Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi / The Journal of Social Sciences

Akademik Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi, Yıl: 6, Sayı: 43, Aralık 2019, s. 86-94

ISSN: 2149-0821 Doi Number: <http://dx.doi.org/10.29228/SOBIDER.38929>

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FIGURE SPACE RELATIONSHIP IN CONTEMPORARY ART¹

Abstract

Human beings perceive themselves and other living and non-living objects in their surroundings within a certain time dimension. Figure is the general name of the all kinds of beings and objects that could be encountered in natural world or imagined. If space is considered as a void what makes it visible can be created by creating a state of fullness with living or inanimate objects. Hence, figures or how objects appear in the picture with their locations become important components of what makes space visible. . This research aims to investigate space and figure works in contemporary art. This research carries importance in order to understand space figure relationship in contemporary art. The sample of the research is limited to contemporary artists and their works of art. Content analysis and qualitative data analysis methodology has been used for the research design.

Since the beginning of the art of painting the general inclination was the figurative painting, however, from 1950' to recent days conceptual works of art took over the place of compositions valued based on plasticity in the past. Figure and space interpretations are handled in different ways and with aspects for different periods and took form though what artist would like to show. Contemporary artist stand out with their space arrangement though limitless search for form.

Keywords: Words: Figure, space, conceptual art

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¹ Bu çalışma '2nd International Conference on Tourism and Cultural Heritage in Mediterranean, Faro Portugal' da sunuldu.

GÜNÜMÜZ SANATINDA FİĞÜR MEKAN İLİŞKİSİ

Özet

İnsan, varlığını ve etrafındaki diğer canlı ve cansız nesneleri belli bir zaman boyutu içinde algılamaktadır. Figür, doğada rastlanan ya da düşsel her türlü varlık ve nesnenin genel adıdır. Mekan ise bir boşluk olarak ele alınırsa onu görünür kılan şey, canlı ya da cansız nesnelerin yer aldığı bir doluluk hali yaratılarak oluşturulabilir. Böylece figür ya da nesnelerin resimde yer alış biçimleri, konumları ile mekanın ortaya çıkışında katkı sağlayan önemli bir unsur olarak görülür. Araştırmanın amacı, günümüz sanatında figür mekan çalışmalarının incelenmesidir. Araştırma, günümüz sanatında figür mekan ilişkisini anlayabilmek açısından önemlidir. Araştırma günümüz sanatçıları ve eserleri ile sınırlıdır. Araştırma tarama modeli ve nitel veri analizi incelemesi yöntemi ile desenlenmiştir. Resim sanatında başlangıcınan beri figüratif resim anlayışı genel eğilim iken, 1950'lerden günümüze ise geçmişte plastik açıdan önem verilen kurmacaların yerine daha kavramsal çalışmalara yönelinmiştir. Her dönemde ayrı şekil ve yönlerle ele alınan figür ve mekan yorumlamaları, sanatçının göstermek istediğiyle şekillenir. Günümüz sanatçısı sınırsız biçim arayışlarıyla oluşturduğu mekansal düzenlemeleriyle ön plana çıkmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Figür, mekan, kavramsal sanat

Introduction

Since the beginning of 20th century, also changes in both social and living conditions have been reflected in art. The composition, color and form patterns, which continued to prevail until the middle of 20th century in plastic arts, led to new orientations in art (Erzen 1991). Minimalism, installation, performance art and field art, which are the forms of expression in contemporary art emerged in this process, have made space a functioning element of artistic construct.

The artist who chooses the two-dimensional canvas surface establishes an abstract communication with the audience. The artistic notion is processes in an abstract space that does not really exist. In contrast to this situation, the abstract relationship between art object and space is rejected in contemporary art, and the object is considered and constructed as a part of space (Arnold 2010). The environment in which the art object is located is not a passive phenomenon that only provides favorable conditions for display but it has become a material for art and emerged as a part of it.

Figure is the general name of all kinds of beings and objects depicted in painting and sculpture which can be encountered in nature or imagined, (Sozen, 1994:84). The traditional concept of three-dimensional art, which we call the object, has started to lose its old expression by adapting to time through a new understanding. The structure, which can only be viewed from the outside, has changed and started to establish a different connection with the space differing from the usual understanding of space.

The space which can be considered as a three-dimensional area with defined borders is a concept that

- can be interpreted as an extension of human beings and incorporates human intellectual, spiritual and social activities. It is the constructed relation to the figure rather than empty structures that allow us to perceive space as space. At the same time, space has a dimension that is acquired by the momentary experiences emerging from the mobility of the individual beyond width, length and height. Before the 20th century, space was considered as a subject represented. The actual space in which the work was exhibited was of secondary importance. Dadaist Surrealist and structuralist circles revolutionized the formal and conceptual relationships between artist, artwork, space and visitor. Thus, the period of ignoring the actual space in which the work of art was exhibited was over. Kurt Schwitters's 'Merzbau' (1922) (Picture 1) intertwined the work and the place where it was produced and exhibited.

Image1. Kurt Schwitters, Merzbau (1922)

Schwitters has created collages and constructions from waste materials such as labels, pieces of broken wood, tickets. As one of the first examples of installation art, this work can be seen as a good example of the different view of figure-space relationship in contemporary art. Marcel Duchamp was the first to question the relationship between the work of art and the space it's situated. In Duchamp's installations, space becomes an essential part of the work of art. Starting with Duchamp, this new narrative goes beyond traditional expression and material, and led to a different relationship between the work and the space and the audience. At the same time, Duchamp presented the industrial materials he used as ready-made art, adding aesthetic value to functional objects. He tried to keep himself away from traditional painting and to reveal the conceptual value of the work of art. At the same time Duchamp presented industrial materials as a readymade art. He gave esthetics value to the functional materials. He tried to be far away traditional art and take out the conceptual value of art Works.

Object becomes a work of art because artist designed it in that way. Duchamp's the most popular readymade object is the "fountain" (Image 2) which is an upside down urinal.

Image 2. Marcel Duchamp Fountain, 1917-1964, San Francisco Museum of Modern

Until the 1950s, the exhibition of artistic works took place in gallery halls as the usual way to use the space. In the process, space as the place where the work of art is exhibited begins to exceed its familiar use and frees itself from being only associated with the gallery and the work of art. For example Yves Klein empties a gallery hall in Paris and paints it in white (Image 3), the exhibition visited by 2500 people is called 'Le Vide' (The Void). Here, the gallery itself transforms into a work of art. (Antmen, 2010: 21). Another example could be Alan Kaprow (filling an entire yard with automobile wheels) (Picture 4) or the installations by artists such as Claes Oldenburg (Picture 5) that are spread throughout the space and open to audience participation.

Image 3. Yves Klein, The Void (Le Vide) 1958, Galerie Iris Clert-Paris

Image 4. Allan Kaprow, Yard, Pasadena, 1967

Image 5. Claes Oldenburg, Giant Hamburger, 1962

All these developments have clearly revealed one point. The object of art has now begun to be regarded as something other than a mass supported by such things as volume, surface, light-shadow, color. Minimalists, have expressed the changing understanding with these words; "We are now sculpting the space with exhibited objects, not the mass". They imagined and shaped the space as a sculpture. In time, the space itself has become the object itself.

In Minimalism the relationship of objects to space is observed. The space is viewed as an interior space and usually its purpose is to create new forms, often composed of pieces based on a regular structure. It aims to realize three-dimensional works that can cross the boundary between art and daily life. Donald Judd (Image 6) used obscure geometric forms to make objective sculptures in grandiose dimensions and painted them with vivid colors. He directs the viewer to observe the relation between himself, the work and the place where the work takes place.

Image 6. Donald Judd, Nameless, 1980

In Field Art, works are produced for a certain period of time and for a specific place. Robert Smithson, moved his work out of the gallery space, and used the earth as an object that could not be taken into the gallery as an art material. (Image 7)

Image 7. Spiral Breakwater- Soil, Rock and Salt Crystal, Utah Big Salt Lake

The art tendencies of the 1960s had the goal of destroying the wall between art and life. The artists had to leave the gallery to showcase their work and reach different audiences. For this

reason, many performances, happenings, fluxus actions were performed in the streets and public spaces and the traditional gallery space was ignored. (Image 8).

Image 8. Joseph Beuys I love America, America is me 1974, New York

Along with 'Performance', the body which was only a figure in the paintings and sculptures until that day, turned into an artistic object exhibited by itself. This gave artists the opportunity to exhibit their art outside of galleries and museums.

In the 1970s, unlike the traditional art works, placement or installation emerged as an art form that does not include an independent art object from its environment, which is created for a certain place, and in which audience participation is a fundamental necessity. The installed (placed) artwork is exhibited for a short period of time, then dismantled and then remains solely as photographic documents. For example, Judy Pfaff (Image 9, 10) organized very interesting environments (submarine gardens, magical worlds, etc.) with thousands of objects thrown after use (Avant-Garde Magazine, 1995:126).

Image 9. 10. Judy Pfaff , All of the Above, Rice Gallery 2007

Judy Pfaff.... . . . all of the above...Mixed media including: lights, Plexiglas...string, grapevines, plywood...Styrofoam, steel, joint compound...plaster, paint, dye, silicone...rubber tubing, umbrella frames...lead, black foil, fan...40' x 44' x 16'

The most striking of these works, which can be done outside the galleries and museums, belongs to Christo and Jeanne-Claude. The American duo who were doing landscapes all over the world and the most famous of them was the Wrapped Reichstag Berlin, (Image 11) that they packed the German parliament building with aluminum and rope (Picture11).

Image 11. Christo ve Jeanne-Claude Packed Reichstag, Berlin 1971-95

Over time, with the idea that the work of art cannot be observed independently from the space, form of placement and space has started to be brought to the forefront. As well as the object of

contemporary art, the space within it is at the focal point of the presentation. Nowadays, space is no longer a place but becomes a state of being where it is a part of the process.

With the emergence of postmodernism in the early 1980s, artists have come up with new opportunities through eclectic approaches. The postmodern understanding of art supports the ambiguity of the space and the creation of "off spaces" within the city boundaries (alternative display spaces that normally would not be of interest to the arts). Postmodernism's "anything goes" approach also means that the exhibition spaces can be combined with social / urban areas in a number of different ways. As a result, a growing number of groups of artists with avant-garde tendencies have emerged since the 1990s, struggling to eliminate traditional conception of art and space.

Result

Thus, the relationship between the work of art and the environment in the post-1950 period began to be questioned. Changing social conditions and the effects of these conditions on art and art work and space have mutually influenced each other. It is a matter of the exhibition of the work of art to be displayed on the space as well as the appearance of the space, and sometimes the space itself is transformed into a work of art.

The trends and formations that emerged after 1960, the perception of art and work of art by the society, the diversity of materials and techniques used and brand new arrangements took place with brand new meanings. The relationship between figure and space has gained new dimensions with the values revealed by art. The space is no longer a merely field, but a part of the work of art. In this process, the space has become both the art object itself and the exhibition space.

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