



Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi

Journal of Social Sciences

ISSN 2564-6583 | e-ISSN 2602-229X |

ARAŞTIRMA MAKALESİ

RESEARCH ARTICLE

TRANSFORMATIONS OF ESTHETICS IN POSTMODERN ART

Postmodern Sanatta Estetik Düşüncesinin Oluşumu

Serkan İLDEN¹ • Esmâ MUTLU^{2*}

¹ Kastamonu University, Faculty of Fine Arts and Design, Department of Painting, Kastamonu, Turkey.

² Kastamonu University, Social Sciences Institute, Arts and Design Program, Student at Proficiency in Arts, Kastamonu, Turkey.

Geliş Tarihi/Received Date: 01.06.2020

Kabul Tarihi/Accepted Date: 10.07.2020

ABSTRACT

As an outcome of information or technology era since 1960s to date, post-modernism is considered as a process, in which extraordinary advancements and changes occurred and different discourses emerged in the fields such as painting, graphic, sculpture, architecture, philosophy, economics, and sociology involving the social life and culture. Postmodernism caused the emergence of new artistic discourses as a result of rapid change and development of artistic events in the current era, it transformed into different identities other than modern art and brought new concepts and perspectives to the art life. These concepts and perspectives are in opposition to modernism and they are very tough. Considering that the modern art's elements such as mission, uniqueness, beauty, and proportion would limit the area of art, postmodern artists place the esthetic components into a populist structure in harmony with today's living conditions. In the present study, the changes in postmodernist art after modernism will be discussed, postmodern art esthetic will be explained, and the transformation of artistic values within the frame of Pop-art and Conceptual Art will be examined.

Keywords: Postmodern Culture, Postmodern Art, Esthetic, Sociology of Art.

ÖZ

Postmodernizm, 1960'lı yıllardan zamanımıza bilgi ya da teknoloji çağının getirisi olarak toplumsal yaşamı, kültürü içine alan resim, grafik, heykel, mimarlık, felsefe, ekonomi, sosyoloji gibi alanlarda sıra dışı bir gelişim ve değişimlerin yaşandığı, farklı söylemlerin ortaya çıktığı bir süreç olarak kabul edilir. Postmodernizm, yaşadığımız çağ içerisinde sanatsal olayların hızla gelişmesi ve değişmesi sonucunda yeni sanatsal söylemlerin ortaya çıkmasına neden olmuş, modern sanattan farklı kimliklere bürünmüş ve sanat hayatına yeni kavramlar ve bakış açıları getirmiştir. Bu kavram ve bakış açıları modernizme tezat oluşturacak düzeyde ve serttir. Postmodern sanatçılar modern sanatın misyon, biriciklik, güzellik, oran gibi unsurlarının sanatın alanını kısıtlayacağı düşüncesinden hareketle estetik unsurları da günümüz yaşam koşulları doğrultusunda, popülist bir yapıya oturtmaktadır. Bu çalışmada; modernizm sonrası postmodernist sanatta meydana gelen değişimlere yer verilerek, postmodern sanat estetiğinden bahsedilerek ve estetik değerlerin Pop-art ve Kavramsal sanat çerçevesinde dönüşümü üzerinde durulacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Postmodern Kültür, Postmodern Sanat, Estetik, Sanat Sosyolojisi.

Please cite this paper as follows/Atıf için:

İlden, S., Mutlu, E. (2020). Transformation of Esthetics in Postmodern Art. *Alinteri Journal of Social Sciences*, 4 (1): 39-46.

INTRODUCTION

Introduction From the aspect of definition and functionality, modernism is a culture, in which the mind comes to the forefront, through a radical revolution that will not leave anything denying the nature and religion behind, and which (as an illumination project) brings the idea of “constant and linear advancement” forward. Postmodernism, however, is a culture that has arisen as a reaction to modernism, exhibited anti-modernist attitudes, and started becoming popular in the late 1960s. But, in the early 1980s, it has arisen from a structure that has no eclectic characteristics such as genre, quality, or originality but contains works incorporating chaos, complexity, and kitsch. Against the Modernism’s original and elite intentions and ideas of completely ignoring the history, Postmodernism employs a critical approach, which involves the lost values, towards stereotyped lifestyles. Starting to organize in the late 1960s, postmodern theory is in interaction with many domains such as art, architecture, sociology, politics, esthetic, and economics.

METHOD

“Postmodernist art is an approach creating works of art by remaining stuck in no principle. When compared to the modernist artistic object, the postmodernism puts its artistic object into a pluralist synthesis rather than a singularist one” (Şahin, 2012: p. 93). Drawing apart from modernism’s sovereign esthetic, postmodernism creates works of art in harmony with today’s age of technology and industry. The concept of “beauty” in modernism has disappeared in postmodernism.

It creates a complete break from modernism or modern artistic esthetic remaining its popularity in artist groups in the late 1960s. For this reason, in order to understand the content and meaning created in postmodernist art or the postmodernist approach to art and esthetic or approach, it is necessary to reveal what the modernist artistic approach or modernism is or what the esthetic criteria of modernism are (Anonym, 2018).

In the present study, the changes in postmodern art after modernism will be explained and it will be discussed how the presentation of art has changed depending on the parameters, on which today’s art involving concepts and approaches different from postmodernist art esthetic rely.

TRANSFORMATIONS OF ESTHETIC IN POSTMODERN ART

Postmodernism refers to concepts such as “after the modernism” or “beyond the modernism” but there is no consensus on the exact meaning of this term. Being one of the leading supporters of postmodernism, Jean François Lyotard stated that postmodernism doesn’t constitute a process after a specific historical period or modernism. Even when defined as a radical criticism of modern society, postmodernism is not something after the modernism because it has no chronological historicity. On the other hand, according to Lyotard, postmodernism is a critical style of expression “re-emerging” in specific periods and involved in the modernism (Yamaner, 2007: pp.3885-3886).

Considering the development of art and its changes in the historical process, Şaylan (2016) stated that the art has reflected the dignity and divinity of religion before the Renaissance and shaped the esthetic as a performance of this mission. Humanism has been considered as an important factor in the Renaissance period and the artists of that period created works based on the principle of realism by putting the human in the center and adhering to the components of esthetic such as perspective, light, and color. “The period between 1850 and 1870 is considered as the age of important revolutions, wars, and movements. The Industrial Revolution created a completely new and very dynamic society. Remarkable examples of important and prominent events include world wars, the emergence of the third world, consecutive technological advancements, the beginning of the age of science, and women's movements. All of these events have significantly affected the art and esthetic approach” (Şaylan 2016: p.89).

Since the second half of the 20th century, western societies have entered a new period and this period has been named “postmodern, post-art, or information society”. In this period, flexible production became popular via the advancements in communication and technology. However, this model, which is used for describing the western societies and named “post-industrial society”, doesn't only consist of technological and industrial advancements but it is also considered as a process incorporating a social understanding, cultural structure, and individual differing from the individuals of modern society (Örs, 2009: p.8). Called postmodernism or post-industrial, these advancements also include the globalization. Postmodernism is considered as a cultural and social value, whereas globalization is considered as an economic and technological aspect. Nowadays, it is very difficult to distinguish these two aspects having significant effects on human life. Together with the advancement of technology, capitalist lifestyle spread to the entire world and the notions such as democracy, locality, and multiculturalism have been replaced by the universal values and “globalization” referring to a homogeneous global society eliminates many constituent beliefs, which divides the societies from the others (such as nation-states) and grant individuals identity, and the raison deter of these beliefs (Örs, 2009: p.9).

Postmodernism has maintained a stance against the enlightened (science, mind, etc.) objective and progressive aspect of modernism and criticized the modernism. Emerged in the 1960s and developed by several artists, postmodernism attacks the legitimating discourses of modern age and scientists' idea that humanity would reach independence via science. Lyotard advocates that we cannot talk about a single and unifying sense anymore since there is no single sense but many senses (Gül, 2011).

Rationalism and secularism imposed by the enlightenment movement lay the historical and cultural foundation of modernism. The important point here is to question the movements developed against the main idea of modernism and to analyze the intellectual aspect of the postmodern period. Organizations such as nation-state coming to the forefront in the modernization period have been replaced by the localization in postmodernism and postmodernism has created a new economic and social segment that has not only conceptual differences but also intellectual ones. Thus, several approaches to the problems of individuals in postmodernism period, as well as the solutions to those problems, have arisen. Led by the ideas “anything can be done” and “anything can be

deemed permissible”, the postmodern approach is based on the refusal of any human factor such as principles, order, exact true, and ethical values and acceptance of individual’s life without any standard (Gül, 2011). According to Featherstone, the postmodernism involves many conceptual confusions and is full of notions such as “loss of the sense of historical background”, “schizoid culture”, “excretion culture”, “reality replaced by images”, “simulations”, and “unchained indicators” (Featherstone, 2013: p.35). All these notions have reflected on the postmodern art and transformed the modernism’s notions such as originality, mission, and elitism.

Although using creativity and creating original and authentic works are very important for modernists, it is very senseless for postmodernists. Postmodern artists advocated that all the methods have been used, it is not important to seek after new movements in art, and avant-garde has lost its validity. However, kitsch that has been deemed worthless by modernism has been considered an esthetical component for the postmodern art approach (Selçuk, 2011: pp.3885-3886).

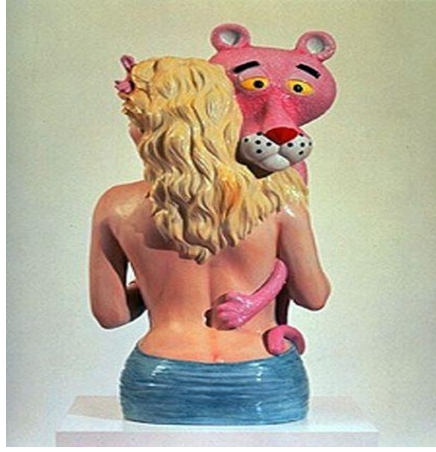


Figure 1: Jeff Koons, Pink Panther, 1988

(Source: <https://www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/1997/dannheisser/koons.html>, 2020)

According to Baudrillard, “since art broke the work from nature and turned into a simulation (not even a copy) process, it causes a very dangerous result: everything seems similar to each other because the symbols disappear and the previous works become the source of new ones and this cycle lasts forever. Then, a kind of changelessness, a sameness, or a kind of similarity arises. When this mentality is applied to the work of art, the component differentiating the work of art disappears and all the works become stereotyped.” Especially after the end of the modern era, it can be seen in the art that the kitsch and simulation have turned into an esthetical category and determined the content of works to a large extent (Şahiner, 2013: p.145).

Pop-art can be given an example. Pop-art is known as a movement that has emerged in the 1960s and been affected by the mass culture. It has ignored the modernism’s “high culture” understanding and been affected mainly by the popular culture. Moreover, pop-art remained adhered to an eclectic structure and ignored the elitism, which was the most important characteristic of modernism. Artists such as Andy Warhol, Tom Wesselman, and Claes Oldenburg were against the academisation of art and they deconstructed the modern art.

Furthermore, in the art of the 20th century when different concepts and approaches have been observed, the meaning and value assigned to the usage object made the “commodification” problem and dignity esthetic of modern art to be questioned and criticized. Marcel Duchamp’s ready-made objects can be given as examples of this. The principle of “dignity of esthetic”, which was criticized by Duchamp by signing an ordinary usage object, has integrated the art and daily life and designed the route of postmodern art. This riot against the principles and esthetic values of modern art has directed the formation of conceptual art and the esthetical values have been replaced by the ideas and thoughts (Şahin, 2013: p.239).



Figure 2: Marcel Duchamp (1917), Fountain, Porcelain urinal, Modern Arts Museum, New York.

(Source: <https://10layn.com/marcel-duchamp/>, 2020)

In the practice of conceptual art, the components such as ready-made objects, concepts, and writings have gained the art a new perspective and the presentation of art has changed depending on these parameters. The idea that any material and thought can be art has become acceptable and a structure, in which the esthetical values and criteria have become uncertain, has come to the forefront. Thus, the events called “conceptual art practices” draw attention to a process prioritizing the thought over the work of art and catching the moment in interaction with nature and different materials (Alp, 2013: p.53).

Thus, the conceptualists created works advocating that concepts such as skill/creativity involved in the traditional art practice have lost their validity. “Erased De Kooning Design” (1953), which Robert Rauschenberg erased a design of Willem de Kooning, a painter, by using 40 erasers, or the participation of Yves Klein, a French artist, in an exhibition in Iris Clert Hall in Paris by sending a telegraph stating that “this is a portrait of Iris Clert if I say so” and by exhibiting himself in an empty gallery in Iris Clert Hall in order to make the emptiness become concrete support this idea (Antmen 2014: p.194).



Figure 3: Robert Rauschenberg, Erased De Kooning Design, 1953.

(Source: <https://fragilekeys.com/2012/03/15/graceful-erasure/>, 2020)

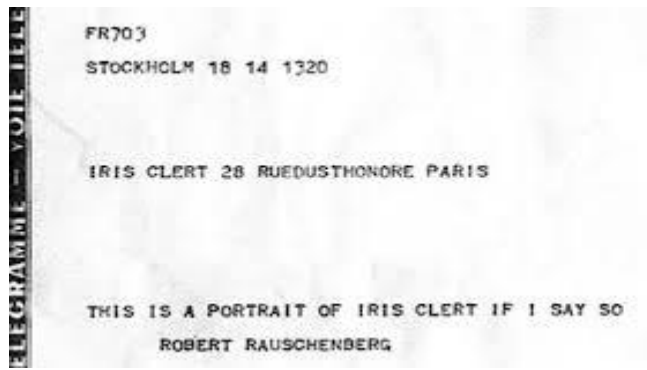


Figure 4: Robert Rauschenberg, "This is a portrait of Iris Clert if I say so", 1920, Telegraph

(Source: Bağatır, 2020)

According to Baudrillard, the art couldn't become an ideal lifestyle by passing beyond itself in accordance with esthetic utopia of modern times. The art has spread out in the general estheticization of daily life, not in an idealism passing beyond itself. The art has disappeared within the trans-esthetic of ordinariness for the pure distribution of images (Türksever, 2019: p.93). In the postmodern era, the border between art and daily life has disappeared and the esthetical value of a work of art is shaped according to the appreciation of mass culture. Postmodern art is shaped within a constant mobility and change since it is in a volatile and transient aura integrated with life.

From this aspect, Andy Warhol, who is accepted to be one of the leaders of art and esthetic approach, has designed and distributed a poster of Marilyn Monroe, who was a movie star taken as role by the society, represented the postmodern art approach (Ataseven, 2017: p.288).



Figure 5: Andy Warhol, Nine Marliyns, 1963.

(Source: <https://sanatkaravani.com/andy-warholsanatin-son-evrimini-gerceklestirmek/>, 2020)

Baudrillard stated that all the artistic opportunities and functions have been eradicated. On the contrary with academicians such as Benjamin and Adorno, Baudrillard believes that art has lost its functional aspect. The art is a game played with the parts of history by creating different compositions of previously designed patterns. For this reason, Baudrillard stated that artistic creativity has been exhausted, anything that was possible in art has been done, and it is not possible to make any new thing anymore. However, as a result of the effect of art on the other fields, the dreams of the avant-garde movement's integration with art has become a reality. Based on the idea that the art exist everywhere, the idea that anything can be art started being accepted and exhibited since Duchamp. It has become invalid to consider art as an esthetical value. As morals passing beyond the good and bad in Nietzsche, Baudrillard emphasized that the art has passed beyond today's esthetical limits and beyond the beautiful and ugly (Türksever, 2019: p.114).

CONCLUSION

The wars of the 20th century, advancements in technology and science, and emergence of capitalism have caused significant changes in socio-economic and cultural structure. It also affected the art. The changes and dynamics observed in art in the 1960s transformed the art's homogeneous structure into a complex one. It reversed the main values of art and notions such as authenticity and divine esthetic have been replaced by the components such as deconstruction, eclecticism, and parody pastiche.

The period of Dada and Duchamp, as stated by Baudrillard, has started as a trans-esthetic period and the "esthetic conclusion" that has been the most important determinant of postmodern art has experienced radical changes. In sum, many movements such as Pop-Art and Conceptual Art have emerged as a result of the transformation of art's representation in the 20th century, in which the ready-made materials have been considered as works of art.

Postmodernism includes many movements and thoughts. As a result of the transformation of usage materials into works of art and elimination of the border between art and daily life, postmodernists turned towards the concept, integrated the old and new in an eclectic manner, and mutated the academic structure of modernism.

REFERENCES

- Alp, Ö.K. (2013). Sanatın Temsili ve Postmodern Sanatta Temsil. *Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi Güzel Sanatlar Fakültesi Hakemli Dergisi*, 12, 25-53.
- Antmen, A. (2016). *20.Yüzyıl Batı Sanatında Akımlar*, İstanbul: Sel Yayıncılık.
- Featherstone, M. (2013). *Postmodernizm ve Tüketim Kültürü*, İstanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları.
- Gül, F. (2011). Postmodernizmin İnsana Bakışı:Felsefi Bir Sorgulama, *Türk Yurdu Dergisi*, 100, 270-283.
- Örs, H.B. (2009). Postmodern Dünyada İdeolojinin Dönüşümü, *İ.Ü. Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Dergisi*, 40, 1-17.
- Selçuk, G. (2011). Postmodern Söylem ve Popüler Kültür Kavramının Semantik Dönüşümü, *Yaşar Üniversitesi Dergisi*, 23(6), 3880-3892.
- Şahin, H. (2012). Postmodern Sanat, *İdil Sanat ve Dil Dergisi*, 1(5), 85-98.
- Şahin, H. (2013). Postmodern Sanatta Eklektik Nesnelere, *Karadeniz Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 36, 220-239.
- Şahiner, R. (2013). *Sanatta Postmodern Kırılmalar*, Ankara: Ütopya Yayınevi.
- Şaylan G. (2016). *Postmodernizm*, Ankara: İmge Kitabevi.
- Türksever, M.N. (2019). Jean Baudrillard'ın Düşüncesinde Trans-Estetik. Yayınlanmamış Yüksek Lisans Tezi. *Ankara Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü*, Ankara, 93-114.
- Ataseven, S.Y. (2017). Andy Warhol'un Resimlerinde Popüler Kültürün Etkisi. *Karadeniz Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 9 (16), 280-295.
- Yamaner, G. (2007). *Postmodernizm ve Sanat, Mimarlık, Sinema, Edebiyat, Tiyatro, Tasarım*, Ankara: Algı Yayın.

Internet

<https://forum.turkmmo.com /konu/ 1619811-postmodernizm-ve-pop-art/> Date: 20.12.2018.

Figuries

<https://www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/1997/dannheisser/koons.html>, Date: 18.01.2020.

<https://10layn.com/marcel-duchamp/> Date: 18.01.2020.

<https://fragilekeys.com/2012/03/15/graceful-erasure/> Date: 30.05.2020.

BAĞATIR, D.R. (2011). Nesnenin Ötesi: Kavramsal Sanatın Dayanak Noktaları, *Sanat ve Tasarım Dergisi* ,1 (7), Date:15.05.2020.

<https://sanatkaravani.com/andy-warholsanatin-son-evrimini-gerceklestirmek/> Date:18.01.2020.