don't know the reason why, I can't. But what you say is true, the women artists were more on the front. It is the same today; I guess in contemporary art, women are more active.

ÖK:
My thesis is based mainly on the quest for the emergence of a 3D art in Turkey and despite the fact that Altan Gürman for example did works that converged to conceptual art using ready-mades or opening up space within the pictorial canvas for other objects, like his collages; but it was mainly women who ended up being the pioneers of this transformation. You for example, dealt mainly with intervention to localities. That was new for Turkish art and we may say that it came out of your art. You could have stayed in sculpture but you went forward. How did this come through, how did you decide to base your art on 3D which exceeded that of the sculpture?

AE:
Yes. I think I had a tendency to escape anything that was immobile, stable and permanent. All works of art have a life span. The process… The exhibitions are done, some things are displayed like your problematic issue for that time; and then those things go back to where they came from or they just disappear. So I tried to work forward in the matters of disappearance and this 'time' issue. The affect of being a woman in this case is all about the notion of locality. Women are more domestic so they seem to belong to localities more than anyone else. But I can not give an answer to that. A man could have thought of it, too; but my motivation was all about being temporary; not being stable or permanent. For example they sometimes commission me to do a stable work of art, I accept it but still I desire that work to go under some transformations in time. The most obvious example in this sense is my work that I did with benches in Germany. I wanted them to be heated during the winter and not heated during summer. Then what happens is that my benches enter the same process of living with their surroundings. So in winter it becomes a work of art whereas in summer it is just an ordinary bench. As the houses are heated in winter, the benches are heated likewise. It is an art, then it is not, then it is art back again…

ÖK:
So you, in a way, also, are questioning what could actually be art…

AE:
Yes, of course, I keep doing that in every work of my art.

ÖK:
And maybe it also comes with the question of who the artist is… For example you once took some stones from the streets and placed them in the gallery. Stones that could have drawn anyone's attention and would stood without the label of art. Somebody else could have noticed them, but they became art when you spotted them and re-located them. Reminds me of Marcel Duchamp, who when he came out with his famous Fountain, told everyone that it was an art because he, the artist himself said so… What do you think about this, the idea of the signature and the artist's identity during the process?

AE:
But Duchamp meant exactly the opposite? He was being ironic…

ÖK:
Of course, he was being sarcastic about it.

AE:
I always tell my students not to sign their pieces for example. Not every work of an artist or an art student or whoever that is interested in art, is a work of art. I am also against the fact that it is so elevated, the position of the artist, God-like. So Duchamp too was making fun of it, he was positioning himself against this convention.

ÖK:
Sure. What about your relation to the material? Do you pick it up after the birth of your idea or do you find reference in too that might as well shape your idea further? Is it just a tool or also a resource?

AE:
The idea of course comes before the material. Then I start thinking how this idea will ever become a form. I mean all kinds of forms are flying around in your head and where you begin is actually a mystery. But the material is very important, I mean what the material requires, what it demands has a significance.

ÖK:
Maybe sometimes the material itself directs you to your art…

AE:
It could be, but also, which material would reflect the idea the best in the first place is an important concern. Light or heavy, strong or fragile; what that idea you have is looking for… And then there are the demands of the material. Those two have to be combined. Of course the more you get

acquainted with the material; your idea gets affected from it. The capabilities of the material may change the idea, feed the idea. What that material has the potential for; I mean they constantly communicate with each other; the artist has to listen to it.

ÖK:
So the material itself is an important part of the process, not just a tool…

AE:
Yes it is, maybe it is because I studied sculpture in the first place.

ÖK:
Your background being in sculpture, I once read in one of your interviews that you did not see yourself as someone who radically went against the conventionalities; because you thought that your art was not very distant than that of the discipline of sculpture… May I ask you to further your thoughts on this? For example you had been doing your sculptures even in academy as faceless. You were stepping out of the discipline but you thought it to be only an extension of sculpture?

AE:
Yes I said that, and I think so. I still name my work as sculpture.

ÖK:
For example, your contemporaries who had their education in peinture, claim that what they do today is completely different and that their art is actually a breakthrough compared to their learned conventionalities. The more I read and look into it, I can not find a logic that could point out a linear unfolding which would eventually arrive at a Turkish Conceptual Art; the transition from the 2D works to 3D works seems to me like a rupture in Turkish artistic representation. But here you are, somehow claiming that even though what you did was different and new, the discipline of sculpture already had that potential in it and you just explored it. Can we say that?

AE:
Yes, I really believe that what I do today is sculpture.

ÖK:
Michelangelo in his last years had done some incredible and fascinatingly early works for his times, like the Dying Slaves and the Rondinni Pieta; unfinished works some say but they keep transforming I think. Somehow maybe those works were hinting what you are saying; that the stone had the potential to exceed its attributes.

AE:
You are right. Have you seen those sculptures? They are incredible. That's exactly what I mean. I think they are also a process in themselves; that is the idea in them.

ÖK:
What about your relation to language? I mean, the idea that language as words, both in a pictorial and conceptual sense, being integrated to artistic representation; how do you evaluate this?

AE:
I too use language in my art, and I see it as another material. If language is the closest way that will take me to my idea I use it. I for example did a piece in Germany, still there in Kreuzberg, which was about the '-miş'li' past tense that we use in Turkish. I did many versions of it; I did the letters out of plexi-glass; I did a film version; I did it a version that was engravings on a curtain… As my piece was traveling from one place to another, I kept changing it. As you go from one place to another it has to change. But if you want me explain language as it is…

ÖK:
I mean for example after the science of semiotics came to be; the idea that there was a signified, signifier and the sign; language being a representation on its own and being similar to art in that sense; bearing concepts behind the scene of the actual writing of the letters, how the conceptual artists abroad took off from as they included language, sometimes only language into their art; how do you see this perspective? Where does language stand in art? Do you think it is a problematic issue to be challenged through art?

AE:
But that changes from person to person. I mean all individual works of art have their own problematic. Of course there are works that use the language very properly, very right in its place; and then there are some works that use language just to use it, just to make people read. Some use it like a knowledge show-off. Language shall be discussed separately for each work of art.

ÖK:
So, you think that language is not an inevitable material in art… One can do without it…

AE:
No not at all, has no superiority.

ÖK:
What about aesthetics? How do you define aesthetics? Through beauty or functionality…

AE:
Within this transformation that I'm talking about, there is the aesthetics of course. While an idea becomes a form, it brings its own aesthetics with it. But of course it is aesthetics in quotes; according to whom kind of a way… Is it beautiful, or does it have to be beautiful? Sometimes it has to be not beautiful. Just like every work of art has its own material, it has its own way of appearing. But in a way I believe in quality. Even if you want to make

something not good; you are supposed to do in the best way you can. For example Wim Wenders says this about the movie Easy Rider: “It is a good movie because the script is good, the actor is a good actor, Dennis Hopper is a good director, and so on…” So in order for something to be good, some other things of quality have to come together. Those things may be of different qualities but at the end, they have to come together in an impressive form. It’s like writing a novel about love but not all of them are good. It’s all about how you put it together.

ÖK:
Ok. There is also another thing that I find worth exploring. A work of art is something tangible, I mean as physical as it can be; can be touched, can be seen; it is meant to be experienced by a third person at least. So it has to be called as finished or has its own time-to-be-seen whereas in conceptual art; there is the concept which is just the opposite. It can not be touched. It is a never-ending process. It is a mental process, something impossible to convert to a 3D physicality. What do you think about this? Is it a contradiction for you, too; something that causes tension within your artistic production?

AE:
Exactly… For example they sometimes do not give me deadlines but I tell them to give me deadline otherwise I can not stop. Because it will never end, my work will never be finished.

ÖK:
Then the interaction with the viewer starts, that is another dimension as well.

AE:
True…

ÖK:
Another thing that interests me about conceptual art is that, when it was defined as it is in the western contemporary world, it was as if the notion of concept never existed before as part of the art. How come?

AE:
Yes it was there, it must have been. Maybe it was just a matter of…

ÖK:
…definition, naming, categorizing?

AE:
Maybe it was because there was no such movement before. They came as a crowd and they exposed themselves all at once…

ÖK:
Maybe it was also because they were doing something so radical that they had to write manifestos, put some ideological proof in text in order to explain what and why they were doing. It was the same for you actually,

how did you if I may call it, defend yourselves, as artists who were practicing a rather new and different form of art?

AE:
You know we did many exhibitions, like the 'Yeni Eğilimler' and the 'ABCD'. There was also one that was called '123'. They were all self-organized attempts; we found the money, the place to exhibit, we picked each other. We chose the artists for example and this was why we were highly criticized. Still, I believe that we did something very important for Turkey because in one of our latest shows in AKM, there were long lines of people who came to see our art. What we did was something that the youth was looking forward to, who was curious about. This also was something new for that period.

ÖK:
What kind of criticisms you had to cope with and how did you manage to cope with them?

AE:
We were criticized very harshly and very stupidly. They looked at our art and asked "is this art" but the worst of all was the ignorance, the invisibility that we had to deal with. That still is a problem, even for today. But despite that strong ignorance and extended invisibility, we still kept on producing our art. For that, one has to be very stubborn.

ÖK:
Yes you could go public with these exhibitions. Plus there were many galleries being opened here and there. Then some social classes who had been gaining more social status as a result of their increasing financial power, started to be interested in art as collectors.

AE:
But the people invested their money in painting more than anything else; because they wanted to invest their money into something that was not a stranger to them. They could put the paintings up on their walls. Nobody ever invested in my art so far, not in Turkey; yes they put some money into my art abroad but never here. Because the art-collectors here only pay for the things they know what to do with.

ÖK:
Right; and then there is the fact that the kind of art like your art can not be surrendered, can not be captured in a single closed environment. It is hard to place it in a corner of a house.

AE:
No, not that dramatic. You can easily place it in a corner of a house. But it is hard for them to realize it, or somebody has to explain them how. They obviously do not want to be challenged.

ÖK:
They find it problematic maybe, not that easy to accept. In a way, this could be a success in terms of your art. Maybe because your art is political in that sense, forces people to think about it…

AE:
Right!

ÖK:
How do you see the viewer, where do you position the viewer in terms of your art? Do you consider the viewer's position beforehand like the re-creator of the work or as another dynamic which could add to your art or extend it?

AE:
Sometimes I seriously spend time to establish a place for the viewer within my work; as to for example where the viewer will stand; how they will enter the work… Sometimes I realize that I haven't spare free space for the viewer to view the work. Or shall I spare or not, that is also another question. Will the viewer step inside the work, or just will watch it from a distance. Is their participation required? For example my latest ferry-work; I mean that would not have worked if the viewers were not involved, if they had shown no interest. For that work in particular, there was the risk of it being a failure since it very much depended on the viewers' participation. All that investment would go waste if nobody would ever come. Three ferries were being brought from the other end of the world and the people in Frankfurt could have shown no interest. The work would have collapsed entirely then. Without the people, that work of art would not work. So there are works that very much depend on its viewer whereas there are works that are completely ignorant and careless of the people that might view them.

ÖK:
What about the notion of memory? I mean localities have a memory, bodies too; materials and objects have their memory; and as the works of art change places or change hands; do you think that these work as transformative dynamics causing the art works to change meaning along the way? This is a heavy concept on its own; must have directed you in your relation with the places you intervene for example. How do you escape the memory that locality bears or do you escape; how do you integrate it to your art? Or is it just another issue which only becomes a concern for you only for some of your works?

AE:
I actually do not deal with the memory very much. I believe it is a very romantic concept. It attracts very easily; an easy tool for temptation. Of course I deal with it to the extend you mentioned. For example I used it once but tried to represent it with the objects of the current time. I try not to be romantic as much as I can while I deal with memory. It doesn't make sense to camouflage today with that of the past; what counts is to bring the memory of the past to day and make it seen, visible.

ÖK:
I asked this mainly because of the illusionary concept of time that is being created by the post-modernity. I mean there is the notion of the 'loss of memory'; and also there is the fact that everything becomes a matter of history very quickly; everything is experienced simultaneously but at the same time as all is being duplicated; all appears as a copy of a copy of a copy; like re-created phenomena, as Baudlliard mentions, simulacrum. And artists can not help but deal with this issue; this disappearances; loss of the sense of time and memory. Yes it is romantic in a sense because it is usually attributed with the feelings of longing and missing; but I'm trying to question to what extend it remains to be a problematic within your art?

AE:
That is why one should not exploit this problematic; because it is exploitable. You also exploit the position of the viewer against this particular notion. They are easily attracted to it and you know it. It is important for me and for my art to avoid these easy, already known ways; like attractions and temptations. That is one of the things I keep challenging. Is it too easy, too direct or too obvious? But from time to time I decide to do something very easy and beautiful… But memory remains to be a source of problem in my art; even if I use it, I tend to escape the romanticism it bears. I try to terminate its romantic character.

ÖK:
As an artist, do you see yourself as someone with a mission; mobilizing masses, conveying your messages in order to teach people or let them see certain things; wake them?

AE:
For example they say; this artist has represented Turkey. I do not believe these kinds of representations. This is ridiculous. Everybody represents themselves only. What am I to convey? I lived here and my art already speaks for itself, for its geography. But I do not feel like I should transmit this or that message… For example the work that I mentioned to you about the Turkish past tense '-miş'; that was very Turkish in nature. But I did not do it to produce something that would be Turkish; I did that because that particular aspect of Turkish grammar was very interesting. There is no right or wrong or good or bad in this. It was some story that I wanted to tell. What attracted me most about this tense was that it was a tense that eased to lie; to bullshit; to let go off the responsibility or the burden of ownership; it was the tense of the imagination. These tempted me, but maybe they would not work with another person. So I did not intend to look for and find anything correct; I just dealt with what interested me. Still it has nothing to do with being Turkish, it is very personal. Because, I personally felt the lack of an equal tense in English; you have to form longer sentences to get to the same meaning. But it is very straight-forward in Turkish and it is soft at the same time, too. It is also a state where one is not quite sure of himself; where he can also make fun of himself. Something you can not joke about in another country, speaking another language.

ÖK:
Yes, right; but I was mainly asking if you ever felt the need to make a statement through your art. Like for example, a message that you wanted to convey and maybe you thought art was a tool in that sense?

AE:
I would not do it through my art, I'd rather tell it. If they ask my opinion, I'd say it or write it. But it is also hidden within art itself and it should be hidden.

ÖK:
Final question… When you look behind, thinking about yourself and your art as well as your contemporary artist friends who are also women, producing this rather new art in Turkey; do you see yourself and your friends as a group who set the pace; who created a turning point; who rose to the occasion and twisted the Turkish art history; cause a rupture? How do you evaluate your era?

AE:
I believe that I opened some venues for Turkish art but this should not be something that I may have the right to say. It must be something that the others should look into and research and conclude.

ÖK:
Thanks a lot for the opportunity.

AE:
You are welcome anytime. I am sure other questions will come up as you move along, just let me know… I thank you; as long as good stuff comes out of it. ☺

APPENDIX E

Ayşe Erkmen ile Söyleşi / 02.12.2005 19:00, Cihangir, No:18, Istanbul.

ÖK:
Öncelikle beni kabul ettiğiniz için teşekkür ederiml…

Benim tezim esasen sizin ve çağdaşlarınız olan kadın sanatçıların ve sanatınızın Türk çağdaş sanatı düşünüldüğünde yeni bir form olarak adlandırılıp adlandırılamayacağı ve sanatınızın batıdaki tanımıyla kavramsal sanatla ne kadar örtüştüğü ile ilgili...

Sorularıma geçmeden önce ben aslında sizin ne düşündüğünüzü merak ediyorum... Bu doğrultuda mesela siz kendi sanatsal tarihinizi nasıl görüyorsunuz, size ait olduğunu söyleyebileceğiniz görsel dilinizi nasıl ve nereden adapte ettiğinizi düşünüyorsunuz... İsterseniz bunlarla başlayabiliriz.

AE:
Doğru düşünmüşsünüz, yani batıdaki anlamıyla kavramsal sanata olan yakınlığımız açısından. Ancak o dönemde, biz akademideyken, pek öyle haberimiz yoktu batıda olanlardan. Oradaki yeni sanatı görme şansımız yoktu. Bugün gibi değildi, kitaplar, dergiler yoktu, biz de yaptığımızın pek farkında olarak yapmıyorduk. Etkilendiğimizi söylemek zor, farkında olmak lazım önce çünkü. İşte seyahat engelleri vardı, maddi imkanlar kısıtlıydı, hem kitap bile gelmiyordu. Belki bizim kavramsal sanatımızı daha içten gelen, daha doğuştan gibi düşünmek gerek. Benim açımdan, ben öğrenciyken yaptığım işleri, sanatı sorgularken doğdu.

ÖK:
Siz bildiğim kadarıyla klasik heykel eğitimi gördünüz, peki nasıl oldu da şu anki sanatınızda görülen sorgulayıcılığa ulaştınız, bu önermeyi nasıl keşfettiniz?

AE:
Evet, heykel okudum ama benim işlerim başından beri farklıydı. Tabi, eğitimin gerekliliklerini yerine getirmek zorundaydım, seramik çalıştım, metalle çalıştım ama ne yaptıysam beni hep başka bir yere yönlendirdi, şu an yaptığıma yani. Pek farkında değildim, tam bilmiyordum ne yaptığımı ama sanırım sonuçta 'yeni' birşeyler yapmak istiyor olmamdan kaynaklanıyor, o zaman da bunu arıyordum. Galiba biraz da bize verdikleri eğitimin demode olduğunu düşünüyordum. Bu öğrenme süreci uzun sürüyor. Ama ben şanslıydım, Şadi Çalık benim hocalarımdan biriydi ve bizim böyle deneysel işlerimizi desteklerdi.

ÖK:
Başka kimler hocalarınız oldu?

AE:
Altan Gürman ve Ercüment Kalmık'tan temel sanat eğitimi aldım.
ÖK:
Bu durumda aslında biraz da olsa batıdaki anlayışa yakın bir eğitim aldınız, sonuçta temel sanat eğitimi batıda Bauhaus ile ortaya çıkan prensiplere dayanan bir müfredata sahip sanıyorum, minimalizme de katkı sağlayan bir yaklaşım, kavramsal sanatın tarihinde önemli yeri var... Ayrıca Altan Gürman da yurtdışından gelmişti sanıyorum ve belli bir etkilenmesi söz konusuydu?

AE:
Doğrudur. Ama ben mimariden dersler aldım, beni çok beslemiştir. Mimariden aldığım dersler en sevdiğim derslerdi. Öğrenilecek ne varsa orda öğreniyorum gibi gelirdi.

ÖK:
Peki, 1960lardan 1980lere kadar olan süreci düşündüğünüzde, pek çok farklı sosyo-politik açılımı olan bir dönem, olaylı vs, siz kendinizi bir vatandaş olarak o günlerde nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz ve bu sürecin sizin sanatınıza nasıl bir katkısı olduğunu düşünüyorsunuz? Mesela sanatınızı politik buluyor musunuz, özellikle o dönem için...

AE:
Bence zaten sanat politik birşey. O zaman da aynı şeyi düşünüyordum. Politik sanat yapmak demek herşeyi açıkça söylemek değildir ama. Sanatta politik olmak için, politik olan mevzunun bazı değişimler geçirmesi gerektiğini düşünüyorum. O zamanın politik sanatı çok sivriydi. Heykeller çok sertti, keskindi. Renkler çok patlıyordu. Ben bunu kastetmiyorum.

ÖK:
Sizin işleriniz bu bağlamda daha lirik... Katılıyor musunuz?

AE:
Bilmiyorum belki... O zamanın politik işleri çok karamsardı ben politika ve sanatın böyle bir platformda buluşmasından yana değilim. Politik olan birşeyin sanat olması için belli bir filtreden geçmesi gerek. O zaman da böyle düşünüyordum.

ÖK:
O zamanın o politik ortamını kendi sanatınıza nasıl entegre ettiniz, ya da bir sanatçı, bir vatandaş olarak etkilendiniz mi? Belki de etkilenmediniz?

AE:
Yok tabi ki etkilendim, etkilenmiş olmalıyım. Çünkü sivil polis heryerdeydi. Mesela kimlik kontrolleri yapılırdı. Şimdi sizin gibi bir öğrencinin hayal edemeyeceği günlerdi onlar. Neyseki hayal etmeniz dahi zor.

ÖK:

Evet, haklısınız... O zamanlara daha yakından baktığımda dikkatimi çeken başka birşey daha var. Siz ve çağdaşınız olan sanatçılar, sanat ortamlarına yeni formlarla, yeni bir görsel dille giriş yapıyorsunuz ve çoğunuz kadınsınız. O zamanların baskıcı ortamını da göz önüne aldığımda, bunu tuhaf buluyorum; çoğunuz kadınsınız ama hiç olmadığı kadar görünürsünüz, sergiler yapıyorsunuz. Sizin yorumunuz nedir bununla ilgili?
AE:
Evet ama bu sadece güzel sanatlarda değildi.

ÖK:
Doğru, edebiyatta, popüler kültürde de kadın sanatçılar beliriyordu.

AE:
Öyle... Ama ben bilemem tabi nedenini. Dediğiniz doğru ama, genelde önde kadınlar vardı. Bugün de öyle, çağdaş sanata bakın, kadın sanatçılar daha aktif, daha kalabalık.

ÖK:
Benim tezim esas olarak Türkiye'de 3 boyutlu sanatın nasıl ortaya çıktığına da değinme çabasında. Mesela, Altan Gürman son derece erken sayılabilecek kolajlar yapmıştı, bu yolun başı gibiydi yaklaşımı, kanvası başka objelere açtı, hazır-objeler kullandı ama bu anlamda asıl geçiş döneminde kadınlar bu değişimin öncüsü konumundalar. Siz mesela, mekana müdaheleyle ilgilisiniz asıl olarak. Bu Türk sanatı için yeni birşeydi diyebiliriz ve sizin işlerinizden çıktı bu yol. Benim sorum sizi bu yola yönelten ne oldu, yani heykeli aşan bir üç-boyutluluğa nasıl ulaştınız?

AE:
Sanırım benim sabit olan, hareketsiz olandan kaçınmak yönünde bir eğilimim de vardı. Her işin kendine ait bir ömrü var. Süreçtir bu... Sergiler yapılır, o zamanki meseleniz neyse işiniz onu yansıtır ama sonra o iş de o mesele gibi geldiği yere döner ya da kaybolur. Bu yüzden ben bu ortadan kaybolmayla 'zaman'ın kendisiyle ilgilendim. Sanırım kadın olmak da beni mekana bağlayan şey oldu belki. Kadınlar daha evcildir hani, mekana herkesten çok onlar aittir. Tabi benim düşündüğümü bir erkek de düşünebilir ama benim derdim geçici olmakla ilgiliydi, kalıcı olmamak, sabit olmamak. Mesela bazen benden bir sergi için iş istiyorlar, kabul ediyorum ama bir taraftan da o işin zamanla kendi kendine değişmesini arzu ediyorum. Bu şeyde çok barizdi mesela, benim Almanya'da banklarla yaptığım işimde. O işimi biliyor musunuz? Ben o bankların kışın ısıtılmasını istedim. O zaman ne oluyor, banklar da çevrenin yaşadığına dahil olmuş oluyor. İş de kışın bir sanat eseri olurken, yazın olmuyor. Tıpkı kışın evlerin de ısıtılması gibi, banklar da ısınacaktı. Şimdi bir sanat, bir sanat değil, bir sanat bir değil...

ÖK:
Bu durumda bir taraftan da neyin sanat eseri olabileceğini sorguluyorsunuz?

AE:
Tabi ki, her işimde yapıyorum bunu.

ÖK:
Belki bu ‘sanatçı’nın kim olduğu sorusuyla da alakalıdır. Mesela siz bir işinizde, sokaktan taşları alıp galeriye taşımıştınız. Herhangi birinin dikkatini çekebilecek taşları siz farkettiniz ve onları sanat eseri olarak etiketleyerek içeriye aldınız. Başkası dışarıda görse sadece taş olacaklardı ama siz gördüğünüz ve yer değiştirttiğiniz için sanata dönüştüler. Marcel Duchamp gibi bir nevi. Şu meşhur pisuar, sanatçı bu sanattır dediği için sanat olması bir objenin. Siz bu konuda ne düşünüyorsunuz, yani sanatçının kimliği, imzası, sanatın ne olduğu konusunda ne kadar belirleyici?

AE:
Ama aslında Duchamp başka bişey söylemeye çalışıyordu orada değil mi? Ironi vardı onun yaptığında, dalga geçiyordu?

ÖK:
Evet, o alay ediyordu.

AE:
Yok ben mesela öğrencilerime de her zaman söylerim işlerini imzalamamalarını. Çünkü her sanatçının ya da sanatla ilgilenen kişinin yaptığı her iş sanat değil. Ben bu sanatçının abartılmasına da karşıyım, tanrı gibi. Duchamp alay ediyordu, karşı çıkıyordu bu duruma.

ÖK:
Tabiki. Peki, başka bir soru... Malzemeyle olan ilişkinizi nasıl tanımlıyorsunuz? Sizin için bir araçtan mı ibaret malzeme yoksa işin oluşumu sırasında fikrinizi de şekillendiren, size kaynak yaratan, sizi besleyen başka bir eleman mı? Yani araç mı yoksa ötesi var mı?

AE:
Fikir önce gelir tabiki. Sonra ben bu fikrin nasıl forma dönüşeceğine bakarım. Yani bir fikir oluştuğında her çeşit form aklınızda uçuşmaya başlar aslında başlarken herşey bir muamma. Ama tabi malzeme önemlidir, onun da talepleri olur, bunun da anlamı var.

ÖK:
Belki bazen işinize yön de verebilir, ya da bir fikre götürebilir sizi?

AE:
Olabilir ama ilk önce asıl fikri en iyi gösterecek olan malzeme nedir diye düşünmek gerek. Hafif mi ağır mı, narin mi kuvvetli mi, sizin fikrinizin neyi aradığı önemli. Ondan sonra malzemenin talepleri gelir. O ikisini birleştirmek gerek. Tabi malzemeyle yakınlaştıkça, ondan da fikirler doğar. Malzemenin potansiyeli vardır, belli bir iletişimi vardır kendi içinde, sanatçının buna kulak vermesi gerek.

ÖK:
Bu durumda malzeme de sürecin önemli bir parçası yalnızca bir araç değil.

AE:

Evet ama belki bu benim herşeyden önce bir heykeltraş olmamdan kaynaklanıyor olabilir.

ÖK:
Heykelden geliyor olmanız konusunda, bir röportajınızda okumuştum, alışılagelmişliklerin bu kadar karşısında bir sanatınız olmasına rağmen, işlerinizin heykelden çok da uzak olmadığını düşündüğünüzü söylemişsiniz. Bunu biraz açar mısınız? Örneğin akademideki heykellerinizi yüzsüz çalıştığınızı biliyorum. Heykel disiplinin dışına taşarken belki bunun sadece heykelin bir uzantısı olduğunu düşünüyordunuz?

AE:
Evet öyle demiştim ve öyle düşünüyorum. Ben işlerime hala heykel diyorum.

ÖK:
Örneğin, çağdaşlarınızdan resim geleneğinden gelenlerden, bugün yaptıkları sanatı çok farklı niteleyenler ve hatta devrimsel bir tarafı olduğunu düşünenler var. Ben okudukça ve inceledikçe, pek doğal ve olağan bir seyir göremiyorum, özellikle Türkiye'de kavramsal sanatın ortaya çıkması açısından ya da 2 boyuttan 3 boyuta geçilmesi konusunda, bana sanki orada birşeyler kırılmış gibi geliyor. Ama siz, işlerinizin yenilikçi olduğunu kabul etseniz de bir yerde, aslen heykelde var olan bir potansiyeli ortaya çıkarmaktan ve keşfetmekten ibaret gibi konumluyorsunuz.... Ya da doğru mu ifade ediyorum, bilmiyorum?

AE:
Hayır, evet, ben gerçekten işlerimin heykel olduğunu düşünüyorum.

ÖK:
Michelangelo son yıllarında çok etkileyici ve zamanı için oldukça yeni adledilen işler yapmıştı, bu Dying Slave ve Rondinni Pieta gibi; bitmemiş işler gibi görünüyorlardı ama aslında sanki kendi içlerinde dönüşüyorlar, oluşuyorlardı. Belki bu işler sizin söylediklerinize örnek bir yerde, yani mermerin özniteliklerini aşabileceği kendine has bir potansiyelinin olması.

AE:
Evet, haklısınız. O işleri gördünüz mü? Çok inanılmaz. Öyle birşey evet. Onlar da kendi içlerinde bir süreci yaşıyorlar, sürecin kendisi olarak, onlardaki fikir bu bence.

ÖK:
Peki, dille olan bağınız nedir? Kastettiğim kelimeler, yazılı dil, hem görsel hem de kavramsal anlamda, sanatsal temsile eklemlenmesini nasıl yorumluyorsunuz?

AE:
Ben de işlerimde yazı kullanıyorum o da bir başka malzeme. Eğer benim fikrimi iletmem için en iyi yol yazı ise, onu kullanıyorum. Örneğin Almanya'da yaptığım bir işim vardı, hala ordadır sanırım Kreuzberg'de,

‘miş-li’ geçmiş zamanla alakalı bir işti, birçok versiyonunu da yaptım sonradan. Plexi-glass’tan harfler yaptım, film yaptım, sonra perdeye baskı yaptım. Şimdi iş ordan oraya dolaşırken, durmadan değiştirdim ben onu. Bir yerden bir yere giderken değişmek zorunda. Ama bu arada, dili olduğu gibi anlatmamdan bahsediyorsanız...

ÖK:
Yok hayır mesela ben semiyotiğin bir bilim haline gelmesi, fikrin gösterilen, gösteren ve işaret rollerine bürünmesi, dilin özünde bir temsil olması ve bu anlamda sanata olan yakınlığı, perde arkasında sanki varolan kavramların bir yansıması gibi yazılı harflerin varlığı vs; ve batıda kavram sanatçıların yazıyı sanatlarına eklemlemiş olmaları ve bazen sadece ‘dil’den ibaret işler ortaya koymaları, siz bunu nasıl görüyorsunuz? Yani dil sanatın neresinde? Bunun da sanat üzerinden sorgulanacak bir mesele olduğuna inanıyor musunuz?

AE:
Ama şimdi bu kişiden kişiye göre değişir. Yani her işin kendine ait bir meselesi var. Tabi bazı işler var dil çok yerli yerinde kullanılmış, bazı işler var yazı sadece kendini okutmak için kullanılmış. Bazıları dili bir de gösteriş için kullanıyor. Dil meselesi her iş için ayrı konuşulmalı.

ÖK:
Bu durumda yazılı dil sanatın olmazsa olmaz bir malzemesi değil, onsuz da oluyor?

AE:
Tabi ki, hiçbir üstünlüğü yok.

ÖK:
Peki, estetiği nasıl tanımlıyorsunuz, form mu işlevsellik mi?

AE:
Tabi şimdi benim bu bahsettiğim dönüşümün içinde estetik boyutu da var. Fikir forma dönüşürken, kendi estetiğini beraberinde getiriyor. Tabi estetik tırnak içine burada, çünkü neye göre kime göre meselesi var. Güzel mi, güzel olmalı mı? Bazen olmak zorunda değil. Nasıl her işin kendi malzemesi varsa, her işin kendine göre bir de nasıl görüneceği meselesi var. Ama ben kaliteye inanıyorum. Birşeyi iyi göstermek istemiyor bile olsanız, bunu en iyi şekilde yapmak gerek. Mesela Wim Wenders ‘Easy Rider’ filmi için şey demiş, “iyi film çünkü senaryo iyi, oyuncu iyi, Dennis Hopper iyi yönetmen vs”... birşeyin iyi olması için, tüm elemanların iyi olması ve bir araya gelmesi gerek. Hepsi ayrı kalitede de olabilir ama etkileyici bir formda buluşmalılar. Mesela çok aşk romanı var, hepsi güzel değil. Herşey nasıl bir araya geldiğiyle alakalı.

ÖK:
Peki... İncelemek istediğim konulardan bir tanesi de şu... Bir sanat eseri aslında çok somut, çok dokunulabilir birşey, yani fiziksel anlamda, görülebilir, dokunulabilir, yani bir üçüncü kişi bunu tecrübe edebilir. Yani

‘bu oldu’ denilecek bir an gelir, ya da görünür olacağı an neyse ona erişilir ama kavramsal sanatta sanki bu yok, tanımı gereği konuşuyorum, kavram dediğimiz tam tersi. Dokunulamaz. Bitmek bilmez bir süreç olabilir. Zihinsel bir süreç, aslında 3 boyuta indirgemesi olanaksız birşey. Bu konuda ne düşünüyorsunuz? Sizce de bu bir çelişki mi, siz kendi sanatsal üretiminizde bunu hissediyor musunuz?

AE:
Tabi ki... Mesela bazen bana en son şu gün demezler ama verin diyorum ben yoksa duramıyorum, o iş bitmiyor. Çünkü sonu yok, yaptığım iş bir türlü nihayete ermiyor bazen.

ÖK:
Bir noktadan sonra da seyirciyle olan etkileşim başlıyor, bu da bir başka boyut...

AE:
Doğru...

ÖK:
Bana ilginç gelen bir başka konu da... Batı da adını ‘kavramsal sanat’ koydukları bir akım olagelmeden önce sanki ‘kavram’ sanatın hiçbir zaman parçası olmamış gibi bir durum var. Bu nasıl oluyor?

AE:
Yok tabi ki vardı, olmaz mı, belki bu sadece bir nevi şey meselesi...

ÖK:
...tanımalama, adını koyma, kategorize etme?

AE:
Yoktu tabi bundan önce böyle bir akım olarak yoktu. Kalabalık birşekilde görünür olunca akım gerçekleşiyor.

ÖK:
Belki de zamanına göre çok daha radikal bir açılım olduğundan dolayı, adını koymak hakkında yazmak ve belki bu fikir etrafında bir araya gelmek durumunda kaldılar, açıklamak, anlaşılır kılmak için. Aslında sizin için de benzer bir durum doğabilirdi, siz nasıl savundunuz yaptığınız işleri, yeni olması ve farklı olması nasıl bir durumda bırakıyordu sizi?

AE:
Biliyorsunuzdur biz birçok sergi yaptık, işte Yeni Eğilimler vardı, ABCD vardı, 123 vardı. Hep kendi kendimize yaptık, para bulduk, sergileyecek alan bulduk. Birbirimizi seçtik. Mesela bu yüzden çok eleştirildik. Ama ben hala o zaman Türkiye için çok önemli birşey yaptığımıza inanıyorum. Bizim son sergilerimizden birinde AKM’nin önünde kuyruklar vardı. Bizim o zaman yaptığımız gençliğin takip ettiği, merakla beklediği birşeydi. O zaman için yeniydi tabi.

ÖK:
Ne gibi eleştirilere maruz kaldınız ve bunlarla nasıl savaştınız?

AE:
Aslında çok acımasızca, biraz da saçma eleştirdiler bizi. İşlerimize baktılar, "bunun neresi sanat" dediler. Genel tavır görmezden gelmekti tabi, görünmezlikle uğraştık. Bu hala sorun, bugün bile. Ama bu kuvvetli görmezden gelme ve görünmezliğe rağmen, biz işler çıkarmaya devam ettik. Bunun için inatçı olmak lazım.

ÖK:
Evet, işlerinizi kamu önünde sergileme şansınız oldu. Hem o dönemde de galeriler çok aktifti, yenileri açılıyordu vs. Ve bu arada, güçlenen ve eli para gören bir kesim de sanata koleksiyonerler olarak ilgi duymaya başladı.

AE:
Ama tabi insanlar paralarını resme yatırdılar, çünkü o tanıdık birşey. Duvara asabilirler resmi. Kimse benim işlerimle ilgilenmedi o anlamda mesela Türkiye'de, evet yurtdışında para koyanlar oldu ama burada olmadı hiç. Tabi buradaki koleksiyonerler alınca ne yapacaklarını bilecekleri şeye para veriyorlar.

ÖK:
Tabi ama bir yandan da şu var ki: sizin işleriniz gibi işleri zaptetmesi zor, kapalı bir ortama hapsolması güç. Evin bir köşesine konulacak işler değil çoğu.

AE:
Yoo, o kadar da dramatik değil, evin bir köşesinde de durabilir. Ama anlamaları zor ya da birilerinin anlatması gerek. Zora gelmek istemiyorlar.

ÖK:
Belki de problematik buluyorlar, kabul etmesi zor. Aslında bu bir açıdan sizin işlerinizin bir başarısı olarak da algılanabilir. Yani işlerinizin politik olması bir nevi, insanları sorgulamaya yöneltmesi.

AE:
Doğru!

ÖK:
Peki, seyirciyi işinize göre nereye konumluyorsunuz? Onun da bu 'süreç'te rolü var mı bir yaratan gibi, işi geliştirebilir ya da ona ekleme yapabilir mi katılımıyla ya da sadece varlığıyla, ya da yeniden yaratılması demek olabilir seyircinin varlığı?

AE:
Bazen işimin içinde seyirciye yer bırakmak, yer açmak için ciddi şekilde mesai harcıyorum. Nerede duracaklar, işe nerede girecekler. Bazen bir farkediyorum, seyirciye alan bırakmamışım. Belki de bırakmamalıyım, bu da

başka bir sorun. Seyirci işin içine adım atmalı mı, ya da bir mesafeden mi seyretmeli. Katılımını bekliyor mu bu iş? Mesela benim son işim bu vapurlar, eğer seyirci katılmasaydı çalışmazdı. Özel olarak o iş için, başarısız olma ihtimali vardı seyirci katılmasaydı, ilgi duymasaydı. O kadar para boşa gidecekti eğer kimse gelmeseydi. Düşünün dünyanın bir ucundan üç vapur geliyor ve Frankfurt'tan hiçkimse ilgilenmiyor. Tamamen çökerdi o iş. Seyirci olmadan o iş çalışmazdı. Yani seyirciye dayanan iş var, dayanmayan da var. Bazı işler seyirciyi yoksayan işler, orada olması birşeyi değiştirmeyen işler.

ÖK:
Peki hafıza konusunda ne düşünüyorsunuz? Şu bağlamda soruyorum, mekanların aynı bedenlerin olduğu gibi bir hafızası var ve yer değiştiren, el değiştiren işlerin değişmesi gibi, mekanın da kendi içinde dönüştüren bir dinamiği olabilir mi? Bu çok ağır bir konu aslında ve belki de sizi işlerinizde yönlendirmiş olabilir. Şöyle ki, siz mekana müdahele ediyorsunuz ve oradaki hafızada bir kopuş yaratıyorsunuz ya da oranın hafızasından kaçınamıyorsunuz ve işinize dahil ediyorsunuz. Ya da belki bu herhangi bir kavram sizce, pek bir özelliği yok?

AE:
Ben aslen o kadar derin ilgilenmiyorum hafızayla. Bana fazla romantik geliyor. İnsanları çeken bir tarafı var, cazibesi var. Tabi ki uğraştığım oluyor, sizin bahsettiğiniz ölçüde. Mesela bir keresinde, objeleri kendi zamanlarında temsil etmek adına kullandım hafızayı. Hafızayla uğraşırken romantik olmaktan kaçınmaya çalışıyorum. Şimdi zamanı geçmişle kamufle etmek bana anlamlı gelmiyor; belki geçmişi bugüne taşıyıp görünür kılmak anlamlı olabilir.

ÖK:
Ben bunu soruyorum çünkü post-modern zamanların hafızayı biraz ilüzyona dönüştüren bir doğası var. Yani bu hafıza kaybı meselesi ve de herşeyin çok hızla geçmişin bir parçası haline geliyor olması. Herşey aynı anda birlikte yaşanıyor ve çoğaltılıyor; herşeyin kopyanın kopyası olması meselesi, tekrar yaratılması, Baudlliard'ın dediği gibi, simulasyon. Tabi sanatçılar da bu konuyu ele alıyor; zaman ve hafıza algısının kaybolması. Romantik evet bu özlem duygusu vs ama yine de sormak istiyorum, sizin işleriniz açısından bunu problematize ettiğiniz durumlar oluyor mu?

AE:
İşte bu yüzden istismar etmemek gerekiyor çünkü sömürüye çok açık. Bu açıdan bakılınca seyircinin konumlandırılması da sömürüye açık. Çabuk etkileniyorlar. Benim için bu kolay, bilinen yolları işlerimden uzak tutmak önemli; bu etkilenmeler, cazibeler. O yüzden sorguluyorum ben. Çok mu kolay oldu, çok mu bariz, çok mu direkt? Ama bazen ben de durup kolay ve güzel bir iş çıkarıyorum... Ama hafıza özelinde, evet bir mesele olarak işlerimde yer bulsa da, bu içindeki romantizmden kaçınıyorum. Romantik doğasını yok etmeye uğraşıyorum.

ÖK:

Bir sanatçı olarak, kendinizi misyon sahibi olarak görüyor musunuz, yani kitleleri harekete geçirmek, mesajınızı iletirken birşeyler öğretmek insanlara, birşeyleri değiştirmek, aydınlatmak gibi emelleriniz söz konusu oluyor mu?

AE:
Mesela diyorlar ki bu sanatçı Türkiye'yi temsil ediyor. Ben bu temsillere inanmıyorum. Saçma. Herkes kendini temsil ediyor. Ben neyin mesajını taşıyorum. Ben burada yaşadım ve işlerim de bunu anlatıyor zaten, bu coğrafyadan geliyor. Bunu bir mesaj olarak iletmem gerektiğine inanmıyorum. Bu bahsettiğim 'miş-li' geçmiş zaman işim alabildiğine Türk bir iş sonuçta. Ama ben bunu Türk olsun diye yapmadım. Türkçenin bu yönü çok ilginç olduğu için yaptım. Bunun içinde doğru, yanlış, iyi, kötü yok. Bu benim anlatmak istediğim bir öyküydü, anlattım. Bu zamanla ilgili benim ilgimi çeken, Türkçe'de bunun yalan söylemek, ya da palavra atmak, ya da sorumluluktan kaçmak için kullanılması. Bir yerde hayal gücünü konuşturuyor. Bu beni çekti ama belki başkası için çalışmayacaktı. Ben bir doğru aramadım, beni ilgilendiren şeyle ilgilendim. Çünkü ben bu iş özelinde, hani İngilizce'de olmaması böyle bir zamanın, bunu anlatmak için İngilizce'de daha uzun cümleler kurmak gerekiyor. Ama Türkçe'de çok net ve yumuşak da. Bir de tabi bu zamanda kişinin ne söylediğinden tam emin olmaması durumu da var, kendisiyle dalga geçmesi. Bununla bir başka ülkede, bir başka dilde şaka yapmak mümkün değil.

ÖK:
Yok tabi ki ama benim asıl sormak istediğim siz işleriniz aracılığıyla bir beyanatta bulunuyor musunuz yönündeydi. Mesela, sanat bu bağlamda sizin iletmek istediğiniz mesajı ilettiğiniz bir araç mı?

AE:
Yok ben bunu işlerim üzerinden yapmam, ben bunu söylerim. Eğer fikrimi sorarlarsa söylerim ya da yazarım. Tabi ki işlerimde de gizlidir, ama gizli olması gerek zaten.

ÖK:
Peki bir son soru... Geçmişe dönüp baktığınızda, kendi tarihinizi, işlerinizi ve çağdaşınız olan diğer kadın sanatçıları düşündüğünüzde, Türkiye'deki bu yeni sanatın öncüleri olduğunuzu, bu dönüşümü gerçekleştirenlerden olduğunuzu ve belki bunu tetiklediğinizi ve hatta değişime sebep olduğunuzu düşünüyor musunuz? Bahsettiğim kırılmayı sahipleniyor musunuz? Sizin sanatınız bunun neresinde yer alıyor?

AE:
Tabi ben bir çok yol açtığımıza inanıyorum ama bu benim söyleyebileceğim birşey olmamalı. Başkalarının buna bakması ve araştırması lazım.

ÖK:
Zaman verdiğiniz için teşekkür ederim Ayşe Hanım.

AE:

Ne zaman isterseniz, mutlaka başka sorular da çıkacaktır, çalıştıkça konuşalım... Güzel birşey ortaya çıktığı sürece ben teşekkür ederim tabiki...

APPENDIX F

Interview with Canan Beykal – Suadiye – 08.01.2006

ÖK: What exactly was your motivation to start practicing art and pursuing a life as an artist? In other words why did you become an artist: you had a mission to accomplish, was it innate and inevitably in your nature, is it a direct result of the social or political responsibility you have as a world citizen or is it just a very personal ambition to 'sign', to leave your trace behind…

CB: The only thing that has directed, navigated and guided me in my work is my tendencies and my tendencies only... The rest is all that has been attributed to you and to your art, everything else is associations that were configured later on. My art or my mission was not programmed from the beginning. It is definitely not about creating a unique signature, cause as I said my purpose was never to attain the new in the form, it was not a purpose; or it is not about leaving a mark behind, not to the extent of entering the collection of a museum. On the other hand, having a mission or a socio-political responsibility is not about being an artist; it is about being an intellectual.

I am not the one to decide if my art had avant-garde characteristics or not but I am fully aware of the fact that my artistic expression differed to the fact that the conventional ways were not sufficient for me, they were not enough to successfully convey my thoughts, ideas. This was obvious in my personal development, especially in my theoretical studies, following my graduation. Towards the end of 1970s, this theoretical aspect started with the abandoning of the conventional forms and materials in art and what I started in 1979 as the transfer of the opportunities of semiotic expressions into art, was documented my first exhibition, which was an audio-visual show, in 1981 called "İzm-ler". What was the core of this transformation can not be explained in a formal development. Because, despite what we have been thought, I had became aware of the fact that just like in philosophy, the thing to transform the form, especially in arts and painting; would have to be the 'reality' the 'truth' itself. If what you mean by idealism is its philosophical meaning, of course it is inevitable to link it with conceptuality; because what makes the art of painting a mental activity is this problem of the truth itself. As the art of painting attempts to achieve the ultimate formal expression of the truth itself; it is forced to realize this transformation through a series of mental transformation. So, long before conceptual art was defined as it had been in the west; the discipline of art was a philosophical question for me which had a conceptual basis underneath.

ÖK: Considering the visual expression in your works that may be acknowledged as avant-garde for its time; how did you end up in challenging these issues within the limits of artistic representation but reaching beyond conventionalities?

CB: Definitely the arena where I was trying to get even with the art of painting was its transformation from the 2-Dimensionality to 3-Dimensionality which was all about the representation of reality and its limits of possibility. To tell the truth I did not care about what the others were doing in that particular period.

ÖK: The conflicts between the left and the right in terms of politics, the military coup of the 1970 and 1980, the prosecutions, the banning of the courts, the years of 1970s to 1980s were a period of depression, tension and uncertainty, insecurity. How did you as a citizen, lived through that period, how did it reflect in your life and how did it, if it ever did, surface in your art?

CB: My position in that particular period was very obvious in my writings, my reviews and my reactions. In short, throughout that period, taking shelter in my identity of being an artist and benefiting from the artist's immunity; I did not hesitate to react to what was going on. I was someone with political preferences who had openly laid these choices down in my works both in practice and theory.

I had referred to that period as the Renaissance of the Youth in one of my writings. Truly, the youth of that period, especially the ones that I had a chance to know, were the second most literate generation this country had ever seen. They had a wide spectrum of interests, and could never get enough of discussing, questioning and challenging. That is why they were very equipped to perceive this world from a completely different perspective and on that account they were even more learned than their teachers. Their most difficult dilemma was most probably what I meant by idealism, their romanticism in that sense as I would call it. They really believed that they would be able to change the world with their bare hands. What happened afterwards proved just the opposite though. In my personal view, in that period of political destructions and massacres, many were wasted for nothing.

ÖK: Within the specific period mentioned above, what was the difference between having a background in the academy, or abroad, or having been raised by the masters in their ateliers? How do you orientate yourself when you think of your own resume?

CB: In this particular period, being a part of the Academy was truly important in the sense that it was the only institution for education in arts. Despite its institutional nature, it was still a place to choose and to be chosen.

But, especially for the particular period, the young people who were to become artists also had the potential to become intellectuals and the education offered by the Academy was not enough. At least it was not enough for me. The academic doctrines and the authority of the academy were all about the formalist relation of the master and its apprentice. What you had to realize was that it was a time in which you had to learn the discipline but at the same time consciously avoid the danger of being an ordinary artist. You might laugh it when I say this but I truly believe that especially for the young artists the existence of boundaries and limits pre-defined in arts makes them even more creative to out-rule those conventionalities and come out with their own style. Thinking that there are no other platforms existing for the young artists to be fed upon other than that of the academy, the people of academy, the professors and the young artists are nevertheless different than the rest of the society, they are crazier in a sense just like they should be, and that is a good thing.

In terms of my personal background, I grew up in Cihangir, which inevitably meant to be surrounded by the people from the Academy (I used to play in its backyard, went to the high school next to it) and intellectuals; I could get to know some important painters of the period. Compared to my teachers with whom I studied in their ateliers, I was luckier in the sense that with the help of the elective courses that were not available in their times, I was more equipped. There was another environment in which I could develop myself further outside the academy. What I am trying to say is that my difference compared to the others was about my background before the academy but I could only become aware of this when I started the academy. But in every students' story of coming to academy, there is someone who must have seen the difference in them and guide them towards the academy.

Personally I think that one of the main factors that complicated the process of art-making was the understanding that arts for women were more like a hobby that would add their nature more of a grace and transform them into more emotional, sensual people whereas it was for men that arts were considered as an area of profession. This was of course discrimination. It meant that your intelligence, your culture and your creativity potential would not be rightfully evaluated. To tell you the truth, my struggle and my fight with everything that I had been criticizing in terms of norms of authority; was not a big success. Every piece of authority that I tried to breakthrough and surpass was bordering the beginning of another authority. Maybe it would be clever to bear in mind the inexperience of youth and wrong set of choices and preferences. The solution to the individual dilemmas does not only depend on your personal choices and struggles. We truly believed in the freedom of nations to decide their own faith but we were failing to achieve to claim the same freedom for ourselves because we were less powerful over against the masculine, patriarchal interdependence/cooperation which was very strong in manners of protection and preservation. These of course are only my opinions, maybe other women artists do not share the same views, maybe I was not

clever enough to overcome the difficulties of being a woman, maybe the others did not feel the burden of being a woman at all.

ÖK: How do you relate this transformation to your identity as a woman?

CB: It is impossible for me to say that I was openly dealing with the issue of being a woman in my works, even though I was living through the dilemma of being a woman inside out. The woman artists of the period were women but their works were masculine. Maybe my prior identity was being a woman but my sub-identity was masculine. In the 90s I thought of the problematization of being a woman more of an international issue than a local issue that was to be dealing with individual identities. I was dealing with the 'self' concept very much through my works in that period and inevitably I could not approach to the problem of identity by dealing with my identity, because I was already questioning the problem of belonging and not-belonging. Attributing adjectives to identities or to values that form these identities is I believe a process of nationalization. These are forbidden zones for me. That is why I started to deal with personalities that were exempted from these kinds of identities like that of the children. Actually I do not care much about the identity; I do not understand why everybody thinks that I problematize this in my works. Actually I could not care less. I do not find it interesting for a woman to be busy with her womanhood or her private life; for example I don't find anything interesting or extraordinary in the works of Tracey Emin. I do not care about her private life at the end of the day.

ÖK: During the process of your artistic production, what is your relation to the material? Do you take the material as one of your sources of influence, as one of the determinant elements within the work itself that demands the needs of the final work (if it can ever be finalized) and guides the process or is it only another medium that serves the purpose of the context and is sculptured according to the demands of the concept?

CB: Whichever material is the best medium that would carry my idea that is what I use. To accept the material as a source of reference or influence is no different from the conventional methods. If you give the priority to the idea as the creator force, theory and practice form an inseparable whole. Material is not important, not as important as they say so. There is no good or bad material but there is compatible material. Every material brings with it its own demands and authority and the worst would be to let the idea be directed with the needs of the material. My material or my medium is the simplest, or sometimes it even does not exist. For example writing/text is something like this; it even does not have a dimension, I sometimes only use its ghostly appearance. It would be wrong to say that there is unbreakable bond with me and the material. If you are using a medium, any kind of medium, after a while you are forced to speak its language.

ÖK: Compared to the contemporary art of the world, how do you position the art in Turkey, where do you think your art stands in this comparison? Could your art be the avant-garde of the conceptuality in Turkey or was it a natural unfolding of the Turkish art history or was it the delayed birth of the alternative in art? If you believe that it was a natural unfolding, would you be able to acknowledge that this kind of art in Turkey had its unique texture that was specific to this geography to this culture and because of this aspect what emerged in this locality was beyond imitation?

CB: Considering the opportunities available in Turkey, the artists of the period did successful catch the spirit of the time (zeitgeist) but their visibility was delayed; but it is unnecessary to evaluate this as local and different. I personally think that for the first time in this period that our artists could meet at a common spirit and mentality. If they were not understood enough, the reason of this problem should be seek for in the attitudes of the people and institutions that were dealing indirectly with arts that time. I mean the people who ran galleries, curators who returned back to business, and the art critics who were taking sides with the market in their gallery exhibitions. Plus we did not have any analysts or viewers during that period. I personally find it very natural that the art of the period then was reacted and criticized against.

ÖK: How definitive do you think that the choice and naming of the artist is in terms of defining and deciding a work to be a work of art?

CB: What we know since Duchamp is that the choice of the artist is the first determinant of what is an art work and this method has long before substituted the conventional models of creation. Nevertheless, this does not mean that art can not be criticized or evaluated outside the concept and context which the artist had attributed to his or her arts.

ÖK: Thinking the art of Kosuth and Beuys for example, how do you evaluate the integration of language and text into the visual representation? How possible would you say it is the co-existence of text and image and the readymade together in a singular work of art in terms of connotations, semiotics and their inter-relations as elements side by side?

CB: Language since it was the actual physical appearance of the idea was my medium in arts since 1979 and 1980.

ÖK: Who do you think were the influential figures preceding your art in Turkey; as both names from the west and from Turkey? How much of the conceptual art practice in Turkey was imported and how much of it was configured in this locality? For example Altan Gürman and the Basic Design education or the influence of Bauhaus in that sense?

CB: The art movements that were against the formal art which were Dadaism, Constructivism (the Russian wing), or in general anti-art movements, were never fully practiced in Turkey. The Turkish artists actually

avoided these art movements. But cubism was fully practiced and applied. Abstract, figurative expressionism was widely accepted, even in the academy. The reason for this was that they were easily transferable formal movements; they did not have disrespect against what was already known as art. All the others were fighting against arts, trying to overthrow it; what would be left if they would succeed and arts would be destructed, wasn't this dangerous?

When it comes to Bauhaus, that is what I do not agree with you. Before the foundation of the Basic Design department in the Academy, the German teachers who had been raised in Bauhaus ecolé had already founded the Marmara Fine Arts Academy towards the end of 1950s. The reason for its foundation was of course all about to create an organic relation between the industry and that of the arts of design; in order to serve the needs of the industry. For both of these institutions it was not the foundation of the Basic Design department that helped or changed anything or modernized the arts in Turkey. Even if the basic principles of design and their integration into the curriculum in both in Academy and in Marmara had any effect in the modernization of arts in Turkey, it was not major. But, especially in the academy, Basic Design education and the conventional atelier education were in complete disharmony. Even today, this education, in both schools needs to be renovated immediately in accordance with the new technologies.

ÖK: Whose legacy do you think you had inherited and onto whom do you think you are passing it on?

CB: There was nothing in the Turkish arts that I could inherit into my own art; but inevitably all that was before me in the history of art was a part of my interpretation. I do not care who will pursue the legacy of mine or I do not also agree or care about the fact that my art is a legacy or not.

ÖK: Do you believe that in Turkey, in that particular time, there existed a determining authority when it was a matter of the definition of art and how political was this existence or this absence? In terms of financial investments, the appearance of a social class that gained the power to buy art to start family collections but at the same time in terms of political freedom, the fact that the space where ideas were to blossom was contracting; what kind of opportune or available moments you saw to continue to produce your art or what were your indispensables that you could not sacrifice?

While the freedoms were not very freely being practiced, the period in question was also famous for the newly emerging, enriching middle class who had started to invest in the Turkish art and the art galleries were growing in number; do you think this is contradictory?

CB: In that particular period something definitely was impacted because of all those tensions and everything but it is hard to say that the arts were ever affected. The period was very productive in the sense that despite the

non-reactionary attitude of painting and sculpture against the censoring view of the government; the increasing number of independent art galleries creating a market for both art buyers and the artists who sold their art did breakthrough the authority of the academy and the arts were handed over to a free art market. My works in which I was also questioning these kinds of relation were right at this period. I truly believed that arts were not meant to be viewed or sold or bought, should never be. I also wrote about these things. I was thinking that we were going through times where the arts were becoming a subject to a commercial consumption rather than a cultural consumption. Actually this was always the case but it was newly being experienced in Turkey. It was not a contradiction, that the economic freedoms were freely practiced whereas political freedoms were banned. Capital was demanding consistency and therefore was in favor of the repressive regimes as it was the case throughout the history. The military coups were never done against the authorities of the economy nor the right wing ideologies that favored suppression. The regimes that were established afterwards proved this right. As an economist you would know better, that during that devaluation of the period, painting was an asset, a clever investment; this was a case very special to Turkey.

ÖK: Where do you position the viewer? Within the process of artistic production, as a determining factor or only as a role player?

CB: The involvement of the spectator within the art work is not a necessity. Arts are of course not hermeneutic. It is of course something to be defined and completed with the viewer. What is art what is not, what is the use of art, what if it is never there anymore; if an art work is proposing a question about these, it definitely requires participation. This does not have to be a physical participation. My viewer needs to know how to read and write, at least. But at the same time I do not believe that the creation is mutual.

ÖK: What kind of a formation do you think that the artwork would be going through after it would be laid down in the gallery? Is this a continuous process, or at least rhythmic that is divided but harmonious and in consistency in terms of its evolution?

CB: I truly believe that the art work has a life span, it has a life on its own, it has to have. According to me, whichever area that the arts leak into after they are created they shall be considered to have signed their own death. I believe that this leaking of the arts into the public sphere will bring another kind of isolation, alienation, despite what is expected of this intercourse of the arts and the city. For my works, I think that they are too delicate to be brought out of the preserved environment of the gallery. I believe that my works are out of the circle of that selling and buying and carry with them their own loneliness and they require equipment to protect and preserve them. I sometimes create works that even lack a single object, whose existence you can only sense them;

weak in terms of its material (photography, text, or just pure imagery), sometimes even dimension-less.

ÖK: With which emotion would you associate your work with? I am asking in order to understand your own perception, your own associations that you construct between you and your works… I find your works along with the works of other women artists of the period appearing as lyrical, poetic…

CB: I can not name an emotion. If you find it lyrical that is your interpretation. You are free on that account.

APPENDIX G

Canan Beykal ile Söyleşi – Suadiye – 08.01.2006

ÖK: Sanatla uğraşmaya başlamanızın ve sanatçı olmaya karar vermenizin ardındaki sebep neydi? Başka bir deyişle, neden sanatçı oldunuz: tamamlamanız gereken bir görev vardı, doğuştan gelen ve doğanızda var olan bir şey miydi, bir dünya vatandaşı olarak sahip olduğunuz toplumsal veya siyasi sorumluluğun doğrudan bir sonucu muydu, yoksa yalnızca son derece kişisel bir "imzalama", ardında iz bırakma hırsı mıydı...

CB: Mesleğimde beni yönlendiren, bana yol gösteren ve bana rehberlik eden tek şey eğilimlerim ve eğilimlerimdi... Gerisi tamamen size ve sanatınıza atfedilenlerdir; herşey daha sonra biçimlendirilen çağrışımlardır. Sanatım veya misyonum, baştan programlanmış değildi. Eşsiz bir imza yaratmak ile kesinlikle ilgisi yok çünkü belirttiğim gibi, amacım hiçbir zaman biçimde yeniyi elde etmek değildi. Bir müzenin koleksiyonuna dahil olmak için ardımda bir iz bırakmak da değildi amacım. Öte yandan, bir misyon veya sosyo-politik sorumluluk sahibi olmak sanatçılıkla değil, entelektüel olmakla ilgilidir.

Sanatımın avant-garde özellikleri olup olmadığına karar verecek olan ben değilim fakat sanatsal anlatımımın, konvansiyonel yöntemlerin benim için yetersiz kalması açısından farklılaştığının farkındayım; zira bu yöntemler düşüncelerimi ve fikirlerimi ifade etmekte yeterli değildi. Kişisel gelişimimde bu çok açıkça görülüyordu; özellikle de mezuniyetimi takip eden teorik çalışmalarımda. 1970'lerin sonuna doğru, sanatın konvansiyonel biçim ve materyallerini terk etmekle bu teorik tarafı ortaya çıktı ve semiotik ifadelerin fırsatlarını sanata transfer etmekle 1979'da başladığım şey görsel-işitsel bir gösteri olarak 1981'deki "İzm-ler" adlı ilk sergimde yer aldı. Bu dönüşümün özünde ne olduğu biçimsel bir gelişimle açıklanamaz çünkü bize öğretilenlere rağmen, tıpkı felsefede olduğu gibi, özellikle sanat ve resimde biçimi değiştirenin "gerçekliğin", "doğrunun" kendisi olması gerektiğini farkettim. Eğer idealizmden kastettiğiniz onun felsefi anlamı ise, elbette bunu kavramsallığa bağlamak kaçınılmazdır; çünkü resmin sanatını zihinsel bir faaliyet yapan, bu gerçeklik problemidir. Resim sanatı gerçekliğin en iyi biçimsel anlatımına ulaşmaya çalıştığından, bu dönüşüme bir dizi zihinsel dönüşümden geçerek varmak zorundadır. Dolayısıyla, kavramsal sanatın batıda tanımlandığı şekliyle tanımlanmasından çok önce, sanat disiplini benim için altında kavramsal bir temel yatan felsefi bir soruydu.

ÖK: Çalışmalarınızdaki, dönemi için avant-garde kabul edilebilecek görsel anlatım göz önünde bulundurulduğunda, bu konularla sanatsal betimlemenin sınırları dahilinde mücadele edip alışılmışın ötesine ulaşmanız nasıl gerçekleşti?

CB: Resim sanatıyla hesaplaştığım alan kesinlikle iki boyutluluktan üç boyutluluğa dönüşümüydü. Bu tamamen gerçeğin temsili ve olanaklarının sınırları ile ilgiliydi. Doğruyu söylemek gerekirse, o dönemde başkalarının ne yaptığı umrumda değildi.

ÖK: 1970 ve 1980'deki askeri darbeler, idamlar, yasaklamalar, sol ve sağ arasındaki siyasi çatışma göz önünde bulundurulduğunda, 1970'lerden 1980'lere kadarki yıllar bir bunalım, gerilim ve belirsizlik dönemiydi. Bir vatandaş olarak bu dönemi nasıl yaşadınız; bu dönem yaşamınıza ve sanatınıza nasıl yansıdı?
CB: O dönemdeki yazılarımda, eleştirilerimde ve tepkilerimde konumum oldukça barizdi. Özetle; o dönem boyunca sanatçı kimliğime sığınarak ve sanatçı dokunulmazlığından faydalanarak, olan bitene tepki göstermekten çekinmedim. Siyasi tercihleri olan ve bu tercihleri, gerek uygulamada gerekse teoride, çalışmalarında açıkça ortaya koyan biriydim.

Yazılarımdan birinde, o dönemden Gençliğin Rönesansı diye sözettim. Gerçekten de o dönemin gençleri, özellikle de tanıma fırsatı bulduklarım, bu ülkenin şimdiye kadar gördüğü en bilgili ikinci jenerasyondu. Birçok şeyle ilgilenirlerdi ve tartışmaktan, sorgulamaktan ve mücadele etmekten asla sıkılmazlardı. Bu dünyayı bambaşka bir açıdan algılayacak kadar donanımlı olmalarının nedeni buydu ve bu yönüyle öğretmenlerinden bile daha bilgiliydiler. En zor ikilemleri muhtemelen idealizmden kastettiğimdir; romantizmleri diyeyim. Dünyayı kendi elleriyle değiştirebileceklerine gerçekten inanırlardı. Gerçi daha sonra olanlar tam tersini kanıtladı. Bana kalırsa, o siyasi yıkım ve katliam döneminde niceleri bir hiç uğruna ziyan oldu.

ÖK: Bahsi geçen dönemde, akademik geçmişe sahip olmak, yurtdışında olmak veya ustalar tarafından atölyelerinde yetiştirilmiş olmak arasındaki fark neydi? Özgeçmişinizi düşündüğünüzde kendinizi nasıl yönlendiriyorsunuz?

CB: O dönemde Akademi'nin bir parçası olmak gerçekten önemliydi; zira orası sanat eğitimi veren tek kurumdu. Kurumsal yapısına rağmen seçilesi ve seçilinesi bir yerdi. Ancak, özellikle o dönemde, sanatçı olacak gençler aynı zamanda aydın olacak potansiyele de sahiplerdi ve Akademi'nin verdiği eğitim yeterli değildi. En azından benim için yeterli değildi. Akademik doktrinler ve akademinin otoritesi tamamen usta çırak ilişkisine dayalıydı. Farketmeniz gereken, bir yandan disiplini öğrenip diğer yandan sıradan bir sanatçı olmaktan bilinçli olarak kaçınmanızın gerektiği bir zaman olduğuydu. Bunu söylediğime gülebilirsiniz ama özellikle genç sanatçılar için, sanatta önceden tanımlanmış sınır ve kısıtlamaların varlığı, onları gelenekleri kırmak ve kendi tarzlarını ortaya çıkarmakta daha yaratıcı kılıyordu. Genç sanatçılar için akademininkinden başka beslenecek bir platform olmadığı düşünüldüğünde, akademinin insanları, profesörler ve genç sanatçılar yine de toplumun kalanından farklıydı; olmaları gerektiği gibi çılgınlardı, ve bu iyi bir şey.

Kendi geçmişime bakıldığında, Cihangir'de büyüdüm ki bu Akademi'nin insanları ve aydınlarla çevrili olmak anlamına geliyordu (Akademi'nin arka bahçesinde oynardım, bitişiğindeki lisede okudum); dönemin bazı önemli ressamlarıyla tanışma fırsatım oldu. Atölyelerinde beraber çalıştığım hocalarıma kıyasla daha şanslıydım çünkü onların zamanında olmayan seçmeli derslerin sayesinde daha donanımlıydım. Akademinin dışında kendimi daha da geliştirebileceğim başka bir ortam vardı. Demek istediğim; başkalarından farkım akademiden önceki geçmişimle ilgiliydi ancak ben bunu akademiye başladığımda farkedebildim. Fakat akademiye gelen her öğrencinin hikayesinde, o öğrencideki farkı görmüş olup onu akademiye yönlendiren biri vardır.

Sanat icra etme sürecini karmaşıklaştıran ana etkenlerden birinin, sanatın kadınlar için doğalarına zarafet katıp onları daha duygusal insanlar haline getirecek bir hobi, erkekler içinse bir meslek olarak anlaşılması olduğunu düşünürüm. Bu tabi ki bir ayrımcılıktı. Zekanızın, kültürünüzün ve yaratıcı potansiyelinizin hakkaniyetli bir şekilde değerlendirilemeyeceği anlamına geliyordu. Doğruyu söylemek gerekirse, normlar ve otorite açısından eleştirdiğim herşeyle olan mücadele ve kavgam, büyük bir başarı değildi. Kırmaya çalıştığım otoritenin her parçası, başka bir otoritenin başlangıcıydı. Gençliğin tecrübesizliği ile hatalı seçim ve tercihleri akılda bulundurmak mantıklı olabilirdi. Bireysel ikilemlerin çözümü yalnızca kişisel seçim ve çabalara bağlı değil. Ulusların kendi inançlarına karar verme özgürlüğüne gerçekten inanırdık ama aynı özgürlüğe kendimiz için sahip çıkmakta başarısızdık çünkü koruma ve korunma yollarında çok güçlü olan maskülen, ataerkil bağlılığa karşı daha az güçlüydük. Bunlar tabi ki benim şahsi görüşlerim; belki diğer kadın sanatçılar aynı görüşleri paylaşmıyordur, belki ben bir kadın olmanın zorluklarıyla mücadele etmekte yeterince akıllı değildim, belki de diğerleri kadın olmanın yükünü hissetmediler bile.

ÖK: Bu dönüşümü kadın kimliğinizle nasıl ilişkilendiriyorsunuz?

CB: Her yönüyle kadın olmak ikilemini yaşıyorduysam da, çalışmalarımda kadın olmak konusunu açıkça işlediğimi söyleyebilmem mümkün değil. Dönemin kadın sanatçıları kadındı ama çalışmaları maskülendi. Belki öncelikli kimliğim kadın olmaktı ama alt kimliğim maskülendi. 90'larda kadın olma sorunsalını bireysel kimliklerle ilgilenen yerel bir konu olmaktan ziyade uluslararası bir konu olarak düşündüm. O dönemde "kişi" kavramını çalışmalarımda sıkça işledim ve kaçınılmaz olarak kimlik sorununa kendi kimliğime temas ederek yaklaşamadım çünkü zaten ait olma ve olmama problemini sorguluyordum. Kimliklere veya bu kimlikleri oluşturan değerlere sıfatlar atfetmenin bir millileştirme süreci olduğuna inanıyorum. Bunlar benim için yasak bölgeler. Bu yüzden, çocuklarınkiler gibi bu tür kimliklerden muaf kişiliklere değinmeye başladım. Aslında kimliği fazla umursamıyorum; neden herkesin çalışmalarımda bunu problematize ettiğimi düşündüğünü anlamıyorum. Açıkçası daha az umrumda olamazdı. Bir kadının kadınlığıyla veya özel hayatıyla meşgul olmasını ilginç bulmuyorum; örneğin Tracey Emin'in çalışmalarında ilginç veya sıradışı

hiçbir şey bulmuyorum. Günün sonunda, onun özel hayatı beni ilgilendirmiyor.

ÖK: Sanatsal üretim süreciniz sırasında materyalle ilişkiniz nedir? Materyal, –şayet bitirilebilirse– bitmiş işin gereksinimlerini belirleyen ve süreci yönlendiren öğelerden biri olarak etkilendiğiniz bir kaynak mı, yoksa yalnızca durumun amacına hizmet eden ve kavramın gereksinimlerine göre şekillenen başka bir ortam mı?
CB: Fikrimi taşıyacak en iyi malzeme o an için neyse onu kullanıyorum. Materyali bir referans veya ilham kaynağı olarak kabul etmenin konvansiyonel yöntemlerden bir farkı yoktur. Yaratıcı güç olarak önceliği fikre verirseniz, teori ve pratik ayrılmaz bir bütün oluşturur. Materyal önemli değildir, en azından söyledikleri kadar önemli değildir. İyi ya da kötü materyal yoktur; uyumlu materyal vardır. Her materyal kendi gereksinimlerini ve otoritesini getirir ve en kötüsü, fikrin materyalin gereksinimleri ile yönlendirilmesine izin vermektir. Benim materyalim veya ortamım en basitidir, hatta bazen yoktur. Örneğin yazı böyledir; boyutu bile yoktur, bazen sadece hayaletimsi görünümünü kullanırım. Materyal ile benim aramda kırılmaz bir bağ olduğunu söylemek yanlış olur. Bir ortam kullanıyorsanız, herhangi bir ortam, bir yerden sonra onun dilini konuşmak zorunda kalıyorsunuz.

ÖK: Dünyadaki çağdaş sanatla karşılaştırdığınızda Türkiye'deki sanatı nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz, sizin sanatınız bu karşılaştırmada nerede duruyor? Sanatınız Türkiye'deki kavramsallığın avant-garde'ı olabilir mi, yoksa Türk sanat tarihinde doğal bir ortaya çıkış mı, ya da sanatta alternatifin geç kalmış doğuşu mu? Doğal bir ortaya çıkış olduğuna inanıyorsanız, Türkiye'de bu tür sanatın bu coğrafya ve kültüre özgü kendi eşsiz dokusuna sahip olduğunu ve bu sebepten dolayı burada ortaya çıkmış olanın taklitten uzak olduğunu kabul eder miydiniz?

CB: Türkiye'deki olanaklar göz önünde bulundurulduğunda, dönemin sanatçıları zamanın ruhunu (zeitgeist) başarıyla yakaladı ama görünürlükleri gecikti; fakat bunu yerel ve farklı olarak değerlendirmek gereksizdir. Sanatçılarımızın bu dönemde ilk defa ortak bir ruh ve mentalitede buluştuğunu düşünüyorum. Yeterince anlaşılmamışlarsa, bu sorunun sebebi o zamanlarda sanatla dolaylı olarak ilgilenen şahış ve kurumların tavırlarında aranmalıdır. Galerileri işleten kişilerden, işe geri dönen küratorlerden ve galeri sergilerinde piyasadan yana taraf olan sanat eleştirmenlerinen bahsediyorum. Ayrıca o dönemde analist veya izleyiciler de yoktu. O dönemin sanatına tepki olmasını ve eleştirilmiş olmasını gayet doğal buluyorum.

ÖK: Sanatçının seçimi ve adlandırmasını, bir işin sanat olarak tanımlanması ve sanat olduğuna karar verilmesinde ne kadar tanımlayıcı buluyorsunuz?

CB: Duchamp'tan beri bildiğimiz odur ki sanatçının seçimi, neyin sanat olduğu konusunda ilk belirleyicidir ve bu metod konvansiyonel yaratım modellerinin yerine geçeli çok olmuştur. Yine de, sanat, sanatçının sanatına atfettiği kavram ve bağlam dışında eleştirilemez veya değerlendirilemez diyemeyiz.

ÖK: Örneğin Kosuth ve Beuys'un sanatı düşünüldüğünde, dil ve metnin görsel temsile entegrasyonunu nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz? Çağrışımlar, semiotik ve bunların arasındaki bağ açısından, metin ve görsel ve hazır olanın tekil bir sanat eserinde beraber yer alması sizce ne kadar mümkündür?

CB: Dil, fikrin asıl fiziksel görünüşü olduğundan, 1979 ve 1980'den beri sanattaki ortamımdır.

ÖK: Türkiye'de sizin sanatınızdan önce batıdan ve Türkiye'den hangi isimlerin etkili olduğunu düşünüyorsunuz? Türkiye'deki kavramsal sanatın ne kadarı ithal edilmiştir, ne kadarı burada yapılandırılmıştır? Örneğin bu bağlamda Altan Gürman ve Temel Tasarım eğitimi veya Bauhaus'un etkisi?

CB: Biçimsel sanata karşı olan Dadaism, Konstruktivizm (Rus kanadı) gibi sanat hareketleri veya genel anti-sanat hareketleri Türkiye'de hiçbir zaman tam anlamıyla icra edilmemiştir. Türk sanatçılar aslında bu sanat hareketlerinden sakınmışlardır. Ama kübizm tam olarak icra edilmiştir. Soyut, temsili ekspresiyonizm akademi de dahi genel kabul görmüştür. Bunun nedeni, bunların kolayca taşınabilir biçimsel hareketler olmasıdır; sanat olarak bilineni saymamazlık etmemişlerdir. Diğerleri ise sanata karşı savaşıyorlardı, onu yıkmaya çabalıyorlardı; başarılı olsalardı ve sanat yok edilseydi geriye ne kalırdı, tehlikeli değil mi?

Bauhaus'a gelince, size katıldığımı söyleyemem. Akademi'de Temel Tasarım departmanının kurulmasından önce, Bauhaus ekolünde yetişmiş Alman öğretmenler Marmara Güzel Sanatlar Akademisi'ni 1950'lerin sonuna doğru kurmuşlardı bile. Kuruluş amacı elbette endüstrinin ihtiyaçlarını karşılamak üzere endüstri ile tasarım sanatı arasında organik bir bağ yaratmaktı. Bu iki kurum için de, Türkiye'de sanatı modernleştiren veya birşeyler değiştiren, Temel Tasarım departmanının kurulması değildi. Temel tasarım ilkeleri ve bunların Akademi ve Marmara müfredatına eklenmesi, Türkiye'deki sanatın modernleşmesini etkilediyse de, bu etki büyük değildi. Fakat özellikle akademide, Temel Tasarım eğitimi ve konvansiyonel atölye eğitimi tam bir uyumsuzluk içindeydi. Bugün bile, bu eğitimin her iki okulda da bir an önce yenilenmeye ve yeni teknolojilerle uyumlu hale getirilmeye ihtiyacı var.

ÖK: Sizce kimin mirasını devraldınız ve kime devredeceksiniz?

CB: Türk sanatından kendi sanatıma miras edinebileceğim hiçbir şey olmadı ama sanat tarihinde benden önce gelen herşey kaçınılmaz olarak yorumumun bir parçası olmuştur. Benim mirasımı kimin devralacağı

umrumda değil; sanatımın bir miras olacağı veya olmayacağı gerçeğine katılmıyor ve umursamıyorum.

ÖK: Söz konusu dönemde Türkiye'de, sanatın tanımı konusunda belirleyici bir otorite olduğuna inanıyor musunuz, bu otoritenin varlığı veya yokluğu ne kadar politik? Maddi yatırımlar açısından değerlendirildiğinde, aile koleksiyonlarını başlatmak için sanat eseri satın alma gücünü kazanan bir toplumsal sınıf doğarken; siyasi özgürlükler açısından bakıldığında, fikirlerin gelişmesi gereken alan daralıyordu. Bu bağlamda, sanatınızı icra etmeye devam etmek için ne tür fırsatlar gördünüz veya feragat edemediğiniz şartlarınız nelerdi?

Özgürlükler tam anlamıyla yaşanamıyorduysa da, söz konusu dönemde yeni oluşan, zenginleşen ve Türk sanatı ve sanat galerilerine yatırım yapan orta sınıf sayıca artıyordu; sizce bu çelişkili mi?

CB: Söz konusu dönemde, bütün o gerilim yüzünden kesinlikle etkilenen birşeyler vardı ama sanatın etkilendiğini söylemek zor olur. O dönem, resim ve heykelin hükümetin sansürcü bakışına tepkisiz tavrına rağmen oldukça üretkendi; sanat satın alanlar ve işlerini satan sanatçılar için bir pazar yaratan bağımsız sanat galerilerinin artışı, akademinin otoritesini kırdı ve sanat, serbest bir sanat pazarına devroldu. Bu tür bağları sorguladığım çalışmalarım bu dönemdeydi. Sanatın izlenilmesi, satılması ve satın alınmasına karşıydım. Ayrıca bu konularda yazdım. Sanatın kültürel değil, ticari bir tüketime tabi olduğu bir zamandan geçtiğimizi düşünüyordum. Aslında bu hep böyleydi ama Türkiye'de yeni tanışılıyordu. Siyasi özgürlükler yasaklanırken ekonomik özgürlüklerin tam anlamıyla yaşanması bir çelişki değildi. Sermaye tutarlılık gerektiriyordu, dolayısıyla tarihte de olduğu gibi baskıcı rejimlerden yanaydı. Askeri darbeler ekonomik otoritelere ya da baskıdan yana olan sağ eğilimli ideolojilere karşı yapılmıyordu. Daha sonra kurulan rejimler bunu kanıtladı. Bir iktisatçı olarak daha iyi bilirsin ki, o dönemin devalüasyonunda resim akıllıca bir yatırımdı; bu son derece Türkiye'ye has bir durumdu.

ÖK: İzleyiciyi nasıl konumlandırıyorsunuz? Sanatsal üretim sürecinde, belirleyici bir etken mi, yoksa sadece bir oyuncu mu?

CB: Sanatta izleyicinin varlığı bir gereklilik değildir. Sanat tabi ki hermenötik değildir. Elbette ki izleyiciyle tanımlanması ve tamamlanması gereken birşeydir. Ne sanattır, ne değildir, sanat ne işe yarar, sanat olmasa ne olur; eğer bir sanat eseri bu tür sorular arz ediyorsa kesinlikle katılım gerektirir. Bu fiziksel bir katılım olmak zorunda değildir. Benim izleyicim en azından okuma yazma bilmelidir. Fakat aynı zamanda, yaratımın karşılıklı olmadığına inanırım.

ÖK: Sizce sanat eseri galeride yerini aldıktan sonra nasıl bir formasyondan geçer? Bu sürekli bir süreç midir, yoksa en azından bölünmüş ama uyumlu ve evrimi açısından tutarlı mıdır?

CB: Sanat eserinin bir ömrü olduğuna inanırım, öyle olmak zorunda. Bana göre, yaratıldıktan sonra sanat eseri hangi alana koyulmuş olursa olsun, kendi ölümünü ilan etmiş sayılmalıdır. Sanatın kamusal alana bu sızışı, sanat ve şehrin bu münasebetinden umulandan bağımsız başka bir izolasyon, yabancılaşma getirir. Çalışmalarım, galerinin korunmuş ortamından dışarı çıkarılmak için çok narin diye düşünüyorum. Çalışmalarımın, alım satım döngüsünün dışında olduklarını, kendi yalnızlıklarını taşıdıklarını ve korunmak için ekipmana ihtiyaç duyduklarına inanıyorum. Bazen sadece hissedebileceğiniz, bir nesnesi eksik işler yaratıyorum; materyal (fotoğraf, metin ya da salt imgeler) açısından zayıf, hatta kimi zaman boyutsuz.

ÖK: İşinizi hangi duyguyla ilişkilendiriyorsunuz? Sizin algılamanızı, alışmalarınızla kendi aranızda kurduğunuz bağı anlamak için soruyorum... Döneminizin kadın sanatçılarının çalışmaları arasında sizinkileri lirik ve şiirsel buluyorum.

CB: Şu duyguyla ilişkilendiriyorum diyemem. Lirik buluyorsanız bu sizin yorumunuzdur. Bu konuda özgürsünüz.