

OUR WORK IN PROGRESS: INSTAGRAM-SOURCED PARTICIPATORY STORYTELLING INSTALLATION

A Master's Thesis

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Ankara
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To Aslı Aslan, my collaborator in life.

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PARTICIPATORY STORYTELLING INSTALLATION

Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences
of
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by
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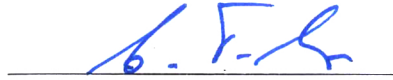
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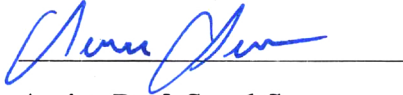
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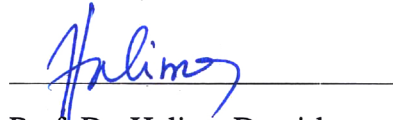
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ABSTRACT

OUR WORK IN PROGRESS: INSTAGRAM SOURCED PARTICIPATORY STORYTELLING INSTALLATION

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This thesis analyses the current relation between art and audience, focusing on the collective creativity in social media and the function of audience collaboration in the art zone. Attempting to define the act of artistic participation in social media and relocate it in contemporary art, I examine how collaboration in the development of an artwork becomes possible. This thesis accompanies exhibited artwork, which consists of a three-dimensional installation that procures generation of various stories by the rearranging of the flow of printed images of Instagram posts. I also aim to achieve a relational aesthetic by considering those “Instagram friends” as coworkers of a collaborative work, which further undergoes a transformation through each viewer-participant’s intervention in the gallery setting. Therefore, I assert that we have already been collaborating by creating and sharing through social media, and thus shaping the form of communication in the 21st century.

Keywords: Avant-garde, Instagram, Interactive Installation, Participatory Art, Relational Aesthetics

ÖZET

DEVAM EDEN ÇALIŞMAMIZ: INSTAGRAM KAYNAKLI KATILIMCI

ÖYKÜLEME YERLEŞTİRMESİ

Aslan, Mert

Yüksek Lisans, İletişim ve Tasarım Bölümü

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Mayıs 2016

Bu tez sanat ile izleyinin güncel ilişkisini, sosyal medyadaki toplu yaratıcılık durumuna ve izleyici işbirliğinin sanat ortamındaki işlevine odaklanarak inceliyor. Burada, sosyal medyadaki sanatsal üretimi açıklayıp bunu güncel sanatta konumlandırırken, bir sanat işinin geliştirilmesinde işbirliğinin nasıl mümkün olduğunu araştırıyorum. Bu metin, Instagram gönderilerinin baskısı alınmış görüntülerinin akışının değiştirilerek hikayeler oluşturulmasını sağlayan üç boyutlu bir yerleştirme çalışmasına eşlik etmektedir. Aynı zamanda “Instagram arkadaşlarım”ı bu sanat işinin birer çalışanı olarak kullanırken, her katılımcının müdahalesiyle dönüşmekte olan ortak bir iş üzerinden bir ilişkisel estetik kurmayı amaçladım. Dolayısıyla, halihazırda ortaklaşa bir yaratıcılık sergilediğimizi ve ürettiklerimizi paylaşarak 21. yüzyılın iletişim biçimini de şekillendirdiğimizi öne sürüyorum.

Anahtar kelimeler: Avant-garde, Etkileşimli Yerleştirme, İlişkisel Estetikler, Instagram, Katılımcı Sanat

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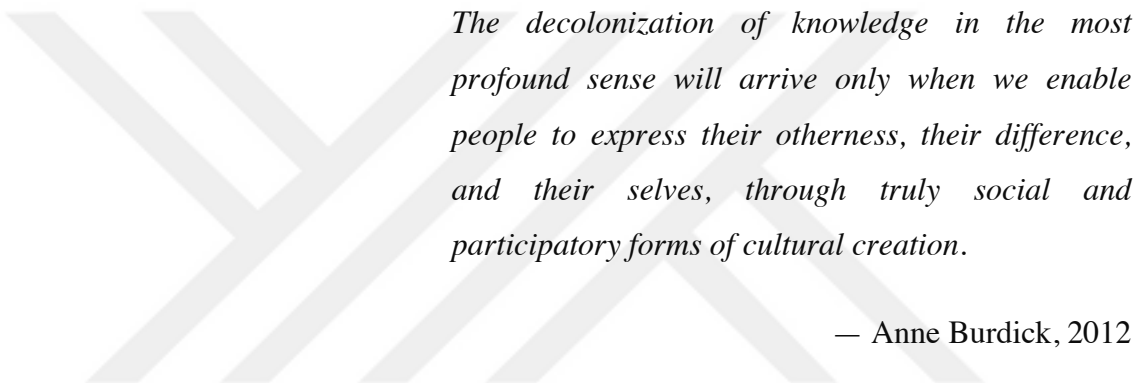


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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION



The decolonization of knowledge in the most profound sense will arrive only when we enable people to express their otherness, their difference, and their selves, through truly social and participatory forms of cultural creation.

— Anne Burdick, 2012

When the emergence of these avant-garde movements donated the art society with a large free space, all kinds of creative act were warranted as valuable and opened their own discussions in different artistic contexts. The strictness in classical representation was interrupted with critical thinking inside this new space, but the emancipation in art was not fully completed yet on the audience side. “The first half of the 20th century is marked by three artistic discourses: expressionism, abstraction and a third discourse, that currently has no umbrella term but was initiated by Duchamp, Dada and Surrealism” (Coulter-Smith, 2006: 1). In his “Relational Aesthetics” Nicolas Bourriaud (2002: 12) states:

The 20th century was thus the arena for a struggle between two visions of the world: a modest, rationalist conception, hailing from the 18th century, and a philosophy of spontaneity and liberation through irrational (Dada, Surrealism, the Situationists), both of which were opposed to authoritarian and utilitarian forces eager to gauge human relations and subjugate people.

The society was still unable to fully communicate with art until the so-called

‘socially engaged art’ initiated by a number of artists in the early 20th century.

Swedish curator Maria Lind (2009: 49) identifies socially engaged art practice as

“simultaneously a medium, a method, a genre;” – a definition that can refer to a wide

range of work, from more activist in nature to the more relational or community-

based. Since the artistic experience for the audience began to include taking active

roles in the production of the artwork itself, there emerged socially engaged art with

‘collaboration’ in its core.

Collaboration is without a doubt a central method for contemporary artists’ contact to

public. Various kinds of collaboration – between artists, between artists and curators,

between artists and audiences, or between audiences – continue to emerge as an

increasingly established working method (Lind, 2009: 53) in today’s art scene.

Collaboration in art is by no means new. Its genealogy is long and complex and

includes a number of exemplary works. Avant-garde artists have been utilizing

various methods of collaboration and viewer involvement in their practice. Artists

have been designing collaborative events to communicate to the public, where they

could answer both aesthetical concerns and social needs. Many different methods of

collaboration have appeared in some specific cases, which the artists recognized that

an artistic experience is renewed with each new spectator’s participation into the

artistic happening/event. “Participatory art type refers to a range of arts practice,

including relational aesthetics, where emphasis is placed on the role of the viewer or

spectator in the physical or conceptual realization and reception of the artwork”
(Hand, 2010: 4).

Participatory art gave its referential examples in the field of installation art, which appeared as a major movement within Postmodern. “Participation is more associated with the creation of a context in which participants take part in something that someone else has created but where there are nevertheless opportunities to have an impact” (Lind, 2009: 54). According to art historian and critic Claire Bishop (2012: 11), many followers and practitioners of participatory art argue:

Due to the near total saturation of our image repertoire, artistic practice can no longer revolve around the construction of objects to be consumed by a passive bystander. Instead, there must be an art of action, interfacing with reality, taking steps – however small – to repair the social bond.

This points to a political tendency of the participatory artwork in question. One of the first texts to elaborate theoretically the political status of participation is “Author As Producer” by the German thinker Walter Benjamin. (Bishop, 2006: 11) As Bishop explains, Benjamin (1934: 6 cited in Bishop, 2006: 11) argued that when judging a work’s politics, we should not look at the artist’s declared sympathies, but at the position that the work occupies in the relations of production of its time.

The determinant factor is the exemplary character of a production that enables it, first, to lead other producers to this production, and secondly to present them with an improved apparatus for their use. And this apparatus is better to the degree that it leads consumers to production, in short that it is capable of making co-workers out of readers or spectators.

According to Benjamin (1934: 6), “a political tendency is a necessary but never sufficient condition of the organizational function of a work” (Benjamin, 1934: 6).

Rather than saturating the political aspect, Bishop (2006, 11) points out in

“Participation: Documents Of Contemporary Art” how Benjamin maintained that “the work of art should actively intervene in and provide a model for allowing viewers to be involved in the processes of production” (Bishop, 2006: 11). Similarly in Michael G. Birchall’s (2015: 13-14) account:

When viewers become participants in a work of art, or co-producers, there is a transition in the aesthetic considerations. It could be said that socially engaged art is the neo-avant-garde; artists use social situations to produce de-materialized, anti-market, politically engaged projects that carry on the modest call to blur art and life.

Art critique focusing on socially engaged art emphasizes “how collaborations are undertaken; artists are judged for their processes and how successful collaboration is developed” (Bishop, 2016: 178-183). An outcome of socially engaged art, there is a reciprocal environment, where audiences are able to see their own contribution in artistic processes, instead of passively viewing the final product, as they would have done previously. This kind of environment also triggers co-creative acts in which we encounter the participants producing together and mutually benefiting from solid aesthetical outcomes. The art form most related to participatory and socially engaged art is that of installations which have appeared as a major movement in postmodern art but has its roots in earlier approaches such as Marcel Duchamp’s use of ‘readymade’ in 1917.

Installation art form in the most general sense is an embodied art form that calls the viewer into physical interaction inside its own space. This type of art encourages a critical response towards the nature of artistic interaction and creativity. Accordingly, Bishop (2012: 23) notes “a common trope in this discourse is to evaluate each project as a model”, echoing Benjamin’s (1934: 98) claim in ‘The Author as Producer’ that a

work of art is better if it brings more participants into contact with the processes of production. “Through this language of the ideal system, the model apparatus and the ‘tool’, art enters a realm of useful, ameliorative and ultimately modest gestures, rather than the creation of singular acts that leave behind them a troubling wake” (Bishop, 2012: 23). Referring to Bishop’s account in his “Deconstructing Installation Art” text Graham Coulter-Smith states “Foundation for contemporary installation art was inspired primarily by the transgressive aesthetics pioneered by Duchamp, Dada and Surrealism” (Coulter-Smith, 2006: 4).

Today, audience participation has polarized the critical debate surrounding contemporary art’s transformative social and aesthetic potential. In the context of a criticism of present-day artistic models and media use, we encounter some popular developments, which have a massive impact on the content of what we create and share. “Now digital technology has given birth to the rise of participatory culture. People are gravitating toward entertainment formats where they can take an active role in shaping the experience, rather than merely consuming the product” (Brown, 2014: 1), which was actually predicted by thinkers when the very first personal computers were invented and also when the Internet came. The transitional phases in art and media fields throughout the last century seem smooth in terms of using technology. Simply as an example, the social media is engaged with our productive and communicational needs and is able to turn us into significant figures in different networks of both online and offline communities.

1.1. Purpose Of The Study

Today's popular art forms can be considered products of our reciprocal creativity rather than something that exists by itself without any participation. The space of participation and creativity has become so enormous with contributions of new media that almost any imaginative production is possible. It isn't even necessary sometimes to know what to create and how to create, however, the emphasis is on the creation of 'customizable experiences'. We survive symbolically in social media as much as it permits us. What we all do is produce and consume information through art and media platforms, and repeat this cycle as we continually upgrade to imposed hardwares and softwares, hardly going beyond their infrastructures and interfaces. Moreover, we often adopt them as perfect realms to be creative and social, but more importantly, to fulfill our desire of self-expression under their formal allowance. As Evans (1989: 2) maintains, "As a result of this we are taking on the appearance of media 'zombies' who consume innumerable art-products but are unable to make, or in many cases even conceive of making, art on our own."

However in the digital era, art has been changing its direction to adopt a more integrative manner. I prefer to call it "using the social data" for art's recently predominant way of touching the public. Maria Lind (2009; 53) notes "artist groups, circles, associations, networks, constellations, partnerships, alliances, teamwork and such notions have been filling the air in the art world over the last two decades." The widespread incorporation of participatory practices into contemporary art has generated a considerable critical literature, much of which focuses on the social impact of this style of artworks (Brown, 2014: 1).

Social media on the other hand is getting closer to world of art as well, in order to provide individuals 'free' spaces, motivating them to express themselves publicly, that is to say, to create and share easily. In my own contribution to installation art, I turn to the medium of Instagram and examine its ability to function as both individual interactive experience and a collective experience. In the scope of this study, the term 'participatory art' is adopted to label my discourse on the relation between artist and audience, which is illustrated with a collaborative installation work that offers an experience of deconstruction and reconstruction of visual stories, through the images we produce in Instagram.

Above all, it is the causal nexus between artistic production and audience relation throughout the crises and enhancements in art throughout the last century to which I wish to draw attention, putting into question within the contemporary art frame. In this manner, I am examining which participatory art examples generate a new type of artist-audience relation with collaboration in their focus. What is the role of Instagram, a popular social media product, in shaping the creative use of new media? And finally, to what degree an installation artist is visible during the individual and collective interactions by the audiences?

This study is a juxtaposition of theory and practice that makes an inquiry on the current relations between artists, audiences and the contemporary media. While attempting to use the art space as a co-creative platform, its main objective is to document the process during the viewer interactions. It asserts that art audience today has gained more authority and materiality in the art realm, thus, becoming one of the substantial elements in artist's process of production of artistic experiences.

Furthermore, the power of the audience is an indispensable asset to help the artist complete his/her artistic process. Aiming to deepen my study on such relations between the artist, audience and art trio, I attempted to experiment with a participatory installation that prompts interventions and collaborative actions from the audience. This thesis tries to construct a scientific research on collaborative approaches in art, mainly concerning the creative act of the audience in making authentic narrations with the provided materials. My position here is that, considering the dominance of participatory art as an international style, I seek to alter the audience's definition of participation, shifting the focus away from passive spectatorship towards the sense of 'play', in the sense of the term as deployed by Johan Huizinga in 1938. The notion of 'deconstructive play' will also appear while discussing the artwork at the end of this thesis. I design a reciprocal environment – turning the art practice towards the social – by using the images that are created by Instagram users, to be deconstructed by the participants of the installation. The participants reuse the provided content in different contexts and make their own narrations on the installation.

The title of the work "Our Work In Progress", implying a collective project, is derived as a metaphor for a construction area, which is depicted as a scene of transformations within the artwork, portraying the tradition of indicating what is being processed or repaired in public. Thus, the artwork best fits the definition of 'process art' that is capable of transforming over in time through manipulation by the participants both individually and collaboratively. Collaboration "on the one hand offers an alternative to the individualism that dominates the art world", while on the other hand, "it is conceived as a way of re-questioning both artistic identity and

authorship through self-organization” (Lind: 2009; 53). Focusing on the development of a ‘customizable experience’, I suggest a model, i.e. a medium that aims to grasp the spectator’s attention in flexible stories. I have gathered source material – a ‘visual database’ – for the installation from various personal and institutional Instagram users, by cropping out the square format images they posted, without their information and permission, on the understanding that their online publication gives consent to the reuse of the images in question. I copied the selected images in 300 page bales and aligned them on a solid surface in a linear flow. The images change as the spectators pull off the pages from the bales. What I have subsequently observed in this interaction model is the potential of matching various visual stories that the audience will be authoring consecutively. To put it another way, it is another haptic surface not only to view Instagram images to watch, but also interactively manipulate these images by removing and producing different combinations in turn can be viewed and potentially understood by others as stories. In this manner, the artwork can be defined as a visual language mediated, Instagram-sourced participatory storytelling installation. The audiences are encouraged firstly to interact with the stories by taking out pages from the image bales to create new stories together with each other simultaneously or uncoordinatedly, and hereby secondly, they are incentivized to rediscover and experience the collaborative feature of contemporary art.

1.2. Structure Of The Study

By pragmatically sharing resources, equipment and experience, this installation constitutes a response to the artist-audience relation, emphasizing that the art audience is free to be involved in the process. The exhibition runs a constant risk too,

reflecting the installation as an alternative interface for representing individual images, instead of perceiving the whole as a playful and productive structure. It is also important to note that a collage of nonsense is not considered a risk but as one of the many possible outcomes of an ordinary use of the installation. This thesis is not separating the participants as creative and uncreative in theory, but rather it is trying to distinguish different 'modes of participation' in a public art zone through a simple interactive product.

In addition, I will give a historical account of art theories on participation and collaborative authorship of art object, and examine specific artists and artworks in the intersection of art and media fields. Though it is extremely important to map out how interactive media developed from the old media within a historical course, in my thesis, I will limit my study to a specific extent, in which I will define the concepts mentioned above, such as Socially Engaged Art, Reciprocal Environments, Modes Of Participation and Using The Social Data. In this sense, instead of following a linear path through the various stages of progress and innovations of the 21st century, I prefer to adopt a synchronic approach that aims at a general view of contemporary art.

First defining how participation, collaboration and co-creativity have been taking place from the first avant-gardes to our day, the second chapter will introduce us what installation art is and how participatory installations in particular play a major role in the contemporary art scene. The key terms here are Dada, Fluxus, Socially Engaged Art and Relational Aesthetics, which sum up the connective aspect of art throughout the 20th century. The research on the crisis of disappearing of classical

spectatorship in art will bring us to today's discussions about participatory culture in contemporary art and contemporary media use. The mode of interaction in some participatory installations provides a promising basis for the discussion that the shift of relation between artist and audience is questioned in terms of authorship and authenticity. "An intelligent account of contemporary art such as Nicolas Bourriaud's 'Relational Aesthetics' (2002) can seriously argue that art of the 1990s represents a revolutionary involvement of the viewer and integration with everyday life" (Coulter-Smith, 2006: 7).

The third chapter will come up with new media's contribution to artistic purposes. 20th century's popular field of practice the 'new media art' breaks with the modernist ideal of the autonomy of art as promoted by formal institutions of art and exhibition. It establishes multidisciplinary communities as an alternative way of organization; collaborative art works as an alternative mode of production; joint exhibitions and festivals as an alternative form of display; and public spaces as an alternative venue for exhibitions, meetings and discussions. Through experimentation with new technologies and simulations of or scenarios for a better society, new media demonstrates an orientation towards the future. On the other hand, social media's role in the current conceptions of self-expression, creativity and art is another question of debate with its mainstream traditions such as online self-promoting and involving in social networks as an artist. This chapter mainly argues that social media urges its users to create and publish their artistic productions, which eventually creates a sense of competition. Recently, media theorist Boris Groys (2010: 1) has suggested,

In today's culture of self-exhibitionism (in Facebook, YouTube, Twitter or Instagram, which he provocatively compares to the text/image

compositions of conceptual art) we have a spectacle without spectators. The artist needs a spectator who can overlook the immeasurable quantity of artistic production and formulate an aesthetic judgment that would single out this particular artist from the mass of other artists. Now, it is obvious that such a spectator does not exist.

In the fourth chapter, I develop an alternative medium that resurrects the mass of images, which once published on Instagram, may be given new opportunities to be revived in new contexts. This approach locates me between being a designer – because I am developing a medium – and a curator – because I am using this medium to host the viewers. Here, I will explain briefly how my work of art has evolved and unfolded in a reflexive fashion throughout the process of writing this thesis. I will also investigate how it became a co-authored work with audience participation, primarily by containing the images that others have created and thus being a meta-figure for the changing roles of the artist and audiences in the art zone. Overall, I outlined the relations between theory and practice, visualizing them from place to place, in order to provide a representative correspondence for the reader.

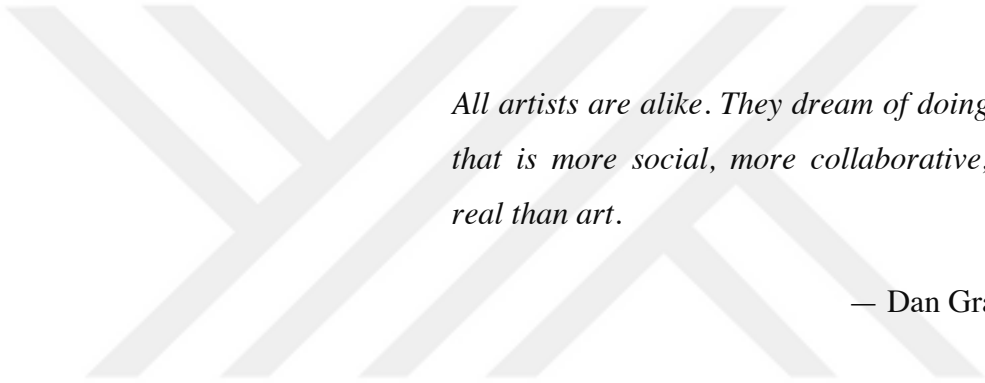
I promote the exhibition process as the central element in the final chapter and briefly talk about the signs showing us that art itself has been a work in progress throughout history continues to converge individualism and collectivism at various intervals. Italian theorist Manfredo Tafuri states that “History is viewed as a ‘production’, in all senses of the term: the production of meanings, beginning with the ‘signifying traces’ of events; [...] an instrument of deconstruction of ascertainable realities” (Tafuri, 1987: 2-3). As the collaborative artwork emerges as a continuation of the theoretical framework regarding with a certain historical frame, I perceive the outcome as a process art that records action and inaction, a socially engaged object that progressed various interpretations from different audiences on its shared surface.

Consequently, the outcome appears to be another work in progress that is the extension of the thesis writing process, in this instance however, the audience is not only reading but also contributing to the whole work with their interaction.



CHAPTER 2

THE ACT OF PARTICIPATION FROM AVANT-GARDE TO CONTEMPORARY ART



All artists are alike. They dream of doing something that is more social, more collaborative, and more real than art.

— Dan Graham, 2012

20th century artists created the “participatory” art type for involving audiences in the art making process, aiming at a reciprocal creativity. They also advised their audiences a critical standpoint regarding the relationship shaped between them and art. The act of participation in art appearing with the avant-garde movements have always been vague and difficult to trace in the history of art. However, it is gradually preferred as a method, in terms of using the power of the audience in the art zone, by the artists who structured their aesthetical practice on human interaction and collaboration. Participation facilitated a collective creativity within the art audience, which especially appears in the discussion of relational aesthetics and in its selection of contemporary installation examples. Instead of prolonging the discussion of

collective creative action in detail in the participatory art field, my purpose is to design a new reciprocal environment by activating the audience, but this time trying to locate the act of participation in social media. This chapter examines some attempted formulations relating to collaborative practices within the first avant-gardes and contemporary artists of the mid 1990s, as well as recent developments in how participation is structured and motivated with the rising technologies that concern the wide range of media use. Having first analyzed the modes of participation, examples of collaboration and co-creativity, I will then re-explore the relation between audience and installation art of the present day, which can sometimes be intensely static and intangible, and other times extremely dynamic and distortable. In the remainder of this introductory chapter, I will discuss the significance of these interrelated perspectives in relation to the emergence of new media and artistic productivity in social media.

2.1. Participation, Collaboration And Co-creativity In Art

In participatory art, the artist's goal is to make the audiences see the aesthetic creation of their contribution. In other words, the main requirement for an art object to function as a "participatory" product is the physical interaction with the art object by at least one participant. "Participatory artworks address the public audience, aiming to meet people where they are, draw them in and establish a relationship with them" (McIntosh, 2014: 5). The act of participation often exposes a collective creativity that emerges during the collaboration in the art zone. What is emerging with participation is an interactive art, which is more productive in the doing than in the watching. "Participatory art has more in common with interactive entertainment, such as video games, entertainment parks and sports, than with the contemplation of a landscape painting" (Heinrich, 2014: 29). Thus, participatory art practice has been also approached also as a collaborative method, producing a reciprocal creativity. Although the word collaboration can express quickly what participatory art requires essentially, we need to understand firstly how do people eventually find themselves in a collaborative mode, while they initially set out to visit an art space. In other words, which features of a work of art activate the audiences' creative actions?

Co-creativity, on the other hand, is a norm that reflects collective creativity that is less dependent on the medium but concerns the collective actions taken in that medium. "Researchers studying team performance generally agree that, under the right circumstances and with appropriate motivation, large groups of people can work together and harness their collective intelligence to achieve efficient results" (Benkler, 2006:1). Different from intelligence and innovation, artistic creativity requires a certain set of skills and sensibilities as well as a particular type of cultural

capacity. If we admit that crowds can have collective intelligence, another question might be, do they also have a collective creativity in artistic sense?

Maria Lind clarifies some confluent notions in collaborative art practices. “From the outset, ambiguities appear because concepts like collaboration, cooperation, col-creativity, reciprocity, interaction, and participation are used and often confused, although each of them has its own specific connotations and functions” (Lind, 2009: 54).

Collaboration becomes an umbrella term for the diverse working methods that require ‘collective action’, which refers precisely to acting collectively while ‘interaction’ can mean that several people interact with each other, as well as that a single individual interacts with, for instance, an apparatus by pressing a button.

Cultural theorist Mieke Bal identifies interactivity as crucial to the aesthetic and affective resonance of the work. On the other side, art historian Kathryn Brown states, “Interactivity is understood not only as a relationship between artwork and audience, but also as the manifestation of bonds between images and the cultural context in which they are embedded” (Brown, 2014: 8). Accordingly, taking interactivity in a participatory work as essential in this study, I will be concisely looking at the key features of participatory art that arouse the notion of creativity in its conceptual frame.

A common sense of creativity defined it as an activity undertaken by individuals who are fully conscious of their intentions. Creativity in the artistic sense is rather the ability of putting out concrete authentic figures with different methods in different media. To what extent is the notion of creativity, considering today’s art and media

environment, is a concern for studying participatory art? Although the notion of creativity is a widely discussed topic, not only in the history of art but also in other scientific fields, the creative act is, arguably, what makes us human. Besides, many artists in the 20th century found inspiration and material in the creativity of others and developed participatory platforms to obtain their authenticity. This led to a new understanding of art experience, in which the experience of a participatory work is renewed extended by the creativity of others. In her book “Interactive Contemporary Art”, art historian Kathryn Brown (2014: 6) states, “There is a sense in which this notion of ‘creativity’ is not distinctive of participatory works, but can be understood as an extension of the experience of art more generally.”

It is interesting that there exists an intentional extension to the experience of art, which is accomplished through authorization of the audience on the production, presentation and manipulation of the art object. In such projects, creativity of the audience might be taken as compulsory for the full experience of the work of art. Is the audience, however, truly responsible for sustaining the artistic experience of a work in a creative way? To what extent would it be meaningful to discuss the creativity of an artist differing from the creativity of an audience? As Duchamp stated in 1957, “The creative act is not performed by the artist alone; the spectator brings the work in contact with the external world by deciphering and interpreting [...] and thus adds his contribution to the creative act”. In this sense, it is pointless to find a fine line of creativity between artist and audience. Instead, we should focus on what kind of a new relation between artist and audience does the participatory art form propose us. Later on, I will be discussing the kind of artistic relation I propose within my work.

In her 2012 book, *Artificial Hells*, Claire Bishop (2012: 241) defines participatory art, implying an art model without the audiences, where they all have turned into creative producers, but also acknowledging that art cannot exist without the spectator:

Participatory art in the strictest sense forecloses the traditional idea of spectatorship and suggests a new understanding of art without audiences, one in which everyone is a producer. At the same time, the existence of an audience is ineliminable, since it is impossible for everyone in the world to participate in every project.

On the other hand, Gustaf Almenberg claims in his “Notes On Participatory Art” that participatory artworks shifted the focus away from both the spectator and the art object, and instead privileges the act of creating. “Participatory Art is the beholder in action using personal choice and intuition as primary tools” (Almenberg, 2010: 5). He defines the act of creating that as the focus of such works, which may not only affect the look of the work itself (thereby distinguishing it from, say, a painting), but typically exploits the participant’s own psychology and physical presence in the games of make-believe permitted by its rules. (Almenberg, 2010: 5) This viewpoint will also help me to discuss the act of creativity in my work. The effort in the audience side, that is to say, the interaction is revealing a new process through an interventionist spectatorship. I will also refer to this type of spectatorship, where the audience encounters ‘customizable experiences’. For now, we still need to configure how participatory art changes our attitude in the art zones as Almenberg suggests.

Similarly in Bishop’s account (2012: 284), participatory art is replacing spectator’s inaction with action, just as participatory democracy seeks to replace monarchy with

pluralism. Bishop explains as:

Participatory art is not a privileged political medium, nor a ready-made solution to a society of the spectacle, but is as uncertain and precarious as democracy itself; neither are legitimated in advance but need continually to be performed and tested in every specific context.

A participatory work authorizes the spectator's action by offering some gaps for filling with new expressions. When the audience authority is at play, the given responsibility is expected to produce creative consequences throughout the reciprocal process. At least participatory projects aim at such processes, which demonstrates us the transformation of both the work and the participant.

American philosopher Kendall Walton asserts that a participant performs a range of actions (some real and some imagined) that are 'authorized' by the script of the work. For Walton, the type of imagining prompted by such engagement with fictional worlds can, as a general matter, lead to a form of critical self-awareness. He argues, for example, that a mimetic painting can be understood as a prop in a game of make-believe, as the work invites us to imagine its representational content as if it were actually before us. According to Walton, representational artworks are "akin to props such as dolls or toy trucks on the grounds that they 'prescribe meanings' and permit us to play games in fictional worlds" (Walton, 1990: 53). For Walton, this kind of self-imagining can be generated by an individual's engagement with fictional worlds created in media such as painting or literary narrative. Brown (2014: 7) adds:

Participatory artworks can, however, amplify the effect of an individual's self-placement in a fictional world by making tangible the sensory, emotional, and ethical effects of encounters within that world, or by displaying the outcomes of a participant's action or inaction in response

to a particular set of circumstances. In this regard, participatory art demands much of the imaginative work asked of art audiences generally. However, by making strategies of self-imagining central to their aesthetic effect and by allowing individuals to experience the consequences of their own 'choices and intuitions' in determining the instantiation of the work, participatory works can have the effect of confronting audience members with startling and direct forms of self-knowledge.

Overall, participatory art practices opened up new ways of thinking about the role and nature of art and its audiences with collaboration at their core. "It is also necessary to pay attention to collaborative works and collective actions in society in general and to current theories of collaboration within philosophy and social theory" (Lind, 2009: 54). It seems to me that to be able to answer how participatory art evolved to our day; one should turn back to the beginnings of the historical avant-garde and look at to the role of the artist and his relation with the audience as these were defined at that time. Accordingly, we can trace when and how the collaborative practices in the art scene has started to appear. Then it would be easier to review how such a genre of participatory art was shaped throughout the history of art and how participation appears in present-day artists' new modes of expressions in contemporary media.

2.2. Dada, Fluxus, Socially Engaged Art And Relational Aesthetics

Today, we live in an age where new production techniques and social media have influenced the language of expression we use, the way we create, make art and the channels to share we use today. It is important to point out why a 21st century artist should attribute to new media for new creative facilities. But primarily, it is better to know who were the predecessors that needed to design such a reciprocal

environment holding the creative exchange between the artwork and the audience, and how was the condition of their time in terms of artistic production and relation to public. Boris Groys (2010: 1) has suggested that contemporary art was shaped after the Second World War:

The tradition in which our contemporary art world functions – including our current art institutions – was formed after the Second World War. This tradition is based on the art practices of the historical avant-garde – and on their updating and codification during the 1950's and 1960.

Hereby, we can draw a line from the first avant-gardes, who advised us a critical stance towards the social dynamics, to contemporary artists that play around the creative act itself through art. What avant-gardes understood from 'participation' is the key subject for understanding their influences in today's artistic practices concerning the audience interaction.

In the historical frame, the act of participation gives us a progressive impression when we review the fundamental movements that contributed practices on audience interaction. In this process, the interaction and collaboration oriented artists conducted their own theories and practices through different media.

Today, we can observe artists using a wide range of media as performative and productive facades. The use of Internet leads the way, obviously, facilitating the relation between artists and the audiences. It is the connective space of artists and art lovers, where I am also trying to relocate the act of participation. At the mean time, I point to a breaking phase which the spectator achieves the condition of the artist during this transition. Therefore, the main question in this part is, what was the motivation for the 20th century artists in creating productivity and participation,

whereas the 19th century artists didn't seek any external intervention into their precious works? Can we just summarize it with the exhausting and castrated one-way relation of conventional art forms? Or, are there other critical determinants that generate social bonds in art?

At first sight, artists recognized that if art doesn't engage with the society, which means that the society wouldn't take a productive role inside art, there wouldn't be any social progress. And art had its seminal vision as it always did, however, it gained more power to reach more people as the techniques of production improved. As Walter Benjamin pointed out in the 1930s, relations of production condition social relationships. In Bishop's words "Benjamin argued that when we judge the politics of a piece we should not observe the artist's declared sympathies but the position the artwork takes in the production relationships of the given era" (Bishop, 2006: 11). This aspect will be indeed recognized in some of the leading artwork examples and theories of participatory art practices over the last century. Through some key movements, I highlight certain artists, who resided in Dada (1916) and Fluxus (1963) movements. These movements sustained their characteristics in the 1990's art practices, which Nicolas Bourriaud refers in his 1997 book *Relational Aesthetics*.

The movements emerged in the twentieth century show us that artists perpetually required to relocate the act of participation in their own media, i.e., with their own mode of expression. The process of participatory art becomes traceable if we respectively look at the emergence of Dada, Fluxus and Socially Engaged Art. Then, we will see that Relational Aesthetics became an umbrella term founded by Nicolas

Bourriaud to label the new artistic practice in the art form that includes solid contribution in the experience of art from the society.

2.2.1. Dada

Lets start with how Dada emerged. It is possible to say that Dada is born with an anti-bourgeois attitude; however, it is like a common symbol for being against fascism and war (Eroğlu, 2014: 9). Dada didn't want to grow up on the existing traditions in art and even rejected them. It didn't only desire to survive with different modes of expressions other than the known media but also used the social material in a critical way. One of the broad topics discussed in Dadaist artworks is the issue of authorship of the work of art. Dadaism aimed at unsigned, anonymous works and further, it ignored the issue of style and ownership of the work.

Marcel Duchamp's 1917 *ready-made* artwork the "Fountain" is a milestone, prevalently representing the provocative Dada movement. The piece was an industrial porcelain urinal, which was signed "R.Mutt". For Duchamp, the idea of challenging the customary language of art is more important than the object itself. "Duchamp undertook a series of interventions designed to disrupt the smooth integration of modern art into the cultural apparatus of American capitalism" (Antliff, 2014: 30).



Figure 1: Marcel Duchamp, *Fountain*, 1917, Porcelain urinal

Duchamp also criticized the position of artist by signing urinal, as “R.Mutt” who actually doesn’t exist. He chose an ordinary article of life, placed it in front of the viewers and so abolished its useful significance under a new title and point of view.

Parallel to discussion above, I need to ask; to what degree it would make sense to make a new interpretation for the Fountain of Duchamp? Yet, there is also a misconception, a common assumption towards contemporary art that we think we can interpret new meanings and relations out of art pieces, for the sake of taking art at its extremes. Is it possible to say that, for instance, it is open to become a joker object, a lost figure of different stories that once belonged to fictional characters, spaces and times? Can we play with its meaning, replacing it inside new stories and give it new functions? Generating new stories out of existing artworks is already

exercised as a basic method. Beside from that, we might be losing the point when we ask our questions and participate in the stories of art objects. Alluding Bishop's warning, it is for sure important to read the artworks under their conceptual allowance. But fortunately, it is not obligatory to do so, either as an artist or as an art taker. Hereby, we should join back to the main discussion and study the next generations' contribution in participatory art.

2.2.2. Fluxus

The reason we jump to the Fluxus movement (1960s) from Dada is that it is revealing the notion of anti-art and staging provocative individual and collective works. It can be seen, as its own members saw it, as a strain of the Neo-Dada movement of the 1950s and 1960s. John Cage's 1967 motto is "Art, instead of made by one person, is a process set in motion by a group of people. Art's socialized" (Dempsey, 2005: 201).

Fluxus is a critical landmark in the history of artistic participation, as a performative and playful social constellation. Actions of fluxus constitute workable examples for understanding the established avant-garde approaches in creating artistic relations with the public. Such a new relation between the contemporary art object and its audience points a paradigm shift, a re-creation of basic elements that represent a universal 'grammar' underlying public contact. They all often have an abstract language, just as seen in the 1969 exhibition "When Attitudes Become Form", shaped together by a group of artists as a process-based art.



Figure 2: *Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form*, 1969, Group Exhibition

All objects are basically touchable products, in other words, tactile images as it is visible in this work. They already constitute a static position at the first look, like a classic sculpture, until one interrupts and makes physical contact. Changing an object's location, for instance, reveals a progression in the exhibition room. If art doesn't lose any value as the visitors consume it, what is reproduced then? The degree of abstraction in this time span was variable, as it appears in the practices, like those artists who took place in the 1969 exhibition. They were not only collaborating with each other as artist, but also reproducing the perception in the space with the participants who visit the art space. Evoking the traditional mediating conditions of a gallery setting, I assert emphatically that this is an artistic event designed for viewer interaction.



Figure 3: Walter De Maria, *Art By Telephone*, 1969, Telephone

As it is seen in the photo above, the artists communicates to people in the gallery through a telephone connection, thus transforming her existence as an artist into a telephone in the space. She is no more in control of the situations that take place in the space but affecting the space by ringing and waiting for someone to answer her call. Apparently, Fluxus practitioners stepped out of the conventional role of artist and avoid producing any work being bought or sold as a commodity. Who were the following artists that represented an abandoning of authority in artistic production, for opening some space for the relational aesthetics? Digesting the approach of disregarding the authority in art as an innovative method, artists in 1960s aimed at a better perception in the society. This reminds me Joseph Kosuth's statement in 1969, which is "Being an artist now means to question the nature of art" (Dempsey, 2005: 240).

In "The Fluxus Reader", David T. Toris points out "The artists of Fluxus were committed to the acceptance and the investigation of nature's 'musts', choosing in many cases to relinquish artistic control in favor of participation in, assimilation of,

and identification with the process of nature” (cited in Friedman, 1998: 93). Within this context, one of the key figures who made contact with fluxus is German artist Joseph Beuys. Beuys was keen to push the boundaries of what constitutes art with, declaring ‘everyone is an artist’ and coined the term ‘social sculpture’ to encapsulate his anarchic program for transforming society. He generalized creativity as a social phenomenon. In Alan Antliff’s (2014: 31) account “His purpose was to free himself from the authoritative role of the artist and his audience from a passive relationship to his work”. Keeping in mind that Beuys had a romantic, utopian understanding of the position of the artist, we know that for him, the realization of a healthy social order requires an end to authoritarianism in all its guises, including the state formation. Beuys stated that art, whether ostensibly conventional or Fluxus-oriented, was a means of facilitating social transformation. Antliff (2014: 20) mentions on his relation to Fluxus as:

His position as an artist was too far important to denounce and so, when faced with a choice between art and Fluxus, Beuys chose art. He was committing his creative activity to a larger social project: the expansion of our spiritual self-knowledge and cooperative potential.

Beuys had also a major impact in shaping the notion of abstraction in art. He was signaling, to Fluxus activists and Duchamp enthusiasts alike, that for him the concept of art was as invaluable for social progression as efforts to thwart art’s commodification. “Beuys’s commitment to social engagement through art also informed his critique of the French ‘anti-artist’ Marcel Duchamp” (Antliff, 2014: 31).

In Bishop’s account “Very little attention has been paid in Anglophone art history to

Beuys's activities of the 1970s, despite the fact that they form the most central precursor of contemporary socially engaged art, intersecting artistic goals with social, political and pedagogic ambitions" (Bishop, 2012: 244).

Only Jan Verwoert provides a nuanced reading of Beuys's persona as a teacher in the 1970s. He argues that Beuys's output should be characterized as a hyper-intensity of pedagogic and political commitment – an excess that both reinforced and undermined his institutional position.

"Beuys was both 'too progressive and too provocative': rejecting a curriculum, offering day-long critiques of student work, but also physically attacking the student's art if a point needed to be made" (Beck, 2001: 106). Beuys was not privileging the work but the progress, as Fluxus artists did, however in a more social way.

2.2.3. Socially Engaged Art

"There has been a significant shift in the way community art is delivered through exhibitions and public programmes, in what is now largely regarded as socially engaged art" (Birchall, 2015: 1). Curator and academic Michael G. Birchall notes in his article "Socially Engaged Art in the 1990s and Beyond" that the shifts in art "share a long history with new genre public art and site-specific art" (Birchall, 2015: 18).

As contemporary art production has moved towards collective, self-organised, participatory, and socially engaged art as a response to the new labour conditions in neo-liberal societies, what has emerged in this field is a significant shift in how art is produced, mediated, and curated. Artists, curators, institutions, and publics all respond to socially engaged art in numerous ways; whether they are commissioned directly by publicly funded entities or via the artists' own initiatives.

Central to above-mentioned deliberations, art historian Grant Kester, who is engaged in these discussions in responding to Claire Bishop's widely cited piece "The Social Turn: Collaboration And Its Discontents" (2006) utilizes his book "The One and The Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art In A Global Context" to address critics and curators mapping collective art practices, including Bishop and Nicolas Bourriaud.

Sarah Smith (2012: 35) informs us in her book review as follows:

Kester positions collaborative practice in relation to the current period of neo-liberalism and avant-garde tradition in modern art. Identifying the recent growth of collaborative projects as a "global phenomenon", Kester defines these practices as existing on a continuum that encompasses mainstream work in biennials and work that overlaps with the fields of development, urban planning and environmental activism.

As the rise of participatory art evidences a "paradigm shift *within* the field of art, even as the nature of this shift involves an increasing permeability *between* 'art' and other zones of symbolic production" (Smith, 2012: 35). In Smith's account, Kester deconstructs this shift into two components: "the move towards collective production and the organization of process-based art projects that allow for viewers' participation" (Smith, 2012: 35). Kester states that collaborative projects function to structure social experiences, "Setting it sufficiently apart from quotidian social interaction to encourage a degree of self-reflection, and calling attention to the exchange itself as creative praxis" (Kester, 2011: 28). Smith (2012: 35-36) clarifies his approach as follows:

Kester doesn't address all collaborative art, but rather speaks to the gap in theoretical discourse employed to discuss such projects. To this end, he draws on a variety of global case studies, ranging from contemporary artists and collectives operating within well-established international

circuits.

Also not discussing collaboration, French curator and critic Nicolas Bourriaud defines certain contemporary artworks as “an attempt to create relationships between people over and above the institutionalized relational forms” (Bourriaud, 2002: 4), almost as a soil for participatory art (Lind, 2009: 58). Bourriaud uses the idea of ‘relational aesthetics’ as a way to understand some of the key developments in contemporary art, which also underline the communities and activities of new media art that we will see in the next chapter. Before proceeding with the new media issue, we need to comprehend under which circumstances we call an artwork ‘relational’ in consideration with its collaborative, participatory and co-creative capabilities. In new media art, this relational aesthetics is reflected as a strong interest in co-creative processes and reciprocal activities in the form of organization of communities, festivals, performances, discussion and laboratory-like experiments, rather than a concern with the creation of tangible works of art.

2.2.4. Relational Aesthetics

Relational aesthetics is not merely mimicking the dynamics of contemporary information society, but is meant to facilitate “relational space-time elements, inter-human experiences and places where alternative forms of sociability, critical models and moments of constructed conviviality are worked out” (Bourriaud, 1998: 44). According to Lind, “relational aesthetics was widely debated in the mid-1990s Scandinavia, France and the Netherlands, and recently during a delayed but intense reception in the United Kingdom and the United States” (Lind, 2009: 58). While

every form of art is relational with regard to the social setting of its reception, in relational aesthetics “Inter-subjectivity and interactivity form the very basis of creative concepts and production practices” (Bourriaud, 1998: 44).

When Bourriaud published his seminal book *Relational Aesthetics* in 1998, in which he describes relational art as “art taking as its theoretical horizon, the realm of human interactions and its social context” (Bourriaud, 1998: 7-40), he triggered a critical discussion about the increasing popularity of participatory art. Employing a term used by Marx, he defines relational art as the type that “represents a social interstice”. Bourriaud’s argument is provocative and “sees art from a Marxist perspective as an apparatus for reproducing the encompassing hegemonic capitalist ideology” (Hand, 2011: 1).

In addition, Brian Hand claims, “Due to the complexity of the cultural sphere in the age of information, there are slips and gaps within the reproduction of the dominant ideology that can be exploited by certain artists as creative heteronomous interstices” (Hand, 2011, 1). In this sense, we return to Bourriaud’s belief that relational art can “create free areas, and time spans whose rhythm contrasts with those structuring everyday life, and it encourages an inter-human commerce that differs from the ‘communication zones’ that are imposed on us.” (Bourriaud, 1998: 16) In other words, a relational art form becomes a space of potentiality, a free realm of possibility for human interaction. “However, not all relational art involves a social element, much of it does invite viewers to interact not only with the work itself, but also with other people, whether performers included in the work or fellow lay participants” (McIntosh, 2014: 2).

In Lind’s account, the artists in question “do not wish to reproduce or depict the

world as we know it but instead create new situations, “micro-utopias”, using human relations as their raw material” (Lind, 2009: 58). She argues that Bourriaud, by referring to Duchamp’s 1954 lecture “The Creative Act”, nevertheless underlines the importance of those artists producing inter-personal experiences, which aim at liberating themselves from the ideology of mass communication. It is an art, which “is not trying to represent utopias, but build concrete spaces” (Bourriaud, 1998: 46), and present-day art is also striving to produce situations of exchange, and relational space-time. Such spaces, often in galleries or in semi-public forums, are surrendering the viewer with the aspiration of the work of art. In Lind’s (2009: 58) words:

This heterogeneous group of artists propose social methods of exchange and different communication processes in order to gather individuals and groups together in other ways than those offered by the ideology of mass communication. They seek to entice the observer or viewer into the aesthetic experience offered by the artwork.

Bishop noted, “Prior to the institutionalization of participatory art following relational aesthetics, there was no adequate language for dealing with works of art in the social sphere that were not simply activist or community art” (Bishop, 2012: 2002). What is reproduced in the art space within the relational art is the “counter-merchandise” (Lind, 2009: 58). Unlike merchandise, it conceals neither the work process, nor the use value, but the participation which allowed its authentic re-production.

Participation of the audience, as participatory art implies in the latter half of the 20th century, changes the perception of the space within the objects installed in that space. The participants consistently change the original order of the world they are in. In other words, the exhibition area becomes a shared world for action and inaction, autonomy and collectivity, without concerning any social classifications but cultural

alterity. This tension became one of the central arguments in contemporary art scene with the appearance of Installation Art, which is widely practiced for creating reciprocal environments and creating new relational aesthetics.

2.3. Interactive Installation As Participatory Art

How installation art is organized in present-day art is another cardinal point to consider in relation to participation and collaboration. Art of fluidity and provocation was instantly popular in 1960s and onwards and developed in many different ways by many different artists. The term installation has come to be used to refer to three-dimensional works that are often site-specific, meaning that they are created to exist in a certain space, and designed to transform the perception of space. Interactive Installation, Land Art and Environmental Art are some contemporary terms that work with the logic of installation and have numerous examples since 1970's.

However, there is a fine line between installation and installation art. In her critical history of installation art Claire Bishop (2005: 6) explains:

Since the terms (installation and installation art) first came into use in 1960s, this ambiguity has been present. During this decade, the word 'installation' was employed by art magazines to describe the way in which an exhibition was arranged. The photographic documentation of this arrangement was termed as 'installation shot', and this gave a rise to the use of the word for works that used the whole space as 'installation art'. Since then, the distinction between an installation of works of art and 'installation art' proper has become increasingly blurred.

Bishop defines installation art as that "into which the viewer physically enters" so that they are "embodied" and able to experience the space rather than simply view it

from a detached position. In her book, *Installation Art*, Bishop refers a fellow scholar in the field, Julie Reiss, who asserts that the viewer is necessary for the full creation of an installation work. Bishop outlines the development of installation art from its beginnings in the 1960s when artists wanted to alter the traditional relationship between themselves and the viewer, to be able to create a more immersive and social experiences. As a result, installation artists shaped their practices in a manner that turned the space into a crucial component of the artwork. In this sense, installation works create an environment that encourages viewers to use more of their senses to better experience the work and even become the key asset in the installation by themselves. As I interpret, such a practice contributed to the notion of reciprocal environments, where the viewer is in an interaction with the art object and the whole space as well.

Interactive installation is a sub-category of installation art, which emphasizes ‘embodiment’. “An interactive installation frequently involves the audience acting on the work of art or the piece responding to users' activity” (Oliveira, Oxley, Petry, & Archer, 1994: 1). Installation artists produced several kinds of interactive installations, including web-based installations, gallery-based installations, digital-based installations, electronic-based installations, mobile-based installations, etc. “Interactive installations are frequently created and exhibited in the 1990s, when artists were particularly interested in using the audience participation” (Oliveira, Oxley, Petry, & Archer, 1994: 1) and attempted to create reciprocal works that portray collaborative actions in the art space. Bishop’s comprehensive historical analysis of installation art provides us three fundamental features that can be studied.

First, the aspiration to create a more direct involvement between the viewer and the work of art; second, the observation that installation art presents the viewer with fragments that must be explored and assembled in a manner that ‘activates’ the viewer; and third, the expanded sculptural (Krauss, 1979: 1) tactic of deconstructing the traditional concept of the precious work of art via the use of found objects and materials.

These different approaches propound a critical standpoint towards the mentioned dynamics of art of installation. Bishop also suggests, “Contemporary installationism can be traced back to the radical art of the 1960s” (Bishop, 2005: 10) and even further if we include preliminary gestures in the domain of Dada and Surrealism. We encounter installation art as ‘expanded sculpture’ in Bishop’s major commentaries, in reference to Rosalind Krauss’ s 1979 essay “Sculpture In The Expanded Field.” More specifically it can be described as, in most instances, “gallery-bound expended sculpture. So there is a fine line between installation art and traditional media such as sculpture, painting, photography and video. To put briefly, installation art directly addresses the viewer's literal presence in the space. Bishop (2005: 6) explains:

Rather than imagining the viewer as a pair of disembodied eyes that survey the work from a distance, installation art presupposes an embodied viewer whose senses of touch, smell, and sound are as heightened as their sense of vision. The insistence on the literal presence of the viewer is arguably the key characteristics in installation art.

In terms of creating a site of embodiment, Roman Ondák’s “Measuring The Universe” is relevant. He is an installation artist who is interested in formation of social relations in the art space. This connective approach makes his work simply interactive and performative.



Figure 4: Roman Ondák, *Measuring The Universe*, 2007, Performance

Claire Bishop noted that a turn of art practices towards the social has taken place since the 90's, in a desire to switch the traditional connection between the art object, artist and the audience. The artist is less perceived as an individual that produces objects and increasingly as someone who produces situations and discursive practices in public space. Ondák's work is constative in terms of being a collectively authored work. It directly highlights the necessity of the presence of the viewer. Ondák leaves a pencil in the gallery and steps back from the work. Ondák's mode of expression is that he exists in the space in a form of pen, strongly implying that there would be no any work of art if there were no users of the pen. In her 1996 article "Does Interactivity Lead to New Definitions?" Anne Marie Duguet's states:

For by creating a site of exchange and transformation between a mental space and a material reality, an apparatus defines the conditions of a given experience, that is to say the range of possibilities and constraints governing relations between subject, technology, image, environment and participants.

While "Measuring The Universe" fits in the playful stereotype of contemporary art to

a certain extent, “this work is able to relate to its audience, speaking to the human condition through real experiences, and occupy an important space, bridging the gap between the average person and the contemporary art scene” (McIntosh, 2014: 6). I would like to put next Rirkrit Tiravanija’s long-term work “Untitled (Free)”, because it also has the ability to communicate by using relatable elements that allow people to attribute their own meanings. It has a considerable impact on the transformation of ideas towards contemporary art and helped us to meet with a new medium: eating. At first glance, it is more likely an eating ceremony, a joyful time that represents social interactions. Indeed, he converted a gallery into a kitchen where he served rice and Thai curry for free, has been recreated at MoMA. If we expect for this work to become a participatory work, one participate without any physical presence. The work calls the viewer into interaction to reveal a solid function, like we see in Ondák’s participatory work. However, Tiravanija is trying to escape from the rush of production of meanings and applying another conceptual framework related to cooking, serving, eating and communicating through all of these.



Figure 5: Rirkrit Tiravanija, *Untitled (Free)*, 2011

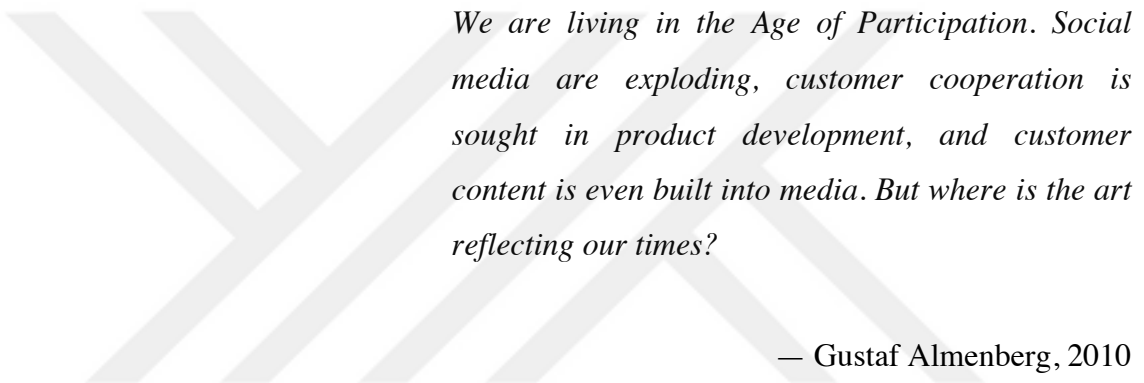
While examining reciprocities and contrasts amongst two works from different mediums, it is important to note that our custom of categorization of art and media products are sometimes limiting and redundant when it comes to make an authentic criticism in contemporary art. As long as new artistic skills and new combinations of media products emerge, we will continue trying to relocate our creative tendencies and relate them with certain identifications. However, in participatory art, theatrical metaphors are prevalent. If the viewer participates in the play, the play transforms. As long as the viewer stays passive in the site, the work doesn't give any feedback that reveals any reciprocity. Karly A. McIntosh's (2014: 6) summary is explanatory in terms of the reciprocity between artist, viewer and artwork.

Participation provides a new and unusual context for people to connect with each other, as well as the exhibition space and larger art world, thus re-establishing and reimagining the relationship between artist, viewer and work.

Loosing the reciprocal relation is actually one of the actual risks in my work. Since I aim at creating a reciprocal environment, I need to design it with a concrete sense of communication and creativity. Fortunately, the modern human is so integrated with the act of participation and making self-expression that an interaction is unavoidable with the installation, especially if the constituent material is social media. I will try to employ people's creative tendencies in an interactive installation and the primary material is the image production in Instagram, which I am examining in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

SOCIAL MEDIA AS NEW AVANT-GARDE



We are living in the Age of Participation. Social media are exploding, customer cooperation is sought in product development, and customer content is even built into media. But where is the art reflecting our times?

— Gustaf Almenberg, 2010

Just as it is possible to discuss the degree to which artistic collaboration can claim agency through a certain level of opacity in relation to the cult of the individual – a group of artists beside a solo artist – it can also be argued that progressive instruments can turn artistic production from a personal level to a social level. Then we need to ask, simply, what kind of instrumentalization is prevalent in today's artistic production and what are the new dynamics of their consideration of artistic participation? To answer these questions, we can examine currently running models, where people freely choose what to participate in and how to do so, both individually and collectively. As it seems in the 21st century, new media offers us a large space of

experimentation with its products, featuring highly communicative and artistic capabilities, which are like the first avant-gardes that facilitated involvement in artistic communities, publishing personal works and taking roles in collaborative projects. So what are the aspects of new media that allow us to relate with the avant-garde concepts? I suggest that social media principally behaves like an avant-garde platform of artistic participation and collaboration. It is no doubt conveying a high level of audiovisual communication and thus producing a reciprocal creativity amongst its users. Since we need a particular example in 21st century in terms of creating and sharing instantly, we can say that Instagram is a collaborative participatory work, which has been growing by collecting and timelining numberless images from different individuals all around the world. Can each Instagram user be considered a creative laborer, constructing an unending visual surface of personal stories? This chapter picks up a number of themes outlined in previous chapters, such as the tension between the collective and the individual creativity and puts the conflict between narration and database in the center of these issues.

3.1. New Media's Relation To Artistic Production

A common difficulty in the recognition of collaborative practices has spread over time in contemporary art, since the authorization of the audience in the production of art; it is now concerning the new media use. Today's art production embraces society's faithful utilization with remote and mobile connection to aesthetical production, which are facilitated by 'new' powerful hardwares and responsive softwares. The term 'new' re-appeared in the 1990's again and was used as shorthand for new cultural forms, which depend on computer-based production and media access. Manovich describes it as radical cultural innovation. "But now it was paired not with particular such as photography, print, and film but with media in general" (Manovich, 1999: 1). To this I would add that avant-garde concerns have not only continued over time but also dispersed over different media. But what can be the specific avant-garde approach that appears in the present day's media use? And which new topics of discussion that new media brought within? Manovich states, "New media represents new avant-garde for the information society, although it uses old modernist forms" (Manovich, 1999: 1). The avant-garde strategy of collage, for example, re-emerged as a "cut and paste" command in the most computer-based operations. Manovich continues with his arguments in his 2002 article "Avant-garde as Software" as follows:

If the 1920's avant-garde came up with novel forms for the new media of their time (photography, film new printing and architectural technologies), the new media avant-garde introduces radically innovative ways of using already accumulated media. Thus, computer-based techniques of media access, manipulation and analysis are the new avant-garde.

Irish Museum Of Modern Art (IMMA) presents a series of talk, which aims to

provide a general introduction to key concepts and themes in contemporary art.

“What Is New Media art?” is the third booklet in this series, constituted by curators

Lisa Moran and Sophie Byrne, including an essay by academic Maeve Connolly.

Informed by the rapid pace of technological development, new media art is a constantly changing category encompassing film, video, photography, lens-based media, digital technology, hypertext, cyberspace, audio technology, CD-ROMs, webcams, surveillance technology, wireless telephones, computer and video games, GPS and biotechnology.

The fascination with the ability of new technologies to transform ideas of aesthetical relation, sense of community and the nature of creativity makes new media art a strikingly contemporary figure, which has been embraced by academics as much as artists. Today’s researchers and practitioners of art make experiments with different media and this has become a new way of criticizing such notions in approaching to art. Lev Manovich, for instance, studies the big data in the Internet, the cultural product of 21st century. He analyses the uniqueness of new media revolution by comparing it with the avant-gardes of the 1910’s – 1920’s in visual arts, design and film. He argues in his “Avant-garde as Software” article that “The 1920s avant-garde techniques were transformed into the conventions of modern human-computer interface and software, thus functioning as a foundation of post-industrial labor” (Manovich, 1999: 32-47). In her essay “Art and (New) Media Through the Lens of the IMMA Collection” in IMMA’s booklet, Connolly clarifies the issue in detail as follows:

The term ‘New Media Art’ is frequently applied to artworks, or art practices, involving media not traditionally or conventionally associated with the Fine Arts. Paintings, drawings and sculptures are routinely (although sometimes erroneously) regarded as original and unique works of art authored by a single individual, but the emergence of photography, film, video, audio and other technologies enabling reproduction through

mechanical or digital means, radically alters the relationship between art and originality. This is one of the reasons why artists associated with the historical Avant-Garde, seeking to radicalize the relationship between art and society, often rejected painting or sculpture in favor of photography or cinema. Inevitably, however, media that are initially perceived by the art world as 'new' (such as video in the 1960s) soon become familiar and even conventional.

Parallel to this summarizer citation, Manovich (1999: 3) can continue with explaining the computer's arrival to existing conditions.

In fact, rather than being a catalyst of new forms, the computer seems to have strengthened already existing ones. How should we understand this absence of radically new forms in a culture undergoing rapid and massive computerization? Is new media's avant-garde promise only an illusion?

Overall the studies on new media, there is an obvious attribution to its capacity of making everyone an artist. If we think of a new audience behavior emerging through this process, it would be the artistic participation in social media, where collaboration and creativity occasionally assembles. Social media has powerful impacts on the relationship of production in terms of revealing new understandings towards artistic expression and communication. In this manner, I consider the artistic production in social media as equivalent to avant-garde practices, which are facilitated by firstly the invention of personal computers, and then expansion of smart phones with thousands of interactive and social applications in them.

3.2. Artistic Participation In Social Media

Since the creative act became something unavoidable with the tools we use today, those tools also have a massive impact in our orientation of the aesthetical creation and in the ways of artistic communication. Actively using the social media as an

expressionist platform is a new avant-garde way of collective creativity. As a result, we have a creative process in total when we read out the symptoms through the relation between social media and its user. However, we also encounter some difficulties while clarifying the new relations between artist, audience and artwork in the age of social media. Boris Groys (2010: 1) finds the right questions for today's artistic handicaps, while analyzing some popular traditions in our day:

At the turn of the twenty-first century, art entered a new era—one of mass artistic production, and not only mass art consumption. To make a video and put it on display via the Internet became an easy operation, accessible to almost everyone. The practice of self-documentation has today become a mass practice and even a mass obsession. Contemporary means of communications and networks like Facebook, YouTube, Second Life, and Twitter give global populations the possibility to present their photos, videos, and texts in a way that cannot be distinguished from any post-Conceptual artwork, including time-based artworks. And that means that contemporary art has today become a mass-cultural practice. So the question arises: How can a contemporary artist survive this popular success of contemporary art? Or, how can the artist survive in a world in which everyone can, after all, become an artist?

If we define it simply as artistic production what we do in social media, this kind of production is so increased and accumulated that now we can't know what to look at inside this constellation. Manovich is searching the ways for knowing what we want to look at inside the 'big data'. He is studying 'software algorithm' and brings the big data in his workspace. In one of his experiments, Manovich is delivering Instagram images to his workspace for making large representations of the social data after collecting them from global Instagram users. In other words, he imports the data of social media into new media that he designs a way of knowing what too look at in this database and locating them. However, he also claims that the database is an opponent for the narrative, which triggers me to search for a connection between

database and narrative. Thus, Instagram seems as most likely a visual database of authentic social narratives where I can benefit from and design a storytelling platform that uses its database as a source.

3.3. Instagram As An Artistic Database

There are a number of formulations surrounding avant-garde art since 1990s that should be taken into consideration as well. Foster (1994: 26) believes that “the avant-garde continues” in contemporary art practices through “subtle displacements” and “strategic collaborations with different groups.” Kathryn Brown (2014: 1) also prefers to explain what constitutes the present-day artistic practices in relation to academic progression:

The new generations of professional artists find their access to the art system predominantly through the network of art schools and educational programs that have become increasingly globalized in recent decades. This globalized and rather uniform art education is based on the same avant-garde canon that dominates other contemporary art institutions—and that includes, of course, not only avant-garde art production itself but also the art that was made later in the same avant-garde tradition. The dominant mode of contemporary art production is the academicized late avant-garde.

Social media plays a big role in this awareness and opens new spaces for the actualization of such desires. Within this discourse, I am developing a participatory artwork for the same audience that ensures taking place *up there* both in its development and its presentation. All we need is to find the correct gaps to fill with innovation. An image database, such as Instagram, would be helpful to observe people’s creative tendencies in the software age. Our question might be that to what degree people can reflect creativity and collaboration through social media? And

what assists such a reciprocal relation inside this platform?

Instagram users have been posting images that spread over the World Wide Web revealing their personal narratives and at the same time filling a mutual database with visual data. Art director Alexey Brodovitch's advice to young photographers was "If you see an image you have ever seen before, don't click the shutter." On the contrary, Instagram evokes a demonic appeal in capturing the same things again and again. In his 2014 book "The Instagram Book", Steve Crist makes a synoptic statement:

Not since Edwin Land invented the Polaroid camera has image making become so revolutionized. Instagram has taken today's phenomenon of instant photography and social media to a new zenith, enabling amateurs and auteurs alike to share their images with a global audience. From the ubiquitous selfie to urban life and the beauty of nature, Instagram has provided a forum for posting and viewing a seemingly endless archive of images from our time. From teens to retirees, would-be and actual photographers are creating their own images and following countless others, creating an online community that is visually inspired.



Figure 6: Richard Prince, *New Portraits*, 2015, Screenshot prints

Above, we see English artist Richard Prince's 2015 work "New Portraits", in which he sold numerous screenshots of other people's Instagram posts. It evokes one of the

oldest questions “But is it art?” that collides with one of the most pressing, current global debates, concerning of online privacy and ownership in the digital age.

In Fig.7 we will see an Israeli soldier’s Instagram post, a photo through the lens of his sniper gun. The image has been heavily criticized online. Electronic Intifada, a news site focused on Palestinian issues, described the photograph as "tasteless and dehumanizing". The site published several other images from Ostrovski's Instagram page, including snaps of the soldier posing with heavy-duty guns.



Figure 7: Mor Ostrovski, 2013, Instagram post

In her seminal book “On Photography” Susan Sontag (2005: 82) notes, “Because each photograph is only a fragment, its moral and emotional weight depends on where it is inserted. A photograph changes according to the context in which it is seen.” In this sense, shooting becomes an idea, a symbol in Ostrovski’s Instagram photo. All shooting act suddenly becomes one in this photograph. Aggressively but

figuratively, the image here has a narrative power. It represents the moment of capturing a person in a heavy, contractionary frame and halting his momentum inside that moment time. Many other words can be noted down to represent emotions and semantic deliberations regarding this image, but the main focus here is to obtain an image's power of narrative. Accordingly, I will implement these Instagram images as a source for the storytelling activity in a gallery setting.

Although Manovich claims that the database is an opponent of the narrative, I would instead avoid the conflict between database and narrative by instead attempting to design a storytelling medium that is fed from an image database. Social media has a powerful impact on society's relationships of production in terms of revealing new understandings of artistic expression and communication. In this manner, I consider the artistic production in social media as equivalent to avant-garde practices, which are facilitated by firstly by the widespread use of personal computers, then by the popularization of smart phones with thousands of interactive and social applications contained in them. Social media is an extensive platform that shapes the new form of communication, based on sharing the in the 21st century.

CHAPTER 4

OUR WORK IN PROGRESS

You must first let forms, colors, words and tones grow and afterwards explain them.

— Jean Arp, 1914

A transformative, process based artwork inherently moves its artist away from the new relation it conducts with the viewer. With the exposition of the artwork, I choose to alienate myself from the object and let the reciprocal process evolve. Art, again, attempts to engage with the society without bothering about ownership, just as avant-garde projects in the history of art. According to the previous introduction and categorization of some typical, early and recent installations, which seek self-expression and collaborative actions through audience interaction, we can simply define the installation work of this thesis as crowdsourcing interactive fiction, due to its cultivation by a group of collaborators and participants. The title, “Our Work In Progress: Instagram-sourced Participatory Storytelling Installation” also reveals the project’s technique of application. To be able to better explain its concept, this chapter outlines how I formulated the art project after all, on the basis of my personal

views on the issues under discussion. Thus, the chapter aims to encourage the reader and the audience to adopt a critical standpoint for assessing the work's assemblage and operation. Instead of surveying a wide topic like storytelling in this chapter, I will examine how autonomous and collaborative storytelling is possible in inspirational inter-media works. To be concise about the main approaches in my work, I will first give a personal artistic statement. Second, I will outline the elements that the artwork comprises. Finally, I will discuss its designated experience in practical terms.



4.1. Artist's Statement

What constitutes the contemplation of an artist is his/her mode of expression. The artist's style of thinking is actually his/her style of making. However, we understand that certain artists also make art out of the modes of expressions of others and let the process evolve by itself. Despite this highly inspirational approach in developing a work of art, the nature of an art thesis pushes us to learn at first what kind of forms, colors, words and tones are going to appear and in which contexts we will encounter them and perceive their relations. Accordingly, an installation work needs a premise too, just like this one, for clearly explaining it to the reader before or after the artwork's experience.

Considering both the state of the artist and of the viewer defines me as an "Artographer", which is a term developed by the Canadian academic Rita Irwin (Sullivan, 2006: 25) and her colleagues, referring to multiple roles of Artist, Researcher and Teacher. This term also helps me describing my stance towards the issues. More to the point, a self-identification is necessary in making this art project. On the other hand, having a rough idea about the author could provide the reader some clues on what kind of an experience that the artwork offers. It is not my intention here to present a detailed narrative of myself or the installation; rather, I will attempt to explain as efficiently as possible the methodological configuration of the installation, that is to say, my general strategy.

My other goal as an artist is to share the same position with the audience in relation to the art object and stay outside the installation in order to be able to

empathize and find more criticism towards the functioning of the work. The artist's alienation to his artwork eventually occurs, especially when the work starts to transform by others' interventions. Its creator becomes a stranger to it and inevitably moves out of the structure that he designed, since it allows manipulation. My aim is to benefit from the viewer's perspective as part of an organic process without any interference from me as the artist.

As stories transform and show difference in time, this procreates an organic process that controls itself. Rather than being a controller in this research, I consider myself as an observer, but first, a "context provider"¹ who designs an interactive medium and lets the visitors play with it. This locates me between a designer and a curator, since I host the viewer and prompt artistic production with the designated medium. In this case, the Instagram users turn into content providers, where the installation participants use the ready content in new contexts. Here to put it briefly, the power of images is in the participant's service for making new visual stories, until the bales run out of pages.

The mode of interaction with the given material in this artwork is similar with a regular, objective scientific essay, which gives the concepts and anti-concepts² to its readers, then lets them consider both viewpoints towards the issues. However, "Our

¹ Sharon Daniel (2007: 21) conceptualizes the term 'context provider' as the one who establishes a framework in which the participant-subject may emerge and make a statement or articulation in concert with other participant-subjects – thus producing collective statements out of individual, non-authorial voices.

² Anti-concept is a term designed to obliterate some legitimate concept. Ayn Rand explains the use of anti-concepts that they give the listeners a sense of *approximate* understanding. But in the realm of cognition, nothing is as bad as the approximate. It consists of creating an artificial, unnecessary, and (rationally) unusable term, designed to replace and obliterate some legitimate concepts—a term which sounds like a concept, but stands for a "package-deal" of disparate, incongruous, contradictory elements taken out of any logical conceptual order or context.

Work In Progress” works with symbols and symbolism is a total enemy of didacticism, declamation, false sensibility and objective description, as Jean Moreas stated in Symbolist Manifesto in 1886. (Dempsey, 2005: 41) A conflict amongst concepts is out of question in this storytelling medium since the subject is visual, although, the newly emerging stories can contradict with the previous ones content-wise through the power of symbolic images. Congruently, the artwork is designed to provide a space of breaking concepts by creating anti-concepts, in other words, deconstructing and constructing stories. To say more clearly, the participant will be spoiling the existing flows of images on the installation and compounding new ones by using random images in different contexts.

Inspiringly, American psychologist Rollo May states, “Whereas moral courage is the righting of wrongs, creative courage, in contrast, is the discovering of new forms, new symbols, new patterns on which a new society can be built.” Although courage and comfort are some of the essentials in artistic participation in our case, the critical point in activating the audience is the deliberation of limits and possibilities in the experience. As Beuys suggests, all people are creative at some level since they have an operating mind, but when it comes to making things concrete and visible, it becomes possible with the conditions that prompt productivity. Productivity comes with the utility of apparatus and enjoyment within that apparatus. Within this claim, I assert that anyone can feature artistic attitudes, if the correct motivation meets with creatively inclined individuals. To test this, I used Instagram images for making visual stories together with the audience in the gallery. The main question after all is how art audiences can produce stories collectively in the art zone? But at first, we need to know what kind of images can provide meaningful relations to the spectator

in spectator in general, and how the images used in “Our Work In Progress” were collected and compiled in particular.

4.2. Structure Of The Artwork: The Meaningful Image At Play

The mode of interaction with the given material in this artwork is similar to an objective scientific essay that gives the concepts and anti-concepts to its readers, and then lets them form their own opinions on the issue. However, “Our Work In Progress” works with symbols and “symbolism is a total enemy of didacticism, declamation, false sensibility and objective description” (cited in Dempsey, 2005: 41), as Jean Moreas stated in Symbolist Manifesto in 1886. In this sense, a conflict of concepts is out of question in this storytelling medium, although, the newly emerging stories can contradict previous content with the power of symbolic images. Congruently, the artwork is designed to provide a space of breaking concepts by creating anti-concepts in a way that is not competitive. In other words, the participant will be manipulating but contributing to existing narrations and compounding new ones by using random images in different contexts.

A classical painting is fewer expressionists but mostly realist. In contrast to Fluxus examples, the audience is free to interpret any meaning and relation within the presented images. It is a performance-based action that produces a setting of social interstice with productive participation. But can we construct an image-based installation that promotes a freedom of interpretation? Despite the strict references of the image, how is it possible to go out of the given meanings in an image, without adding or subtracting visual elements from its autonomous content? Is it possible to

change the meaning of an image by replacing a second image just next to it? If so, will the two images compose a different narrative when paired sequentially, when they showed something different individually in isolation?

Apparently, installations work with a wide range of objects that include solid or transformable materials, constant images with various printing techniques, moving images with screens and projections, mirror reflections and more. But before evaluating the whole structure of our artwork, we should embrace how images become specifically meaningful within their designated contexts and which parameters they deploy in the installation. Is it necessary to have meaningful images to make an image-based installation? Or, is the meaning already spread over time and showing itself to us between different images? Let us now turn to what kind of paradigm “Our Work In Progress” proposes us within these parameters.

A paradigm, first of all, is the pattern of thinking that determines how one interprets and responds to situations. Paradigms in visual stories need to be coded clearly. This is because paradigms provide a storyteller with a ready means to communicate a set of values to a target audience and shapes stories with suitable reference keys. The referential ability of a story is something hidden but gradually appearing with the incoming fragments of the story, which usher the viewer to make meaningful connections and perceive the whole. As the viewer perceives the fragments, it transforms into a whole in his/her mind. But how does this perception with the image ensure a common solution, a mutual narrative for different viewers towards the stories? In other words, how do stories communicate in the same way to different spectators? Finally, is it sufficient to explain the interaction between the spectator and the story as a game? Let us assume that the gamification process starts with the

very perception of the viewer. But what kind of images would do the best for structuring a gamification? Before playing with the images, it will be necessary to go over shortly how image becomes meaningful, or better, relational to us.

The conflict of subjective and objective recognition of an image is not preferred as a breaking point presently in this discussion. However, essentially perceiving the codes in images, which is basically the fundamental asset in visual communication, will bring us soon to the main interchange between this playful installation and its participants. In their book “Des!gn Thinking”, Gavin Ambrose and Paul Harris (2010: 84) introduce us the image as follows:

Images, as visual codes, have the ability to convey an idea or a lot of information very quickly, they can be used to communicate in many different ways as they are very versatile and their reading can be conditioned by other factors at play during their presentation.

If we start with the basic conceptions towards the image, we reach at its different cultural and social interpretations, where we see these as being shaped by the contexts within which they are used. As soon as an image is taken as a readable text that gives one or more denotations with its content, it becomes understandable and responsible in many ways. “A denotive interpretation means to signify something by a visible sign. For example, ‘car’ is a denotive that we have associated with a four-wheeled vehicle. Likewise, a picture of a car may denote ‘transport’” (Ambrose & Harris, 2010: 69). So, generally speaking, a number of specific images constitute the paradigm. In that case, if we conceive certain images in certain ways, can the difference of perception produce autonomous reading, let us say, a the different look at the same image that produces different interpretations? Ambrose and Harris (2010: 70) explains the cognitive and denotive interpretation as follows:

Many images have cognitive meanings far beyond their denotive interpretations. Cognition refers to things that we have perceived, learned and reasoned. A picture of a house denotes a home, the place where you live; but home has other connotations such as family, security and love.

It is self evident that there is a possibility to retain multiple meanings and relations from images, if one intends to perceive and reproduce them. To be precise, creating an image is the finest way to optimize the messages, in the cases that non-verbal and non-textual dialogues don't work or not preferred. But obviously, it is essential to have the attention and comprehension of a spectator in unfolding the stories behind images.

As my goal is to use visual codes, instead of making new ones in order to generate stories, Instagram then becomes an open database from which to benefit. A snap of someone's portrait, of an object or of a place in Instagram is readily available image material, which will ultimately generate stories in one way or another. An Instagram image, which is not in any extraordinary sense thought of as an ordinary post, can perform artistic, emotional, social and political agency. Its own interface is only an imposed facet that is designated for a certain usage, and I remove it to obtain only the power of the image itself. We will see in the next section how I have extracted the posts in Instagram and remediate them into another haptic surface as I adopt a post-digital approach.

4.3. Installation and Experience

Collecting images from people is nearly same with the technique of ethnography and anthropology. However, I am not interested in examining the content of those images

comprehensively, but rather in attaining relational combinations during the process of interaction. In some ways, my working process has been also similar to working process of a software developer, who develops an interaction and thus creates reciprocity with himself/herself and the user. According to Manovich (2002: 2) “In the first part of the 1990s when interactivity was a new term, it often claimed that an interactive artwork involves collaboration between an author and a user.” Manovich this discussion in his article “Who Is The Author? Sampling / Remixing / Open Source” and continues:

The notion of collaboration assumes some shared understanding and the common goals between the collaborators, but in the case of interactive media these are often absent. After an author designs the work, s/he has no idea about the assumptions and intentions of a particular user. Such a user, therefore, can't be really called a collaborator of the author. From the other side, a user coming to a new media artwork often also does not know anything about this work, what is supposed to do, what its interface is, etc. For this user, therefore, an author is not really a collaborator. Instead of collaborators, the author and the user are often two total strangers, two aliens which do not share a common communication code.

Notwithstanding Manovich's claim, I would argue that throughout avant-garde movements and conceptualism, collaboration between an artist and an audience is gradually preferred as a working method. The new media we use today makes collaboration obviously apparent. Whereas every Instagram post that is made is an entry into a certain database, I aim to create collaboration by using narrative and database as a source of content.

Since there is already a huge constellation of images in the social media, my goal is to approach it as a material depot, which can be reutilized and opened for interaction in another interface. But still, how does it create a collaborative, a reciprocal environment implementing those images in an interactive medium? Contemporary

art audiences have been consuming its products, ever since they began to responding to and thereby giving back to the works of art in a way that created reciprocal means of interaction. This has come to an intensive point today with the capabilities of new media. The main effort in new media is for revealing the creative intent of users while, usually, offering them an interactive narrative – like in computer games – whose constituent elements are organized in a form of database structure. In his article “The Weak Universalism” Boris Groys (2010: 1) states as follows:

Earlier, during the classical period of mass culture, one was expected to compete for public attention. One was expected to invent an image or a text that would be so strong, so surprising, and so shocking that it could capture the attention of the masses, even if only for a short span of time, what Andy Warhol famously referred to as one’s fifteen minutes of fame.

If we examine the conditions in “Our Work In Progress”, one can easily take a role in a public show, in other words, be famous through certain modes of participation. The mode of participation is divided into three steps overall the production of “Our Work In Progress.” These steps are: 1) posting on Instagram; 2) designing of the medium (installation); and 3) participating in the installation. Here, the installation phase includes also the spatial composition concerning the setting conditions in the gallery. After the final placement of the installation, it produces arbitrary images through the participants’ interactions.

Another goal of the installation is to give evidence that the participants have already been creative with their daily act of publishing images on Instagram. In the installation, the ordinary daily images, which stand alone in Instagram’s classical timeline, find an opportunity to become a part of stories, through a certain selection of the combinations. My effort here is to expand the human potential for

interpretation and expression beyond rational, so as to communicate (on some level) with the possible stories on the surface.



Figure 8: Mert Aslan, *Our Work In Progress*, 2016, Wooden frames

There are two triptychs that contain a total of eight hundred images stacked in bales, which are organized in two rows of three, the rows meeting at a corner in the exhibition area. In the wooden frames, the viewers find the actual fragments taken from Instagram and they recompose them in different combinations with each episode of interaction. In interaction, there is a similar action that they do in Instagram, which is sliding over the images. But in this instance, the user encounters another haptic surface that carries images. “Art centered on providing interactive opportunity asks more of the average viewer, requiring a higher level of physical, emotional, and social engagement in order to fulfill the work” (McIntosh, 2014: 2). In this sense, “Our Work In Progress” works easily with its haptic mode of interaction.



Figure 9: Mert Aslan, *Our Work In Progress*, 2016, Interaction close-up view 1

In one of his articles, Lev Manovich mentions the significance of “import” and “export” commands that appear in computer based design processes. In his account, there is always a set of commands that the user applies, with consequences through computer-based design. Manovich states, “Everybody who is practically involved in design and art today knows that contemporary designers use the same set of software tools to design everything. However, the crucial factor is not the tools themselves but the workflow process, enabled by “import” and “export” operations” (Manovich, 2006: 5). He explains how “import” and “export” commands are critical in computer-based design processes:

Typically, a designer may create elements in one program, import them into another program, add elements created in yet another program, and so on. This happens regardless whether the final product is an illustration for print, a web site, or a motion graphics sequence; whether it is still or a moving image, interactive or non interactive, etc. Given this production workflow, we may expect that the same visual techniques and strategies will appear in all media designed with computers.

In “Our Work In Progress”, I appealed to the logic in “import” and “export” actions, which actually belong to computer-based design processes. I did this in a different manner from such process by printing and grouping Instagram images in the installation, as I consider printing as “re-importing” into another workspace. During the interaction, participants “re-export” them by ripping out papers from the surface. As a result of this remediation, the remainder images are potentially telling a visual story. Given this situation, interactions of multiple participants retain a power to create a reciprocal creativity during this collective production. The form of collectiveness in interactivity is the main difference of this work, unlike most of the new media based artworks that generally provide “one to one” interactivity. The mode of interaction here can be also defined as a deconstructive play, where a new participant is free to disturb the previous participant’s play by customizing the flow of the images, thus customizing the experience itself.



Figure 10: Mert Aslan, *Our Work In Progress*, 2016, Interaction close-up view 2

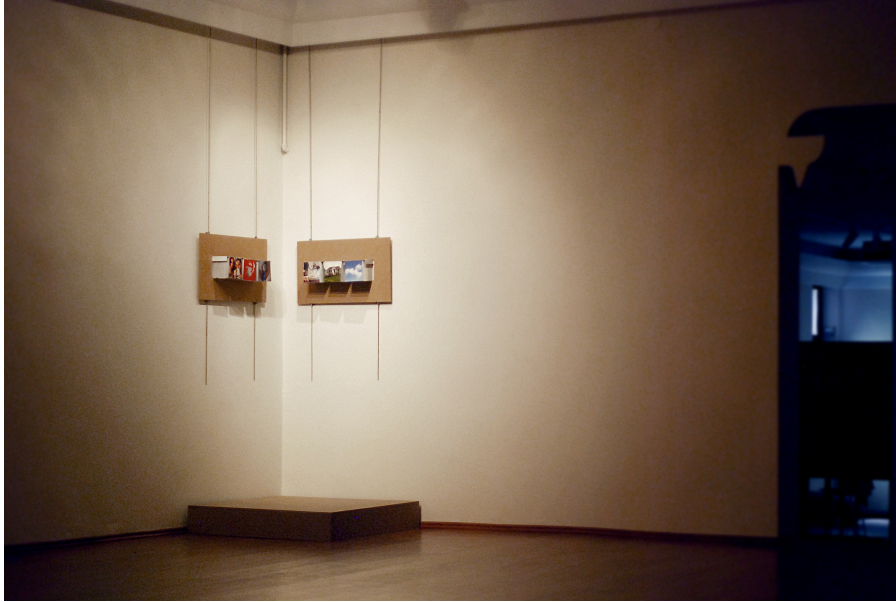


Figure 11: Mert Aslan, *Our Work In Progress*, 2016, Exhibition general view

In order to symbolically associate with the distinctness of the moment of participation, I placed a platform underneath the triptych frames, which can be stepped on and used as a stage of action. This addressed the fundamental requirement of participatory art, which is the embodiment in the work of art the literal presence of the viewer. This application intensifies the ritualistic tone of the performance by showing us the participant's intermediary role as the authoritative and responsible producer on the 15 centimeters high wooden stage.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

I love the idea of something that lasts forever, that is timeless and indestructible.

— Jack Hardwicke

In this concluding chapter I promote the exhibition process as a central element, which gives us discussable outcomes. To what extent did the designated interaction met with the artist's expectations? Manovich's (1999: 2) most inspiring and paraphrastic statement is that "Mass visual culture only pushes further what was already invented, intensifying particular techniques and mixing them together in new combinations." We are no longer living in the enlightenment of miraculous discoveries anymore but we are capable to reach beyond existing opportunities by recomposing them for new purposes. This alludes to Benjamin's (1969: 2) words, "In principle a work of art has always been reproducible. Manmade artifacts could always be imitated by men". In this sense, this kind of relationship that I propose within my work promotes a repeated productivity through participation.

Speaking of repeating a production, art director Alexey Brodovitch once advised

young photographers “If you see an image you have ever seen before, don't click the shutter.” It sounds like one should not capture an accustomed, ordinary scene that was seen or studied before, or one or to which one was accustomed. In my view, this suggests that we humans are the decision mechanisms regarding the possibilities in front of us. From this perspective, “Our Work In Progress” allows us to shift between different images and decide the flow of images on the surface. Different sets of decisions provide a multitude of readable stories during the process.

After analyzing the ways in which members of the public participate (or refuse to participate) in the installation, I see that this interactive practice both shaped viewers and/or provoke resistance to the work of art. Each viewer brought something unique to this participatory art as a result of his or her widely varied experiences. There were two options: Resisting the work, or, enjoying the freedom of combinations. As random images were accessed by random viewer-participants and went outside the exhibition space, art has thus penetrated to the society, while it is the same society that has helped to create and in this way penetrated into the artwork with their visual material in the first place. In short, the work allowed the visitors to take pieces away as mementos. What is left in the space are the leftovers, i.e. those images which no one chose to take away at that time. As Bishop suggests, it is necessary to remain conscious of the fact that the fun aspects of participatory works can detract us from criticality.



Figure 12: Mert Aslan, *Our Work In Progress*, 2016, Installation leftovers

The installation “Our Work In Progress” remediated already existing images and evolved as an analog interface open to interaction, as regards initial tendencies of participation in the history of art. Like a contemporary art object, it offers a playground in which to play forever; furthermore, its emphasis is on its manufacturable process. We see that the installation came to an end as a process art, but we also see that it can be further transformed by concerns such as accessibility in the exhibition space both physically and logically. Indeed, we can say that its process has not come to an end yet, and remains open to be tested and evaluated again, since we take art academically as an eternal notion with its techniques, conditions and relations.

According to McIntosh (2014: 5) “The most successful participatory works can acknowledge and make space for people’s differences, while also strongly accentuating the commonalities that unite people.” The space created by humans is somehow more valuable than the space that exists before or beyond humans, like nature. The stage thus begins to be instructive during the exhibition of the artwork.

Dan Graham mentions an artwork's aftermath as follows:

A [spatial, temporal] work had only to be exhibited in a gallery and then written about and reproduced as a photograph in an art magazine. Then this record of the no longer extant installation, along with accretions of information after the fact, became the basis for its fame, and to a large extent its economic value.

Whereas media art makes it relatively easy to facilitate participation, fine art is resolutely spectatorial. I wanted to create a renewable relation between a stable image and its designer, and I aimed to experiment with the designer's creative intentions with unstable images. For this purpose, I attempted to design an interactive and social situation to provide opportunities for viewers to participate in a shared experience and forge a connection through everyday actions. If I redefine my artistic stance, I can conveniently adopt the Neo-Pop expression of Jeff Koons, "The public is my ready-made" (cited in Dempsey, 2005: 281). In conclusion, we have a participatory installation that established their audience as a community in itself, where we encounter Instagram images in another medium, namely, another haptic surface with the function of storytelling.

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