



EXAMINATION OF THE CONCEPT OF EXHIBITION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE WHITE CUBE

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ABSTRACT

The isolation of the gallery space from the world outside the museum reinforced the understanding that art belongs to the 'universal and eternal spiritual realm', with nothing to do with money or politics. The fewer the objects exhibited in modern museums and the more empty the walls, the more sacred the museum space becomes. In this context, the modern art museum, also called the white cube, is unspoiled and pure spaces designed to present art in a still and quiet environment, undisturbed by the intervention of people. This study was carried out with the literature review method. In today's art, it is aimed to be a resource that presents current examples to researchers working on the interaction of gallery space and nature, by creating works that focus on the relationship between the gallery space and nature.

Keywords: White Cube, Art Museums, Interior Design Elements, Context, Experience

INTRODUCTION

The most important feature of today's art is that many disciplines are intertwined. In this case, it emerged as a reaction against the concept of autonomy, which modernism attaches the most importance to. Contemporary art is no longer a single discipline, but interdisciplinarity. The art object defined by modernism changed after the 1960s and dragged the artist to a new path (Yücel, 2012, p. 4-5). The artist now has to think about the space in his production. Because in postmodernism, the complement of the art object is the viewer, and in this direction, the artist has to think about the space where the viewer and the art object will meet. In the 21st century, the artist has aimed to create a new perception on the axis of the gallery space and the audience since 1950. By reversing the main duties imposed on the gallery space, it provided a new way of seeing and an extraordinary culture of interpretation emerged. The viewer experiences the art of this period by feeling it completely, and this experience is again in the home of the art; He lives in an art gallery. Postmodernism, reacting against the inviolability of the sublime space of modernism, has placed everything that was previously unthinkable within an art gallery.

1. GALLERY IDEOLOGY

Irish artist and critic Brian O'Doherty examines the processes in which objects gain the status of art in *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of Gallery Space*, while revealing the implicit rules that make the mechanisms behind modern art invisible, and examines the artists who make those rules visible. As a three-dimensional volumetric form, the cube both bears witness to a semiotic meaning of early modernism arising from this term and symbolizes architecture. This duality overlaps with each other in terms of defining the gallery that functions as a space for art, and also points to the transformational context that extends from one to the other. For

this reason, in the foreword of the book, in which many aspects of the white cube issue are referred and the ideology of the gallery space is examined, Thomas McEvilley, while explaining the relationship between contemporary art and the gallery, emphasizes that one of the prominent tendencies of our age is to 'examine the phenomena according to their contexts' (Huntürk, 2011)

An article written by Ahu Antmen for 'White Cube' and Beyond contributed to the developments that transformed this unique 'shell' of 20th century art, at the level of known examples. There is an interesting approach quoted from Daniel Buren in that article: How can bread on display in an art gallery become a work of art? Based on this question, Daniel Buren tried to understand the effect of museums on a work of art.

"Putting a slice of bread in a museum or exhibiting it does not change the function of that museum, but the museum, at least for the duration of the exhibition, turns that slice of bread into a work of art. Let's display a slice of bread in a bakery and see: To distinguish that slice of bread from other breads. It will be difficult, even impossible. Then let's display any work of art in a museum: is it really possible to distinguish it from other works?" (O'Doherty, 2010, s. 18)

In summary, putting a work of art in a bread oven or displaying it there does not change the function of the oven, but the oven cannot turn the work of art into a slice of bread.

2.'HOW CAN BREAD BECOME A WORK OF ART?'

The meaning and value of a work is related to the space in which it is exhibited as much as the object itself. From this point of view, the 'white cube' galleries, which are described as the 'shell' of 20th century modern art, have a great role in gaining the status of art. When we enter these isolated spaces with white walls and no windows, works of art are presented to our eyes as if they were religious truths. Art seems to be 'in its own world' within an eternity and resembles a ritual meeting place for the audience.

O'Doherty, who defines the current gallery space as "a bit of church sanctity, a bit of courtroom formality, a bit of experimental laboratory mystery and an elegant design delight", said, "The more rigorous the rules for building a medieval church are, the same are the rules applied for the construction of the gallery space has care. Any contact with the outside world must be avoided, so windows are often destroyed. The walls are white. The main light source is the ceiling. Wood floors are so polished that you can hear your own footsteps or carpeted so that you can step quietly, eyes on the walls. Art, as they say, is a phenomenon "in its own world". The only thing you can see in that place is maybe a table. In such a context, even the footed ashtray acquires the status of a sacred object: even fire extinguishers are sometimes mistaken for an aesthetic object in modern museums. The perception of modernism that transforms life into formal values has thus succeeded. But it is also one of those deadly diseases of modernism. Shadowless, white, clean, artificial gallery space is dedicated to the technology of aesthetics." (Lekesiz, 2014, s.288).

In the art transformation of the 1960s, the dominance of the white cube was shaken by new forms of expression such as happenings, performance and installation, and it created a criticism of the system that revolved behind it. The singular object, which has a commodity value, leaves its place to the works that the viewer can establish in a physical interaction. The gallery is purified from its sanctity and turns into a workshop space. In fact, the space itself, the context itself, becomes the content. This is one of the most distinguishing features of postmodernism from modernism (Antmen, 2013, s. 193).

Some of the artists who criticize the art system have produced many works in a category called land art. However, it still could not escape from being a part of the system. For example, Robert Smithson exhibits the dust of the Spiral Breakwater within the confines of a gallery (Sakman, 2014). Robert Smithson's Spiral Jetty (1970) is still open to visitors today and turns red and pink from time to time, thanks to a variety of bacteria and algae found in the lake. Extending from the shore to the lake and rotating counterclockwise, Spiral Jetty is formed from 6,000 tons of basalt, gravel, salt and sand-like material collected from the shore. The change in the water level during the year determines the amount of salt accumulated on the Spiral Jetty and this change causes a difference in the appearance of the work.



Image 1. Robert Smithson, *Spiral Breakwater*, 1970, Great Salt Lake, Utah(left)/ *Cracked and Dusty Pebble Mirror*, 1968(right)
(<https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/>)

“Smithson, who divided the examples of land art into two as space and non-space, thus separated the projects realized in the field from the installations made with the materials left over from these projects” (Antmen, 2008, s. 254).

On the other hand, the Irish author of the book also bases his 'classic text' on three articles he published in 1976, based on a 'contextual transformation'. As a rule of thumb, it should underline the author's judgment: 'When abstracted, the context of the object becomes the gallery' (O'Doherty, 2010, s. 64).

3. TRANSFORMATION OF ARTWORK

In the content of the book, the depth of the original relationship between the stages of art production and the quality of the works that determine this production is expressed in different ways and concretely. The reason is; The works in the gallery space are not independent from this space and often give that space its identity. In other words, while transforming the work of art, it also undergoes a transformation. In addition, the effect of the works on the audience is an effect that is shared with this space. Wherever the viewer sees and perceives the art object, that place is identified with the work of art and in a sense integrated with it. Considering that the modern sense of gallerism in Europe did not go back to the 1840s, the concept of gallery gained a new content after Kurt Schwitters' famous 'Merzbaum', the first typical example of which was witnessed in the 1920s, while it was responsible for acting as a shell protecting the artwork at first. It is a work produced forty years before the installation and is the source of the 'urban mythos'. According to the author, 'Merzbau' is one of the first designs that brought the modern idea of the gallery to the agenda.

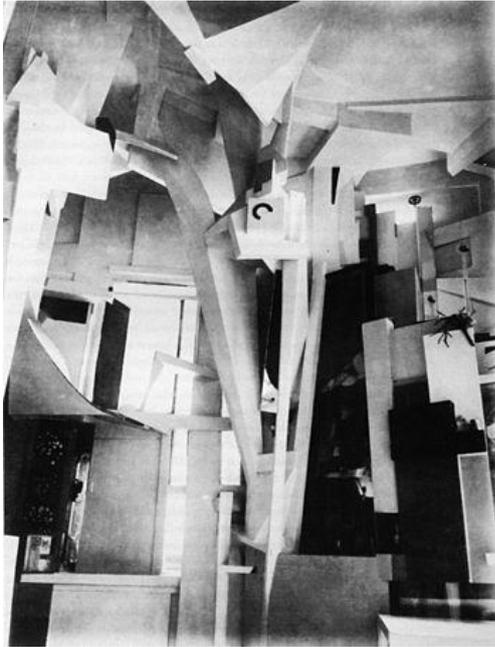


Image 2. Kurt Schwitters, *Merzbau*, whose construction began in 1923, was destroyed in 1943. Hanover, Germany
[\(https://www.tate.org.uk/\)](https://www.tate.org.uk/)

Independence from the exterior is a primary rule for the gallery, because there the work is in its own world. In this sense, the gallery is a 'ritual space'. According to McEvelley, the sense of eternity in the gallery gave it a 'purgatory status'. In this respect, the bias peculiar to religious structures seems to be valid for the gallery as well (O'Doherty, 2010, p. 109).

The relationship between works of art and space brings up the issue of transformation in the context of the elements that affect the image of depth on the floor of the painting, such as the window: 'The perspective positions each element in the picture in order within the cavity of a cone, while the frame observes the distances in the foreground, middle and background like a grid. reveals it' (O'Doherty, 2010, p. 34). This frame, which gave the viewer a sense of trust as an absolute limit until the 19th century, cut off the relationship between the space inside the painting and the exterior. However, this is not the case for the gallery space. Here, the author emphasized the differences between the frame in the photograph and the image limitation in the picture. In this respect, the dimensions of the revolution initiated by Monet will of course be great. Painter M. Denis expressed his ideas on this subject as follows; "*A painting is a surface covered with lines and colors before it becomes an image of any object.*" (<https://www.brainyquote.com/>).

The author, who defines the late modern period painting as 'color field' in this context, discussed this trend, in which the effect of depth is erased and which aims to create wide color areas, in a separate section titled the viewer and the eye, the context as content. Visual memory for the viewer in the gallery space bears witness to a dual function with the artwork and the gallery space in which it is located.

3.1.Vision and Audience

O'Doherty thinks that narrating modernism to children as a series of Aesop's tales would be much more helpful in instilling a love of art than "heavy texts". "Who Killed the Illusion of Depth?"; "How Did the Edges of the Picture Revolt against the Center of the Picture?"; "The Man Who Raped the Canvas"; "Where Did the Frame Go too?"; Suggesting fairy tale titles

such as "The Return of the Dissolving Paint Layer by Shine", "And how would one tell the tale of that little Picture Plane that had grown into a bad thing?" Asking the plane's to the eye's, from the eye to the viewer's view, the concept of "lazy verb", "perceptual Adam", "proxy stance in front of the picture", "the spectator-eye" and "romantic self" have been discussed by the theorists, critics and painters. He put aside his big words and deeds and placed the reader in modern idols(Lekesiz, 2016).

In J. Addison's words, the spectator comes from a deep-rooted lineage as 'the keen-eyed, rational thinker'. The awareness level of the audience has increased there. The 'dandy cousin' of the audience has now appeared on the stage. The eye, which is more 'teachable' compared to the viewer, has to make its way to the points where it can adequately grasp the change.

O' Doherty explains how the gallery as a space swallows the object in its context plan and how it directly becomes that object itself; He examined, together with his examples, the transformation from being a "place" into a "sign" and gradually becoming an artistic adventure itself. "Aesthetics has been transformed into a kind of social elitism. The gallery space is a "privileged" place. The gallery space, where aesthetics is transformed into commerce, is an "expensive" place. What is displayed in them is officially incomprehensible if you are not a member of the club; art is a 'difficult' thing. Distinguished audiences and incomprehensible rare objects; Are these not social, financial, and intellectual arrogances that reflect our limited systems of production, our valuation, and our social habits in general?" (Köylü, 2013)

3.2.'Context' in Recovered Space

The movements that emerged from the beginning of the new century (20th century) are the 'theatrical components' that run parallel to the gallery space with their 'mixed' structures. When approached from this point of view, we enter the period of artists who intervene in the gallery space in one way or another. The 'Coal Sacks' exhibition in New York in 1938, in which Duchamp turned the gallery space inside out, is one of the important firsts in this regard. There, space was 'perceived as a stand-alone element and made a part of an aesthetic action' (D'Oherly, 2010, p. 90). Similar actions have been observed over time. Such initiatives, which justify the thesis that art production stems from an aesthetic of formation, are a necessity of modernism.

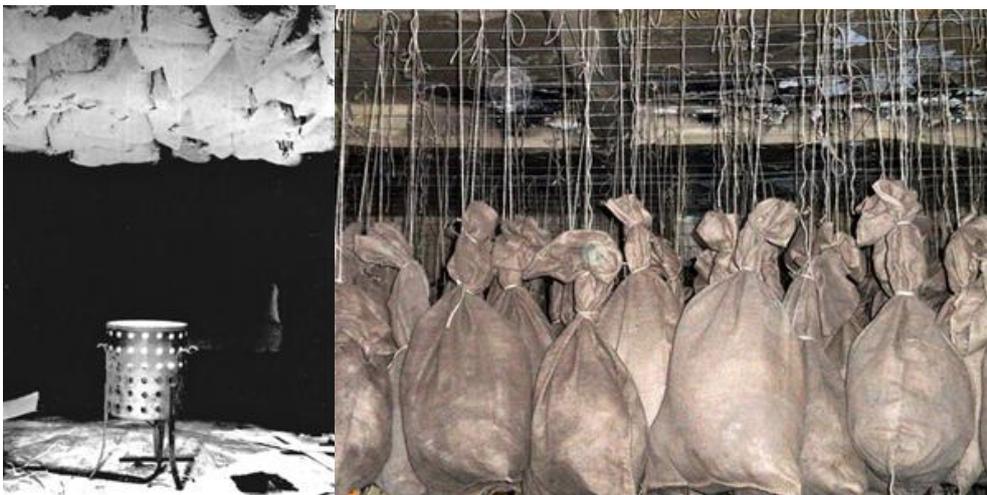


Image 3. Marcel Duchamp, *1200 Coal Sacks Hanging from the Ceiling, 1938* ([flickr.com/photos/78501498@N00/8118708554](https://www.flickr.com/photos/78501498@N00/8118708554))

However, such initiatives are peculiar to artists with 'charisma', as in the case of Duchamp. A similar gallery practice is witnessed in the 'The first documents of Surrealism' exhibition ('One mile of thread') organized by him in 1942. These are methods that have not been tried before. The appropriate interpretation in this respect is: 'The classical modernist gallery space is a place between the workshop and the living room, where the features of both meet in a neutral space' (D'Oherly, 2010, p. 97). Again in this context, Baudelaire's article on the occasion of the 1846 Salon was a kind of prophecy (for the Bourgeoisie) according to the author: Ideas about art are part of free enterprise; this indicates a paradoxical situation that attacks the social structure as much as it protects it. This is the path paved by the bourgeoisie.

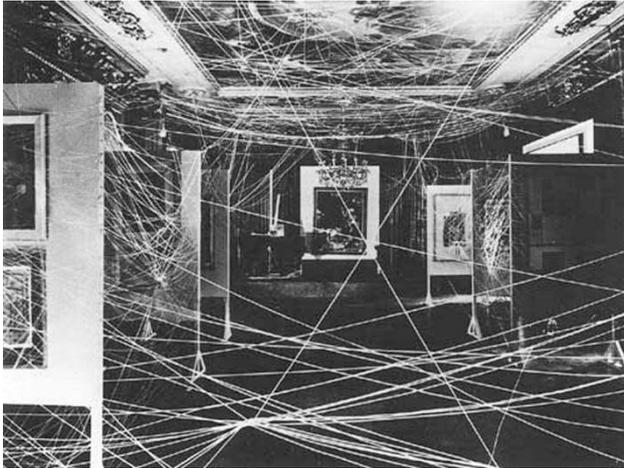


Image 4. Marcel Duchamp, A Mile of Thread, image from the exhibition "The First Documents of Surrealism", 1942, New York (Photo: John D. Schiff)
(<https://www.tate.org.uk/>)

The art of the 1970s was diverse. The art of this period does not seek certainties, but tolerates ambiguity. As for the postmodern period, the gallery space ceased to be a 'neutral' space at that stage. For example, the wall has become a 'membrane' in which aesthetic and commercial values are transitionally replaced.

The gallery has now entered the period of mythification. The white cube, as a symbol of the artist's distance from society, but also as a space that provides a relationship with that society, is a 'saved space', a kind of 'pre-museum museum', a 'magical room', perhaps an 'illusion' (D'Oherly, 2010, p. 101). Designing the gallery space as a 'fiction' is a very different matter; The first name that comes to mind at that point is Lissitzky.

3.3. Gallery as Indicator

The history of galleries in Europe is the history of gallerists. First hand names: Vollard, Kahnweiler, D. Ruel, Wildenstein and more recently Leo Castelli. The gallery action was about to begin, when the latter founded his own named gallery in 1957, at the age of one advanced, in New York City, where Yves Klein served visitors blue cocktails at Iris Clert, painted the exterior walls blue, and placed uniformed guards at the door. Opened under the name of 'The Void', this exhibition became a new alternative to the period in which the gallery was used as a metaphorical 'tool' in the 1960s. This justifies the author's view that there is a 'gallery history' as unique as the history of art (D'Oherly, 2010, p. 109). This is the date when the new space began to push the box that bound it. The reason is understandable, in the words of the author: Searching for originality, valuation methods, supply-demand economy, and the process of gaining value of the rare are very suitable for visual arts

(D'Oherly, 2010, p.133). The fact that the gallery space is once again 'an unrivaled discourse space' is the natural result of this process.

Is the gallery space just a 'White Cube' as the author puts it in a somewhat abstracted expression? Or is it a series of metaphors in which that space changes color and position according to aesthetic ideologies in the historical process? Neither one nor the other; maybe both (D'Oherly, 2010, p.136).

4.CONCLUSION

As Brian O'Doherty writes in the last word of "The White Cube," the various types of artistic activity seen between 1964 and 1976 have succumbed to the prevailing cultural conditions in which we live. Neither the land art works nor the installations made for this cause gave a permanent solution; gallery spaces combined the dominance of the ideological eye. Although the exhibitions are carried to different places and all over the city through biennials, the result remains the same, and museums such as "MAMA" (Modern Art Museum) in New York continue to dominate as an art idol. Unless there is a strong rebellion movement that will break this monopoly and a breakthrough that will integrate life and art again, this domination will continue for a long time.

As a result, we cannot escape neither the white cube nor this system. However, with this rebellion process that started in the 1960s, this system has ceased to be a system that only serves monetary values, with alternative art environments and biennials today. According to Reesa Greenberg, "The exhibition halls favored for contemporary art are now old factory buildings or warehouses, not remodeled galleries from a house or apartment."

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