

Contemporary Art Criticism of Jean Baudrillard *

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Research Article

Submitted: 13.05.2022 | Accepted: 29.05.2022

Abstract: The idea and practice of art, which started to change in the modern period, continued its metamorphosis in the post-modern period. Contemporary art, which was handled by many philosophers and thinkers, was called trans-aesthetic by Jean Baudrillard. According to Baudrillard, art has lost its meaning by penetrating every aspect of life in the post-modern age. In other words, art has become the transfer of images that mean nothing by becoming trans-aesthetic. At this stage, no object can be said to be beautiful or ugly.

Keywords: Baudrillard, contemporary art, criticism, trans-aesthetics, post-modernism.

* This article is produced from the master's thesis prepared by the author at Ankara University.

Introduction

The most obvious period of revolutionary events in art is the beginning of the Dadaism movement in the early 20th century and before it. The works of art did not show radical changes until this period, as they did in this period. In this period, the necessity of having features appealing to the mind as well as the features appealing to the eye came to the fore in the work of art. For this reason, Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968) first exhibited a bicycle wheel as a work of art in 1913. In 1914, a bottle dryer has designated a work of art. After that, the artwork that appeals to aesthetic judgment and taste began to be replaced by conceptual artwork.¹

Briefly speaking, the Dada movement, which emerged after the First World War, at a time when people's perception of the world changed profoundly, is a movement that mocks the magnificence of traditional art. It can be said that this movement has blurred the difference between works of art and other man-made objects. In the same period, French artist Marcel Duchamp became famous simply by signing any object made by people, ready-made, in his own words.²

According to Baudrillard, art has not succeeded in transcending itself and becoming the ideal lifestyle in accordance with the aesthetic utopia of modern times. Art has dispersed itself not in a transcendent ideality, but the general aestheticization of everyday life. Art perished in the trans-aesthetics of mediocrity for the sake of the pure circulation of images. The decisive period in postmodern art has been the period of Dada and Duchamp, in which art denied its own aesthetic game rule and opened up the mediocrity of images to the trans-aesthetic age.³

¹ Süreyya Su, *Güzelin ve Çirkinin Ötesinde Estetiğin Halleri* (İstanbul: Can Yayınları, 2017), 171.

² E. Hans Gombrich, *Sanatın Öyküsü*, çev. Ömer Erduran & Erol Erduran (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1999), 601; David Hopkins, *Dada ve Gerçeküstücülük*, çev. Suat Kemal Angı (Ankara: Dost Kitabevi, 2006), 17.

³ Jean Baudrillard, *Kötülüğün Şeffaflığı*, çev. Işık Ergüden (İstanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları, 2016), 18.

In the postmodern era, in Baudrillard's words, the trans-aesthetic era has begun. Throughout history, art has manifested in different ways. Artworks, which have a distinct aesthetic value unlike everyday objects, began to change with human perceptions at the beginning of the 20th century. Ready-made and works of art were evaluated in the same category. In a period when everything is considered aesthetic, art has become invisible. Technical and theoretical changes have occurred after ready-made products have taken their place in art history as works of art against aesthetics. First of all, the understanding of representation and reality has undergone a radical change. Instead of the picture of a concept, the objects that express it have gained the feature of expression. This allowed the objects to gain meaning alone or together.⁴

Ready-mades have caused the understanding of reality to become a problem in philosophy and art. Seeing the representation of any object in an imaginary way rather than realistically has led to the differentiation of the viewer's and the artist's perspectives on the works. Claiming that everything is a copy, Duchamp tried to show what the ready-made products he put forward as a product can mean, not what it means. In this way, Duchamp paved the way for many movements such as pop art, minimalism and conceptual art. Duchamp's intervention at the beginning of the 20th century influenced the whole century and caused a new aesthetic understanding that glorified the ordinary elements of life. Since Duchamp, the delicate displacements and interlacing between the ordinary and the artistic have become the natural tendency of postmodern art.⁵

According to Duchamp, the work of art represents the artist's encounter with himself, an analytical session in which the artist re-experiences his feelings with his material. Therefore, the aesthetic work is a tool to empathize with the artist, a magical ritual that enables the viewer to identify with the artist and his works through this empathy. What Duchamp is concerned with is the

⁴ Su, *Güzelin ve Çirkinin Ötesinde*, 173.

⁵ Su, *Güzelin ve Çirkinin Ötesinde*, 174.

creative act that creates the artwork rather than the artwork. Therefore, he opposes the aesthetic evaluation of art. Looking at art from an aesthetic level cause being completely insensitive to the subjective creative process. Duchamp thinks that aesthetic judgment ignores the creative personality of the artist, especially the relationship between the artist's extremely human personality and his superhuman creativity, that is, his use of transcending his personality by transforming his creativity into art.⁶

Therefore, Duchamp's works, ready-mades, aim to prevent aesthetic idealization. The artist should not limit himself in the name of certain aesthetic judgments. The works that Duchamp put into art are primarily industrial products, and on the other hand, they gain a dual meaning by turning into works of art as a result of the artist's creative act. This feature blurs the distinction between art and non-art, like a deconstructive act that forms the basis of contemporary art. Duchamp says that the ready-made is always based on the extinction of good and bad taste. This is what makes it subversive, even revolutionary. Values are ironically reversed, moving beyond the good and the bad, the beautiful and the ugly. The urinal displayed in the museum elevates the ordinary object while making ordinary the sublime masterpieces of art. In a sense, Duchamp mocks aesthetic judgments about the artwork.⁷

In this context, objects, after taking the role of decorative and symbolic extras in all classical art, were freed from relying on psychological and moral values in the 20th century.

Baudrillard's Critique of Contemporary Art: Trans-aesthetic

Art, which ceased to exist in the shadow of human beings, gained extraordinary importance as an independent element of spatial analysis. For this reason, they are fragmented to the point of abstraction, in Baudrillard's words. Contemporary art, existing

⁶ Donald Kuspit, *Sanatın Sonu*, çev. Yasemin Tezgiden (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2014), 34-35.

⁷ Kuspit, *Sanatın Sonu*, 40-41.

in the consumer society, has destroyed the traditional sublime status of representation. The object no longer has the privilege of essence and meaning over the image. One has ceased to be the truth of the other. Image and object co-exist in logical space, where they act equally as signs. Where before all art was built on a deep idea of the world, pop art wants to be the same as the artificial order formed by the industrial and serial production of signs. In short, while pop art feeds on the banality of objects detached from their functions, all pre-Pop art feeds on transcendence.⁸

Today's art and art discourse, which Baudrillard says is devoid of value and meaning, is rapidly increasing. But the spirit of art has disappeared. In his own words: "Art as an adventure, art with the power to create illusions, art that sets up another stage against reality, where things submit to the rule of a higher game, like lines and colors on a canvas, losing the meaning of beings and transcending their own reason for being. Art disappeared as a transcendent figure whose ideal forms they were able to attain in the process of extraction."⁹ It is understood from these expressions that the art that Baudrillard claims to have disappeared is an art that reflects a representation of the truth that Plato wants to continue by keeping it under control within the state. This understanding of art manifested in Aristotle as a means by which people reach their soul serenity through catharsis. The issue of hyperreality of images in art is now always present. According to Baudrillard, both those who believe in this reality and those who do not believe are under the influence of simulation electricity. An aesthetic vulgarity imposes itself in today's art. Art first lost its desire for illusion and became trans-aesthetic. Art manifests itself as the ability to transfer some feelings and features, and an effort to gain a feature. The trans-aestheticization of art today is nothing but the transfer of images that mean nothing.¹⁰

⁸ Baudrillard, *Tüketim Toplumu*, çev. Alaeddin Şenel (İstanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları, 2015), 144.

⁹ Baudrillard, *Kötülüğün Şeffaflığı*, 20.

¹⁰ Özkan Eroğlu, *Baudrillard'ı Okumak* (İstanbul: Tekhne Yayınları, 2014), 37.

Baudrillard's views on contemporary cinema can help us express his criticism of art. According to Baudrillard, films that leave no room for criticism because they destroy themselves from within, and are full of references, talkative, high-tech films carry the ulcer of the cinema, its inner tumor. According to him, the directors of these films take the special effects and megalomaniacal stereotypes to such an extreme that it is as if their whole concern is to beat up the images themselves, to make them suffer by exhausting their effects, and to turn the script into image pornography. The audience has no choice but to witness this excess of cinema end the illusion of cinema.¹¹

As technology improved, the cinematographic effect perfected so did the illusion. There are no hints or illusions left in today's cinema. Cinema connects everything on a hyper-effective, hypertechanical, hypervisible level. We are getting closer and closer to the useless perfection of the image. The image ceases to be an image by multiplying rapidly. The closer you get to the absolute clarity, high resolution, and realistic perfection of the image, the more the illusion power is lost.¹²

The image is the abstraction of the world into two dimensions. It is the activation of the power of illusion by eliminating one of the real-world dimensions. The virtual image, on the contrary, destroys this illusion by immersing us in the image, recreating a realistic three-dimensional image. Baudrillard expresses this situation as follows: "The virtuality tends towards the illusion of perfection. Its whole purpose is to destroy reality through its twin. In contrast, deception reduces real objects to one dimension, giving them a magical presence. This is the lesson that modernity forgets: to decrease brings power, power arises from absence. We, on the other hand, do not stop accumulating, adding and increasing. Now that we are incapable of confronting the mastery of symbolically mastering the absence, we are stuck with the opposite illusion: the

¹¹ Baudrillard, *Sanat Komplosu*, çev. Elçin Gen & Işık Ergüden (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2012), 28.

¹² Baudrillard, *Sanat Komplosu*, 29.

disenchanted illusion of abundance, the modern illusion of multiplying screens and curtains.¹³

Thus, art is by no means a mechanical reflection of the positive or negative conditions of the world. In a world that preys on indifference, art at best adds indifference to this indifference. It revolves around the emptiness of the non-object object, the image. In cinema, directors such as Warhol, Godard, Jarmusch, Antonioni, Wenders, and Altman help the meaninglessness of the universe, the hyperreal or real illusion, through the image.¹⁴

Today, art, like any commercial enterprise, offers profitable investments, glorified consumer goods and career opportunities. Everything that has nothing to do with art turns into art. Baudrillard states that the sole function of Disneyland is to hide the fact that all of America is one huge theme park. Similarly, art has evolved into a front-line, a deterrent mechanism, which conceals the fact that the whole society has passed into the trans-aesthetic period. Because art has lost all the privilege it had, we can see it everywhere.¹⁵

The art that we can find everywhere presents an icon-breaking appearance. Modern iconoclasm has become not about destroying images, but producing an image where there is nothing to see. These are images that literally leave no traces or lead to any aesthetic results. If there is a secret to these images, it is that something is being lost behind them all. This is the secret of the simulation; Not only did the real world disappear with the simulation, but the question of its very existence also lost its meaning.¹⁶

When we look at history, it is seen that the same problem is valid in Byzantine iconoclasm. According to Baudrillard, icon worshipers were cunning people who claimed to represent God in the

¹³ Baudrillard, *Sanat Komplosu*, 31.

¹⁴ Baudrillard, *Sanat Komplosu*, 32.

¹⁵ Sylvere Lotringer, "Sanat Korsanlığı," Baudrillard, *Sanat Komplosu*, çev. Elçin Gen & Işık Ergüden (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2012), 12; Baudrillard, *Simülakrlar ve Simülasyon*, çev. Oğuz Adanır (Ankara: Doğu-Batı Yayınları, 2014), 27-28.

¹⁶ Baudrillard, *Sanat Komplosu*, 36.

most sublime form. In reality, however, they were covering up asking questions about his existence by imitating God through images. Every image became an excuse for refraining from asking the question of the existence of God. In fact, behind every image, God was disappearing. In other words, the question of the existence or non-existence of God was solved by simulation. God was not dead, but disappeared, his existence no longer being questioned.¹⁷

Iconoclasts hated them because they sensed the problems that images would cause. What causes iconoclasts to fear the omnipotence of simulacra is the realization that icons can remove the idea of God from people's minds while predicting that this eerie reality may lead to the thought that God never existed, but could only exist through their produced simulacra. As a matter of fact, it happened as they thought.¹⁸

According to Baudrillard, art has lost its desire for illusion. Everything has become trans-aesthetic, elevating it to the level of aesthetic mediocrity. The origin of modernity in art consists of the deconstruction of the object and the representation.¹⁹

The state of art is like money, which cannot be converted into real value or wealth, cannot be exchanged, only in circulation. There is a very rapid circulation and impossible exchange in art. The works have become indistinguishable neither against their referential value nor among themselves.²⁰

In this case, there is neither a criterion of judgment, a rule of thumb, nor a taste for contemporary art. The delicate balance of aesthetic judgment and taste no longer exists. In this sense, according to Baudrillard, we are doomed to indifference in our current situation, since we can no longer reach the ugly or the beautiful, and it is impossible to make a value judgment. Beauty and

¹⁷ Baudrillard, *Sanat Komplosu*, 36

¹⁸ Baudrillard, *Simülakrlar ve Simülasyon*, 17.

¹⁹ Baudrillard, *Sanat Komplosu*, 49.

²⁰ Baudrillard, *Kötülüğün Şeffaflığı*, 21.

the ugly, once they are freed from their mutual contradiction, appear more beautiful than beautiful or uglier than ugly. For example, today, the painting reveals not exactly ugliness (ugliness is still an aesthetic value), but rather uglier than ugly (bad, worse, kitsch).²¹ Baudrillard, this unqualified (kitsch) art produced in the contemporary world; thinks that he sees being meaningless and ridiculous as his right, trying to be a worthless thing and claiming that it is something superficial.²²

In works of art that multiply rapidly and become kitsch, it is the aura that fades. The object reproduced by reproduction technology is separated from the traditional layer. By producing the work more than once, its sole existence is replaced by a mass presence. By allowing reproduction to be in the hands of the buyer, the produced object comes to life. These two processes cause two sudden and very important changes in the lands belonging to the objects of the past: the disintegration of tradition and the renewal of humanity.²³

Throughout history, just as the way of existence of societies has changed, the way of perception has also changed. We can read today's perception changes as the deterioration of aura. Today's societies have a desire to be close to objects and to destroy the uniqueness of the object by digesting it with reproduction. The removal of the veil from the object, that is, the destruction of the aura, is the signature of a sensed perception that everything in the world is alike. Thanks to reproduction, there has been such an increase in the perception in question that it finds the sameness even in the unique.²⁴

According to Baudrillard, who continues Walter Benjamin's views, there is not a single difference between contemporary art and technical, mediatic, or numerical operations. There is no

²¹ Baudrillard, *Kötünlüğün Şeffaflığı*, 24.

²² Baudrillard, "Sanat Dünyasının Kurduğu Komplo," çev. Oğuz Adanır, *Özne* 14 (2011), 2.

²³ Walter Benjamin, *Teknik Olarak Yeniden-Üretilebilirlik Çağında Sanat Yapıtı*, çev. Gökhan Sarı (İstanbul: Zeplin Yayınları, 2015), 15-16.

²⁴ Benjamin, *Teknik Olarak Yeniden-Üretilebilirlik Çağında Sanat Yapıtı*, 18.

more artistic difference, no more transcendence, and there is no other way to reflect the world. In this sense, there is nothing left in the name of contemporary art. Because there is no difference between art and the world, they are the same thing. We no longer have the opportunity to make a distinction in the field of art.²⁵

This point started with impressionism, in which reality was reduced to simple elements in the modern era. Impressionists pursued a revolutionary approach to painting. Although artists were previously taught the ingrained methods of drawing and painting of the High Renaissance, the Impressionists sought impressions of everyday life subjects and scenes. They tried to put forward the idea of reflecting the modern subjects in painting exactly as they perceived it. That's why many Impressionists painted outdoors to capture the visual effects of the real world.²⁶

Afterward, a detailed analysis of all kinds of perception, object structure, sensitivity and formal fragmentation open abstraction has been made. The paradox of abstraction; The reason is that it frees the object from figurative necessity and pushes it to be only a form, and thus condemning the object to a sharper idea of objectivity. Abstraction wanted to get rid of the figurative mask based on similarity and reach the analytical truth in the object. Under the name of abstraction, there has been a movement towards a more intense reality, something that seems more real than really.²⁷

At this point, art has influenced all reality in the name of a general aestheticization (trans-aesthetics). Ultimately, vulgarized art and the mundaneness of the world began to mix. All kinds of reality have been drawn into the aesthetic field and aesthetics has been transformed into a universal dimension in every field.²⁸

²⁵ Baudrillard, *Şeytana Satılan Ruh ya da Kötülüğün Egemenliği*, çev. Oğuz Adanır (Ankara: Doğu Batı Yayınları, 2015), 99.

²⁶ Diana Newall, *Empresyonistler: Ayrıntıda Sanat*, çev. Elif Dasdarlı (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2014), 7.

²⁷ Baudrillard, *Şeytana Satılan Ruh ya da Kötülüğün Egemenliği*, 100.

²⁸ Baudrillard, *Şeytana Satılan Ruh ya da Kötülüğün Egemenliği*, 100.

As a prelude to this situation, displaying a urinal in an art exhibition has been an unprecedented idea and has in itself confused reality. Baudrillard states that Duchamp's intention, in Dada style, may only be to shake up the art institution, but he also adds by saying that what happened happened to art. This coup accelerated the collapse of art history with Andy Warhol's works and Duchamp's daring painting experiments. From now on, there is no point in asking whether art is realist, expressionist, futuristic, or pop. The understanding of 'everything is in the mind' has begun to be accepted. The logic of "If reality is being put up for sale everywhere, why not in the gallery?" has begun to pervade everywhere.²⁹

From now on, art started to look like it was looking for a way out among the wastes by messing up its own trash cans. Baudrillard narrates an ironic incident at this point:

About ten years ago in Beaubourg, cleaners went on strike and the cultural center was filled with heaps of garbage. In those days there was an exhibition about garbage in the center. Naturally, the amount of garbage left by visitors in Beaubourg reached a gigantic size and exceeded the amount of cultural garbage on display inside. In this case, it is safe to say that the real artists are the striking cleaning workers. Because they had turned this cultural center into an area where culture was turned into a concrete waste. The strike and the exhibition coincided with the same time period; do not forget the wild and fantastic dimension of the strike, which resembles a repetition of the exhibition.³⁰

From this point of view, it can be said that according to Baudrillard, most contemporary works of art have an appearance that does not have an iota of value. Contemporary art, which has given vulgarity the status of art, has left art without a will, leaving it to be a machine that has nothing to grind but itself. Contrary to expectations, the closure of the gap between art and reality

²⁹ Lotringer, "Sanat Korsanlığı," 22.

³⁰ Baudrillard, "İllüzyon, Yitirilen İllüzyon ve Estetik," çev. Oğuz Adanır, *Baudrillard* (İstanbul: Say Yayınları, 2016), 14.

brought neither art nor reality to life and eliminated the possibility of creating an illusion. All that remains is an art, deconstruction and self-reference, which constantly recycles its own dead.³¹

All this has caused art and reality to be liberated and doomed to each other at the same time. Art that has lost its function has finally resembled a holistic reality. When Baudrillard says “Integral Reality” he means a world that is visible, transparent, where everything is real and liberated, brought to an end and must be meaningful (whereas, in order to speak of meaning, everything must not be meaningful). Nothing should remain unsolved and unexplained in this world. The disappearance of the idea of God has compared people to reality and what is called the ideal of transforming this real world. This idea has led people to the conclusion that they transform the world into a reality, that is, a holistic and technical reality.³²

According to Baudrillard, at this point where holistic reality has reached today, the person who can prove that art has an essence will have achieved a miracle. Today, art has turned into something that is only talked about in the art world. This community, which constitutes the art world, cannot approach art and the artist correctly. Creative action in this world resembles nothing but a creative action indicator. What we have is an art that consists only of signs and has no real value. What the painter deals with is not what he paints, but the act of painting itself.³³

This is only one of the pillars of the conspiracy. The other is the audience. The audience consumes this art culture, which they mostly do not understand, as something insignificant. The audience understands that they should not understand anything, they think that the only thing that matters is the imposition called culture.³⁴

³¹ Baudrillard, “İllüzyon, Yitirilen İllüzyon ve Estetik,” 9.

³² Baudrillard, “Bütünsel (ya da Küresel) Gerçeklik,” çev. Oğuz Adanır, *Özne* 4 (2004), 11-13.

³³ Baudrillard, *Şeytana Satılan Ruh Ya Da Kötülüğün Egemenliği*, 101.

³⁴ Baudrillard, *Şeytana Satılan Ruh Ya Da Kötülüğün Egemenliği*, 102.

According to Baudrillard, in general, the audience pretends to admire the works of art, which they look at and do not understand anything, with the thought that there is a higher meaning that they cannot understand. Even if there is nothing to understand in reality, it is not the work that matters, but the signature on it. In the consumption culture, where the image determines everything, works of art enter circulation with meaninglessness and signature (image, brand) based on the fact that famous artists have something they want to tell. A painting is an object that is both painted and signed. Thanks to the creator's initials, this original object seems to have an even more original appearance. According to Baudrillard, while this subject proves its existence with an object named the painting, brush strokes can also have a meaning thanks to this indicator. The signature unconsciously puts the work in a different object-specific world. Thus, thanks to this signature, the canvas becomes unique not as a work but as an object. However, the original meaning of the object cannot be mentioned here. What is at issue is not the work being seen, but the different value it acquires with a signature (sign) with opposite meanings that enables it to be understood and evaluated to whom it belongs within a certain system of signs. Thus, it is not only contented with ascribed meaning to the work, which turns into a cultural object through a signature but also it is thought that it should have a different value.³⁵

As can be understood from Baudrillard's statements, contrary to the traditional idea of art based on a transcendent basis, post-modern art has become a sign in which the artist reveals his own existence through his signature. When the artist signs an ordinary object, that object turns into a work of art, and the artist thus reveals his own existence. In this case, contemporary art is not concerned with everyone's aesthetic pleasure. On the contrary, it reveals itself by the fame of every object in a trans-aesthetic world, even for fifteen minutes. Nothing in this world is more valuable

³⁵ Baudrillard, *Gösterge Ekonomi Politiği Hakkında Bir Eleştiri*, çev. Oğuz Adanır & Ali Bilgin (İstanbul: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2009), 115.

than another, everything done is genius. As a result of this approach, art has turned into an object devoid of transcendence, an object producer that has undergone structural deformation and in turn deforms us. There is no longer a real object in this production. It is an idea of an object, not an object seen in Readymade. It is not the artistic object, but the thought of art itself, from which we should enjoy it.³⁶

In these conditions, it is very difficult to talk about painting and art today. Art is nothing but an illusion that exaggerates the world we live in, a mirror that deforms it. In a world condemned to indifference, art, like thought, cannot do anything but add indifference to this indifference. There are no longer places where the fascinating illusions of the old art are produced. In this case, there is no other option other than the continuous production of the image.³⁷

With the continuous production of the image, art, which has only one form, loses its meaning. According to Baudrillard, art is like a sign that means nothing. According to him, art becomes part of a general universe of meaninglessness and insensitivity.³⁸

Since the 19th century, art has not been concerned about being useful. It can even be said that he is proud of this feature. When this situation is forced a little, any object that has been rendered useless can be turned into a work of art. Ready-made, which loses its function to the object and transforms it into a museum object without ever playing on it, does nothing else. According to Baudrillard, from the moment the truth becomes useless, an art object becomes the toy of that destructive aesthetic of mediocrity.³⁹

Thus, everything that has become old, has lost its function and has become useless has an aura in this way. The logic of uselessness offers no alternative but to compare art itself to a waste,

³⁶ Baudrillard, *Şeytana Satılan Ruh ya da Kötülüğün Egemenliği*, 103.

³⁷ Baudrillard, "İllüzyon, Yitirilen İllüzyon ve Estetik," 10.

³⁸ Baudrillard, *Şeytana Satılan Ruh ya da Kötülüğün Egemenliği*, 104.

³⁹ Baudrillard, *Şeytana Satılan Ruh ya da Kötülüğün Egemenliği*, 105.

which by definition is useless. Art strives to show its uselessness. On the one hand, it is sold at an exorbitant price, on the other hand, it strives to show that it is not only something that has no use value but also something that has no exchange value. In this way, art has a material value as it becomes increasingly complex and gradually turns into nothing. In this case, nothing can be considered beautiful or ugly anymore. According to Baudrillard, the function of contemporary art is to be of no use.⁴⁰

All the hypocrisy of contemporary art is also here. To be willing to meaninglessness, to nonsense, to void, to strive to be void when already void. Claiming superficiality in superficial terms, striving to be absurd while essentially devoid of meaning. According to Baudrillard, the main event of art is that nothing comes to the surface in signs. In this case, there is no possibility of a critical judgment about art. It's just a matter of friendly acknowledgment, with forced geniality.⁴¹

The other side of hypocrisy is to force people to value it a little bit the other way around, by bluffing nullity, with the excuse that it is not possible for art to be so void and that it is definitely hiding something. Contemporary art takes advantage of the impossibility of grounding aesthetic judgments and speculates on the feelings of guilt of those who do not understand it or realize that there is nothing to understand.⁴²

Postmodernism in art is defined by a nihilistic indifference, ironic playfulness, and destructive permissiveness, contrary to the seriousness of modernism. It is possible to see many examples of this in the industrial works of artists such as Andy Warhol and Damien Hirst, in the performances of artists such as Marina Abramovic, in Duchamp's ready-mades, and new media arts from video to the internet. Contrary to the prescriptive and aesthetic beauty of modern art, postmodern art has blurred the distinction between high culture and popular culture. He did this in line with

⁴⁰ Baudrillard, *Şeytana Satılan Ruh ya da Kötülüğün Egemenliği*, 106.

⁴¹ Baudrillard, *Sanat Komplosu*, 52.

⁴² Baudrillard, *Sanat Komplosu*, 53.

the culture of consumption, which nullified aesthetic criteria and expanded the field of art towards advertising and design. Pop art has brought irony, pastiche, commercialism and nihilism.⁴³

Baudrillard states that postmodern art consists of eclectic mixtures of styles, forms and genres selected from art history. The avant-garde movements that make up modernism call for the transformation of art and life by promoting denial and conflict. Although postmodernism has an avant-garde and anarchist spirit, instead of transforming life and art, it transforms life and art into a show. By creating a dream world in a multitude of images and styles, he tries to establish a distorted and non-revolutionary world.⁴⁴

Baudrillard, who says that there is an epidemic of value today, also states that art is everywhere. This situation destroys the spirit of art. In today's art, the sensitive scales of aesthetic taste and judgment have disappeared. The shine of art in advertising is directly related to the impossibility of any aesthetic evaluation. Baudrillard states that contemporary art is in a kind of stagnation following jerky movements, in a situation that cannot overcome itself and closes in on itself by repeating more and more. On the one hand, there is an accumulation of current art forms and on the other hand, there is a rapid proliferation, a primitive exaggeration, and innumerable variations on the forms of the past. This is logical: wherever there is accumulation (statis), there is spread (metastasis).⁴⁵

In the trans-aesthetic world, everything becomes aesthetic. Politics has turned into a spectacle, sexuality is used by advertising, and all kinds of activities gain an aesthetic quality under the name of culture. This is the all-invading advertising and mediatic signification style. When everything is aesthetic, there is no longer anything beautiful or ugly, and art disappears. According to Baudrillard, this situation is not only the realization of utopia and

⁴³ Su, *Güzelin ve Çirkinin Ötesinde Estetiğin Halleri*, 200.

⁴⁴ Su, *Güzelin ve Çirkinin Ötesinde Estetiğin Halleri*, 201.

⁴⁵ Baudrillard, *Kötülüğün Şeffaflığı*, 20-21.

the perfect manifestation of modernity but also trans-aestheticization, which means the negation and disappearance of these results by reaching beyond their own borders.⁴⁶

All the movements that can be listed when looking at the history of art have emerged thanks to the fact that the artists participating in the process denied the existing situation and produced works with the sensitivity of revealing something new against the old. In other words, art movements emerged from each other against each other. However, as Baudrillard said, today's artistic movements and movements coexist indistinguishably from each other. The eclectic structure that emerges with such a process in art brings with it a devaluation. Because the works of art or trends that emerged in this process seem to have emerged by chance.⁴⁷

Conclusion

According to Baudrillard, in the period when reality lost its meaning by multiplying, there was no such thing as modern art anymore. There is no distinction between modern art and advertising, media works, or technique. According to Baudrillard, we no longer have the means to discuss the essence of art as Benjamin problematized. Today, art has turned into something that is only talked about in the art world. Art is just a spectacle in the consumer society through simulacrum that replace reality.

Contemporary art, with the meaninglessness it presents, saves us from the domination of meaning. The reason for its rapid spread should be sought here. It thrives on the reputation of being useless and meaningless regardless of any aesthetic value. All these are extreme phenomena associated with postmodern culture and imagery. The only thing that contemporary art can represent with its useless function is the meaninglessness that dominates life.

Baudrillard says that all kinds of artistic possibilities and functions are exhausted today. Against theorists such as Benjamin and

⁴⁶ Su, *Güzelin ve Çirkinin Ötesinde Estetiğin Halleri*, 205.

⁴⁷ Su, *Güzelin ve Çirkinin Ötesinde Estetiğin Halleri*, 206.

Adorno, who believe in the revolution through culture, Baudrillard claims that art has lost its critical function. Art now consists of a game played with pieces of the past by reassembling the already produced forms in different compositions each time. Therefore, according to Baudrillard, it is impossible to do anything new because artistic creativity is exhausted and everything that can be done in art has been done. However, art has penetrated all areas of life and the dreams of avant-garde movements to combine art and life have come true. But this spread of art has eliminated art as a transcendent phenomenon.

In this situation, which Baudrillard calls trans-aesthetics, art has lost its specificity, boundaries, criteria and character. Parallel to the emergence of art everywhere, everything has started to be seen and exhibited as art since Duchamp. Art, as an ordinary object exhibited in a museum or as an object expressing dignity in a home, company and public space, has become a part of everyday life, invalidating its justification for being an aesthetic object. Just as morality goes beyond good and evil in Nietzsche, according to Baudrillard, art today has gone beyond the beautiful and the ugly by overflowing the boundaries of aesthetic values.

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