

Sanat ve İnsan Dergisi Journal of Art and Human 2023-7 (2) ISSN 1309-7156 http://sanatveinsan.com

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In The Context of Art As Politics, Thomas Hirschhorn's "Community of Fragments" Installation Aesthetic

Abstract

Artists serve as spokespersons by incorporating social issues and facts into their works. Culture influences the artist through this transfer, and the artist, in turn, influences culture and society. Artistic expression extends beyond the representation of societal issues to encompass engagement with the third circle, which comprises the realm of politics. Artists choose to create art in a political context using one of three aesthetic approaches: idealistic aesthetics (art for the sake of art), dogmatic aesthetics (political art), or "doing art politically." The artist's most consistent response in this exchange is doing art politically, as in the case of Picasso's "Guernica." Similarly, Thomas Hirschhorn proposed the "Community of Fragments" installation, a universal and realistic model in his work, in accordance with this understanding. Hirschhorn's installation model is examined to illustrate this unity between politics and art and to differentiate between politically made art and political art. "What are the aesthetic context of the installation, the criteria, attitude, and criteria an artist will take towards the work?" defines the problem of the research. The artist's aesthetic stance towards the work has been synthesized and integrated in "Doing Art Politically" through a literature review that focused on the Hirschhorn installation. The research is restricted to the artist's "Community of Fragments" installation work. The research findings show that the political perspective on art identifies three critical components: The work of art has a universal character, expresses reality, and is not influenced by any specific group with political ideology, including art market forces and capitalism.

Keywords: Hirschhorn, Politically Art, Propaganda3, Political Art, Installation.

Politik Olarak Sanat Bağlamında Thomas Hirschhorn "Parçalar Topluluğu" Enstelasyonu Estetiği

Özet

Sanatçılar toplumsal meseleleri ve gerçekleri eserlerine yansıtarak sözcü görevi görürler. Kültür bu aktarım yoluyla sanatçıyı etkilerken sanatçı da kültürü ve toplumu etkiler. Sanatsal ifade, toplumsal meselelerin temsilinin ötesine geçerek politika alanını kapsayan üçüncü çevreyle ilişkileri de devreye sokar. Sanatçılar, üç estetik yaklaşımdan birini kullanarak politik bağlamda sanat yaratmayı tercih ederler: idealist estetik (sanat için sanat), dogmatik estetik (siyasi sanat) veya "politik olarak sanat yapmak." Bu etkileşimde sanatçının en tutarlı yanıtı, Picasso'nun "Guernica" örneğinde olduğu gibi, sanatı politik olarak yapmaktır. Benzer şekilde Thomas Hirschhorn da bu anlayışa uygun olarak çalışmasında evrensel ve gerçekçi bir model olan "Parçalar Topluluğunu" yerleştirmesini ortaya koymuştur. Politika ve sanat arasındaki bu birlikteliği göstermek ve politik olarak yapılmış sanat ile politik sanat arasındaki ayrımı yapabilmek için Hirschhorn'un enstalasyon modeli incelenmiştir. "Enstalasyon'un estetik bağlamı, bir sanatçının esere karşı alacağı ölçüt, tavır ve kıstaslar nelerdir?" sorusu araştırmanın problem cümlesini oluşturmaktadır. Politik olarak sanatta, sanatçının esere karşı koyacağı estetik tavrı, yapılan literatür taraması sonucunda sentezlenerek bütünleştirilmiştir.

³Propaganda: "Ideas or statements that maybe false or exaggerated and that are used in order to gain support for a political leader, party etc. (Hornby, 2015: 1194).

Sanatçının esere yönelik estetik duruşu, Hirschhorn enstalasyonuna odaklanan bir literatür taraması yoluyla "Sanatı Politik Olarak Yapmak" bağlamında sentezlenmiş ve bütünleştirilmiştir. Araştırma, sanatçının "Parçalar Topluluğu" enstalasyonu ile sınırlandırılmıştır. Araştırma bulguları, sanata politik bakış açısının üç kritik bileşeni tanımladığını göstermektedir: Sanat eseri evrensel bir karaktere sahiptir, gerçekleri ifade eder ve sanat piyasası güçleri ve kapitalizm de dâhil olmak üzere herhangi bir politik ideolojiye sahip olan gruptan etkilenmez.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Hirschhorn, Politik Olarak Sanat, Propaganda, Politik Sanat, Enstalasyon.

1. Introduction

Doing art politically – not making political art.

Jean-Luc Godard (Hirschhorn, 2008)

Art derives its power from its ability to transform social and political content into form. Culture is everything that a society does, and this influences art as well. According to Tylor, culture is; A vast and intricate collection of wholes that encompasses human-learned art, knowledge, traditions, conventions, talents, habits, and skills. (Güvenç, 1979, p. 102). Politics "derives from the Arabic word Seyis (horse keeper) and means a special view or the art of organizing and conducting state affairs" (Akay, 2002, p. 32).

Culture and art are also closely related and strongly correlated with politics. Therefore, throughout history, art has encountered periods of oppression that have directly opposed its autonomy and freedom in its association with politics. In defiance of these constraints, the artist adopted three distinct political positions. A) Idealist Aesthetics (art for art's sake) b) Dogmatist Aesthetics (Political Art) c) Political Aesthetics of Art (Doing art politically). As an individual in society, an artist also interacts with politics by expressing the universal problems of culture (Ziss, 2009, pp. 48-51). Thus, artists who expressed their political discourse through art responded to the problems of their society with art, as in Picasso's work "Guernica."

Artistic freedom was nonexistent during the Middle Ages, in the totalitarian regimes of socialist countries, and in Hitler's Germany of the modern world. As a result of the spread of democracy with the transition from the monarchy to the republic, artists took their positions by doing art politically or political art (Gezer, 2017, p. 3107). Alternatively, they evaded these perspectives and maintained their commitment to impartial policies.

2. Methods

Utilizing qualitative research methodology, a literature review was undertaken to acquire the necessary data to understand the aesthetic of Hirschhorn's installation. The scanned data were synthesized using Hirschhorn's "Community of Fragments" installation as an example. The resulting information was then incorporated with the artist's aesthetic approaches in his work and the political context. The purpose of the research is to reveal the distinction between political art and doing art politically. Examining the Hirschhorn installation as an example of political art, in terms of raising awareness, constitutes the importance of the research. "In the realm of politics, what aesthetic context surrounds the "Community of Fragments" installation, which functions as a model?" and "What are the artist's guiding principles, attitudes, and standards in preparing this work? The questions serve as the research's problem statement. The investigation is restricted to Hirschhorn's "Community of Fragments" installation as an example. As a result of the research, Hirschhorn's artwork's general characteristics show a fallowing political art context: It is determined that the work is universal, expresses truth and reality, and the artist is free from the pressure of a particular group (political ideology, art market forces, capitalism, and so forth).

3. Approaches to the relationship between art, culture and politics that affect the installation

The 20th century is a turbulent era that encompasses art, culture, and politics. With the invention of photography, the artist, who avoided political affairs during modernism, progressively confronted politics and used it as a spokesperson

for society. A network of perpetually intertwining components has emerged around art, capitalism, culture, and politics, particularly since the postmodern era. Consequently, it is critical to examine art through a broad lens through which these four components are consolidated, and to recognize the influence of popular culture and legislation.

Art does not aim to shape society, but it affects the culture in which it is born. Regarding the correlation between art and politics, interest is drawn to two aesthetic approaches: dogmatic and idealistic. The relationship between art and politics, according to idealist aestheticians, generates enthusiasm in society but restricts its freedom and detracts from its purpose; this is not the proper approach. This context consequently transforms art into propaganda and kitsch (Akbulut, 2011: 5-6). Art is concerned with the eternal and universal context, whereas politics is preoccupied with the temporal (Ziss, 2009: 48). Three perspectives exist with regard to the intersection of politics and art. Idealist aesthetics, which is art for the sake of art, dogmatist aesthetics (political art), which is political art, and political aesthetics of art (doing art politically) are the three.

The prevailing perspective in idealist aesthetics holds that "art will cease to be art if it enters politics and commands" (Ziss, 2009: 48). In dogmatic aesthetics, the artist is obligated to facilitate the flow of political discourse over which he has no control out of social responsibility. An individual who disregards this correlation while advocating for the autonomy of art and politics holds reactionary beliefs. As per dogmatism, politics takes precedence over art, which is in direct opposition to the very essence of art. However, it is erroneous, inconsistent, and preposterous for the artist's work to "directly" reflect political ideology (Ziss, 2009, pp. 48-51). From a political standpoint, the aesthetics of art advocate for the presentation of messages that should be universal, truthful, and precise. The artist employs social images; this constitutes and is considered political. In general, the period of politicalization in art has been regarded as the most turbulent context period in history (Hirschhorn, 2008; Ziss, 2009: 50).

The artist is perpetually engaged in direct or indirect political activity. Art possesses the capacity to unveil an ideology, the harsh realities of existence, and the imperative for a paradigm shift. Due to this ability to manipulate the emotions of individuals, governments have either irrevocably excluded or employed it. For this reason, Plato recommended that individuals disregard art and poetry in their perfect form and either repress them or put them to use (Akbulut, 2011: 24-28). As Rancière puts it, "art that functions to advance political objectives forfeits its autonomy and transforms from 'artistic' to propaganda through the dissemination of political concepts" (Ranciere 2007, cited in Akbulut, 2011: 28). Art is utilized via politics in this context, or politics is utilized via art. Unlike the modernist era, when an attempt was made to avoid politics, contemporary political artists are free to create works that reflect the situation or authority. According to this concept, it can be said that what is essential is the echoes of this art in society.

4. Doing Art Politically and the Hirschhorn "Community of Fragments" Installation

With his art, Hirschhorn is neither against politics nor works for them. He reveals only universal and absolute truths and realty. To accomplish this, it confronts the errors and corruption of the political and market spheres with the intention of resisting and surpassing them. Hirschhorn asserts in particular, "During the early years of his career, an artist should not capitulate to interest groups on account of economic hardships." Subsequent to receiving assistance from market forces, the artist's vocal capabilities will deteriorate to the point of inability to scream. Similar to artists employed by sizable organizations (Hirschhorn, 2008). As a result, Hirschhorn neither opposes nor is employed by politics. He reveals only universal and absolute truths and realities.

Artists who are supported by commercial forces are not permitted to offer criticism; if they do, their ability to do so is constrained. As a consequence, they focus their critique on governmental institutions /establishments. Thus, only the most extreme of these criticisms elicits a response from global powers. The reason for this is to facilitate the renewal of their systems (Yılmaz, 2015, pp. 306-309). Conversely, artists who consent to collaborate with major corporations become instruments of art political influence (Yılmaz, 2015, pp. 306-309; Hacke, 1993).

Hirschhorn integrates themes of philosophy, aesthetics, politics, and passion in his works. He creates art with a politically made agenda in mind, as opposed to being concerned with the political climate or the ideology of the majority (Hirschhorn, 2008). As a result, Hirschhorn develops his own perspectives and ideas independently, unaffected by governmental political discourses.





Image 1. Image 2.

Image 1. Thomas Hirschhorn "Community of Fragments" Installation-Detail, 2021, Copenhagen, Denmark. Image 2. Installation-Detail.

Hirschhorn states in an interview with the Louisiana Modern Art Museum, "Ruins are significant because there is always a purpose for their ruins status and as symbols of society and time." The artist's installation comprises ruins and devastation (Image 1,2). The underlying causes of these devastations consistently vary. Using the ruins left by the passage of time, the installation explores the following topics: economic corruption, collapse, calamities (including those caused by human intervention), conflicts, nuclear catastrophes, and even devastation. In the context of time, universal remnants possess a particular fascination for the artist. Ruins are ubiquitous remnants of human history that either vanish or persist in their state of ruins (Image 3, 4, 5, 6) (Elmer, 2021). The artist, who consistently associates the destruction of these structures to human activities, also references to the destruction caused by nations, capitalists, dominant powers, and individuals.

The tendency towards the autonomy of art is art for art's sake (Yılmaz, 2015, p. 289). Despite this neutrality, the autonomy of art and political conditions intersect. At this intersection, the artist should favor the artistic model that communicates universal truths and realities.





Image 3. Installation-Detail

Image 4. Installation-Detail

Hirschhorn employs art as a tool in his installations; however, through his selection of the political power field, he poses the following inquiries: What do they want? Where do they stand? What do I want? Where do I stand? This field can be interpreted negatively as the field of aesthetics. Nevertheless, this negativity ought not to be disregarded; rather, it should be confronted in an effort to establish a new reality that transcends contemporary concerns, negativity, remarks, and concepts. Artists must therefore confront the realities of the world through the creation of politically done

works that have a positive impact. Self-inquiries such as "Is it possible for my work to create solutions?", "Can my work have an impact on others or something?" should be considered. Politically made art entails transcending the historical context of the work. The artist is confronted with universal issues; by integrating his experience, personal insights, and knowledge with resistance to external pressures, he should strive to attain a sense of universality. This way of thinking is called political (Hirschhorn, 2008).





Image 5. Installation-Detail

Image 6. Installation-Detail

Although the space within the Hirschhorn installation, which we may refer to as a mine or cave, is presently unremarkable, it may acquire a different significance, function, or worth in the future. The artist is drawn to areas whose status is uncertain and susceptible to modification. His installation is a human-supporting, non-architectonic space in the form of a roof. In the past ten to fifteen years (between 2000 and 2020's), earthquakes, natural calamities (such as Fukujima and Tsunami), and wars have been broadcast on television around the globe. Considering the conflicts in Syria and Iraq as well as the ruins of communities, he perceived ruins in a broader sense (Elmer, 2021). Given the circumstances, it is possible that the spaces within the installation were intentionally crafted as a code or allusion to the demise of capitalism and politics. Alternately, they may have been created as prototypes of concepts that aimed to rescue individuals by "holding them under a roof."

Sometimes, politics can also use idealistic aesthetics to distance society from politics. Conversely, an artistic piece incorporating political elements into its composition may inadvertently benefit the hegemons (Gezer, 2017, p. 3107). In this instance, an evaluation of the work can be conducted by assessing its universality, authenticity, and integrity.

The critique and rebellion depicted in 'Guernica' by Picasso and 'The Shootings' by Goya constitute a legitimate, universal rebellion. Within this particular framework, Hirschhorn's installation also comprises judgments and criticisms that are universal, accurate, and relevant to all eras. Additionally, it is worth noting that "art, functioning as a vehicle for propaganda, demands remuneration or profit and transforms its value into a craft" (Gezer, 2017, p. 3093). In the same way that Kant stated, "Work performed for the purpose of frivolous delight constitutes creativity; it is considered "free art." However, if the performer regards the task as a burdensome duty and performs it solely for monetary gain, it can be considered a "wage art" or "craft" (Soykan, 1997 as cited in Oğuz, 2014:12).

Since Hirschhorn considers society, the venue where he will exhibit (museum, commercial gallery, public space, or fair) does not matter to him. According to him, this means being political (Hirschhorn, 2008). The purpose of the work, its honesty, universality, and, as Kant said, the artist's free expression in his work determine whether the work is art or performance.

There is a danger of losing reality in art under the influence of political ideology. Political ideology can influence the work and sometimes create works that oppose it (Gezer, 2017, p. 3094). Sometimes, this can serve as a contrast to the gaps left in the work. If the reality in society changes, the style and aesthetic realities of the work also change. If it does not change, the artist ignores social changes and becomes reactionary (Şimşek, 2000, as cited in Gezer, 2017, p. 3094). Therefore, even if the artist makes political art, his decisions must be entirely his own (Hauser, 1984, pp.

123-148). Since Hirschhorn makes his own decisions by acting as society's spokesperson, he creates artworks by doing art politically, not political art.





Image 7. Installation-Detail

Image 8. Installation-Detail.

Another issue that the Hirschhorn installation refers to is that today, destruction and ruins are generally seen by tourists in Italy, Greece, Turkey, and Cambodia are perceived as cultural heritage. These ruins are destructions that occurred in the past, exist today, and perhaps will exist in the future, and people all over the world have struggled against these ruins with differences of opinion (Elmer, 2021).

The artist's installation was created by working half a day with six assistants. Apart from this, people contributed to this installation by visiting and helping in the construction phase. They used materials such as public refrigerators, photocopy machines, paint, and tape. The placed forms were built from the ground floor upwards to higher elevations. People came to the place daily and were involved in production in an intellectual sense. A light but large construction was created with materials such as tape and cardboard. Therefore, the artist wanted to emphasize that demolishing the existing one by building it from scratch simultaneously as the construction of the work requires the same effort. As Antony Gramsci said, "Destroying is truly as difficult as creating" (Image 7, 8, 9, 10). (Elmer, 2021).

In the context of "form" in his installations, Hirschhorn used forms that could only come from himself and that only he knew and understood. Giving form, instead of creating a form (building form), means becoming one with it. The artist defends and glorifies this form against everyone. With an artistic challenge, "How can I give a form that takes a position in this confrontation, a form that resists the facts?" He asks the question and wants to understand the context of formality. For Hirschhorn, liking the material and subject one works on means knowing, realizing, and being persistent about it. The artist also says the following about the materials he uses: "I love the materials I work with, and I do not change them because I decide in their favor (Hirschhorn, 2008).



Image 9. Installation-Detail.



Image 10. Installation-Detail.

The artist's decision regarding the materials he uses is significant. It should not be surrendered to something new, to a wish or a demand. For Hirschhorn, this is what is political" (Hirschhorn, 2008). By not giving in to another wish, Hirschorn meant that the artist resists external pressures or the demands of others. If he allows this, he will break away from universal discourse and start making political art.





Image 11. Installation-Detail

Image 12. Installation-Detail

Hirschhorn applies the following rules in his aesthetics: acting impulsively, prioritizing energy over quality, striving for strength despite perceived weaknesses, not holding back in effort or self-expenditure, considering panic as a motivator, aiming for precision while embracing exaggeration, underestimating oneself, being critical towards one's work, demonstrating persistence without achieving outright success, aspiring to innovate within one's work, taking full responsibility for one's work, being willing to appear ignorant in front of one's creations, valuing constant improvement, rejecting hierarchies, believing in the interconnection of Art and Philosophy, and being prepared to pay the price for one's creative endeavors (Image 11, 12, 13,14) (Hirschhorn, 2008).

Hirschhorn's works were not created on behalf of a gallery or institution. The artist considers his installations indispensable for influencing the lives of ordinary people and reaching out to individuals in public spaces. Those without cash are granted complimentary entry. The artist criticizes the lack of public spaces in museums and says, "Hopefully, one day, museums will be able to open their spaces to people like these examples" (Elmer, 2021).

By providing access to or contact with art, Hirschhorn's works are not a surface or area but rather an upper surface, which he exposes to the public. Friction or impact is generated on this upper surface. The work is a place of confrontation and dialogue. While creating his work, the artist often asks questions such as, Does it have any dynamics? Is there any communication between my work and the audience? Can it create holes carved into contemporary and universal truths? Does it give a message of breakthrough for humanity? (Hirschhorn, 2008). Consequently, Hirschhorn's installation can be regarded as humble and modest to facilitate public access. The absence of financial backing from a gallery or institution liberates his work from political force and grants it economic autonomy.





Image 13. Installation-Detail

Image 14. Installation-Detail.

As stated by Daniel Grant, one of the editors-in-chief of American Artist magazine, an aspect that distinguishes these free works beyond their installation features is the economic profit they generate. According to Chelsea art dealer Renato Danese, Vanessa Rubinick, director of the Hauser & Wirth art gallery in Zurich, and Ron Warren, it is almost impossible to sell an installation and challenging to sell its pieces. As a consequence, certain components of installation works are intended for sale individually (Grant, 2011).

In general, according to Hirschhorn, being political (or doing art politically) means taking risks, going beyond mere criticism, being positive, solving the forms and facts in your work universally, criticizing without being self-indulgent, and revealing the positive in the negative (Image 15, 16). (Hirschhorn, 2008).





Image 15. Installation-Detail.

Image 16. Installation-Detail.

5. Conclusions

In his works, Hirschhorn sees two different realms. While simultaneously synthesizing the art world and human destruction and emphasizing this with his installation, he creates his work as "Doing Art Politically." Art transforms into a craft when it is utilized as an instrument for propaganda and when profit and benefit are sought after. In order for 'Doing Art Politically' not to be confused with 'political art,' the work of art must be universal; the artist should not be under the pressure of a particular group (political ideology, art market forces, capitalism, and so forth), should decide in favor of the facts and truths of society, not of particular groups, and must be free; the artist works neither for nor against the market and follows his own rules. The artist must have a warrior will and produce works that question and reveal new forms of existence that may be utopian.

To summarize the balance of art and politics, while politics deals with the temporary, art deals with the final universal and focuses on three perspectives in the art context. These are idealist aesthetics (art for art's sake), dogmatist aesthetics (political art), and political aesthetics of art (doing art politically). In idealist aesthetics, if art comes under the command of politics, it will no longer be art. In dogmatic aesthetics, due to his social responsibility, the artist is not free and serves political discourse. Indeed, this is against the nature of art. Doing art politically gives the right messages that are universal and real.

Hirschhorn's installations are not political art made under pressure but a modest attempt to open public spaces to people. If a work is indirectly or necessarily related to politics due to its social responsibility or if it helps the flow of political discourse, then the work's universality, reality, and honesty are carefully questioned. After that, a judgment can be made. In addition, it is a logically correct proposition that as long as capitalism maintains its power in the world, art will feel the pressure of the dominant forces.

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Visual Resources

- Images 1: Thomas Hirschhorn "Parçalar Topluluğu Enstalasyonu", 2021, GL Strand, Copenhagen, Denmark, İnternet Erişim Adresi: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0zvNdrBqG-k&t=163s, (Date of Access: 10.10.2023).
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- Images 4: Installation-Detail, https://www.stephenfriedman.com/news/348-thomas-hirschhorn-commu nity-of-fragments/, (Date of Access: 11.10.2023).
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